



Denial: My 25 Years Without a Soul

Jonathan Rauch

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For 25 years, I lived in an upside-down world where love was hate, attraction was envy, and childhood never ended.

A memoir...

Denial: My 25 Years Without a Soul Details

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Kathrin says

Everyone that has the nerve to say that being gay is a lifestyle choice needs to read this book.

Nancy says

A love letter indeed

Rauch writes with deep understanding and lyrical beauty about his own coming of age. I ended the book with tears in my eyes.

Karen says

4.5 stars

This short biography is not exactly a traditional coming-out story in that it focuses primarily on the psychological inversion that the author experiences for twenty-five years, beginning in early adolescence. The writing is at times philosophical and could be, perhaps, a bit more streamlined in places. But on the whole it's a very honest and revealing account of a heart and mind battling confusion, getting lost along the way, and constructing a worldview to make sense of it all. The happy (if short and sketchy) conclusion reunites Rauch with his soul, his ability to love, and ultimately to the relationship he thought he would never have.

Emma says

"I recall childhood as a series of moments in a continual present thrust right up in my face, with no past or future. Though I learned, I do not remember acquiring knowledge. My discovery on that afternoon came as an announcement which presented itself with a bow and sat down to take its appointed place in my conscious mind. It must have been, however, part of a long unfolding. A few things had gone before, and later would come much more. Only in retrospect, long after the fact, was I able to find any pattern in the skein. And what a strange pattern it turned out to be! To have been twisted up in it, controlled by it, bent and helpless like a tied tree! Today, as I look back from middle age, the contorted condition of my youth has become incomprehensible to me. What you read here is a piecing together of shards, a backwards reading of an ancient script. The feeling that made sense of that world is gone, thank God."

And so begins the tale of Rauch's life from childhood to adulthood. It's a brutally honest and intelligent reflection on the innermost workings of his mind as he discovered and came to terms with his true self. Rauch exposes to the world his deepest vulnerabilities, those childhood thoughts that most people repress so as to never see the light of day. In a way it's amazing how he almost unconsciously manipulated his own mind to maintain the denial of his homosexuality. I flew through this book, his thought processes are so

relatable and intuitive to my own when I deal with anxieties or insecurities. I think a lot of people will be able to connect to his story, especially those more prone to introspection, regardless of particulars, insecurity and repression are pretty common as we grow up and "find ourselves".

Omar Aguilar-Pelayo says

Great way book!

Remind me if myself. Very inspiring words to help come out to family. Love the way he refers to gay people and not creating categories. Recommend

Beth says

3.5 stars

Within Jonathan Rauch's short volume, I discovered much to reflect upon. This is the only book of this type I've ever read, so I have nothing to compare it to. I absolutely admire his courage. That may seem trite or predictable to say, but I think writing about one's life is always vulnerable and risky, and he's sharing a highly personal journey in a very public way. I think it's always appropriate to acknowledge the strength that takes.

I was reading it through the filter of my straight-married-female experience, and it might sound odd, but I'd never really thought about the fact that I'd never really thought about my orientation! It was something I took for granted. That said, there are other aspects of my personality and history that I *did* have to work through, so Jonathan's message about understanding and owning who you are resonated. The moment when he finally broke through was such a relief... it's like someone opened up the curtains to the light after only knowing the darkness. I think anyone who's ever lived with a secret or feeling of shame will identify with that moment of freedom.

The star.5 off is because I felt the narrative grew a bit repetitive at times. Otherwise, I found the writing engaging, insightful and definitely thought-provoking.

Gochrisgo says

Interesting, quick read. There are some beautiful, telling passages. My favorite is when the writer rear ends another car because he was staring at a man, but still can't consider that he might be gay.

The writer uses a unique internal monologue style to try to make us feel what it feels like inside to discover you are gay.

The writing style can feel antiquated; if this writer is truly so accepting of his own homosexuality, why doesn't he use the word gay?

After reading many chapters about his teen crush, I was thrilled to read he is now married to a man. It would give closure to hear more about his husband and current relationship.

I find it frustrating that this writer says being gay is a "mild disability". That is an indefensible position in 2013.

John Lam says

I liked the idea of this book however it's to educate a heterosexual reader. He doesn't talk about the deep gritty experiences of being a confused homosexual.

Also, his writing isn't strong for a memoir. It read more like a news article.

Ian says

My bias... I am a straight male that views homosexuality as a choice, and a bad one at that with clear undeniably poor outcomes for people who choose it.

That said, I have an open mind, and I read this to try to put myself in the shoes of people on the other side of the ideological divide. This book provided an excellent counterpoint to my understanding, and exposed heterosexual readers such as myself to the uniquely different perspective that gay members of our society experience. A lot of the challenges he faced never even occurred to me. I really appreciated his perspective in admitting that there are many difficulties and challenges unique to the homosexual lifestyle that the majority do not face. In fact he admits that "homosexuality is a mild disability". Given the flamboyance of the gay movement in general, this was a very refreshing read into the mind of someone who has lived the human experience in a totally different way than I have and can speak openly of its advantages and failings.

Highly recommended for other heterosexual readers.

John Majors says

A friend recommended this book as a look inside the journey a man began in his boyhood to discover his sexual identity. Difficult to read in places, though not graphic, but not for everyone. With all the writing/reading I've been doing on "identity," it was helpful to read his perspective.

Andrew says

This is a quirky little book, a fun but quick read. While I believe the title of the book is a bit melodramatic, I do like Rauch's writing style. He shares a lot of very private information, and at times, I felt like I was wandering around in the basement of Rauch's subconscious, picking up a memory from this table, or looking at a childhood object from that. I think his story, though, is a bit more normal than he might like to believe. Also, I would very much like to know what Paul, the person about whom Rauch writes at length, thinks of this book. Overall, though, I liked the book, and would consider reading other titles by Rauch.

Franco says

Jonathan says: 'I began to realize, by the time I was about 15 or 16, that there were three classes of young man... There were the masculine gods, so unselfconsciously and enviably magnificent; there were the regular boys, so unselfconsciously and blessedly ordinary. And there was also a third class, a category for boys who would be grateful even to be unself-consciously ordinary, so that they could be released from their prison of sullen envy. The third class consisted of me. I occupied it alone.'

He was most certainly not alone. It takes a lot of guts to open your heart like this and show the inner workings of your body, mind and soul. The book is beautifully written. I have never read anything written quite like this before. I couldn't put it down.

William Sillyman says

A life revisited

There is much about this story so very similar to my own life. So much I can relate to. I know what it is like to live without a soul.

Brittany says

"...all I wanted was to be normal, which is really what any child or teenager wants."

"But how I do ache, sometimes, over the theft of my youth."

This was really powerful for me. I often felt "monstrous" and different-- like I never fit in. Though I am a heterosexual female, I can greatly relate to feeling ostracized when it came to my appearance and my weight compared to my peers. As we grow older and more mature, we come to live with our differences and notice that differences are what make each person unique and beautiful. We must appreciate each day, love each other, and bask in the beauty of each stage of our lives. Finding yourself and accepting yourself are some of the most difficult tasks you can ever tackle.

"How can I describe to you what it was like to be awakened to the ability to love? It was rehabilitating, it was redeeming: not the state of love (or of lust), but the possibility of love."

Matt says

I recently heard Russell Moore recommend this brief book. It is a poignant, eye-opening, first-person account of a gay man's painful struggle for self-understanding and search for identity. The honesty is raw, the images vivid, the writing exquisite. Every Christian should read this book. Even though our worldview, and therefore many of our presuppositions and conclusions, are different than Rauch's, "Denial: My 25 Years without a Soul" will build understanding, fire compassion, deepen empathy, and nurture the kind of Christ-reflecting love we ought to feel—and exercise—toward every image-bearer of God.
