



## Born Into Crisis

**Kenneth Nixon Jr.**

Burning Soul Press (May 2, 2023)

Softcover \$19.99 (232pp)

978-1-950476-55-8

*Born into Crisis is a memoir whose story about the impact of mental health issues on a family folds into suggestions for systemic reform.*

Kenneth Nixon Jr.'s memoir *Born into Crisis* turns a childhood of trauma into a call for community support to address unmet mental health concerns.

Nixon grew up in Arlington, Virginia in the 1990s and had a somewhat chaotic childhood. His mother, Ramona, contended with severe mental illness. Untreated, that illness impacted people in multiple generations of Nixon's family, including his father and grandmother. A official copy of a custody request is used to illustrate this expansive family pain, followed by coverage of what brought Nixon's family to that point: his mother's mental health had deteriorated to such an extent that she could no longer care for her son.

The book draws a clear contrast between the indifferent legal and mental health systems and families who deal with the dramatic impacts of mental illness on a daily basis. Throughout, Nixon also comments on how his childhood experiences informed his ministry and spirituality. The book's sense of continuity is profound, even though it alternates between clinical psychoanalytical work, advice to others in similar situations, and humane suggestions for dealing with issues including suicide and forgiveness. Nixon's father recounts his son's birth story in one instance, saying that he found Nixon covered in blood and wrapped in a newspaper in his mother's apartment.

Following its chronological account of Nixon's childhood, in the course of which some of his family members' stories are also included, the book issues a general call to action to its audience. This second section shares a vision for an interfaith alliance to address community mental health needs on behalf of those who are ignored by society and who struggle on their own. In the course of this work, Nixon discusses topics like the decriminalization of mental health problems, expanded crisis care, and empathetic addresses to trauma. While progressive and inspiring, these recommendations pale in comparison to the power of Nixon's own story. The proposals for systemic reform are familiar ones, though illustrated by Nixon's specific experiences and special understandings of the challenges of dealing with mental health problems.

Closing with the hopeful message that systemic change can be achieved, *Born into Crisis* is a memoir whose story about the impact of mental health issues on a family folds into suggestions for systemic reform.

JEREMIAH ROOD (April 12, 2023)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book and paid a small fee to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. Foreword Reviews and Clarion Reviews make no guarantee that the publisher will receive a positive review. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*