



A Stone of Hope

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In the tradition of *The Other Wes Moore* and *Just Mercy*, a searing memoir and clarion call to save our at-risk youth by a young black man who himself was a lost cause—until he landed in a rehabilitation program that saved his life and gave him purpose.

Born into abject poverty in Haiti, young Jim St. Germain moved to Brooklyn's Crown Heights, into an overcrowded apartment with his family. He quickly adapted to street life and began stealing, dealing drugs, and growing increasingly indifferent to despair and violence. By the time he was arrested for dealing crack cocaine, he had been handcuffed more than a dozen times. At the age of fifteen the walls of the system were closing around him.

But instead of prison, St. Germain was placed in "Boys Town," a nonsecure detention facility designed for rehabilitation. Surrounded by mentors and positive male authority who enforced a system based on structure and privileges rather than intimidation and punishment, St. Germain slowly found his way, eventually getting his GED and graduating from college. Then he made the bravest decision of his life: to live, as an adult, in the projects where he had lost himself, and to work to reform the way the criminal justice system treats at-risk youth.

A Stone of Hope is more than an incredible coming-of-age story; told with a degree of candor that requires the deepest courage, it is also a rallying cry. No one is who they are going to be—or capable of being—at sixteen. St. Germain is living proof of this. He contends that we must work to build a world in which we do not give up on a swath of the next generation.

Passionate, eloquent, and timely, illustrated with photographs throughout, *A Stone of Hope* is an inspiring challenge for every American, and is certain to spark debate nationwide.

A Stone of Hope Details

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From Reader Review A Stone of Hope for online ebook

Krista Stevens says

Gripping memoir of what it was like for one boy who was lost in a dysfunctional family and to the streets in Brooklyn and drugs and, miraculously, made it out. The struggles are real. He reminds me of many of my students. Interesting intervention with Boys Town rules. Would be a *** book - maybe for seniors.

Karlan says

The author came to NYC from Haiti as a child to live in a small apt with many relatives who did not pay much attention to him. By age 14, he was involved in street drug dealing and entered the justice system. He was fortunate to be sent to a small group home, Boys Town, where he began to learn how to control his temper. Many mentors are given credit in the book for helping him to create a successful life. His honesty about his teen problems is moving and shows how difficult it is to grow up in a poor city neighborhood.

Joanna says

“They cripple the bird’s wings, then they condemn it for not flying as fast” –Malcolm X in *A Stone of Hope*, p. 187.

Jim St. Germain is the embodiment of resilience. After moving to Crown Heights from Haiti as a young boy, Jim becomes the product America’s racist and economically unequal environment. His life becomes a constant struggle for survival in a world defined by poverty, violence, and lack of opportunities. With the support of loving and determined human beings, Jim slowly starts to discover the power of his potential, and fights for his success, dignity and humanity, values often threatened and destroyed by the current criminal justice system focused on punishment rather than rehabilitation. This inspiring book is well-written and filled with powerful imagery, lessons and testimonials.

Winter Sophia Rose says

Emotional, Inspiring & Unforgettable! A Remarkable Read! I Loved It!

Dixie Keyes says

Jim St Germain's story is certainly one to be shared. Rich in its authenticity and honest from a voice of experience, anyone who reads it will gain a deeper understanding of the juvenile justice system and how it can affect the lives of young people who find themselves in difficult circumstances. He doesn't hold back. What I most respect is how there were no miracles in his story--he shares the many times he doubted those who wanted to help him and the mistakes he continued to make when the way out was so close. This just mirrors the genuine process of shifting or transitioning from a life of fear and survival to one of knowledge

and confidence. I hope this book can be in every middle and high school classroom and library. It will give many young people hope and they can see what fortitude and resilience look like.

Rebecca says

This brought up some pretty intense feelings of guilt from my time teaching about the kids I didn't even scratch the surface for. I would like to use this next summer with my students who now have kids and grandkids in the system.

Sheralee says

5 stars ? plus for Jim St. Germain!

I'm white and fully aware that I grew up under the blanket of white privilege. I want and need to understand what is going on in the world around me. When I was younger, I couldn't understand why everyone wasn't equal. Laws had been passed, what is the problem? With age and understanding the racism deeply imbedded in this country, I now understand.

This book helps to point out the huge flaws in the United States. It is time to change the way people are dealt with according to race, religion and sex.

I highly recommend this book and will absolutely pass this book on!

Nancy says

This book was a gift, and I had it on my "to read" pile for quite a few months because I thought it would be difficult to get through. It's the story of an immigrant boy from Haiti who moves to NYC with his father to live in a different kind of poverty. No surprise, it doesn't go well for a good part of the story. And when it does go well (or better) it's certainly not easy. But the book is written beautifully and is surprisingly easy to read, considering its subject matter. The tough parts are factual, never maudlin. The better parts are filled with gratitude, grace and hope. We could all use more of that these days. I recommend this without reservation. I would love to see it taught in high school (and in Congress, but that's overly optimistic). It's a good reminder that it does matter when we care for each other.

vontell dozier says

Beyond moving, thought provoking and humbling. I loved how he started every chapter with a quote from a someone he would have never heard of had he continued on a path of destruction. At time I had to put it down to absorb it , wipe a tear, and let a smile form on my face. You won't be disappointed. Get this book and read it and share it with others outside of your circle of friends .

Kristen says

On the surface, one might question why "A Stone of Hope" by Jim St. Germain resonated with me the way it

did. After all, I am a white woman with blue eyes and blond hair who grew up in the most suburban, and arguably one of the safest, corners of Queens in NYC. (Any real NYer knows Queens and Brooklyn have “a thing”.) But to think I couldn’t relate or understand would be misguided.

You see - I know Jim St. Germain very well. Not the man personally, no. But many just like him. Who have walked in his shoes. Because I walked alongside them. In fact if Jim was just a little bit younger or that part of my life started a little bit sooner, it’s highly likely our paths would’ve actually physically crossed. Because I’ve been inside Boys Town’s NSD locations more times than I can remember. Both of them. I’ve walked the streets in Crown Heights and could point you right in the direction of those projects where he lived. I’ve spent so many hours sitting and waiting and testifying and reporting out in Brooklyn Family Court I stopped counting. I can even say I know Marty. (It’s been awhile so he may or may not remember me too. A great attorney and an even better man!)

This memoir affected me and wrecked me and undoubtedly gave me hope in every way possible. It took me back to a place I wasn’t sure I necessarily wanted to go back to. With its beautiful storytelling and vivid imagery, this book truly helped me see through the eyes of the many young men I tried so desperately to help over the years. To see what they were up against. To know that the obvious “right” choice was almost never the easy one. Or the safest one.

I hope this book changes you. I hope it opens your eyes in the same way it did mine. It’s that good.

Marisa Gonzalez says

Memoir of Jim St Germain, an advocate for rights within the juvenile justice system. He tells of his life emigrating to the US from Haiti, living in poverty in Brooklyn, being incarcerated as a minor and becoming a member of Boys Town which changed his life. This book was just alright. While I did enjoy reading about the positive influence which Boys Town provided for him, I also found the writing to be very generic. It had the feeling of being written by an outsider looking in, was very cliched and gave no perspective of who the author is as a person.

Ember Greene says

Although arguably badly titled, A Stone of Hope is more than just a coming-of-age story. This inspiring memoir reads like fiction and is packed with gut-wrenching stories that remain unforgettable. St. Germain’s story is Ta-Nehisi Coates’s understanding of a black teenage boy’s world perspective in *Between the World and Me* meets Dave Peltzer’s foster home system struggles in his second book, *The Lost Boy*. We’ve heard of stories like this before and yet this story remains different from the rest. St. Germain tells his story through a very straight-forward narrative incorporating other novels and biographies of African American men. He explains how a young boy is expected to survive in a poor neighborhood and how this shapes him into acting a certain way. Through his journey, we can easily understand how young men raised this way need to work twice as hard and given a more opportunities in order to be equipped with the tools to succeed.

Denise Relf says

Beautifully written book by an amazingly powerful man. I was one of the first staff members in the Close To

Home Initiative and was ever changed by those young people. Reading this book should show everyone that what may look like a stoned hardened kid is really an overlooked and under developed mass of greatness waiting for some curious and caring person to come along. Jim's story is sadly a common one for many youth of color living in NYC (not all need to be locked up to have their freedoms removed). This book really shows you what can happen when we instill hope in a child's life, and shows the importance of making the critical steps in bringing about true justice reform for our youth.

Jessica says

A Truly Transformative Experience

That Jim St. Germain lived through his childhood is remarkable. That he emerged from it with the grace, dedication, desire, and tenacity to make a difference to children of color living in poverty and hopelessness is nothing short of a miracle. As St. Germain makes abundantly clear, he did not get where he is today without substantial assistance. But in the end, he is the teen who decided to take advantage of the unlikely opportunities - which many teens would not see as opportunities at all - handed to him and turn his life in a startling new direction.

I have no idea what it's like to live in the ghettos of America, but this book gets me closer to understanding the experience than any other book I've read, song I've heard, or movie I've seen. The author barrels his life experiences at you with an impressive combination of vulnerability, fairness, and deep insight. From the very start, he ties his story to the larger story of poverty in America, and refuses to become a symbol of someone who "made it out" of Crown Heights, Brooklyn; instead, he challenges the reader to recognize not only that his life remains intertwined with the lives of those driven by poverty and hopelessness but also that your life - and the lives of all Americans - is deeply connected to the poorest brown and black populations of America.

This book is a call to understand - and a call to action. Don't pick it up unless you're ready to be transformed by St. Germain' story and message. That said, it should be required reading for everyone in the country.

If you read only one book this year (and this is NOT something I can ever remember saying before today!), MAKE IT THIS ONE.

Kelly Hager says

Jim and his family left Haiti and moved to Brooklyn when he was a child. By the time he was a teenager, he was dealing drugs and had already been arrested multiple times. Before he could legally drive, he had been convicted of a felony. Generally speaking, we know how this story ends: life in prison or dead at a young age, right?

But instead, Jim was put in Boys Town (a group home that works as rehab, almost) and surrounded by people who expected him to succeed, get his GED and go to college. And he did all those things.

This memoir shows how Jim's life was turned around, yes, but also shows how the system is largely failing us. For the most part, young men (and specifically young black men) aren't helped. More money is spent on prisons than schools, and people are being almost set up to keep going from the street to prison, over and

over.

This is an inspiring read and, more than that, an easy to follow blueprint of how the system can improve.

Recommended.
