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## **“Coconut” Provides Historic Look at Racism, Marginalization**

Life for Latino Americans in Los Angeles during the turbulent 1960’s and 1970’s is the focus of “Coconut,” a novel by Manuel Padilla Jr., which provides a look at racism and marginalization through the eyes of a child and his family.

“I’ve yet to see a story printed about what it was like to be a middle class, American-born Latino family during that time,” Padilla explained. “Yet, there are 42 million Latino baby boomers, many like myself, many who were not taught Spanish nor encouraged to embrace their Hispanic roots. Assimilation was the only acceptable path, and both blatant and institutional racism were prevalent. ‘Coconut’ examines what it was like to be a Latino during that era of civil rights change.”

Set in the San Fernando Valley, “Coconut” examines the lives of the Rodrigos, a second/third generation Mexican-American family. The novel opens with the young protagonist suffering a racist incident, and then explores the complexities of his family’s life as they strive for acceptance in an often unaccepting homeland. Coconut uses historical events such as the Depression-era repatriation of Latinos, “Operation Wetback” in the fifties and the Chicano Rights Movement of the seventies as a backdrop to exploring the plight of the family.

“In researching the book, I was amazed to learn how prevalent systemic racism against brown people was in the past, and yet it continues to this day,” Padilla said. “‘Coconut’ – brown on the outside, white on the inside – is a name many use to characterize assimilated Latinos.”

“‘Coconut’ validates the lives of minorities who were raised during that time, myself included. The novel will resonate with many Latino Americans as I don’t believe we’ve ever truly been given a voice,” Padilla continued. “Rest assured, the book is not all serious – remember these were the times of ‘American Graffiti,’ the roller skating craze and disco. All these topics are touched upon in a humorous way.”

“Coconut” is being published by Xlibris Publishing and is now available on Xlibris.com Amazon.com, Barnesandnoble.com, Apple Books and other online booksellers.

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Manuel Padilla Jr. has over 36 years of professional writing experience in the media and publishing worlds, working as a newspaper reporter and editor; marketing, public relations and advertising professional; and public speaker. He has written pieces which have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* and other publications. He was also a regular columnist for the *Los Angeles Daily News*. He is presently working on his second novel and can be found online at <https://manuelpadillajr.com/>.