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—*The New York Times Book Review*

# OUT OF DARKNESS

ASHLEY HOPE  
PÉREZ



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### Description

New London, Texas. 1937. Naomi Vargas and Wash Fuller know about the lines in East Texas as well as anyone. They know the signs that mark them. They know the people who enforce them. But sometimes the attraction between two people is so powerful it breaks through even the most entrenched color lines. And the consequences can be explosive.

Ashley Hope Pérez takes the facts of the 1937 New London school explosion—the worst school disaster in American history—as a backdrop for a riveting novel about segregation, love, family, and the forces that destroy people.

### Selected Critical Acclaim

- Notable Award Booklist's 50 Best YA Books of All Time, **Winner, 2017**
- Notable Award Children's Book Committee at Bank Street College Best Children's Book of the Year, **Winner, 2016**
- Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) Choices, **Winner, 2016**
- Tomás Rivera Book Award, **Winner, 2016**
- Notable Award YALSA Best Books for Young Adults, **Winner, 2016**
- Notable Award Michael L. Printz Honor Book, **2016**
- Writers' League of Texas Discovery Prize, **Winner, 2016**
- Notable Award Amelia Elizabeth Walden Award Finalist, **Short-listed, 2015**
- ACL Distinguished Book, **Winner, 2015**
- Notable Award Kirkus Best Teen Books of the Year, **Winner, 2015**
- Notable Award School Library Journal Best Book, **Winner, 2015**

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"Elegant prose and gently escalating action will leave readers gasping for breath at the tragic climax and moving conclusion."—*Booklist*

"Pérez deftly weaves [an] unflinchingly intense narrative....A powerful, layered tale of forbidden love in times of unrelenting racism."—**starred**, *Kirkus Reviews*

"This book presents a range of human nature, from kindness and love to acts of racial and sexual violence. The work resonates with fear, hope, love, and the importance of memory....Set against the backdrop of an actual historical event, Pérez...gives voice to many long-omitted facets of U.S. history."—**starred**, *School Library Journal*

Interest Level: Grades 8-12  
Reading Level: Grade 7  
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Multi-user eBook

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“The beauty of Perez’s prose and her surefooted navigation through the dangerous landscape of the East Texas oil field in the late 1930s redeem the fact that anyone who dares read this agonizing star-crossed love story will end up in about six billion numb and tiny pieces. Absolutely stunning.” —**Elizabeth Wein, author of *Code Name Verity* and Michael L. Printz Award Honoree**

This Romeo & Juliet revisioning takes place in 1930s East Texas, and it's a gut-punch of a novel . . . What makes this book so powerful is how it looks directly at the lives and stories of immigrant and minorities in American history. There are too few historical novels, let alone YA historical novels, where these voices are given an opportunity to be seen and heard. Though tragic, Perez offers up so much emotional heft and so much compassion for ordinary lives that it's impossible not to fall in love with these characters, their stories, and feel the weight of history upon them. There is immense sense of place here, too. Powerful, painful, raw, and easily one of the best books I've read this year.—**Book Riot**

Ashley Hope Perez is a wizard. *OUT OF DARKNESS* is one of the most sophisticated uses of multiple narrators I've ever seen. This immensely skilled novel is a love story set against the backdrop of the New London school explosion—a 1937 gas explosion that killed nearly 300 students and teachers, and the worst school disaster in American history . . . This book is set less than a generation ago, and Perez’s writing makes you feel how immediate and real the racism, abuse, and pain its characters experience still is. It’s an incredibly important—and timely—book.—**Brazos Bookstore**

The story explores real racial brutality, and the author never shies away from the town's overt racism or the mob violence that was considered acceptable -- so long as it was directed at African-Americans. Because each chapter is told from a different point of view, with Naomi and Wash having the most perspectives, Perez is able to delve fully into the psyches of even the antagonist and "The Gang," the voice that stands in for the white community of students. By no means is this an easy read; at times readers may need a box of tissues to manage the emotional nature of the last third of the story. But don't let that stop you; it's not only beautifully written but may start a powerful conversation about the injustices of the past and how they affect the present.—**Common Sense Media**

This novel is as stunning as it is truthful, a narrative shaped by history and love that honestly explores racism, abuse and a young woman's tenacity to fashion a life on her own terms. Pérez has contributed an important, meticulously crafted book to young adult literature.—**Huffington Post**