

# MOST AMERICAN

## Notes from a Wounded Place

By Rilla Askew

Foreword by Susan Kates



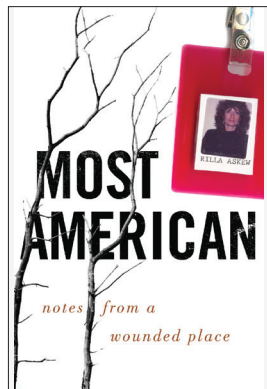
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*Timely reflections on our divided society,  
written with grace and authority*

“A respected novelist muses on the tortured nature of her relationship to the state where she was born and raised. . .Honest and searching, Rilla Askew’s book deftly interweaves a personal narrative about belonging with a larger cultural one. . . An eloquently thoughtful memoir in essays.”—*Kirkus Reviews*

In her first nonfiction collection, award-winning novelist Rilla Askew casts an unflinching eye on American history, both past and present. As she traverses a line between memoir and social commentary, Askew places herself—and indeed all Americans—in the role of witness to uncomfortable truths about who we are.

Through nine linked essays, *Most American: Notes from a Wounded Place* evokes a vivid impression of the United States: police violence and gun culture, ethnic cleansing and denied history, spellbinding landscapes and brutal weather. To render these conditions in the particulars of place, Askew spotlights the complex history of her home state. From the Trail of Tears to the Tulsa Race Riot to the Murrah Federal Building bombing, Oklahoma appears as a microcosm of our national saga. Yet no matter our location, Askew argues, we must own our contradictory selves—our violence and prejudices, as well as our hard work and generosity—so the wounds of division in our society can heal.

In these writings, Askew traces a personal journey that begins with her early years as an idealistic teenager mired in what she calls “the presumption of whiteness.” Later she emerges as a writer humble enough to see her own story as part of a larger historical and cultural narrative. With grace and authority she speaks honestly about the failures of the dominant culture in which she grew up, even as she expresses a sense of love for its people.

In the wake of increasing gun violence and heightened national debate about race relations and social inequality, Askew’s reflections could not be more relevant. With a novelist’s gift for storytelling, she paints a compelling portrait of a place and its people: resilient and ruthless, decent but self-deceiving, generous yet filled with prejudice—both the best and the worst of what it means to be American.

Rilla Askew, born and raised in eastern Oklahoma, is the award-winning author of four novels, *The Mercy Seat*, *Fire in Beulah*, *Harpsong*, and *Kind of Kin*, and a collection of linked stories, *Strange Business*. She teaches creative writing at the University of Oklahoma. Susan Kates is Professor of English at the University of Oklahoma and author of *Red Dirt Women: At Home on the Oklahoma Plains*.

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