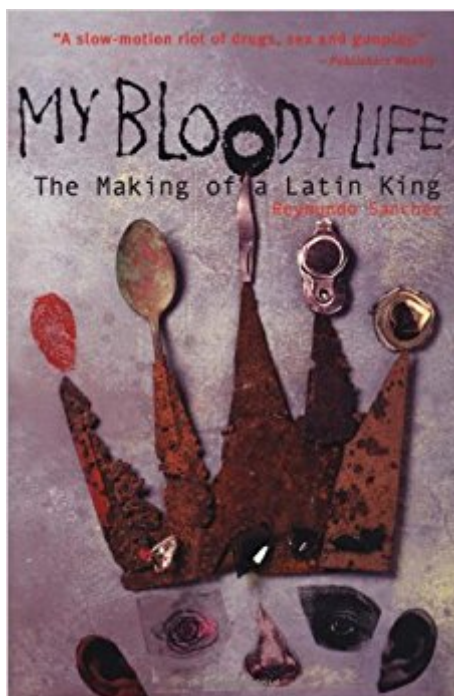


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My Bloody Life: The Making Of A Latin King



Synopsis

Looking for an escape from childhood abuse, Reymundo Sanchez turned away from school and baseball to drugs, alcohol, and then sex, and was left to fend for himself before age 14. The Latin Kings, one of the largest and most notorious street gangs in America, became his refuge and his world, but its violence cost him friends, freedom, self-respect, and nearly his life. This is a raw and powerful odyssey through the ranks of the new mafia, where the only people more dangerous than rival gangs are members of your own gang, who in one breath will say they'll die for you and in the next will order your assassination.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *My Bloody Life*, Reymundo Sanchez tells a chillingly sad tale, from his birth in the back of a pickup truck in Puerto Rico to the day he quit the Latin Kings gang, 21 years later. From the first page, his narrative is unpretentious, disarmingly honest, and horrifyingly riveting. His early years were so full of pain and abuse that by the time he opts, at age 11, to hang out with the local gang, the Latin Kings, it seems a perfectly logical choice. In his shoes, any one of us--smacked nightly by a mother and beaten ragged whenever the stepfather got the chance--would likely have chosen the same path. The gang was the family that accepted him as well as the peer group that offered girls who didn't say "no." Any violence that went with the territory couldn't match the atmosphere of brutality that permeated his own home. Sanchez was a Latin King for six years and participated in innumerable bloody gang battles--years rife with sex, drugs, booze, and acts of gang revenge. He finally got up his pluck to leave (and the only way was to be "violated" out through a gang beating),

but admits in his conclusion that life since then has, in some ways, been even harder. He's had to quit drugs, lose the only community he's known, support himself, and deal with the nightmares of all the horrors he's seen and done. Though Sanchez still hasn't accomplished his dream of completing college, he has managed to leave the Kings, leave Chicago, leave behind his mother's legacy of violence, and write an impressive first book. --Stephanie Gold --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Chicago in the 1980s provides the setting for this extremely disturbing and raw account of a Puerto Rican teenager who lost himself to violent gang activity. Now repentant, Sanchez (a pseudonym) writes in a voluble voice, replete with operatic asides declaiming the immorality of his actions. But he offers a forceful and unusual perspective on Chicago. In Sanchez's telling, it's a place of territorial graffiti and racist cops, in which a slow-motion riot of drugs, sex and gunplay constantly unfolds. Sanchez recounts his family's arrival in Chicago's Northwest Side in the late 1970s, when he was a small boy; he describes the beatings his grifter stepfather regularly doled out; and he portrays the allure of the mysterious and ritual-bound lives of tough, teenaged gangsters. When his family returned to Puerto Rico, he stayed behind. Soon, he joined the fearsome Latin Kings, and his given street name "Lil Loco" attested to his youth and ferocity. While graphically describing what he witnessed as a gang member—senseless killings, inter-ethnic hatreds and sexual abuse of gang-affiliated women—Sanchez also pursues harder truths, arguing that it is a minority of promiscuous drug-users accompanied by community-wide silence that keeps the gangs in business. In the end, he condemns his former gang for masquerading as a Latino "public service" organization while high-ranking members become rich from their youthful recruits' drug dealing. And he scoffs at their reliance on conformist rituals and violence (violations of the rituals were punished with full body beatings). Offering very little hope, this book captures the dark, self-destructive lot of countless urban teens. Like other gangland memoirs (such as *Monster* and *Always Running*), it is significant because it takes the reader deep inside a secretive and brutal ethnic gang subculture. (Aug.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I'm not giving this book 5 stars because of the writing, but because the events were so eye-opening. As a middle school teacher in the Chicago area, Sanchez's story reminded me of how much kids are affected by the neglect and abuse of their parents. Sanchez's absences from school made me sick with worry about some of my own students who miss a lot of school. I couldn't believe what a

terrible life Sanchez had before he even started going to school. It's unfortunate that his mother not only allowed abuse to happen to her child, but also participated in it. At the end, Sanchez says he blames his mother, and I completely agree with him. Throughout the retelling of the experiences Sanchez had as a gang member of the Latin Kings, I felt really conflicted. I rooted for him because I knew he has such a hard life and was doing what he needed to do to survive, but I was also sick to my stomach with how many people he killed and the way he disrespected and abused women. I kept checking myself by reminding myself that he was a teenager throughout the telling of this story and that he does reflect and say that drugs and alcohol made him "brave" and that he now understands his actions were wrong. I also think about how Sanchez CHOSE to get out, even if it took him six years. That's a really hard thing to do, and I think that takes courage. Throughout his whole retelling of his time as a Latin King, I was amazed at how long Sanchez survived and after finishing the book, I still don't completely understand gang life. While the content of his story is wildly inappropriate for Middle and high school students, unfortunately, those are the kids that need to read it to truly understand the lifestyle of a gang member, and I have nothing but respect for Sanchez for telling his story to help save someone else. Given Sanchez's background, I didn't expect great writing; however, I do think more sophisticated writing would enhance the emotional effects of his story. Of course I was sad about what happens, but despite all the tragedy in the story, I didn't cry at all or ever come close, and I feel like maybe I should have.

I found this book completely by accident. I was searching for "My Reviews" and this along with a thousand other books and gadgets popped up. I saw this (not sure why it came up on a search of "My Reviews"), and it sounded interesting so I ordered a sample. The sample is all it took - I didn't hesitate to order the book, and immediately ordered his next book (Once a King Always a King) when I finished this one. His third book will be next (Lady Q). Sanchez's story telling is brilliant - a clean, crisp, and remarkably detailed history of the events of a hardcore gang banger whose life revolved around alcohol, drugs, violence, and sex. Although there is plenty of abuse, it's not a "woe is me" tale of abuse or how the system beat him down. He doesn't glamorize the lifestyle. It's simply a tragic story of a kid who didn't know another life but somehow found a way out. It reminded me, "There but for the grace of God go I." I literally couldn't stop reading this book - I read it walking to work, eating lunch, and every spare second of the day.

Although Reyes presents a more violent and crude picture of gang life than Always Running and Down These Mean Streets, I appreciate his honesty. His story is sad and true for many young

Latino men and women growing up in these neighborhoods. It is a devastatingly accurate portrayal of how we as a society and "the system" continue to disproportionately fail our minority youth. Accounts like these are a must read for everyone regardless of race, socio economic status, gender, religion etc. we should all know what our role is in putting a stop to racism in our communities and fighting for equality for all. No child should ever be allowed to grow up in these conditions, much less to become killers and/or drug addicts. Also Highly recommend, 13th documentary on Netflix

As an abused young boy Lil Loco (which was his gang name) was just looking for love and support. He was looking for a place where he wouldn't be abused or mistreated. In return though he mistreated multiple women, became involved in crimes and swore his loyalty to the Latin Kings. Reymundo gives an open and honest look into life in a gang, the situations that he finds himself in are heartbreaking at times and make you angry at others. I have read this book several times and I am sure I will read it more.

Love the book. Its gonna be my 3rd time reading it. One time i borrowed it from a friend. Then from the library. And finally i got to own it! Definitely had to go in my book collection.

At the Chicago area community college where I teach writing, I like to ask my students what the books they read. Amazingly, two or three students in most every class of 25 say they have read My Bloody Life. This book has found its audience here. And nationwide as well, as its 85 five star reviews confirm. Why? Because Sanchez is a born writer. He has the narrative force of an Ernest Hemingway. (I prefer Sanchez.) This book is a hard, painful, gruesome read. Nonstop violence, sex, drugs. As a Latin King, Sanchez was as insanely homicidal as they come: "Lil' Loco" was his nickname. As a child in Puderto Rico, he'd been brutally sodomized by a cousin, then, in Chicago, he was beaten and abandoned by both parents. Sanchez wrote Bloody Life as an antidote to gangs. It's THE BOOK for anyone who's in a gang or thinking about joining one. Or, who wants to understand gang life in Chicago in (I'm guessing) the 1970's and 1980's. The sequel - Once a King, Always a King - is equally powerful. Very different, focused on relationships, but equally compelling. Raymundo Sanchez, I hope you never stop writing. Thanks for this one.

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