

In a New Century: Essays on Queer History, Politics, and Community Life

John D'Emilio

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D'Emilio's decades of immersion in the LGBT community gives his words a palpable integrity.

In a New Century: Essays on Queer History, Politics, and Community Life, by John D'Emilio, covers the history of the LGBT community from closeted and persecuted to visible and legally empowered. The rise of the civil rights and women's liberation movements are also chronicled in this academically challenging yet easy-to-read book.

In a New Century opens with a thirty-three page introduction by the author that shares his personal odyssey as a gay man from graduate student through full professorship, from part-time to full-time activism, and from timidity as an author to the publication of hundreds of essays, research articles, and books.

Every essay is preceded by a paragraph explaining its context and background. For example, in the second essay, "Beyond Queer Nationalism," which was taken from a speech D'Emilio made in 2008 to a group that gives scholarships to promising LGBT students, D'Emilio writes, "Because it was the fortieth anniversary of 1968, a year of tremendous upheaval in the United States and around the globe, and because the media were giving so much attention to events of that year, I decided to frame my remarks to a contrast between then and now. How had change been achieved, I asked, and are the strategies and mindsets of the past still appropriate today."

This comparing and contrasting of past and present is a central theme of *In a New Century*. Whether taking oral histories in the late 1970s about the pre-Stonewall homophile movement, sharing his conflicted feelings about same-sex marriage, or writing about his active leadership role in LGBT organizations, D'Emilio's essays are imbued with passion and authenticity.

Entertaining stories from D'Emilio's decades of teaching college students, moving stories about being gay during the AIDS epidemic, and heartwarming stories about when it became okay for men to dance with men and women with women all add priceless value.

D'Emilio's guileless openness about his struggles and joys over forty-plus years as a gay man in the United States culminates in the final essay, where he writes eloquently about the fight for marriage equality. He wisely suggests that the LGBT community should note what contemporary heterosexual statistics and societal trends portend, that traditional marriage is not such a great thing for the 99 percent, and that activist energies could be better focused on reinventing ways to love that will work for everyone.

PATTY SUTHERLAND (Summer 2014)

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