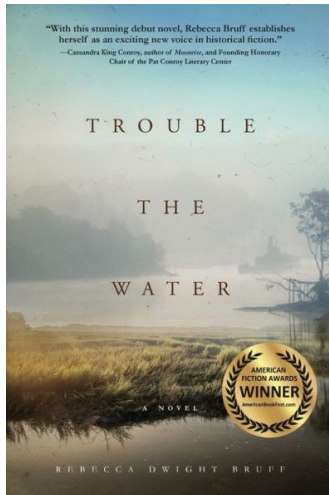


# Trouble the Water by Rebecca Dwight Bruff



*The powerful story of **Trouble the Water** moves me each time I read it. But my greatest joy has been sharing it and discussing with friends and fellow church members. Rebecca seemingly wrote this beautiful book for just such a time as this in our nation's history.*

~ Kim Brannon, Lay Leader, North Texas Conference UMC

**Trouble the Water** offers a glimpse of the courage we need as we embrace society's necessary (and, long over-due) change, moving us from a slavery to old paradigmatic thinking into a vision for creative liberation and equity for all. Dr. ~

Andy Stoker, Sr. Minister, First United Methodist Church, Dallas

**Trouble the Water** is an impeccably researched and skillfully crafted book that shares a story that is, unfortunately, not widely known. The life and accomplishments of Robert Smalls are inspiring and are especially pertinent in today's society. Not only is the book a gripping read on an individual level, it is perfect for group studies and provokes thoughtful discussions on its themes of racism, courage, and religion. I cannot recommend Rebecca Bruff's **Trouble the Water** strongly enough. ~ Dianne Boone

Inspired by the life of an unsung American hero, *Trouble the Water* navigates the rich tributaries of suffering, hope, courage, and redemption. In his inspiring journey, Robert Smalls is witness to both privilege and suffering alongside his owner's daughter and the dangerous son of a firebrand secessionist. At the age of twelve, he's sent to work in Charleston, where he loads ships and learns to pilot a cotton steamer. When the Civil War erupts and the cotton steamer on which he is enslaved becomes a confederate warship, Robert seizes the opportunity to pursue freedom for himself and the people he loves. From his illiterate childhood to his thrilling escape to freedom, from his work to make South Carolina the first state to guarantee public education to his final days on the porch of his family home — *Trouble the Water* invites important and thoughtful reflection, discussion, and learning.

***Trouble the Water** explores race, rights, religion, class, economics, family and freedom in a way that illuminates, exposes and educates – through the power and beauty of story. Discussion questions are included.*

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**ORDER THROUGH:** Cokesbury, Amazon, B&N, Bradbury Lane (in Richardson), Logos (in Dallas), Interabang (in Dallas), Bookshop: <https://bookshop.org/shop/WindRoseReads> or from the author (best for signed / inscribed copies): <https://rebeccabruff.com/shop/>

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## About the Author

Rebecca Bruff, a UMC Elder in the North Texas Conference, heard “bits” of the story of Robert Smalls on her first visit to South Carolina in 2013. She was captivated – and called – and moved across the country to research and write this novel. Bruff earned her bachelor's degree in education at Texas A&M and Masters and Doctorate degrees in theology at SMU. In 2017, she was a scholarship recipient for the prestigious Key West Literary Seminar. She volunteers at the Pat Conroy Literary Center in Beaufort, South Carolina. She's published non-fiction, plays a little tennis, travels when she can, and loves life in the lowcountry with her husband and an exuberant golden retriever. Bruff is available to speak/facilitate in congregations, classrooms, and seminars.

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## REVIEWS AND AWARDS

- **First Place/Gold for Debut Novel**, Feathered Quill
- **First Place/ Gold for Adult Fiction**, Feathered Quill
- **Beaufort County School District** selection for February 2020
- **Selected as Fiction Winner** by American Book Fest
- **Selected as 2019-2020 community literacy read** by Library Association of Sulphur Springs, Tx
- **Book club selection** for Beaufort County Friends of the Library, February 2020
- **Pat Conroy Literary Center 2020 March Forth** event featured selection
- **Black History Month book club selection** by Morris Center for Lowcountry Heritage
- **Pulpwood Queens Bookclub** 2020 selection

"This luminous novel's central events take place during the American Civil War, but this novelization of the life of Robert Smalls spans the 19th century... This is an extraordinary and healing gift to the literature of the South. Engaging, heartfelt and beautifully crafted, it shows the role religion played in maintaining slavery ("a scriptural institution") and is peopled with characters that live on in the reader's imagination. A life long-suppressed is here brought forth in light and depth and beauty. Highly recommended." *Historical Novel Society*

"In her brilliant new novel, *Trouble the Water*, Rebecca Dwight Bruff skillfully uncovers an American odyssey, long lost in the camouflage of history....Bruff gifts her readers a stunningly dramatic narrative." Gripping, heartrending and at last, inspirational ~Jeffrey Blount, Emmy award-winning television director, Meet the Press

"Here is a novel that succeeds on just about every level: its world and characters come alive; it entertains and the pages turn easily; it defamiliarizes and causes wonderment (as historical fiction does); it is symmetrical without being overwrought, formally tight without feeling forced (the Russian formalists would say that if you have a gun at the start of the story, it will eventually need to go off. Let's just say that the prologue and the early chapters in this book "go off" by the end). So if you like that sort of thing in your historical fiction, then *Trouble the Water* should satisfy your readerly instincts." Amazon reviewer, Emma Java

"This story is beautifully told. I really feel like I know the characters. Her attention to detail is amazing. *Trouble the Water* is a must read." Amazon review, L. Williams

"This book has the feel of a Great American Novel. The same sort of feel as *The Grapes of Wrath*, but dealing with slavery and oppression during the Civil War, rather than the economic hardships during the Great Depression. With themes of race, religion, and relationships, *Trouble The Water* is a fictional story inspired by the heroic and hard life of Robert Smalls. I certainly will never forget it. I've learned so much and am changed—two important things I hope to gain through fiction and non-fiction alike. There is much beauty to be found within these pages." B&N review, Nicnac63

## Contact Information

**Publisher:** Koehler Books 800-435-4811 • 210 60th Street, Virginia Beach, VA 23451 [info@koehlerbooks.com](mailto:info@koehlerbooks.com)

**Agent:** Marly Rusoff, the Rusoff Agency <https://rusoffagency.com> [m.rusoff@rusoffagency.com](mailto:m.rusoff@rusoffagency.com)

**Author:** Rebecca Bruff 214.923.6615 [becbruff@gmail.com](mailto:becbruff@gmail.com) or [Rebecca@RebeccaBruff.com](mailto:Rebecca@RebeccaBruff.com)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/RobertSmallsBook> **Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/rebeccabruff.author/>