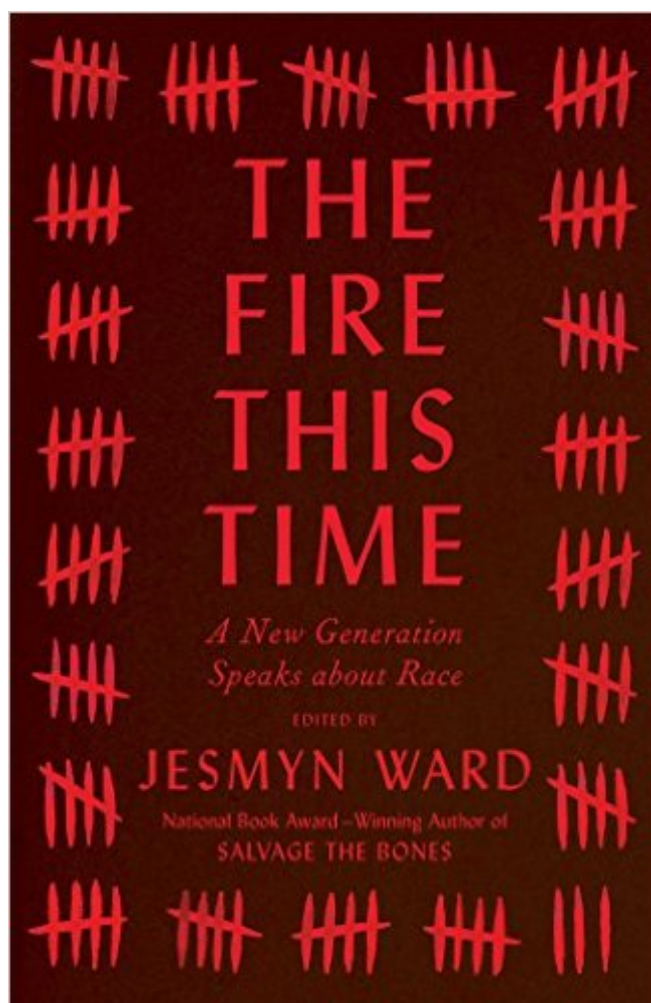


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# The Fire This Time: A New Generation Speaks About Race



## Synopsis

National Book Award winner Jesmyn Ward takes James Baldwin's 1963 examination of race in America, *The Fire Next Time*, as a jumping off point for this groundbreaking collection of essays and poems about race from the most important voices of her generation and our time. In light of recent tragedies and widespread protests across the nation, *The Progressive* magazine republished one of its most famous pieces: James Baldwin's 1962 "Letter to My Nephew," which was later published in his landmark book, *The Fire Next Time*. Addressing his fifteen-year-old namesake on the one hundredth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, Baldwin wrote: "You know and I know, that the country is celebrating one hundred years of freedom one hundred years too soon." Award-winning author Jesmyn Ward knows that Baldwin's words ring as true as ever today. In response, she has gathered short essays, memoir, and a few essential poems to engage the question of race in the United States. And she has turned to some of her generation's most original thinkers and writers to give voice to their concerns. *The Fire This Time* is divided into three parts that shine a light on the darkest corners of our history, wrestle with our current predicament, and envision a better future. Of the eighteen pieces, ten were written specifically for this volume. In the fifty-odd years since Baldwin's essay was published, entire generations have dared everything and made significant progress. But the idea that we are living in the post-Civil Rights era, that we are a "post-racial" society is an inaccurate and harmful reflection of a truth the country must confront. Baldwin's "fire next time" is now upon us, and it needs to be talked about. Contributors include Carol Anderson, Jericho Brown, Garnette Cadogan, Edwidge Danticat, Rachel Kaadzi Ghansah, Mitchell S. Jackson, Honoree Jeffers, Kima Jones, Kiese Laymon, Daniel Jose Older, Emily Raboteau, Claudia Rankine, Clint Smith, Natasha Trethewey, Wendy S. Walters, Isabel Wilkerson, and Kevin Young.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"My only sin is my skin, ... What did I do, to be so black and blue?" Fats Waller, "(What Did I Do to Be So) Black and Blue?" The title of this choric collection of prismatic prose and poetry convoking for equality, compassion and freedom from fear, written by some of today's prominent and talented African-American writers, derives from the title of James Baldwin's groundbreaking *The Fire Next Time* which he ended with the fiery memorable passage: "If we...the relatively conscious whites and the relatively conscious blacks, who must, like lovers, insist on, or create, the consciousness of others--do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world. If we do not dare everything, the fulfillment of that prophecy, re-created from the Bible in song by the slave, is upon us: God gave Noah the rainbow sign, No more water, the fire next time!" I will never know the pain and fear and rage felt by African-Americans, including the artists who contributed pieces to this innovative anthology full of timely contributions to the current critical conversation on racial relations in the U.S. Nonetheless, if this book can be a bridge to better, fuller understanding by me (which, I think, it most definitely is) and others similarly situated, such a comprehension of the unknown being, after all, one of the main goals of artists and writers, then maybe it will help us all play some part in changing ourselves and perhaps the world for the common good. \_\_\_\_\_ "Be the change, you wish to see in the world."

Mahatma Gandhi.

â œ[W]e are writing an epic wherein black lives carry worth, wherein black boys can walk to the store and buy candy without thinking they will die, wherein black girls can have a bad day and be mouthy without being physically assaulted by a police officer, wherein cops see twelve-year-old black boys playing with fake guns as silly kids and not homicidal maniacs, wherein black women can stop to ask for directions without being shot in the face by paranoid white homeowners. I burn, and I hope.â •â “ Jesmyn Ward, Introductionâ œA friend recently told me that when she gave birth to her son, before naming him, before even nursing him, her first thought was, I have to get him out of this country.â •â “ Claudia Rankine, â œThe Condition of Black Life Is One of

Mourningâ •Anthologies tend to be pretty hit or miss with me, but the eighteen pieces in THE FIRE THIS TIME: A NEW GENERATION SPEAKS ABOUT RACE are uniformly excellent. There wasnâ™t a single poem or essay that I didnâ™t love. I devoured the whole thing in most of an afternoon, and was left hungering for more. Inspired by James Baldwinâ™s THE FIRE NEXT TIME â “ â œA Letter to My Nephewâ • in particular â “ Jesmyn Ward compiled a collection of essays on race by and for a new generation. The result is eclectic and surprising and just straight-up breathtaking. I wasnâ™t sure what to expect â “ a more academic bent, perhaps? â “ but in this case, I think my preconceptions were a positive, because THE FIRE THIS TIME upended them in the best way possible.

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