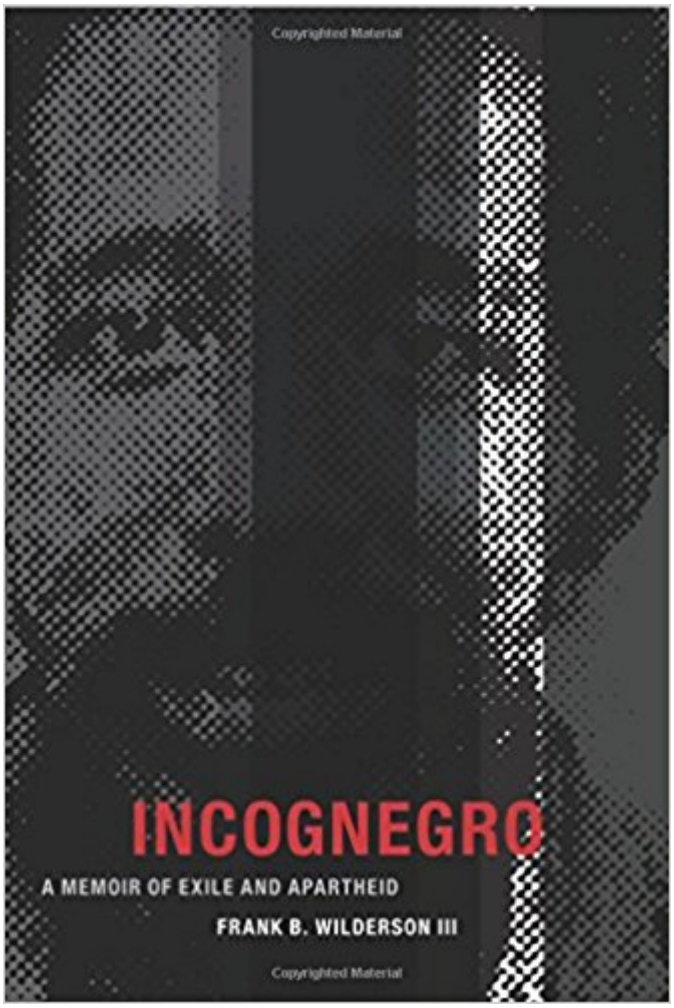
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Incognegro: A Memoir Of Exile And Apartheid



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Synopsis

In 1995, a South African journalist informed Frank Wilderson, one of only two American members of the African National Congress (ANC), that President Nelson Mandela considered him "a threat to national security." Wilderson was asked to comment. Incognegro is that "comment." It is also his response to a question posed five years later in a California university classroom: "How come you came back?" Although Wilderson recollects his turbulent life as an expatriate during the furious last gasps of apartheid, Incognegro is at heart a quintessentially American story. During South Africa's transition, Wilderson taught at universities in Johannesburg and Soweto by day. By night, he helped the ANC coordinate clandestine propaganda, launch psychological warfare, and more. In this mesmerizing political memoir, Wilderson's lyrical prose flows from unspeakable dilemmas in the red dust and ruin of South Africa to his return to political battles raging quietly on US campuses and in his intimate life. Readers will find themselves suddenly overtaken by the subtle but resolute force of Wilderson's biting wit, rare vulnerability, and insistence on bearing witness to history no matter the cost.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Wilderson, a professor, writer and filmmaker from the Midwest, presents a gripping account of his role in the downfall of South African apartheid as one of only two black Americans in the African National Congress (ANC). After marrying a South African law student, Wilderson reluctantly returns with her to South Africa in the early 1990s, where he teaches Johannesburg and Soweto students, and soon joins the military wing of the ANC. Wilderson’s stinging portrait of

Nelson Mandela as a petulant elder eager to accommodate his white countrymen will jolt readers who've accepted the reverential treatment usually accorded him. After the assassination of Mandela's rival, South African Communist Party leader Chris Hani, Mandela's regime deems Wilderson's public questions a threat to national security; soon, having lost his stomach for the cause, he returns to America. Wilderson has a distinct, powerful voice and a strong story that shuffles between the indignities of Johannesburg life and his early years in Minneapolis, the precocious child of academics who barely tolerate his emerging political consciousness. Wilderson's observations about love within and across the color line and cultural divides are as provocative as his politics; despite some distracting digressions, this is a riveting memoir of apartheid's last days. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.
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Nelson Mandela calls Wilderson Ã¢â ¬Å“a threat to national security.Ã¢â ¬Â• Wilderson asks, Why does Mandela compromise? Radical, defiant, and searingly honest,Ã Â this memoir about beingÃ Â active in the freedom struggle in the U.S. and in post-apartheid South Africa is bound to spark passionate argument asÃ Â Wilderson weaves togetherÃ Â his personal story with his politics, always critical of those in power.Ã Â The only black kid in his suburban Minnesota school, he grows up hearing the n-word all the time. His parents beat him for refusing to pledge allegiance. A graduate of Dartmouth, on the faculty at Berkeley, he confronts the prejudice behind New Age facades. In Johannesburg in the 1980s and early 1990s, he joins the African National Congress.Ã Â Occasionally, the account flags with too much detail on the authorÃ¢â ¬â„¢s experiences in both countries, back and forth over time, but what holds you fast is his lack of reverence and self-importance; he isÃ Â as candid about his attraction for white women as he is about his nostalgia for Ã¢â ¬Å“a homeland that never was.Ã¢â ¬Â• --Hazel Rochman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Some on the most unique commentary on the contemporary Black American experience, specifically the pain and frustration that comes with being Black in so called "post-racial" America. After the death of Mandela, his commentary on South Africa is especially timely in terms of balancing out the political commentary on this controversial figure. The smartest people I know swear by this book for good reason; it's completely unique and extremely insightful.

must read

A revelation, important, moving and enlightening, human and inspiring. A must read.

I've just finished reading this book through once, and I couldn't put it down. I feel like I need to read it again and underline things and mark pages.I'm a white male Baby Boomer, six years older than the author. I was a hippie and a "revolutionary" in the 1960s, and still am to an extent, yet I was never a revolutionary in the way that Frank Wilderson was (is?) a revolutionary. I've also never had to walk in his racial shoes, which essentially proves his point about black positionality.The dude has had some amazing experiences, both in South Africa and in America, and has lived to tell about them with remarkable insight and candor. While I disagree (only slightly) with his politics, I can't help but respect and admire his perspicacity, his accessibility as a writer, his emotional vulnerability, and his ability to perceive and/or inject humor into the most outrageous of circumstances. While his anger is all too evident, what ultimately comes across is Mr. Wilderson's humanity.If you're a black reader, I imagine you'll find yourself frequently nodding in recognition at many of the experiences Wilderson relates, and admiring his skill at exploring what is a deeply complex and conflicting topic, that of "race". If you're a white reader - one who has grown beyond such cliched thinking as "_I_ never owned slaves!" and "Why are they STILL angry? What do they want NOW?" - you may yet learn a little something about why "liberal" is not necessarily a positive term, and why it's still extremely difficult, 150 years after the Civil War and 50 years after the various civil rights acts, for blacks and whites, in America and elsewhere, to have and maintain intimate, symbiotic relationships. You'll also learn a great deal more than you knew before about the political and psychological nuances of trans-apartheid South Africa. You may even re-think your cathedralization (one of Wilderson's favorite words) of Nelson Mandela just a bit.Whatever kind of reader you are, I guarantee that you'll come away with something positive and enlightening from "Incognegro". And though Frank Wilderson may want to kick my white ass, after reading his memoir I want to give him a great big old bear hug and exclaim, "My brother!"

This book deserves to be right up there with the classics. It is beautifully written and painfully honest about the vulnerabilities and impossibilities of being a black man in contemporary America. At the same time, Wilderson tells a fascinating story of his time spent in South Africa and on the inside of the ANC, intertwined with reflections on his life back in the States. Speaking as a white woman, it's not often that we get such an intimate and forthright accounting of the inner racial turmoil our country generates and perpetuates for African-Americans. This book is a must-read for anybody

who wants to better understand the racial havoc that is America.

A beautifully written memoir that takes you from late 60s Minnesota to late 80s "end of apartheid" South Africa, and then to the 00s in California's "progressive" Bay Area through the eyes of the exceedingly dynamic academic and activist Frank Wilderson III. Wilderson weaves a tale that explores hisinner torments, social struggles, family battles, and challenging relationships with amazing insight, biting political criticism, humor, poetry, and, above all, honesty. Inspired by Assata Shakur's memoirs, Wilderson's book is a poignant trek through the ongoing evolution of a post-60s era black radical and a modern-day visionary. Highly recommended!

Frank Wilderson paints a picture of an American citizen that is often forgotten about either accidentally or intentionaly, because they represent a view that is taken as anathema to being "American". Wilderson explains how black anger, rage, and frustration as well as an attraction to communism of the Maoist or Leninist variety comes about. He is middle class, black, Ivy educated, and also unhappy, unfulfilled, angry, tired, and sceptical. His experience moved from a hatred of America to a hatred of South Africa and what they have become but he presents far more questions than answers about how this happens and why as well as how to possibly fix the problems associated on two sides of the ocean for blacks be they Americans or Africans; Pharoh for blacks may be on both sides of the sea. I recommend this book especially to the white conservative Christian reader and to the very liberal white reader that seeks to understand the black experience in America at home and abroad and the influence that global capitalism and political pragmatism and compromise can have on those that are marginalized in any society.

Racism doesn't die a sudden death. It's a concept that's tough, vengeful, and bitter. "Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid" is a story of race and the shifting attitudes of two countries. Frank B. Wilderson has in his life lived in two countries notorious for its cruel treatment of some of its own citizens solely for the color of their skin - The United States and South Africa. Drawing his ideas and views, Wilderson constructs a very highly readable piece of work, that will enlighten as well as entertain. Written as a response to Nelson Mandela "Incognegro" is a pivotal piece of writing for those studying race in today's world.

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