Dedication

With love and gratitude

to my parents Blanquita and Manolo;

for their continued support and inspiration;

for teaching me that no goal is too lofty given perseverance and dedication;

for their example of courage, integrity, and strength of character;

for showing me by example the importance of

standing up for what you believe is right no matter the risk;

for being my best friends; and

for instilling in me the values that have made me the person I am today.