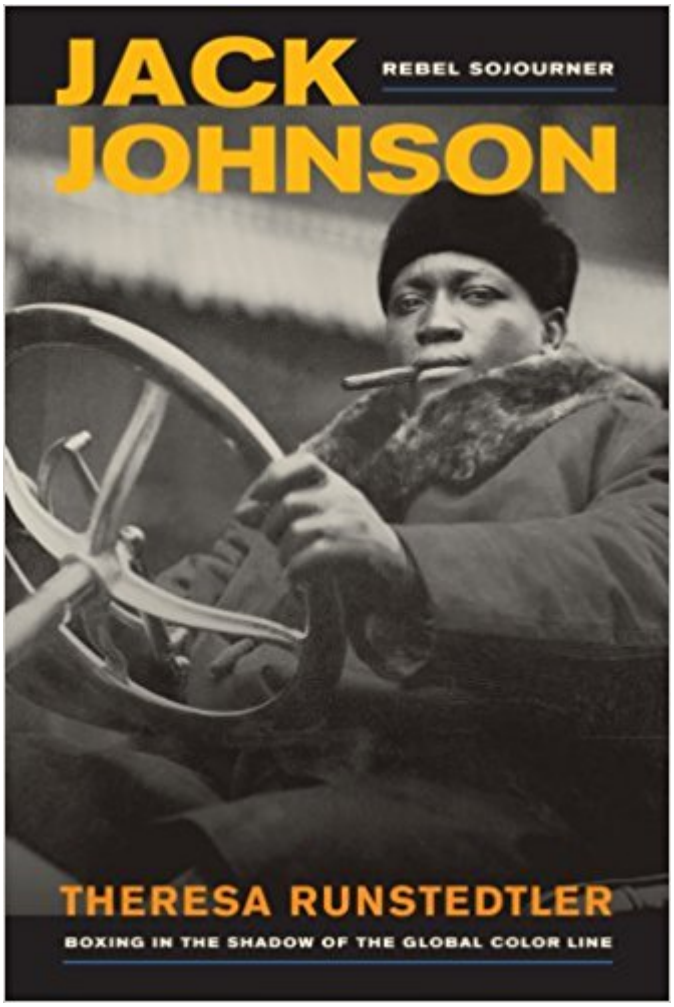
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Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner: Boxing In The Shadow Of The Global Color Line



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Synopsis

In his day, Jack Johnson—born in Texas, the son of former slaves—was the most famous black man on the planet. As the first African American World Heavyweight Champion (1908–1915), he publicly challenged white supremacy at home and abroad, enjoying the same audacious lifestyle of conspicuous consumption, masculine bravado, and interracial love wherever he traveled. Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner provides the first in-depth exploration of JohnsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s battles against the color line in places as far-flung as Sydney, London, Cape Town, Paris, Havana, and Mexico City. In relating this dramatic story, Theresa Runstedtler constructs a global history of race, gender, and empire in the early twentieth century.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“This book is a must-have addition to any boxing fan’s library.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Glenn Wilson Boxing News 2012-08-02)Ã¢â ¬Å“Runstedtler brings new perspectives to bear in Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner. . . itÃ¢â ¬â„¢s well worth the read.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Thomas Hauser The Ring 2012-09-01)Ã¢â ¬Å“Runstedtler presents an unexpected yet wholly authentic take on the great African American boxer, Jack Johnson.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Alan Moores Booklist 2012-04-15)Ã¢â ¬Å“A fascinating must-read for students of African American or American studies covering the early 1900s.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Jim Burns Library Journal 2012-07-16)Ã¢â ¬Å“My nominee for book of the year by a rising young scholar. . . . For anyone interested in colonialism, imperialism, race, and the global impact of sport, this book is a must read.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Mark Naison With A Brooklyn Accent

2012-05-25)Ã¢â ¬Å“A thoroughly researched, scholarly study, meant to be read slowly and considered deeply. . . . Highly recommended for all readers.Ã¢â ¬Â• (R. W. Roberts, Purdue University Choice 2013-03-01)

"Theresa Runstedtler traces Jack JohnsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s fabulous, furious, iconic life across five continents and through four paradigms (race, masculinity, imperialism, and popular culture), setting a formidably high bar in the emerging genre of transnational biography. Jack Johnson: Rebel Sojourner is a groundbreaking achievement.Ã¢â ¬Â•—David Levering Lewis, author of W. E. B. Du Bois, 1868-1919: Biography of a Race“This is a brilliantly researched and original study of the transnational career of the black American boxer Jack Johnson. In lucid and engaging prose, Theresa Runstedtler traces JohnsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s travels across multiple continents, showing how JohnsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s life serves as a cultural compass for the intersecting worlds of American, British, and French empire and ideas of race at the turn of the last century. This marvelous contribution to the burgeoning literature on the popular culture of imperialism and transnationalism will find a wide and appreciative audience among scholars of empire, American history, and African American studies.Ã¢â ¬Â•—Kevin Gaines, author of American Africans in Ghana: Black Expatriates in the Civil Rights Era.“Theresa Runstetler's Jack Johnson: Rebel Sojourner is one of the two or three most important books on race and sports I have read in the last ten years. It shows that Jack Johnson's impact on black-white relations, during the years of his exile, was at least as great in countries outside the United States as it was domestically. When he fought outside the US, Johnson became a model of power and agency for colonial peoples seeking liberation, and an object of exotic fascination and aversion for whites trying to maintain their power in a changing world. It is a brilliantly researched and innovative work that forces the reader to look at race in countries like France and Mexico in a completely different way.Ã¢â ¬Â• —Mark Naison, Professor of African American Studies and History, Fordham University“Theresa Runstedtler has created a wonderfully thoughtful and sophisticated exploration of the impact of Jack JohnsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s storied boxing career in the context of Western imperialism of the early twentieth century. The author provides a fascinating and broad picture of the international implications of JohnsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s success as the worldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s first black heavyweight champ. His fame inspired colonized people from Fiji to Jamaica to India. Western imperialists conversely grew alarmed at JohnsonÃ¢â ¬â„¢s popularity and success. Ultimately, this book is a welcome addition to the study of how itinerant black workers who left the U.S. contributed to transnational resistive politics in Europe, Latin America, Australia, Asia, and Africa. None was as popular as Jack Johnson,

who reigned not only as heavyweight champ, but was the most salient example of the intersection of defiance to global white supremacy in the space of sport and entertainment.Ã¢â ¬Â• —Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, author of Hip-Hop Revolution: The Culture and Politics of Rap

On May 14, 1913, Jack Johnson, the world's first black heavyweight champion, was convicted by an all-white jury under the Mann Act and sentenced to 366 days in prison and a hefty, $1, 000 fine. Born of the white slavery hysteria of the early 20th-Century, the Mann Act sought to prohibit the transportation of women across state lines "for the purposes of prostitution or debauchery, and for any other immoral purpose." But while intended to defy the forces of prostitution, the vaguely-worded law criminalized many forms of consensual sexual activity, resulting in political blackmail and bullying. The first person to be ensnared by this controversial legislation was Johnson whose interracial, romantic encounters not only encroached too closely on America's rigid color line but also its unbendable sexual frontier. The brash and formidable pugilist, who punched his way to the top of the boxing world, shattering white-hopes and swelling the white man's burden along the way, could not dodge the jab of trumped-up charges against him. Despite the fact that the activities leading to his arrest occurred prior to the passage of what otherwise became known as the White-Slave Traffic Act, Johnson was nonetheless found guilty of violating the law. One month later, he was a transatlantic fugitive on the run. For the next seven years, he journeyed throughout England, France, Russia, Spain, Argentina, Barbados, Cuba, and Mexico in an elusive search for a place where he could escape the constraints of racial prejudice.With edifying and engaging prose, Theresa Runstedtler chronicles these years Johnson spent in exile, analyzing the racial skirmishes the bombastic prizefighter confronted as he discovered Jim Crow in its borderless, global variety. She weaves together a brilliant and well-researched narrative that rescues the fighter out of popular memory as an apolitical figure and reveals him to be a diasporic hero who became the focal point of an international strategy to maintain white supremacy. In doing so, she not only contributes a useful study for scholars of imperialism, masculinity, and popular culture to engage but also complicates the growing literature in transnationalism with an indispensable examination of race and sport.

I was interested in this book because I had previously read Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson years ago. Runstedtler's work started very slow. The book is about Johnson's life but also the political environment of the parts of the world where Johnson lived and traveled. I thought it would be solely based on Johnson's life. Unlike Unforgivable Blackness, which took a "micro" approach, Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner takes a "macro" approach.

Dr. Runstedtler's work, Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner, does an outstanding job of highlighting racism within the context of professional boxing. The implication that this work is merely a "mislabeled essay" is simply a failure to understand the sheer impact in which Jack Johnson's life plays in athletics today; especially considering the overwhelming number of African-American and Afro-Latino athletes who, in many ways detailed by this work, continue to be exploited regardless of any adverse financial, physical, or psychological affects. I plan to contribute a full review of this book soon however, in the meantime, I highly recommend that any who enjoys reading a brilliantly researched work should buy a copy. You will not be disappointed.

this is someone's doctoral dissertation and fails to reveal compelling facts or observations of Jack Johnson the man that were not known but does reveal a universally shared conspiracy of white supremacy and economic complicity that hastened Johnson's demise and character assassination.

I really enjoyed reading this book on Jack Johnson. I particularly liked how Theresa Runstedtler consistently underscores that discussions about race, mass culture and politics are interrelated. As someone interested in US history, this book drew attention to a figure I was less familiar with. I would recommend it for anybody interested in sports and/or US society.

Dr. Rundstedtler offers a powerful and insightful history of Jack Johnson and global white supremacy. Her work chronicles not just Johnson's career and his place within and beyond the ring, but the lessons we can learn about white supremacy, globalization, and international relations through his career. The book an important contribution within sport studies, history, and American Studies, highlighting how its always bigger than a game.

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