

Live to See the Day

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Synopsis

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An indelible portrait of three children struggling to survive in the poorest neighborhood of the poorest large city in America

Kensington, Philadelphia, is distinguished only by its poverty. It is home to Ryan, Giancarlos, and Emmanuel, three Puerto Rican children who live among the most marginalized families in the United States. This is the story of their coming-of-age, which is beset by violence—the violence of homelessness, hunger, incarceration, stray bullets, sexual and physical assault, the hypermasculine logic of the streets, and the drug trade. In Kensington, eighteenth birthdays are not rites of passage but statistical miracles.

One mistake drives Ryan out of middle school and into the juvenile justice pipeline. For Emmanuel, his queerness means his mother’s rejection and sleeping in shelters. School closures and budget cuts inspire Giancarlos to lead walkouts, which get him kicked out of the system. Although all three are high school dropouts, they are on a quest to defy their fate and their neighborhood and get high school diplomas.

In a triumph of empathy and drawing on nearly a decade of reporting, sociologist and policymaker Nikhil Goyal follows Ryan, Giancarlos, and Emmanuel on their mission, plunging deep into their lives as they strive to resist their designated place in the social hierarchy. In the process, *Live to See the Day* confronts a new age of American poverty, after the end of “welfare as we know it,” after “zero tolerance” in schools criminalized a generation of students, after the odds of making it out are ever slighter.

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