

An Angle of Vision: Women Writers on Their Poor and Working-Class Roots

Edited by Lorraine M. López

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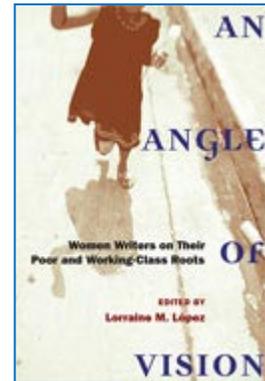
The University of Michigan Press, 2009

Q&A with Lorraine Lopéz, editor of *An Angle of Vision: Women Writers on Their Poor and Working-Class Roots*

An Angle of Vision is a compelling anthology that collects personal essays and memoir by a diverse group of gifted authors united by their poor or working-class roots in America.

Throughout this collection, the authors describe delicate balances of work and family, men and money, motherhood and sexuality.

Editor Lorraine M. Lopéz is the prize-winning author of two novels, *The Gifted Galabon Sisters* and *Call Me Henri*, and a short-story collection, *Soy la Avon Lady and Other Stories*. She is Associate Professor of English at Vanderbilt University and Associate Editor of the *Afro-Hispanic Review*.



The University of Michigan Press: How did the idea for a collection come about?

Lorraine Lopéz: The idea for the collection sprang from an Associated Writing Programs (AWP) panel that I organized in 2006. The panel was titled “Trashy Women” and it featured women writers from lower and working-class backgrounds who now navigate the professional realm with some uneasiness due to social class diversity. LeAnn Fields from the Press attended that panel and encouraged me to consider developing the idea for a collection. She had the idea that collecting a variety of voices on this complex topic would prove powerful and compelling, and she was absolutely right.

UMP: Is there anything that the authors collected in your book have in common?

LL: Apart from being raised in lower or working-class homes, the writers in this collection connect on a range of topics. Many articulate the outsider or in-between status experienced after crossing the class divide, feelings of not belonging in either camp. Others discuss betrayal of home and family inherent in discussing past deprivation. Still more intersect on the topic of work--jobs, careers, and professional choices. In collecting these personal essays, I found significant connections between the pieces, and the result is that these amplify and augment one another, accruing thematic resonance throughout the book.

UMP: Describe some of the situations these authors started out in.

LL: Many started out in single-family homes, women borne to women who were poor and struggling to raise children on their own. Some were raised in rural environments, where diminished resources sharpen effects of poverty, and others came from big cities, where want often renders young women vulnerable to invisibility or early sexualization. Some coped with families wherein the adults were

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compromised due to mental health problems and a few experienced diminished circumstances prior or due to immigration to this country.

UMP: What role did writing and education play in their changes of circumstances?

LL: Education and writing played a key role in changing circumstances for these women by providing options, opportunities, and examples outside of growing-up experiences to trigger the self-defining choices that enabled these women to change the course of their lives.

UMP: What are they finding to be the most challenging aspects of their lives now?

LL: Most of the authors report continuing to deal with feelings of not belonging on either side of the class divide. They experience guilt and the sense of having betrayed loved ones by leaving the past behind and feeling of unworthiness in the face of the privilege their lives now proffer. As evinced by contributing work to this collection, all exhibit responsibility in the face of the challenge to offer up their experiences to inspire and encourage other women from similar backgrounds. They all share, as Joy Castro writes, "An angle of vision and the will to change."

To read more about *An Angle of Vision: Women Writers on Their Poor and Working-Class Roots*, visit the University of Michigan Press website at: <http://www.press.umich.edu/titleDetailDesc.do?id=329628>
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