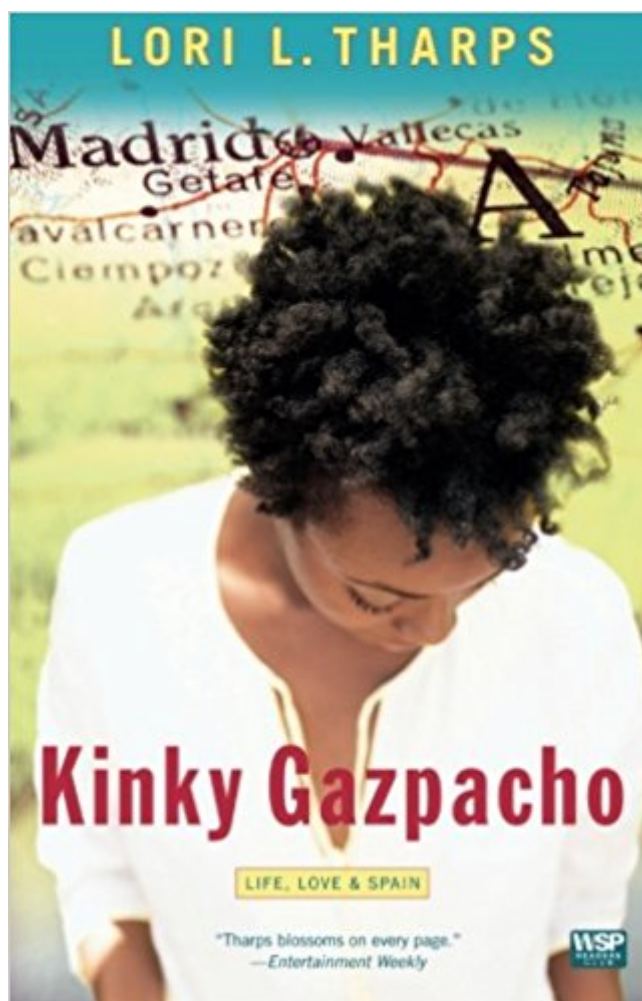


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Kinky Gazpacho: Life, Love & Spain (Wsp Readers Club)



Synopsis

Magazine writer and editor Lori Thorps was born and raised in the comfortable but mostly White suburbs of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where she was often the only person of color in her school and neighborhood. At an early age, Lori decided that her destiny would be discovered in Spain. She didn't know anyone from Spain, had never visited the country, and hardly spoke the language. Still, she never faltered in her plans to escape to the Iberian Peninsula. Arriving in the country as an optimistic college student, however, Lori soon discovers Spain's particular attitude toward Blackness. She is chased down the street by the local schoolchildren and pointed at incessantly in public, and her innocent dreams of a place where race doesn't matter are shattered. The story would end there, except Lori meets and marries a Spaniard, and that's when her true Spanish adventure really begins. Against the ancient backdrops of Cádiz and Andalusia, Lori starts the intricate yet amusing journey of rekindling her love affair with Spain and becoming a part of her new Spanish family. From a grandmother who spies on her to a grandfather who warmly welcomes her to town with a slew of racist jokes, the close-knit clan isn't exactly waiting with open arms. Kinky Gazpacho tells the story of the redeeming power of love and finding self in the most unexpected places. At its heart, this is a love story. It is a memoir, a travel essay, and a glimpse into the past and present of Spain. As humorous and entertaining as such favorite travel stories as *Under the Tuscan Sun*, this book also unveils a unique and untold history of Spain's enduring connection to West Africa. Kinky Gazpacho celebrates the mysticism of travel and the joys of watching two distinct cultures connect and come together.

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. With flawless agility, *Tharps* (coauthor of *Hair Story: Untangling the Roots of Black Hair in America*) juggles a coming-of-age story, a portrait of the writer as a young woman, a travel book and a detective story along with a memoir about learning to love oneself and one's world. A child of privilege, *Tharps* experienced the world as a middle-class suburbanite. That she was black presented complications but not trauma. (The third grade International Day offered the happy prospect of a smorgasbord of international flavors and the awkward prospect of dressing like a slave. She enjoyed the former and passed on the latter.) In a narrative sense, little happens of a dramatic nature. She attends college, goes on an American Field Service stint to Morocco, studies abroad in Spain, falls in love, gets married, has children and becomes a freelance writer. What matters is that *Tharps* infuses this narrative with the pleasure of shared discovery, taking the reader along to the kids' party where they're playing Nigger pile-on! (They're not talking about you. It's just a game) and into the chaste arms of the boys she has crushes on. *Tharps* has written a thought-provoking, answer-seeking consideration of race in the Western world that one can lie back and enjoy. The thoughts and answers will continue to haunt. (Mar.) Copyright ÃÂ Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"With flawless agility, *Tharps*...juggles a coming-of-age story, a portrait of the writer as a young woman, a travel book and a detective story along with a memoir about learning to love oneself and one's world." -- Publishers Weekly (starred review)"Joining the ranks of such fine books as Frances Mayes's *Under the Tuscan Sun* and Sarah Turnbull's *Almost French*, Lori *Tharps* takes us on an adventure of love, language, and travel. In her capable hands, it's not a small world after all -- but rather a big one, with much to discover and a great deal of fun to be had." -- Veronica Chambers, author of *The Joy of Doing Things Badly* and *Kickboxing Geishas*"*Kinky Gazpacho* is not just a journey but a 'trip,' as they say. We encounter Frederick Douglass's hot descendant, Michael Jackson fans in Morocco, racist candies, and the love of a lifetime in a memoir that's sometimes heartbreaking, often hilarious, and always quirky." -- Asali Solomon, author of *Get Down*

*Kinky Gazpacho**Kinky Gazpacho* by Lori L. *Tharps* is a memoir of her growing up in a Black

American, middle-class family, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Despite her parents' education and background, Lori had a lack of self-worth concerning her origins. This was evident when she was in third grade, during International Day at a private school. At one point, Lori's parents sent their children to public school for a year. Lori deemed this an experiment. However, because of her middle-class background and clear, expressive speech, she was not accepted by the three other minorities in her class. She and her older sister were returned to private school. By seventh grade, Lori regards herself a hispanÃfÂ filo. She longs to someday visit Spain. Due to the stereotyping and racist jokes she experienced as a young girl, the effects of negative prejudices were probably hidden throughout her childhood. She didn't confront her friend's teen sister who drove them home as she told a racist joke to a fellow student. Lori questioned, "Maybe I was different? Special? Maybe she forgot I was Black since I was so good at fitting in with all the whiteness around me." At school and in her neighborhood, Lori's friends were white. At Smith College, Lori decided she would dissociate with white students. She attempted to befriend Black students. Most Black Smith College students are from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds. Lori felt she would have something in common with them. She wanted to fit in. However, this turned out to be a fiasco. The young women weren't friendly. But I think Lori didn't give them a chance. Tucked inside Lori was years of feeling like an outsider on both sides. The young women didn't welcome her with open arms. Lori thought she knew the reason, but I liken this to your first person in writing. Your protagonist does not know what another person is thinking. Yet Lori learned the importance of friendship with a group of like-minded friends, regardless of skin color. She and friends formed Lamb Bhuna, an exclusive multi-culti, hush-hush, affirmative-action, eating club. I thought the title hilarious. In fact, the book, although written with sensitivity and poignancy is sometimes peppered with hilarity. In her junior year, Lori attended Salamanca University in Salamanca, Spain. She felt she would meet her destiny there. She wanted to absorb the culture and its people. She discovered that some Spaniards were not friendly. They pointed and stared and called her morena, negrita and chocolate. Few Spanish students were interested in befriending Americans, but she had more male attention in one semester than she thought possible. However, their interest was her exoticism. Lori did meet a Spaniard, Manuel, in college. They seemed to connect immediately. Both had similar tastes, opinions, and were family oriented. Eventually, he would take her home to meet his family who welcomed her with open arms. At the end of the semester, on Lori's return home, Manuel flew to Wisconsin that summer and worked as an au pair on a student visa to be near her. All though Lori was disappointed with her utopia, and constantly found fault in the country, she felt a connection when she discovered and researched Spain's Black historical past. In Manuel she discovered a kind,

patient, and considerate man. Kindness can make you feel cared for, understood, and validated--feel loved. Lori's family loved him and she did too. She had met her destiny. This is a wonderful memoir of growth: loving and accepting oneself. It is of friendship, and an expressive, tender love story. After a six-year on-again-off-again courtship, the two married and are the parents of two sons. I did understand Lori found most Spaniards' behavior unsatisfactory or unacceptable toward people of color. But she also realized that Manuel's family for the most part, welcomed her with open arms. I'm surprised her middle-class parents did not discuss Black history with their children. Lori should not have had the feeling of low self-esteem. Concerning International Day, she shuddered at the thought of dressing up as a slave to represent her people. With a little ingenuity, her parent(s) would have discovered: Queen Ahmose-Nefertari (1562 - 1495 BC), Queen Tiye (1398 - 1338 BC), known for her wisdom and beauty, she became the Great Royal Spouse of Pharaoh Amenhotep III. Pharaoh Akhenaton (Amenhotep IV) was one of the many children conceived by Queen Tiye and Pharaoh Amenhotep III. Her grandson was King Tut. In addition, there was Candace of Meroe, legendary queen of Kush and many, many more. Other issues were: If Lori had a sense of self before she set foot in Spain, she would have been unshakable in dealing with racism, and who she is. This should have taken place in her childhood. Lori and Manuel should have educated each other about their family's culture, challenged false beliefs about each other's way of life, adjusted and adapted to one another's customs. And last, showed patience as your partner adapts.

The most thoughtful, well-developed, all-encompassing memoir I have ever read. I was literally speechless after reading the last line. Tharps' story is one that gives hope to the hopeless, especially when it comes to finding love in unfamiliar places. She told her story without telling all, if you know what I mean. She gave a full account, but still left much to the imagination. I feel like I was right there with her on the many journeys she depicts in the book, feeling the surprises and angst where need be. I will be reading this book again when I yearn for another dose of great inspiration and hope.

From the pink cobblestoned streets of Salamanca to the quaint fishing village of Barbate, this book tells the tale of one young Black American woman who searches to find herself in a country that she describes as "peculiar" and one that has a "particular attitude towards Blackness." It weaves the tale of one extraordinary adventure, one that ultimately starts with Morocco and ends with Spain. Only this story is a real adventure. It is touted as a memoir and that is exactly what it is...it is a coming of

age tale coupled with trying to find one own's identity and it is a love story. What makes this memoir stand out just a little more is the fact that it provides a great history lesson. After reading this book, I conducted my own search about Spain's past. Kinky Gazpacho: Life, Love, & Spain is a delight to read and I enjoyed every moment of it-even those moments of reading where I might have wanted to cringe but did not-so I give this book 5 stars. I love it because the premise of the book may seem simple: girl studies abroad in Spain, girl meets boy, girl and boy get married and live happily ever after. It is so much more than that because it is about Life. Love. And Spain.

I liked the book, especially the fact that it was somebody's story, but there's nothing new here. It's the story of an African-American woman who, from childhood, was obsessed with the idea of living in Spain and ultimately ends up doing just that. She's constantly obsessed with the idea of racial identity, though, and since that's the main theme of the book, and it's 2012, I was unimpressed. I suppose if the idea of a Black person living in Europe is new to you, then this book might be for you. Although I enjoyed the books for its humor, ultimately, it was disappointing.

A beautiful coming of age love story combined with a travel journey and ultimately about finding your place in places you never thought you would.

I enjoyed this book immensely. Finally a woman who understands the experience of a black woman in America, trying to thrive under the weight of oppressive and pervasive negative stereotypes. There were so many things that I could relate to the author on. Thank you for writing this book!

Having lived in Spain myself, I was drawn to this book because so few Americans write about their years living in Spain. I was touched to hear that she experienced many of the same emotions as I did. Unlike her, I returned home and lost contact with Spain, so I envy her even more. If you have an interest in Spain and want to read what it's like, this is good book for you.

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