



Always Running: Gang Days in L.A.

By Luis J. Rodriguez

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By age twelve, Luis Rodriguez was a veteran of East L.A. gang warfare. Lured by a seemingly invincible gang culture, he witnessed countless shootings, beatings, and arrests, then watched with increasing fear as drugs, murder, suicide, and senseless acts of street crime claimed friends and family members.

Before long, Rodriguez saw a way out of the barrio through education and the power of words and successfully broke free from years of violence and desperation. Achieving success as an award-winning Chicano poet, he was sure the streets would haunt him no more -- until his son joined a gang. Rodriguez fought for his child by telling his own story in *Always Running*, a vivid memoir that explores the motivations of gang life and cautions against the death and destruction that inevitably claim its participants. At times heartbreakingly sad and brutal, *Always Running* is ultimately an uplifting true story, filled with hope, insight, and a hard-learned lesson for the next generation.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

As the preface of this admirable but ultimately disappointing memoir states, Rodriguez, an award-winning poet and publisher of the small press Tia Chucha, decided to document his youth as an East Los Angeles gang member in an effort to steer his teenaged son, Ramiro, away from the gang that he recently joined. A member of various Latino gangs based in and around the South San Gabriel Valley during the late 1960s, Rodriguez participated in random acts of violence, and was imprisoned on several occasions for the crimes he committed. Unfortunately, he offers frustratingly little detail behind the facts of his life and activity in the gangs. Rodriguez presents colorful characters and highly charged events, such as shootings, Mexican funerals, rapes and arrests, but his writing style renders much of that rich material forgettable.

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Review

"An absolutely unique work: richly literary and poetic, yet urgent and politically explosive at the same time...A permanent testament to human courage and transcendence."

-- Jonathan Kozol, author of *Savage Inequalities*

"Rodriguez's account of his coming of age is vivid, raw...fierce, and fearless...Here's truth no television set, burning night and day, could ever begin to offer."

-- Gary Soto, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Every spiky anecdote from a life of guns, razors, uppers, downers, glue, heroin, sex, and early death supports this former gang member's view of the violence as collective suicide. That Rodriguez's memoir takes place...before the '92 L.A. riots only makes this beautifully written and politically astute account more compelling."

-- Suzanne Ruta, *Entertainment Weekly*

"Extraordinarily haunting and evocative."

-- Paul Ruffins, *The Washington Post Book World*

About the Author

The son of Mexican immigrants, **Luis J. Rodriguez** began writing in his early teens and has won national recognition as a poet, journalist, fiction writer, children's book writer, and critic. Currently working as a peacemaker among gangs on a national and international level, Rodriguez helped create Tia Chucha's Café & Centro Cultural, a multiarts, multimedia cultural center in the Northeast San Fernando Valley. Visit his website: www.luisjrodriguez.com.

Users Review

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