



The Maid's Daughter: Living Inside and Outside the American Dream

By Mary Romero

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The Maid's Daughter: Living Inside and Outside the American Dream By Mary Romero

2012 Americo Paredes Book Award Winner for Non-Fiction presented by the Center for Mexican American Studies at South Texas College

Selected as a 2012 Outstanding Title by AAUP University Press Books for Public and Secondary School Libraries

This is Olivia's story. Born in Los Angeles, she is taken to Mexico to live with her extended family until the age of three. Olivia then returns to L.A. to live with her mother, Carmen, the live-in maid to a wealthy family. Mother and daughter sleep in the maid's room, just off the kitchen. Olivia is raised alongside the other children of the family. She goes to school with them, eats meals with them, and is taken shopping for clothes with them. She is like a member of the family. Except she is not. Based on over twenty years of research, noted scholar Mary Romero brings Olivia's remarkable story to life. We watch as she grows up among the children of privilege, struggles through adolescence, declares her independence and eventually goes off to college and becomes a successful professional. Much of this extraordinary story is told in Olivia's voice and we hear of both her triumphs and setbacks. We come to understand the painful realization of wanting to claim a Mexican heritage that is in many ways not her own and of her constant struggle to come to terms with the great contradictions in her life.

In *The Maid's Daughter*, Mary Romero explores this complex story about belonging, identity, and resistance, illustrating Olivia's challenge to establish her sense of identity, and the patterns of inclusion and exclusion in her life. Romero points to the hidden costs of paid domestic labor that are transferred to the families of private household workers and nannies, and shows how everyday routines are important in maintaining and assuring that various forms of privilege are passed on from one generation to another. Through Olivia's story, Romero shows how mythologies of meritocracy, the land of opportunity, and the American dream remain firmly in place while simultaneously erasing injustices and the struggles of the working poor.

A happy ending for the maid's daughter: Hector Tobar's profile of Olivia for

the *LA Times*

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Download and Read Free Online *The Maid's Daughter: Living Inside and Outside the American Dream* By Mary Romero

Editorial Review

Review

"For this sequel to her groundbreaking study on the social inequity of domestic work, *Maid in the U.S.A.*, Romero spent two decades following Olivia, who was raised in between two worlds, living in an upscale Los Angeles house where her mother worked as a maid."-*Ms. Magazine*

"Why read it: This isn't *The Help*. Romero's nonfiction book relies on 20 years of research and is an anthropological study into identity politics and the myth of meritocracy."

-*Diverse Magazine*

"A moving work that deconstructs the American Dream at the fraught intersection of race, class and gender."-*Kirkus*

"While there are numerous books examining the lives of domestic workers, in *The Maid's Daughter* has delved into less-studied questions...while it is often argued...that microsociological research can yield results with macrosociological implications, Romero shows this more convincingly than many."-Elizabeth J. Clifford,*Ethnic and Racial Studies*

"While *The Maid's Daughter: Living Inside and Outside the American Dream* is an emotionally draining book at times - the reader is witness to the abusive treatment of others - it is well worth the depth of experience and knowledge one gains by reading it...Author Romero has successfully encapsulated the plight and struggles of domestic workers and given the reader a great deal to contemplate."-*New York Journal of Books*

"Readers who found the popular novel *The Help* annoyingly glib and superficial may find *The Maid's Daughter*, an oral history and sociological study, astonishingly complex and often raw with emotion."-*Washington Independent*

"A compelling story of how a maid's daughter moves from a girlhood of rage and resentment to a level of empowerment, as a grown woman, that will make readers want to stand up and cheer. Blending life history and cultural analysis, Mary Romero shows that it is possible to do creative ethnographic work that is of service to both the academy and society. Although the identity of Romero's protagonist must remain anonymous, her struggle will live on in this memorable book."-Ruth Behar, author of *Translated Woman*

"Mary Romero's book *The Maid's Daughter* is a rich and detailed sociological account of the lives of a live-in maid and her daughter."-Jessica M. Vasquez,*National Catholic Reporter*

"[Romero] transforms twenty years of recorded interviews with a woman referred to as 'Olivia Sanchez' into a highly readable book which juxtaposes Olivia's story, as told to Romero, with sociological commentary, research and selected interviews with other children of domestic workers. This thought provoking study raises many questions to wrestle with on both individual and societal levels... Open-minded readers may find their views transformed after reading this engaging narrative."-*Englewood Review of Books*

"This detailed, intimate investigation of domestic work from the perspective of a domestic worker's child is a

significant achievement that reads like a more academic *Random Family*."

-*Publishers Weekly*

"Two decades of research culminate in the real-life story of a Mexican-American girl navigating issues of class, race, and identity in contemporary Los Angeles."

-*Los Angeles Magazine*

"There are no inherently good and evil characters in this story--just people trying to deal with the problems that come with having too much money, or not enough."

-*Los Angeles Times*

"In her new book, *The Maid's Daughter*, Romero is again the perfect scholar — respectful, curious, honest about her own orientation. She's a listener, allowing the women she talks with to guide the way in which their stories are revealed... It's very moving work; thoughtful, sensitive, the best possible use of scholarship to open our eyes."-*Los Angeles Review of Books*

"The circumstances of 'Olivia's' true story—growing up in the servants quarters of a gated luxury suburb—may evoke *Upstairs, Downstairs* meets Beverly Hills 90210, but the narrative is infinitely more profound and subversive. A unique, autobiographical collaboration between two brilliant women, *The Maid's Daughter* relentlessly interrogates every facet of privilege and subalternity to achieve a psychological complexity and irony worthy of a great novel."-Mike Davis, author of *Planet of Slums*

"A valuable case study and a dramatic life story, this oral history explores identity and illuminates race, class, and gender in America at a peculiarly intimate intersection between upper-middle-class white families and the women of color who provide domestic labor for them." -*Library Journal*

"A page-turner. The book's remarkable protagonist tells a compelling story...with each episode, the reader cannot wait for the next. How will she negotiate high school, dating, college campus politics? Mary Romero's more than two decades of research have produced a book worth waiting for."-Renato Rosaldo, co-editor of *The Anthropology of Globalization: Cultural Anthropology Enters the 21st Century*

About the Author

Mary Romero is Professor of Justice Studies at Arizona University. She is the author or editor of many books, including *Maid in the U.S.A.* In 2012, she was awarded the Julian Samora Distinguished Career Award by the Latino/Latina Sociology Section of the American Sociological Association.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Anthony McDonell:

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Chuck Bryson:

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