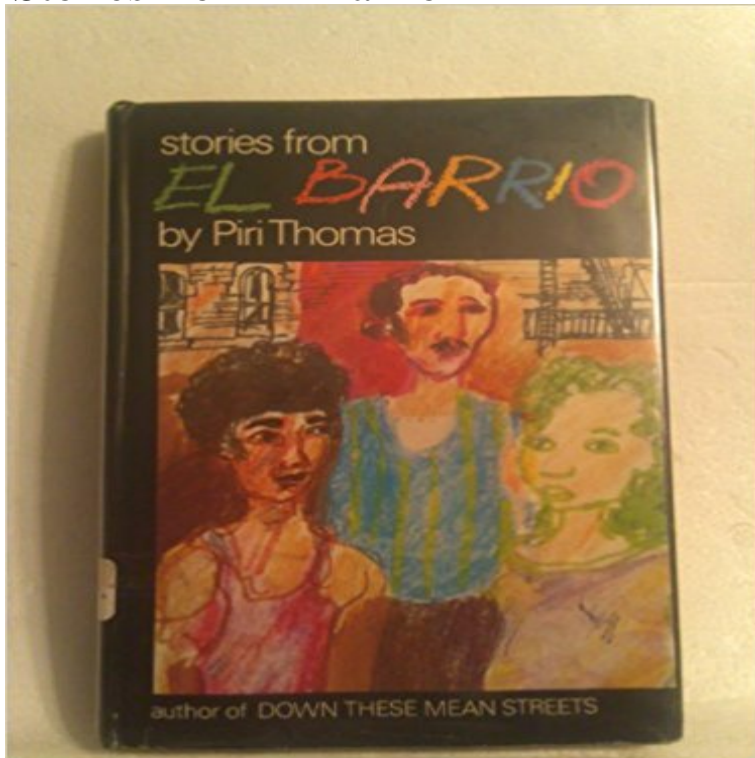


## Stories from El Barrio



Piri Thomas (1928 - 2011) was a writer and poet whose memoir *Down These Mean Streets* became a best-seller. The book describes his struggle for survival as a Puerto Rican/Cuban born and raised in the barrios of New York. It has been in print for 45 years. His other works include *Savior*, *Savior Hold My Hand*; *Seven Long Times*; and *Stories from El Barrio*. Thomas was involved with drugs, gang warfare and crime. While spending six years in prison, Thomas reflected on the teachings of his mother and father, and realized that a person is not born a criminal. Consequently he decided to use his street and prison know-how to reach at-risk youth, and to help them avoid a life of crime. Thomas was influential in the Nuyorican Movement which included poets Pedro Pietri, Miguel Algarin, and Giannina Braschi, who wrote of life in New York City using a mix of English and Spanish. Thomas traveled around the U.S., Central America and Europe, giving lectures and conducting workshops in colleges and universities. He was the subject of the film *Every Child is Born a Poet: The Life and Work of Piri Thomas* by Jonathan Robinson.

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