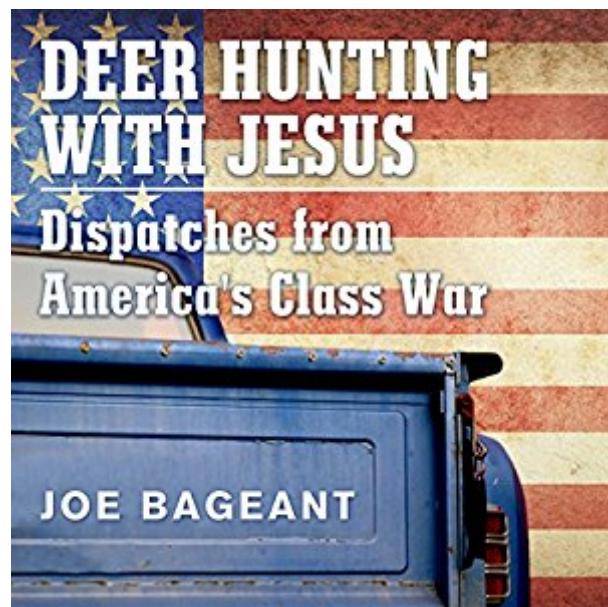


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# Deer Hunting With Jesus: Dispatches From America's Class War



## Synopsis

After 30 years spent scratching together a middle-class life out of a "dirt poor" childhood, Joe Bageant moved back to his hometown of Winchester, Virginia, where he realized that his family and neighbors were the very people who carried George W. Bush to victory. That was ironic, because Winchester, like countless American small towns, is fast becoming the bedrock of a permanent underclass. Two in five of the people in his old neighborhood do not have high-school diplomas. Nearly everyone over 50 has serious health problems, and many have no health care. Credit ratings are low or nonexistent, and alcohol, overeating, and Jesus are the preferred avenues of escape. A raucous mix of storytelling and political commentary, *Deer Hunting with Jesus* is Bageant's report on what he learned by coming home. He writes of his childhood friends who work at factory jobs that are constantly on the verge of being outsourced; the mortgage and credit-card rackets that saddle the working poor with debt, i.e., "white trashonomics"; the ubiquitous gun culture - and why the left doesn't get it; Scots Irish culture and how it played out in the young life of Lynddie England; and the blinkered "magical thinking" of the Christian right. (Bageant's brother is a Baptist pastor who casts out demons.) What it all adds up to, he asserts, is an unacknowledged class war. By turns brutal, tender, incendiary, and seriously funny, this book is a call to arms for fellow progressives with little real understanding of "the great beery, NASCAR-loving, church-going, gun-owning America that has never set foot in a Starbucks". *Deer Hunting with Jesus* is a potent antidote to what Bageant dubs "the American hologram" - the televised, corporatized virtual reality that distracts us from the insidious realities of American life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Let me begin by saying that, as an escapee in 1974 from Red State Indiana to Bluest of Blue New York City where I discovered my own liberal bona fides, I hope every New Yawker, Bostonian, Connecticut Yankee, San Franciscan, Portlander (OR), and Seattlean reads Joe Bageant's *DEER HUNTING WITH JESUS*. Along with every East and West Coast Democratic Congressman, Senator, and Presidential aspirant. Why? Understanding a different country within our country, developing a modicum of identification or at least empathy, developing and further promoting national policies to address the societal needs of working class America, and (if for no other reason) increasing the chances of re-establishing and maintaining Democratic control of Congress, the White House, and someday the Supreme Court. Bageant is not some liberal academician who just helicoptered in Margaret Mead-like for a brief, notebook-in-hand stay with the indigenous peoples of Winchester, Virginia. Rather, *DEER HUNTING WITH JESUS* describes the author's return to live in his hometown after a thirty-year absence in such far-flung left wing havens as Boulder, CO, Eugene, OR, and the Coeur d'Alene (ID) Indian Reservation. What he discovers is a town far different than the one of his boyhood, a place where "average folks" are uneducated, hopelessly parochial and uninformed, terrified of getting sick, and anesthetized by materialism, religious fundamentalism, and eight hours a day of television. They spend most of their lives resentful of "elites" and the rich, but resigned to their lot, all the while living on an economic precipice.

Senator Obama may or may not have read this book. Its author does open with the observation that life is so hard among the white poor and working poor that they seek solace in beer, overeating, Jesus, and guns. This is, however, a very serious book, a first-hand deep look into the hearts and minds of the 60% of the country that cannot control its lifestyle, environment, pay check, or future. Early on I note that the author appears to combine both education and common sense. There are magnificent turns of phrase throughout.

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