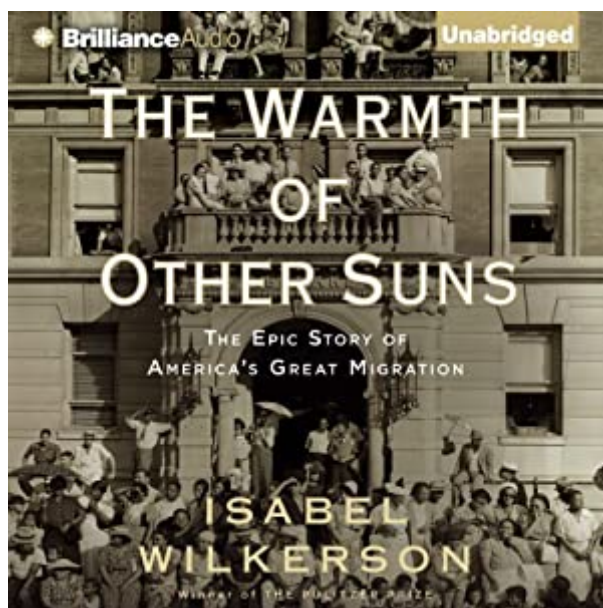


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# The Warmth Of Other Suns: The Epic Story Of America's Great Migration



## Synopsis

National Book Critics Circle Award, Nonfiction, 2011 In this epic, beautifully written masterwork, Pulitzer Prize-winning author Isabel Wilkerson chronicles one of the great untold stories of American history: the decades-long migration of black citizens who fled the South for northern and western cities in search of a better life. From 1915 to 1970, this exodus of almost six million people changed the face of America. Wilkerson interviewed more than a thousand people, and gained access to previously untapped data and official records, to write this definitive and vividly dramatic account of how these American journeys unfolded, altering our cities, our country, and ourselves. With stunning detail, Wilkerson tells this story through the lives of three unique individuals: Ida Mae Gladney, who in 1937 left sharecropping and prejudice in Mississippi for Chicago, where she achieved quiet blue-collar success and, in old age, voted for Barack Obama when he ran for an Illinois state senate seat; sharp and quick-tempered George Starling, who in 1945 fled Florida for Harlem, where he endangered his job fighting for civil rights, saw his family fall, and finally found peace in God; and Robert Foster, who left Louisiana in 1953 to pursue medicine, becoming the personal physician to Ray Charles as part of a glitteringly successful career that allowed him to purchase a grand home where he often threw exuberant parties. Wilkerson brilliantly captures her subjects' first treacherous and exhausting cross-country trips by car and train and their new lives in colonies that grew into ghettos, as well as how they changed their new cities with southern food, faith, and culture and improved them with discipline, drive, and hard work. Both a riveting microcosm and a major assessment, *The Warmth of Other Suns* is a bold, remarkable work, a superb account of an "unrecognized immigration" within our own land. Through the breadth of its narrative, the beauty of the writing, the depth of its research, and the fullness of the people and lives portrayed herein, this book is destined to become a classic.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Isabel Wilkerson, the Pulitzer Prize winning newspaper writer, has now come back to write a fascinating and sweeping book on what she calls "the biggest underreported story of the twentieth century." This is the story... no- make that the stories... of the "Great Migration", the migration of sharecroppers and others from the Cotton Belt to the Big Cities: New York, Chicago, Detroit, LA and etc in the period between the World Wars. Over one million blacks left the South and went North (or West). Of course we all know the tale of the "Dust Bowl" and the "Okies", as captured by Steinbeck in words, by Dorothea Lange in photographs, and even in song by Woody Guthrie. But this was as big or even bigger (estimates vary), and to this day the story has not been covered anywhere near as well as the "Dust Bowl" migrations. Wilkerson's book has more than ten years of research in its making, and thus is a large and weighty volume at more than 600 pages. It is also personally researched, the author having interviewed over 1,200 people. She picked three dozen of those to interview in great depth, and choose but three of those stories to present to you here. The title of this book is taken from Richard Wright's "Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth": "I was taking a part of the South to transplant in alien soil, to see if it could grow differently, if it could drink of new and cool rains, bend in strange winds, respond to the warmth of other suns, and, perhaps, to bloom." <http://www..com/Black-Boy-Record-Childhood-Youth/dp/0060834005> This book is a not an easy summer read, mind you. At times both heartwarming and heartbreaking, at times so riveting you won't be able to put it down- but at other times so moving that you'll need to put it down for a while. The author peppers her book with interesting side notes and anecdotes, such as when some of the migrants, being unfamiliar with a Northern accent, would mistakenly get off at the cry of "Penn Station, Newark," the stop just before Penn Station, New York. Many decided to stay there, according to Isabel, giving Newark "a good portion of its black population." A personal note: My Dad got his Masters on the GI Bill, then took us to Los Angeles to be a teacher. He was partnered with a more experienced teacher- a lady we called "Miz Edna" who had migrated to LA from the South. Our families became friends, as also "Miz Edna's" husband had served in New Guinea with my father (as a cook, however, remember the WWII Army was still segregated) . I remember many of her stories, and especially her rich melodic voice, with just enough of the South

remaining. Thus, I "heard" many of the quotations and personal stories here in "Miz Edna's" voice. This is a deep and great book, I highly recommend it. Further reading: Arnesen, Eric. *Black Protest and the Great Migration: A Brief History with Documents* Grossman, James R. *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* Lemann, Nicholas. *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America*

A wonderful, well-researched work describing the stories and lives of three African-Americans who migrated from the American South. Loved these three intertwined stories. I learned a lot and it was alternately heartbreaking and inspiring. I really didn't have much of an understanding of the great Migration- and it was shocking, really, to get a glimpse of how these people had to struggle and deal with discrimination, danger, and racism. It's so heartbreaking to see what people were subjected to because of their skin color. Great research, compelling subjects, and wonderful story telling. It could have used a good editing- as the author alternates between the three characters, their stories tend to be briefly reiterated at the beginning of each new section. I think the author thinks the reader will forget the back story of each subject as the book progresses. I just skimmed or skipped the paragraphs that were repeats; a bit of annoyance. A good work overall though, and a wonderful look into a difficult time that really shaped the United States. Highly recommended.

I have been delaying writing a review only because there is so much to say. The task was mammoth for the author but she carried it off after extensive research and interviews. There are three main "characters" whose journeys are followed from their lives in the south, through the migration north and west, and their lives in their new homes. The three come from different southern states and different employment backgrounds. Their stories are interspersed with actual incidents which other African-Americans experienced in the south during fifty years beginning in the WWI era as well as other historical data. The content of the book is provocative as well as educational. A fairly aware person, I learned a great deal and see our country in a different light.

An examination of the migration of African Americans from the South to the North and West from the post-slavery era to the 1960s. What drove them to leave and what they found. Separately and intertwined, this book offers an examination of the lives of three individuals who were a part of this event from different locations in the South to various cities in the North and West. These three people had different educational backgrounds and undergoing the migration in different decades and included one woman and two men. Thirdly, the impact the migration had on country as a whole

and relating this migration to other migrations of peoples. I appreciated that there were historical segments as well as segments with the different perspectives of individuals.

This book was recommended by a couple of my coworkers and I am so glad I read it. I never knew my paternal grandparents, but I did know my maternal ones who were, in fact, immigrants from Virginia to New York. My grandfather used to share snippets of his story, which I definitely saw in George Starling's journey. I loved every bit of the book and was truly saddened by my completion of its reading, as I wanted there to be more. More Americans, both Black and white, need to be exposed to this important part of our country's history to gain understanding of one of the facets of why it is as it is today.

This book was a long read, but in the end, it provided an enlightening perspective on the migration of people from the southern states to the north from the early to late 20th century. I was horrified by the statistics on lynching and equally horrified by the personal stories of those who lived in fear during that era. Particular striking was the experience of a doctor driving from Texas to California for a new position, only to find there was no place he could stop or stay over ---and this was in the 1960s! The author's decision to tell the story through the people who actually lived it was brilliant and served to translate what could have been dry statistics into a compelling narrative. This is a book I will remember for a long time.

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