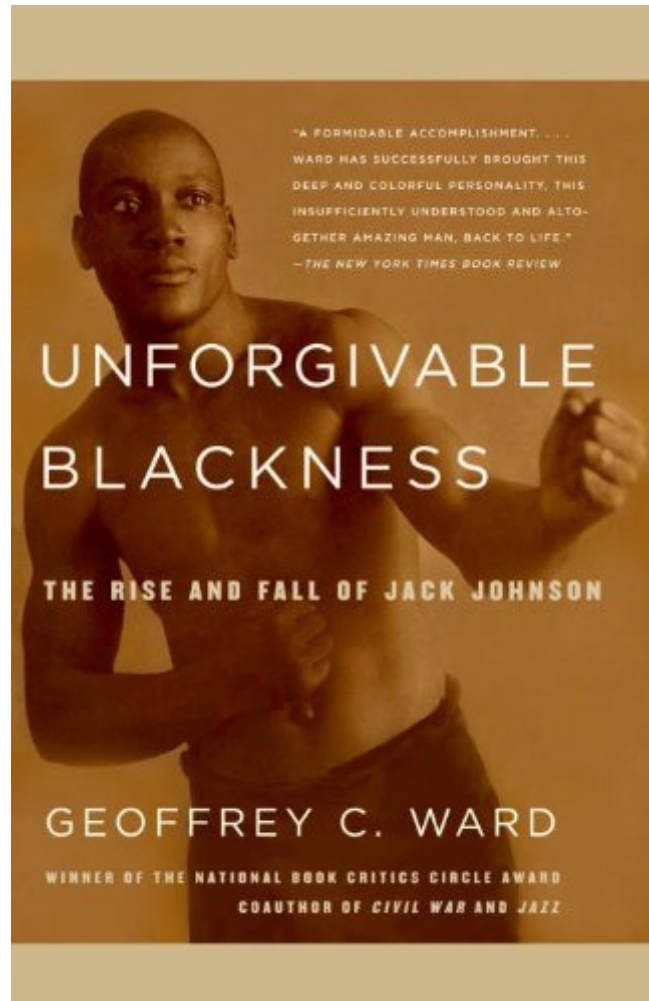


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Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise And Fall Of Jack Johnson



Synopsis

In this vivid biography Geoffrey C. Ward brings back to life the most celebrated " and the most reviled " African American of his age. Jack Johnson battled his way out of obscurity and poverty in the Jim Crow South to win the title of heavyweight champion of the world. At a time when whites ran everything in America, he took orders from no one and resolved to live as if color did not exist. While most blacks struggled simply to exist, he reveled in his riches and his fame, sleeping with whomever he pleased, to the consternation and anger of much of white America. Because he did so the federal government set out to destroy him, and he was forced to endure prison and seven years of exile. This definitive biography portrays Jack Johnson as he really was--a battler against the bigotry of his era and the embodiment of American individualism. From the Trade Paperback edition.

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Customer Reviews

In the introduction to his biography of Jack Johnson, Geoffrey C. Ward indicates that his primary source was newspaper articles. And indeed, this biography reads much like a very long newspaper account of the life of Jack Johnson. This isn't good or bad, but an apt description of what it is like reading this biography. In fact, Ward has done a commendable job in weaving what he had to work

with into a very readable, informative, and enjoyable work. Jack Johnson was the boxing world heavyweight champion from 1908-1915. And he was the first black heavyweight champion, which dominates the story of his life inside the ring and out. Johnson became heavyweight champion at a time when boxing was just barely out of the bare knuckle era, and while more organized as a sport, was still a rough and tumble and often illegal activity. Boxing, even as it is today, was often surrounded by unsavory characters. During that era throwing fights for money or to set up matches wasn't uncommon. Johnson learned his craft literally starting from the bottom up in local tough man or boxing contests and his skills eventually lead him to the top of his sport. What make Johnson's story so interesting are two things - race and his profligate lifestyle. Race played a key role in his life even though he himself ignored race and didn't let it interfere with how he behaved or what he did. He often sported white women on his arm and eventually married a white woman, and did not defer to anyone, black or white. This made him an even more incendiary figure for the race conscious press and America at the time. Many white heavyweights wouldn't fight Johnson - most notably Jim Jefferies who held the title at a time when Johnson was the obvious deserving opponent for a shot at the champion.

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