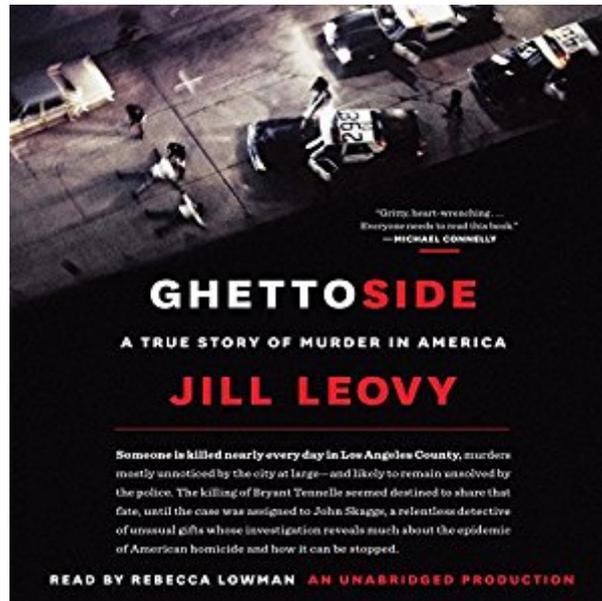


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Ghettoside: A True Story Of Murder In America



Synopsis

Audie Award, Non-Fiction, 2016 A masterly work of literary journalism about a senseless murder, a relentless detective, and the great plague of homicide in America. On a warm spring evening in South Los Angeles, a young man is shot and killed on a sidewalk minutes away from his home--one of the thousands of black Americans murdered that year. His assailant runs down the street, jumps into an SUV, and vanishes, hoping to join the scores of killers in American cities who are never arrested for their crimes. But as soon as the case is assigned to Detective John Skaggs, the odds shift. Here is the kaleidoscopic story of the quintessential but mostly ignored American murder--a "ghettoside" killing, one young black man slaying another--and a brilliant and driven cadre of detectives whose creed is to pursue justice for forgotten victims at all costs. Ghettoside is a fast-paced narrative of a devastating crime, an intimate portrait of detectives and a community bonded in tragedy, and a surprising new lens into the great subject of why murder happens in our cities--and how the epidemic of killings might yet be stopped.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ghettoside was a word used to by a Watts gang member to describe his South Central Los Angeles neighborhood. The author writes that Ghettoside is both a place and a predicament. It is a place where black boys and men are safer in jail than on the streets. Ghettoside is also a frame of mind. It is a place with a culture of violence where the heroes are seen as the villains; the villains are seen as the heroes and all the victims are seen by one detective as some father's child. By the time you

finish this book you will know the heroes (detectives, including those whom the author calls ghettoside craftsmen whose involvement, dedication and self sacrifice is the stuff of which legends are made) and the victims (the focus here is on a good boy, the murdered 18 year old sheltered son of a homicide detective) and the addicts, the whores and the gangster-villains. You will better understand the police culture, and neighborhood culture and what they are all up against. You will understand why there are so many murders. This is more than a story about heroic and tenacious homicide detectives' almost impossible task of identifying, tracking down, arresting and aiding in the prosecution of the drive by shooter of an 18 year old boy; it is an illuminating history and an exploration of a culture of lawlessness and violence and the multigenerational tragedies of its victims. Author Jill Leovy, award winning reporter and editor for the Los Angeles gives startling and sickening statistics. She states that lawlessness is its own kind of order and where the criminal justice system fails to respond vigorously to violent injury and death, homicide becomes epidemic.

It's easy to be cynical about the inconsistent, over-stressed, under-resourced, misguided and plainly race-oriented American justice system. Whether it's cops on the street or lawyers in a courtroom, the entire system is a poorly-run bureaucracy that moves papers and bodies around but doesn't actually accomplish anything concrete or long-term. So I was surprised that Detective John Skaggs and some of the others featured here managed to prove that even within this crumbling edifice of "justice" plenty of officers do their best - even when the system would be perfectly content if they sat on the sidelines, slurping coffee and marking time. It's fitting to write this review the day after Ferguson riots burn buildings and otherwise make race relations a little worse than they were the day before. If you read this review six months from now, you'll probably think "Ferguson? Huh?" because that's the kind of memory we have. I'm certainly tired of police violence that the state bends over backwards to excuse, but at least this book provides a counterweight. In LA, these cops DO investigate crimes, whether it's a gangster or a civilian, and they TRY to put the pieces together to find justice in the name of those who've died. I most like narrative nonfiction that tries to answer a "why" question. I get that inner cities are full of violence - but why? I get that police and inner city residents have a terrible relationship - but why? I get that cops have a hard time solving inner city crimes - but why? For the most part, Jill Leovy answers those questions in a ways that maybe seem obvious, but I'd never thought of before.

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