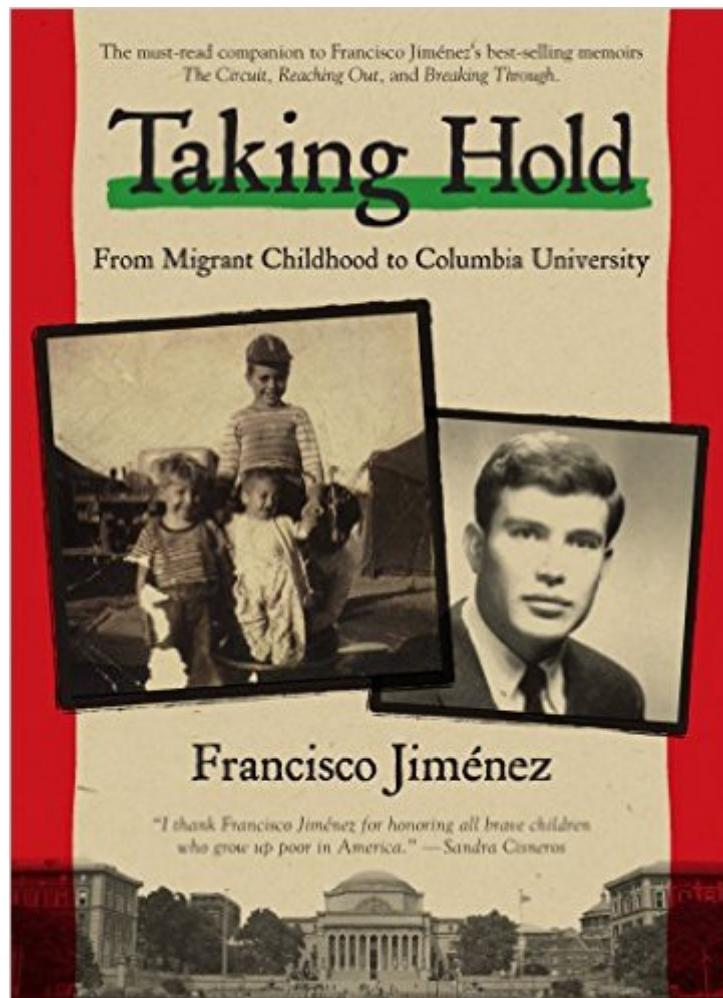


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# Taking Hold: From Migrant Childhood To Columbia University



## **Synopsis**

In this fourth book in his award-winning memoir series, Francisco Jimenez leaves everything behind in Californiaâ "a loving family, a devoted girlfriend, and the culture that shaped himâ "to attend Columbia University in New York City. With few true accounts of the Latino experience in America, Francisco Jimenezâ ™s work comes alive with telling details about the warmth and resiliency of family and the quest for identity against seemingly impossible odds. "Many [students] have commented that your books give them hope and courage and, thanks to you, many are seriously thinking about college for the first time in their lives" --John Padula, teacher, Boston Public Schools

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Taking Hold, "A Migrant Childhood to Columbia University" by Francisco Jimenez is an honest, compelling tale of one man's journey from poverty in Mexico to academic excellence and a Ph.D. Francisco is hardworking, innocent and devoted to his family. He maintains relationships with his family and with traditional Catholic values. He is also very much in love with Laura who he eventually marries and has two sons. Alone in a bewildering New York City and surrounded by academic Giants, Francisco is overwhelmed. Fortunately, he makes friends with the young man across the hall, and this relationship makes his first year adapting to New York and Columbia so much easier. Through the influence of one of his professors, he begins to explore the plight of the Mexican Indians over recent centuries. As a migrant worker, their history ignites his sense of social justice and he comes to life. It continues to be a driving force and integral part of his identity. This

book is well written. Unfortunately it lacks drama and high points. Francisco is very steady worker and everything comes to its natural conclusion. I think it should be required reading for young folks who do not understand or want to learn more about the lives and aspirations of Hispanics in America. I will share it with my own family who should be able to relate to parts of it.. Living in New Mexico, we have many discussions of prejudice and confusion about one's own identity. I rate this book a four. Jodie Marino Nachison, spouse

This is part of a continuing series of memoirs. This one centers especially on the author's post graduate life at Columbia University and gives a vivid picture of the experience. I especially recommend this for high schoolers and college students who may be considering graduate studies. It's also highly inspiring reading for those from Spanish speaking countries who are now in the U.S. There's lots of humor in the book and also a lot of real life romance as the author details the friendship that led to marriage. The book is entertaining and it is inspirational. Highly recommended.

“Taking Hold” is the next entry in Francisco Jiménez’s life story, which began with “The Circuit” and continued with “Reaching Out” and “Breaking Through.” The review copy of the book identifies the target audience as children ages 12 and up. That age group makes it difficult for me to know whether to recommend the book. The biggest problem I have is that “Taking Hold” describes Jiménez’s life as he heads off to Columbia, pursues his doctorate, and begins a family. I really don’t think that children as young as 12 will have much interest in this story since there is really nobody for them to relate to, unless . . . Unless they’ve started with “The Circuit,” in which we meet Jiménez as a child migrant worker. Readers who have followed Jiménez through his earlier books will find the same person, the same drive, and the same thoughtful writing here. Even here, though, I’m of two minds. On the one hand, the four books (so far, at least) serve to document a remarkable life that begins in the humblest of circumstances and progresses to true success. Missing the ending of this story (again, so far) is essentially missing the point—or one of the points at least. And yet, I still wonder whether young children will relate to doctorates, professorships, and the like. That’s not to say that the entire book is about a dry world of academia; it’s not. But much of the story involves Jiménez’s academic pursuits, and I have to wonder about relatability. The best advice for children is probably to start at the beginning with “The Circuit” and to continue as long as interest survives.

Not sure anything could measure up to the first book, which I have read aloud to classes of children,

and read with my upper level adult ESL students. Jimenez' simple writing style doesn't quite support the adult story well; I'm not sure who the target audience is. The observations don't go quite deep enough for an adult reader, but I am not convinced this would hold the interest of child or middle school readers. I do love his earlier books, however, and they've been inspirational for many young and older students I've known.

I have now read ALL of Francisco's books and have loved everyone of them. His writing style reminds me of John Steinbeck because of the easy flow of his words. I especially like the way he relates to his life when he was younger and how it relates to his life in each of the books he has currently written. The pictures he has included in the last 3 books let the reader see who he is talking about. I found this very helpful when I was teaching his books. My students then could see who they were reading about. I am now waiting for the audio book to come out so I can add it to my collection. Prof. Jimenez is a very quiet unassuming person who carries a big stick in the literary world as far as I am concerned and one I am proud to know. My hats off to you for showing young poor people they can do it also if they put their minds to it.

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