ForeWord Reviews
Clarion Review

WOMEN'S STUDIES

Girlz Just Wanna Be Loved
Liz Walker
Jacinth Foote, illustrator
LVLup
978-0-9805832-0-5
Four Stars (out of Five)

"When life gives you lemons make lemonade." The literary equivalent of this popular adage might be "When life gives you adversity write a book" a piece of advice to which Liz Walker subscribes. Walker co-author of the previous Christian self-help book *You Are Crowned with Glory* draws on her personal experience to form the basis of *Girlz Just Wanna be Loved.*

Walker's youth was tumultuous and included pornography drug use and unprotected sex. After becoming a Christian marrying and having children Walker wished to communicate the importance of self-confidence and healthy sexual relationships to a young female audience. With emotionally vivid snippets from Walker's past *Girlz* aspires to be a memorable testimony about the sacredness of their sexuality for teen girls.

Arranged like a workbook *Girlz* has short chapters that address different themes such as "Sanctuary" "Sex Gone Wild" "What Am I Doing?" and "Restoring Beauty." The book follows a young woman's trajectory from innocence to sexual experience with a detour through dissatisfaction and a period during which confidence is restored. Walker uses clear but metaphorical prose to illustrate each state as when she describes a young woman's initial sexual state as that of an opulent bedroom that is progressively sullied by careless male suitors. Such analogies support Walker's point that one's sexuality is a significant part of life.

Girlz has the inviting atmosphere of a diary or some similar place where a reader might doodle or even write down her thoughts. Floral borders on certain pages add attractiveness. The pen-and-ink drawings by Jacinth Foote are embellished with a shade of pink and they increase the welcoming tone. Questions at the end of each chapter ("When you look in the mirror now what do you see? What do you reflect?") encourage readers to engage with the text.

Overall *Girlz* is an affirming exploration of teen sexuality even describing masturbation long a bugbear of sex advice books with approbation and sexual abuse with sensitivity and understanding. That said the book though open and frank does have its limits. Walker treats

pornography as a dangerous indulgence that twists and damages sexual expression. Given her background her perspective is understandable. Prospective buyers should know though that *Girlz* takes a negative view of a controversial subject that according to some can be a part of a healthy sexual life.

While *Girlz* may be appropriate for most young women the book assumes that readers have both mothers and fathers ("Describe your relationship with your dad") which may turn off readers who have blended families and/or queer parents. And a girl's love interest is posited as male leaving lesbian readers out of the loop. *Girlz Just Want to Be Loved* is best suited for heterosexual young women especially if they are religious in conjunction with more factual textbook-like sources about puberty and physical changes and their emotional effects.