

## The Latin Deli: Telling the Lives of Barrio Women

Judith Ortiz Cofer



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# Through her beautifully lyrical writing, Judith Ortiz Cofer tells us of the women's lives that entangled with hers in El Building in Paterson, New Jersey.

A community transplanted from what they now view as an island paradise, these Puerto Rican families yearn for the colors and tastes of their former home. As they carve out lives as Americans, their days are filled with drama, success, and sometimes tragedy. A widow becomes crazy after her son is killed in Vietnam, her remaining word "nada." Another woman carries on after the death of her husband, keeping their store, filled with plantain, Bustello coffee, *jamon y queso*, open as a refuge for her neighbors. And there are Cofer's stories of growing up with a dictatorial and straying father, a caring mother, and a love for language that will lead to a career as a teacher and writer.

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