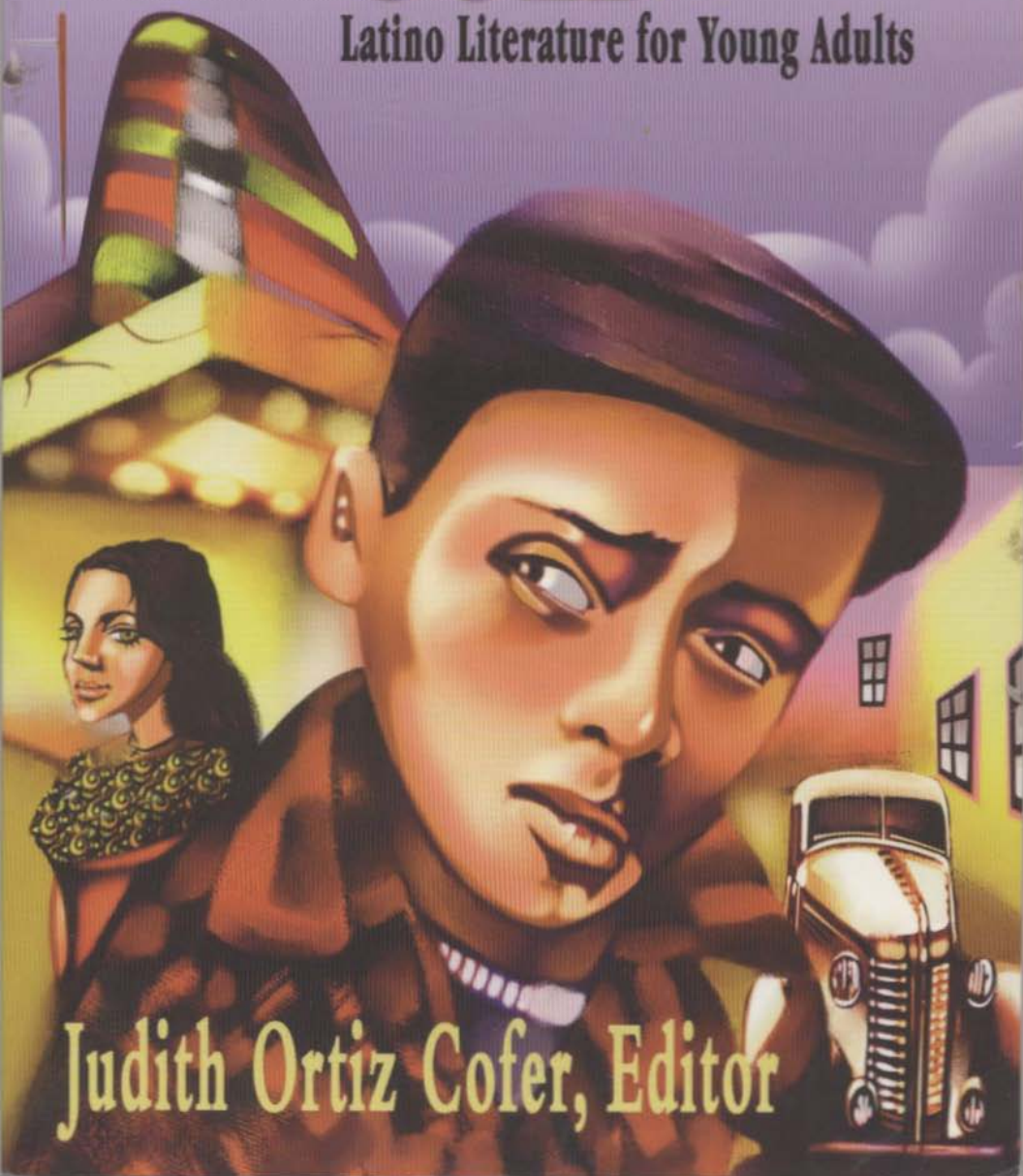
RIDING LOW on the STREETS of GOLD

Latino Literature for Young Adults



Judith Ortiz Cofer, Editor

RIDING LOW on the STREETS of GOLD

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Too White

I felt bad for the kid but wanted to laugh at the fat cop, who looked around the scene with his eyes squinted as if he were the greatest detective. His fat cheeks and the front teeth that touched his lower lip made him look like a little kid with a badge and a gun. That afternoon I was alone, having gone in the grocery store to walk the tall aisles of wine and liquor, hoping to have guts enough to stuff a bottle down my baggy pants to share later with my friends Johnny de la Rosa, David Romero, and Gilbert Sanchez, who were, like me, among the few Chicanos in our town. Usually we walked the Livermore streets together, feeling like giants, strutting past small homes that seemed barely to reach our waists, thinking we were bad. We weren't a gang, but we had thought about giving ourselves a name. Kids our age avoided us.

The crowd was pressed so close that our shoulders touched. Suddenly some kid on a ten-speed bike broke through to the front. His handlebars were raised up like ram's horns. He stopped and rested his elbows on the chrome bars, and his face in the palms of his hands.

"Damn," he said, blue eyes wide. "What happened here?" He looked at me, expecting me to answer.

"Some kid got hit," I said.

"Friend of yours?" he asked.