



Jeanine Cummins

Topics

Activism and Social Justice, Best Selling and Award Winning Authors, Criminal Justice, Immigration

Travels From

New York

Bio

Jeanine Cummins was born on a US Naval Base in Rota, Spain, and spent most of her childhood in Gaithersburg, Maryland. When she was sixteen, Jeanine's family experienced a horrific violent crime: the double-homicide of her two cousins by four strangers. Her brother was the only surviving victim of the attack. The crime and the impact it had on her family became the subject of her best-selling 2004 memoir *A Rip in Heaven*. After that publication, Jeanine began speaking publicly about victims' rights, and specifically about her family's experiences with the criminal justice system. Jeanine is a death penalty opponent and can speak to the ways death row further persecutes victims of violent crime. She has addressed college, high school, and middle school students about topics from writing to victimology, to turning trauma into art. She's spoken to first responders about best practices when dealing with victims of violent crime and trauma. She has also visited prisons where she spoke with inmates about using art or stories as a way to take ownership over trauma. With her new book, *American Dirt*, Jeanine looks forward to the opportunity to discuss her extensive research into the origin stories of migrants and

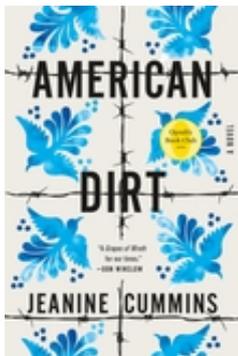
refugees who attempt to get to the US via the southern border with Mexico. During her research, Jeanine visited migrant shelters and orphanages in Mexico, met with humanitarian aid workers who provide water to migrants in the desert, interviewed lawyers who provide *pro bono* legal services for unaccompanied minors, and volunteered at a *desayunador* (soup kitchen) in Tijuana. Those experiences, among many others, were deeply influential in helping Jeanine understand why Mexican and Central American migrants are willing to undertake such a perilous journey, crossing Mexico atop the treacherous freight trains known as *La Bestia*, all in the hopes of reaching a hostile and closed foreign border.

SPEECHES

American Dirt *American Dirt* is a novel about migration in the Americas. Cummins can speak about her extensive research throughout both sides of the borderlands and the real conditions on the ground that migrants are facing, and speak to why they are undertaking such a perilous journey to an unwelcoming country.

A Rip in Heaven: A Memoir of Murder and Its Aftermath Cummins can speak to victims' rights, and tell the story of her family's horrific encounter first with violent crime and homicide, and then with the criminal justice system.

BOOKS

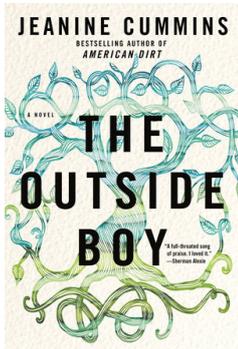


HARDCOVER

[American Dirt](#) A Novel

Flatiron Books

Hailed as "a *Grapes of Wrath* for our times" and "a new American classic," *American Dirt* is a rare exploration into the inner hearts of people willing to sacrifice everything for a glimmer of hope.

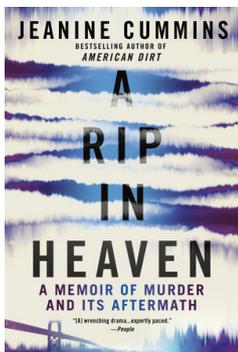


PAPERBACK

[The Outside Boy](#) A Novel

Penguin Random House

A poignant, coming of age novel about an Irish gypsy boy's childhood in the 1950s.



PAPERBACK

[A Rip in Heaven](#) A Memoir of Murder and Its Aftermath

Penguin Random House

A Rip in Heaven is Jeanine Cummins' story of a night in April, 1991, when her two cousins Julie and Robin Kerry, and her brother, Tom, were assaulted on the Old Chain of Rocks Bridge, which spans the Mississippi River just outside of St. Louis.

REVIEWS: "I was a facilitator of a reading group for convicted felons, as part of their probation. Each group, we would read *A Rip in Heaven* and discuss it. We had Jeanine Cummins come to the court and spend a few days with us. To say that we were all changed forever is an understatement. Ms. Cummins gave presentations to both adult offenders and juvenile offenders. Both presentations were very emotional and, by the questions she was asked, were very insightful and taught us all about trauma and forgiveness. There were more than a few tears shed during those presentations. It was both uplifting and inspiring for everyone involved during those two short days and none of us will ever forget being a part of that wonderful experience."

—Linda Mowrer, Wayne County Court of Common Plea in Wooster, Ohio

"In addition to *A Rip in Heaven* being an important experience for my students, Ms. Cummins' coming to my classes and speaking about her writing and her story was a truly transformative experience for several students. Although the classes were large and often very difficult to engage, Ms. Cummins was able to easily connect to the students and deliver a meaningful narrative about her writing process and her personal experience as a survivor of homicide."

—Cortney Fisher, Deputy Director of the DC Office of Victims Services and Adjunct Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Maryland

"I was delighted with Jeanine Cummins' visit to Roanoke College. She is a talented author and dynamic speaker whose campus-wide talk on her book *A Rip in Heaven* had a powerful impact on our faculty and students."

—Dr. Todd C. Peppers, Henry H. & Trudye H. Fowler Professor in Public Affairs at Roanoke College

"The class experience was enhanced when the author herself came to speak about her book, the criminal justice system, and how to improve the survivors' interaction with the system. In this day and age of social media distractions my students were focused on every word Jeanine said. I could not ask for a better presentation on such a difficult and personal topic. Jeanine expanded the knowledge base of my students in such a personal and powerful way. I will be forever grateful."

—Kevin Barrett, PhD, Rockland Community College

"Jeanine Cummins' talk was inspiring for students, faculty, and community members alike. We were all mesmerized by her storytelling and the engaging--and personable--way in which she talked about her writing and research process. One of the best visiting writers we've had in years!"

—Mary McMyne, Lake Superior State University

Advance praise for *American Dirt* "Beautiful, straightforward language drives home the point that migration to safer places is not a political issue but a human one. With a story line sure to be much discussed this election year—plus a film in the works—*American Dirt* may be the don't-miss book of 2020."

—*Booklist* (Starred)

"Lydia and Luca are utterly believable characters, and their breathtaking journey moves with the velocity and power of one of those freight trains. Intensely suspenseful and deeply humane, this novel makes migrants seeking to cross the southern U.S. border indelibly individual."

—*Kirkus Reviews* (Starred)

"This extraordinary novel about unbreakable determination will move the reader to the core."

—*Publishers Weekly* (Starred)

"*American Dirt* is both a moral compass and a riveting read. I couldn't put it down. I'll never stop thinking about it."

—Ann Patchett, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Dutch House* and *Commonwealth*

"Why do we read fiction? By immersing ourselves in the lives of fictional characters we gain emotional depth, breadth, and empathy. We become more human. I have never felt more changed—or challenged—by a book than I have by *American Dirt*. It's truly a revelation."

—Elin Hilderbrand, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Summer of '69*

"A powerful, moving, and unforgettable read. Sadly, this is the real story that many Mexican families live through every day."

—Reyna Grande, author of *The Distance Between Us*

"Relevant, powerful, extraordinary. It is a remarkable combination of joy and terror, infused always with the restorative power of a mother's love and the endless human capacity for hope."

?Kristin Hannah, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Nightingale* and *The Great Alone*

"This book is not simply the great American novel; it's the great novel of *las Americas*. It's the great world novel. This is the international story of our times. Masterful."

—Sandra Cisneros, award-winning author of the highly acclaimed *The House on Mango Street*

"*American Dirt* is a beautiful and painful book about the perilous journey many immigrants must endure to survive in this world. Jeanine Cummins writes with such grace, compassion, and precision that I could not stop reading."

—Erika Sánchez, author of *I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*

"*American Dirt* is an extraordinary piece of work, a perfect balancing act with terror on one side and love on the other. I defy anyone to read the first seven pages of this book and not finish it. The prose is immaculate, and the story never lets up. This book will be an important voice in the discussion about immigration and *los migrantes*; it certainly puts the lie to the idea that we are being besieged by 'bad hombres.' On a micro scale—the story scale, where I like to live—it's one hell of a novel about a good woman on the run with her beautiful boy. It's marvelous."

—Stephen King

"From its heart-stopping first sentence to its heart-shattering last, Cummins's story of immigrants is just what we need now. Gritty yet sensitive, realistic yet hopeful, grand and granular, *American Dirt* by

Jeanine Cummins is a *Grapes of Wrath* for our times."

—Don Winslow, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Border*

"*American Dirt* is an urgent, blistering, unforgettable book. In her portrayal of Lydia and Luca, a mother and son forced to leave their Mexican home, Jeanine Cummins has given face to migrants everywhere who flee violence and near-certain death in search of only one thing: a chance at life. Beautifully written, thrilling in its propulsive force, *American Dirt* is a new American classic."

—Tara Conklin, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Last Romantics*

"The story of the migrant is the story of our times, and Jeanine Cummins is a worthy chronicler. At once intimate and epic, *American Dirt* is an exhilarating and beautiful book about parental love and human hope."

—Rumaan Alam, author of *That Kind of Mother* and *Rich and Pretty*

"Great novels throw open the windows of a sleeping house, giving face and voice to what might otherwise remain unseen and making it impossible to look away. As *All Quiet on the Western Front* made flesh and blood the word 'soldier', *American Dirt* brings to life the nameless migrant, a word that lives mostly in numbers in the news. Here is the riveting story of a mother, her son, and the people they meet as they journey towards safety, a story that makes real the people who are walking toward the United States from Central America and Mexico, even as you read this sentence. Urgent and unforgettable, *American Dirt* leaps the borders of the page and demands attention, especially now."

—Sarah Blake, author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Postmistress* and *The Guest Book*

"This tough, powerful novel is an eye opener. It made me understand better why someone would give up the home they know and love to survive, and the grit required to cross that border. It is essential reading for our time."

?Tracy Chevalier, bestselling author of *Girl With a Pearl Earring*

"Riveting, timely, a dazzling accomplishment. Jeanine Cummins makes us all LIVE and BREATHE the refugee story. If a book can change hearts and transform policies, this is the one!"

—Julia Alvarez, author of *In the Time of the Butterflies*

"I strive to write page-turners because I love to read them, and it's been a long time since I turned pages as fast as I did with *American Dirt*. Its plot is tight, smart, and unpredictable. It is rich in authenticity. Its journey is a testament to the power of fear and hope and belief that there are more good people than bad."

?John Grisham