



Latanya: A Story of Gangs, Girls and Guns (The Latanya Series)

Ed Gaskin

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Seeking her own redemption, Latanya, the lead character, is a newly released ex-convict, hustler, and former gang banger. Fresh from a five-year sentence in prison, she has softened her world view through therapeutic journaling and writing. She was a teenage, single parent who enjoyed the fast life until she “caught” one too many charges. She is guilt ridden for not being there for her daughter, and for the harm she has brought to others. Can she use her street smarts and ability to hustle to do good? At the funeral of her daughter’s best friend, she realizes nothing has changed since she went in; people are still proposing the same tired solutions, and using the same tired rhetoric. Latanya decides to start a writing group for gang-involved girls as a way to help them deal with their issues and hopefully make different life choices than she did. It’s an uphill, life-or-death battle she must win as a way to be a role model for her daughter, redeem herself, and potentially save the lives of the girls and prevent the next senseless homicide in the world of gangs, girls and guns. Latanya is a book on gang violence as told from the perspective of women: sisters, girlfriends and mothers, using vignettes frequently found in urban newscasts. The scenes are authentic and based on real life experiences. This is a fresh and unexplored perspective as the voices of women are not heard in the discussion of gun and gang violence, even though women are involved in one out of three incidents as either a victim, perpetrator and accomplice. Young ladies who hang with gang-involved men have a greater chance of getting shot than the guy. Often overlooked is the positive role women can and do play in helping deter violence. “The idea was for the reader who is familiar with urban street life, particularly gang life and the corresponding gun violence, to identify with the stories because they have either heard of or experienced something similar,” says author Ed Gaskin. This book tells the story of Latanya in the form of a treatment and outline for a play or movie. It is ideal for those who want to develop skits or facilitate discussions on various real life scenarios. Hopefully, someone would film a movie based on the story as a way to reach more people with this story and message. There are a number of topics that can be addressed based on these stories. This edition includes 34 potential discussion questions and a resource list. Just as we have discussions on substance abuse, and sex education, given the incidents of violence with which young women are involved, we need to make young ladies aware of the dangers of gang involvement. Based on research, we have come to see the importance of gender specific programming and this book is a contribution to that effort. “I wrote the story as a cautionary tale because the life and advantages of gang involvement as seen from the outside or in movies and videos are far more glamorous than the reality. In addition I wanted to address the issue of women’s empowerment and trauma. Often the “Ride or Die” philosophy of the street is not challenged and it leads to the exploitation of women. While there is a lot of violence depicted in rap videos and movies, what isn’t shown is the resulting effect of trauma. We have not addressed the issues of trauma many of our kids are experiencing as they are shot, shot at or when they hear about and or see so many of their friends getting shot or killed.” Ed Gaskin says. I would like to hear from you if you have heard of or experienced similar stories, use this book with your group and/or you have an idea as to who the perfect person to play Latanya would be. Write me at ewgaskin@gmail.com.

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