## LATINAS

## Empowering Latinas

## Yasmin Davidds' life story inspires others to succeed.

vercoming an addiction to drugs and surviving the trauma of physical abuse are enough to challenge even the strongest person. To use that experience to empower others adds a new dimension to this kind of success story.

But that is exactly what Yasmin Davidds, author of Empowering Latinas: Breaking Boundaries, Freeing Lives [Penmarin Books, 2001], has accomplished. By being up-front and willing to share her story, she has built a successful career helping Latinas overcome their own personal challenges.

Back in the early '90s, Davidds felt compelled to tell others about her recovery, even though she was afraid she would be ostracized. "Instead, I started building strength," says Davidds. "Rather than shame me, people embraced me."

The more she talked about her experiences, the more she inspired others to share their stories with her and motivated them to make positive changes in their lives. A role model, motivational speaker and author was in the making.

Already dedicated to working within the Hispanic community, Davidds quickly found a niche for herself.

"Empowering Latinas is

my life's mission, and helping them find love for themselves is what I most strive for," says Davidds. "It's imperative for the psychological and economic vitality of our nation that Latinas become aware of their intrinsic worth so that they may capitalize on it and improve the quality of life for themselves and those they love."

Now Davidds tours the country telling Latinas how they can overcome personal and cultural obstacles, especially the "¿qué dirán?" barrier. "The fear of what people will say is one barrier that has been lurking within our culture, generation after generation," explains Davidds. "It's so powerful that it prevents us from taking risks toward the betterment of ourselves."

Born in Southern California, Davidds, a single mother to Divina, is uniquely qualified to put all the disparate pieces of her life in order. Following her stay at a recovery center in 1993, she earned a business degree from the University of Southern California in 1995 and

a master's degree in women's studies from San Diego State University in 1999. In between, she studied at the University of Cambridge in England.

Raúl Vargas, director of USC Mexican American Programs, remembers Davidds as a college student and a scholarship recipient. He got to know her better through her work as a board member of the USC Mexican American Alumni Association and considers her a friend. "Yasmin has used her life's experiences to get where she's gotten to today," says Vargas. "Her

communication skills are exceptional, and she's a passionate advocate for Latinas."

Another colleague, Martha Díaz Aszkenazy, president of Pueblo Contracting Services, Inc., publisher of the San Fernando Sun, and board member of Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (H.O.P.E.), notes, "Yasmin is very visible, and her story is easy to relate to. Role models are the embodiment of dreams and possibilities, and they help young men and women to dream."

Recently, Davidds was appointed spokesperson for the Latino Scholastic Achievement Corporation's "Prove It" campaign, which urges Latino high

school students to stay in school. She has also launched the Latina Youth Leadership Institute for H.O.P.E., for which she is also a board member. Radio projects and speaking tours to Mexico and other Latin American countries are in the works.

She also is getting ready to launch an Anthony Robbins-styled workbook and audio program—The Latinas' Seven Principles to Self-Love and Personal Freedom. She is so confident of this program that she boasts, "If Latinas choose to embrace and incorporate these seven principles into their daily lives, I can guarantee they will forever be free."

Yasmin Davidds vows to continue building her own destiny and leading others on their own journeys to self-realization.

At the core of her message: "What happened to me is not who I am. It is only what was done to me, not what I have become." H

