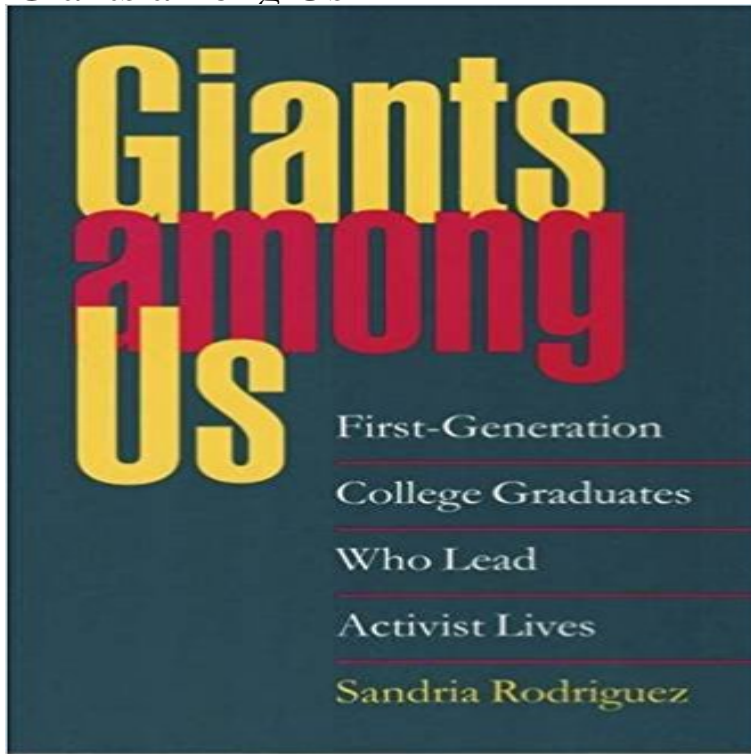


Giants among Us



How do children from undereducated and impoverished backgrounds get to college? What are the influences that lead them to overcome their socioeconomic disadvantages and sometimes the disapproval of families and friends to succeed in college? These are the basic questions Sandria Rodriguez posed to seventeen first-generation college graduates, and their compelling life stories make important contributions to what little is known about this phenomenon. The daughter of parents who didn't finish elementary school, Rodriguez uses many examples from her own life in the course of examining the participants' experiences before, during, and after college that directed them toward social or educational activism. Together, the seventeen represent a wide range of diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, age, geographical area of childhood, and profession. Twelve of the seventeen hold advanced degrees, all are working professionals, and all come from families who were poor. Jerry, the son of German immigrants, owns an engineering company in Chicago; Chang, a native of China, is the first from his village to go to college; Grant, a sharecropper's son, is a lawyer with a nationally prominent law firm in Washington, D.C., and patron of fine arts; Arlene, a Mohawk Indian, is a storyteller and social activist; Alex, from Spanish Harlem, is an elementary school principal. The book is divided into four parts. In the first two chapters, we meet the participants. In the three chapters that follow, Rodriguez examines how the participants as children perceived themselves within their families, schools, and communities. Chapters four and five focus on the campus life and the participants' activist experiences. Finally, chapter six offers recommendations for mentoring disadvantaged children, so that they can successfully switch the track and aim for something better. *Giants Among Us*

is an essential resource for college administrators, faculty, counselors, and student support-services staff--as well as K-12 educators--concerned with preparing, retaining and mentoring first-generation students.

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