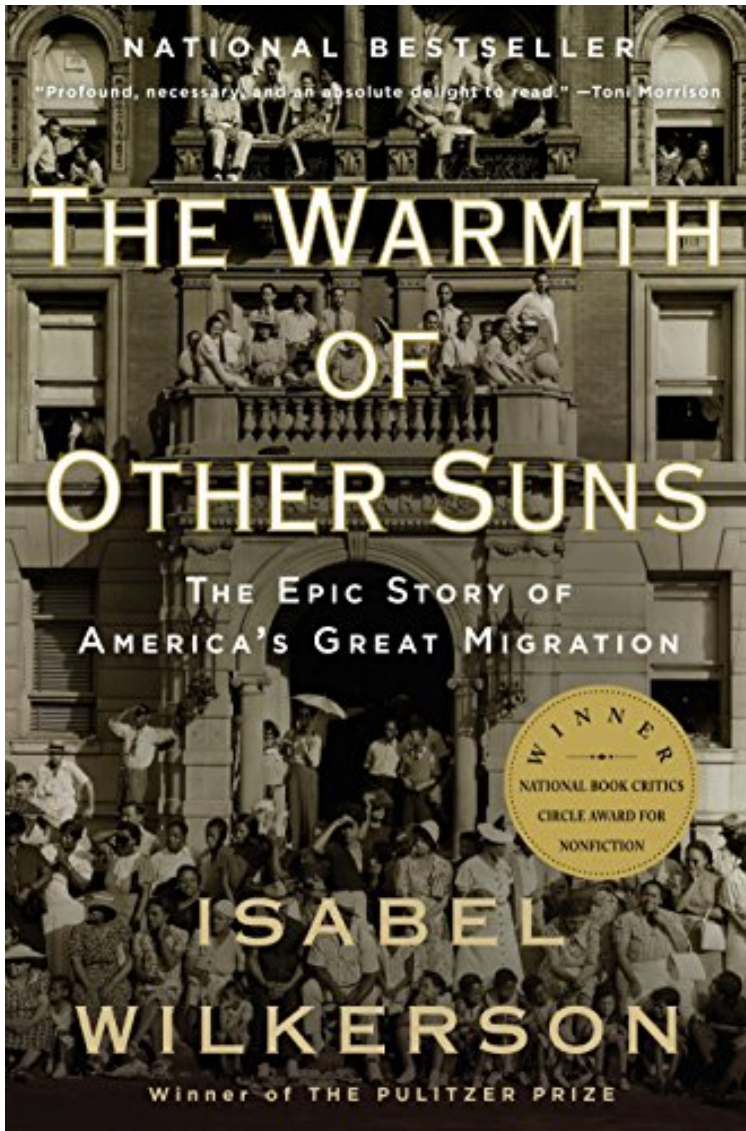


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The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration



Par Isabel Wilkerson
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurOne of The New York Times Book s 10 Best Books of the YearIn this epic, beautifully written masterwork, Pulitzer Prizewinning author Isabel Wilkerson chronicles one of the great untold stories of American history: the decades-long migration of black citizens who fled the South for northern and western cities, in search of a better life. From 1915 to 1970, this exodus of almost six million people changed the face of America. Wilkerson compares this epic migration to the migrations of other peoples in history. She interviewed more than a thousand people, and gained access to new data and official records, to write this definitive and vividly dramatic account of how these American journeys unfolded, altering our

cities, our country, and ourselves. With stunning historical detail, Wilkerson tells this story through the lives of three unique individuals: Ida Mae Gladney, who in 1937 left sharecropping and prejudice in Mississippi for Chicago, where she achieved quiet blue-collar success and, in old age, voted for Barack Obama when he ran for an Illinois Senate seat; sharp and quick-tempered George Starling, who in 1945 fled Florida for Harlem, where he endangered his job fighting for civil rights, saw his family fall, and finally found peace in God; and Robert Foster, who left Louisiana in 1953 to pursue a medical career, the personal physician to Ray Charles as part of a glitteringly successful medical career, which allowed him to purchase a grand home where he often threw exuberant parties. Wilkerson brilliantly captures their first treacherous and exhausting cross-country trips by car and train and their new lives in colonies that grew into ghettos, as well as how they changed these cities with southern food, faith, and culture and improved them with discipline, drive, and hard work. Both a riveting microcosm and a major assessment, *The Warmth of Other Suns* is a bold, remarkable, and riveting work, a superb account of an unrecognized immigration within our own land.

Through the breadth of its narrative, the beauty of the writing, the depth of its research, and the fullness of the people and lives portrayed herein, this book is destined to become a classic. From the Hardcover edition. Extrait Part One In the Land of the Forefathers Our mattresses were made of corn shucks and soft gray Spanish moss that hung from the trees. . . . From the swamps we got soup turtles and baby alligators and from the woods we got raccoon, rabbit and possum. Mahalia Jackson, *Movin' On Up* Leaving This land is first and foremost his handiwork. It was he who brought order out of primeval wilderness . . . Wherever one looks in this land, whatever one sees that is the work of man, was erected by the toiling straining bodies of blacks. David L. Cohn, *God Shakes Creation* They fly from the land that bore them. W. H. Stillwell 1

Chickasaw County, Mississippi, Late October 1937 Ida Mae Brandon Gladney The night clouds were closing in on the salt licks east of the oxbow lakes along the folds in the earth beyond the Yalobusha River. The cotton was at last cleared from the field. Ida Mae tried now to get the children ready and to gather the clothes and quilts and somehow keep her mind off the churning within her. She had sold off the turkeys and doled out in secret the old stools, the wash pots, the tin tub, the bed pallets. Her husband was settling with Mr. Edd over the worth of a years labor, and she did not know what would come of it. None of them had been on a train before not unless you counted the clattering local from Bacon Switch to Okolona, where, by the time you sit down, you there, as Ida Mae put it. None of them had been out of Mississippi. Or Chickasaw County, for that matter. There was no explaining to little James and Velma the stuffed bags and chaos and all that was at stake or why they had to put on their shoes and not cry and bring undue attention from anyone who might happen to see them leaving. Things had to look normal, like any other time they might ride into town, which was rare enough to begin with. Velma was six. She sat with her ankles crossed and three braids in her hair and did what she was told. James was too little to understand. He was three. He was upset at the commotion. Hold still now, James. Lemme put your shoes on, Ida Mae told him. James wriggled and kicked. He did not like shoes. He ran free in the field. What were these things? He did not like them on his feet. So Ida Mae let him go barefoot. Miss Theenie stood watching. One by one, her children had left her and gone up north. Sam and Cleve to Ohio. Josie to Syracuse. Irene to Milwaukee. Now the man Miss Theenie had tried to keep Ida Mae from marrying in the first place was taking her away, too. Miss Theenie had no choice but to accept it and let Ida Mae and the grandchildren go for good. Miss Theenie drew them close to her, as she always did whenever anyone was leaving. She had them bow their heads. She whispered a prayer that her daughter and her daughters family be protected on the long journey ahead in the Jim Crow car. May the Lord be the first in the car, she prayed, and the last out. When the time had come, Ida Mae and little James and Velma and all that they could carry were loaded into a brother-in-laws truck, and the three of them went to meet Ida Maes husband at the train depot in Okolona for the night ride out of the bottomland. 2

Wildwood, Florida, April 14, 1945 George Swanson Starling A man named Roscoe Colton gave Lil George Starling a ride in his pickup truck to the train station in Wildwood through the fruit-bearing scrubland of central Florida. And Schoolboy, as the toothless orange pickers mockingly called him, boarded the Silver Meteor pointing north. A railing divided the stairs onto the train, one side of the railing for white passengers, the other for colored, so the soles of their shoes would not touch the same stair. He boarded on the colored side of the railing, a final reminder from the place of his birth of the absurdity of the world he was leaving. He was getting out alive. So he didnt let it bother him. I got on the car where they told me to get on, he said years later. He hadnt had time to bid farewell to everyone he wanted to. He stopped to say good-bye to Rachel Jackson, who owned a little caf up on what they called the Avenue and the few others he could safely get to in the little time he had. He figured everybody in Egypt town, the colored section of Eustis, probably

knew he was leaving before he had climbed onto the train, small as the town was and as much as people talked. It was a clear afternoon in the middle of April. He folded his tall frame into the hard surface of the seat, his knees knocking against the seat back in front of him. He was packed into the Jim Crow car, where the railroad stored the luggage, when the train pulled away at last. He was on the run, and he wouldn't rest easy until he was out of range of Lake County, beyond the reach of the grove owners whose invisible laws he had broken. The train rumbled past the forest of citrus trees that he had climbed since he was a boy and that he had tried to wrestle some dignity out of and, for a time, had. They could have their trees. He wasn't going to lose his life over them. He had come close enough as it was. He had lived up to his family's accidental surname. Starling. Distant cousin to the mockingbird. He had spoken up about what he had seen in the world he was born into, like the starling that sang Mozarts own music back to him or the starling out of Shakespeare that tormented the king by speaking the name of Mortimer. Only, George was paying the price for tormenting the ruling class that owned the citrus groves. There was no place in the Jim Crow South for a colored starling like him. He didn't know what he would do once he got to New York or what his life would be. He didn't know how long it would take before he could send for Inez. His wife was mad right now, but she'd get over it once he got her there. At least that's what he told himself. He turned his face to the North and sat with his back to Florida. Leaving as he did, he figured he would never set foot in Eustis again for as long as he lived. And as he settled in for the twenty-three-hour train ride up the coast of the Atlantic, he had no desire to have anything to do with the town he grew up in, the state of Florida, or the South as a whole, for that matter.

3 Monroe, Louisiana, Easter Monday, April 6, 1953 Robert Joseph Pershing Foster

In the dark hours of the morning, Pershing Foster packed his surgery books, his medical bag, and his suit and sport coats in the trunk, along with a map, an address book, and Ivorye Covington's fried chicken left over from Saturday night. He said good-bye to his father, who had told him to follow his dreams. His father's dreams had fallen apart, but there was still hope for the son, the father knew. He had a reluctant embrace with his older brother, Madison, who had tried in vain to get him to stay. Then Pershing pointed his 1949 Buick Roadmaster, a burgundy one with whitewall tires and a shark-tooth grille, in the direction of Five Points, the crossroads of town. He drove down the narrow dirt roads with the ditches on either side that, when he was a boy, had left his freshly pressed Sunday suit caked with mud when it rained. He passed the shotgun houses perched on cinder blocks and hurtled over the railroad tracks away from where people who looked like him were consigned to live and into the section where the roads were not dirt ditches anymore but suddenly level and paved. He headed in the direction of Desiard Street, the main thoroughfare, and, without a whiff of sentimentality, sped away from the small-town bank buildings and bail bondsmen, the Paramount Theater with its urine-scented steps, and away from St. Francis Hospital, which wouldn't let doctors who looked like him perform a simple tonsillectomy. Perhaps he might have stayed had they let him practice surgery like he was trained to do or let him walk into the Palace and try on a suit like anyone else of his station. The resentments had grown heavy over the years. He knew he was as smart as anybody else's smarter, to his mind but he wasn't allowed to do anything with it, the caste system being what it was. Now he was going about as far away as you could get from Monroe, Louisiana. The rope lines that had hemmed in his life seemed to loosen with each plodding mile on the odometer. Like many of the men in the Great Migration and like many emigrant men in general, he was setting out alone. He would scout out the New World on his own and get situated before sending for anyone else. He drove west into the morning stillness and onto the Endom Bridge, a tight crossing with one lane acting like two that spans the Ouachita River into West Monroe. He would soon pass the mossback flatland of central Louisiana and the Red River toward Texas, where he was planning to see an old friend from medical school, a Dr. Anthony Beale, en route to California. Pershing had no idea where he would end up in California or how he would make a go of it or when he would be able to wrest his wife and daughters from the in-laws who had tried to talk him out of going to California in the first place. He would contemplate these uncertainties in the unbroken days ahead. From Louisiana, he followed the hyphens in the road that blurred together toward a faraway place, bridging unrelated things as hyphens do. Alone in the car, he had close to two thousand miles of curving road in front of him, farther than farmworker emigrants leaving Guatemala for Texas, not to mention Tijuana for California, where a northerly wind could blow a Mexican clothesline over the border.

Revue de presse A landmark piece of nonfiction. sure to hold many surprises for readers of any race or experience. A mesmerizing book that warrants comparison to *The Promised Land*, Nicholas Lemann's study of the Great Migration's early phase, and *Common Ground*, J. Anthony Lukass great, close-range look at racial strife in Boston. [Wilkersons] closeness with, and profound affection for, her subjects reflect her deep immersion in

their stories and allow the reader to share that connection. Janet Maslin, *The New York Times* *The Warmth of Other Suns* is a brilliant and stirring epic, the first book to cover the full half-century of the Great Migration. Wilkerson combines impressive research with great narrative and literary power. Ms. Wilkerson does for the Great Migration what John Steinbeck did for the Okies in his fiction masterpiece, *The Grapes of Wrath*; she humanizes history, giving it emotional and psychological depth. John Stauffer, *Wall Street Journal* [A] massive and masterly account of the Great Migration. A narrative epic rigorous enough to impress all but the crankiest of scholars, yet so immensely readable as to land the author a future place on Oprah's couch. David Oshinsky, *The New York Times Book (Cover)* [A] deeply affecting, finely crafted and heroic book. Wilkerson has taken on one of the most important demographic upheavals of the past century, a phenomenon whose dimensions and significance have eluded many a scholar and told it through the lives of three people no one has ever heard of. This is narrative nonfiction, lyrical and tragic and fatalist. The story exposes; the story moves; the story ends. What Wilkerson urges, finally, isn't argument at all; it's compassion. Hush, and listen. Jill Lepore, *The New Yorker* "The Warmth of Other Suns is epic in its reach and in its structure. Told in a voice that echoes the magic cadences of Toni Morrison or the folk wisdom of Zora Neale Hurston's collected oral histories, Wilkerson's book pulls not just the expanse of the migration into focus but its overall impact on politics, literature, music, sports in the nation and the world." Lynell George, *Los Angeles Times* One of the most lyrical and important books of the season. David Shribman, *Boston Globe* [An] extraordinary and evocative work. *The Washington Post* Mesmerizing... *Chicago Tribune* Scholarly but very readable, this book, for all its rigor, is so absorbing, it should come with a caveat: Pick it up only when you can lose yourself entirely. *O, The Oprah Magazine* [An] indelible and compulsively readable portrait of race, class, and politics in 20th-century America. History is rarely distilled so finely. *Grade: A Entertainment Weekly* An astonishing work. Isabel Wilkerson delivers!... With the precision of a surgeon, Wilkerson illuminates the stories of bold, faceless African-Americans who transformed cities and industries with their hard work and determination to provide their children with better lives. *Essence* "A truly auspicious debut.... The author deftly intersperses [her characters'] stories with short vignettes about other individuals and consistently provides the bigger picture without interrupting the flow of the narrative. Wilkerson's focus on the personal aspect lends her book a markedly different, more accessible tone. Her powerful storytelling style, as well, gives this decades-spanning history a welcome novelistic flavor. An impressive take on the Great Migration." *Kirkus*, Starred [A] magnificent, extensively researched study of the great migration. The drama, poignancy, and romance of a classic immigrant saga pervade this book, hold the reader in its grasp, and resonate long after the reading is done. *Publishers Weekly*, Starred Not since Alex Haley's *Roots* has there been a history of equal literary quality where the writing surmounts the rhythmic soul of fiction, where the writer's voice sings a song of redemptive glory as true as Faulkner's southern cantatas. *The San Francisco Examiner* Profound, necessary and an absolute delight to read. Toni Morrison *The Warmth of Other Suns* is a sweeping and yet deeply personal tale of America's hidden 20th century history - the long and difficult trek of Southern blacks to the northern and western cities. This is an epic for all Americans who want to understand the making of our modern nation. Tom Brokaw A seminal work of narrative nonfiction. You will never forget these people. Gay Talese With compelling prose and considered analysis, Isabel Wilkerson has given us a landmark portrait of one of the most significant yet little-noted shifts in American history: the migration of African-Americans from the Jim Crow South to the cities of the North and West. It is a complicated tale, with an infinity of implications for questions of race, power, politics, religion, and class implications that are unfolding even now. This book will be long remembered, and savored. Jon Meacham Isabel Wilkerson's *The Warmth of Other Suns* is an American masterpiece, a stupendous literary success that channels the social sciences as iconic biography in order to tell a vast story of a people's reinvention of itself and of a nation, the first complete history of the Great Black Migration from start to finish, north, east, west. David Levering Lewis Isabel Wilkerson's book is a masterful narrative of the rich wisdom and deep courage of a great people. Don't miss it! Cornel West