

# A Cry of HOPE

Santiago Carreno Estrada, Ph.D.

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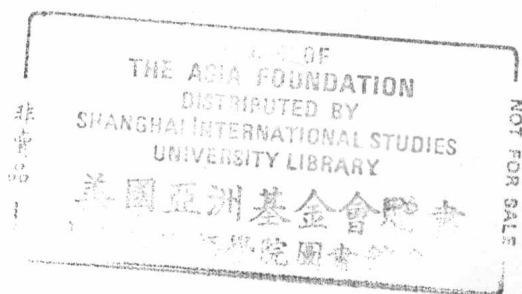
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# A Cry of HOPE

Spiritual Reality Therapy

Santiago C. Estrada, Ph.D. Psychology



Published by:

Salsa Books

247 Forest Avenue

Laguna Beach, CA 92651



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# Foreword

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The story of the spiritual quest is as old as mankind. It exists in all cultures of all nations of the world. "A Cry of Hope" is as moving, revealing, and beautiful as the best of these stories.

I have known Dr. Estrada since he has been sober. He has overcome poverty, prejudice, and tremendous odds. He is a sincere, compassionate, wise, enthusiastic man, who truly cares about his fellows. In finding himself and fulfilling his purpose in life, the writer shares the formula of his success in the struggle of continuous spiritual comprehension. The wise reader will use this formula in the pursuit of his own personal enlightenment.

*"To know others is wisdom.  
To know yourself is enlightenment."*

*Zen Saying*

John A. Newsome, M.D.  
Medical Director  
GENESIS, Chemical Dependency Program  
South Coast Medical Center  
South Laguna, California



# Dedication

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To my family, for their love and honesty,  
Kim, Michelle and Gabriel;  
and to my parents, for trying their best,  
the late Santiago Rodriquez Estrada  
and Guadalupe Carreno Estrada.

# Acknowledgements

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I would like to thank all those persons who have made this book a reality. In particular, Jim Messelbeck of

Allergan, Inc.; Joseph Wolpe, Ph.D.;

Douglass Chalmer, Ph.D.; and Eric Speare, M.D.

For their prayers and spiritual guidance,

Fr. Charles, Fr. Shepperd, Fr. Robert,  
and William L.

For her encouragement and lasting friendship, Sibbers,

For his laughter and acceptance

the late Fr. Dave O. Duran.

For their immeasurable love and reality checks,

Lynn W. and my brother, Victor.

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# Introduction

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This book is a personal testimony and case study of how hope can be a living catalyst for the chemically and emotionally addicted. Foremost, it is an effort to reach out to the lonely and suffering and to their families or loved ones who also may be suffering. In June of 1976, I began to write my feelings and thoughts concerning my fellow men and women. One introduction stated, "My story is your story. It is complex yet simple, because reality is simply complex." This book has had many titles that have ranged from Contemporary Curanderism (folk psychiatry), Jimmy, Jim, Santiago what next?, to Being Human. That introduction went on to express, "If you are a person who is being or trying to be more human, that is, if you are in the process of life and living life in such a manner that people matter, then I speak to you. Whether you are poor, rich, average, this story is about you because you bleed, cry, scream, struggle, laugh, desire, drink, talk to yourself, want and need others, care for others, and want to be loved. This story is for all "*ser humanos*" - human beings - and those who have a desire to be more human." That was June 1976 and that is how far the book got.

Today is June 27, 1985, and I am writing the last draft of this introduction from Prince of Peace Abbey, A Benedictine monastery, Benet Hill, Oceanside, California. As I compare the draft of 1976 to this draft, my heart is warmed because the intent has not changed in eleven years; the difference is - now there is a manuscript to accompany the introduction. That is a significant difference!

The intent is to reach out to you and to share with you my experience, strength, weakness, and most of all my CRY OF HOPE. This book is the growth from a seed within me that has been encouraged to bloom by the lives of literally thousands of young people, adult men and women, corporate executives, prisoners, and alcoholics and addicts who have touched my professional and personal life by their willingness to allow me to join them in their painful and sometimes joyful search for hope. In 1976, I met Leo Buscaglia, the love teacher, and I was near the end of my journey here on this earth, so I thought. It was our first and last meeting. We were discussing my career choices and completing my dissertation before I left the northwest. Near the end of our conversation, he said something like,

"The only real answer is to immerse yourself in love." As I walked out of his office I thought, "That's impossible for me." So, I introduce you to a personal effort, to add to your life, by writing in the spirit of the greatest dimension of all, love, which is to consider, respect and strive to see the needs of the beloved - which in this case, is you, my human family.

This path of love has become more real to me as hope has become a conscious part of my life. Learning to be still and quiet has increased my belief that I have much more in common with you than I have differences. I believe this sense of "we" rather than "I" has grown because of a miracle or set of miracles that have and continue to impact my life. Although I acknowledge the uniqueness of each person and consider cultural awareness to be essential in human understanding, the major needs of human beings are universal. I believe that we prefer that which enhances life, i.e., peace, honesty, respect, mutual recognition, cooperation, but the reality is that many times we choose the opposite of that which enhances our personal life and lives of others.

I know that there have been many times when I chose to nurture, feed, fan that spark of the less-preferred way until I was consumed in an inferno of feelings, thoughts and actions contrary to my basic preference and basic nature.

I also reach out to families, loved ones and friends who are close or emotionally involved with those persons, who like myself, seemed to be pulled in a powerful vacuum of self-centeredness, obsession, anxiety and hopelessness. I ask you to read and see how you are part of the disease which appears to be the inability to belong, to love and to receive love.

Now, I must tell you that in June of 1976 my life was in turmoil and there was no manuscript because I could not stay focused on anything. I cannot to my satisfaction describe the miracle that has launched my life's journey of devotion, dedication, openness, willingness and faith that there is a real and viable purpose to my presence on this planet Earth. Yet I must say that there are sill moments when fear, guilt, frustration, self-centeredness and alienation will spread like a dark gray cloud over my consciousness and color my behavior and flavor my life. However, these emotions have lost the power to rule an entire day.

It is this new freedom that this book is about, so please join me, by allowing yourself to read the story that is to follow. First, I would like you to use your visual and creative powers by placing yourself in a comfortable, pleasant and safe environment and imagine listening to this story. Secondly, as you read, check the feelings, thoughts or behaviors you identify with. (Please feel free to write me if you have any questions, comments or send your personal story if you wish to share it with me. I will do my best to answer you as soon as possible.) Thirdly, if certain sections are very

important, write down the reactions that these sections may elicit immediately. When you have finished reading my story, you may choose to go on and write your own story. Read and follow the suggested program that I call "Spiritual Reality Therapy" (SRT), an approach to counseling and holistic human growth that I have developed over the past sixteen years of being a family therapist, educator and organizational consultant. You will find an brief background to SRT; my definitions of self-esteem, self-worth, self-regard, and self-transformation. How it works, is to start and finish your story; writing your story is a major part of the approach. Coming to believe that there is real hope and living like there is, is the result.

Herman Hesse's words served as an inspiration to me. Perhaps they can help you. They are as follows: "Every man (and woman) is more than just himself; he also represents the unique, the very special and always significant and remarkable point at which the world phenomena intersect, only once in this way and never again. That is why every man's story is important, eternal, sacred; that is why every man, as long as he lives, fulfills the will of nature, is wondrous and worthy of every consideration. In each individual the spirit has become flesh, in each man the creation suffers, within each one a redeemer is nailed to the cross."

# CHAPTER 1

## Personal Historical Antecedents

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Both my father and mother were born in Mexico, a land that I do not know very well, but a culture that is a strong part of my identity. Juchipila is the town where my father was born. It was one of the first areas settled in New Spain. He told me that this land brought forth sugarcane, and it was the sugarcane that sustained his family. Supposedly, my grandfather was a full-blooded Indian and my grandmother was a Mestiza, which is a mixture of Indian and Spanish blood. My father said my grandfather began a small farm by breeding mules and growing a small acreage of sugarcane. My grandmother was very insistent that her children learn to read and write. She was able to persuade my grandfather that for the future of her children, this was absolutely necessary. My father told me it was because of my grandmother he learned to read and write.

My father told me a story that occurred one morning when he was about 19 years old. He and his brother Tomas were tending the mules. All of a sudden in the early dawn they heard the thunder of galloping horses. My father jumped to his feet, looked in the distance and saw the dust rising up in clouds as the horses galloped toward his father's house. His heart began to beat rapidly and his mind raced as he concluded that the horses were probably being ridden by revolutionaries. He mounted a mule and rode as fast as he could toward the house following the dust clouds. When he approached the house, he saw a body hanging between two trees. The body was his father. The revolutionaries had hung him by his wrists and had beaten him to death. My father ran to his father and untied his wrists. He looked at him in absolute helplessness. In his tremendous panic, he suddenly remembered that his mother might also have been hurt. In search of her, he ran into the house. He remembered then that his mother had gone to visit her sister.

I do not know much more about the story, except that since the entire

family had been threatened with death from the revolutionaries, the family scattered. My father came to the United States in 1925. I have read the letters that were written to my father from his mother. She begged him not to return to Mexico and assured him that she was safe. She felt that the threat was directed more toward her sons than anyone else. My grandmother died after my father had been in the United States a year. This is all I know of my father's side of the family, for I was never to meet any of them.

My father traveled throughout the United States. He spent a part of his life in Illinois and in Colorado. Finally, he came west to California and settled in a small town called Claremont, where he lived for a few years. He then moved to Fullerton to pick citrus fruit, oranges and lemons. Then, Fullerton had a population of about 7,000 people. It was there that he met my mother in a small restaurant. My father was forty-eight years old and my mother was thirty-four. She was a waitress at this restaurant where my father ate regularly.

My mother was also born in Mexico, in a small town called "*Valle de Topia*". My mom was not very sure where her dad came from, except that he was a Spaniard. My Aunt Luz relayed the following history. My grandfather was a small man, about five feet tall. He was extremely pale and had green eyes. He was also very business-wise. My grandfather worked until he had enough money to purchase a male and a female goat. With the two goats, he began to make cheese and to breed more goats. As a result of his business instinct, he was able to buy small bits of land which he amassed into a ranch. He married my grandmother, whom he adored. She was of Mexican and Spanish blood. My grandmother had twenty children, four of whom died at birth. My mother was the last of the children who lived. When my mother was eight years old, her mother died. She would cry when she would tell this part of her story. A few months after that, her father died. There were tremendous struggles between her brothers and sisters for the land and for power. As a result of this, my Aunt Luz married her fiance and they took my mother with them to the United States. My aunt and her new husband also brought along his brother. This man and my mother were wed on their way to the United States; my mother was twelve years old. This man was not my father, but was the father of my three sisters and three brothers. My aunt has told me that my mother and her new husband were often close to starvation. They finally made it across the border and lived in Yuma, Arizona for a short while before settling in Anaheim, California.

My mother told me that her life was very difficult during those years. Her young husband was not willing to work regularly. He was a singer and spent much of his time entertaining, but not getting paid. There were

arguments and periods of anguish. Six children and a number of years later, her husband committed a crime, which brought great shame to her and to the family. He was taken to jail and tried. The sentence was as follows: He could go to prison for a long period of time, or he could choose to go to Mexico and never return. He chose to go to Mexico and not return. When he left, his last born, my brother Victor, was less than a year old. Mexico and her culture was to impact our lives in varied ways.

The Mexican culture is very rich and diversified; it also is quite complex. I need to express my relationship to it by sharing a poem in the form of a dream. The dream unfolded like this: I was a young boy in the midst of many people who were dressed in bright feathers and they were a small, dark reddish-brown people full of energy and tremendous intensity that touched the depth of my soul. Suddenly I found myself being led by an old man through the mountains and this old man had a face with a thousand wrinkles in it, long white hair and the body of a young warrior. He took me to a stream where the water was clear and I could see his face and mine side by side. He then took some wet sand in his left hand and with his right hand he began to roll it into a small ball which he blew on three times. Then, three beautiful gems fell to the ground. He said, "Gem number one, my son - it has been 4,000 years since our seed was planted here, and now we are at the dawn of a new world. Our god *Quetzalcoatl*, the integration of man and animal, earth and sky, sailed off around the 12th Century on a raft made of serpents and promised to return in one reed (52 years). Gem number two - our cousins, the Aztecs, completed their city Tenochtelan in 1325 and when you awake from this dream, you will read that Cortes, the Spanish conquistador, was thought to be *Quetzalcoatl* because he was white and bearded, rode a horse which made him look like half man and half animal." He went on to say, "There will be many legends and myths about that time; the people and their ways will be divided and the division will be an illusion, just as time is an illusion. Gem number three - a country will grow to be known as Mexico and Mexicans will have Indian and Spanish blood. Part of Mexico will be taken by America; some Mexicans will return to Mexico, others will remain to become part of America. Throughout the years, more and more Mexicans will go north to America. You, my son, will be an American of Mexican descent, a Spanish and English-speaking Indian." Then the old man turned into a young man who said, "I am Huextozin, an Aztec prince of Texcoco and this is what I said to the Spanish at the sunset of our time:

You tell me that I must perish

like the flowers that I cherish.

Nothing remaining of my name,

nothing remembered of my fame?

But the gardens I planted still are young,  
the songs I sang will still be sung..."

Then I saw my father, the Indian, who took my mother, the Spaniard, by the hand and they began to dance. The old man calmly whispered in my ear, "Remember, my son, there is only one time - no time in the back - no time in the front - just this time - the time to be," and I awoke and I was born.

## CHAPTER 2

# Orange Nightmares and Midnight Bandits

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My story starts with a dream I had at the age of five. In my dream, I was a strong young man. For some odd reason I was dressed in very loud-colored clothes that fit tightly. A man was leading me into a large tent and as we got closer, I could hear the roar of a crowd gathered inside. Next, I was climbing up a long ladder that had many steps. Up to this point I was calm and enjoying the excitement. When I reached the top of the ladder, I noticed there was a fire raging in the center of a ring in which the ladder stood, and my mother was standing in the middle surrounded by flames. A man threw a swing and signaled for me to take it so I could save my mom. Nervous excitement rushed through my entire body. I wanted to save her and at the same time I wanted to run away. Fear permeated my mind; I couldn't run and I couldn't save my mom. I called out for it to be a dream; suddenly, I woke up to my mother's singing. It was a relief to see that I was home, and that both my mother and I were safe.

Our house was in Anaheim, a small town of less than 15,000 people. When I was a child, within the parameters of my world, there were no freeways, no Disneyland, and no large factories. There were orange groves that seemed to stretch for miles around my home. I can remember the smell of orange blossoms and the euphoric intoxication they induced. That fragrance was addicting and I could never get enough of it.

My father was a professional orange picker and he seemed to take pride in what he did. He went to great lengths to prepare his orange clippers, cantina, hat, shoes and his Levi jacket. I was captivated by curiosity about what happened where my father worked. Somehow, I imagined great things would happen for me when I had my opportunity to join in my father's profession. Finally my father gave in to my pleading and nagging, "Please, *por favorito*, Papacito, take me to work with you, Daddy."

The great day began at dawn. My mother was the first one up and she

made tortillas for breakfast and lunch. The sun began to show its face and I was on my way to become an orange picker. Before going to work, my older brother would get on his knees and pray. I asked my mom why he prayed and she said, "He prays to God that it rains so he won't have to go and pick oranges."

Looking back on those days, the most vivid memories I have are of the early morning rides in the back of a camper-like truck, listening to the chatter of the men who did this work day in and day out. I prayed for the orchards to be far away so that I might sleep a few more minutes.

In the winter, the trees were usually wet with the morning frost and the coldest of water would quickly seep into my gloves and shirt sleeves. Once the initial shock had been absorbed, I began picking. When I started working I was intent on picking as many boxes as I could. I was obsessed with the idea of being the fastest orange picker in my crew, particularly being faster than my father.

As noontime drew closer, the smut from the pots that burned coal to keep the fruit from freezing began to melt and cake my face black; sometimes it would find its way into my eyes. Other difficulties were cutting my finger with the clipper, stabbing my arm with a broken twig, having rotten oranges hit my face, and when climbing up the middle of a tree, broken branches scratching my face. All of this activity made the day uncomfortable and trying. It wasn't long before I too was praying for rain.

At the age of eight I began to pick regularly on weekends and during summers; this continued until I turned fifteen. I learned the art of being a coyote (that is, going ahead and scouting the trees that have the largest oranges). The larger the orange, the faster boxes were filled. The more boxes filled, the more money. There were times we picked orange groves that had trees over twenty feet tall and the oranges were as small as golfballs. I remember asking my father, "Why do we get paid such little money?" He answered, "Because we have no power, my son. Pickers have tried to organize but always the growers have broken up those efforts; perhaps someday it will come to pass, but I do not believe it will happen in my time." By the age of ten, I was consciously aware of the powerlessness orange pickers faced. There was no compensation for the disparity we faced at those groves, where the opportunity to earn a decent living was nonexistent. I did not analyze or even attempt to propose a solution to this dilemma, except to suggest walking off the job. People would then say, "And where do we go when we walk off?" I had no answer; consequently, I learned to live with hostility and helplessness. I vowed I would not pick oranges all my life. Some men would laugh and say, "You'll be picking the rest of your life, just like us." I would become very angry and repeat to myself, "I won't, I won't, I won't..."

Another facet of my childhood took place in Los Angeles, where my parents and I would go at least once a month. There we would see *variedades* and go to dinner. The entire show came from Mexico and brought great Mexican stars such as Pedro Enfante, Dolores del Rio, Pedro Vargas, Cantinflas and others. Celebrities with whom every young American identified. (I say this jokingly because most kids my age did not know who these actors were.) Romance, honor, courage and tequila became my world. Spanish was my first language and I had seen articulate and confident Mexican movie stars express their dreams, visions and beliefs. My little heart used to beat with excitement when, in battle, the *valiente* would stand up for the poor and win.

On one of these excursions, when I was about eight years old, my father said to me, "It is time you begin to learn how to find the bus station in case someday you have to get you and your mother back home." The bus was our only way to travel because my father didn't drive.

I loved being responsible for getting my mom back home and the opportunity to be in charge. Sometime after I had learned my way to the depot, we were at the show and we had seen both movies. My mother told me that my father had walked out during the last movie and he had not returned. We saw both movies one more time and when my father still did not return, my mother was very angry, "*awitada* to the max" (as we used to say in the streets). My father had told my mom that he was going out for a few moments, which turned into hours. Needless to say, the drills were over. I took a deep breath and then I took my mom by the hand and off we went. Once we began to walk I recognized the landmarks and then the depot was in sight. On the way home that evening, my mom explained to me that my father had gone out to have a beer or two and that he probably met some friends and that was the reason he had not returned. There were to be other times that my father was missing because of drinking.

I loved my father very much and I simply learned to bury my anger, rejection and disappointment when he did not show up, or when he broke his word. He was such a generous, kind, humble and wise man when he was not drinking. Early in my childhood I noticed he drank a fifth of wine or two quarts of beer every day. He called his booze "*medecina*." During the week, he never got violent; however, there were a few times he would drink on the weekends and he would try to hit my mom. She would run out to a neighbor's house and call the police. This was not a daily occurrence, but it happened enough to cause pain and hurt that I swiftly buried. At other times, my father would come home drunk from a weekend excursion and he would be disoriented, tired, smelly and injured. One time he came home beaten up; there was dried blood on his face and he smelled like vomit. It brought sickness up to my throat and then it dropped to the pit of my