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Los Angeles, 1968: From Happy Ranch to Watts: Book III in The American Teachers Series (Volume 3)

T. Lloyd Winetsky

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Weeks before the assassination of Martin Luther King,

Allen Greene, a directionless young white man who never intended to be a teacher, finds himself in a Watts classroom, standing before thirty black seventh-grade girls. After a trial-by-fire first day that includes run-ins with violent students and ominous warnings from faculty members, Allen doubts his ability to follow through on the whole venture. He finds some encouragement from unexpected places: a teen mother who is unjustly accused of striking a teacher, a low-achieving gang member with an unexpected gift for poetry, and an elderly teacher with a commitment to social justice who takes Allen under her wing. As he builds a rapport with students as a tough-but-fair teacher, Allen's outside-the-box approach evokes antagonism from some faculty members, especially his department chairman, whose has a vile secret that adds a mini-mystery to the plot. As pressure builds both inside and out of school, Allen joins some students and teachers in peaceful protests while gangs and vandals run wild. After Dr. King is assassinated, the increased tension leads to dramatic showdowns for Allen, who finds both an unlikely savior and an unexpected calling. Not another oversimplified feel-good story of "white teacher saves the ghetto," *Los Angeles, 1968: Happy Ranch to Watts* is a novel based on first-hand experience and real events in a volatile urban setting, a slice-of-life account of a young man's gradual maturation toward personal commitment.

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