



RECLAIMING SOUTHSIDE

M. J. COLL

M. J. Coll grew up imagining herself as like her father's son, but 1950's Richmond, Virginia, wasn't a welcoming environment for her to come of age. Venturing to the Midwest for college, M. J. came into her own as a lesbian feminist in her twenties, exploring relationships with other women, participating in Vietnam War protests, and advocating for citizens in crisis. But when her mother got sick, M. J. found herself back in Richmond, the city that she both loved and struggled to understand. Caring for her mother and reconciling with her father left her with no choice but to reclaim Southside, the neighborhood she grew up in and had sought so desperately to flee in her teens and twenties.

This collection of vignettes and poems about coming of age in the South speak both to M. J.'s personal experience as a young lesbian and the movements of the latter half of the twentieth century that have shaped America today. A testament to both how far we have come since the fifties yet how far we still need to go in our search for equality for the LGBTQIA+ community, M. J.'s story is both personal and political.



About the Author

M. J. Coll is a retired English teacher and the author of book of poetry, *The Journey*. She has written essays for local Richmond magazines and newspapers about her experiences with anti-war protests, the second wave of feminism, and the beginnings of the current LGBTQ movement. She grew up in Richmond in the fifties and currently lives in the city with her black lab Flip.

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Genre: Memoir		Distributed by Lightning Source / Ingram	
Printed Book Size: 6 x 9"		Printed Page Count: 114	
Format	Paperback		
ISBN	978-1-962416-47-4		
Price	\$14.95		

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