



Stories from El Barrio

Piri Thomas

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Stories from El Barrio Piri Thomas

Piri Thomas (1928 - 2011) was a writer and poet whose memoir "Down These Mean Streets" became a best-seller. The book describes his struggle for survival as a Puerto Rican/Cuban born and raised in the barrios of New York. It has been in print for 45 years. His other works include *Savior, Savior Hold My Hand*; *Seven Long Times*; and *Stories from El Barrio*. Thomas was involved with drugs, gang warfare and crime. While spending six years in prison, Thomas reflected on the teachings of his mother and father, and realized that a person is not born a criminal. Consequently he decided to use his street and prison know-how to reach at-risk youth, and to help them avoid a life of crime. Thomas was influential in the Nuyorican Movement which included poets Pedro Pietri, Miguel Algarin, and Giannina Braschi, who wrote of life in New York City using a mix of English and Spanish. Thomas traveled around the U.S., Central America and Europe, giving lectures and conducting workshops in colleges and universities. He was the subject of the film "Every Child is Born a Poet: The Life and Work of Piri Thomas" by Jonathan Robinson.

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