



The Odyssey of Woolly Mammoth Boy: One Man's Journey through Autism, Racism, Grief, and Surviving the American Dream

R. Vicente Rubio

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The Odyssey of Woolly Mammoth Boy is a survivor's tale—my tale. This is a story about how I filled a void in my life with creative and awkward perseverance. It is a tale of my dedication to living life with meaning and integrity, to flourishing through times of chaos wrapped in the bewilderment of self-doubt, and a tale of moving on when all around me did not make any sense.

This is also a story of magic and the darkness of the soul exposed in the glare of the Sun's revealing brightness—the tale of a person transitioning between centuries of time, between the places I was supposed to be in, the places I chose to be in, and the places I was forced to fit in. This mystical approach captures some of the profound differences in my experiences of life as a person with Asperger syndrome.

Woolly Mammoth Boy is a book for neuro-typicals, for people on the autism spectrum, and for those who have experienced trauma. As a person recently diagnosed on the autism spectrum, and having experienced severe physical abuse as a child, I have written about my own grappling with the symptoms present in my life: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), sleep deprivation, eating disorders, memory loss, dark depressions, uncontrollable rages, low tolerance for social and sensory stimulation, lack of physical coordination and efficiency (when I was younger), a hyperactive startle response, addiction, and rigid, on-edge thinking.

I also wrote this story for my daughters, nephews, and nieces, so they could know of a time and place they did not have to experience. Growing up in a tumultuous America during the '60s and '70s, I was exposed to—and a recipient of—the blatant and degrading racism that flowed so easily in the society in which I was born a first-generation Filipino-American. My experiences of being bullied and beaten, laughed at, passed over, segregated, ignored, and ridiculed because of the color of my skin, shape of my eyes, color of my hair, skinny, short stature, and the way I spoke led me to developing a “Social PTSD.” Overcoming this background and moving past it has been a lifelong cycle of growth, failure, learning, and reflection.

This book is for my clients, my students, and their parents and caregivers—all those I have had the privilege to teach and befriend in the last thirty years of my professional career as a dance teacher, martial arts instructor, and mentor. This story is also for all the young people who are at risk and dealing with life transitions, divorce, family violence, or single parenting, and are challenged by drug addictions, running away, or suicidal mentalities.

When I was growing up, I struggled with my difference in a vacuum—no one understood my brain, least of all me. I hope this story will inspire young people to believe in their own potential, and to tolerate their difficulties secure in the knowledge that it does get better—they will learn, grow, and come to understand themselves and the world.

Here, then, are tales of great questing for valor and good deeds, of glorious fallings into dark crevices in the deep Earth, and of surviving. This is a survivor's tale. Peace now, my friends, and be comforted—for these

tales are true.

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