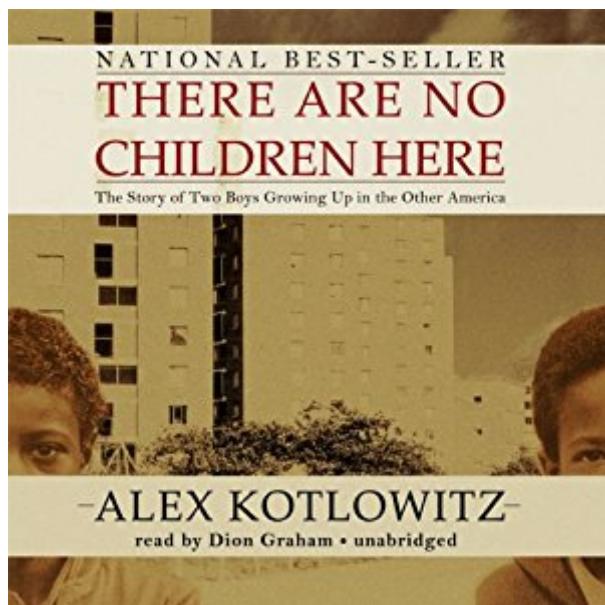


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There Are No Children Here: The Story Of Two Boys Growing Up In The Other America



Synopsis

A touching, meticulous portrait of two boys growing up in a Chicago housing project reveals how they help each other maintain a shred of innocence among street gangs, gunfire, violence, and drugs. Book available. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

To hardcore conservatives who believe that the plight of the poor is no one's fault but their own, I say: Read this book. To hardcore liberals who believe the poor are oppressed by society and not responsible for their situation, I say: Read this book. "There are No Children Here" shows that life is more complicated than either extreme. The lives of the people in this book are governed by complex interactions of both personal choices and unavoidable bad luck. The author sympathetically examines the terrible hardships his subjects were born into, but never shies away from showing how their situation is perpetuated by the harmful behavior and relationships they choose to pursue. Whatever your ideology is going in, you will not look at poverty the same way after reading this book.

This book describes a social atmosphere that few people actually experience or fully understand. It only provides a glimpse into the lives of two boys growing up in one of Chicago's public housing areas, but it will leave an everlasting impression in the minds of its readers. Alex Kotlowitz follows the lives of these two young boys as they attempt to navigate through the gang wars, police and

government deficiencies, and the poverty stricken Chicago slums. The boys are under 15 years of age, yet they are forced to make decisions that people much older than them struggle with every day. They are forced to struggle through their childhood in poverty and without a father to guide them in those struggles. Kotlowitz looks at the two boys as they watch their friends and family members perish in gang and drug wars, police brutality, or hauled off to prison for other crimes. They also watch as their mother struggles to provide for her family and the governments inefficient handling of Chicago's public housing. The author is able to show the young boys struggle to get an education and succeed in an area filled with failures. They have few role models to guide their decisions and few opportunities for success. Alex Kotlowitz is able to point out the constant struggle these young boys have faced and the opportunities that they are deprived of. He shows how the environment both physically and mentally hampers the two boys opportunity for success and a normal childhood. The book provides an excellent look into the mental struggles they faced as their friends got caught up in gangs, were killed, and started committing petty crimes. Overall this book provides an excellent depiction of life in the Chicago public housing, and the struggle of those two boys as they attempt to survive and succeed in the ghettos.

It's been a few years since I've read this book in its entirety. I first did so as a requirement for my college minor - Youth Agency Administration. This book, quite simply, changed everything for me. Growing up in a small farming community far away from the violence of the inner city, the only view I ever had of the life led by Lafayette & Pharoah came from snippets of the news from larger cities or from movies. It's easy to question the accuracy of both. However, with every page of "There Are No Children Here," I was drawn into the struggle these boys and their family & friends faced every day. I, as many others who have read their story, do wonder what has happened to all of these people since the ending of the book. Bottom line: Yes, the author's elaborations can seem a bit contrived at times, but the facts of the story alone speak for themselves. And, honestly, given the power of this account, what author would not be a bit emotional & contrived? That's the point. I recommend this book to people all the time...even to my boyfriend who grew up in a Chicago neighborhood similar to the one haunted by Lafayette & Pharoah. Regardless of your reason for reading it, your own background, or what you think your views are now, you will bring something away from the experience.

Alex Kotlowitz's novel was written during the middle and late 1980s. It accurately and truthfully describes the living conditions that existed in a Chicago housing project. He details a three year

period in the lives of ten year old Lafayette and seven year old Pharaoh which includes their special adventures on the railroad tracks and their constant fear of gang violence and death. The family is caught up in a "culture of poverty". Mr. Kotlowitz includes many, many true characters including the then mayor, housing execs, politicians, police, and gangbangers in the book. But the beauty of the book is the close bond between the brothers in the mist of surrounding chaos. Today Lafayette is still adjusting, but alive. Pharaoh has graduated high school with the help of Mr. Kotlowitz's, and his mother, LaJoe is well. They have since move from the housing projects, but still reside on the westside of Chicago. Mr. Kotkowitz lives in a suburb outside of Chicago. I was police officer in those projects when this book was written.

For those readers who have commented that this book is boring, I have one question....is the existence of this type of devastating poverty boring and insignificant to your particular life? This is not a fictional story of the hardships and struggles of the River's family; rather, it is a harsh reality that exists in our country, one of which we turn our backs and close our eyes to daily. This book is touching only if you understand and acknowledge the facts that perpetuate poverty and welfare-dependency in the United States. I believe that the readers who comment on LaJoe's laziness are truly portraying their ignorance and stupidity in their comments. In my opinion, this book paints a vivid picture, too vivid for some, of the America that most people do not want to see. My advice for others- read this book because you will be shocked a horrified at our "land of the free." Are those in poverty truly free or are they drowning in a world that smothered them to begin with?

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