

## ABSTRACT

Author: Anthony Lacerenza  
Title: From the Valley, a Memoir  
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“From the Valley, a Memoir” follows the early life of Anthony Lacerenza as he grows up queer in the conservative town of Naugatuck, Connecticut. Lacerenza discovers his queer identity as he simultaneously discovers his creative self. This discovery leads him to majoring in theatre at Naugatuck Community College. While attending college, Lacerenza has to work as a part-time cashier at Ocean State, a retail store, to make ends meet. In both the Theatre Department and at Ocean State, Lacerenza is affected by power dynamics and exploitation. In college, his theatre professor creates a hostile environment and stirs rumors that he is grooming a young actor to sexually exploit her. In the retail environment, customers and coworkers focus on him as a young, gay man, and perpetuate forms of bigotry during the 2016 rise of Donald Trump. As a result of both spaces, Lacerenza experiences mental, emotional, and physical health issues. From the Valley, a Memoir not only portrays the dangers of remaining silent but also reveals injustice at both his college and his workplace.