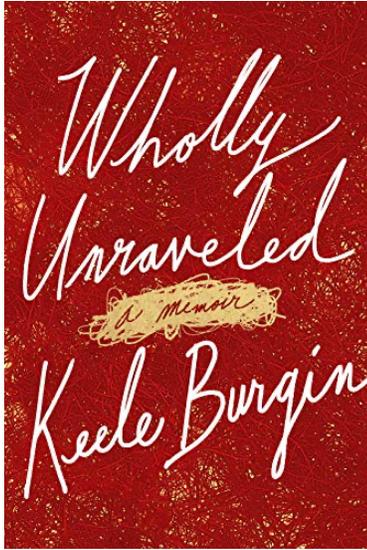


# Wholly Unraveled

By Keele Burgin



## About the Book

At the age of twelve, Kathleen found herself looking down the barrel of a .45-caliber pistol. Her father, one of the leaders of a strict religious cult, had found yet another cruel way to punish her for being a “rebellious” kid. Filled with pain, vulnerability, and guts, *Wholly Unraveled* delivers a gripping portrait of a resilient young woman who turned her deep shame into awe-inspiring dignity and grace.

That harrowing upbringing coupled with a violent assault at the age of seventeen sent Kathleen fleeing from home after high school. She finds work in a bar, fraternizes with drug dealers, and descends deep into alcohol and substance abuse until she escapes once again to the most unlikely of places, the Madonna House apostolate in rural Canada. Among missionaries, Kathleen initially struggles to wrangle the demons of her childhood before taking the first steps toward peace and healing. After months of soul-searching, she emerges with a new sense of purpose, a new name — Keele — and a new appreciation for what it means to be part of a family.

The childhood and subsequent misfortunes of Keele Burgin left me wholly breathless, as I fumbled with her from one abusive relationship, one distressing situation, after another. Not for the faint of heart, this stunning, no-frills memoir traces the emotional entanglement of an abused girl turned fractured woman struggling to find her way amid continuous trauma. *Wholly Unraveled* immerses the reader in the author’s story of hope and triumph in the face of nearly impossible circumstances.

# Discussion Guide

1. When Keele is at Madonna House Marion tells her, "Give in, look at the pain you're in, and ask what you're supposed to learn from it. Live in the questions for a time. Don't look for the answers right now." Can you think of a time where you had to do this in your own life?
2. What are the messages that you received from your family that you still carry today? Talk about the positive and the negative.
3. How much do you believe your upbringing dictated your adulthood? What are some patterns that you can trace back to your childhood?
4. When you were young did you ever wish you were in a different family? Did you ever create a 'somewhere else' place like Kathleen did to hide from the reality of your situation?
5. Kathleen initially dealt with her childhood trauma by running, chasing drugs and adrenaline. How have you dealt with difficult things in your life? Talk about how you have reconciled your own trauma in your life.
6. What is your relationship with religion and how do you juxtapose religion and spirituality in your life?
7. What was your reaction when Kathleen chose Madonna House, a Catholic community, when she needed healing? Why do you think it worked for her? Is there a place that has been healing for you? Is that place paradoxical given your experience?
8. The theme of silence is woven throughout Kathleen's story. She was not allowed to use her voice for so much of her young life and sometimes when she did use her voice she was punished. At Madonna House she was asked to be silent and it had healing power. Discuss this as well as the use of her voice in writing a memoir.
9. Are you willing to share a story from your own life that you don't want to say out loud?
10. When Kathleen returned to Madonna House after running away, Marion told her, "You want to find yourself—who you are without the fear." I looked in her eyes, and I could feel something, a lightness. I felt hope. "That is all any of us want. To know who we are and to act without fear."

What do you feel when you read this quote? Can you think of a time when you knew who you were and acted without fear? Can you think of a time when you were afraid but you did the thing that you were afraid to do anyway? How did those experiences affect you?

## Author Bio

Keele is an entrepreneur, activist, author, and filmmaker. Her story of survival and self-discovery has inspired a life dedicated to impacting tens of thousands of women across the globe. She has served in leadership roles on the boards of multiple international non-profit organizations that empower women.

Keele founded (B)Tribes to bring like-minded women together to ignite their inner compass and create profound transformation in their lives. Keele is a contributor to Insight Timer where she shares powerful guided meditations on intentional living, gratitude and self-healing.

A gifted speaker, Keele leads with a message of hope, resilience and the power of storytelling that has been shared both locally and nationally at conferences, on NPR, as a guest speaker on podcasts, a contributor to magazine articles, and a guest lecturer at universities. She lives in Boulder, Colorado with her three sons.

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Publication Date: April 1, 2019

Genres: Memoir, Women's Non-fiction

Hardcover: 289 pages

Publisher: Little A

ASIN : B07GJR7GD8