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## Patrick B. Reyes. Nobody Cries When We Die: God, Community, and Surviving to Adulthood

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Patrick B. Reyes. *Nobody Cries When We Die: God, Community, and Surviving to Adulthood*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2016. IX +190 pp. \$19.99 Paper. ISBN: 0827225318.

The title of this book, *Nobody Cries When We Die*, is an allusion to a rap song by Tupac Shakur, “Life Goes On.” The song starts off with the lyrics “How many brothers fell victim to the streets?” Patrick Reyes chooses to use these provocative lyrics as the title because his book, like the song, is a condemnation of a rigged system that brutalizes and kills Brown and Black bodies. The subtitle “God, Community, and Surviving to Adulthood” gives an idea of Reyes’s more specific contributions as a Latino theologian telling his story of growing up in Salinas, California and of his search for his vocation. Reyes states clearly in the first chapter after the Introduction, “My definition of the Christian vocation is ‘God’s call to new life for all creation’” and “I can hear God calling me simply to live” (13).

It would do the book a disservice to trace an argument from start to finish since the book is ultimately not making an argument. Rather, the author is telling a story. The book reads almost like a novel and the author’s casual style of writing allows a certain speed and fluidity to the reader. The content of the book, however, is anything but easy to read. As Reyes recounts his own life story, he tells of some violence and life conditions that are, more than surprising, tragic. He begins the narrative with a jarring story about a violent encounter in boyhood with his stepfather, his mother’s boyfriend, whom he refers to only as “Stranger.” It is clear from this story of abuse and neglect that what we are about to jump into is a show of profound vulnerability on behalf of the author. Story after story, Reyes paints a picture of a community struggling to find that vocation, that call to live. In one particularly memorable story, a young girl is shot in the crossfire of a drive-by shooting in which Reyes and his friends, teenagers

apparently, are the intended targets. Through this story and many others, we are introduced to the woman to whom the book is dedicated to, Reyes's grandma, a woman who, Reyes is convinced, is clearly a saint. The tender retelling of the grandmother-grandson relationship tugs on the reader's heartstrings. Reyes understands that sometimes those who shape our vocation most profoundly are *tía/os*, *abuelita/os*, *prima/os*, those who were often never given an opportunity to reflect on their own.

In addition to the beautiful storytelling, which is a theology in its own right, Reyes as a scholar of theology offers profound theological reflections on his stories. For Latinx theologians, these reflections feel familiar as Reyes makes use of such thinkers as Virgilio Elizondo, Carmen Nanko-Fernandez, Orlando Espín, and many other Latine theologians throughout the decades: He offers insights on his own life through concepts like *lo cotidiano*. He also speaks to the power of *teología en conjunto* in recounting a common experience for many of us in the academy or in scholarly circles: "What I needed was the connectedness in which scholars of color can thrive, survive, and heal" (61).

Reyes's experiences of poverty, violence, and the other heartbreaks that plague communities of color are not foreign to many Latine people, including myself. Although Reyes says that he hopes that the book is "for those who are on the margins and being held there by violence, so that they might be able to discern God's call in these stories" (6), it could be equally, or perhaps even more valuable to those for whom these realities are foreign and shocking. This is especially true for those who are ministering with students and people related to Reyes and his story. Reyes's insights serve as one source of much needed continuing education to close the gap between many religious leaders and people at the margins.

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