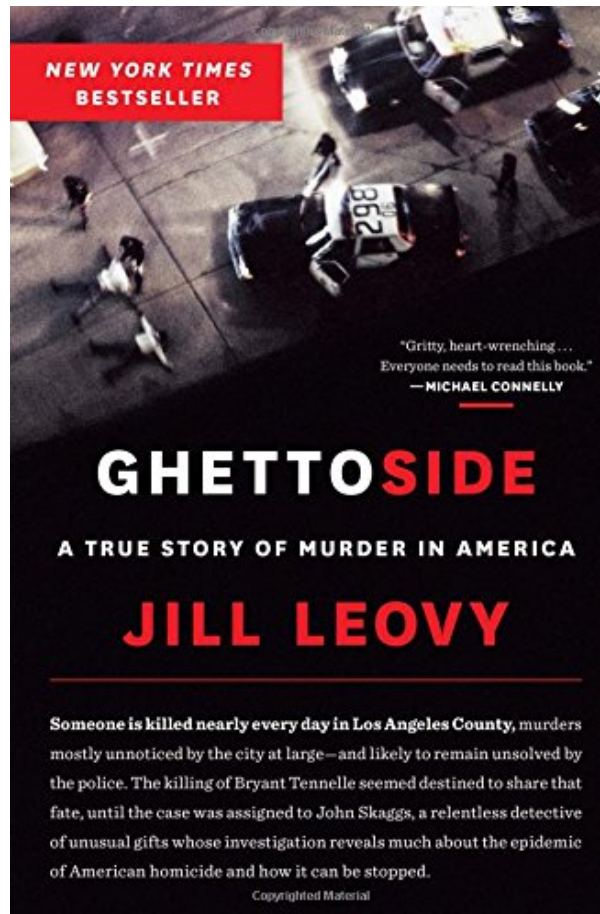
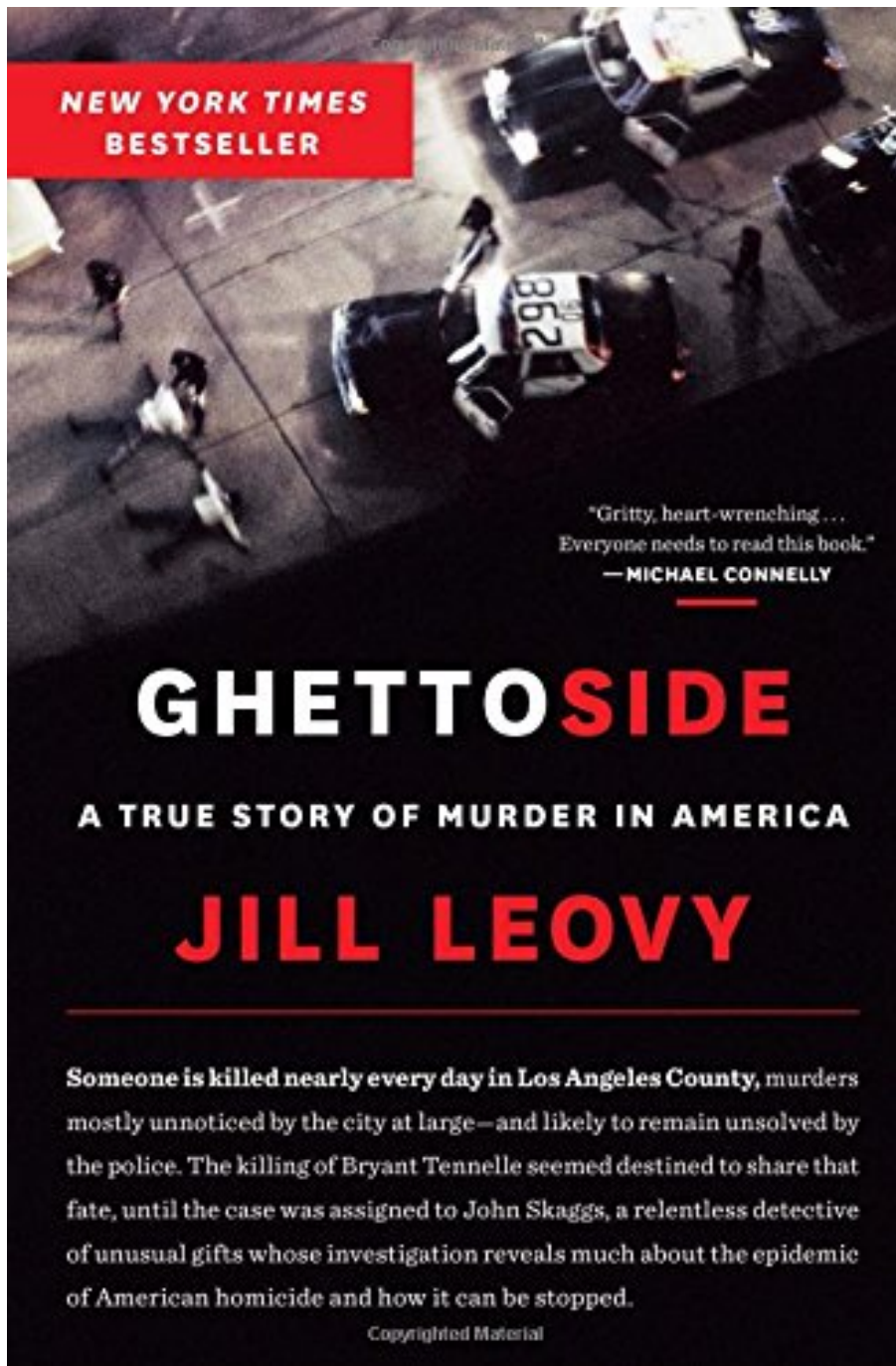


GHETTOSIDE: A TRUE STORY OF MURDER IN AMERICA BY JILL LEOVY



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**NEW YORK TIMES
BESTSELLER**

"Gritty, heart-wrenching ...
Everyone needs to read this book."
—MICHAEL CONNELLY

GHETTOSIDE

A TRUE STORY OF MURDER IN AMERICA

JILL LEOVY

Someone is killed nearly every day in Los Angeles County, murders mostly unnoticed by the city at large—and likely to remain unsolved by the police. The killing of Bryant Tennelle seemed destined to share that fate, until the case was assigned to John Skaggs, a relentless detective of unusual gifts whose investigation reveals much about the epidemic of American homicide and how it can be stopped.

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NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • NAMED ONE OF THE TEN BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY SAN FRANCISCO CHRONICLE, USA TODAY, AND CHICAGO TRIBUNE • A masterly work of literary journalism about a senseless murder, a relentless detective, and the great plague of homicide in America

NATIONAL BOOK CRITICS CIRCLE AWARD FINALIST • NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY The New York Times Book Review • The Washington Post • The Boston Globe • The Economist • The Globe and Mail • BookPage • Kirkus Reviews

On a warm spring evening in South Los Angeles, a young man is shot and killed on a sidewalk minutes away from his home, one of the thousands of black Americans murdered that year. His assailant runs down the street, jumps into an SUV, and vanishes, hoping to join the scores of killers in American cities who are never arrested for their crimes.

But as soon as the case is assigned to Detective John Skaggs, the odds shift.

Here is the kaleidoscopic story of the quintessential, but mostly ignored, American murder—a “ghettoside” killing, one young black man slaying another—and a brilliant and driven cadre of detectives whose creed is to pursue justice for forgotten victims at all costs. *Ghettoside* is a fast-paced narrative of a devastating crime, an intimate portrait of detectives and a community bonded in tragedy, and a surprising new lens into the great subject of why murder happens in our cities—and how the epidemic of killings might yet be stopped.

Praise for *Ghettoside*

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“Masterful . . . gritty reporting that matches the police work behind it.”—*Los Angeles Times*

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About the Author

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Most helpful customer reviews

98 of 105 people found the following review helpful.

An Important and Essential Book That Will Broaden Your Understanding

By Lita Perna

Gettoside was a word used to by a Watts gang member to describe his South Central Los Angeles neighborhood. The author writes that *Gettoside* is both a place and a predicament. It is a place where black boys and men are safer in jail than on the streets. *Gettoside* is also a frame of mind. It is a place with a culture of violence where the heroes are seen as the villains; the villains are seen as the heroes and all the victims are seen by one detective as some father's child.

By the time you finish this book you will know the heroes (detectives, including those whom the author calls *ghettoside* craftsmen whose involvement, dedication and self sacrifice is the stuff of which legends are made) and the victims (the focus here is on a good boy, the murdered 18 year old sheltered son of a homicide detective) and the addicts, the whores and the gangster-villains. You will better understand the police culture, and neighborhood culture and what they are all up against. You will understand why there are so many murders.

This is more than a story about heroic and tenacious homicide detectives' almost impossible task of identifying, tracking down, arresting and aiding in the prosecution of the drive by shooter of an 18 year old boy; it is an illuminating history and an exploration of a culture of lawlessness and violence and the multigenerational tragedies of its victims.

Author Jill Leovy, award winning reporter and editor for the *Los Angeles* gives startling and sickening statistics. She states that lawlessness is its own kind of order and where the criminal justice system fails to respond vigorously to violent injury and death, homicide becomes epidemic. "Wherever law is absent or undeveloped---wherever it is shabby, ineffective, or disputed---some form of self-policing or communal justice usually emerges." She says reformers focus on the rights of defendants while being blind to the under enforcement of violent crime. The author writes that police are preoccupied with nuisance crime and lax when it comes to answering for black lives. In poor urban centers those who live in minority enclaves settle their scores outside the law.

During the 1960s the number of people sent to prison for criminal homicide was less than half the number of homicides. From 1994-2006 suspects were arrested in just 41% of the 3,300 killings involving black male victims in Los Angeles.

The author does not preach. She shows. She explains. She tells true stories that will break your heart. Crime witnesses are terrified to testify because they and their families are threatened, beaten and often killed. Mothers weep over children who join gangs for protection or for the teenage allure of girls, guns and

excitement.

According to the author, blacks who make up only 12 percent of the U.S. population, account for nearly half of all homicide victims.

The Southeast's per capita murder rate is eight to ten times the national average. The majority of the victims are black on black. So why was the budget for police overtime cut 57 percent? For detectives, working odd hours is essential. The author writes of budget cutbacks that eliminate necessary overtime and equipment. How can one do a job if the office phone don't work? Why would a detective have to live out of his sedan for two days when his unit lost the salvage cars they hoarded? When Detectives aren't issued departmental cell phones, they purchase their own. Detectives buy their own pads, pencils staplers, keyboards, calendars and binders. One detective purchases his own fax machine and printer for the office. Local appliance dealers provide video machines for interrogations.

This book is an eye opener and a heart breaker that will change the way you see black on black crime in America and the detectives who devote their lives to seeking justice for its victims.

Maybe the book should be titled, "Ghettocide" because it is about the physical, emotional and spiritual death that happens in pockets of cities all over America.

48 of 52 people found the following review helpful.

"Nothing else matters after working murders."

By Bella Rosa

Jill Leovy's theory, in a nutshell, is that "men [kill] one another to settle disputes or exact revenge in the absence of a trusted legal authority." Even as she details the awful statistics - in 1993, black men age 20-24 died by homicide at a rate of 368 per 100,000 - she maintains that the lack of police presence in minority neighborhoods drives young men to take matters into their own hands.

I get that gangs have stepped in to monitor and control neighborhoods in the absence of other local authorities, but the result is a casualty count that rivals a literal war zone. Leovy uses the story of Bryant Tennelle, shot in the head while walking down Eightieth Street, to humanize the incomprehensible numbers. Bryant's father, Wallace Tennelle, himself a homicide detective, and the detective assigned to the case, John Skaggs, illustrate the changes in the LAPD over the years and the frustrations of working in South Central. Leovy doesn't sugarcoat the problems of bureaucracy, misunderstanding and apathy, but she's also very clear about the bravery and dedication of men like Skaggs, constantly working for justice in a neighborhood where 20 young black men were killed in the 30 days before Bryant Tennelle was shot.

It's an extremely timely topic. Leovy tells a compelling story very well and raises a lot of issues that deserve careful thought.

24 of 25 people found the following review helpful.

A dark and violent true picture of South L.A.

By Neal Reynolds

I was born and raised in Fullerton, Calif., about 25 miles from L.A., and by the 1960's spent quite a bit of time in and around the city although I stayed away of course from South L.A. I still understand much of what Jill Leovy shows us of the area. This is indeed important reading. This is stark reality. I strongly recommend this to all readers who are seeking understanding of our violent times in all parts of the country.

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