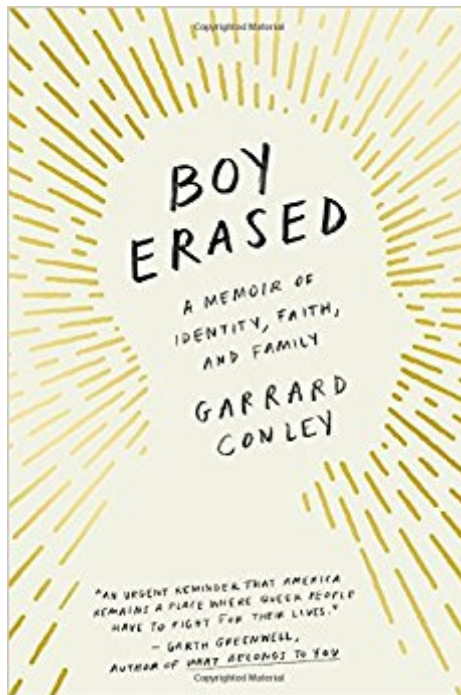




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# Boy Erased: A Memoir Of Identity, Faith, And Family



## Synopsis

"The power of Conley's story resides not only in the vividly depicted grotesqueries of the therapy system, but in his lyrical writing about sexuality and love." —Los Angeles Times  
"This brave and bracing memoir is an urgent reminder that America remains a place where queer people have to fight for their lives..." —Boy Erased  
"A necessary, beautiful book." —Garth Greenwell, author of *What Belongs to You*  
A beautiful, raw and compassionate memoir about identity, love and understanding. The son of a Baptist pastor and deeply embedded in church life in small town Arkansas, as a young man Garrard Conley was terrified and conflicted about his sexuality. When Garrard was a nineteen-year-old college student, he was outed to his parents, and was forced to make a life-changing decision: either agree to attend a church-supported conversion therapy program that promised to "cure" him of homosexuality; or risk losing family, friends, and the God he had prayed to every day of his life. Through an institutionalized Twelve-Step Program heavy on Bible study, he was supposed to emerge heterosexual, ex-gay, cleansed of impure urges and stronger in his faith in God for his brush with sin. Instead, even when faced with a harrowing and brutal journey, Garrard found the strength and understanding to break out in search of his true self and forgiveness. By confronting his buried past and the burden of a life lived in shadow, Garrard traces the complex relationships among family, faith, and community. At times heart-breaking, at times triumphant, this memoir is a testament to love that survives despite all odds. A movie is in the works starring Nicole Kidman, Russell Crowe, and Lucas Hedges, directed by Joel Edgerton and produced by Anonymous Content and Focus Features.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"[A] powerful convergence of events that Conley portrays eloquently." [Washington Post](#) "The power of Conley's story resides not only in the vividly depicted grotesqueries of the therapy system, but in his lyrical writing about sexuality and love, and his reflections on the Southern family and culture that shaped him." [Los Angeles Times](#) "This brave and bracing memoir is an urgent reminder that America remains a place where queer people have to fight for their lives. It's also a generous portrait of a family in which the myths of prejudice give way before the reality of love. Equal parts sympathy and rage, *Boy Erased* is a necessary, beautiful book." [Garth Greenwell](#), author of *What Belongs to You* "A brave, powerful meditation on identity and faith, *Boy Erased* is the story of one man's journey to accepting himself and overcoming shame and trauma in the midst of deep-rooted bigotry." [Buzzfeed \(Buzzfeed's Hot Summer Reads\)](#) "A moving memoir about discovering your true self, *Boy Erased* is a must-read." [Bustle](#) "Boy Erased is a gut-punch of a memoir, but the miracle of this book is the generosity with which Conley writes in an effort to understand the circumstances and motivations that led his family to seek the 'cure' his memoir is not simply a story of survival • in this book, a true writer comes of age. Conley writes vividly, with intelligence, wit, and genuine empathy. By embracing complexity and compassion, he reclaims his life and reminds us that a story rarely belongs to one person alone." [LA Review of Books](#) "Well-written, compelling, disturbing, and ultimately quite bracing, this is an important, refreshingly unsentimental perspective on the dangers and abuses of ex-gay therapy ministries." [Bay Area Reporter](#) "Wrenching and absorbing." [Travel and Leisure](#) "A compelling story of perseverance and humanity." [Outsmart Magazine](#) "Boy Erased isn't a smug tale of liberal awakening: Conley is frank and articulate about the sense of loss that has come with denying his religion and, as a consequence, the family he still loves [Conley's] writerly eye often wanders outside non-fiction's usual constraints. Writing stories is the work he wants to do; this book is clearly the work he needed to do." [Toronto Star](#) "Exceptionally well-written... This timely addition to the debate on conversion therapy will build sympathy for both children and parents who avail themselves of it while still showing how damaging it can be." [Publishers Weekly](#), [STARRED review](#) "In a sharp and shocking debut memoir, Conley digs deep into

the ex-gay therapy system. An engaging memoir that will inevitably make readers long for a more equal future. • Kirkus Reviews "Closely observed feelings are the fuel that drives this complex coming-of-age account. Moving and thought provoking. • Booklist "An essential document of the early 21st Century. Conley bears witness to something history will eventually condemn as too horrible to have happened, but he also takes the pain of "ex-gay therapy" and makes of it not just a record but a wonder." • Alexander Chee, author of *The Queen of the Night* "A brave account of a young man coming to terms with his sexuality in an environment that reviles him for it. A triumphant, heartfelt story. • Julia Scheeres, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Jesus Land* and *A Thousand Lives* "Garrard Conley has a hell of a story to tell, but he tells it with complete intelligence and gravity and beauty. This is a book that matters on every level, from the most intimate to the most political, and it settles into the reader's memory perfectly and permanently. *Boy Erased* is the book for our times. • An important book, and a true companion." • Rebecca Lee, author of *Bobcat and Other Stories* "Conley tells his story beautifully, with candor and courage and with compassion not only for the boy he was but for the parents who sent him to ex-gay therapy. Here at last is a story of evangelical homophobia from the inside, from a survivor and former believer, rather than from the incredulous outside. A vital book for young people still struggling with self-hatred inside the church and for anyone who's escaped it. • Maud Newton "Garrard Conley's memoir about his time in the ex-gay movement is actually about surviving an attempt at soul-murder. This is a book that had to be written, and it deserves a wide audience. • Charles Baxter, author of *The Feast of Love* "In 1982, Edmund White broke literary ground with his memoir *A*. Now it's Garrard Conley's turn to bring his own story to readers. As White was three decades ago for his generation, Conley is an important and necessary contemporary voice. • Ann Hood, author of *The Knitting Circle* and *Comfort*

Garrard Conley's fiction and nonfiction can be found in *Time*, *Vice*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, and on CNN.com, BuzzFeed, and elsewhere. He has received scholarships from the Bread Loaf, Sewanee, and Elizabeth Kostova Foundation writers' conferences. A finalist for the Lambda Literary Award for *Boy Erased*, Conley lives and teaches in Brooklyn, New York.

That could have been me. When I came out decades ago, my Mom lovingly suggested that I go

hear an ex-gay speaker at our church. I was grown, married, and divorcing. Not being reliant on parents makes it easier to resist such invitations, as does being older. Moreover, I had the support of a loving wife who would have skinned me alive. But about the book. . . . This was more of a history book for me, perhaps because of my vantage point. I still found it moving, but not earth shattering, as some have described. Garrard's gift, and what made the book wonderful for me, is his failure to demonize anyone -- himself (more or less), his parents, or God. His ability to see the dignity in his mother and father -- very different folks -- and the dignity in others that he encounters on his journey is one of the special qualities in this memoir. It wasn't my story, but his writing is adept enough that he takes you on his journey with him, and I was engrossed enough that for a few hours, his story was mine. I recommend the book, even for someone who, like me, passed these milestones some time ago.

I don't usually read memoirs, but a friend recommended this book and I'm so glad she did. The story is overwhelming at times. I felt attached to the author, wanting to know what happened after his days in "treatment" and how he survived. This is an amazing story of strength and self-discovery and I recommend it highly to everyone.

An amazing book on so many levels! In this memoir, Garrard Conley shares intimate details of his adolescent and early adult years in his quest to understand and accept himself. His journey is made far more difficult by his fundamental Christian upbringing and his parents and community's unwillingness to accept him as he is. This leads him to ex-gay therapy which is far more harmful than helpful. Anyone who reads this book will no longer be able to accept such therapy as an acceptable treatment. Conley's willingness to expose the intimate details of his life brings the reader into his life, pulling for him to find self-love in a world that makes it difficult to do. On another level, the book has incredible writing. The vivid descriptions, the limited but effective dialogue, the changes in time, and the development of the key people in his life at that time show Conley's incredible writing skills. Admittedly, at times I wanted to skip the descriptions in order to discover what happened next in his life. However, the quality of the writing kept me reading every word. I will look forward to reading more by Conley!

This is an important story. Garrard Conley tells of his parent's decision and his own collusion in seeking a cure for his gay sexuality through Exodus Ministry's Love In Action. With portraits of other participants and the leaders, he provides a taste of the actual experience. Most poignant is the

telling of his own inner life and his mother's ambivalence and hidden anguish in subjecting her son to something she is deeply unsure of. Conley's book is a courageous break to choose life over death. It is the story of one who has come through deep struggle to begin living the one life he can save... his own.

Very insightful book that I would recommend especially for those in Christian leadership/counseling. Even though this book is about gay vs the established church, I could quickly relate to the author's struggle based on my own struggles of misinterpretation of scriptures by those that have never walked in my shoes. We tend to forget that Jesus does not need human help in teaching sanctification. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" Very well written.

As a fellow ex-gay patient I bought this book to help me readdress some of my own experiences so that I could better understand my emotions regarding my experiences. While reading this book I relived some unpleasant times. I revisited memories that I didn't know I had. It's a good book, and even though the endings of author's experience and mine are very different I cannot critique it in any other way but to say that regardless of the severity of one's exposure to ex-gay ministry and homophobia from the church, it's a struggle we all bear. This book is a good springboard for opening up discussion about those experiences.

Conley appears to be trying too hard to be a poetic writer. The story line is attractive, but the author seems to depart too frequently on side trips that are not woven into the context of his timeline in a way that makes for easy reading. I think it distracts from the intensity of his story.

An interesting book, but a bit too wordy for my tastes. I felt like the author was trying too hard to be literary, rather than concentrating on telling his story, which I think could have been a very compelling one. While I was reading the book it was hard to tell how the author really felt about what he had gone through. It wasn't until I had finished the book and read a few articles that he had written for various publications that I got a sense of how awful it had been for him.

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