

by *Jim Coby*

“THE THINGS THEY HAVE TO ENDURE TO STAY TOGETHER”:

A Conversation with Matthew Griffin
Author of *Hide*

PHOTOGRAPH BY RAYMIE WOLFE



WHEN THE MARRIAGE EQUALITY ACT PASSED through the Supreme Court in the summer of 2015, the LGBTQ community breathed a sigh of celebratory relief, as they finally earned the national recognition that their heterosexual counterparts had long possessed. For an earlier generation, however, exposure of love between a same-sex couple could potentially spell disaster, and therefore necessitated that the relationship be carefully concealed. Such a couple is at the heart of Matthew Griffin's first novel, *Hide*.¹ A contemplative and heart-wrenching work, *Hide* follows the relationship of Frank Clifton, a World War II veteran and textile mill worker, and Wendell Wilson, a taxidermist, in rural North Carolina. Oscillating between scenes of their blossoming relationship in the mid-twentieth century and

scenes set in the twenty-first century, Griffin explores what it means to fall in love in a society that questions the legality of same-sex relationships and what it means to sustain that love through seclusion, sickness, and aging.

Matthew Griffin was born and raised in Greensboro, North Carolina, and grew up visiting family across the state, from Lexington to New Bern. A graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop, he returned to the South where he worked at the Highlander Research and Education Center just outside of Knoxville, Tennessee, before migrating to Lafayette, Louisiana, to teach fiction. His first novel, *Hide*, has been praised by publications such as *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *The New York Times* and was featured as one of Amazon.com's "Best Books of February 2016."² He and his husband, Raymie Wolfe, currently reside in New Orleans.

I conducted this interview with Matthew Griffin on the campus of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, where he was a Visiting Assistant Professor of fiction and I was working on my PhD. The interview took place on April 14, subsequently, we exchanged emails to clarify certain points. The transcription has been edited by the NCLR staff for clarity, flow, and format while remaining true to the voices and intentions of the speakers.

JIM COBY teaches English at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. He received his PhD from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, where he focused his studies on literature of the American South. His work has been published, or is forthcoming, in *South Central Review*, *Arkansas Review*, *The Explicator*, and *Paste Magazine*, among others.

ABOVE **Matthew Griffin, 2016** ¹ *Hide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016); quotations from the novel will be cited parenthetically.

² Rev. of *Hide* by Matthew Griffin, *Kirkus Reviews* Feb. 2016: web; *Publishers Weekly* 7 Dec. 2015: web; Namara Smith, "First Novels," rev. of *Hide*, *New York Times* 4 Mar. 2016: web.