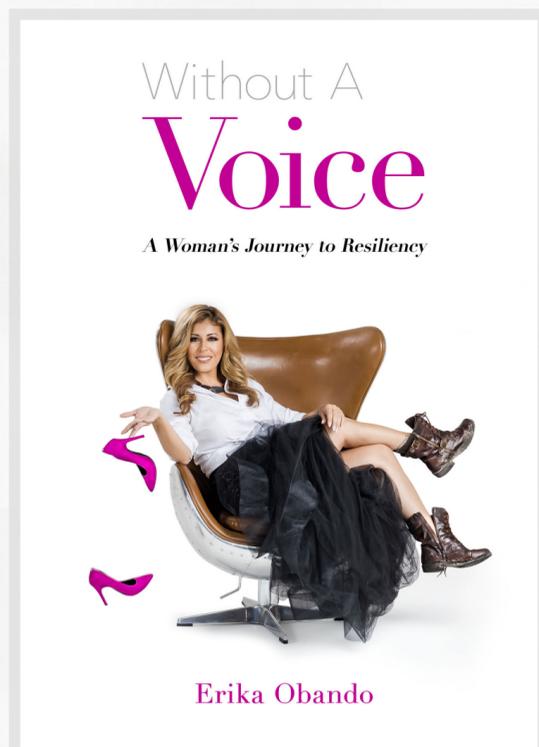


BOOK EXCERPT

Without A Voice - A Woman's Journey to Resiliency
by: Erika Obando



CHAPTER 6 - MY PURPLE SHOES

...All hell broke loose as everyone scrambled to get out of the car. My mother quickly pushed me from her lap and slid across the seat towards the other door. I scooted towards her on my right and was almost out of the vehicle when I realized I had lost a shoe. This was not just any shoe. This was one of my favorite purple shoes that had been given to me as a birthday gift from a dear uncle. Those shoes were one of very few gifts I had received in my life and I cherished them dearly. I loved everything about those shimmery shoes. They made me feel like a princess despite living a pauper's life. In my young mind, it was worth saving. It only took a few seconds to find my shoe on the floor and slip it back on but by the time I turned around to continue getting out the car, I had a rifle in my face with a screaming officer on the other end of it. The others had scattered and were hiding in nearby bushes except my mother and two of the other children from the group. My mother was face-down on the ground just feet away from the car. An officer stood over her screaming at her in English. I yelled to him in perfect English that she only spoke Spanish and I offered to translate. The officers were stunned. They asked why I spoke such fluent English, "I don't belong here. We are just trying to get back home," I told them. With my mother, my sister and me in the hands of the authorities, my dad had no choice but to come out of hiding. He raised his hands above his head to indicate his surrender. The others made a run for it. My family and I were arrested along with the young boy that had been traveling with his dad and little sister. In the moments before my dad was to surrender, the boy's dad had given him the address and phone number where he could be reached in the U.S. The man had made an agonizing decision. He felt he could be more helpful to his son by continuing to his destination rather than risk being arrested and sent back. My dad promised to care for his boy until they could be reunited.

Let's Work Together



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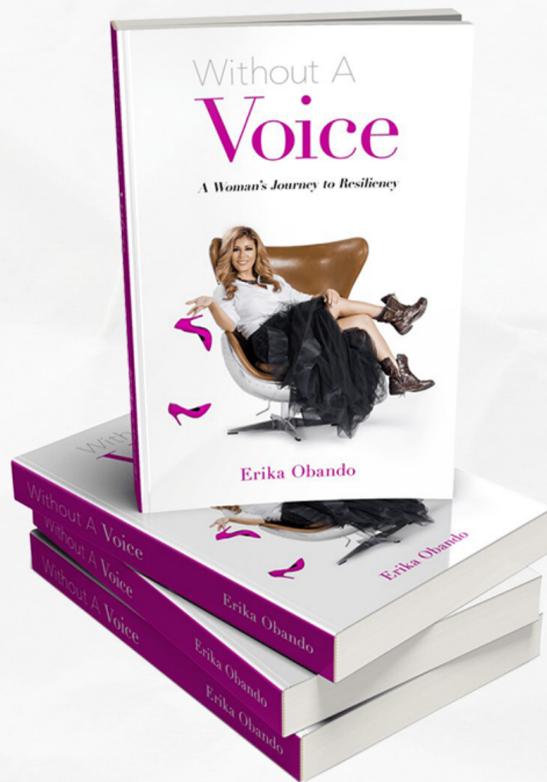
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CHAPTER 15 - THE POWER OF FORGIVENESS

... Lastly, forgiveness of others is worthless if you can't forgive the most important person in your life which is You. For years, I felt I deserved the situations in my life for making bad decisions. The guilt of having failed consumed me. I failed at being a child worthy of love. I failed for bringing pain into my son's life. And I failed for not being the person everyone else needed me to be. But so often we give vindication to others easier than how we redeem ourselves. We are so critical of our imperfections and then wonder why others see us that way as well. Forgiving yourself starts with self-compassion. With a sense of inherent worth despite your actions or circumstances. It's allowing the discovery of self with patience and love and giving yourself permission to be imperfect and make mistakes along the way. That no one was born with all the answers and figuring them out in failures was part of succeeding. In honoring yourself, you find that you will begin to attract those who love you exactly as you are. And nothing you ever do ever merits self-deprecation.

When I began the exercise of forgiving myself, I had to start deep within. I realized that there was still a little girl inside of me in dire need of so much healing and loving and I was the only one who could provide that. I closed my eyes and looked for the forgotten little girl sitting in the corner of my memory that always yearned for a simple hug, to be noticed, to be appreciated and who had the audacity to want to be loved. For someone to look at her and know she had always been more than enough, and her value was priceless. That she was perfect with all her imperfections and her innocence was still intact. That all the chaos she lived through; was not a punishment, but a formative base of the amazing woman she would become. When I forgave myself, I forgave the lost little girl inside and now I had a chance to give her all she ever wanted: to be loved. In her, I found the love of my life... I finally fell in love with me.

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