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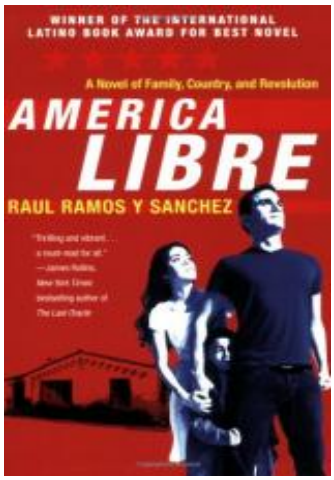
America Libre

by Raul Ramos y Sanchez



About the Book

After years of anti-immigrant backlash, anger seethes in the nation's Latino communities. The crowded streets bristle with restless youth, idled by a deep recession. When undercover detectives in San Antonio accidentally kill a young Latina bystander during a botched drug bust, riots erupt across the Southwest. As the inner-city violence escalates, Anglo vigilantes strike back with shooting rampages. Exploiting the turmoil, a congressional demagogue succeeds in passing legislation that transforms the nation's Hispanic enclaves into walled-off Quarantine Zones.

Discussion Guide

Characters

1. Who was your favorite character? Why?

2. Who was your least favorite character? Why?

3. What emotions drove Mano?s conversion from loyal citizen to insurgent?

4. Do you think Mano?s actions were immoral? Why or why not?

5. Under the same circumstances as Mano, what would you have done differently?

6. How did Mano?s view of their rebellion differ from the views of Jo and Ramon?

7. What experiences ultimately radicalized Rosa?

8. Do you think Rosa?s reaction to her predicament differed from that of a mainstream American woman? If so,how?

Stereotypes and Diversity

1. Did the story make you question your assumptions about the people and culture of Latin America? For example, were you surprised by the diversity of the Latino characters in the story?

2. What role has the media played in fostering Hispanic stereotypes?

3. What are the positive and negative aspects of using an ethnic label like ?Hispanic? or ?Latino??

Immigration and Demographics

1. Did the story change your perspective on U.S. immigration policy? If so, how?

2. Do you think a separatist movement like that proposed by fictional character José Antonio Marcha could ever take root in the U.S.? Why or why not?

3. What can we do to prevent the social turmoil presented in the story?

The Media

1. Where is the balance point between the news media?s responsibility to highlight social problems and the exploitation of those problems to attract viewers and readers?

2. Short of censorship, how can we protect ourselves from the economic impetus to ?sell the news??

Historical Parallels

1. The events in America Libre are similar to some real-life events in U.S. history, such as the race riots of the 1960s and the internment of Japanese- Americans during World War II. Do you think that today?s society has changed to prevent events such as these from happening again? If so, how has it changed? If not, what are examples of how society has stayed the same?

2. Could the U.S. recognition of the State of Israel in 1948 ever be used as precedent for a Hispanic homeland within current U.S. borders? Why or why not?

3. Do you believe any of today?s public figures are using the immigration issue for political gain? If so, how?

Author Bio

A long-time resident of the U.S. Midwest, Cuban-born Raul Ramos y Sanchez is a founding partner of BRC Marketing established in 1992 with offices in Ohio and California. Besides developing a documentary for public television, *Two Americas: The Legacy of our Hemisphere*, he is host of MyIimmigrationStory.com ? an online forum for the U.S. immigrant community. In his own words: ?The first English word I learned was ?January.? I read it on the calendar thumb-tacked to the wall of our apartment in the Bronx as a seven-year-old. I pronounced it Han-noo-a-ree. I?ve managed to learn a few more English words since.?

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