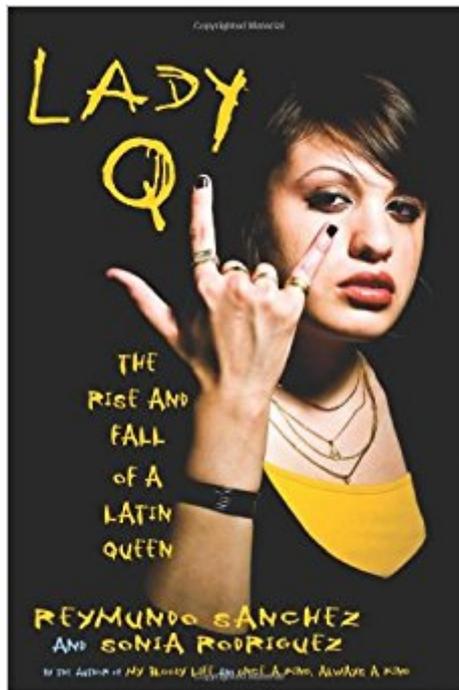


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Lady Q: The Rise And Fall Of A Latin Queen



Synopsis

This is a raw and powerful memoir not only of one woman's struggle to survive the streets but also of her ascent to the top ranks of the new mafia, where the only people more dangerous than rival gangs were members of her own. At age five Sonia Rodriguez's stepfather began to abuse her; at 10 she was molested by her uncle and beaten by her mother when she told on him; and by 13 her home had become a hangout for the Latin Kings and Queens who were friends with her older sister. Threatened by rival gang members at school, Sonia turned away from her education and extracurricular activities in favor of a world of drugs and violence. The Latin Kings, one of the largest and most notorious street gangs in America, became her refuge, but its violence cost her friends, freedom, self-respect, and nearly her life. As a Latin Queen, she experienced the exhilarating highs and unbelievable lows of gang life. From being shot at by her own gang and kicked out at age 18 with an infant daughter to rejoining the gang and distinguishing herself as a leader, her legacy as Lady Q was cemented both for her willingness to commit violence and for her role as a drug mule. For the first time, a woman's perspective on gang life is presented.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I was less than halfway through the book when I realized a sad fact; I was no longer shocked! The terrible things happening to the protagonist were becoming too common in the story. It seems as though her life couldn't be anything BUT abusive. This isn't a story of the "downward spiral"; it's someone born into the "spiral." This girl is sexually abused by her uncle, then her cousin, and when

she tells her mother about the molestation, she gets beaten. When that happened, I was no longer shocked that she got involved in gangs. This was a child who had no advocate, no supportive parent, and nobody really cared. If she'd told her teachers what was going on, what would they have done? This was an era when child molestation wasn't taken as seriously as it is now. This girl had nowhere to turn to but the gangs. "Lady Q" is not terribly well-written, but it doesn't need to be. This is a story that all teachers and social workers should read, if you want to understand why kids get involved in gangs from an early age. Gangs aren't anything like the ones portrayed in "West Side Story." Kids don't join gangs because of racism and poverty; they join because it's a substitute for family and it gives them a sense of power.

So I absolutely loved both of Sanchez's previous books but this one was disappointing!!! It is written by Sanchez and telling Lady Q's story...not at all what I expected. I read the first few chapters and agree with the rest of the reviews that it is repetitive and does not have the "feel" of the previous books. Needless to say, I went back and returned it to Borders and got some other book. I'm going to wait until the price goes way down to finish it, You should too! Definitely, not worth spending so much money on!

There is little that isn't compelling about this story. A young girl in an abusive home and environment falls into the arms of the gangs around her for a source of protection and love. She rises through the ranks from being a street soldier to leading one of the largest distributors of cocaine in Chicago. It's a morally reverse rags to riches back to rags story. The facts in the novel are raw and hard hitting but nevertheless poorly told. My first major qualm with this story is that it is one long elaborate summary that didn't seem to go through much revision or was even artistically presented in any way. Although this was done entirely through an interview, we rarely get any direct quotes from Lady Q herself or even the line of questioning that leads up to those questions. We don't physically or emotionally "see" this story through description or otherwise. Lady Q's reactions to these questions (outside of the 3 minute cry at the novel's inception) are totally absent from the story and thus any emotional connection the reader could have made as well. Instead we are presented with a poor commentary from the author himself which seems devoid of any color, character or personalization. Lady Q herself seems a vapid character in spite of the constant assurance that she has a charismatic and magnetic personality. I feel like the author is spoon feeding us characterization and description instead of relying on writing talent to tell us the story. Let me quote to demonstrate: "Sonia remembers a gang-warfare incident that happened on a sunny day during

the first summer her family spent in their new apartment. Her mother was sitting and looking out the front window down the boulevard. She noticed and commented on three young men in their late teens to early twenties sitting on the opposite side of the boulevard in the shade of the trees who were rolling and smoking joints. They sat on the Latin Kings side of the boulevard and stood up only to flash the Latin Kings hand sign at cars passing by. At one point they all left but returned soon thereafter, each carrying a 40 oz. bottle of beer wrapped in a paper bag. Moments after they returned from their beer run 2 of the 3 men got up and began shaking the hand of the third guy who was still sitting against one of the trees. The handshakes ended with the Latin King's hand sign being thrown up in the shape of the crown. Suddenly the 2 standing guys pulled out guns and opened fire on the guy sitting against one of the trees."I mean this scene is shocking and it will make an impact but not because of the writing which honestly sounds like a 12 year old wrote it. I really wanted to like this story and was hoping it was evocative enough to infuse into my curriculum but there is just no way. A story like this should make your heart bleed or at least seethe with fury at some point but "eh" or "huh" is all you can expect from this novel.

There is no doubt among those who know street life that the people who wind up in gangs are either deeply broken from hard childhoods or desperately looking for a sense of family they cannot find at home; often both. The kindest thing I can say about this book is that none of it was surprising. The prose was competent, but far from engaging. The people were sketched in so lightly that few of them ever came alive on the page. Even Sonia Rodriguez, the "Lady Q" whose story the book claims to tell, never comes fully to life. She is less a person than a sociological archetype. Her over-simplified personality and complete inability to make her own choices in many different situations caused me to even doubt the book is based on a real person. This story could have been written simply by drawing on anecdotal accounts in newspapers, news magazines, and a handful of talk show interviews. There is nothing in these pages that inclines me to believe it is a true story, and that is the saddest aspect of the book, far more disappointing than the shallow people and unlikely juxtapositions of indecision in dire circumstances. If someone knows nothing about how young people wind up in gangs then yes, I could and would recommend reading this book. If someone is looking for an in-depth biographical portrait of a tragic life then they would be better off reading, "The Cross and the Switchblade", or perhaps, "Run, Baby, Run".

I preferred Sanchez's other two books to this one. I think, because the others are HIS stories, they feel more authentic. It would be difficult to put that much emotion into someone else's story.

Nonetheless, Sanchez's reason for writing this book, to shed light on the female gang experience and de-glamorize gang life, is respectable. Many of my students are at risk for becoming involved in gang life. I want as many of them as possible to read Sanchez's work. If you've ever wondered, "Why in the world would anyone want to be in a gang?" this book will answer your question.

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