



Las hijas de Juan: Daughters Betrayed (Latin America Otherwise)

Josie Méndez-Negrete

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Las hijas de Juan shatters the silence surrounding experiences of incest within a working-class Mexican American family. Both a feminist memoir and a hopeful meditation on healing, it is Josie Méndez-Negrete's story of how she and her siblings and mother survived years of violence and sexual abuse at the hands of her father.

Méndez-Negrete was born in Mexico, in the state of Zacatecas. She recalls a joyous childhood growing up in the midst of Tabasco, a vibrant town filled with extended family. Her father, though, had dreams of acquiring wealth in *el norte*. He worked sun-up to sun-down in the fields of south Texas. Returning home to Mexico, his pockets full of dollars, he spent evenings drinking and womanizing.

When Méndez-Negrete was eleven, her father moved the family to the United States, where they eventually settled in California's Santa Clara Valley. There her father began molesting his daughters, viciously beating them and their mother. Within the impoverished immigrant family, the abuse continued for years, until a family friend brought it to the attention of child welfare authorities. Méndez-Negrete's father was tried, convicted, and imprisoned.

Las hijas de Juan is told chronologically, from the time Méndez-Negrete was a child until she was a young adult trying, along with the rest of her family, to come to terms with her father's brutal legacy. It is a harrowing story of abuse and shame compounded by cultural and linguistic isolation and a system of patriarchy that devalues the experiences of women and girls. At the same time, *Las hijas de Juan* is an inspiring tale, filled with strong women and hard-won solace found in traditional Mexican cooking, songs, and storytelling.

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