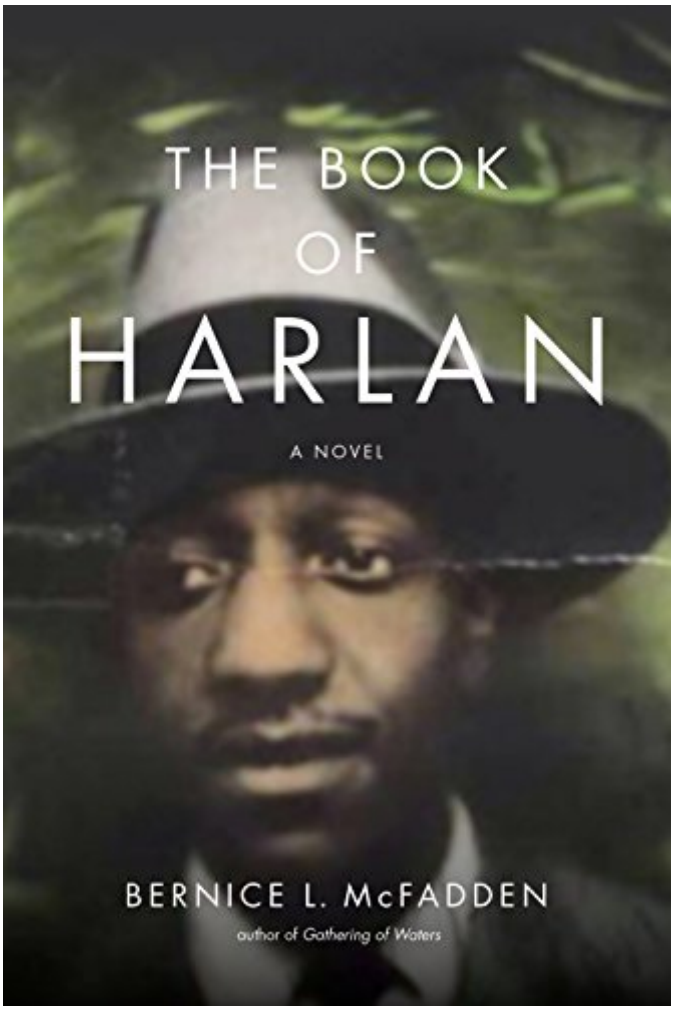
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The Book Of Harlan



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Synopsis

WINNER of the NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work (Fiction) A Washington Post Notable Book of 2016 "Simply miraculous...As her saga becomes ever more spellbinding, so does the reader’s astonishment at the magic she creates. This is a story about the triumph of the human spirit over bigotry, intolerance and cruelty, and at the center of The Book of Harlan is the restorative force that is music.Ã¢â ¬Â• --Washington Post “Another one of Bernice L. McFaddenÃ¢â ¬â„¢s masterpieces…McFadden took me on a melodious literary journey through time and place—complex, real, beautifully raw, and necessary…McFaddenÃ¢â ¬â„¢s prose lingers, giving me courage to stay committed to telling authentic stories that, while revealing of unspeakable truths, serve to unite us all.Ã¢â ¬Â• --The Millions "I’ve finally discovered a writer I should’ve been reading for years!...McFadden has a gift for placing her characters into the vivid history swirling around them, but keeping their emotional experience front and center in the story. There’s a Zora Neale Hurston sensibility to the way she does that." --MPR News, Kerri Miller’s Must-Read "McFadden’s writing breaks the heart--and then heals it again. The perspective of a black man in a concentration camp is unique and harrowing and this is a riveting, worthwhile read." --Toronto Star "The Book of Harlan is an incredible read. Bernice McFadden…has created an amazing novel that speaks to lesser known aspects of the African-American experience and illuminates the human heart and spirit. Her spare prose is rich in details that convey deep emotions and draw the reader in. This fictional narrative of Harlan ElliotÃ¢â ¬â„¢s life is firmly grounded amidst real people and places—prime historical fiction, and the best book I have read this year.Ã¢â ¬Â• --Historical Novels Review, EditorsÃ¢â ¬â„¢ Choice "McFadden packs a powerful punch with tight prose and short chapters that bear witness to key events in early twentieth-century history: both World Wars, the Great Depression, and the Great Migration. Partly set in the Jim Crow South, the novel succeeds in showing the prevalence of racism all across the country--whether implemented through institutionalized mechanisms or otherwise. Playing with themes of divine justice and the suffering of the righteous, McFadden presents a remarkably crisp portrait of one average man’s extraordinary bravery in the face of pure evil." --Booklist, Starred review "Through this character portrait of Harlan, McFadden has constructed a vivid, compelling narrative that makes historical fiction an accessible, literary window into the African-American past and some of the contemporary dilemmas of the present." --Publishers Weekly “McFaddenÃ¢â ¬â„¢s impressive achievement offers us a window into the often very difficult lives of African Americans from the Jim Crow era up to the present--and, unexpectedly, in wartime Germany. Highly recommended for showing us that however badly black citizens have

historically been treated, black lives matter.Ã¢â ¬Â• --Library Journal The Book of Harlan opens with the courtship of Harlan’s parents and his 1917 birth in Macon, Georgia. After his prominent minister grandfather dies, Harlan and his parents move to Harlem, where he eventually becomes a professional musician. When Harlan and his best friend, trumpeter Lizard Robbins, are invited to perform at a popular cabaret in the Parisian enclave of Montmartre--affectionately referred to as "The Harlem of Paris" by black American musicians--Harlan jumps at the opportunity, convincing Lizard to join him. But after the City of Light falls under Nazi occupation, Harlan and Lizard are thrown into Buchenwald--the notorious concentration camp in Weimar, Germany--irreparably changing the course of Harlan’s life. Based on exhaustive research and told in McFadden’s mesmeric prose, The Book of Harlan skillfully blends the stories of McFadden’s familial ancestors with those of real and imagined characters.

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Customer Reviews

I thoroughly enjoyed reading The Book of Harlan, because I learned some things of which I was previously unaware. The author had some well developed main characters, and their experiences were very realistic and apropos of the time. I could not describe the mood with just one word since

the realistic characters' lives mirrored ours - periods of various moods due to the circumstances in which they found themselves. The one thing that I would not say is that the mood was light-hearted. Ms. McFadden is a very accomplished writer - very easy to understand. At the end of the book, I wondered whether or not Harlan had changed, how much he had changed and whether or not those changes (if any) those changes would be lasting ones.

The Book of Harlan by Bernice McFadden was a fascinating read. I only found out after reading that this is the story of her grandfather, Harold. Steeped in historical richness, Ms. McFadden tells her ancestors story. There are many of details in this book I was unfamiliar with, mainly African Americans held prisoner in concentration camps. It was colorful, reminiscent, and at times heartbreaking. But, totally worth it. The only think that kept me from giving this a five star rating is there was a couple of holes in the storyline that I would have like to seen filled. Otherwise, it was a great book.

I have said this before, but it bears repeating. The publishing of any Bernice McFadden book is an event, not simply another book being released. She has done it again with this excellent novel. The Book of Harlan can be described as a historical novel, but that description doesn't really do it justice, because it is much more than just historical. She uses very short chapters to great effect, it certainly helps the feel of the book as a fast paced page turner.Bernice's prose as usual is imperial and her storytelling skills remain on a superior level. The novel centers on Harlan and his coming of age, but there are a host of characters here including some actual persons. We follow Harlan from childhood to age of adult maturity and because the story crosses multiple decades it allows Bernice to riff on various historical incidents, including both world wars, Nazi occupation of France and the turbulent 60's. Bernice is at the top of her game with this one, with a heart warming ending that will leave a smile on your face.

Before reading this book, I had no idea that the Nazis had rounded up African Americans who happened to be in Europe at the time of their invasion of France and then sent them to concentration camps; in fact, I had not even thought about it. The Book of Harlan tells the story of Harlan, an African American musician playing gigs in France (as well as his compatriots) who was interned at Buchenwald. But the book also tells the story of the rest of his life, both before and after World War II, as well as the story of his grandparents, his parents, his child, and others. Unfortunately, McFadden goes into almost no depth with a lot of this. This story is so big, so

important, that the other characters deserve a much bigger place in the book; in fact, Harlan deserves more depth himself. For instance, though we hear about the woman who became pregnant with Harlan's children and meet the children briefly, we never know what happened to them, only that they never had a relationship with Harlan. The Instead, the book is somewhat superficial and suffers from a lack of character development, despite the excellent writing.

Once again I found myself lost in the literary genius of Bernice McFadden. The Book of Harlan grabbed my attention from the very first sentence and never let me go. I could feel the transition of both Harlan and his parents into adulthood and then into the colorful and often times carefree lives they led experiencing life to the fullest along the way. Knowledge is power and I most certainly learned more about the German concentration camps that I never knew before. The fact that there were black people caught up in the despair and torture of the concentration camps that may never have their voices heard is truly heartbreaking. Bernice McFadden, I'm looking forward to following you where ever your stories take me next!

This was a sad book in so many ways that it was hard to be happy about the good things that happened in life. It is amazing how hate can destroy ones very soul. This book made me consider a part of history that I had not considered African Americans apart of. The idea of African Americans being in a Nazi Camp with the jewish people subject to the same treatment just never crossed my mind yet the author was able to take us there with the main character Harlan and it was very believable . His life was a sad reflection of what could go wrong in society when all we encounter is hate.

This novel wonders around a single family's history and those who happened to cross that family's path. And in that family a son is born, and that son is Harlan. Harlan is a sorry piece of work, due to his sorry parents, and very easy to dislike. But then he is captured by Nazis during WWII, and the audience feels a little sorry for Harlan. And then we quickly go back to hating him. But Harlan gets a chance, many years later, to redeem himself. And he does. And we realize just how everything in this story that seemed pointless had it's own reason for being included. It all added up at the very end. And the ending is what saved The Book of Harlan.

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