



Breaking Through

By Francisco Jiménez

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At the age of fourteen, Francisco Jiménez, together with his older brother Roberto and his mother, are caught by *la migra*. Forced to leave their home in California, the entire family travels all night for twenty hours by bus, arriving at the U.S. and Mexican border in Nogales, Arizona. In the months and years that follow during the late 1950s-early 1960s, Francisco, his mother and father, and his seven brothers and sister not only struggle to keep their family together, but also face crushing poverty, long hours of labor, and blatant prejudice. How they sustain their hope, their good-heartedness, and tenacity is revealed in this moving, Pura Belpré Honor-winning sequel to *The Circuit*. Without bitterness or sentimentality, Francisco Jiménez finishes telling the story of his youth.

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Breaking Through By Francisco Jiménez Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Francisco Jimenez continues the moving tale of his early youth begun with a dozen autobiographical short stories in *The Circuit*. *Breaking Through* chronicles the author's teenage years. At the age of 14, Francisco and his family are caught by la migra (immigration officers) and forced to leave their California home, but soon find their way back. The author explores the prejudice and challenges they face while also relaying universal adolescent experiences of school, dances and romances.

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From School Library Journal

Gr 5-8-Maturity means breaking through the cocoon into freedom for Panchito, whose adolescence is described in this sequel to *The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child* (Houghton, 2001). The simplicity of life and the unending work for the whole family continues here, but is mitigated by Panchito's increased awareness and gradual loss of innocence as he learns to make his life a success. His father's bitterness, pain, and need for unquestioning obedience is matched by his mother's ability to coax agreement out of her son. The clash of cultures between teen insolence in the U.S. and Mexican respect for elders' authority is vividly portrayed, as is the injustice and casual bigotry often endured by young and old. Fortunately, the protagonist, now often known as Frankie, finds friends and employers willing to recognize his strength of character and ability. While sure to be inspiring and reassuring to readers mesmerized by the first book, this follow-up lacks the intensity and voice so memorable in that one, and is consequently less affecting. Still, Jimenez ably helps readers see the world of 1950s and 1960s California through adolescent eyes. Rock 'n' roll, Kennedy versus Nixon, the old-boy network of service clubs, the humiliation of deportation, and the painful struggle to have the right clothes are among the pieces of that world that readers see with a startling clarity from a new perspective. The photos at the end are great additions.

Carol A. Edwards, Sonoma County Library, Santa Rosa, CA

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 6-12. Jimenez' autobiographical story *The Circuit* (1997) broke new ground with its drama of a Mexican American migrant child in southern California. It won many prizes and was a *Booklist* Editors' Choice. This moving sequel is a fictionalized memoir of Jimenez's teenage years in the late 1950s, when the family finally stayed in one place and Francisco and his brothers worked long hours before and after school to put food on the table. First they picked strawberries in the fields. Later the jobs got better: cleaning offices, washing windows and walls, waxing floors. The prose here is not as taut as in the first book, but Jimenez writes with simplicity about a harsh world seldom seen in children's books. He also writes about a scary, sad, furious, and broken father--like the father in Na's *A Step from Heaven* [BKL Je 1 & 15 01]. He stays true to the viewpoint of a teenager growing up poor: the yearning (What would it be like to live in a house, rather than the crowded barracks?); the ignorance (College?); the hurt of prejudice. Yet he celebrates his Mexican roots even as he learns to be an American. The images are powerful, especially the one of the boy cleaning offices before dawn, with notes of English words to memorize in his shirt pocket. An excellent choice for ESL classes, this is a book for many readers, who may discover an America they didn't know was here. *Hazel Rochman*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

David Shields:

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