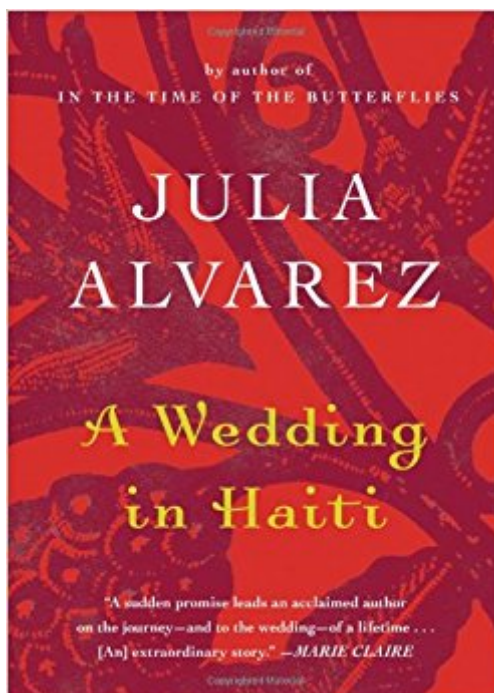


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# A Wedding In Haiti (Shannon Ravenel Books)



## Synopsis

In a story that travels beyond borders and between families, acclaimed Dominican novelist and poet Julia Alvarez reflects on the joys and burdens of love—for her parents, for her husband, and for a young Haitian boy known as Piti. In this intimate true account of a promise kept, Alvarez takes us on a journey into experiences that challenge our way of thinking about history and how it can be reimagined when people from two countries—traditional enemies and strangers—become friends.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Author One-on-One: Julia Alvarez and Mark Kurlansky Mark Kurlansky, the bestselling author of *The Food of a Younger Land*, *Cod* and the upcoming *Birdseye: The Adventures of a Curious Man*, interviews Julia Alvarez about *A Wedding in Haiti*. Mark Kurlansky: As a Dominican growing up around Haitians and next door to Haiti what was your impression of Haiti and Haitians and what surprised you when you went there? Actually, there weren't many Haitians around when I was growing up in the 50s, under the dictatorship of Trujillo. The border had been closed since the massacre of 1937, when Haitians living on the Dominican side were killed by the military (from 4,000 to 40,000--the figures vary wildly). I knew only one Haitian, Chucha, who was the nanny over at my cousins' house. The story was that during the massacre, Chucha had walked all the way from the southwest border to the capital and knocked at my great aunt's door, asking for asylum. My great aunt took her in. Chucha stayed for the rest of her life. When she was in a good mood, Chucha told incredible stories. So, that was my impression of our neighbor country: a place of

cranky people who could tell the best stories. What I absorbed from the culture was that Haiti was the benighted country next door, where Vodou was the religion, instead of our enlightened Christianity. Haitians were the "real blacks," whereas black Dominicans were "indios oscuros" (dark Indians). Haiti was the enemy who had invaded us and occupied our country for twenty-two years. (Interestingly, Dominicans celebrate their independence, not from their colonizer Spain, but from Haiti.) At night, when I didn't want to go to sleep, I'd be threatened with the Haitian cuco (boogeyman) who was going to come take me away to Haiti. Of course, this threat only served to pique my interest! Given that I was curious about Haiti, I'm surprised that I didn't make more of an effort to go "next door" when I returned often to the D.R. All the red tape required to cross the border discouraged me, but I think there was also a subliminal fear and shame based on the 1937 massacre, never fully acknowledged by my country. I assumed that as someone of Dominican heritage and white, I would be unwelcomed, until I was invited by Piti to attend his wedding. What surprised me were the many similarities between Haiti and the D.R.--despite our different histories, languages, cultures. Haitians were making casave, a staple of the Dominican diet as well. Their beer, Prestige, tasted like our beer, Presidente. (Even the names had a similar ego-boosting feel to them!) The sayings, which are the way popular wisdom gets passed down in our oral cultures, were often the same ones in Kreyòl as in Spanish. These might seem superficial things, but they signaled a deep connection between our two countries. I was impressed by how much more resourceful the Haitians were. As a poorer country, they don't waste anything. The culture, especially out in the countryside, is less "corrupted" by Americanized and globalized influences. No McDonalds or Kentucky Fried Chickens, no ads for Coke, though we did see a big truck with OBAMA painted on the side of the trailer. Read the rest of the interview --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

AARP.com's Best Books of 2012 Named one of the Top 10 Best Latino Authors for 2012 by TheLatinoAuthor.com "She is the ideal travel companion" witty and observant and, as in all of Julia Alvarez's writing, compassionate and full of heart. A Wedding In Haiti is a great experience and its unaffected prose is as true a portrait of complex Haiti as you will find. "Mark Kurlansky's [A] beguiling memoir of family and culture. "O, The Oprah Magazine "An sudden promise leads an acclaimed author on the journey" and to the wedding "of a lifetime . . . [An] extraordinary story. "Marie Claire "An open-eyed view of Haiti before and after the earthquake . . . A Wedding in Haiti is Alvarez's view into the rural Haitian family life that never makes the news. "The Associated Press "Award-winning Dominican writer Julia Alvarez

finally, sweetly, gets to know her sister country as she travels to a friend's fete. • "Ebony • Alvarez's devotion, her admiration and hope, and most clearly, the love for her extended family, is palpable throughout. • "The Christian Science Monitor • Heartbreaking and humorous, simple and elusive. • "Ms. Magazine blog • A moving message about the nature of poverty, human love, and their opposites. • "Examiner.com • A glimpse into the heart of a complex country during a tumultuous time. • "National Geographic Traveler • This beautiful memoir from Alvarez is a look at Haiti through an unlikely friendship . . . Wonderfully told. • "New York Post • A memoir with the structure and impact of a novel . . . It is hopeful, folksy, sobering and graceful with good story-telling. • "Asheville Citizen-Times • Touching, funny, eye-opening and uplifting. • "The Seattle Times • A compelling account of friendship, loyalty and perseverance. • "Philadelphia Citypaper • A deeply personal story of family and connection that casts a light on larger issues of global community and the need for unity, compassion, and understanding. • "Shelf Awareness, starred review • Beautifully told and moving, Alvarez's memoir serves to introduce readers to all Haiti once was • and what it could be again. • "SheKnows.com • Warm, funny and compassionate. • "Kirkus Reviews • A moving homage to the Haitian people. • "Publishers Weekly • "[Alvarez's] unaffected prose and her warm and caring voice make this • intimate introduction to a troubled country one many readers will savor." • "Booklist

I love Julia Alvarez. I doubt we have the same political leanings and I know we aren't the same religion or socio-economic bracket. To be honest, we might not get along if we met. But I love her books. She's got the kind of clear writing voice that aspiring authors dream of and she lives life as an adventure, which I greatly admire. She also knows which stories to tell and to my knowledge has never written a bad book. This book was also great. To people comparing her to Gabriel Garcia Marquez, this is a personal travel narrative, it isn't meant to be poignant literature. Just because both authors often write about South and Central America doesn't mean they write in the same genre or for the same audience. That being said, this is her story about several trips to Haiti with a family friend. It reads as honest, compelling and gives a depiction of day to day life in a country that has a lot of poor or inaccurate information being released about it. If you like Alvarez, you'll like this book. If you're curious about Haiti, you'll like this book. I'd highly recommend it.

As soon as I heard about A Wedding in Haiti, I ordered the Kindle version because Julia Alvarez is one of my favorite authors. The descriptions of how things are here { I live here in DR } are bang on!!

I love the part about crossing the border because it is exactly how it is. The bickering that occurs on road trips, especially road trips here, where, well roads disappear was hilarious. My favorite part is her description of how life gets complicated here, once one starts living, caring and loving being here. I couldn't stop reading until the last word.

Alvarez never fails to keep the reader's attention. Thinking this book historical fiction like many of her previous writings, I was delighted to find this a record of wonderful family support and intensity. The reports on post earthquake Port-au-Prince were intriguing. Alvarez raises a very important issue at the end: will all the outside NGO assistance really change Haiti's plight or will international political power continue to ignore the underlying causes of Haiti's poverty and culture. Alvarez remains my 21st century favorite female author. A must read for lovers of cultural insights, realistic human interaction, and current day political intricacies.

Love this book! Having recently taken a mission trip to Jarabacoa and even spending time with the family that the story is about, it is a wonderful telling of a life we in America cannot imagine. These people are incredible, love them and love the story. Thank you for sharing!

I actually give this book 4 1/2 stars as I liked it a lot. I liked it because it flowed beautifully. It is easy to connect with Julia Alvaraz and the people she shares her visits to Haiti with. The story is really interesting and so informative. I feel like I could really picture where they were. Ms Alvaraz clearly is devoted to the people of both the Dominican Republic and Haiti. She is empathetic but not condescending. She is actually quite humble. I highly recommend this story. It is both "feel good" and inspiring.

As always Julia Alvarez takes you on a journey. This time replete with pictures not just the ones every reader creates in their heads but real time pictures. I was part of a diary and was moved by every moment I shared with her. I am always saddened when the journey ends. Like a visit with a dear friend whom you are thoroughly enjoying and you are already anticipating the next visit in the midst of the one you're having because you don't want to leave but know you must. Thank you.

In this book, *A Wedding in Haiti*, Julia Alvarez shares her personal experiences, friendships and relationships in such a way that made me feel as if we were old acquaintances. I have to admit that I reluctantly started reading this book but was quickly won over by her warmth and openness in her

telling of her relationships and travels in Haiti. Until I read this book I had no desire to travel to the Dominican Republic or to Haiti. Thank you Julia Alvarez.

I have submerged myself into this book immediately. A poetic description of many realities but with such humanity that it enlightens your grey matter while challenging your heart and soul. I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the human race, Caribbean, Dominican and Haitian history and realities.

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