



★ **They Call You Back: A Lost History, A Search, A Memoir**

**Tim Z. Hernandez**

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Tim Z. Hernandez's *They Call You Back* expands upon his prior documentary novel *All They Will Call You*, about the deaths of twenty-eight Mexican nationals in a California plane crash.

In January of 1948, a plane carrying Mexican workers crashed in Los Gatos Canyon, California. There were no survivors. The passengers were on their way back to Mexico after laboring in the United States; unidentified in newspaper accounts, they were buried as “deportees” in a mass grave. Upon learning of the tragedy in 2010, Hernandez began a complicated and often circuitous quest, trying to find the workers’ families. The resulting book, *All They Will Call You*, led to the official acknowledgement and memorialization of the crash victims.

In this book, the continued search for the Los Gatos families is linked to Hernandez’s personal and ancestral complexities. With eloquent self-assessment, he writes about his issues with alcoholism and artistic identity, along with his separation from the mother of his two children. He recounts the economic struggles of his grandparents and parents and the 1995 police-involved death of his uncle. And he elaborates on racial validity and erasure, noting the longstanding minimization of people of color.

The memoir is rich with history, vivifying those who live and work in Mexico and California’s Central Valley. Hernandez’s grandfather was a Korean War veteran with PTSD; he believed that the appearance of a butterfly brought an omen of death. And before boarding the fateful 1948 flight, Alberto Raigoza Carlos could handle “guns, horses, harvests, embroidery, paintbrushes, and just about any task that was put in his way.” Cultural traditions and the speaking of Spanish are contrasted with life in “el Norte,” where assimilation into American society changed family dynamics.

With mystical and factual intensity, the moving memoir *They Call You Back* is about individual purpose and collective heritage.

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