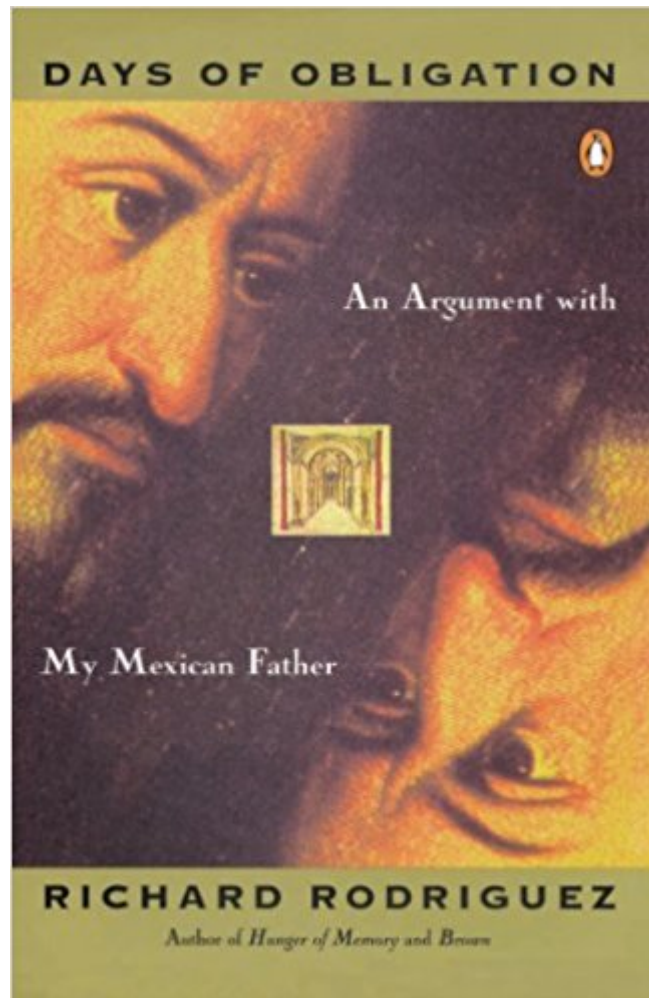




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# Days Of Obligation: An Argument With My Mexican Father



## Synopsis

Rodriguez's acclaimed first book, *Hunger for Memory* raised a fierce controversy with its views on bilingualism and alternative action. Now, in a series of intelligent and candid essays, Rodriguez ranges over five centuries to consider the moral and spiritual landscapes of Mexico and the US and their impact on his soul.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Luminous essays on the cultural identity of Californians of Mexican descent. Author tour. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.

"The best American essayist." — *Village Voice* Richard Rodriguez works as an editor at the Pacific News Service in San Francisco and is a contributing editor for Harper's magazine and the Sunday "Opinion" section of the Los Angeles Times. He appears regularly as an essayist on the NewsHour with Jim Lehrer on PBS.

A beautiful work.

Must to read! Especially for Californians! We are being witnesses of the new classics created. Despite the tough vocabulary and not an easy writing style, author created brilliant and truly remarkable set of essays. They are not related to each other directly, which makes it somewhat

easier to read and possible to skip around, moving back and forth according to your own moods and preferences.

What an opportunity to own this collection of autobiographical essays by the most prolific Hispanic nonfiction writer of our time.

Hardcover was awesome.

not the usual type of book i would read but had to for an ap class, there is no argument instead it is a 10 part flow of everything Richard feels about our culture. I am 17 so i prefer more thought provoking books

Days Of Obligation: An Argument with my Mexican Father by Richard Rodriguez is his autobiography where he expresses his excessive points of view towards Mexico, religion, sexuality and the United States. Rodriguez main audience are Hispanics since he himself is hispanic. He does a lot of self contradiction throughout his autobiography where he heavily claims Mexico is a betrayer, gay people should be set free and that the United States is for the best of people: to later disown his words. It's hard to tell if he is trying to convince his readers to think alike him or if he is trying to make them as confuse as he sounds: making me dislike his memoir. Most Hispanics take much pride in their origin which is why they may contradict rodriguez way of thinking, like i do. Even though Mexicans are full of the Mexican pride there might be some hispanics who are also having a hard time understanding why they have to have such pride in being Mexicans when Mexico has pushed them to live in another country. ¿¿¿ Why viva Mexico? The country that had betrayed them? The country that had forced them to live elsewhere¿¿¿ (Rodriguez,53)? Both of Rodriguez parents were born in mexico and they taught him the mexican culture, however Rodriguez did not understand the mexican culture since he mostly questioned everything about mexico. ¿¿¿ In Mexico there is two versions of you there is tu and there is usted¿¿¿ (Rodriguez,54). That Fact bothered Rodriguez since for him ¿¿¿ Usted is the language outside Eden¿¿¿ (rodriguez,54). He grew up in California calling everyone you and questioned why in Mexico there is Usted and there is tu. He also portrays in his tone sorrow towards Mexico which Makes his autobiography confusing. ¿¿¿ A false mother, Mexico cares less for her children than for her pride. The exodus of so many Mexicans for the U.S. is not evidence of Mexican failure; it is evidence, rather, of the emigrants failure. After all those who left were of the peasant, the lower

classes- those who could not make it in Mexico" (Rodriguez,60). After saying Mexico is the one to blame for so many people wanting to move to the United States he later blames the people for not being tough enough to live in Mexico. Which makes the reader just as confused as Rodriguez sounds simply because it puts his Hispanic readers to actually think more into depth if Mexico is worth their pride. Rodriguez was not just confused over Mexican culture but he was also having personal contradictions with his inner self. Between so much confusion, Rodriguez admitted being homosexual. He works his way through many ideas to create the words to express his sexuality confusion. His confusion came to an end in San Francisco where homosexual parades were taken place in. He felt a strong attraction towards wanting to support the gay community, it was then when he realized his weird thoughts in his childhood over the same sex were not just only his but many other men's too. "To grow up homosexual is to live with secrets and within secrets. In no other place are those secrets more closely guarded than within the family home" (Rodriguez,30). Rodriguez's biggest fear was confronting his tough Mexican Father. It took him years to build up the courage to show his true identity to his family. He denied himself for years making his life a secret and a type of lie where his confusion grew hunger without being feed. Due to the family's strong belief in Catholic religion he was considered "a firm believer in original sin" (Rodriguez,42) for desiring his same sex. But then again Rodriguez judges the gay community by expressing his fear toward AIDS. "AIDS, it has been discovered, is a plague of absence. Absence opened in the blood. Absence condensed into the fluid of passing emotion. Absence shot through opalescent tugs of semen to deflower the city" (Rodriguez,40). He blamed AIDS on loneliness and with the same passion that he loved being alone he hated AIDS. What Rodriguez truly takes pride in is being American. He expresses his idea of the United States being the best he has ever had even though he judges its educational system saying, "American educators have lost the confidence of their public institution" (Rodriguez,168). In his autobiography he takes his reader to Mexico City and then to San Francisco. There is a very big difference in his diction and tone when he talks about Mexico City than when he does about San Francisco. "Mexicans drive on the sidewalk. A man on the street corner seizes the opportunity of stalled traffic to earn his living as a fire eater. His ten children pass among the cars and among the honking horns to collect small coins" (Rodriguez,16) whereas "I am soon pleased by the faint breeze from the city, the slight agitation of the homing crowds of singles, so intent upon the path of least resistance. I admire the prosperity of the corridor, the shop windows that beckon inward toward the perfected life-style, the little way of the city of San Francisco" (Rodriguez,38). For Mexico he shows uses a woe

tone and for San Francisco he uses a relaxing tone. He constantly favored America. Rodriguez autobiography was a battle between not just his family strict Mexican Catholic ways but mainly between his brain and his inner self since for parts he was positive of what he was feeling but yet always found an excuse to downgrade his positive way of thinking. He might want his Hispanic readers to understand his confusion or to join his confusion. Me as a Hispanic got carried on by his confusion making me realize I disliked his memoir.

This book is more of a dialogue rather than an argument. A passionate mesmerizing dialogue with the past and present perceived realities of the author's cultural heritage. I saw Richard Rodriguez at a televised University presentation. His ability to respond to questions from the students and faculty with relaxed patience and stunning oratory was impressive. That is why I purchased this book. A man of knowledge and accomplishment, who has something to say, and knows how to say it. I wanted to learn more from him. That same quality of knowledge permeates this book which is filled with unsurpassed images of Mexico, Spain and California. Mr Rodriguez revisits this historical blend of cultures that produced him and invites us to also participate in this dialogue of perceptions. He bares his inner most thoughts, his agony and his pride. Well worth reading. Take your time, and savor the sights, sounds and existence of a beautiful people; then and now.

I first learned of Richard Rodriguez on C-Span's Booknotes program. He was an invited guest of First Lady Laura Bush to speak at an author's fair that she started hosting in Texas while she was the First Lady of Texas. Rodriguez was promoting his book "Brown" at the time and I thought his observations were wonderful. "Days of Obligations" is in a similar vein, but not nearly as focused. He does (primarily) focus on the differences between Mexico and the United States. Two interesting observations from Mexicans about America include: 1) "America is 'Organized'". Passive voice. Rodriguez notes that there seems to be no connection that actual Americans do the organizing. Rather it's almost like it is fate that America is organized. 2) Americans have too much freedom. Rodriguez digresses from his Mexico/America discussion for an interesting (but off topic) discussion about the gay lifestyle in San Francisco. Perhaps it was meant to be a comparison between Mexicans moving into California and San Francisco's transformation into a beacon for homosexuals. If so, it was poorly correlated, although interesting nonetheless. His observations on multi-culturalism are very interesting. Rodriguez is a hard man to pin down politically. He is a walking dichotomy. Gay. Devoted Catholic. Mexican, but barely speaks Spanish. American but feels that he is different. Anyway, he looks at school to be the ultimate "de-individualizer" in American

society, and that is not entirely bad. He believes that there needs to be a common understanding in society - we all have a common culture if we live in the United States, even if we prefer to ignore it. For example, he stresses the importance of studying the Founding Fathers: "These were the men that shaped the country that shaped my life." He stresses that point off and on throughout the book - the United States shaped his life, Mexico shaped his parents' lives, and even though they brought Mexico with them in their hearts, he did not buy into it - he was shaped much more by America. Rodriguez's observations on multiculturalism in the Catholic church and Protestant vs. Catholic (in attitude, worship style, individual vs. communal, even musical themes) take up nearly an hour of the audio edition - but it may be the most interesting hour of all. Rodriguez is a skilled and experienced public speaker (regular duty on PBS plus book tours) so I have to wonder why he did not read his own book. The reader they chose did a great job with accents (primarily Irish and Mexican) and the spoken Spanish was solid so I have no complaints, but still...I give this one an A-. Worth a read, or in my case, a listen while driving to work. Lots of thoughts about immigration, Mexico, religion - and true to Rodriguez's form, no real answers. But, the discussion is worth the time and Rodriguez can turn a phrase quite nicely.

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