

SOLITO: MICROREVIEW

BY LIZ LUMBRANO

S*SOLITO: A Memoir* by Javier Zamora, a book that was published in 2022, is based on Zamora's life specifically pertaining to his journey to cross the border at the young age of nine. His parents had already crossed safely, and after some time apart they finally decided to set up Zamora to cross as well. However, Zamora would be grouped with people he didn't know, following the directions of multiple coyotes, little money and stretching his food for days. After the first chapter, as a reader, we are hopeful young Zamora is able to see his parents safely as he expressed how excited he was to finally leave his hometown of El Salvador and be together again in the USA. Heartstrings are tugged after each chapter, and after finishing the book my heartstrings were completely pulled. Zamora writes about the trauma of being trained to say he was from another country, memorizing a new identity, being questioned by border patrol, being stripped of their money by officers, hiding his native accent from locals, the hot

scorching heat of the desert, the safe houses, walking for what seemed like endless miles, and so much more. Reading through Zamora's trauma and experiences, my heart sank each time as I remembered this was a nine-year old boy. Alone. Placed in a situation where thousands of people die each year. The fear he experienced is written underneath the words on the page and I could picture myself holding this little boy's hand through it all. While he was without family, Zamora linked himself with a mother and her daughter, and eventually a young man joined them to play the role of a family. As days passed, young Zamora really began to believe this was his family— a feeling he couldn't wait to experience with his own parents but also accepted the reality that he might not be able to as well. This left me completely heartbroken. As much as he tried not to cry throughout this grueling journey, my tears flooded for him. This was a very emotional read for me, but definitely a must read to better understand the complexities and dangers of crossing the border and the trauma that comes after.

BADASS BONITA: MICROREVIEW

BY LIZ LUMBRANO

BADASS *Bonita: Break the Silence, Become a Revolution, Unearth Your Inner Guerrera*, a book written by Kim Guerra and published in 2024, serves as a self-reflective guide on how to heal your inner niña and the critical steps needed to advance oneself from generational trauma and expectations. This book gives you the tools to begin discovering your individuality and being unapologetic about it. Guerra focuses on Mexican culture and the traditional roles and expectations of a young girl/woman. For generations, many of these expectations include cleaning up after everyone before you clean up after yourself or making sure your partner's lunch is ready for them in the dark hours of the morning. Basically as a young girl/woman in the Mexican culture, our future is decided for us- a caretaker, housekeeper, mother, and wife. We are taught to never express our true emotions about how we feel about something, and if we do, the answer is typically somewhere along the lines of "that's just the way things have

been" instead of offering new, different approaches to conflict. Guerra gives the extra push needed to find our voice and reminds us of how it's always been there, however we were never taught on how to use it. Through every chapter, I felt seen and heard, a feeling I had been longing for for most of my adult life. This book really gives Mexican-American young girls/women the validation we've been seeking for. We are taught to brush off our emotions, thoughts and feelings but Guerra validates all of our insecurities and teaches us how to rise above the culture and create a new perspective of our experiences. Regardless of what the culture may believe in what is right, we are capable and most importantly, allowed to say "no" to what they think is best for us. One of my favorite chapters titled, "The Niña Before She Needed Healing" was an emotional one for me to read and the most impactful. I was completely floored by the connection Guerra guided me to create with my inner niña and simply tell her that none of her trauma was her fault and she is safe now. This book is a refreshing perspective, as it certainly gave me the validation I had been looking for. The beauty behind the validation? I had the power all along.