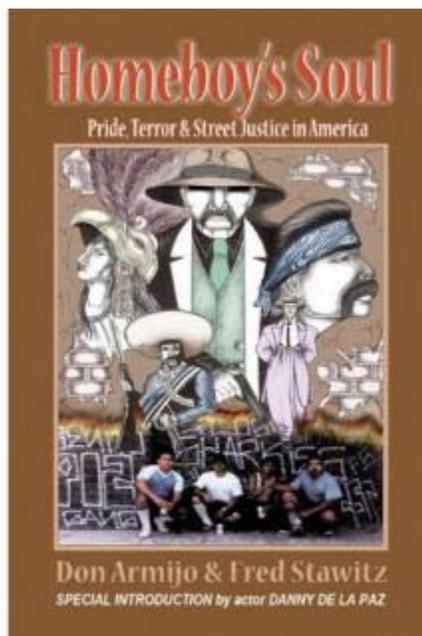


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## Book Review: Homeboy's Soul: Pride, Terror and Street Justice in America

21/07/2010 15:47:00 Michael F. Shaughnessy, Senior Columnist EducationNews.org



Homeboy's Soul: Pride, Terror, and Street Justice in America

**7.22.10 - Michael F. Shaughnessy - Every once in a while a good book comes along that tells a story, while at the same time offering some insight into sociological issues. Don Armijo and Fred Stawitz have co-authored a book, published by Publish America out of Baltimore.**

Michael F. Shaughnessy  
Eastern New Mexico University  
Portales, New Mexico

Every once in a while a good book comes along that tells a story, while at the same time offering some insight into sociological issues. Don Armijo and Fred Stawitz have co-authored a book, published by Publish America out of Baltimore.

Homeboy's Soul is a book about gangs- and how the youth of America, and certain cultures are lured into the gang and street life, almost as part of growing up. Don Armijo tells the story of how he slowly, gradually, and ultimately became part of Los Sharkies in East L.A. It did not happen overnight, and was not a conscious decision. There was no application process, although there were subtle initiation rites. Almost by osmosis, Don Armijo grew into the barrio and the street life, then later into cerveza and drugs and ultimately, the Big House or la pinta (prison).

Every once in a while a book comes along that helps us understand the insidious process by which our youth become part of some group that defends its territory or street. The book tells the story basically of a bunch of good kids who were suckered into the local gang, and became part of Calle Doce. These kids are assimilated slowly into the street life in the barrio. Some make it out- thanks to the Armed Services and some end up in sangre (blood) on the streets. Some find religion, and others find death con tecato ( heroin, not beer or pisto)

The book takes us on a journey from Don Armijo's home, to his school, to his first experiences with his amigos and later amigas and then later to revenge, retaliation and retribution for drive by shootings and invasions by other gangs into his turf.

Along the way, we see efforts on the parts of parents to intervene, and we see the failure of the schools to motivate these "at risk" youth. We begin to identify with the fears and foibles of the older gang members (the veteranos) and the rucas. The slang is different on the East Coast from the West coast, and the terms differ from the Chicanos to the African American gangs to the Irish gangs in the North Bronx, as well as the Hispanic gangs in the South Bronx.

The authors take us into the culture of the barrio and los Surenos ( a glossary is provided for those who are not familiar with the slang of this East L..A. group).

Don Armijo is honest and forthcoming with his story. It is a story that will help politicians and police understand the quagmire of the barrio and kids are brought into gangs, grow up in gangs, and rely and depend on gangs for encouragement, respect and a feeling of involvement and appreciation.

But one also learns that once in jail, one is forced to confront their ultimate responsibilities and to recognize the choices that one has made- either consciously or unconsciously.

One gets the feeling from this book that conscious choices are not often made- kids grow up in an environment that fosters this life style- and this life style grabs kids by the neck and entraps them.

Many years ago, I read The Felon by John Irvin. It told of life in the Big House- the Pen, and this book is going to be required reading for classes in sociology if one really wants to understand gangs, juvenile delinquency and crime.

Sadly, many individuals died along Don Armijo's calle, and due to his mistakes. He has attempted to share his mistakes, take responsibility for them and help others understand life in the barrio and the process by which one becomes a homeboy- and loses their soul.

If you are a sociology instructor or teach classes in gangs, juvenile delinquency, probation or parole, you need to go to [.publishAmerica.com](http://publishAmerica.com) and get this book for required reading. Your students will appreciate it, and some politicians may learn a thing or two. Those really interested in learning about the socialization process by which one becomes a "gang member ", will appreciate the readability of the book, and the lessons learned. Don Armijo learned his lessons the hard way and did hard time. We need to prevent others from making his mistakes.

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.Michael F. Shaughnessy is currently Professor of Psychology at Eastern New Mexico University and is a Consulting Editor for Gifted Education International and Educational Psychology Review. He has been involved in gifted education since receiving his doctorate from the University of Nebraska Lincoln, in 1983. He also holds master's degrees from Bank Street College of Education and the College of New Rochelle in Guidance and Counseling and School Psychology. He has some post doctoral training from George Washington University in Washington, D.C. and Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas. He has presented on gifted topics in Australia, South Korea, South Africa, Slovenia, Finland, Germany, England, France, and has been a Consulting Editor for Gifted Education International. He has written, edited or co-edited about a dozen books and published several hundred articles, book reviews, research reports, interviews and commentaries

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