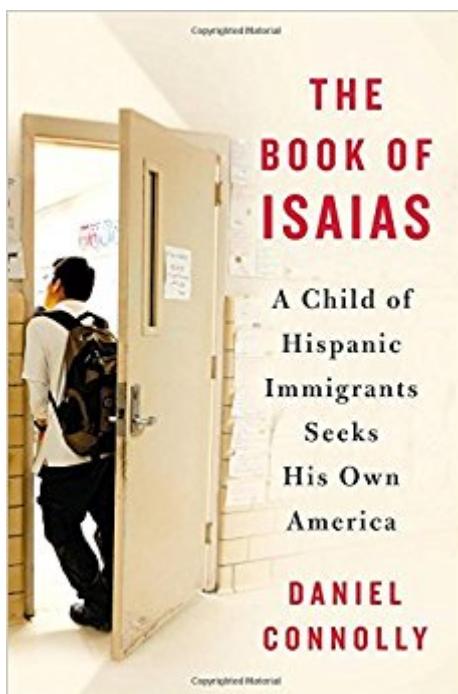


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# The Book Of Isaias: A Child Of Hispanic Immigrants Seeks His Own America



## Synopsis

\*\*One of Southern Living's Best Books of 2016\*\*A fast-paced nonfiction narrative that will help you understand today's immigration battles18-year-old high school senior Isaias Ramos plays in a punk rock group called Los Psychosis and likes to sing along to songs by Björk and her old band, the Sugarcubes. He's so bright that when his school's quiz bowl goes on local TV, he acts as captain. The counselors at school want him to apply to Harvard. But Isaias isn't so sure. He's thinking about going to work painting houses with his parents, who crossed the Arizona desert illegally from Mexico. Despite the obstacles and his own doubts, Isaias sets out on the journey to become the first in his family to go to college. He faces make-or-break standardized testing, immigration bureaucracy and absurdly high college costs. And most importantly, the siren song of doubt. This simple story reflects broader truths. Mexican immigration has brought the proportion of Hispanics in the nation's youth population to roughly one in four. Every day, children of immigrants make decisions about their lives that will shape our society and economy for generations. In the tradition of Friday Night Lights and A Hope in the Unseen, this deeply human narrative offers a powerful antidote to the heated political rhetoric about immigrants and their children.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"There is a wide, almost universal air to the author's writing, as he alternately tells a narrowly focused story and a broad-based one, making clear that this tale of one family's immigration cannot

be told without laying bare the complex context in which it is situated. A story of one child of (unauthorized) immigrants that has much wider, timely resonance." *Kirkus* "Caught up in today's news images, readers will appreciate the intense daily drama behind the offensive 'illegal alien' stereotypes." *Booklist* "Compelling...Connolly's touching story about the challenges that children of immigrants, both documented and undocumented, face in making their way in the United States provides readers with a deeper understanding of the immigration debate."

*Library Journal* "Immerses readers in the world of Isaias Ramos, a high-achieving Memphis teen who is an undocumented immigrant...[A] delicate, comprehensive, and empathetic portrait." *Publisher's Weekly* "Richly reported, empathetic, carefully observed, and devoid of tendentious argument or political spin, *The Book of Isaias* is a stout rebuke to anyone who wishes to build a wall or metaphorical around this unimaginably complicated and delicately human issue at the center of our national discourse." *Hampton Sides*, bestselling author of *Americanah*, *In the Kingdom of Ice*, and *Hellhound on His Trail* "The Book of Isaias is a compassionate and well-told tale from Tennessee, a corner of the U.S. that is being remade, quietly, by the dreams and the labor of Latino immigrants." *Hector Tobar*, author of the New York Times bestselling *Deep Down Dark*. "Thought-provoking and moving."

*Miriam Pawel*, author of *The Crusades of Cesar Chavez: A Biography*, a National Book Critics Circle finalist "Isaias' triumphs and his heartbreaking challenges say more about the immigration debate than a thousand sound bites. A must-read for any thoughtful American."

*Amanda Eyre Ward*, author of *The Same Sky* "The story in this book is a crucial one."

*Sam Quinones*, journalist and author on Mexico and the Mexican-American experience, winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for *Dreamland: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic* "One person's story that makes us realize the universality of the immigrant experience."

*Clan Johnson*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize for international reporting "Compelling...[Connolly] is a brilliant and empathetic writer." *The Memphis Flyer*

DANIEL CONNOLLY speaks fluent Spanish, and, for more than a decade, has reported on Mexican immigration to the U.S. South for news organizations including The Associated Press in Little Rock, and The (Memphis) Commercial Appeal. The winner of numerous journalism prizes, he has received grants and fellowships from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, the International Center for Journalists and the Fulbright program. He lives in his hometown of Memphis, TN.

I was really moved by *The Book of Isaias*. I was a little familiar with the story because the author is a

journalist here in Memphis and I had seen some of the articles about his time at Kingsbury High. I happen to be an immigration lawyer so I can tell you that Mr. Connolly does a very competent job explaining in layman's terms the immigration issues that are an important backdrop for the story. I don't know any of the people he's writing about, by the way. But I can tell you that the challenges facing the very impressive young people he follows during his year at Kingsbury are, sadly, very real. And the stories of the impressive young people at the center of this book will genuinely move you and if you're like me, anger you that talent like theirs is being wasted rather than nurtured. I've been practicing in this field for many years and feel like I know my way around the subject. But Mr. Connolly educated me in terms of helping me see things from the client's perspective in a way I really can't simply as a legal practitioner. For the average reader who knows little about the complexities of the subject, Mr. Connolly's conversational writing style and his gift for telling a good story will make the book worth your time. Mr. Connolly has an engaging writing style and the book is very readable. And the story is so compelling. I'm planning on buying some additional copies of this book as a gift for a few people I know will really appreciate it. Congrats to this first author on a great debut!

Excellent exploration of the plight of children of undocumented immigrants. The book is beautifully written, interweaving the story of a high school senior and his friends with facts about the history and current legislation surrounding illegal immigration. The author draws you into the life of these children and you become invested in caring about their future. A must read for anyone wanting to know more about the reality of life in the US for the thousands of children born outside the country and brought here illegally.

Immigration and the plight of children brought to the US as children... a topic I often hear the macro side of in political outlets, but never before have I seen the micro side told so well and with such care and attention to detail. The challenges of Isaias and his schoolmates show what real life is like for this generation of dreamers. Very well done and thoughtfully researched.

Great insight into a very timely struggle. Hopeful and heartbreaking at the same time.

In 2003, more than 5 million undocumented Mexicans entered the United States. Four of them were from the Ramos family who, after they made their way across the border in Arizona, settled in Memphis, Tennessee. In the decade since their perilous and illegal journey, the parents built a

family-run painting business, and sent their now three children to public schools. Author Daniel Connolly asks whether a child who lacks legal status can succeed in America. And is academic success and college a path to that success? More broadly, is a lack of legal status a barrier to success regardless of achievement? Connolly uses Isaias, an exceptional student, as a poster child for this country's immigration debate. He follows Isaias during his senior year in high school as he prepares for a post-graduate life. Unfortunately, Isaias's future self gets too burdened by his present one and he drops out of college focusing on his family's painting business. Perhaps Connolly hoped to find in Isaias what author Michael Lewis found in Michael Ohr in *The Blind Side*, but instead he ended up with the immigrant version of the Younger family from *A Raisin in the Sun*. Connolly hints at this outcome in the Prologue when he writes that "adults invested their hopes in Isaias, perhaps too many hopes." When Connolly examines America's immigration system, the book is a stimulating and expansive read. But keeping the flawed and ambivalent Isaias as the centerpiece to the larger immigrant tale, left this reader unimpressed, and worse, uninspired.

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