



How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America

By Kiese Laymon

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How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America By Kiese Laymon

Author and essayist Kiese Laymon is one of the most unique, stirring, and powerful new voices in American writing. *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America* is a collection of his essays, touching on subjects ranging from family, race, violence, and celebrity to music, writing, and coming of age in Mississippi. In this collection, Laymon deals in depth with his own personal story, which is filled with trials and reflections that illuminate under-appreciated aspects of contemporary American life. New and unexpected in contemporary American writing, Laymon's voice mixes the colloquial with the acerbic, while sharp insights and blast-furnace heat calls to mind a black 21st-century Mark Twain. Much like Twain, Laymon's writing is steeped in controversial issues both private and public. This collection introduces Laymon as a writer who balances volatile concepts on a razor's edge and chops up much-discussed and often-misunderstood topics with his scathing humor and fresh, unexpected takes on the ongoing absurdities, frivolities, and calamities of American life.

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for Kiese Laymon and his debut novel *LONG DIVISION*:

"[*How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America*] is not intended to serve as "a woe-is-we narrative" about the difficulties of being black in America or the South...or even an attempt to illuminate the taboo-amongst-black-folk subject of mental health—although both serve as narrative threads in Laymon's writing. Rather, it's an exercise in recalling memories." —**Jackson Free Press**

"Funny, astute and searching.... The author's satirical instincts are excellent. He is also intimately attuned to the confusion of young black Americans who live under the shadow of a history that they only gropingly understand and must try to fill in for themselves." —**Sam Sacks, Wall Street Journal**

"Don't miss Kiese Laymon's *Long Division*. One Mississippi town with two engaging stories in two very different decades. The sharp humor and deep humanity make this debut novel unforgettable." —**Melissa Harris-Perry, MSNBC**

"A novel within a novel—hilarious, moving and occasionally dizzying.... Laymon cleverly interweaves his narrative threads and connects characters in surprising and seemingly impossible ways. Laymon moves us dazzlingly (and sometimes bewilderingly) from 1964 to 1985 to 2013 and incorporates themes of prejudice, confusion and love rooted in an emphatically post-Katrina world." —**Kirkus Reviews**

"Laymon's debut novel is an ambitious mix of contemporary southern gothic with Murakamiesque magical realism.... the book elegantly showcases Laymon's command of voice and storytelling skill in a tale that is at once dreamlike and concrete, personal and political." —**Booklist**

"Smart, exciting and energetic...the language romps and roars along through some truly wonderful comic scenes and yet the book doesn't hesitate to comment seriously on questions that matter to human beings everywhere, not just in rural Mississippi." —**Victor LaValle, author of *Big Machine* and *Slapboxing with Jesus***

"Laymon is a brilliant young writer...this is a book that sings in the heart but challenges readers to take careful consideration of the power of memory. Like the best of Hurston, Ellison, or Bambara, Laymon's craft flows on frequencies that both honor and extend the traditions those writers established." —**William Henry Lewis, author of *I Got Somebody in Staunton***

"A little fantasy, a little mystery and a lot hilarious." —**Atlanta Journal-Constitution**

"*Long Division* is one of those books that I picked up and just couldn't stop reading...powerful, a classic American novel.... By far one of my favorite books." —**Jeff Chang, author of *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* and *Total Chaos: The Art and Aesthetics of Hip-Hop***

"Kiese Laymon is an amazing, courageous and brave novelist and essayist.... Laymon fiercely tackles issues

of prejudice, adolescence and love with a swagger and confidence all his own. You rarely find novels this honest and engaging. Read this book." —*Michigan Quarterly Review*

"Laymon's voice is unique, a rarity in an era during which fiction tends all too often to chase trends.... At times touching, at times poignant, Laymon more than once strikes a beautiful chord in the midst of what often feels gritty and intentionally provocative. Those touching insights make *Long Division* worth the effort, and readers who stick with the story (stories, actually) will find themselves thinking about City and the people in his life long after they close the book." —*Chicago Book Review*

"A curious, enjoyable novel...take[s] relish in skewering the disingenuous masquerade of institutional racism..." —*Publishers Weekly*

"The racial/ethical awareness is as complex as Coetzee's, and Laymon is just as good a writer. Laymon takes some real risks. I love the interplay of spirituality and sexuality. Nothing sounds forced, pandering or trendy. City, the husky citizen of the imagination, feels totally singular and totally representative. That's tough to pull off." —**Tim Strobe, author of *Ethics of Exile***

About the Author

Kiese Laymon was born and raised in Jackson, Mississippi. He attended Millsaps College and Jackson State University before graduating from Oberlin College in 1998. He earned an MFA from Indiana University in 2003 and is now an associate professor at Vassar College.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Norman:

The publication with title *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America* possesses a lot of information that you can study it. You can get a lot of profit after read this book. This book exist new information the information that exist in this reserve represented the condition of the world today. That is important to yo7u to understand how the improvement of the world. This book will bring you with new era of the the positive effect. You can read the e-book on your own smart phone, so you can read this anywhere you want.

Shannon Thomas:

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