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As the leader and self-proclaimed prophet of the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints, a sect of Mormonism based in isolated southern Utah, Warren Jeffs held sway over thousands of followers for nearly a decade. His rule was utterly tyrannical. In addition to coercing young girls into polygamous marriages with older men, Jeffs reputedly took scores of wives, many of whom were his father's widows. Television, radio, and newspapers were shunned, creating a hidden community where polygamy was prized above all else.

But in 2007, after a two-year manhunt that landed him on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List, Jeffs's reign was forcefully ended. He was convicted of rape as an accomplice for his role in arranging a marriage between a fourteen-year-old girl and her nineteen-year-old first cousin.

In *When Men Become Gods*, Edgar Award nominee Stephen Singular traces Jeffs's rise to power and the concerted effort that led to his downfall. It was a movement championed by law enforcement, private investigators, the Feds, and perhaps most vocal of all, a group of former polygamous wives seeking to liberate young women from the arranged marriages they'd once endured. The book offers new revelations into a nearly impenetrable enclave---a place of nineteenth-century attire, inbreeding, and eerie seclusion---providing readers with a rare glimpse into a tradition that's almost a century old but that has only now been exposed.

When Men Become Gods: Mormon Polygamist Warren Jeffs, His Cult of Fear, and the Women Who Fought Back Details

Date : Published April 21st 2008 by St. Martin's Press

ISBN : 9780312372484

Author : Stephen Singular

Format : Hardcover 304 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Religion, Cults, Crime, True Crime, Polyamory, Polygamy, Mystery

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From Reader Review When Men Become Gods: Mormon Polygamist Warren Jeffs, His Cult of Fear, and the Women Who Fought Back for online ebook

Christina says

I spent my internship at The Dallas Morning News around the same time the raid at Yearning For Zion Ranch was conducted, so I was intrigued to learn more about the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints {FLDS} and their practice of polygamy. I've seen a couple episodes of "Big Love," but I doubted Hollywood's interpretation would be completely accurate, so I was pretty excited to see When Men Become Gods: Mormon Polygamist Warren Jeffs, His Cult of Fear, and the Women Who Fought Back on the current collection self of my local library.

When Men Become Gods starts out giving a brief history of the FLDS, with a heavy emphasis on Colorado City, Arizona and Hildale, Utah, which originally was one large city called Short Creek or "Short Crick" or "The Crick." The title is derived from Joseph Smith's divine revelation on polygamy, or "Celestial Marriage."

"Celestial Marriage and a continuation of the family unit enable men to become gods...For behold, I reveal unto you a new and everlasting covenant; and if ye abide not that covenant, then ye are damned; for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory...And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore he is justified." {pg. 11}

The book goes onto detail the rise of Warren Jeffs, the so-called prophet of the FLDS Church {He later says he is not the prophet, which shot his legal defense in the foot.} For what I know about Jeffs, it appears that Singular completed a lot of research to aid him in writing how Jeff came into power within the FLDS, a difficult task since the church was originally run by a council of seven men, in addition to the prophet, that he forces down to just one. Jeffs comes to control the followers through scare tactics, which gave rise to the "Lost Boys," adolescent boys kicked out of the church to less competition for teenage bride.

"Warren taught us to have nothing to do with those who'd been banned from the church, but the worst thing he did was create a huge chasm between parents and their children. He knew exactly had to do this. When he began throwing teenagers out of the FLDS, it made kids hate their parents for listening to Warren, and it made parents hate their kids for doing things to get kicked out. This went right to the heart of the parent-child relationship. When you tell a mother she can't talk to her child anymore, how much more manipulative can you get?" {pg. 109}

In addition, When Men Become Gods details how FLDS members who escaped helped authorities build their case against Jeffs. Singular also did a good job highlight all the people involved, from former members to good Samaritans who began investigating the group on their own, in bring down Warren Jeffs, but so little attention is give to each one that they all start to muddle together after while. And, after a while, the information becomes really repetitive because he's trying to tell the story from every person involved.

Probably the most interesting part was how often the national and state governments turned a blind eye to the FLDS, which made the community like its own separate nation. The local police, government and the school board were all under their control of Jeffs, which allowed them to get away with rape, incest, polygamy, and mental and emotional abuse.

“Further, though it was illegal to practice polygamy in Utah, nearly every politician in the state had ancestors or relatives who’d done preciously that. If anyone made too much fuss about reforming he FLDS, somebody was sure to point out that the critic’s father or grandfather or great-grandfather had married a score of Mormon women and sired two or three dozen children. Why bother taking the political risk?” {pg. 17}

The writing is chalked full of legal jargon, which can make When Men Become Gods a pretty slow read. But, for the most part, it’s interesting and gives a clear cut picture of the FLDS church.

Sarah says

It’s official. I think I’ve read all there is to read about this FLDS business. At least without having enough information about the little community to write a dissertation on the topic. Now it’s down to slightly different versions of essentially the same memoir. The weird part (and quite unfortunate part for those of you who read these little book blurbs) is that I’m still fascinated.

Religions practice, particularly cult culture, is incredibly interesting. Not only is it difficult to imagine that these communities function as utterly isolated sub-sections of our own society, but also that enough people have escaped and generously offered us bits of their world and knowledge so that we can begin to understand. Bit by bit, we put the puzzle together and learn how the master manipulators and evil geniuses of the world manage to brainwash entire populations, scam our enormous national and state governments, and commit heinous crimes with barely the bat of an eyelid from the criminal justice system.

And, for anyone who’s as nerdy about public administration and political science as I am, the complexity of managing this type of phenomenon in a country with such a strong belief in freedom is mind-boggling. Our systems are not set up to effectively or efficiently respond to the institutionalized abuse and neglect of hundreds of children, for instance. Or the impossible task of sorting out welfare benefits for a family with 15 wives and 70 children. And what about the pre-meditated and terrifyingly destructive brainwashing of thousands upon thousands of “consenting” adults? Who, by the way, are not really consenting as they have been given no choice.

The FLDS culture is the ultimate legal and constitutional nightmare. And we’ve been ignoring it, thus letting it become thoroughly corrupt and increasingly out of control, for almost two centuries. How on earth do you even begin to remedy that? Which traditions are protected by “religious freedom” and which are simply criminal and subject to outside intervention? What is the first step (or any of the subsequent steps for that matter) in charging, arresting, and prosecuting hundreds, possibly thousands, of individuals simultaneously?

So I challenge you! Riddle me that!

Valerie says

If an author is going to link a group (FLDS) to bin Ladan, he should make a connection throughout the entire book. Mentioning it in the Intro, then reminding the readers in the conclusion is not enough. Sure Singular sprinkled a little bin Ladan here-and-there but not enough to make a convincing case. Singular should have stuck with his solid facts about the group instead of reaching out on a limb for some possible connection. The book would have been excellent without the inflammatory comments. Either make your case or don't even try.

Petra X says

I've read several books on the FLDS including under Warren Jeffs - books by women who have escaped his dreadful tyranny that he says is divinely inspired because he is the Prophet and infallible (like the Pope, eh?) Those books were individual stories and stories relating (mostly) to the awful subjugation of the women. Interesting as they were, I was looking for an unemotional account of Jeffs leadership and his misuse of power.

This book is it. It's told from the legal point of view. How Jeffs manipulated himself into power and deprived others, equally and more entitled to it, the pursuit of Jeffs, the tax evasions practiced, the casting out of people in order to take over their homes and other illegal activities. Mostly enabled by the local Police, themselves members of the religion wishing to remain in good standing with their Prophet. But worst of all, was the passing around of women and children in marriage. How he told wives they were no longer married to this man, but must go and live with this other one, sometimes, often sisters were 'married' to the same man. And children, little girls, he made them marry whom he wished and if the ensuing sex was against the girl's consent, it wasn't rape, it was an act of conjugal love.

There is another perspective written about in all the books, but not in detail. The fact that in order the men to have their quorum of wives and be able to produce the something like 50 children necessary for them to become gods and rule their own planets in the afterlife (seriously) there can't be too many men around. So they throw the teenage boys out at the slightest excuse. I want to hear their stories and I think I've found the book, Lost Boy by Brent W. Jeffs.

It's a good book, an excellent read, even from the point of view of watching someone absolutely power-hungry exercise it in every way, cruel or kind, but always self-serving and somehow or other hypnotises the people out of their senses so they let him get away with it. Dictators work that way too. Both of them have their cliques and cadres who are generously rewarded. It's all very Machiavellian - the control, the fear, the distancing of the powerful from the ordinary, the sheep.

The book is a real window on the world of this strange, dangerous and awfully sad cult.

Rebecca Huston says

A chilling look at fundamental LDS faith, and Warren Jeffs. Not for the squeamish, this story will bother the hell of out you, and make you wonder about the fringe elements in American religion today.

For the complete review, please go here:
http://www.epinions.com/review/Book_W...

Dionne says

--When Men Become Gods is my 5th book in my study of the FLDS. I've read Carolyn Jessop and Flora Jessop's accounts, and I'm listening to Rebecca Musser's on Cd.

--The women's accounts were their own personal stories. In contrast, Singular gives a history and an overview of the FLDS movement. He share the history of the Mormons, starting with Joseph Smith.

--He then details how things went wrong with some of the modern leaders of the FLDS. And he shares about the women who started escaping and fighting back, and about the brave few who helped them. The women and those who helped them were listed by Singular as the "Resistance".

--A list of just some who made up the "Resistance":

1) Flora Jessop--One of the many women who escaped and fought back

2) Sam Brower--A private investigator

3) Elaine Tyler--She assisted women who were trying to escape the FLDS, and she founded the Hope Organization.

4) Gary Engels--An investigator hired by Mohave County Attorney Matt Smith

5) Ross Chatwin--A loyal FLDS member who was kicked out by Warren Jeffs. He was one of the few men who chose to fight back. Most of the time Jeffs took away these men's homes and wives and children. But Chatwin refused to leave his home, and his wife and kids stayed by his side instead of obeying Jeffs.

6) The Lost Boys--Teenage boys who were kicked out of the FLDS, so that the older men have more women to choose from.

--As I've studied all that has gone into the FLDS being exposed, I have been upset that Flora Jessop hasn't been given more credit for her role. Below is Singular's description of her, and I think it's a good one:

Every revolution produced somebody like Flora Jessop: a flamethrower who jolted others into action. She had a knack for inspiring victimized women to come forward--and for turning off strong FLDS opponents and embarrassing the police or other authorities. In the absence of any organized effort to enforce the law along the border for the past several decades, Flora, like Laura Chapman before her, had stepped forward and done what others wouldn't. Nobody else had wanted to take the risks to help the men, women, boys, girls, and childhood victims of polygamy--least of all the Latter-day Saints church up in Salt Lake City.--p. 121

--As the government authorities and members of the resistance tried to figure out how to bring the members of the FLDS to justice, they had some concerns. They feared a Waco or Jonestown catastrophe. The governments of Arizona, Utah and the Federal government were afraid to tackle the many crimes that were being committed in the FLDS community. Yet, finally something needed to be done. The FLDS wasn't above the law and questions started to be raised by many, below are some:

What about the rising costs of welfare and of treating fumarase deficiency? What if citizens across the nation with no connection to Mormon fundamentalists had to pick up the tab for other people's very expensive marital and sexual practices? What if a religious sect on the Utah-Arizona border were being run like a criminal enterprise, similar to the mafia? Or like a terrorist outfit, answerable only to its Prophet?--p. 115

--Singular shares how the authorities finally go after Jeffs, eventually putting him on the FBI's 10 Most Wanted List. And about the 3 sisters who testified against him, Elissa Wall, Theresa Wall and Rebecca Musser.

--Elissa Wall was forced into marriage when she was barely 14 and was raped by her husband. Not only was this Jeffs' idea, but he refused to listen to her many cries for help and told her to "keep sweet" and submit to her husband.

--When Jeffs was declared guilty by a jury of his peers, several of the heroic women who stood up against him had this to say:

This wasn't just lawyering in the courtroom, this was justice.--Elaine Tyler

Opinion is a fleeting thing, but truth outlasts the sun.--Elissa Wall quoting Emily Dickinson

--Laura Chapman (one of the first women who fought back) was happy with the verdict, but warned people that the fight against the FLDS was far from over:

So much is still lacking in terms of accountability...Elissa Wall's parents not only failed to protect her but prepared a child in a wedding dress for her abuser. They are culpable by law and should be charged. If Warren Jeffs has 80 wives, and birth certificates of his 264 children prove this, he should be charged with 79 counts of bigamy...He was not charged for violating the Mann Act (taking a minor across state lines for sexual purposes). Elissa was taken to Nevada to be married. Jeffs should be held accountable for the human trafficking of women and children to Canada...

An apology should be issued to the thousands of people, over 160 years, who have lived in extreme conditions of poverty, emotional and spiritual abuse, sexual coercion and assault because of this doctrine that places men as superior over women. Since the LDS church is one of the wealthiest religious organizations in the world, they should fund non-profit organizations to provide resources for refugees of polygamy. They should no longer allow a man to be sealed for time and all eternity to more than one woman.

Amy Webster-Bo says

really good, had been interested in this lifestyle for awhile, I had ancestors that were poly, so it was a good book

Clare says

Wow, what I learned from this book is that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Stephen Singular writes about the this offshoot of the Mormon Church that still practices polygamy and the ways in which one meglomaniacal person can twist faith to meet his needs for power. I knew that Warren Jeff was in prison. What I did not know was the background to his conviction on federal charges. This book details the history of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and also the history of Warren Jeffs and previous church leaders. It is detailed and very readable. After learning about the plight of women in this "religion" I was very glad that I am merely a lapsed Catholic.

Erin says

I know what you're all thinking. Why is Erin reading what seems like every book in the world on FLDS? I'm not sure- but I don't recommend it. I'm obsessed. I'll stop after my bookclub in Sept. -Promise.

Bruce says

The author took a no-nonsense approach, neither condoning nor condemning the FLDS people. He let the facts speak for themselves, facts which showed Warren Jeffs to be the real culprit, not the religion or the practice of polygamy by its members. After reading stories in the newspapers for many years, it was interesting to have everything brought together in one cohesive account.

Ingrid Lola says

I found this book very objectively written, and very respectful of the FLDS members themselves, which I applaud fullheartedly, however, the book wasn't as interesting as I expected it to be. It was full of legal jargon and drawn out courtroom scenes.

This is certainly worth the read if you have read "Stolen Innocence" by Elissa Wall. It puts her story in a different light and very interesting to compare the two books.

Ana Mardoll says

When Men Become Gods / 978-0-312-37248-4

The Warren Jeffs' FLDS cult has been a subject of great interest to me lately, and although there are many wonderful ex-member accounts out there (such as "Escape" and "Stolen Innocence"), I've been frustrated until now by the lack of a good, over-arching narrative for the FLDS cult as a whole and the Warren Jeffs' branch specifically. I'd read "Under the Banner of Heaven" earlier in the year, but had been slightly put off by the author's tendency to leap back and forth through the centuries between each chapter, as a narrative technique.

"When Men Become Gods", then, was a very welcome addition to my library. Here was the over-arching narrative of the Warren Jeffs' branch that I'd been looking for - after a brief and to-the-point history of the FLDS, the book begins with Warren Jeffs' childhood, chronicles his rise through the ranks, his abuses of his cult members, the federal search for him, and his sudden and unexpected capture and subsequent trial.

Author Singular is to be commended for providing such a lucid, clear narrative to this difficult and labyrinthine subject; the all the people and places discussed here are done so in such a clear and vivid manner that the reader is able to follow along easily (not an easy thing to do with the complex family trees of the FLDS members!). Singular also brings a great deal of passion to his subject, especially when he provides insight from the police and activists that worked so long and so hard to track Jeffs down and bring him to justice, while trying to protect the abused members.

Indeed, as a narrative for this saga, this book does a superb job of presenting the overall story, and this book would serve as a great introduction to anyone interested in the recent history of the FLDS, or to someone who has read the survivor stories and would like an over-arching account to organize what they have learned. The book is not flawless, though, and I do recommend supplementing your reading with "Escape" or "Stolen Innocence" or both. Indeed, the author of "Stolen Innocence" features heavily in "When Men Become Gods", for it was her testimony that convicted Warren Jeffs at last, and Singular does a fair job of presenting her story, but it is my belief that her biography contains many key points that Singular did not include here, for whatever reason, including the sheer depth of pain and horror she survived as a child.

I would recommend this book as a great introduction or supplemental reading material on the subject.

~ Ana Mardoll

Danielle says

Reading about Warren Jeffs and his cult of fear, incest and abuse makes you want to cheer that he's now in jail, probably for the rest of his life. It's the women and children who, as usual, suffer the consequences. The FLDS, in case you're not familiar with it, is a branch of Mormons who believe in plural marriage. The problem is, when Jeffs took over after his father died, he started marrying underage girls and throwing out young men who might want to marry these girls. They are called The Lost Boys. It's a very interesting book, but heartbreaking too. Read it.

Chrisiant says

The narrative style of this book was a bit stilted and almost too theatrical, setting up the infamous Warren Jeffs and FLDS and evil and those attempting to leave it and/or work against it as inherently good. I felt like

I was being pushed to demonize Jeffs instead of being presented with reasons to damn him on my own initiative.

There was some interesting information that wasn't covered in Jon Krakauer's Under the Banner of Heaven, and I think it was worth the read, but I don't heartily recommend it. I also may just be burnt out on reading about Mormons.

Amanda says

I've read a few things on the FLDS, and watched a few of the documentaries on life in the cult. Once I read Carolyn Jessop's book, I learned how incredibly disturbing the cult really can be in the individual day to day lives of the members. This book presents the rest of the sect, and the myriad ways the legal system attempted to take down Warren Jeffs.

This book while claiming to be about the women "who fought back", most of the glory was given to two of the men on the outside who helped bust down the doors. When one of the women retracted her story and clammed up on the stand, neither the author nor the deputy had any sympathy for her. The women are merely there to be rescued. I did find a lot of new details about the cult, but it wasn't the best primer I suspect on the FLDS out there.

Lynn says

Today's post is on When Men Become Gods: Mormon Polygamist Warren Jeffs, His Cult of Fear, and the Women Who Fought Back by Stephen Singular. It is 291 pages long and is published by St. Martin's Press. The cover has some woman dressed like pioneers on bottom and the beautiful mountains on the top. The intended reader is someone interested a more third party look at the Jeffs case. There is some language, talk of rape and child abuse, and violence in this book. The story is told in a third person way with information coming from all sides of this cult and crime. There Be Spoilers Ahead.

From the dust jacket- As the leader and self-proclaimed prophet of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Later-Day Saints, a sect of Mormonism based on isolates southern Utah, Warren Jeffs held sway over thousands of followers for nearly a decade. His rule was utterly tyrannical. In addition to coercing young girls into polygamous marriages with older men, Jeffs reputedly took scores of wives, many of whom were his father's widows. Television, radio, and newspapers were shunned, creating a hidden community where polygamy was prized above all else.

But in 2007, after a two-year manhunt that landed him on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted List, Jeffs's reign was forcefully ended. He was convicted of rape as an accomplice for his role in arranging a marriage between a fourteen-year-old girl and her nineteen-year-old first cousin.

In When Men Become Gods, Edgar Award nominee Stephen Singular traces Jeffs's rise to power and the concerted effort that led to his downfall. His arrest and trail were spurred on by law enforcement, private investigators, the Feds, and, perhaps most vocal of all, a group of former polygamist wives seeking to liberate young women from the arranged marriages they'd once endured. The book offers revelations into a nearly impenetrable enclave- a place of nineteenth-century attire, inbreeding, and eerie seclusion- providing readers with a rare glimpse into a bizarre tradition that's almost a century old, but that had only now been exposed.

Review- This is the third book I have read about Warren Jeffs and his insanity. In way it was very good because it gives the reader a very broad look at that world. We get insight from people who lived in that world, are still living in it, and the outsiders who interacted with them. On the other hand it was disappointing because it does not go into what got Jeffs convicted; which is an audio tape of him raping an eleven-year-old girl. Now Jeffs did not and does not see it as rape, because he was 'marrying' her but it was rape. Singular does not do more than touch the YFZ ranch where law enforcement found everything that was needed to destroy him. I do not know why that was not touched on. So I really enjoyed this book until the end when it really just stops. So if you are interested in learning about how things started then try this book. But if you want the ending then try something else.

I give this book a Three out of Five stars. I get nothing for my review and I borrowed this book from my local library.

Kymerly says

ok I admit I didn't read this. But I watched the movie I bought at the Book Cellar. It was very good. I hope to read it some day too.

Cait Ruiz says

Ehh

This book was written from a factual basis with an effort at storytelling, but I don't feel it really lived up to what it was trying to achieve. While it was informative, there were often times I was confused about which involved party the author was talking about because there were SO many people (admittedly, this is the nature of the FLDS cult, lots of guilty parties). I enjoyed getting an outsiders perspective, and I think the information given was very interesting, but it took me longer to process what I was reading due to the way it was presented.

Alex Westenhaver-Loretz says

The books uses a lot of material from memoirs written by those who have left the FLDS. I have read the other books so it was more of a recap of other books.

Sabrina Rutter says

I hate books that has the same information that you can read on the internet. This book falls into that category! I'm just glad I didn't pay money to read this.
