

Rebel Yell: Stories by Contemporary Southern Gay Authors

Jay Quinn, Editor

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America's gay community extends far beyond the gay meccas of LA's West Hollywood, New York's West Village, and San Francisco's Castro District to all sections of the U.S. Attention in the gay media and literature is focused on the major centers of gay life in California and on the East Coast, stretching no further south than Washington, D.C. Quinn's anthology of fourteen Southern stories written by contemporary gay men savors the heritage of what it means to be gay and Southern, both in terms of contradiction and compliment.

The narratives study aspects of life, be it family of origin, childhood experiences, "Southern" worldview, and often a combination of all three. Many facets of gay men with their sexual orientation being but just one of many components are portrayed. The stories serve at times as celebrations and at times critiques of what it means to be Southern and gay.

Coming out experiences (as youth and adults), regional traditions, and Southern sensibilities; AIDS; the impact of religion, education, and family values on the authors are all explored. Accounts flow with a journey through each author's roots and sexuality; how they intertwine captivates the reader.

"My South," for example, written by Dan Stone, chronicles his life as the son of a Pentecostal preacher who moved at the age of fourteen with his family to the Midwest. Stone was tormented for being Southern. He shares his painful adjustment after leaving his home in a small south-central Virginia town to enter middle school in Decatur, Illinois. Stone refers to his new school as being "an inhospitable environment for a cerebral Southern sissy—an uncivil war zone where there were no gentlemen and ladies and where guerilla warfare had clearly supplanted croquet as the primary pastime of the young."

Quinn, a North Carolina native expertly edited Rebel Yell. Quinn currently lives in South Florida and is the author of *The Mentor: A Memoir of Friendship and Gay Identity*, a critic and regular columnist for the Lambda Book Report, and his novel, *Metes and Bounds*, is scheduled for publication in 2001.

This collection is well crafted, being pragmatic, and determined while remaining distinctively Southern. The stories are poignant, witty, and proud. It is recommended for gay adults and gay high school students, and also for parents (especially those from the South) coming to terms with their gay child's sexual orientation.

JOHN R. SELIG (May / June 2001)

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