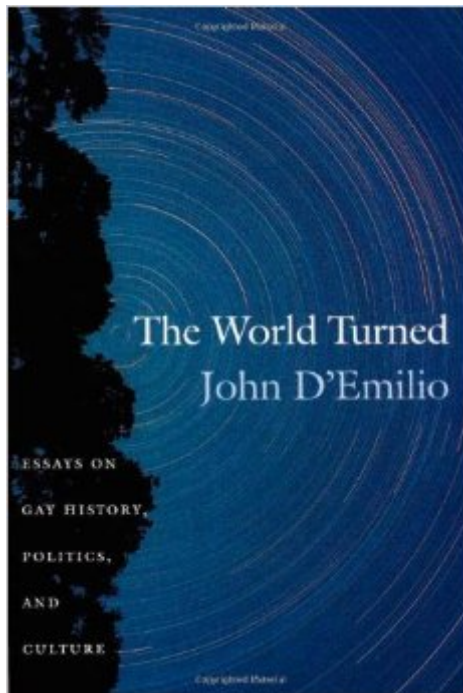


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The World Turned: Essays On Gay History, Politics, And Culture



Synopsis

Something happened in the 1990s, something dramatic and irreversible. A group of people long considered a moral menace and an issue previously deemed unmentionable in public discourse were transformed into a matter of human rights, discussed in every institution of American society. Marriage, the military, parenting, media and the arts, hate violence, electoral politics, public school curricula, human genetics, religion: Name the issue, and the the role of gays and lesbians was a subject of debate. During the 1990s, the world seemed finally to turn and take notice of the gay people in its midst. In *The World Turned*, distinguished historian and leading gay-rights activist John D'Emilio shows how gay issues moved from the margins to the center of national consciousness during the critical decade of the 1990s. In this collection of essays, D'Emilio brings his historian's eye to bear on these profound changes in American society, culture, and politics. He explores the career of Bayard Rustin, a civil rights leader and pacifist who was openly gay a generation before almost everyone else; the legacy of radical gay and lesbian liberation; the influence of AIDS activist and writer Larry Kramer; the scapegoating of gays and lesbians by the Christian Right; the gay-gene controversy and the debate over whether people are "born gay"; and the explosion of attention focused on queer families. He illuminates the historical roots of contemporary debates over identity politics and explains why the gay community has become, over the last decade, such a visible part of American life.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book reflects D'Emilio's roles as gay history scholar and policy director at the National Gay &

Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF). It resembles both his rigorous scholarly "Sexual Politics,..." and his social commenting "Making Trouble." This book will be both a challenge and a pleasure to everyday gay folks and nerdy queer theorists. The book is a compilation of essays regarding gay rights in the 90s, civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, and other such topics. Some people may not like the scrapbook feel here. D'Emilio chose to start the work with the heady academic stuff and that may scare off readers who will really enjoy the rest of it. Many of the entries are speeches he gave and they become repetitive after a while. Still, he does a great job of assessing gay rights in the last decade and summarizing the struggle over the past half century. D'Emilio is ever the counterintuitive thinker, but that's exactly what open-minded gay people need to be reading. A lot of the chapters center upon boys, but D'Emilio still maintains his status as a very pro-feminist, anti-androcentric gay male theorist. He does include this chapter about his changing sex life which implies that he and his partner are celibate; a fact that I highly doubt. However, his discussion about NGLTF is wonderful; there hasn't been enough analysis of gay institutions. At times, the book is kinda preachy and defensive. Still, I'm glad he opens a space for gay work that is not as light as "The Advocate" but not as heavy as Foucault. He still shows that he's a sharp progressive thinker and many ppl would benefit by getting their hands on this book.

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