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REVIEW: Outcasts United: An American Town, a Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference

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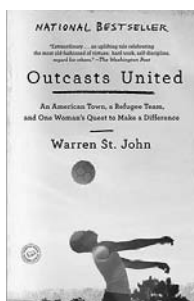
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FICTION

Outcasts United: An American Town, a Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference by Warren St. John

(Spiegel & Grau, 2009; ISBN 978-0-385-52203-8, \$24.95.)



Expanding upon a *New York Times* report, author Warren St. John writes a compelling story of a woman coach, her soccer team comprised of refugee boys, and the impact they had on a small Southern town. Not only the tale of how one person can make a difference, it highlights the struggles of both immigrants and native residents as they adjust and adapt to each other.

Outcasts United revolves around the coach, Luma Mufleh, a young Jordanian woman educated and living in the United States. Driving around her neighborhood, she stumbles upon a group of boys playing soccer in a parking lot. These boys are refugees, mostly from African countries but also Iraq, Bosnia and Afghanistan, who along with their families have been re-settled in Clarkston, Ga. Coach Luma single-handedly and with little support creates a soccer team for them known as the "Fugees" (short for refugees.) Clarkston, a small town about 13 miles east of Atlanta is remarkable only for being a "homogenous, white, Southern town." Unprepared to receive and re-settle numerous ethnic

groups, the residents are divided between those resistant to these changes, including the mayor himself, and those who recognize that change is inevitable.

The book veers back and forth between the personal struggles of coach Luma and her team, the boys' difficulties within a new environment, the immigrant experience for the boys' families, and the town of Clarkston as it adjusts to a new geography of immigrant residents. With all this, the reading is a bit disjointed at times. But the story is moving and empathetic. The author has produced a book where the reader roots for the Fugees from start to finish. It is recommended for both young adults and adult readers. ►►

— Reviewed by **Amy Harris**
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NONFICTION

Regeneration! A Journal of Creative Writing by the Regeneration Writers of Mercer University's College of Continuing & Professional Studies (The Regeneration Writers Press [Macon, Ga.], 2009; \$15.95)

The Regeneration Writers all took what one of them called "a long

