

Dear Readers,

My novel ESPERANZA RISING first published in 2000. I write this as we celebrate twenty-five years in print. It is hard to grasp how much time has passed, but I'm so very grateful for the ongoing support of educators, librarians, and booksellers who continue to introduce the book to children.

It might surprise you to learn that the story began as a picture book about a young girl asking her grandmother what her life was like growing up in Mexico. My editor, Tracy Mack, thought I had much more to tell than what I wrote in that initial brief manuscript. She was right. It deserved more thought, more anecdotes, and much more story. With her encouragement, I leaped into the beginnings of the novel readers know today.

The story parallels my grandmother's immigration journey. It is a riches-to-rags story. A reverse Cinderella story. A story far more common than I suspected. Some of my favorite fan mail has come from adults from countries other than Mexico—India, China, South America—who wrote to tell me that this is *their* story! That they came to the United States because of repressive circumstances, holding fast to the vision and promise of a better life. They struggled, persevered, and overcame. What these letters have shown me over and over again is that our common humanity lies within the immigrant experience. It's how we are inextricably woven together. Maybe that is why ESPERANZA RISING feels as

relevant today as it did twenty-five years ago. Starting over with hope in our hearts is a universal dream.

I have also received thousands of letters from Latinx students who loved and identified with the story, made lasting connections to the characters, and shared that this was the first time they'd seen themselves in literature. Equally meaningful are the letters I've received from non-Latinx students. One adolescent boy wrote, "I never knew about those people or that time, until you told it to my eyes."

I am delighted to share the graphic novel edition with you, magnificently evoked by award-winning artist Andrés Vera Martínez. For some readers, it will bring the story they know and love vividly to life in an exciting new format. For others, it will introduce Esperanza and her family for the first time. Most importantly, I hope it will make the story even more accessible to a wide range of readers and speak directly to a new generation.

With respect and gratitude,

Pam Muñoz Ryan