



The Prince of Los Cocuyos: A Miami Childhood

Richard Blanco

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A poignant, hilarious, and inspiring memoir from the first Latino and openly gay inaugural poet, which explores his coming-of-age as the child of Cuban immigrants and his attempts to understand his place in America while grappling with his burgeoning artistic and sexual identities.

Richard Blanco's childhood and adolescence were experienced between two imaginary worlds: his parents' nostalgic world of 1950s Cuba and his imagined America, the country he saw on reruns of *The Brady Bunch* and *Leave it to Beaver*—an “exotic” life he yearned for as much as he yearned to see “la patria.”

Navigating these worlds eventually led Blanco to question his cultural identity through words; in turn, his vision as a writer—as an artist—prompted the courage to accept himself as a gay man. In this moving, contemplative memoir, the 2013 inaugural poet traces his poignant, often hilarious, and quintessentially American coming-of-age and the people who influenced him.

A prismatic and lyrical narrative rich with the colors, sounds, smells, and textures of Miami, Richard Blanco's personal narrative is a resonant account of how he discovered his authentic self and ultimately, a deeper understanding of what it means to be American. His is a singular yet universal story that beautifully illuminates the experience of “becoming;” how we are shaped by experiences, memories, and our complex stories: the humor, love, yearning, and tenderness that define a life.

The Prince of Los Cocuyos: A Miami Childhood Details

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From Reader Review The Prince of Los Cocuyos: A Miami Childhood for online ebook

Naomi says

This was fun to read. Here for the Spanglish.

Jason says

I was already familiar with Blanco's poetry, so I was excited to read his memoir about his life in Miami. The title is slightly misleading because we also get Richard's teen years as well, which is great. Of course the prose is beautiful and poetic, and the different stories show how Blanco is caught between Cuba and America, his parents' homeland and his new country. The standout character is his outspoken and at times cruel grandmother who forces him to act like a man as she perceives it, even when he is a young boy interested in coloring (not a manly pursuit, according to her). I breezed through this book because the stories were so interesting, and the writing flows so well. I wanted more, of course, and we get a glimpse into Richard's later years in the final page(s) of the book. Perhaps he will write another memoir! I would gladly read it.

I wished the book had included photographs. Blanco's mother is described as taking photographs to mark every occasion, so I'm certain there would be some available. Also, the ending to one of the chapters (El Ratoncito Miguel) came to such a sudden screeching halt that I was jolted. Maybe that was the intended effect, but I did not like it.

Susan Emmet says

Wonderful memoir! Richard Blanco recalls in poetic, loving detail his growing up in Miami and burgeoning awareness of his "self" and all that entailed - his sexuality, his insight and intelligence, his intransigence and yearnings. A fine, fine book.

So glad he remembered and retained the humor that infects so much of the remembering. The first chapter, dedicated to his first attempt to create an American San GIVING out of the Winn Dixie is hilarious, as is his take on Yetta, the Yiddish Queen of the Copacabana and his father's efforts to keep el Malibu running and spot-free. Hilarious and sad and deftly done. Blanco's rendering of the cast at the market, Los Cocuyos, makes it come alive, as does his quest to recognize and accept his sexuality.

A fine poet, an artist and engineer, Blanco writes well.

A book I'll come back to again...

Rebecca McPhedran says

What a beautifully written memoir.

Richard Blanco lived his life in two worlds. He was tossed between his parents love and longing for their

beloved Cuba, and his need and desire to be like those around him. His artistic talent shines through in this book. He is a beautiful writer.

There is a fair amount of humor within. I particularly loved the story about him trying to convince his grandmother that they should celebrate their own first San Giving. The way he talks about walking through the Winn Dixie is so relatable and hilarious. I love this book, and am so excited to read more of his poetry!

Angela says

I picked up this book in Barnes and Noble because old Miami is so colorful and the author is Cuban. When I was 10, Cuban refugees moved into my neighborhood and I loved them, loved visiting them, and loved hearing about their lives.

Richard Blanco's story is different but there are many similarities. He writes so beautifully that I can hear his poetry. Reading his life story (through his teenage years) let me see vividly his Cuban family, warts and all. I learned a lot and loved every word.

In 2013, Blanco became the youngest, first Latino, first immigrant, and first openly gay person to become the US Poet Laureate. He is an inspiration to many.

Elisa says

This book offered both beautiful insight into someone's own life and a deep connection to my own family.

Marta says

Richard Blanco not only does a wonderful job recreating his colorful childhood, he captures a broader experience for many Cuban-American children who were born in the USA or don't remember Cuba. Our legacy is to be left wistful and yearning for a place and life style that aren't our own and never will be. For those readers and myself, there is an excitement to this book that comes from recognition and finally feeling part of a group- the Cuban-American kids who didn't belong in any group!

For any reader, his descriptions of his childhood and the stories he chooses to tell are very funny and entertaining. As Blanco happens to be gay, his book would also be of particular interest to the person trying to come out to their family- particularly in a conservative Spanish home.

His mama's first Thanksgiving toast echoes the hearts of many Cubans still, "Happy San Giving a todos! One day we will all be together."

Cliff Haley says

I read this book since it was the common reading experience for raising freshman at Duke and I was blown away about how good it was. I guess since it was a quasi summer assignment I had low expectations of the book but wow was I being prejudiced. This book is awesome, raw, and relatable. Seriously. Blanco unifies

the reader and his narrative, making his childhood situations feel so personal and genuine. Though his experiences were wildly different than mine, I found myself really understanding where Blanco is coming from and knowing exactly how he felt in the given situation. I absolutely loved that. In addition, Blanco uses humor to highlight the very serious identity crisis caused by the pressure to conform to American culture by his ambient environment and the pressure to conform to Cuban culture by his family and his past. Overall, this book is striking and will always hold meaning beyond words for me.

Patricia says

I've wanted to read this book since I heard the author speak at Milwaukee Public Library in the last year. This esteemed poet has written a beautiful memoir of a Cuban American childhood which was somewhat complicated by the author's realization that he was gay. He has an amazing memory for the details that make this story very compelling and heartfelt.

Sarah Thweatt says

I'm not much of a memoir reader, but my son has to read this for school in the fall and I thought I'd read it as well. Very enjoyable--found the writing warm and Blanco's early life and struggles in Miami as a family of immigrants interesting. I then watched his reading of the poem "One Today" at Obama's second inauguration and just loved it--a sobering contrast to the politics of 2018.

Taryn Pierson says

The Prince of Los Cocuyos is hands-down the best memoir I've ever read. Richard Blanco does absolutely everything right. Each chapter tells a single story small enough to be fleshed out in full detail, but themes of belonging, family, and finding your place stretch effortlessly throughout each one, connecting them all into a resoundingly satisfying whole.

It also doesn't hurt that he's flippin' hilarious, with the timing of a stand-up comedian. (Be careful reading the chapter about his family's trip to Disney World in public, unless you don't mind snorting in front of an audience.)

The book is about Blanco's childhood, growing up a Cuban immigrant in Miami, but underneath that, it's about complicated love-hate relationships with relatives, realizing from a young age that you're different but not knowing what to do about it, and finally growing into yourself and figuring out who you want to be in this world.

The poignance of Blanco's stories made my heart pinchy. Remember what it felt like to be a kid? Things were beautiful! Exciting! Extraordinary! Remembering that simple joy and, yes, also the disappointment and hurt when things didn't work out gave me all the feels.

Everyone who is a person should read this book. Highest possible recommendation.

More book recommendations by me at www.readingwithhippos.com

Alejandro says

It still baffles me that someone with nearly the same exact cultural references as I have wrote and read a poem for the president. I used to feel my family was so weird and not like the ones I saw on TV (and there was no room for someone like me). I feel a little less weird and a little less ashamed.

A lot of the stuff around his sexuality really triggered some old old old wounds. They were surprisingly hard to read, especially his grandmother's abuse (which is similar to the shit my mother and other relatives used to say to me).

Barbara says

So you agree to meet a friend and her friend at a favorite cafe. You're a few minutes late. You go up to the counter and order your cafe cubano, and when you drop into the comfy chair they've kindly saved for you, it's clear that your new acquaintance had just begun to share a story. With a warm smile, he begins again. You sip your cafe and that's that. Ten words in, one sip down, and you're enraptured. Who is this charmer?

That's what it's like to read Richard Blanco. There's no set-up, no folderol, no long, extended do-si-do. He just enfolds you into his life, and you feel entertained ---and exalted.

Alice says

This is an effective and often charming "slice" memoir of Blanco's Miami childhood memories. He has a knack for delineating memorable characters, in particular his Abuela and young Richard's various friends. Smoothly written and leavened with humor, this is an above average memoir.

Leah says

This was such a lovely, engaging read. Richard Blanco brings his poetic touch to this memoir, providing fluid transitions between scenes and painting his childhood in wonderfully relatable pictures. The powerful leap into the future of the last few pages had me in tears. Qué rico! Qué sabroso! Qué delicioso!
