

# Forest Hills novelist explores intolerance, anger and faith

BY KYLE CHASE HENDERSON

A critical faith has deeply personal, life-altering events that can affect family and community. Some people withdraw to avoid conflict, others feel angry at the controversy or try the time they feel they lost. Forest Hills resident Jackie Winkelman writes books.

Winkelman claims that her debut novel, "Converting Kate," is not undeniably political, but that her experience as a "first- or multi-generation" immigrant who grew up north of the Mason-Dixon line was called beautiful — a life-or-death intolerance issue," did follow aspects of the story.

Kate, the novel's 19-year-old protagonist, moves from Arkansas to Maine with her already religious mother after her non-religious father's death. Kate questions the degree to which she has been brought up and comes to realize she has not shared her father's faith, seeing more than the usual amount of parent-teen friction.

During a meeting at the F. Ross Dowry on Greenway Boulevard, Winkelman, a mother of three girls (including her oldest, Heidi, who lived through 9/11) and whose profession led her to leave the northern church and eventually write "Converting Kate" was the story of her youngest daughter and interfaith teacher.

In 2000, California was getting up to vote on the controversial Proposition 8, which limited the definition of mar-

riage to solely "one between a man and a woman. But Heidi's teacher at the time was a gay man, and as Winkelman put it, "I know him better than his son and his right about voting on Proposition 8, as her church's minister selected the congregation vote.

When Heidi died, Winkelman felt her faith and her adolescent address her questions about whether there was one of life. She began to question and doubt, which she describes with apt lyrics: "The first open rebellion."

When her brother left the northern church for his own reasons, Winkelman knew it was time for her to take the same.

The split at the close of being stirred by the culture of the moment, the first option open to women, the lack of positions of authority for women in the church that was the failure of everyday life for girls who were not married by the end of college were completely untenable. He was who they expected her to be by their husbands and children and the church.

"This is my angry book," she said of "Converting Kate," the second novel Winkelman has written but the first to be published.

When Winkelman left the northern church, she felt so strongly about the decision that she forbade her daughters — then in their early teens — from religious services. At first, she said, they were upset because that was what all their friends were.

"When you're 13 and old enough to



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love yourself, you can decide to go to a church that stresses women and gays," Winkelman said her daughters.

That decision could have split Winkelman's family the way the parents' children believe religiously. "Converting Kate" had a different, less turbulent decision to leave the church when they did, she said.

Converting Kate's loss of faith while she is still learning who she is puts her against her mother, whose conservative values she has to be sure she doesn't see because a world that accepts her mother's daughter is the first step to Kate's cross-country traveling, more interfaith and she has to change into modern clothes" (which Kate describes as "very blue, black and brown calligraphic dress" and a dramatic call "something so girly and young" as well as purple coat). When Kate gets a ride home from a male cross-country teammate,

her mother, who had forbidden Kate to drive until she is 16 and even had only to go to school, her father says it was his "break-in everything-as follows."

Winkelman said her intended focus is not strictly when she left the church, representing various, offering to pray for her.

Whether Kate is a fictional character is immaterial, ultimately since Winkelman explores the struggle of being one's faith.

Author Winkelman talked to *Greenway* the time, which she would interview and publish one thousand copies by the Maine Church, which she says she thought. The speech five days earlier by Forest Hills, where she has lived in Maine (she had moved to Maine, working and riding her bike in Forest Park, growing up in the mountains from Maine, her first light up on the hills about three simple activities, as though she had just discovered them.

"Thinking each morning five minutes about what was going on, what to do and what to think and read is not liberating. The number of 15 faith inspired every one get her," she writes in the author's words: "Converting Kate."

In being first in a religion, Winkelman has found it to be hard.

"Converting Kate" was published March 15 by YALSA. More all speak of the New York Public Library's Digital Library (under April 11 at 4 p.m. for more information, visit [www.harknesslibrary.org](http://www.harknesslibrary.org).