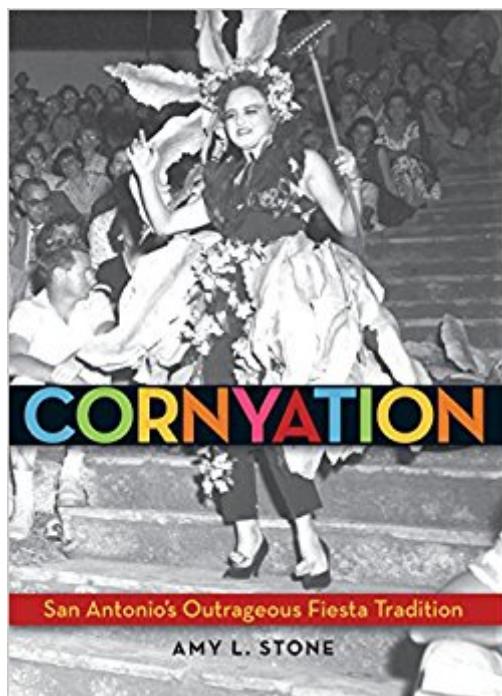


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# Cornyation: San Antonio's Outrageous Fiesta Tradition



## Synopsis

Fiesta San Antonio began in 1891 began as a parade in honor of the battles of the Alamo and San Jacinto and has evolved into an annual Mardi Gras-like festival attended by four million with more than 100 cultural events raising money for nonprofit organizations in San Antonio, Texas. At Fiesta's start, the events were socially exclusive, one of the most prominent being the Coronation of the Queen of the Order of the Alamo, a lavish, debutante pageant crowning a queen of the festival. Cornyation was created in 1951 by members of San Antonio's theater community as a satire, mocking the elite with their own flamboyant duchesses, empresses, and queens, accompanied by men in drag and local political figures in outrageous costume. The stage show quickly transformed into a controversial parody of local and national politics and culture. Told through more than one hundred photographs and dozens of interviews, Cornyation is the first history of this major Fiesta San Antonio event, tracing how it has become one of Texas's iconic and longest-running celebrations, and one of the Southwest's first large-scale fundraisers for HIV-AIDS research, raising more than two million dollars since 1990.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Though Fiesta is famed throughout Texas (and perhaps beyond) for its parades, concerts, and block parties, one of its most lively events is known to few outside the city limits: Cornyation, a satire of the festival's Coronation of the Queen of the Order of the Alamo. Begun in 1951, Cornyation lampooned the local social elites who ran Fiesta and cast itself as an event for the city's 'little people.' In the years that followed, this modest, grassroots affair evolved into a

three-day spectacle featuring such characters as the Pointless Sisters, the Vice-Empress of Garlic (who wore a ocean odoriferous necklace of garlic weighing five pounds), and the Duchess of Hermanâ™s Happiness. After going into hibernation in the mid-sixties, Cornyation reemerged in the eighties as the AIDS crisis made its message of acceptance more urgent than ever.â•#151; Texas Monthlyâ•#147; Five years in the making, Stoneâ™s hotly anticipated book *Cornyation: San Antonioâ™s Outrageous Fiesta Tradition* presents her many findings in a format thatâ™s part scrapbook, part crash course. Brought to life through 40-plus interviews, excerpts from scripts and more than 100 photos that date as far back as the 1950s, the book offers a fascinating look at Fiestaâ™s development into a more inclusive 'party with a purpose' and Cornyationâ™s transformation from a 'Fiesta for the little people' to a major fundraiser thatâ™s donated more than \$2 million to local HIV/AIDS charities.â•#151; San Antonio Currentâ•#147; When Amy Stone left her first Cornyation in 2009, she had more questions than answers. So the Trinity University associate professor of sociology and anthropology did what she does best and started researching....Eight years later, sheâ™s published *Cornyation: San Antonioâ™s Outrageous Fiesta Tradition*, which chronicles the satirical showâ™s history through photos, interviews and document research.â•#151; San Antonio Magazine

Amy L. Stone is an associate professor of sociology and anthropology at Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas. She is the author of *Gay Rights at the Ballot Box* and the coeditor, with Jaime Cantrell, of *Out of the Closet, into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*. Stoneâ™s areas of study include lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender politics and the incorporation of LGBT individuals into communities and cities, and the law. She lives in San Antonio, Texas.

Amy Stone's book surveys more than 50 years of this performance and its place in the community, delving into several archives, interviewing participants from the 1950s to today, and piecing it all together in a very special way with clear text, plenty of photographs, and several copies of primary sources. With the passage of time, this history was in danger of slipping away. The writing and the design of the book make it an accessible read for perhaps a fan of Cornyation who wants to learn beyond the text in that year's program, or a visitor enchanted by this performance who wants to know where it all came from and how it changed over the years. The book is also solid enough to serve as a textbook in any number of college courses, maybe urban celebrations, or LGBT history and theatre, or contemporary examples of the carnivalesque, or gender roles in theatre. The layout of the book is clear enough that a reader can quickly locate needed information, but it also reads

from beginning to end in an entertaining way. I definitely found myself laughing at some of the descriptions of scenes in the show throughout the years, but I also found myself easily looking back in the book and in the index to link together historical moments. This book would be useful in a library for scholars to quickly glean information about this unique institution in San Antonio culture, or to read in depth its fascinating history. I really appreciate how Stone situated the performance in several different contexts, and showing how they were related: Fiesta as an organic celebration, the Fiesta Commission and its official role, LGBT culture in the United States, LGBT people in San Antonio, Hispanic communities in San Antonio, political landscapes, culture wars. In each chapter, she weaves in how these relationships change over time, heavily citing primary sources as well as other academic works on the subjects. The purpose of this book was to get down on paper the history of this performance, connect it to several different contexts, and touch on connections to theory. It definitely accomplishes these goals. What is left is to further weave this history in with theories of social change, camp, the carnivalesque, and more, by synthesizing this history with other LGBT celebrations. I look forward to seeing more work in this area.

My former Trinity University colleague Amy Stone has knocked it outta the ball park. *Cornyation* began as a parody of *Coronation*, one of the major rituals celebrated in San Antonio during the annual Fiesta. This book looks at the history and some of the major characters involved in the parody, which generates financial support for a variety of good causes each year.

I live in San Antonio and have enjoyed Fiesta forever. *Cornyation* is a special treat during the week-long celebration. I enjoyed reading about the history of this unique part of Fiesta. I highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys Fiesta and to anyone who wishes they could.

Such a fun book!

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