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Through The Door Of Life: A Jewish Journey Between Genders (Living Out: Gay And Lesbian Autobiog)



Synopsis

Professor Jay Ladin made headlines around the world when, after years of teaching literature at Yeshiva University, he returned to the Orthodox Jewish campus as a woman—Joy Ladin. In *Through the Door of Life*, Joy Ladin takes readers inside her transition as she changed genders and, in the process, created a new self. With unsparing honesty and surprising humor, Ladin wrestles with both the practical problems of gender transition and the larger moral, spiritual, and philosophical questions that arise. Ladin recounts her struggle to reconcile the pain of her experience living as the “wrong” gender with the pain of her children in losing the father they love. We eavesdrop on her lifelong conversations with the God whom she sees both as the source of her agony and as her hope for transcending it. We look over her shoulder as she learns to walk and talk as a woman after forty-plus years of walking and talking as a man. We stare with her into the mirror as she asks herself how the new self she is creating will ever become real.

Ladin’s poignant memoir takes us from the death of living as the man she knew she wasn’t, to the shattering of family and career that accompanied her transition, to the new self, relationships, and love she finds when she opens the door of life. 2012 Finalist for the National Jewish Book Award for Biography, Autobiography, or Memoir “Wrenching” and liberating. . . . [it] opens up new ways of looking at gender and the place of LGBT Jews in community.” —Greater Phoenix Jewish News

Given her high-profile academic position, Ladin’s transition was a major news story in Israel and even internationally. But behind the public story was a private struggle and learning experience, and Ladin pulls no punches in telling that story. She offers a peek into how daunting it was to learn, with little support from others, how to dress as a middle-aged woman, to mu on make-up, to walk and talk like a female. She provides a front-row seat for observing how one person confronted a seemingly impossible situation and how she triumphed, however shakily, over the many adversities, both societal and psychological, that stood in the way.” —The Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide

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Customer Reviews

This book helped raise my consciousness about the challenges of the trans-community. Joy's courage to suffer enormous pain so that she could grow into who she is created to be as a human being inspires me. Her ability to stay focused on Love, which flowed from her relationship with God, is what saves her as she continues to suffer pain and challenge. For me, personally, the book gave me the opportunity to reflect on my own judgement(s) of the trans-community, and more importantly, trans-individuals. My level of compassion has increased as has my desire for deeper understanding.

After teaching literature for many years at Yeshiva University, Jay Ladin became an instant gender activist, when she returned to the Orthodox Jewish campus as its first transgender employee, now Joy Ladin. Behind the headlines and talk show commentaries, Joy takes her readers into a touching, emotional memoir of her journey to and beyond that point, dealing with not just with her personal and family transformation, but reconciling this to her religion as well. She mourns the "death" of the man she once was, father to three children and husband to a woman who can't help but be bitter about Joy's "choices" in life. The book takes the reader through her emotional, physical and social aspects of becoming a woman, the occasional roller-coaster effect of taking hormones, trying to maintain a realistic link (often dressed as the man she no longer considers herself to be) with her children, and battling the loneliness resulting from trying to carve out a new life with people who can somewhat understand and accept her. It's a powerful, well-written story, and recommended reading. Five stars out of five.- Bob Lind, Echo Magazine

What an amazing story. The author had a long road to travel with many bumps in the road. He could

not remain a man, but had to be a man for his family's sake in the beginning. At the end of the book, when the decision was finally made to go from Jay to Joy I breathed a sigh of relief because I felt that she had finally reached a place in her life where she could be happy and accepted by others.

"Sex Changes: A memoir of marriage, Gender, and moving on" is a better read and is really a good companion to this book. Not that Joy's book is bad it's just very personal and not really that interesting. The other book is written by her 'ex' and is a much more interesting read altogether. Read them both. Then you'll get the full picture.

I wanted to love this book and at times I did. Joy's story is fascinating, especially in 2013 as the focus on understanding trans-gender issues is in the spotlight. This is a hard review to write as I am so glad I read the book and understand her journey. This memoir has allowed me to read other articles and listen to a recent powerful NPR hour on trans-gender with much greater understanding. At times I thoroughly enjoy the writing and at other times there were either too many details, or not enough. It just didn't flow as I would have hoped being written by an English professor. I wanted to understand more about her relationships with her friends, colleagues and children. I found it interesting how the last 1/3 of the book felt like it was not written by the same person and perhaps the spiritual truth was that she was a different person. That being said, I gave it 4 stars, because it is important to read.

One would expect that a published poet and English professor would write engaging prose, and this is a beautifully written book. She describes in great detail the turmoil she experienced in deciding to transition, the impact on her family and the loss of her marriage. For anyone struggling with gender identity, or those who know and/or love someone in the throes of this struggle, this book is an honest portrayal of how powerful and overwhelming gender dysphoria can be.

I read this for a book club, and we all thought that it changed our perception and gave us greater understanding of what it is like to be transgender. This book really made me think about gender, gender roles and how we treat others. It was a bit long and sloppy at points, but mostly, a genuine, painful account of what she went through to become herself.

This is a beautifully written and deeply moving account of one person's transition from male to female. I have never read an account that illuminates the inner world of gender dysphoria so clearly.

i am a psychologist whose caseload includes families with these issues, and I will use this book to help my community understand better not only the transpeople we encounter, but to help us better understand the gender continuum and our own humanity. Thank you, Joy.

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