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'A Star in the Face of the Sky'

'COMPELLING' NEW NOVEL BY SMU CREATIVE WRITING DIRECTOR DAVID HAYNES REVEALS HOW TRAGEDY AND FRIENDSHIP SHAPE FOUR LIVES

DALLAS (SMU) — In his new book, [*A Star in the Face of the Sky*](#), SMU Creative Writing Director and Associate English Professor [David Haynes](#) goes “beyond the margins” to show how four lives cope with the violence that has shaped their intersecting worlds.

The novel, Haynes’ seventh, depicts the close friendship of two strong women — one African American, the other Jewish — and a complex relationship that develops between their grandsons. The thoroughly modern tale, published by New Rivers Press, “explores the legacy of history, evils of spite, power of secretive romance and ultimately, the triumph of love,” Haynes says.

“This constellation, four people leaning on each other, toward each other is necessary because they are all survivors of monstrous family history,” says novelist Debra Monroe, author of *The Source of Trouble* and *On the Outskirts of Normal*). Its touching conclusion will “keep book clubs talking for a long time,” [notes](#) St. Paul Pioneer Press reviewer Mary Ann Grossman.

That’s by design, Haynes says. “I wanted this book to generate long, passionate conversations among people who enjoy a good story.”

Haynes’ teaching interests, including gender, class, race and generational differences, are all themes addressed in *A Star in the Face of the Sky*. For example, the book takes a more modern approach to the boys’ homosexuality, “which for a change isn’t presented as a problem,” Haynes says. “The normalcy and acceptance of their sexuality, and unconditional love, is actually the story’s real appeal.”

Before joining SMU in 1998, Haynes worked for 15 years as a teacher in urban schools, most of those years in middle school in St. Paul, Minn. He served as a teacher in residence at the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. He also served on the leadership team at the experimental Saturn School of Tomorrow.

Haynes is the author of six other critically acclaimed novels: *The Full Matilda*, *Right by My Side*, *Somebody Else's Mama*, *Heathens*, *Live at Five* and *All American Dream Dolls*. He also has written books for children, including *Retold African American Folktales* as well as *The West 7th Wildcats* series, including *Business as Usual*, *Gumma Wars*, *Who's Responsible?* and *The Kevin Show* — two of which have been National Public Radio "Selected Shorts."

The St. Louis native teaches regularly for the low-residency Warren Wilson MFA Program for Writers and also taught in the MFA programs at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, Hamline University, the Writer's Center in Bethesda, Md., and at the Writers' Garret in Dallas.

For more details about *A Star in the Face of the Sky*, as well as Haynes' other writings, visit www.faceofthesky.com.

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PHOTOGRAPHY:

For high-resolution images: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/phrh7tcf2nffvoh/IRgWllykvG>

A Star in the Face of the Sky (New Rivers Press, fall 2013; 345 pages)

Author David Haynes (Photo credit: Hillsman S. Jackson/SMU)

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