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111 third ave s
suite 290
minneapolis, mn
55401

www.upress.umn.edu

presspr@umn.edu

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Please consider a review
or feature of *An Eye for an I*
or an interview with
the author. Please
contact Heather Skinner,
Publicist, at
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questions or requests.

AN EYE FOR AN I: GROWING UP WITH BLINDNESS, BIGOTRY, AND FAMILY MENTAL ILLNESS BY JAMES FRANCISCO BONILLA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The personal story of a blind Puerto Rican boy in New York who transcends a harrowing childhood to become a lifelong advocate for social justice

"*Jovencito*, it's going to be lonely being different and yet strong in this world," James Francisco Bonilla's grandmother told him when he was ten. He had come home after defending himself against a bully who had threatened him with violence, making it clear that he didn't care that James was blind. But despite the isolation James felt in childhood, he would come to commit his life to leveraging his differences and strengths toward a collective fight for justice. James's memoir, *An Eye for an I*, is an inspiring account of how he found a path through his own suffering to make a difference for others.

Born with congenital cataracts, James had limited vision in his right eye and none in his left. At age nine, after a classmate hurled a horseshoe at his face in a racially motivated assault, James's right eye was injured and he became legally blind. At home, too, he feared physical violence, experiencing the unpredictable outbursts of a single mother suffering from severe mental illness. Throughout his youth as a Puerto Rican New Yorker, James was continually failed by educational systems that exposed him to one abuse after another. Searching for relief and inspiration, he discovered an unexpected solace in the natural world, spiritual encounters with Mother Earth that led him toward both personal healing and advocacy.

At nineteen, a breakthrough in medical technology restored the sight in his right eye, and James recognized his unique perspective on the struggles of the disabled and marginalized in American life—and his intense will to make a difference. He seeks to understand generational trauma, and in documenting his growth—physically, mentally, and spiritually—his memoir exemplifies the introspection necessary to participate in truly equitable and effective movement building. *An Eye for an I* presents both James and his aggressors with refreshing nuance and humility, inviting readers to empathize, be inspired, and consider their own potential to be of service in a broken, yet beautiful, world.

"Weaving together a poignant narrative made of personal vignettes, James Francisco Bonilla tells of obstacles overcome, insights gained, and lives transformed by his commitment to social justice and self-understanding. With its intersectional analysis of racism, mental illness, and disability, this memoir brings a fresh and inspiring voice to the world of social justice literature." —Beverly Daniel Tatum, PhD, author of *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*

James Francisco Bonilla is a New York-born Puerto Rican writer and retired professor of Hamline University in St. Paul. He has written and presented nationally and internationally on diversity, cultural competence, and leadership, especially on how to diversify environmental organizations.

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