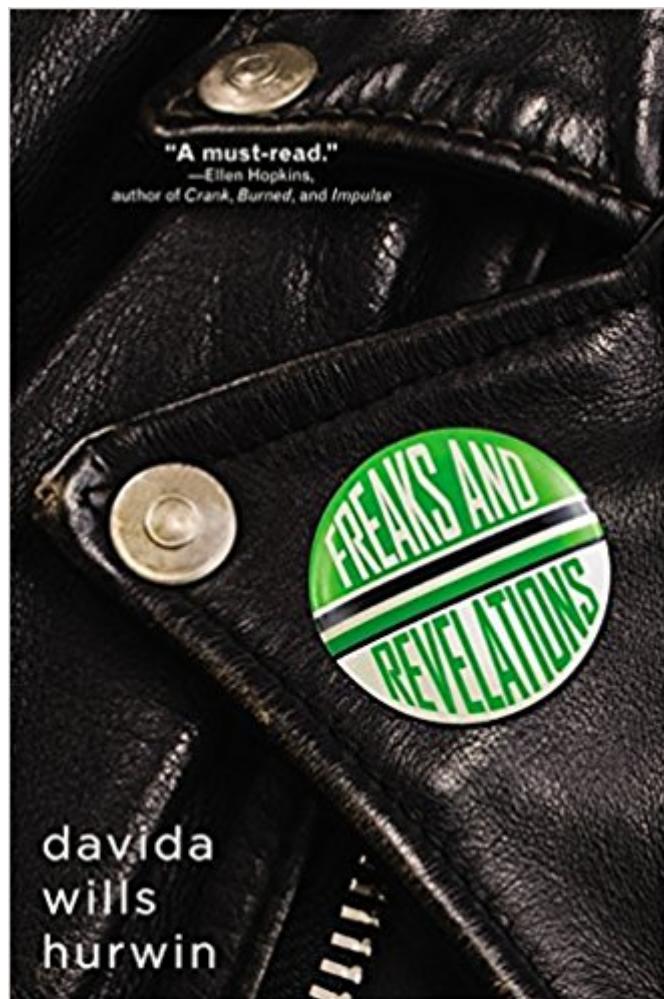


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# Freaks And Revelations



## **Synopsis**

This raw, moving novel follows two teenagers—one, a Mohawk-wearing 17-year-old violent misfit; the other, a gay 13-year-old cast out by his family, hustling on the streets and trying to survive.

Acclaimed author Davida Wills Hurwin creates a riveting narrative told in alternating perspectives of their lives before and after the violent hate crime that changed both their futures. This tragic but ultimately inspirational journey of two polarized teens, their violent first meeting, and their peaceful reunion years later is an unforgettable story of survival and forgiveness. This story is inspired by the real lives of Matthew Boger and Timothy Zaal, who have shared their story on The Oprah Winfrey Show and NPR.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Hurwin tackles the ugliness of hate in a story, told in alternating voices and based on true events, about two boys with more in common than they know at first. Jason, 13, works the streets in San Francisco after his religious mother refuses to accept his coming out. Then he moves to L.A., where Doug, 17, is barely speaking to his parents and is immersed in the punk scene. The narrative counts down to a night in 1980 in which a gay-bashing attack occurred, and the alternating chapters eventually give way to alternating paragraphs as the tension mounts. The dialogue and portrayals of street life are authentic and grim; Adam Rapp fans won't blink an eye. Hurwin frankly discusses sex, drugs, alcohol, prostitution, homosexuality, white supremacy, and other issues

without being gratuitous or graphic. The years following the attack and a chance reconciliation (the story is based on the lives of Matthew Boger and Timothy Zaal) are less detailed than the early years, but their incorporation brings a more hopeful ending than that of famous victim Matthew Shepard. Grades 10-12. --Cindy Dobrez --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Davida Wills Hurwin is the author of *A Time for Dancing* (an ALA Best Book for Young Adults) and *The Farther You Run*. She teaches theater at Crossroads School for Arts and Sciences and lives in Southern California with her husband and daughter.

Sometimes you stumble across a diamond in the rough and you just aren't sure what to do with it. With that in mind, I will pass on *Freaks and Revelations* by Davida Wills Hurwin to you and wish you the best of luck. It will leave you raw and with a knotted stomach, but it is certainly hard to forget. *Freaks and Revelations* is based on a true story of two men on opposite sides of a hate crime. Jason is a 13 year old young man who comes from a family that is anything but desirable. His parents have separated, and he is forced to live with his mother who feels strict religion is the solution to every problem. Unfortunately for Jason, he feels the damage to his family is a direct result of their secrets that torment them all and decides to share his biggest secret. When he announces to the family, including his estranged father, that he is in fact gay, his father walks out and his mother tells him to find another place to live. Doug comes from an equally horrible household, but handles the situation differently. His father is abusive and Doug finds himself escaping through hardcore punk music and culture. Soon he begins going to clubs and meets another group of people who share the same beliefs that minorities- all minorities- are beneath them. Eventually, they even begin "bashing" on a small scale- mostly scaring people and threatening anyone they deem unworthy. Jason is living on the street, hustling money and turning tricks. Doug is sinking deeper and deeper into a life of intolerance and violence. A night of tension and uncontrollable rage lead Doug to attack Jason, who he thinks is just "gay trash"- not someone worth consideration, let alone human decency. Years later, however, a chance encounter will change both their lives. This is an amazingly powerful book about how two boys can come from equally awful houses, turn out so very different, and still come colliding together more than once. With hate crimes like Matthew Shepard's murder still in our memories, this book based on the lives of Matthew Boger and Timothy Zaal is one that will stay with you forever- and not just because of the violence and hate behind it- but because of how intolerance and violence can change into

tolerance and caring with the right circumstances. My only complaint about this book is that 95% of the book is about the two boys and how they grow up and end up in this situation. I would have loved to read more about the aftermath of the bashing, how they got to where they are now, and what happened after their meeting later in life. I am sure their journey as adults was just as interesting as their journey as kids, and there is so much to be learned about their path to acceptance and forgiveness. Nonetheless, this is a powerful book about sentiments that are still so real and raw, even today. Please give this book a chance!

One crisp Thursday evening in Los Angeles in 1980, a young gay male, living on the streets as a prostitute, is beaten nearly to death by a gang of Neo-Nazi skinhead punks. At a decisive moment during the fray, the leader of the punks and the young victim lock eyes. Twenty-five years later, that moment uncoils across a table at a coffee shop when both men, now employees of the Museum of Tolerance, meet to discuss a class they are to teach and they recognize each other. The true story of these events flickered briefly across the media during 2005. The story rose and then died like all media tales as a surprising outcome to what the world saw as yet another act of violence among the blind and the frightened. Novelist and drama instructor Davida Wills Hurwin saw the incident as a moment in human experience that stands out clear and pure as a silver bell; one that needed to be rung again and more loudly. She met with Matthew Boger and Timothy Zaal and told their stories. The result is *Freaks and Revelations*. *Freaks and Revelations* retells the story in fiction, starting 15 years before the 1980 event. Told separately from the point of view of the two young men, the tales flows from the first pages like two rivers rushing towards a confluence, each event in these young men's lives descending through rapids that carry them decisively into each other's paths. The tales descend not just as random flotsam on some bigger flow, but as young men who build lives and communities and world views that shape their course and their ideas and create their experiences. The choice to tell their stories in fiction was a result in part of the creative process Hurwin went through to develop this book. But in greater part it was a result of two things. First, that it is difficult to convey the immensity of human experience through nonfiction narratives. The greatest nonfiction as we know it now is drawn together with fictional tissue - some measure of the decision-maker, the actor, the victim - that we might understand the impulse and flow of events, rather than just see the milestones. Second, the truth is victim not just to memory but to the fears and emotional strata of the players, especially young ones, and even more so, those who have lived through trauma. Our world view, our ability to build and retain a context is not only evolving in youth, but creates a false and narrow narrative for our actions. Trauma adds a layer of misdirection and

encapsulation that is impossible to breach without the tools of fiction. The telling is as gritty as their days and nights, as dark and as light as their hopes and dreams. Although Scholastic is a young adult book publisher, this story is told without the circumspect and moral overtones of most YA fiction. Sex, drugs, and violence take their proper place in these young men's stories. Hurwin has reached inside these characters and their times to let us live two lives in full surround - in taste and smell and sound. Although the opportunity for moral heavy-handedness lurks through the entire tale, Hurwin lets the characters and events speak for themselves. The result is one of the most compelling books that frames tolerance in many years. This book rises to the category of books like The Diary of Anne Frank and Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, books that immerse us in lives that help us see our experience in a broader, more accepting context. *Freaks and Revelations* does the only justice a book can do to that Los Angeles night in 1980. Matthew and Timothy continue to work side-by-side at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. They now call themselves friends. Their road since their encounter 25 years after Matthew's beating has been rocky. But their example is a shining one. It is a privilege to read their story in *Freaks and Revelations*.

Novelist and drama instructor Davida Wills Hurwin saw the incident as a moment in human experience that stands out clear and pure as a silver bell; one that needed to be rung again and more loudly. She met with Matthew Boger and Timothy Zaal and told their stories. The result is *Freaks and Revelations*.

I was not expecting a book from a library...but I love that part of it! It just adds to the experience when I sit down to read it. Now I'm curious about the books past life! And seriously, the book was being sold at a recent book Fair for \$17.00, so I got a great deal!!

Came in very quickly and worked perfectly! :)

This book is based on a very moving, powerful, true story. I had the pleasure of meeting the real-life men who lived this story when I attended their talk at the Museum of Tolerance. If you're ever in the area, they speak the first Sunday of each month. After the book came out I could hardly put it down, and I later had the added pleasure of meeting the author. This will absolutely make an impact on the life of anyone who reads it.

Loved it why can't more books be intriguing like this, one of the few books I've read over and over.

This is a tremendous story. It is insightful and heart-breaking. I actually saw the two men who inspired this story speak together at the Museum of Tolerance in LA. I am a high school teacher and I believe that reading this book and/or seeing these two men speak should be required for every high school student.

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