



Fury: A Memoir

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The author of the iconic *New York Times* bestseller *Smashed* undertakes a quest to confront her own anger.

In the years following the publication of her landmark memoir, *Smashed: Story of a Drunken Girlhood*, Koren Zailckas stays sober and relegates binge drinking to her past. But a psychological legacy of repression lingers—her sobriety is a loose surface layer atop a hard-packed, unacknowledged rage that wreaks havoc on Koren emotionally and professionally. When a failed relationship leads Koren back to her childhood home, she sinks into an emotional crisis, writer's block, depression, anxiety. Only when she begins to apply her research on a book about anger to the turmoil of her own life does she learn what denial has cost her. The result is a blisteringly honest chronicle of the consequences of anger displaced and the balm of anger discovered.

Readers who recognized themselves or someone they love in the pages of *Smashed* will identify with Koren's life-altering exploration and the necessity of exposing anger's origins in order to flourish in love and life as an adult. Combining sophisticated sociological research with a dramatic and deeply personal story that grapples boldly with identity and family, *Fury* is a dazzling work by a young writer at the height of her powers that is certain to touch a cultural nerve.

Fury: A Memoir Details

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From Reader Review Fury: A Memoir for online ebook

Heather says

Fury is intriguing but not enthralling. Koren had great success with her early 20's memoir Smashed and as a result was under pressure by her publisher to write a follow up book of some sort. She decided to write a book on her deep seeded anger that stems from childhood issues like her narcissistic mother who never took her feelings seriously.

If you are looking for a book that explores anger issues this really isn't it. In order to like this book you are going to have to be really interested in Koren's life, to the point where you are going to have to care about reading pages of emails back and forth to her boyfriend who lives in England whom she went through a bad break-up with. Koren isn't the most likeable person on the planet, and without that sympathy or humanistic bond from reader to author the book is only mildly interesting. I feel at the end of the day she was writing it more out of obligation than anything and as a result of such false pressure the topic loses its luster.

Camyla H. says

I suppose you could say I expected much more out of this book considering I'd just read "Smashed" merely a month before. The more I get to know this author through her memoir, the more I realize she's a complainer who has been handed a lot of things on a silver spoon and she should have just "sucked it up" and realized how easy she had it compared to most of the rest of the world.

It was also quite annoying to read constantly about the history behind anger. Had I wanted to learn about the history of anger, I would have read another book. Honestly, I believe she was using this history lesson as filler to fluff her memoir.

Christina McLain says

Liked this book despite the fury I felt when it got a bit too self-centered and revelatory. Honestly the author came across as very irritating but some of her insights were interesting. Zailckas explores how repressed angry especially female anger can make you sick as you sustain unhealthy relationships and hide away from your rage in addiction and depression. She has done a lot of research on how many cultures deal and have dealt with anger, but I found the blend of that information with a memoir of how she herself learned to express her anger wearing at times. And although her family came off as wierd and dysfunctional I couldn't help feel sorry for them, exposed as they were to the whole world. I don't think she would be that easy to deal with either, though her point that we should deal with annoying people and situations as they arise and not later is well taken.

shannon says

i don't know that i would marry someone who respondes to an accidental broken window by calling me an

idiot, and who seems too frequently ask "what the fuck is wrong with you". but then, when i put together my list of acceptable qualities in a mate, it was "decent hygiene, ability to actually be employed as *something*, not horrifically fucking damaged and not an asshole."

apparently i like to follow fiction about unpleasant families with memoirs about them. i seem to have this fondness for memoirs in which i find myself thinking "how can a person actually have anything to write about when they appear too intolerable for anyone else to want to even be around? [hey, there, julie powell!]" what horrible people they all are! didn't i say i was going back to classics? WHY AM I SUCH A LITERARY MASOCHIST???? is scott pilgrim going to make me mad? people i respect seem to have enjoyed them.....

Lori Wilson says

Not sure why I didn't like this book. The author has overcome her alcohol addiction, and now has trouble experiencing all of her normal emotions, especially anger. It didn't pull me into the story and it seemed to me that she was really being whiney and resistant!

Mallory says

Is it research, or is it memoir? The problem that Koren Zailckas does by trying to combine the two is that she does neither terribly successfully. The research bits often don't fit in well with the narrative and her narrative feels thin in many places. Overall, it was a good idea that just didn't work very well on the page, which is a shame. Repressed emotions are both an interesting and important topic, and the idea that women repress anger (or pretend it is something else) so frequently in our society is one that needs to be addressed. This work just simply wasn't the correct medium with which to address it.

Brian S. Wise says

I don't dislike Zailckas' writing style, and I liked "Smashed", but I disliked this book immensely. A slew of self-diagnosis, quotes from writers that exist only for the purpose of balancing her self-diagnosis, extended conversations with her therapist - these are all writing devices I cannot stand. In other words, "Fury" reads an awful lot like a book constructed for no discernible reason other than it was time to write a book. Like the cover, though.

Kelly Hager says

You might know Koren Zailckas from her earlier memoir, Smashed. I didn't read that, but my best friend Jen did and said it was (a) very good and (b) featured Ocean City, where I have spent many a summer day.

But we're not here to talk about Smashed, binge drinking or Ocean City.

After Smashed, she wanted to write a book about anger, but it just wasn't working. Then, after a breakup (a

really bad breakup) with someone she calls the Lark, she moves back in with her parents (her apartment is being subletted) and seeks therapy. Her family dynamic is one where anger isn't really expressed. Instead, huge things are glossed over and minor irritations (being cut off in traffic; dinner being late) are treated as major infractions.

This book is so amazing! I don't normally read non-fiction, but this is exactly the kind I do like: it sort of reads like a novel and the "heroine" is completely relatable. It also reminds me of *Odd Girl Out*, which I read for my book club. The idea behind that is that teenage girls become bitchy and passive-aggressive because it's the only way we're taught that we can express anger. This book deals with that theme as well (obviously, I guess, in a book called *Fury*).

And also, I want to hire her to ghostwrite all my emails and blog posts from now on.

This is part of an email she sent to the Lark: "...as for the question of memories, I can't answer it right now. Not the fact that this ended, but the way in which it ended tarnished so many memories I would've liked to keep."

Who hasn't felt that way about a relationship?

And there's this:

"My hunt for a shrink is not what you might call an informed search. I don't seek out recommendations. I don't ask for referrals. I select a woman on the sole basis that her practice is located three blocks from my apartment, which, in the death grip of depression, is the farthest commute I can undertake."

So in case you're like me and you tend to avoid nonfiction because it's usually dry and boring, know that this is the exact opposite of that. Koren is the kind of person we all wish we were friends with. :)

Katherine says

The author explores her repressed self in this book and the outcome via therapy and a lot of self-reflection is getting in touch with her anger and using anger to facilitate a healing process that allows for more love, love, love. Too happy ending-ish. This book pissed me off. I slammed it down when finished.

Cj says

Not a memoir but more a research book into anger theories. Yes, the author uses her life as an example, but as with her first book too much psychobabble and research notes to really make it a memoir (and it's not in the biography section of my library). The author psychologically analyzes her anger, her distance from people and the book reads that way--like she's talking about a distant character.

Kerensa says

Essentially what Zailckas did was get dumped and whine about it. She relied too heavily on the use of academic quotes instead of actually going further with her emotions. I felt like I was reading a first year college Comp. class essay. It's pretty much [Insert feeling] [Insert quote to explain feeling]. I hate the overuse of quotes to explain a topic or feeling and there was at least one on every page. I loved her first book & really wish this one was written like that one.

Jason says

"Your anger is a gift." -Rage Against the Machine (1992)

Really, Zack? Is it always? I think Koren, and I for that matter, may have to disagree with you.

This is an incredible book. What seems to start out as a "Bridget Jones' Diary" retread (which I can only imagine, as I have not actually seen the entire movie; only short clips from its numerous runs on basic cable), quickly evolves into one of the most honest memoirs I have read in quite some time. One that manages to take on a very serious topic, anger, without insulting the reader by dumbing-it-down to proselytizing or "how-to" bullet points to solve your own problems via the trials and tribulations of the author's own life. It was quite refreshing to see the evolution from Koren's attempt to write an expository effort regarding the topic, to one of personal examination and reflection. And I cannot state this enough, it was fantastic NOT to have to read chapter headings of the "It's OK to not be OK" ilk.

What also makes this work so satisfying in the end, is the lack of resolution. The author's story is continuing, as should yours.

Well done, Koren, well done.

Andrea DeAngelis says

I read this book in a flash because I think the subject matter - repressed anger - is not commonly addressed or maybe I'm mistaken. Memoir is not really the right genre for this because it's more than that, Zailckas was trying to write a book on anger but suffered from a major creative impasse. It was only until she realized she was repressing her own anger that she was able to retool her book into this strange concoction. She didn't even realize that she had severe problems with processing and expressing her own anger. Zailckas includes a great deal of her original book's anger research along with her personal experiences, creating a fascinating, emotionally compelling, deftly sociological book that was difficult to put down. I will most likely draw upon her observations and experiences for years to come.

Annie says

Fury really resonated with me. I want to write Koren a thank you letter for writing this book and helping me further understand myself, my ideals and the concepts that can frame a life. It is a perspective-changer. This

memoir is about anger, more specifically, women and anger. Against the arc of Koren's personal story, other anger theories are included from her extensive research, a format much like her other bestselling book, *Smashed*.

The book begins with Koren racing back to the United States, after a horrible fight with her British boyfriend. As she recovers at her childhood home, Koren finds the book she is writing about anger has stalled and she isn't making any progress. She turns to homeopathy, meditation and psychology for further research and also to see if she can find a cure for her own repressed anger.

This is where we are different personalities. In my family, I am known as the "emotional one." I don't struggle with repressed anger. I have a temper. Anger is easily accessed for me. In my own furious state, I can be cruel, throwing biting words like arrows at my assailant. Although Koren and I both handle anger in strikingly different ways, I could relate to so many of her findings and insights. The themes behind her repression, feeling unaccepted and unimportant in her family, childhood anger not correctly expressed or handled, a constant urging to suppress her more unpleasant emotions, were very familiar to me. After reading about her journey, I felt an urge to get to the root of what is driving my anger, then find meaningful ways to confront and heal from the past.

Zailckas tends to use a lot of profanity in her writing and I was offended by a comment she made-just because of my religious beliefs-hence the reason this didn't quite make it to five stars. But it's very close. She is witty, concise and so likable. I really wanted her to get her happy ending. I was shocked by her family's reaction at one portion of the book. I am really glad she would share such personal parts of her life (her own therapy sessions!) and illustrate that with hard work and personal determination, you can come to terms with whatever pain you have in your past. She demonstrates how the rewards of changing and understanding and accepting your history allow you to be more present in your current life and live better and more wholly in the present. While this might sound cheesy and cliché, Zailckas is such a fresh writer with a decidedly original perspective and persona, it is entertaining and inspiring. When an author combines real research against a deeply personal, yet relatable story, it's a very powerful book. Can I give her all social issues to write about, please? I am very happy she wrote this, I liked it A LOT.

Favorite Quotes:

Anger seems to listen to argument to some extent, but to mishear it, as do hasty servants who run out before they have heard the whole of what one says, and then muddle the order.

-Aristotle

I'm not envious that she's having a baby, but rather that she feels equipped to do it. How does she feel secure enough? How does she know she won't delegate her suffering to her children? How can she be sure that she won't revenge herself on what her latest ultrasound showed was her baby girl? Or make her daughter feel as though it is her sole responsibility to make my sister feel validated? I am fully aware that I'm already controlling and overly critical of my sister, adverse to the helpless devotion of pets, and indignant to the neediness of my dates, and frankly I doubt my potential as a mother.

Yes, this is my family. Yes, we are bad at special occasions. Sure, we have our blemishes: Within the confines of our family, we're crude communicators; we don't always trust one another; we don't always trust ourselves. But every now and again there is comedy in our shortcomings. Our flaws make us human; our humanity means our days together are numbered and the brevity of our time together is what makes it so very special.

Years earlier, back when I first began thinking I might like to write a book about anger, my friend and yoga teacher Rolf shared his philosophy on the subject. Whenever we spoke about what I was writing, he liked to say, "Koren, just remember, you can't blame the bear." This was shorthand for a longer conversation in which he'd asked me the rather disturbing question: "Would you be angry at a bear if it mauled you?"Rolf had gone on to ask: "You wouldn't blame the bear because it's a wild animal, right? And that's what

wild animals do. So why, for instance, would you blame your parents for failing you when you know all human beings are flawed?' Try as I did, I've never really found a decent retort. I know it's like expecting a grizzly to sit down over espresso and do my taxes, but I want my family to be a place of nourishment and support, unfailingly and always.

Megankellie says

I wish goodreads had half star options. Only read this book if you are under 27 and never been in therapy. This book makes me feel like a psychopath and like the world doesn't make sense. No one hassled her for talking like a person in a long dress standing in a subtle breeze and responding cordially to servants. There are very few jokes, no "and then we fell over and one guy farted also I think something puked in here" and I know the location of her apartment so I cannot empathize (it's a great location) (1.5 bedrooms and no roommates). There are very good moments where I was like "YES YES! GO FOR IT! GO THERE!" and instead she quoted someone academic that I don't care about. Also this is basically a story of "I met a guy, got married and had a baby." I have absolutely zero empathy about that and she said during her therapy sessions she never really got angry, which she said in a convoluted and overly blah-blah-my-muslin-dress kinda way. Eat, Pray, Love talks about fury so much better than this book.. I'm only upset with her because I had huge, high hopes and really wanted her to go for it, and to take us on the ride of anger. But whatever, I might be naturally angrier than her, but I cannot empathize with a woman finding "the one true miracle of my life" which is a dude and dealing with career frustration after publishing a book at 23. Yeah, yeah, we all have the right to our own feelings zz, but TAKE ME THERE. I'm sure there's room to empathize/understand anger felt by someone in love with a sensitive British songwriter, who blah blah is amazing, but instead it felt like a way to brag. "Sometimes, when I am in my Rolls Royce with my masseuse, children and husband-- who all really, really, really love me in a profound and honest way, ps--it's just, what's the word--difficult for several seconds." Which I'm sure it actually is sometimes, but she never describes the actual emotion. NOTHING is raw.

I haven't read her first book, I hope it is better. I am shocked that someone with an alcohol problem (I guess?) doesn't feel splitting and insane rages that she could talk about with xxxtreme detail. This book was confusing and disappointing. I had to put it down 80% of the way through because of my fury about hearing how her wedding planning (in Paris) was difficult sometimes. "Withholding and denial got in the way of my relationships" (that is a misquote). Bullshit. Or maybe, but what, you have one therapist and now we're all good? I have extremely strong feelings about this book and would love to hear intimate detail, not some research-quoting. Anyway, I loved the prologue and most of the beginning, but this brand of repression and grief is very foreign to me for the most part. The food she mentions is salmon with a miso glaze. When does she eat a pound of reese's pieces in a parking lot? She is all airy intellect and not one iota shitting meat, which is being a person, I think. The vermin in her world are mice, not hair clogs pulled from a pipe or a dead rat in a gutter. Also, seriously, the very end is her married with a baby. I read the last sentence that was like "I looked at my baby girl and my husband" and I can't read anything else since I took a flame thrower to my bedroom.

I do not wish her ill, but if you know from anger that stems from something deep, old and biblicalish, that features like fire and black holes and flaying, this is NOT the book for you. If you have modern-day woman anger that comes from your age or status or money or creative fulfillment or disappointment this is NOT the book for you. You will not commiserate, you will not feel met where you are, you will not see actual empathy, you will not see your own wounds healed. You will hear about tonglen and holistic medicine,

which feels like a stand in for something Catholic--like the same formula, only approved by Anthropology, the clothing store, or someone who is snobbish about what will make her feel better. I am just saying, if this book appeals to you--and I read it hoping for the scalp-opening vent in two days--CAVEAT EMPTOR. If you are me, you will feel white hot rage at a book about anger, which I'm sure is a Buddhist kohn or something. I guess just manage your expectations. And look for my new book called "I AM CATHOLIC AND IT IS FUCKING GREAT" (I am not Catholic) or "I AM 55, SINGLE, WITH CAT AND I AM SERIOUSLY VERY HAPPY" or "I DO A LOT OF ANIMAL TYPE SHITTING-AND-FUCKING-ISH-STUFF AND I LOVE DIET COKE BUT I ALSO HAVE A HEART AND I'M NOT ENDLESSLY PISSED ANYMORE." Or maybe just a smiling picture of me with "I'D RATHER NOT BE SO FUCKING ANGRY." I think it will be a best seller.

the end.

ETA: I had to change the stars to one. I am still obsessively thinking about this book, which maybe means I should change the stars to 5. Maybe once a week I'll sign in and change it from 5 to 1 and then back to 5. Is anger from the gulf between expectation and result? Disappointment? Ugh. I told someone twice within two weeks to never read this book, completely forgetting I'd already sermonized about it. I'm glad she wrote it. Maybe everyone should read it. Maybe we can all take a chain saw to it. Someone call me.

ETA in 2013: I am still angry about this book. When people like this review I think about it again and get reangry. Well, I had the unfortunate experience of someone saying the sentence "I'm jealous of her. No I'm envious. Wait--what is the one that is the nice one, jealousy or envy? I can't remember." AND reading a book that tells you how to not be a boring droning fuckface in conversation, which is highlighted by "do not talk about anything you believe in passionately" because an accident will happen in your brain and you will talk and talk and talk until love is a lie and everyone is alienated and it is an accident. OKAY. The point is, while I still hate this book, I hate it because I am deeply envious. Envious is the bad one. I looked it up. I went to a gong bath, which was very transformative, seriously, yes I know how that sounds, and I realized something ABOUT THIS FUCKING BOOK THAT PLAGUES ME, which is that it should be retitled: "Psychic Acupuncture." I envy the ways that she experiences the spectrum of human emotion.

ETA in 2015: If I have failed at it, I don't want you to have it. I want it to be objectively impossible. I want it not to be a personal disaster, or indication of a weird weakness, or proof that maybe my body will dictate the stuff I get, or the love I receive, or how happy I will get to be. I mean too bad, I don't get to control that, because I'm not a fascist dictator. I still deeply dislike this book and it makes me angry. I listened to a long back woods sermon on a road trip--it kept going out and cutting in with like pop and Mexican accordions--all about anger. That behind all of it is a fundamental desire for respect, that anger masks deep insecurity. I can get into that.

ETA in later 2015: The answer is Claire Messud's "The Woman Upstairs"

ETA in 2018: Check out "Out of Sheer Rage" for another book about Anger. I think about Koren's book a great deal and maybe want to have coffee with her and find out how it's all going. "Out of Sheer Rage" is also interesting because it quotes people blah blah and he mentions his fiance. I guess he feels more
