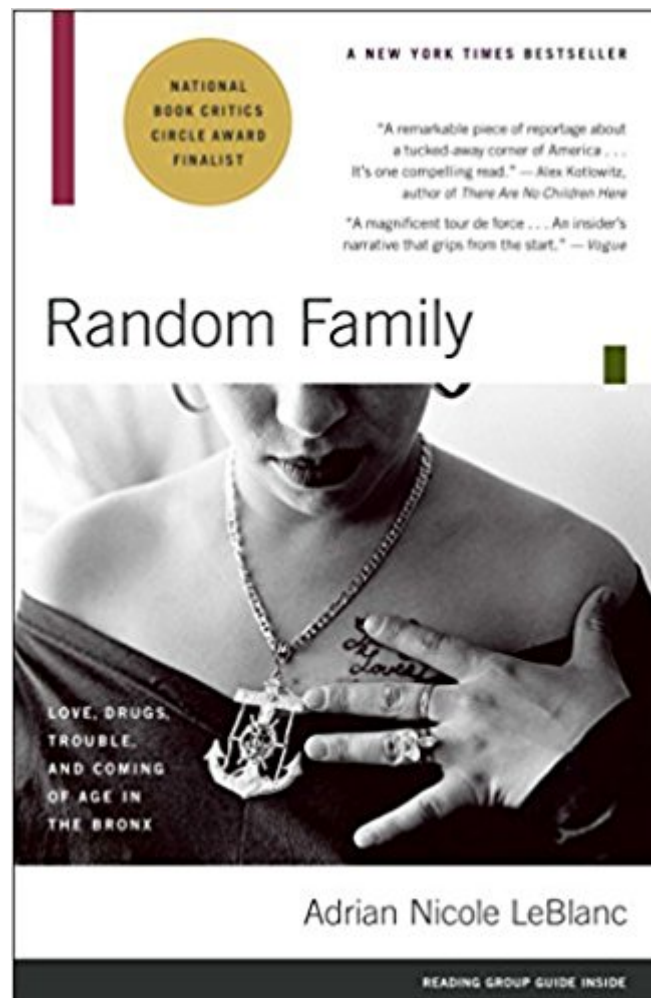




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# Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble, And Coming Of Age In The Bronx



## Synopsis

This New York Times bestseller intimately depicts urban life in a gripping book that slips behind cold statistics and sensationalism to reveal the true sagas lurking behind the headlines of gangsta glamour. In her extraordinary bestseller, Adrian Nicole LeBlanc immerses readers in the intricacies of the ghetto, revealing the true sagas lurking behind the headlines of gangsta glamour, gold-drenched drug dealers, and street-corner society. Focusing on two romances—Jessica's dizzying infatuation with a hugely successful young heroin dealer, Boy George, and Coco's first love with Jessica's little brother, Cesar—*Random Family* is the story of young people trying to outrun their destinies. Jessica and Boy George ride the wild adventure between riches and ruin, while Coco and Cesar stick closer to the street, all four caught in a precarious dance between survival and death. Friends get murdered; the DEA and FBI investigate Boy George; Cesar becomes a fugitive; Jessica and Coco endure homelessness, betrayal, the heartbreaking separation of prison, and, throughout it all, the insidious damage of poverty. Charting the tumultuous cycle of the generations—as girls become mothers, boys become criminals, and hope struggles against deprivation—LeBlanc slips behind the cold statistics and sensationalism and comes back with a riveting, haunting, and true story.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Politicians rail about welfare queens, crack babies and deadbeat dads, but what do they know about the real struggle it takes to survive being poor? Journalist LeBlanc spent some 10 years researching and interviewing one extended family—mother Lourdes, daughter Jessica, daughter-in-law Coco and

all their boyfriends, children and in-laws-from the Bronx to Troy, N.Y., in and out of public housing, emergency rooms, prisons and courtrooms. LeBlanc's close listening produced this extraordinary book, a rare look at the world from the subjects' point of view. Readers learn that prison is just an extension of the neighborhood, a place most men enter and a rare few leave. They learn the realities of welfare: the myriad of misdemeanors that trigger reduction or termination of benefits, only compounding a desperate situation. They see teenaged drug dealers with incredible organizational and financial skills, 13-year-old girls having babies to keep their boyfriends interested, older women reminiscing about the "heavenly time" they spent in a public hospital's psychiatric ward and incarcerated men who find life's first peace and quiet in solitary confinement. More than anything, LeBlanc shows how demanding poverty is. Her prose is plain and unsentimental, blessedly jargon-free, and including street talk only when one of her subjects wants to "conversate." This fine work deserves attention from policy makers and general readers alike. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Journalist LeBlanc spent more than 10 years following two Latina women from the Bronx, and in this ambitious work, she tells their stories, beginning in the late 1980s with their young teen years. Older Jessica becomes a mistress to an enormously successful heroin dealer, and Coco falls for Jessica's brother, an aspiring gangster. The two women find love, weather abuse, have babies, endure their own and their partners' prison terms, and struggle with health problems, social systems, motherhood, their own mothers, the violence of their communities, and the uncertain future. LeBlanc's prose is sprawling and dense with cinematic detail--what people wore, ate, drove, listened to; where they lived; what they said--and she studiously removes herself from the story, letting her characters' day-to-day lives unfold in scenes that are both gripping and mundane and, like life, defy easy organization. What emerges is an important, unvarnished portrait of people living in deep urban poverty, beyond the statistics, hip-hop glamour, and stereotypes. Gillian Engberg Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

An interesting book with tons of insight.

much has been made of the method used in writing this book, and from the first page through to the last, it is clear that an extraordinary amount of work went into the writing of this story. however, i am

always a bit skeptical of the fiction/non-fiction divide. regardless if the events are taken from real life, the author is still going to frame those events in a narrative and leave some things out and put some things in that fit into a narrative structure. this, to me, explains the slightly redemptive aspect of some of the storylines towards the end, and the overwhelming negativity of many of the interactions throughout the rest of the book. this is an amazing portrait of an interconnected group of people, some of whom are family. through their day-to-day lives and through the detailed minutia of their struggles in moving through homes, neighborhoods, schools, and other government institutions, the reader comes away with an understanding of some of the failures of our society, some of the people who are trying to make it better, and some of the impoverished who are in many ways just victims of their circumstances and family's overbearingness, and in other ways the creators of their lot through bad decision making and cultural practices antithetical to the pursuit of happiness as it may be known to the middle classes. the characters are intriguing and their stories are exciting at times, and when they aren't, you have to remember that life isn't always exciting. reading this book and looking for excitement in the characters' lives made me feel a bit like a bad person, but then again, this is a book and not a sociological report: it's there to entertain, right? an amazing book. read it.

The perseverance of every individual written about is staggering. My takeaway is that poverty is cruel, exhausting and nearly impossible to overcome. The parties, the rituals that held this community--these families--together represent their ability to create joy and deep family bonds, despite their circumstances. Brilliant piece of work.

This book was absolutely amazing. True portrayal of how generations can stay systematically poor, uneducated, and trapped. I felt for each and every character. She spent a great deal of time documenting their lives. So I hope next time people won't just say oh they're lazy and just don't want nothing out of their lives. Can see that there is more to it and environment, policy and hopelessness play a major role in the struggle to leave the hood.

So far I am enjoying this book.

Such a page turner and very detailed in what is like to come from a hidden world in the U.S. This book is about girls growing up too quick and boys turning to crime so young it will grip you with each person's life at times I caught myself hoping for them to have a chance and then it all comes down back to reality with the misery and poverty and the struggle to survive.

I am \*so\* glad this book is out in Kindle format! I first read it when it came out, found it incredibly moving, and have been hoping ever since to see it on the Kindle. If you have any interest at all in the urban experience, and what it means to grow up in poverty in the middle of the urban jungle, read this. It follows the life of 4 people~~a brother, sister and their SOs, all intelligent and articulate~~3 of whom are teenagers at the beginning, through the following 16 years of their lives. What unfolds is almost a Greek tragedy of random partnerings, friendships, hardships, prison sentences and of course, pregnancies. Easily one of the best books of the decade.

This book is just such a good read. Hard to put down and I simply devoured it. It's a harsh reality on the struggles of so many descendants of immigrants who most of the time cannot find a way out of the poverty and the struggles that have plagued them through generations. Not only does it shed a light on poverty and its effects on these peoples lives, but also how important it is to set a good example for your children so that they don't end up repeating the same mistakes. The only reason why I don't give this 5 stars is because as a Hispanic female who came from a poor working family my only fear is that the people looking from the outside in would be under the impression that we are all like this when my life was anything but. I just hope that that isn't the case. Much praise for LeBlanc for stepping out of her comfort zone and living with these families to provide us all with an inside perspective on the lives of people we otherwise would look down on. I highly recommend this book to anyone from any background.

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