

**“*Nuestro camino es más largo*” (Our Journey Is Much Longer):
A *Testimonio* of Immigrant Life in the Central Valley and the Road towards the
Professoriate**

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Abstract

Throughout my life I have come home to Modesto, California more times than my heart can remember; it is my heart that remembers and keeps my hometown ever present. Today, I am an Assistant Professor at the University of San Francisco. Yet, who I am today is profoundly intertwined with the little girl who grew up in the Central Valley as a daughter of working class Mexican immigrants. This is my *testimonio*—my truth-telling story—of how I learned from the sacrifices my parents made as *Mexicano* immigrants pursuing a dream of a better life for their children in Central Valley California, and it is the story of learning from my family’s knowledge, strengths, cultural resources, and Community Cultural Wealth.

Keywords: *Testimonio*, Community Cultural Wealth, Immigration

***A mi hogar en Modesto una y otra vez/Coming Home to Modesto...Time and Time
Again***

Throughout my life I have come home to Modesto more times than my heart can remember; it is my heart that remembers and keeps my hometown ever present. No matter where I live, I always say, “I’m going home” when I head towards the Central Valley. As I write this *testimonio*, I am in Modesto—home once again. Perhaps it’s meant to be that I’m visiting my parents and sleeping in the house that has been our family home since I was thirteen. I’m no longer a teenager—to an outsider, I am a long way from the little girl with the boyish haircut who lived in “the projects”. I am now an Assistant Professor at the University of San Francisco. Yet, who I am today is deeply intertwined with that little girl—my upbringing as a daughter of Mexican immigrants in the Central Valley shaped my educational and life trajectories.

I was born and raised in Modesto, from 1974 until the summer of 1992 when I turned 18 and attended UC Davis. After graduating with a double major in Spanish and History, I moved to Los Angeles and spent five years teaching social studies in a Latina/o immigrant community. Thereafter, I started a Masters program in Latin American Studies followed by a Ph.D. in Education—both at UCLA. In 2010, I was offered my first academic job and moved to Arizona. In 2014, I returned to California with as an Assistant Professor in San Francisco. Before, after, and in between these life chapters, I have either lived in Modesto or visited my family there numerous times a year.

On paper my journey may appear fluid, but each of these life chapters was marked by great struggle. Life in and beyond the Central Valley has been one of intense juxtapositions—oppression and resilience, pain and transformation, poverty and cultural richness. Yet, they are never binary; they swirl together, overlapping into a process of continual border crossing—physical, metaphorical, cultural, spiritual, and political (Anzaldúa, 1987).

My *testimonio* is comprised of memories, journal entries, audio recordings, and transcripts of *pláticas* (talks) I've had over the years with my parents Concepción Reynalda Chávez Escobedo and Germán Jiménez Vásquez. From a young age, my parents instilled wisdom, knowledge, and values in their three children. We grew up learning from our *pedagogies of the home* (Delgado Bernal, 2001) and my parents' knowledge of the world through real life stories—our *pláticas*. My father has a love for words, storytelling, and social analysis; my mother used our talks to give us *consejos* (advice), love and encouragement.

I use Critical Race Theory (CRT) and *testimonio* to understand and frame my lived experiences. Critical Race Theory originates in legal studies and is an increasingly salient framework in social and educational research for examining racial subordination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Lynn, 1999; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001; Yosso, 2006). CRT's central tenets include the intercentricity of racism with other forms of subordination, a challenge to dominant ideology, a commitment to social justice, validating experiential knowledge by People of Color, and using transdisciplinary approaches (Solórzano, Villalpando, & Osegura, 2005; Solórzano & Delgado Bernal, 2001). *Testimonios* are examples of experiential knowledge; it is a person's truth being revealed as they recount the events of injustice, violence, or exploitation that they have experienced and witnessed. *Testimonio* is also defined by urgency; there is a need for telling stories from the past, to reclaiming the past, to give

testimony to the injustices of the past, to reinscribe local knowledge, to resist and to counter domination (Anzaldúa 1987; Latina Feminist Group, 2001; Delgado Bernal, 2001; Ramos, 2003). This is my *testimonio*—my truth-telling story—of how I learned from the sacrifices my parents made as immigrants pursuing a dream of a better life for their children in Central Valley California, and it is the story of learning from my family’s knowledge, strengths, and cultural resources.

***Mi crianza en el valle central*/Growing up in the Central Valley**

I am a product of the San Joaquin Central Valley, from a neighborhood mired in poverty and many social ills, but I am also the product of a family and community who are holders and producers of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002) with Funds of Knowledge (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005) and Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2006). Both of these realities—pain and power—and all that lay in-between characterized my upbringing. Like Prieto (2001) in her testimony of life from the Central Valley to the Ivy Walls, I draw strength from memories of tears and laughter, for myself and for reimagining the educational possibilities of Latina/o immigrant youth (Jimenez, 2012).

The Central Valley is the agricultural heartland of California—many immigrant families work in the surrounding fields picking fruit and vegetables, and in the fruit canning factories; my parents worked in both. Modesto is a semi-rural city of 200,000 in California’s San Joaquin Valley, often simply called the Central Valley. Modesto is approximately 90 miles south of Sacramento, the state capital, and 70 miles east of San Francisco. The racial makeup of the city is approximately 49.4% White¹, 35% Latino, 4% African American, 4% Asian, 7.6%, Other (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

My parents left their homeland of Ameca, Jalisco, Mexico in 1972—like many Mexican immigrants—in search of work and life opportunities for their family. They immigrated to Modesto because they had family; social networks helped them find work, a home, and make a life in America (Durand, Telles, & Flashman, 2006). The economic aspects of poverty included my parents’ struggle in grueling, low paying, and physically exhausting work. We sometimes didn’t have much to eat, but we never went hungry. Sometimes our health care was minimal—

¹ White alone, not Hispanic or Latino.

when my sister and I had our wisdom teeth removed, we endured additional pain because we didn't have the extra hundred dollars for a more sedated procedure. Paying for rent, gas, food, and household bills were a constant tension throughout our lives. To make ends meet, my father often held two jobs or worked double-shifts in the fields, in factory work, and as a bricklayer. As the eldest daughter, I had many responsibilities at a young age to support the household—I helped my mother cook food for my siblings, washed laundry daily including my parents' work clothes, prepared my father's lunch for his nightshift, cleaned the home, and helped out as my parents' translator (Dorner, Orellana, Jiménez, 2008). There was often a feeling of survival on the line and economic desperation, which caused great worry and tension.

In 1986 as I entered junior high, we bought a house and we moved closer to the center of town. It was a dream come true for our parents—to become homeowners. It was in a more peaceful neighborhood and felt worlds away from the public housing projects even though it was maybe two miles away. Our new home was still west of the train tracks; these tracks divided the poor, the working class, the immigrant, the People of Color from the downtown hub of city government and businesses. Beyond the downtown were neighborhoods where middle class and wealthier white families lived.

As kids, we rarely went downtown except with our parents to pay an electric bill or go to the post-office. Instead, we often headed to West and South side Modesto to Spanish speaking businesses and grocery stores with Mexican food products. There, my dad could haggle in his own language with the mechanics to fix a problem our car was having—our cars always seemed to break down and need repairs. I learned how to ask for a “jump-start” and use battery cables at an early age. We often ran into friends or family during our weekend outings to the flea market, *Don Juan Foods* where we picked up *carnitas* (fried pork), or *La Perla Tapatía*, which had the best *tortillas de harina* (flour tortillas). These Latina/o owned businesses provided vibrancy, were places for our community to obtain the goods and services we needed, and which welcomed our culture and language. It was comfortable and warm, like home.

El trabajo adentro y afuera de casa/Work In and Out of the Home

My mom and dad are both from the same small Mexican town of Ameca, Jalisco, Mexico. In fact they were neighbors, yet they were from two distinct social classes. My maternal grandmother was a successful moneylender and educated my mother in elite private

catholic schools throughout her life. My father was born into an extremely poor family from a long line of *campesinos* (fieldworkers), and in his family it was a privilege to obtain a sixth grade public education. My mother has a Masters degree in education and was an elementary teacher in Mexico before marrying my father. However, she left her teaching job when she immigrated to the U.S. When we were old enough to attend pre-school, she joined my father working in the factory and worked in low-skilled manual labor for the rest of her life. As I got older, I asked her why she didn't pursue a different line of work. She shared that she didn't have the English language skills or understand how to navigate the systems in America to use her degree. Because there was also a social class difference between her and my father, gender and social roles may have played a big part in her decision.

My father worked in U.S. fields picking fruit for several years, but *el campo* (the fields) had deep historical roots—it was the work he was born into. My grandfather spent all of his life as a *campesino* (fieldworker). It was not simply an occupation—though it was how they sustained themselves—it was a way of life. My father's connection to the Earth and *maíz* (corn) was one I would only learn to appreciate later through his stories. Corn was a part of their everyday lives and it was sacred—there was a lengthy, rigorous process to prepare the land, plant and harvest, thresh the corn, and bundle it for sale. It was also the staple food in his home with a meticulous preparation process for use in *tortillas*, *tamales*, *atole*, *posole*, and much more. I often saw my father's eyes well up when he talked about *el campo*, corn, and life in Mexico.

Throughout my life though, the cannery was their primary work. Both of my parents worked in the fruit-canning factory for over 30 years. One of my chores as a little girl was to wash my dad's uniform everyday because he worked 'clean-up,' hosing down all the machinery with steaming hot water. He wore a bright yellow coat and overalls made of rubber, black rubber rain boots, a hardhat and plastic visor. My mom worked picking the bad fruit from the assembly line, so only the ripened fruit would be canned. As a young girl, I heard the stories my mom's elite upbringing, but it was hard to register since I always saw her in factory work clothes—a hairnet and hard hat, older comfortable blouses that looked like tablecloths under an apron to take the bulk of the fruit splatter as it rolled in the assembly line. One day I asked my mom if she hated the cannery. She laughed and said, “*No hija, es lo que nos da la vida*” (No

sweetheart, it's what gives us life). It was arduous work under difficult conditions, and I'm sure it contributed to many health conditions in their later years, but they viewed work as a gift.

I remember both of my parents missing their family and their way of life in Mexico. Though they always respected what the US provided our family, they experienced the pain of living in a foreign land. As a young person I witnessed how people in authority demeaned them and questioned my parents' intelligence because they did not speak English, for being immigrants, or perhaps for being Mexican; I wasn't always sure the reason, but their talk revealed a disdain for their presence. I remember countless visits to English speaking public spaces (i.e., paying bills, the DMV, the post office, and doctor visits). These experiences from my social interactions as a child were reinforced with my experiences in school. When I told a teacher that my mother had a college degree, she retorted, "but not in America" or I'd see judgmental looks when my parents couldn't attend my parent-teacher conferences because they were working. Wittingly or unwittingly, school actors communicated deficit perspectives of my parents, my family, and consequently, of me. Yet, I could not reconcile this with what I knew in my heart and experience to be true—both my parents held profound wisdom. My father is not an "educated" man in the formal sense, but he is one of the wisest and talented people I know. I have often wondered what kind of life my dad would have had if he had educational opportunities afforded to him—would he have become a politician or savvy lawyer with his oratory skills and keen ability to discern people's hearts and souls. Had they not immigrated, would my mother have gone back to teaching or had she not been looked down upon for her accent when she spoke English would she have leveraged her education in the U.S.? Nevertheless, her education was not wasted; it was poured into her children. She spent time reading with us, going over our homework, ensuring we were doing well in school, instilling in us dreams beyond our everyday realities or "aspirational capital" (Yosso, 2006). She taught us her love for reading and to recognize the beauty of learning. My parents also taught us to preserve our maternal language and to value our bilingual identities or "linguistic capital" (Yosso, 2006). Both of our parents instilled in their children that we were smart, beautiful children of God with a wonderful purpose in life.

Las escuelas y mis experiencias/Schools and Schooling Experiences

Before I ever read a book about cultural alienation and long before I knew what it meant, I knew what it felt like. I was a child of working class Mexican immigrants and labeled an English Learner (EL) in school. It would be a long journey towards countering the *mis-education* in K-12 that had also dealt me cultural shame and ignorance of my own history (Woodson, 1933, 2000; Villenas & Deyle, 1999).

As early as pre-school, I learned to strip Spanish from the pronunciation of my name. “English-Only” was the language I learned in school, which for me translated into “don’t speak Spanish,” and lamentably “don’t be Mexican.” The next year, I entered Kindergarten with the only Latina/o teacher I had throughout my K-12 schooling. She was one of the most influential teachers I had that affirmed my cultural experiences. I often wondered though, why I never again had a teacher who looked like me. At the start of the year, I thought I would garner her praise when I clearly articulated my name with an *English* pronunciation as I was taught in pre-school. She asked me, “*Mija*, how do your parents say your name?” This time, I said my name with a Spanish pronunciation, naturally rolling my “R” a few times the way my mother did. My teacher responded, “That’s how you say your name *mija*, in *English AND Spanish*.” When I told her my preschool teachers taught me to say my name *in English*, she told me, “They were wrong”. I thought about this for a long time and years later, I vividly remember this moment and the lessons learned—that I could be proud of who I was, my language, and my name. Incredibly, my teacher was socializing me into a pedagogy of Latina/o knowledge, *cariño*, and modeling a social critique of schooling in a way that made sense to me at the early age of five (Freire, 1970; Yosso, 2006).

I had a handful of great teachers throughout my K-12 education to which I am deeply grateful—my 5th grade teacher and my music teacher who saw my brother and I grow up and counseled us throughout the ten years we played the violin. Orchestra class was an integral part of my socialization and identity formation. For the most part, I did well academically in elementary school. In third grade, I was labeled “gifted” and placed in the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program, which meant I would now be bussed across town to a wealthier mostly white school; I would later learn this was another way students are sorted and stratified with disparate educational opportunities (Oakes, 1985). I was transplanted from the school and

friends I knew into an educational context with middle-class norms that were foreign to me. I felt different and alone. For a class play, our parents had to make (or buy) ornate butterfly costumes for us. My mom was working and we didn't have the money to have them professionally made so my teacher helped me make cardboard wings with glitter. I wore jeans, a pink top, and slipped my arms through of the loops of yarn to put on my butterfly wings. At first, I thought they were beautiful. Yet, when all the other kids showed up with black leotards, bodysuits, and life-like butterfly costumes made of shiny colorful fabric I wanted to hide; my cardboard wings paled in comparison. The aesthetic differences in our costumes symbolized marked social class differences. In my old school I was smart and outgoing; but here I became shy and silent. A year later, I was thrilled when my mom agreed to let me return to my neighborhood school where I would rejoin my friends from my neighborhood. In time, I thought about why I couldn't get a high quality education that was affirming in my own community. This theme resonated with me throughout my schooling experiences and shaped my future life's work as a teacher and educational researcher.

Junior high was a blur—my teachers didn't know me and I was lost in the shuffle. I got into trouble often for talking during class and was constantly sent into the hallway. This baffled me. In elementary school my talkative and questioning nature was construed as inquisitive and participatory rather than a distraction. High school started off similarly. My life trajectory may have been very different had it not been for my high school counselor. During one meeting with him my freshman year, he looked over my academic cumulative file and exclaimed, "Wait a second you're gifted!" I was perplexed. I told him I was gifted in elementary school, "but not anymore." He laughed and said it wasn't something I could lose. My "gifted" label prompted him to take an interest in my academic journey and enroll me in Advanced Placement and college preparatory classes. High school counselors are in unique positions to facilitate (or constrain) educational success with direct access to all academic programs, Advanced Placement and college-bound programs, and insider knowledge about financial aid and scholarship opportunities (Martin, 2002; McDonough, 1997). I am acutely aware that I was granted access to educational opportunities that were unjustly denied to many of my peers. In one day, a change in my course schedule dramatically altered my educational trajectory. Overnight, it seemed like I was attending a different high school—what Oakes (1985) referred to as schools within schools. That is, different educational tracks within the same school, which

structure disparate schooling for different groups of students. I applied to college when everyone in my A.P. classes was doing so. My father supported my education, but didn't want me to go away to school. After many talks and with the help of my mother and cousin, my father gave me his blessing to attend UC Davis.

La licenciatura y estudios posgrado/My Bachelor's Degree and Graduate Education

I have two UC's as alma maters—my undergraduate B.A. degrees in U.S. History and Spanish were from UC Davis, and my M.A. in Latin American Studies and Ph.D. in Education are both from UCLA. Both of my siblings were also educated in the UC System—my brother at UC Berkeley and my sister transferred to UC Davis during my third year there. My brother went into pharmaceutical sales after graduating and later pursued a graduate degree in school psychology. My sister became an elementary teacher and returned to the Central Valley to teach in our community.

The first time I laid eyes on UC Davis was when I was starting the Special Transition and Enrichment Program (STEP)—a summer program for first generation or economically disadvantaged college students. It was an amazing and much-needed introduction to college life. My first year was extremely difficult—academically, I was not getting the grades I had in high school and socially it was a vastly different world. I found solace in close friends and other working class Students of Color who helped support me through the academic, social, and cultural challenges. I also enrolled in Spanish courses for heritage speakers and it changed my life. Professor Francisco X. Alarcón taught us the Spanish language in a way that was intimately connected to our cultural knowledge, Chicana/o history, poetry, political activism, and affirmed our personal experiences as children of immigrants.

Shortly after graduating, I moved to Los Angeles and became a social studies teacher. I sought to incorporate students' life experiences in their academic learning using oral history and family migration projects. During my teaching years, I was also constrained by high-stakes testing, a narrowing of the curriculum, and de-skilling of teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2004). These tensions coupled with my nagging feeling that I wanted to engage in educational issues with greater freedom led me to seek another path. I decided to return to graduate school to merge my interests in critical and culturally relevant teaching and research.

El doctorado/The Ph.D.

In 2004, I began my Ph.D. in Urban Schooling Education at UCLA. My graduate studies in urban schooling, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory resonated with my own experiences as a daughter of immigrant parents and as a teacher of Latina/o immigrant students. I was drawn to investigate how to translate critical pedagogies into the K-12 classroom for transformative educational experiences.

The UCLA campus was majestic; I could hardly believe I had been accepted. Yet, when I started the program, I felt like I was in the third grade again, being bussed across town—out of place. The constraints associated with a working class background and unequal schooling experiences continued to rear their head in graduate school, what Prieto (2001) terms “the stings of social hierarchy.” There was an academic language spoken in graduate school and social norms I had not yet learned. My peers seemed well versed in this new world. During a phone conversation with my parents, I shared my struggles about my journey through the doctoral program. I questioned whether the Ph.D. was for me. Was I selfish to pursue lofty dreams that required elite graduate school training? Would this pursuit be what I had hoped for? Would I be able to give back to my community in a way that was meaningful? My mom said, “*Tú puedes...sigue adelante*” (You can do it...keep moving forward). My dad repeated it and added, “*Sigue adelante...nuestro camino es más largo*” (Keep moving forward...our journey is much longer). My dad’s words revealed the depth and breadth of how different my path was—not only was it longer, but had twists and turns, hills and valleys making it immeasurably more challenging. My parents talked to me about their journey leaving their families behind in Mexico to work in the U.S., the linguistic and cultural barriers they faced, threats of deportation, the belittling and dehumanizing experiences they encountered. My *pláticas* with my parents were one of countless times where they supported me, reminded me where I came from, and inspired me to keep going.

I used these *pláticas* to inform my research where I investigate how K-12 teachers can affirm and access Latina/o students’ everyday life experiences for in-school learning. In my dissertation, I drew from critical pedagogies (Freire, 1970; Morrell, 2004) and oral histories to develop and implement curriculum with a sixth grade teacher about Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2006)—the array of skills, talent, and resources within students’ families and

communities. My research documented the ways youth wrote about their family histories of migration, and drew upon their Community Cultural Wealth for developing academic and critical literacies. I learned to use storytelling and CRT counterstorytelling as pedagogy in K-12 schools and simultaneously use it as an analytic tool in my educational research (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

A family emergency prompted me to move back home and finish my Ph.D. degree from the Central Valley. Once again, during an integral point in my life, I came home to Modesto. My father was in a terrible car accident and suffered a traumatic brain injury coupled with a swift onset of dementia. He would never be the same again...and neither would we. Once an independent hardworking man working the nightshift at a fruit-packing factory and a masterful bricklayer by day, he had become completely dependent on full time care. His quick-witted nature became dormant; his dynamic oratory skills that brought our family stories to life were lost within the deep recesses of his mind. His visual spatial giftedness that made his brickwork an art form had morphed into cognitive and physical difficulties with daily functions like walking, talking, eating, dressing, and showering. I immediately felt committed to help my family, which meant I changed my academic plan and moved back home.

While this decision was right for me, it proved harder to accomplish than I had anticipated. Every time I tried to write, I hit a wall. I decided to revisit my own family stories. My dissertation was after all about family histories as pedagogical tools. I listened to old tapes of my *pláticas* with my father, relishing in his vibrant witty voice with his unique intonations, dramatic pauses, hand gestures, passion and humor. That is how I came across the excerpt below; it provided me the inspiration I needed to breathe life into my writing and reminded me of why I had started my Ph.D. in the first place.

Tu abuela nunca escuchó alguien decir “Yo quiero ser...”
Mucho menos alguien decir “Yo soy...”
Ojalá que algún día pudiera ver por lo menos el comienzo de un sueño
Sus circunstancias no le brindaban ese lujo.
Tú ya no vas a decir como ellas, “Quiero ver uno que es...”
Vas a decir, “Cuántos somos?”

*Your grandmothers never heard anyone say, “I want to be...”
 Much less someone say, “I am...”
 I wish she could have one day seen even the beginning of a dream.
 Their circumstances did not afford them that luxury.
 You will no longer say as they did, “I want to see someone who is...”
 You will say, “How many of us are there?”*

Germán Jiménez Vásquez

In this conversation, my dad talked to me about the lack of opportunity dealt to my grandmothers in Mexico and the social responsibility I had with a university education. He reflected on her life to convey that she didn't grow up hearing people say they wanted to be doctors, lawyers, teachers, engineers, artists, etc.—let alone see anyone who actually became those things. He said dreams were a luxury not granted to the poor; instead of looking for people who could lead our community, we would now be among the leaders asking, “How many of us are there?” Through our conversations, I came to understand my life as one of having the opportunity to dream, to attain an education, and to inspire hope to (and with) our communities. I learned to use my education in the service of others, that my father had much wisdom to share with me, and to recognize that my journey began long before me—it has deep roots that extend to my parents, my grandmothers, and ancestors.

Mí carrera en la universidad/My University Career

After graduating with my Ph.D., I moved to Arizona to begin a career as a researcher and university professor. I struggled deciding whether or not to take the job—I had never lived outside of California and the anti-immigrant climate was increasingly hostile in Arizona. I asked my mom for advice. She shared her story of moving to America, “*Pues claro, miya era difícil. Pero se va donde está el trabajo y sabíamos que sería lo mejor para ustedes*” (Well, of course sweetheart it was hard, but one goes where the work is and we knew it was best for you). I spent four years in Arizona during the height of SB 1070, with experiences for a future testimonio. My life as a Chicana professor in Arizona was tumultuous, but it served to crystallize my commitment as a scholar-activist. A few years later, I accepted a position at the University of San Francisco; it was the fulfillment of a dream and full circle moment—being close to Modesto (and my family) while pursuing my career with colleagues dedicated to social justice.

As I finalized this testimonio at my parent’s kitchen table in Modesto, I was surrounded by memories—our UC degrees hanging on the living room walls next to my mom’s diploma from Mexico, my high school only a few blocks away, and the physical presence of my parents with a daily *pláticas*—all of which reinforced the beautiful struggle of my journey from child of Central Valley immigrants to the professoriate. It’s been nine years since my father’s accident and onset of dementia. I’ve learned to see him with new eyes. He may speak anxiously, with muscle spasms as he slowly enunciates his thoughts, he may mix up the *dichos*, at other times he’s almost as lucid and witty as his former self. Through it all his immense heart and wisdom will always be a part of him. And through his stories, he’ll always be a part of me.

My life experiences were wrought with many difficulties, but they also fueled and inspired me. I am no longer that little girl with the boyish haircut growing up in Modesto...but I’ll always be a daughter of Mexican immigrants who settled in the Central Valley, whose parents worked in the fields and fruit canning industry, whose dad’s hands created masterful brickwork, who experienced the pain of poverty and racism, whose mother’s education nurtured a love of learning, whose dad’s family stories permanently etched his wisdom and strength in her heart, who was nourished by her mother’s love and perseverance, who crossed (and crosses) multiple sociocultural borders everyday, and who weaves together the *educación* her family gave her, her experiential knowledge and her formal schooling for transformative power with Latina/o communities. I am a daughter of West Modesto, a daughter of the Central Valley, and a daughter of Mexican immigrants turned professor in the academy. My journey may or may not lead me to the Central Valley, but Modesto will remain and forever be *home*.

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