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A long journey to happiness

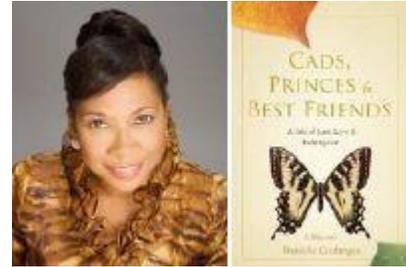
Jersey City author debuts memoir 'Cads, Princes, & Best Friends'

Hilary Morris
Reporter Correspondent

In her writing debut, *Cads, Princes & Best Friends*, Danielle Coulanges boldly exposes the intimate choices and consequences that brought her through difficult heartbreaks and toxic friendships.

From a place of newfound happiness, Coulanges examines her previous 10 years, and invites us to share in her personal journey.

The Jersey City author shows us pieces of her life - from the dusty streets of Haiti to the bustling downtown of Jersey City - that helped shape her into a woman who embraces happiness.



NEW AUTHOR - Danielle Coulanges' new book, "Cads, Princes & Best Friends," reveals the intimate choices and consequences that brought her through difficult heartbreaks and toxic friendships. The book is available at Amazon and Barnes & Noble.

All walks of life

Advertisement

Coulanges spent her first 16 years growing up in Haiti, struggling to make sense of her precarious role in a small community with very specific societal boundaries.

"While Dad's relatives were intellectuals who were somewhat well off," her mother's family "were folks who tried to make ends meet as street vendors or held menial jobs."

Coulanges has come to find that, while straddling classes seemed like a disadvantage at the time, in her adult life those experiences have cultivated in her an ability to identify with people from all walks of life.

Coulanges saw in her family's move to the States an opportunity to break out of Haiti's traditional gender roles and class restrictions.

Revealing glimpse

The bulk of the memoir is a revealing glimpse into Coulanges' intimate life, in part taken directly from her personal journals.

Feeling reluctant to confide in a friend or relative during the difficult times in her life, she felt more comfortable turning to the "self-therapy" of writing.

"I did not want to be judged or told what to do," Coulanges said. "At the time, my journal was my best friend, and I wanted to give it a name."

In entries addressed to "Mimi," as she affectionately dubbed her new friend, Coulanges trudges through the disappointments and pitfalls of her messy love life, a journey with which most women can easily identify.

But Coulanges offers that it is about much more than that. It is also the story of a woman who; through hard work, tough choices, and good friends; finds the strength to arrive in a life filled with real happiness and profound faith.

'Search for self'

While struggling to recover from the painful emotional blows dealt her by the never-faithful Joe, Danielle contends with all manner of relationships that for varying reasons caused hurt and confusion. A maniacal roommate, a drug-addicted brother, and a string of men (ranging from the simply unworthy to the commitment-phobic); all served to create a period of anguish and strife that Coulanges cringed to remember when she first reread her journals: *"the trauma of a separation, the struggle to keep financially afloat, the search for the self I no longer knew, and the loneliness, that sheer vacancy that kept me constant companionship..."*

Becoming authentic

Coulanges inspiration for writing her book was not simply cathartic.

"I wanted to help other women with the lessons I've learned," she says.

Through her story of struggle and redemption, she hopes to share what she calls the butterfly phenomenon:

"From a lowly caterpillar, this creature metamorphoses into a magnificent, winged object of beauty. So too, can you rise above your circumstances to transform your life into one of beauty and grace."

Against the backdrop of this example from nature, Coulanges believes women who feel trapped in their current lives can be inspired to reach further, make positive changes and choose the right mate. She hopes to spread her message of courage and faith to as many women as possible. Self-help seminars are one venue from which she might present her platform of self-transformation.

"If you think your life can be better," she encourages, "make it what you want it to be!"

Future plans

Improving others' quality of life is especially important to Coulanges, and she has begun by sponsoring a child each summer through the Fresh Air Fund.

Ultimately she hopes to see her own charitable organization, Aunts & Uncles Foundation, get up and running, with which she hopes to provide people with experiences beyond their means. Coulanges has modestly begun by offering her time-share to one family a year.

"I hope to grow it to offer small interest-free loans to people going through certain crisis or challenges."

Ms. Coulanges plans to continue writing, but intends to try her hand at fiction next. Her journals will still inspire her to write stories about relationship.

"There was much more in there," she said, joking that some experiences were too juicy to share in her memoir and adds they might be told through characters she'll create in the future.

"Cads, Princes & Best Friends" published by iUniverse Inc. 2008, is available for purchase online at Amazon, iUniverse, and Barnes & Noble. For more information about her book or the foundation, visit: www.butterflypublication.com.

Comments on this story can be sent to: current@hudsonreporter.com.