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AN INTIMATE PORTRAIT THAT SHIFTS THE NARRATIVE OF WHAT GAY LIFE LOOKS LIKE IN THE RURAL SOUTH

“What a revelation! Mississippi’s same-sex couples speak out, defy homophobia, and find fulfillment in community, family, and spirituality. With expert insight, Dr. Marszalek explains how they meet, whether they wed, and why they stay in our poor conservative state. Write your legislator, tell the pastor, and give copies to friends. This trailblazing study is a must-read.”

—John Howard, emeritus professor, King’s College London

“I love, love, love this book. It feels like a conversation that the reader has been brought into, which I think is one of the strengths of the book. Academic and popular audiences will connect with these narrators, and they will feel more like friends by the end. This highly accessible work cuts across disciplinary boundaries to answer questions about where the queer South has been and where it is going.”

—Jerry Watkins, visiting assistant professor, College of William & Mary

Coming Out of the Magnolia Closet: Same-Sex Couples in Mississippi

John F. Marszalek III

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In *Coming Out of the Magnolia Closet: Same-Sex Couples in Mississippi*, John F. Marszalek III shares conversations with same-sex couples living in small-town and rural Mississippi. In the first book of its kind to focus on Mississippi, couples tell their stories of how they met and fell in love, their decisions on whether or not to marry, and their experiences as sexual minorities with their neighbors, families, and churches. Their stories illuminate a complicated relationship between many same-sex couples and their communities, influenced by southern culture, religion, and family norms.

As Marszalek guides readers into the homes of diverse same-sex couples, he weaves in his own story of meeting his husband and living as a married gay man in Mississippi. Both the couples and he explain why they remain in one of the most conservative states in the country rather than moving to a place with a large, vibrant gay community.

In addition to sharing his own experiences, Marszalek reviews the literature on the topic, including writings from southern and rural queer studies, history, sociology, and psychology, to explain how the couples’ relationships and experiences compare to those of same-sex couples in other areas and times. Consequently, *Coming Out of the Magnolia Closet* is written for both the scholar of southern and queer studies and for anyone interested in learning about the experiences of same-sex couples.

JOHN F. MARSZALEK III is clinical faculty of the online clinical mental health counseling program at Southern New Hampshire University. He lives in Mississippi with his husband and their two dogs.