



Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence

By Geoffrey Canada

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Long before U.S. News and World Report named him one of America's Best Leaders and Oprah Winfrey called him "an angel from God," Geoffrey Canada was a small, vulnerable, scared boy growing up in the South Bronx. Canada's world was one where "sidewalk" boys learned the codes of the block and were ranked through the rituals of fist, stick, and knife. Then the streets changed, and the stakes got even higher. In this candid and riveting memoir, Canada relives a childhood in which violence stalked every street corner. "If you wonder how a fourteen-year-old can shoot another child his own age in the head and then go home to dinner," Canada writes, "you need to know you don't get there in a day, or week, or month. It takes years of preparation to be willing to commit murder, to be willing to kill or die for a corner, a color, or a leather jacket."

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Canada knows the world of inner-city children intimately, for he grew up in some of the most dangerous areas of the Bronx. As a young child, he learned that only those who can fight will survive. When he reached adolescence, the knife was the weapon of choice, but for today's youth, which he calls "the handgun generation," it is the pistol. Canada explains exactly what growing up in this war zone does to the psyche: fear, doubt and anger crowd the mind, driving out love, friendship and laughter. There is no post-traumatic stress syndrome, because there is no "post." Greedy drug dealers and gun manufacturers, he says, by flooding the inner cities with their products, have made urban violence, which always existed, more deadly. He has a series of recommendations, rooted in his own experience as a child and as an adult, that are thoroughly convincing. A more powerful depiction of the tragic life of urban children and a more compelling plea to end "America's war against itself" cannot be imagined. 40,000 first printing; author tour.

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From School Library Journal

Gr 7 Up-A comic adaptation of Canada's 1995 memoir illustrates 10 situations from his childhood and teen years on the streets of the South Bronx. Based on the author's personal experiences, this study of the cycle of violence explores the destructive power of escalating hostilities on individuals and communities. Nicholas's drawings effectively accentuate facial expressions and emotions.α(c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

From [Booklist](#)

This brutally honest account of a childhood in the Bronx is a personal history of violence in America and a hopeful plea for the salvation of our children caught in today's cross fire. Canada's childhood experiences influenced his sensitive understanding of violent attitudes born out of fear and self-preservation. What is perhaps most disturbing about the events Canada experienced is the degree to which all such occurrences (gang fights, weapon use, drug abuse) have increased in frequency and randomness, escalated in intensity, and been magnified by movies and media, which continue to promote heroes who succeed through brute force. Canada contends that we, particularly our children, are subjected to a kind of unstated death penalty as the odds for being shot and killed, not even being the target, have dramatically increased. Anyone living in urban America can relate to this book on some level, for we are all aware that our cities have become just as war torn and dangerous as any official battleground. Canada is willing not only to discuss this crisis, but to offer firsthand solutions by such examples as the Countee Cullen Community Center in Harlem, which provides unity, education, and safety for its neighboring community. This book should be necessary reading for all politicians and media personnel and for every NRA member who thinks licensing handguns, getting "tough on crime," or "just saying no" is enough. For Canada, all such quick-fix solutions are temporary mortar for the ever-widening crack in America's foundation. *Janet St. John*

Users Review

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