



Unmasking of Our Interiors: A Queer Incubator of Courage, Resilience and Interior Design Leadership

Michael Plasse-Taylor

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Centered in LGBTQ+ communities during the 1980s and 1990s, Unmasking of Our Interiors is an insightful, funny memoir about a lifetime of activism.

Professor and activist Michael Plasse-Taylor's LGBTQ+ memoir *Unmasking of Our Interiors* covers both his community work in Canada and New York and his evolving personal identity.

Reflecting upon major life events from his childhood into the present, Plasse-Taylor covers his most pivotal memories from a reflective perspective, tinging them with of-the-moment humor, heart, and optimism. He begins with a humorous account of his own birth: his mother reported to him that he all but slipped out in the hospital, even as the doctors claimed that she was experiencing gas, not labor. Plasse-Taylor credits his mother with trying to keep his childhood experiences just as light as that story, despite the undercurrent of domestic tension between her and his father. And in covering such experiences, Plasse-Taylor discusses how he maintained a positive outlook through the challenges he faced—and talks about how he attempted to help others do the same.

By the time the book reaches Plasse-Taylor's adolescence, it begins to introduce questions of sexual identity. He notes that the adults in his life made his own self-realization fraught, including his parents, teachers, and family friends, who were wont to disparage people who didn't match established gender norms. But despite such roadblocks, Plasse-Taylor engaged in dogged persistence, determined to become his true self. He also always tried to help others who sought his guidance. Indeed, he worked to become the authority figure whom he always wanted for himself: as a teacher, he made safe spaces for his students, encouraging them to be true to themselves; as an activist, he donated time, money, and energy to helping marginalized people in Toronto. Examples of his consistency gather in an exponential manner.

Plasse-Taylor is also a compassionate, entertaining guide through the experiences of queer communities in Canada and the US Northeast across decades. His tone is casual, conversational, and thoughtful, though he applies a rosy lens even to the uncomfortable accounts he shares—including to his memories of bullying, childhood abuse, abandonment, and the AIDS epidemic. Indeed, in such moments, instead of indulging in negativity, Plasse-Taylor prioritizes the brighter outcomes of his recollections. And he fleshes these accounts out with sporadic complementary documentation, including photographs, newspaper clippings, awards, and flyers that amplify his memoir's scenes. At all times, his language is personal and inviting.

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JOHN M. MURRAY (March 29, 2022)

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