

SOUTHERN LITERARY REVIEW

A Magazine for Literature of the American South

[HOME](#)
[ABOUT](#)
[SUBMISSIONS](#)
[BOOKSTORE](#)
[CONTENTS](#)
[FREE SUBSCRIPTION](#)

MARCH 7, 2018

[BOOK REVIEWS](#)
[READ OF THE MONTH](#)
[AUTHOR PROFILES & INTERVIEWS](#)
[CONTRIBUTORS' BIOS](#)
[MISCELLANEOUS](#)
[NEWS & EVENTS](#)

You are here: [Home](#) / [Author Profiles & Interviews](#) / Allen Mendenhall Interviews Colleen D. Scott, Author of "Everybody Needs a Bridge"

ALLEN MENDENHALL INTERVIEWS COLLEEN D. SCOTT, AUTHOR OF "EVERYBODY NEEDS A BRIDGE"

 MARCH 7, 2018 BY [ALLEN MENDENHALL](#)  [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

AM: Thanks for doing this interview, Colleen. Your first novel is *Everybody Needs a Bridge*, which you describe as a "work of fiction inspired by actual events." It follows the story of Erin, a young girl in Alabama who's growing up roughly a generation after the Civil Rights Movement. You might call it a bildungsroman involving friendship, race, and the burdens of history. Of course, Alabama is your home too. Were the actual events that inspired the narrative witnessed or experienced by you, or purely drawn from secondhand knowledge and basic immersion in the culture and region?

CS: It is my pleasure Allen. Yes, the novel is intended to be a bildungsroman. The story line is a progression of events that challenge the conscience and beliefs of the main character, the majority I either experienced or witnessed firsthand. But the story line was also intended to be broader than just one person's story and represent a generation, coming of age in the south, post-civil rights. Hopefully, by reliving the experience through the eyes of the main character, the reader will be inspired to rise to similar challenges presented in society even today.

AM: What are some of those challenges?

CS: One challenge is the pressure of societal expectations which shape what we consider to be ideal. Our chosen courses of study, hobbies, occupations, our friends and even our mates are either in concert or in conflict with those expectations. It is my hope that the novel demonstrates the amazing value of relationships. With each word and action, in every relationship we form, we possess the power to either encourage or discourage those around us.

Another overarching challenge explored is the impact of social segregation. When we isolate ourselves we feel uncomfortable around others from different backgrounds, ethnicities, classes and races. I hope the novel highlights the importance of forming relationships with those different from ourselves. I fear that lately we are showing the signs that we might forget how important it is to recognize our similarities and cherish our differences.

AM: You worked in the corporate world for many years before becoming an author.

CS: Yes primarily in finance. I had an opportunity to make a change, and since I have always enjoyed writing and am an avid reader, I decided to seize the opportunity. I have loved every minute of it and now my second novel is in the final stages of editing!

AM: *Everybody Needs a Bridge* captures those awkward teenage years in high school and all that comes with them: the laughing, the teasing, the fitting in, and worse. How did you transport yourself back to that stage of life to construct a first-person narrative?



Colleen D. Scott

TOP POSTS & PAGES

["This Republic of Suffering," by Drew Gilpin Faust](#)

[Interview with Paulette Jiles](#)

[Submissions](#)

[Allen Mendenhall Interviews Colleen D. Scott, Author of "Everybody Needs a Bridge"](#)

["The Myth of Water," by Jeanie Thompson](#)

["The Prayer Box," by Lisa Wingate](#)

SEARCH THE SITE

FREE SUBSCRIPTION

Email Address

[unsubscribe from list](#)

powered by [MailChimp!](#)

TOPICS

[Author Profiles & Interviews](#) (131)

[Book Reviews](#) (389)

[Conferences and Festivals](#) (36)

[Contributors' Bios](#) (91)

[Essays](#) (18)

[General](#) (7)

[Grants and Contests](#) (17)

[News & Events](#) (79)

[Read of the Month](#) (107)

[Residencies](#) (5)

[Southern States](#) (1)

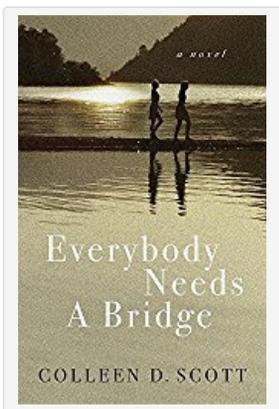
ARCHIVES

CS: Before I began writing, I shared my personal experiences with a few close friends and found that those feelings of awkwardness, loneliness and frustration of trying to fit in were unfortunately common. The discussions helped me sharpen my memories of those emotions and they haunted me until I could leave them with the characters in the scenes of the novel.

AM: When you first sat down to write Erin's story, did you know where you were headed? Did you already have a plot in mind?

CS: Somewhat. I had the high level plot and overarching theme both in mind before I began writing. But instead of writing a detailed outline, I instead utilized poster boards as story boards and post it notes to represent the scenes and the characters. This visualization allowed me to add, delete and change scenes and characters as I wrote and the story line evolved.

AM: Did you write from home? Did you return to Alabama for inspiration or information?



Click here to purchase this book

CS: I primarily write either from an arm chair on my porch or a booth at a local coffee shop. Both locations allow me to get lost in my writing and block out distractions. I do return to Alabama occasionally to visit friends and relatives. When I need inspiration, I spend time at the beach. For me there is nothing more empowering than walking on the beach as the sun rises and again as it sets.

AM: Issues of race and racial identity are central to *Everybody Needs A Bridge*.

CS: Absolutely. Without understanding the dynamics of race and the impact of racism on the central characters, the reader would lose important context. But I also wanted to illustrate how through ordinary conversations and interactions we inadvertently sustain those racist attitudes. And how those small actions can be just as effective as overt

and violent acts.

AM: As Erin ages, her concerns become increasingly grave and weighty. Teenage pregnancy. Murder. She enters college. She has to come to terms with life and death. I don't want to give too much away by saying anything more specific. What does it mean to become an adult? What does it mean to put away childish things?

CS: Life events have a way of forcing us into adulthood, don't they? For Erin the hallmark of entering adult hood is when she realizes the importance of accepting the consequences of her decisions. Thankfully, the crucial friendships she formed along the way clearly illustrated how adults must make decisions, move forward, and do so without assigning blame or hanging on to lingering regrets.

AM: Thank you for this interview. I look forward to reading your next novel.

SHARE THIS:



LIKE THIS:



Be the first to like this.

RELATED

[Allen Mendenhall Interviews Amber D. Tran, Author of "Moon River"](#)
June 14, 2017
In "Author Profiles & Interviews"

[Allen Mendenhall Interviews Robert J. Ernst, author of "The Inside War"](#)
November 28, 2014
In "Author Profiles & Interviews"

[Allen Mendenhall Interviews Elizabeth Harris, Author of "Mayhem"](#)
November 5, 2015
In "Author Profiles & Interviews"

Archives

Select Month

TAGS

[Alabama](#) [Allen Mendenhall](#) [Amy Susan Wilson](#) [Appalachia](#) [Author Interview](#) [Charleston](#) [Claire Hamner Maturro](#) [Contributor](#) [Daniel James Sundahl](#) [Daniel Sundahl](#) [Donna Meredith](#) [Fiction](#) [Florida](#) [Georgia](#) [Interview](#) [Johnnie Bernhard](#) [Julie Cantrell](#) [Karen White](#) [Louisiana](#) [Mercer University Press](#) [Mississippi](#) [New Orleans](#) [nonfiction](#) [North Carolina](#) [novel](#) [Oklahoma](#) [Oxford](#) [Pat Conroy](#) [Philip K. Jason](#) [Poetry](#) [Read of the Month](#) [Rhett DeVane](#) [Short Stories](#) [South Carolina](#) [Southern Gothic](#) [Southern Literary Review](#) [Southern Literature](#) [Tennessee](#) [Texas](#) [The Civil War](#) [University of South Carolina Press](#) [Virginia](#) [West Virginia](#) [William Bernhardt](#) [William Faulkner](#)

FILED UNDER: [AUTHOR PROFILES & INTERVIEWS](#) TAGGED WITH: [ALABAMA](#), [ALLEN MENDENHALL](#), [INTERVIEWS COLLEEN D. SCOTT](#), [COLLEEN D. SCOTT](#), [EVERYBODY NEEDS A BRIDGE](#)



About Allen Mendenhall

Allen Mendenhall is associate dean at Thomas Goode Jones School of Law and executive director of the Blackstone & Burke Center. His books include Literature and Liberty (2014), Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., Pragmatism, and the Jurisprudence of Agon (2017), The Southern Philosopher: Collected Essays of John William Corrington (2017) (editor), and Lines from a Southern Lawyer (2017). Visit his website at AllenMendenhall.com.



LEAVE A REPLY

Enter your comment here...