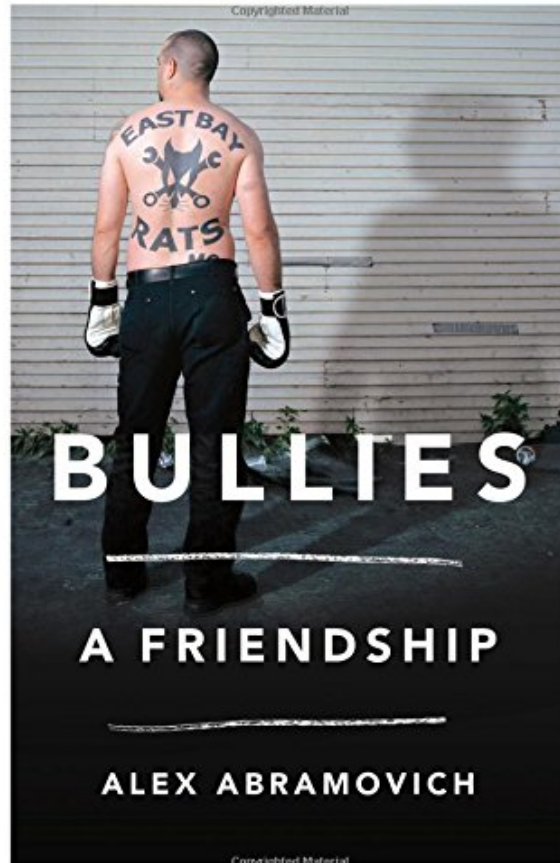
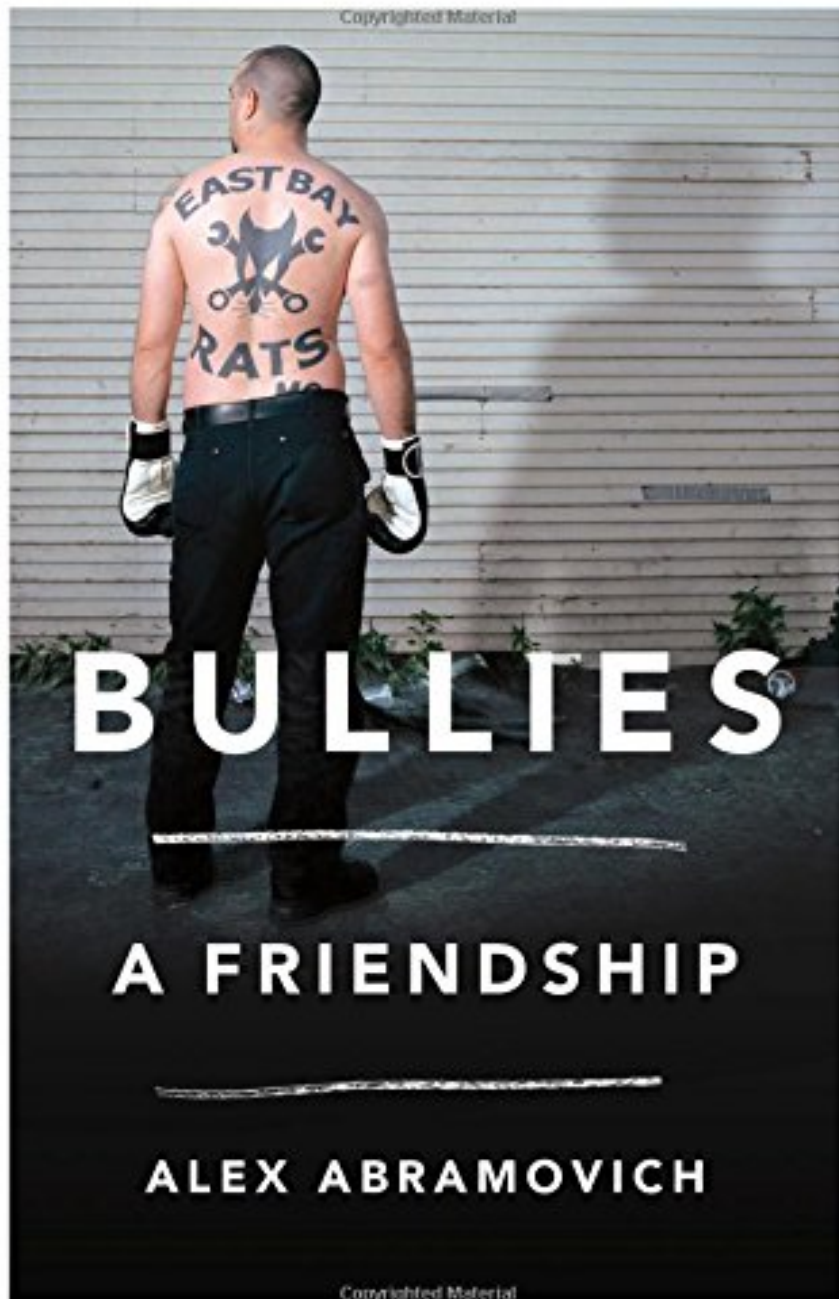


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BULLIES: A FRIENDSHIP BY ALEX ABRAMOVICH PDF

The powerful account of one writer's unlikely friendship with his childhood bully, now the president of a motorcycle club in one of America's most dangerous cities.

Once upon a time, Alex Abramovich and Trevor Latham were mortal enemies: miniature outlaws in a Long Island elementary school, perpetually at each other's throats. Then they lost track of each other. Decades later, when they met again, Abramovich was a writer and Latham had become President of the East Bay Rats, a motorcycle club in Oakland.

In 2010, Abramovich moved to California to immerse himself in Latham's world - one of fight clubs, booze-filled nights, and beat-downs on the city's streets. But dangerous, dysfunctional Oakland was also becoming one of America's most rapidly gentrifying cities, and the questions Abramovich had arrived with were thrown into brutal relief: How do we live with the burden of violence? How do we overcome it? Do we overcome it?

As Trevor, the Rats, and the city they live in careen between crises and moments of renaissance, Abramovich explores issues of friendship, family, history, and destiny - and looks at what happens when those things fail. *Bullies* is at once a vivid, visceral narrative of an unusual friendship and an incisive portrait of a beautiful, terrible city.

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Most helpful customer reviews

12 of 14 people found the following review helpful.

A Cautionary Tale

By Sam Sattler

Bullies represents itself to potential readers as an "account of one writer's unlikely friendship with his childhood bully," a premise likely to appeal to readers who as children experienced either side of the bullying equation. And for a rather brief few pages that is what it is - but all too quickly, the book changes into a social history of the city of Oakland, California, combined with the history of motorcycle clubs in that part of the state. Interesting as those topics may be, I suspect that many readers will be disappointed that so little time is devoted to the psychology of bullies and their victims.

Alex Abramovich and Trevor Latham first met in the mid-eighties inside a fourth grade classroom in Long Island, New York, but Alex was a year younger than Trevor, the boy who would become his "mortal enemy." The boys had a lot in common, mainly that formerly athletic fathers who had once raced motorcycles were raising both of them in single-parent households. Despite their similarities, the boys spent much of the next three years fighting, kicking, and clawing at each other. Trevor's impact on Alex's life was so great that by the end of the fourth grade Alex was playing hooky, and by the end of the fifth grade he was failing most of his classes. At the end of the sixth grade, Alex's father moved him from the area, but it was too late. The damage was already done, and five years after the relocation, Alex would drop out of high school.

Despite the miserable three years they shared, Alex did not think about Trevor again until the day he stumbled upon an Internet reference to him indicating that Trevor had moved to the West Coast where he "started a motorcycle club." Alex, intrigued by the possibility of contacting his childhood bully, sensed from the start that their story was one that he wanted to tell. Surprisingly, when Alex and Trevor would finally sit down together in California, Trevor's memory for details from their childhood easily surpasses Alex's recall of those days. Trevor even remarks that he had considered himself the one who was being bullied, not that he was doing the bullying.

What began as a catch-up visit between Alex and Trevor would turn out to be much more than that when, in 2010, Alex moved to California to immerse himself into Trevor's violent lifestyle of excessive and constant

boozing, street fighting, scheduled fight club events, and so much petty crime that the Oakland Police Department was largely forced to ignore it. As an honorary member of Trevor's motorcycle club, Alex experienced all the ups and downs of that violent lifestyle right alongside his old nemesis (including firsthand experience with the Occupy Oakland movement that plagued that city) but the two of them never took the time to figure out what had happened to them as children.

And that is a shame because it is what I wanted most to learn about from reading *Bullies*. That said, those seeking an inside look into the rogue motorcycle club lifestyle are sure to enjoy and appreciate the book.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Not a Heartwarming Song of Closure

By No Reason

Read this book. Be warned, it is not a self-help book on overcoming childhood trauma. It is a nonfiction account of what happens when the author (Abramovich) reconnects with his childhood nemesis (Trevor), who daily tormented him in elementary school. In smooth, well-written prose Abramovich reports what he finds when he flies from New York to Oakland. Trevor works as a bouncer in a bar -- no surprise there -- but Abramovich is surprised when Trevor immediately accepts him as an old friend. Their childhood fighting is no impediment to friendship, rather it is the basis for camaraderie. Abramovich is invited into Trevor's world of bikers, booze, and belligerence, where "conversations could take sudden turns toward the freakish, or flat-out insane."

The book goes on to explain what happens when the chaotic meets the bizarre. With brief historical digressions, Abramovich describes the City of Oakland, some of the challenges it has overcome, and some that it still faces. Abramovich aptly describes present day Oakland as dysfunctional. Trevor seems quite at home. He accepts Oakland's dysfunction as canvas for his own expression. Trevor does not judge a situation as right-or-wrong, he just lives with it, as Abramovich illustrates when he notes that Trevor's common practice is to answer disjunctive questions with an always-correct affirmative answer, Q. "Does he always ride like that or is he just showing off?" A. "Yep." Trevor has surrounded himself with a group of bikers, encourages everyday people to put on boxing gloves, and confronts chaos with chaos. Abramovich faithfully reports what he sees.

There is no resolution -- the work is nonfiction -- life just goes on. However, there is closure. Abramovich's childhood bully has not changed, but Abramovich's perspective has. Confrontation is life, and it will continue.

7 of 8 people found the following review helpful.

What a wonderful book. From the core of the story --the ...

By Fiona Levaster

What a wonderful book. From the core of the story --the grown-up victim of a bully and the grown-up bully himself come together to find that it was never so simple as all that--the book expands, chronicling what happens to an array of men who don't fit into the system very well, who reject the system just as they are rejected by it. Some have better reactions than others. Some of those reactions are brutal. some are very funny. As is this book. All of it is brilliant.

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