

Boxes – The Trappings of Society and Relationships

A Novel by Thomas DeSanto

Overview

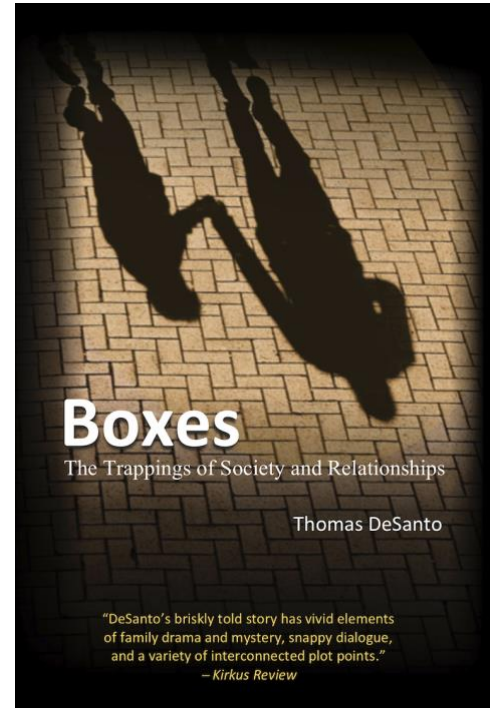
This fast-paced novel engages readers in a twisting mystery as it inspires them to consider the pervasive social issues that impact their lives and relationships. It is a heartfelt exploration of diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI).

Boxes – The Trappings of Society and Relationships is set in Philadelphia in 1998. It follows Tim Adams who is overcome by the shallowness, hypocrisy, and injustice of American society. His despair is intensified by corporate corruption at work, urban decay in Philadelphia, and marital strife at home. Feeling hopelessly boxed in, Tim runs away in the middle of the night with his three-year-old daughter in search of a more-ideal existence. He is pursued by a private detective and the FBI, but outsmarts them at every turn. Along the way, Tim's escape jolts diverse characters from boxed-in lives to new beginnings.

According to the author, the novel “reveals the profound impact of society on the choices we make and the relationships we treasure.” *Boxes* was conceived as a social commentary written as a satisfying quick read that opens the door to deeper contemplation and dialogue. Paperback and digital editions include discussion guides on social issues, racism, relationships, self-realization, spirituality, and marriage, as well as a guide to literary analysis of the novel.

Boxes – The Trappings of Society and Relationships also can serve important roles beyond individual readers and book clubs:

- In the classroom, *Boxes* can offer a multidisciplinary DEI curriculum in literature, social studies, and history.
- In counseling sessions, *Boxes* can be a catalyst for discussion and resolution in many types of relationships.



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Genres: Adventure, Detective/Mystery, Families & Relationships

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“*Boxes* came to fruition over three decades. It reflects the wisdom of many years and yearnings. Its message is more vital now than when it began. Technology has changed exponentially. The human condition has not.”

– Thomas DeSanto, author



Paperback and digital editions are available at [Amazon.com](#), [Bookshop.org](#), and select bookstores.

Three Excerpts

Why is life in office towers so totally removed from life in the streets? Executives pull down multimillion dollar salaries, stay in 5-star hotels, and enjoy thousand-dollar expense-account dinners. In the corporate rat race, executive suites are Skinner Boxes where power brokers pound pleasure buttons until they lose touch with reality. The result is perverse and pervasive injustice.

“What?” Johnny shouted. “Tea for the chink and nothing for me?”

Last time the Chinaman, thought Father Hu. This time the chink.

“You’re so rude,” scolded Bella. “Father Hu can hear you.”

“No, he can’t.” Johnny’s voice was argumentative, but lower.

By that time, he could no longer discern their fighting words.

The kitchen conversation heated up. The volume was low, but emotion ran high. Father Hu concluded that his tea was not forthcoming. But for Bella’s sake he would wait one more minute.

Noting the second hand, he tuned out the battle and turned back to his thoughts. *Chinaman. Chink. How many times had Grandfather heard such remarks? How many times was his own father denied opportunities? Even today, Chinese people were misunderstood and repressed.*

“Courtland’s resin plants in rural areas leaked benzene for years. People got leukemia and other cancers. To cover it up, the company falsified reports or doled out bribes to small-town water-company barons. Shareholders got rich. Poor people died.”

“You knew about this?”

“Not really. A bunch of us figured out that King [the CEO] was poisoning people and cooking the books. We wanted to bring him to justice by gathering evidence. But we couldn’t do it.”

**BOXES IS DEDICATED TO
EVERYONE WHO FEELS
TRAPPED WITHIN LIFE'S
CIRCUMSTANCES AND
LONGS FOR FULFILLMENT**

Long before DEI became a hot topic, *Boxes – The Trappings of Society and Relationships* explored the ramifications of being boxed-in by a society that fails to value diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Reviews

“...What seemed like a meticulously planned trip into the unknown has now turned into a high-wire act that puts his future in serious jeopardy. DeSanto’s briskly told story has vivid elements of family drama and mystery, snappy dialogue, and a variety of interconnected plot points.”

“...The family issues and Tim’s escape have terrific details and believable characters, and the addition of a little cloak and dagger action make the story even more compelling.”

– *Kirkus Review*

“...DeSanto built up the suspense in exciting levels with all the twists and turns, and he brought me with him at each level. The author’s wicked sense of humor was at play here, too. I grinned, chuckled and laughed.” *Boxes - The Trappings of Society and Relationships* by Thomas DeSanto deserves the highest rating. Thus, I give it 4 out of 4 stars.”

– *Online Book Club*

Social Media



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[Thomas DeSanto 1](#)

About the Author



Although Thomas DeSanto grew up in the rural Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, he enjoyed a rich diversity of experiences that piqued his interest in people and places. Families stationed at a nearby U.S. Army Depot provided a steady stream of classmates from all over the country. The television, radio, and newspapers from New York City, just 100 miles away, sparked an affinity for everything urban.

Thomas’ first-generation parents from Italy and Poland, as well as the customers who frequented their small family grocery store, taught him about all kinds of people and what made them tick. Rampant curiosity inspired him to read encyclopedias for pleasure as he consumed the television comedies and music of the mid-sixties and early seventies.

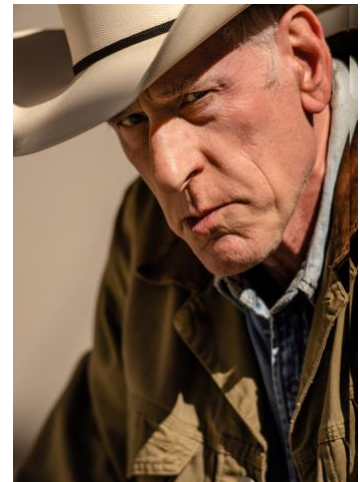
He processed this enormous smorgasbord of input into creativity through writing, drawing, and making music. He delved into science to try to understand how everything worked, and into science fiction to explore future possibilities. As he aspired to be a Renaissance man, his interests multiplied.

College brought a rude, but required awakening. After four years at Penn State University with a self-prescribed curriculum, Thomas was given one year to graduate. Ample credits in counseling, music theory, chemistry, Russian, calculus, graphic design, and neuropsychology, plus a semester abroad in Spain, did not add up to a degree. Consequently, Thomas astutely cobbled together a B.A. in Advertising. And it served him well.

Thomas went on to become an accomplished copywriter, designer, creative director, and strategist for advertising agencies, health systems, and as an independent consultant. Along the way, he added an M.S. in Communication in 2017 to master the new wave of technology.

In 1985, he married Celia Bloom and they have two children, Daniel, and Anya. As he helped raise his family and pursued his career, Thomas gradually wrote his first novel, *Boxes – The Trappings of Society and Relationships*, and self-published it in 2020.

In his spare time, Thomas continues to pursue diverse and sometimes unusual interests. He tracked down unknown ancestors and achieved dual citizenship with Italy. As a “green” craftsman, he creates dimensional art with discarded and found objects. He also sometimes appears in minor roles or as a background actor in television and film.



Author Interviews



Many years of presenting and speaking as a marketing communications professional combined with improvisational acting experience make Thomas DeSanto an excellent choice for interviews. His vast knowledge (intellectual and trivial), quick wit, and deep passion for social justice are entertaining and enlightening.

Thomas welcomes inquiries for audio, video, and virtual/live discussions. He can be reached at desanto.thom@gmail.com, boxesdesanto.com, or 1-858-692-5222.

Sample Interview Questions

Why did you write *Boxes – The Trappings of Society and Relationships*?

I have always been disturbed by the unresolved social issues in American society that continue to plague us. They often go undiscussed and subsequently unresolved. To spark discussion, I decided to create a social commentary in the form of a page-turning mystery novel. The story line would drive readers through the plot while character interactions would bring to light how societal issues deeply affect all of us.

What does the title mean?

The major title "Boxes" describes how societal norms can place us in boxes that confine us and limit our personal fulfillment. The secondary title "The Trappings of Society and Relationships" alludes to how being boxed-in impacts our lives. The boxes that trap us can include racism, addiction, corporate greed, ineffective government, toxic relationships, and failed religion. These are explored in the novel and discussion guides.

What inspired *Boxes* as a social commentary?

I see *The Catcher in the Rye* and *Rabbit, Run* as profound commentaries on the yearning to finding one's place in society and relationships. Like Holden Caulfield, my protagonist Tim Adams is disillusioned by the shallowness and hypocrisy of American society. Like Harry Angstrom, Tim runs away in search of a more ideal existence. The difference is that *Boxes* is neither a coming-of-age story, nor an escape into a downward spiral. Instead, Tim is a troubled young father who redeems himself and others through his desperate escape.

What inspired *Boxes* as a mystery/adventure?

I'm intrigued by the energy and inventiveness of Frank Abagnale in *Catch Me If You Can, The True Story of a Real Fake* (Yes, that's the full title of the original novel). In *Boxes*, Tim Adams is able to outsmart everyone with his clandestine escape and outmaneuver a private detective and FBI agents as he moves across the country with his daughter. Tim is a chameleon as he changes names and stories by carefully deploying identity theft.

Why set *Boxes* in Philadelphia?

I began writing *Boxes* when I lived in Philadelphia in 1986. Living near the Italian Market and other ethnic enclaves near Center City provided myriad genuine experiences to draw upon. I truly enjoyed the city and got to know its underbelly. Philadelphia is a character in the novel as it is trapped in many of the boxes that inhibit its potential. The sad irony is that residents of the cradle of liberty are held captive by insidious social dynamics.

Why did it take three decades to write *Boxes*, and how did that affect its outcome?

Basically, writing the novel was far less important to me than enjoying time with my family and pursuing my career. Over the years, my point of view matured during different stages of life, and that brought great insight. Also, I had to make many adjustments for changes in norms and technologies. The sad and astounding fact is that over all those years America made very little progress on the social issues discussed in *Boxes*. I want to promote the novel so it might spark needed thought and discussion. That's the mission behind it.

Why did you self-publish *Boxes*?

Boxes does not fit well into the standard fiction genres and predictors of commercial success used by most publishers. After reading the first draft, a major publisher told me that it would be nearly impossible to combine a social commentary and mystery into a viable novel. I took on the challenge anyway. After many drafts and adjustments, I submitted to *Kirkus Review*. They had plenty of good things to say. That inspired me to make further edits and move ahead on my own. Publishers would put *Boxes* in a box that would suffocate it. Self-publishing is a long and difficult road, but much like Tim Adams, I move on and learn as I go.