



I Can't Date Jesus: Love, Sex, Family, Race, and Other Reasons I've Put My Faith in Beyoncé

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Featured as one of Summer 2018's most anticipated reads by the *Los Angeles Times*, *Vogue*, *Vulture*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *ELLE*, *Buzzfeed*, and *Bitch Media*.

In the style of *New York Times* bestsellers *You Can't Touch My Hair*, *Bad Feminist*, and *I'm Judging You*, a timely collection of alternately hysterical and soul-searching essays about what it is like to grow up as a creative, sensitive black man in a world that constantly tries to deride and diminish your humanity.

It hasn't been easy being Michael Arceneaux.

Equality for LGBT people has come a long way and all, but voices of persons of color within the community are still often silenced, and being black in America is...well, have you watched the news?

With the characteristic wit and candor that have made him one of today's boldest writers on social issues, *I Can't Date Jesus* is Michael Arceneaux's impassioned, forthright, and refreshing look at minority life in today's America. Leaving no bigoted or ignorant stone unturned, he describes his journey in learning to embrace his identity when the world told him to do the opposite.

He eloquently writes about coming out to his mother; growing up in Houston, Texas; that time his father asked if he was "funny" while shaking his hand; his obstacles in embracing intimacy; and the persistent challenges of young people who feel marginalized and denied the chance to pursue their dreams.

Perfect for fans of David Sedaris and Phoebe Robinson, *I Can't Date Jesus* tells us—without apologies—what it's like to be outspoken and brave in a divisive world.

I Can't Date Jesus: Love, Sex, Family, Race, and Other Reasons I've Put My Faith in Beyoncé Details

Date : Published July 24th 2018 by Atria / 37 INK

ISBN :

Author : Michael Arceneaux

Format : Kindle Edition 256 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Writing, Essays, Lgbt, Gblt, Queer, Humor

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Put My Faith in Beyoncé Michael Arceneaux**

From Reader Review *I Can't Date Jesus: Love, Sex, Family, Race, and Other Reasons I've Put My Faith in Beyoncé* for online ebook

Larry H says

3.5 stars here.

"It's often said that knowing who you are, or at the very least possessing a sneaking suspicion of such early in life, is a blessing. The people who share this sentiment need to write it on a piece of paper, ball it up, and then proceed to pour barbecue sauce all over it as they eat it. Early self-awareness is a blessing only if who you are comes with a support system and an education. If you don't have those, it's easy to find yourself feeling stuck and sullen. I learned a certain part of my identity very early, but it was met with a near-instant confirmation of how unwelcome that part of my identity was to those surrounding me."

At turns poignant, sharply insightful, and utterly hilarious, *I Can't Date Jesus* is Michael Arceneaux's collection of essays about what it's like to be a young black man growing up knowing you're gay but trying to do everything to hide it from your ultra-religious mother, your homophobic father, and a society that embraces masculinity and toughness. It's a book about self-acceptance, self-worth, and the need to live your life on your own terms, no matter what others may think or expect.

Arceneaux approaches each aspect of his life with humor and sensitivity, and a healthy dose of self-deprecation. From being recruited for the priesthood at a time when he wasn't willing to accept who he was to numerous attempts to date (or even just hook up), from coming out to friends, family, and his mother, to his struggles with self-esteem (especially his hair), he doesn't play it all for laughs, but he's not afraid to tell it like it is—even his encounters which left him attacked by fire ants and maybe even fleas.

"The pattern that required my real attention was my turning to sexually confused men for sexual exploration. It was like my turning to someone who can't figure out 'there,' 'they're,' and 'their' to edit your essay."

The book delves deeper than simply exploring a man's journey to find himself and his place in the world. It's also a look at our current political situation, as well as a paean to his ultimate savior, Beyoncé. With each essay he makes you laugh, but he also makes you feel and he makes you think about things a little bit differently than you might have when you started reading.

There were times when this book absolutely clicked for me, times when I thought, "Yep, that happened to me," or felt the same embarrassment or emotions that Arceneaux recounted. At other times I couldn't quite identify, since while I faced my share of bullying and disapproval related to my sexuality when I was growing up and moving into adulthood, those feelings weren't also couched in the expectations of an entire race or the devotion of religion.

Arceneaux's voice is so vivid in this book; it almost felt like he was reading the essays to me at times. (I'd imagine if he reads his own audiobook it would be quite fun to listen to.) While he has faced many challenges in his life, in part, they made him the insightful, emotionally astute, and funny-as-hell person he is today, and I'm thankful he was willing to share his story with us.

See all of my reviews at itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com, or check out my list of the best books I read in 2017 at <https://itseithersadnessoreuphoria.blogspot.com/2018/01/the-best-books-i-read-in-2017.html>.

Valerie says

“Some parts of my life are sad, but I am not a sad spirit.” So reads a line from the epilogue to *I Can't Date Jesus*, a touching, honest, and highly entertaining collection of reflections from Michael Arceneaux, one of my favorite culture writers. I completed this book quite quickly as I was devouring it similarly to the way I often do writings by Arceneaux: with many an internal head nod, several audible chuckles, and constant reminders that despite being my opposite in so many ways, Michael Arceneaux writes in a manner that feels familiar and engaging all the same. As stated in many reviews and in the interviews I have seen concerning it, this book relays the story that isn't shared often enough but surely deserves its rightful place in the minds of many. In relaying his story, one full of heartbreaking and hilarious moments alike, Arceneaux is able to elevate his voice and thus offer space for others who feel similarly, share parallel experiences, are starved for this needed perspective, or a combination of all three. Despite being fully intrigued by the story being told, I did experience some moments where I wish the details allotted were reserved for the points I felt more compelling as a reader. Given this is something that can likely be attributed to personal preference, it's surely not a detail to dissuade a potential reader from picking this up. At its core, this collection offers insight into the experiences that yielded an incredibly gifted writer and offered a layer of humanity and additional honesty I didn't know I needed to someone I have long supported by way of many a retweet, click, or share. Definitely one I recommend!

Erin says

Contender for fave memoir title of 2018

Although not familiar with the work of Michael Arceneaux, I was intrigued to explore this collection of memoir essays. Even though this book didn't have me rolling on the floor with belly laughs, I enjoyed the feel of the book. As if, Michael Arceneaux, was sitting across from me in a cafe and pouring out his perspectives on the Catholic faith, his struggles with coming out to family and friends, thoughts on dating/marriage, American politics, and his love for Beyonce. But I guess if we were really having coffee I would probably be shushing him to stop talking about his blowjobs.

Book will be published in July 2018.

Thanks to NetGalley for an advanced ebook in exchange for an honest review.

BookOfCinz says

I love a book with a great title, even when it is a little blasphemous. **I Can't Date Jesus: Love, Sex, Family, Race and other Reasons I've Put My Faith In Beyoncé** by Michael Arceneaux is a timely, relevant collection of essays that demands to be read.

I was not familiar with Michael Arceneaux before picking up this book but in reading this book I felt like I got to know him a lot. This book, while it can be funny, tackles some uncomfortable topics- that being religion. Arceneaux coming out story broke me, it blows my mind how in this day and age people are still

grappling with some of the things he discussed here. I am happy he found a space to be himself, a space where he is truly accepted and I look forward to reading more of his works.

I have to admit, I am proud Beytheist .

Lauren Murray says

2.5/5

I think there's a great message here, but its a bit raunchy for what I was expecting to read. I appreciate Arceneaux's storytelling (such a compelling title), but not a huge fan of his voice as an author.

Taryn Pierson says

Michael Arceneaux was raised Catholic, and he has spent much of his life trying to reconcile his identity as a gay man with the faith of his childhood. He's also an incisive cultural commentator when it comes to issues of race and class. This is a person who thinks deeply, who has analyzed his life and in this book offers up some of the conclusions he's drawn and the steps he's still taking to understand himself and his family. I love collections like this--personal essays that make you laugh and make you think, sometimes on the same page. And audio is the way to go, no question. Hearing Arceneaux's words in his own voice is a special experience.

Bri (girlwithabookblog.com) says

I really thought I was going to go through all of 2018 only reading books written by women, but **Michael Arceneaux's debut *I Can't Date Jesus* sounded too intriguing to ignore.** Despite not reading any of Arceneaux's work before, I really enjoyed reading his memoir essays. **He's a big shot in the journalism world, particularly known for writing from the gay and black POV, but you don't need to know his previous work to dive into this!** Arceneaux brilliantly writes about **the tensions between his family, religion, sexuality, professional goals, Beyoncé, and beyond.** I dug all of the **Texas references** (some of my favorites were deep cuts that people outside of Texas might not understand... but people read that kind of stuff all of the time about NYC, so don't let that dissuade you) and **enjoyed reading about his reflections upon how his experiences, both during youth and more recently, have greatly shaped the man Arceneaux is today.**

Disclaimer: I was provided with a digital copy of this book for free from Atria Books via NetGalley. All opinions expressed in the review are my own and have not been influenced by Atria Books or NetGalley.

For more reviews, check out www.girlwithabookblog.com!

Jennifer says

I Can't Date Jesus: Love, Sex, Family, Race, and Other Reasons I've Put My Faith in Beyoncé is a collection of essays written by Michael Arceneaux. Although Arceneaux is a seasoned writer, this is his first published

book and it is filled with life experiences related to family, race, sexuality, religion, politics, culture, LGBTQ community...and yes, even Beyoncé. From childhood to adulthood, it's there. Honest, funny, sensitive, heartbreaking, perspective-altering, and unapologetically in your face. I did say funny, right? It's worth mentioning again. His humor generously takes the edge off all the emotional scarring he has endured. Arceneaux shares that it wasn't easy growing up as Black and gay with no support system, and having his very identity translated into damaging messages that had to be unlearned. Where does Beyoncé come in? Well, being a Houston, Texas native herself, and an individual who stands firm in who she is regardless of any opposition, Arceneaux has gained strength from her strength. We all have that one person who has had great impact on our lives (whether they know it or not) and Beyoncé is his. After reading the essay he devoted to her, I can completely understand why.

With fifteen essays (plus an engaging introduction and epilogue), Arceneaux covers a variety of topics that will surely provide readers with validation, hope, and a sense of community. This was my first experience with Michael Arceneaux's writing but it certainly won't be my last. Talent, perspective, and smiles. It's a winner!

Access to an advance reader's copy (ARC) of I Can't Date Jesus: Love, Sex, Family, Race, and Other Reasons I've Put My Faith in Beyoncé was provided by the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Author: Michael Arceneaux

Publisher: Atria Books/37 INK

Genres: Entertainment, LGBTQ Nonfiction

Pub Date: July 24, 2018

cat says

I love that he is telling the stories of his life - and I wanted to 5 star it for the fact that we NEED more black gay writers to tell the truths of their lives. Ultimately though, I just couldn't love the book even while I love the existence of the book. Conversational tone and tangent-based storytelling aside (hi! that's my style too!), it felt clunkily constructed and I never fully engaged with the way he told his story. Looking forward to seeing where he goes next, though, as a writer.

La says

I LOVED this book. It's equal parts hilarious and heartbreaking and I barreled through it all in one sitting. Michael has a way of telling a story that makes you feel like you're talking to a friend, and not being talked at- or worse- reading a Very Important Serious Thing. Reading I Can't Date Jesus felt like stumbling into a serious conversation with a close friend over a bottle of wine that stretches into the wee hours. Read it! You'll love it too.

Kevin says

Michael Arceneaux's inspiring and delightful debut collection of autobiographical essays about growing up black and gay in Texas is alternately hilarious and touching. "This book is about unlearning every damaging thing I've seen and heard about my identity and allowing myself the space to figure out who I am and what

that means on my terms," writes Arceneaux. Growing up in a home with a rage-prone father and religious mother, he kept his sexuality under wraps. Calling himself a recovering Catholic, he still contends, "Catholic guilt never leaves you, and follows you everywhere; it's the herpes of your conscience."

Arceneaux details his fumbling sexual encounters, bad dates and his painful coming out to his mother: "As a gay man, you already have so many people against you," he writes. "Your family--especially your mother--is supposed to be in your corner as you battle these people, not throwing sucker punches with them." He finds solace and a source of strength in favorite musical divas Madonna, Janet Jackson and his goddess Beyoncé. One fascinating chapter covers his mixed feelings about gay people marrying. He's happy for the progress but doesn't see it in his future, writing, "The failure to learn how to love someone properly is a trait that has since been passed down to me."

While I CAN'T DATE JESUS is filled with razor-sharp observations and sly and snarky one-liners, the book's most impressive attribute is Arceneaux's bravery and skill at tackling complex issues with humanity, eloquence and compassion. This book is a winner.

Semora Renee says

This book was very well-written. Michael articulated his points well, and the parts about family, and relationships are universal. He makes me wish I visited Texas. And feeling "seen" is something I believe everyone can relate to. And the idea of identity and wholeness separate from whiteness is a subject that I didn't even know how to say I wanted to read about it. Overall, very very engaging.

Mara says

4/4.5 stars- The perspective of this memoir is one that I think is much needed and I would love to see more of: what does it look like to reckon with people and institutions that on some level don't want you, even when you have lingering love or affection from them? Michael Arceneaux grapples with these questions very thoughtfully on many levels: as a "recovering Catholic," as a gay child of a religious mother, as an adult child of an alcoholic and abusive father, as a black gay man in a white dominated gay culture, etc. etc. I found this to be very moving, and I admire how he unfolded the story, adding layers and nuances as each chapter progressed. This book is definitely funny at times, but I would say that is not the overall tone of the book. If that is your expectation, I think you would be disappointed or confused, so I wanted to clarify that despite the comedic tone of the title itself (which is great, btw), this is not a humorous memoir or an ironic take on pop culture. Rather, there are funny moments and observations about pop culture that are incorporated into the larger personal story he is telling. All told, I really enjoyed this, particularly the religious aspects, and am excited to read more from him in the future.

Also, big cosign on a wholesale rejection of Beytheism. Life is too short.

Roxane says

There are stories that simply demand to be told and Michael Arceneaux's is one such story. In I Can't Date Jesus: Love, Sex, Family, Race, and Other Reasons I've Put My Faith in Beyoncé, Arceneaux writes from his life as a black gay man with an uncanny strength of conviction and such fine wit. The essays collected

here reveal Arceneaux at his finest, as he grapples with the very things that shape our lives--faith, family, and finding a way into the world he wants to be a part of. Whether he is writing about coming to terms with his father's rage or his complicated relationship to Christianity or his trepidations about dating and finding human connection, Arceneaux makes keen observations and sculpts beauty from the ugly things a lesser writer would shy away from. This is not a perfect book--there are some odd structure choices in a few of the essays and a bit too much unnecessary detail in others, but the critical thinking, from beginning to end, is outstanding. I Can't Date Jesus is a must-read collection from a rising, unforgettable voice.

Kayla Brunson says

Thank you Atria Books for providing me with a copy for an honest review.

I haven't read anything by Michael Arceneaux before, but when I heard he was from Houston like me and saw the title I knew I wanted to read it. This was compared to You Can't Touch My Hair: And Other Things I Still Have to Explain and I loved that book last year.

This guy is hilarious as hell and he kept me laughing while reading. The style of the book feels as if we are having dinner and he's telling me about his life. It's very laid back but don't think that he's not hitting you with some hard-hitting truths about the world. I learned a lot from reading about the obstacles he had to face and go through as a gay black man. We also get topics from race, religion, and his love for Beyonce.

I love his candor and his sense of humor:

"You want to learn how to give up on humanity? Ride the bus in L.A."

"Are you a homosexual?"

"Yes, as long as women still come with vaginas."

My favorite part of the book was all of the Houston references. People outside of Houston might not understand them, but I loved seeing my city in a book.

I did have to knock some stars off because it a little heavy in unnecessary information and also very heavy on sexual topics. That doesn't bother me in the slightest but I know that some people might not enjoy it.

All in all, this book was entertaining as it was informational and I can't wait to read more from him.

***Quotes are from an ARC and are subject to change upon publication.*

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