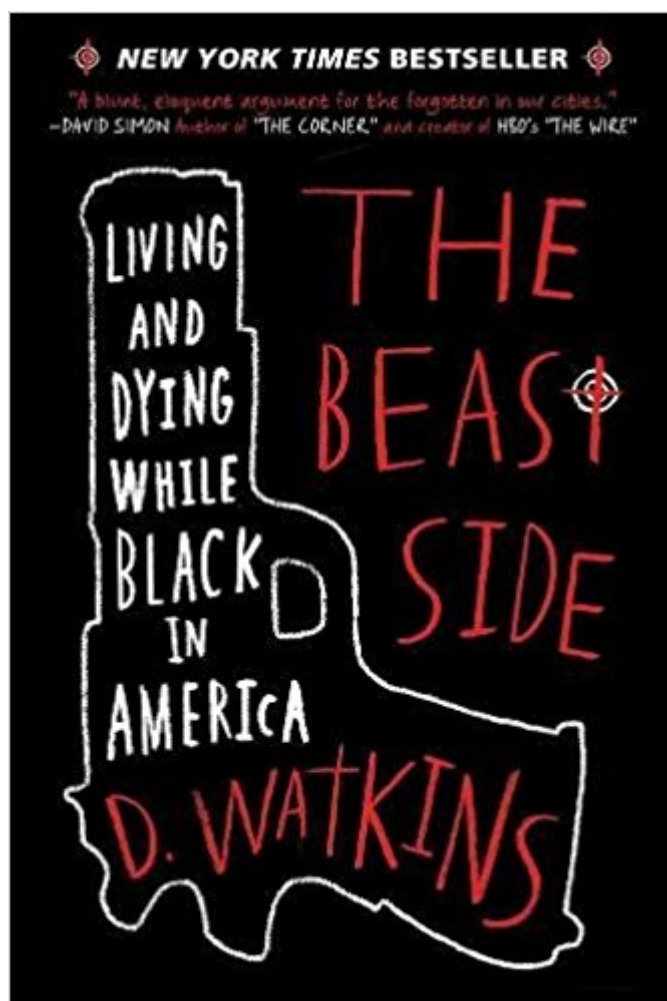


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The Beast Side: Living And Dying While Black In America



Synopsis

A New York Times Best Seller! To many, the past 8 years under President Obama were meant to usher in a new post-racial American political era, dissolving the divisions of the past. However, when seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin was shot by a wannabe cop in Florida; and then Ferguson, Missouri, happened; and then South Carolina hit the headlines; and then Baltimore blew up, it was hard to find any evidence of a new post-racial order. Suddenly the entire country seemed to be awakened to a stark fact: African American men are in danger in America. This has only become clearer as groups like Black Lives Matter continue to draw attention to this reality daily not only online but also in the streets of our nation's embattled cities. Now one of our country's quintessential urban war zones is brought powerfully to life by a rising young literary talent, D. Watkins. The author fought his way up on the eastside (the "beastside" of Baltimore, Maryland; or "Bodymore, Murderland," as his friends call it. He writes openly and unapologetically about what it took to survive life on the streets while the casualties piled up around him, including his own brother. Watkins pushed drugs to pay his way through school, staying one step ahead of murderous business rivals and equally predatory lawmen. When black residents of Baltimore finally decided they had had enough; after the brutal killing of twenty-five-year-old Freddie Gray while in police custody; Watkins was on the streets as the city erupted. He writes about his bleeding city with the razor-sharp insights of someone who bleeds along with it. Here are true dispatches from the other side of America. In this new paperback edition, the author has also added new material in a section titled "Bonus Tracks", responding to the rising tide of racial resentment and hate embodied by political figures like Donald Trump and Ted Cruz as well as the heartbreaking killings of Alton Sterling and Philando Castile, and the impact this has had on issues of race in America. This book is essential reading for anyone trying to make sense of the chaos of our current political moment.

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Customer Reviews

“The 21st century Civil Rights era is upon us and one of the most compelling new voices to listen to is D. Watkins. *The Beast Side* is a riveting and important read no matter what your preconceived notions are on the state of race relations in America today.” —Chuck Todd, correspondent on NBC’s Meet the Press

“Firing off dispatches from that part of the America we left behind, D. Watkins is making a definitive argument for so many men and women ruthlessly marginalized by a society that fails to measure itself on any humane terms. This is a Baltimore voice in angry service of other unheard Baltimore voices, and *The Beast Side* is, by extension, a blunt, eloquent argument for the forgotten in our cities. He has arrived, and by the sound of things, he is here to hold us all to account.” —David Simon, author of *The Corner* and creator of HBO’s *The Wire*

“D. Watkins is a very sharp young talent who transformed himself from a dealer on the streets to an adjunct professor, and most important, to a leading voice of his generation who is determined to see justice for the black community. *The Beast Side* is raw, intelligent, and at times humorous; and a necessary narrative in these challenging times!” —Michael Eric Dyson, author of *The Black Presidency: Barack Obama and the Politics of Race in America*

“D. Watkins has emerged as a powerful new voice just when America needs to hear his message. It’s the voice of all those in Baltimore, Ferguson, Charleston, Oakland, New York, Cleveland, and wherever another innocent life is lost. We all need to listen to what he has to say.” —Touré, author of *Who’s Afraid of Post-Blackness?: What It Means to Be Black Now*

“Brilliant. *The Beast Side* is just the latest illustration of why D. Watkins’s voice is so important to our community. Understand his words, and let’s work to make our community better.” —Wes Moore, New York Times bestselling author of *The Work and The Other*

“D. Watkins unveils America’s dirty secret of what it is like for so many to live as an African American in our country. He captures the pain, blood, sweat, and tears faced by millions of young black Americans each day and offers clear solutions on how to move our nation forward.” —Valeisha Butterfield Jones, founder and CEO of the Women in Entertainment Empowerment

Network “Sharp, witty, and worth the read for young black people who are starving for justice and ready to change the world they live in. Always engaging, *The Beast Side* is written with fire, rage, and intelligence from a young but extremely wise game changer. —Tracey D. Syphax, 2014 White House Champion of Change “*The Beast Side* is an honest, sobering exploration of blackness in the context of Baltimore and the unrest. And Watkins is a skilled storyteller, giving voice to a range of hard truths about the impact of state violence on the lives of black people in inner-city Baltimore. Watkins's authentic storytelling is his hallmark. —DeRay Mckesson, activist for We the Protestors “D. Watkins, a seasoned writer with indisputable talent and skills, gives a detailed account of living on the ‘Other Side of Baltimore. Armed with a relentless spirit and uplifting message, Watkins's words give today's generation a sense of purpose and a chance to rise from the unruly streets of America's Baltimore. —Rahiem Shabazz, award-winning filmmaker of the documentary series *Elementary Genocide* “Tally had his corner and D. Watkins has his ‘stoop. “*The Beast Side* is D. Watkins's sociohistorical examination of black lives in the United States juxtaposed against his upbringing in Baltimore. Through his account we discover a poignant and unadulterated story about the systematic way black lives don't matter and how the challenges for African Americans are much deeper and pervasive than people will admit. His book is required reading! —Dr. Byron E. Price, professor at Medgar Evers College of the City University of New York “With his unsentimental prose and sharp eye for detail, Watkins takes you to his stoop in East Baltimore, the so-called beast side...What helps the arguments in Watkins's essays hit home are the sobering and enlightening slices of life and characters he weaves throughout...By the end, you're left with an advanced understanding of this man's love for the community that formed him, and how neighborhoods such as East Baltimore fit into the national debate for social change. —Baltimore Magazine "The twin pillars of his résumé; not one but two graduate degrees from the region's finest universities on the one hand, gun-totin' drug dealer on the other—give Watkins credit that's hard to argue with. Indeed, he's strongest when he describes the disconnect between the two Baltimores he has navigated so adroitly." —The Washington Post --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

D. Watkins is a columnist for Salon; his work has been published in the New York Times, the Guardian, Rolling Stone and other publications, and he is the recipient of numerous awards

including a BME fellowship. He is currently a professor of Creative Writing at the University of Baltimore and is the founder of the BMORE Writers Project. In addition to *The Beast Side*, he is the author of *The Cook Up: A Crack Rock Memoir*. He lives in Baltimore, Maryland.

This book was an eye opener for me. I enjoyed the method the author used to say what he wanted to say. It's refreshing to read a book where the author doesn't apologize for his thoughts or feelings. So many times authors apologize for what they say, or say readers misinterpreted the meaning of their statements. Not D. Watkins! He speaks his mind in a manner that says "yes, I meant what I said!" So many of the words he stated are my sentiments too. I liked how he was able to weave parts of his story into the current events that have touched many of us. There are two passages that resonated with me, and I still reflect on these passages today. He calls out Black men for allowing other Black men to speak negatively about Black women, and treat us horribly. He points out how time and time again Black women support Black men when they have no one else to depend on. He admonished Black men to take a stand for Black women! There was another passage that pointed out the irony in the Pledge of Allegiance. This passage caused me to really think about the Pledge of Allegiance and what it means to me as a Black woman, and I realized it wasn't for me. Just as the writer realized it wasn't for him. Now, I can no longer stand and take that pledge. I have not experienced liberty and justice for all. If you want to read a thought provoking book that makes you question the importance of Black American lives, pick up *"The Beast Side"*. If you want to read the reality of living and dying while Black in America, read *"The Beast Side"*.

Not as good as *The Cook Up*, but still D. Watkins is an amazing writer. This book tells the story of "the other Baltimore" and the very different world that many of us live in. Baltimore needs so much, but Watkins points to the critical need for jobs--or solid, dependable transportation to jobs or school. 2. A safe place for young people after school or during the summer; 3. Positive role models. Watkins talks of his older brother who warned him off the drug business and pointed him toward education; yet in this book, he shows Moose, whom Watkins thinks is unfairly arrested. When I looked at the video, I saw an example of guns, drugs and several very young people involved. 4. Also the prevalence of lead poisoning--really? Still? Paul Krugman in an article cautioned the West against closing the sweat shops of East Asia. He said there is no where else. The drug/addiction problem in Baltimore may in part exist for the same reason: few or no options. This book needed a good editor,

but Watkins is an important voice.

D. Watkins is an adept storyteller, thrusting the reader directly into the action of each of his essays. Yet that's not his only talent, he is able to reflect, speak his truth and in doing so allow the reader to reflect as well. "The Beast Side" is a powerful read that will give you a first-hand account of what it means to be black, especially a black man in America. I am positive this book will be used in college classrooms; teachers can explore it from a writing, sociology or even contemporary history angle.

This book is definitely food for thought, the flow of the narrative is very easy to follow, serious but humorous also, a must read for anyone who enjoy reading a open opinion of another. I highly recommend this book.

A book well worth reading. The author gives a glimpse into life, growing up as an African American in Baltimore. He challenges the reader to pay attention and acknowledge the life/reality of Black Americans. An honest look at some of the challenges that are faced daily. If there is any hope of progress, the past and present have to be acknowledged. It will take forward thinkers of the next generation to stand up and shout "unacceptable" and lead those willing to shape and move forward into a better future.

I find the short narratives difficult to read at times. The brutal honesty is gutwrenching and forces one to contemplate that which we wish would remain in the shadows so we can sleep peacefully in our quiet suburban beds. With each page and story, the author also offers hope. Hope that change is possible if we listen and act to make a difference-- no matter how small or great.

D. Watkins is an amazing writer, local to me, who is taking advantage of his current popularity to speak to real matters. His writing style is casual, vivid and engrossing. I think this is a must read for anyone interested in the state of minority rights in the United States right now. The book is a quick but memorable read. A must for those who care about social equality.

Should be required reading for all high school students. Very enlightening about living in high risk areas and how the survivors are portrayed and make the best of their situations.

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