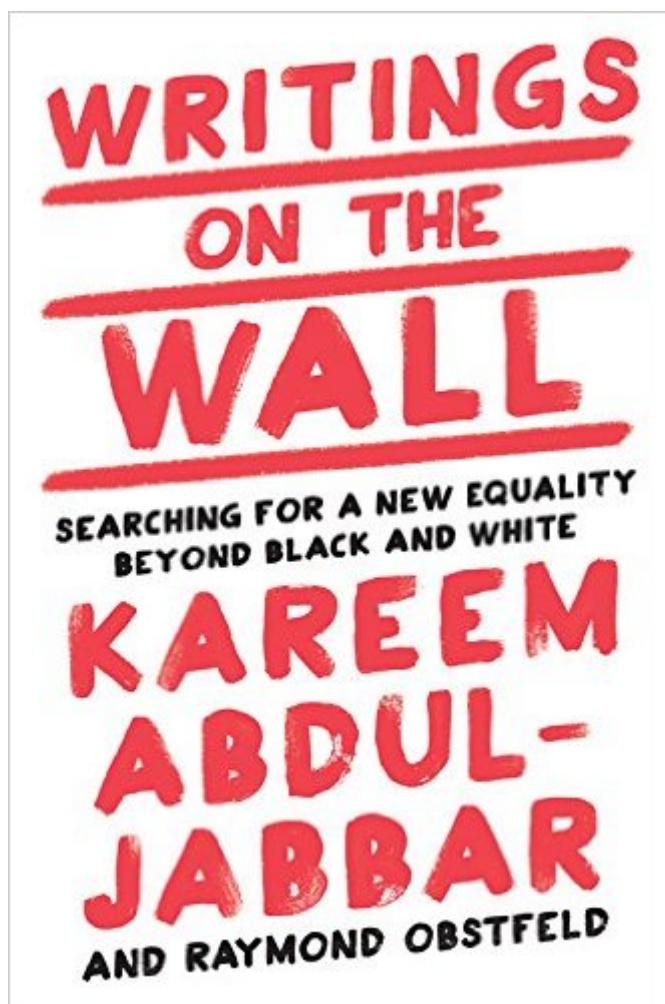


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Writings On The Wall: Searching For A New Equality Beyond Black And White



Synopsis

Bestselling author, basketball legend and cultural commentator Kareem Abdul-Jabbar explores the heart of issues that affect Americans today. Since retiring from professional basketball as the NBA's all-time leading scorer, six-time MVP, and Hall of Fame inductee, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar has become a lauded observer of culture and society, a New York Times bestselling author, and a regular contributor to The Washington Post, TIME magazine and TIME.com. He now brings that keen insight to the fore in *Writings on the Wall: Searching for a New Equality Beyond Black and White*, his most incisive and important work of non-fiction in years. He uses his unique blend of erudition, street smarts and authentic experience in essays on the country's seemingly irreconcilable partisan divide - both racial and political, parenthood, and his own experiences as an athlete, African-American, and a Muslim. The book is not just a collection of expositions; he also offers keen assessments of and solutions to problems such as racism in sports while speaking candidly about his experiences on the court and off. Timed for publication as the nation debates whom to send to the White House, the combination of plain talk on issues, life lessons, and personal stories places *Writings on the Wall* squarely in the middle of the conversation, as many of Abdul-Jabbar's topics are at the top of the national agenda. Whether it is sparring with Donald Trump, within the pages of TIME magazine, or full-length features in the The New York Times Magazine, writers, critics, and readers have come to agree on what The Washington Post observed: Abdul-Jabbar "has become a vital, dynamic and unorthodox cultural voice."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you're looking for a book about sports, you won't find it here. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar presents a group of well written essays, analytical and timely. He criticizes those who attack political correctness, noting that more young people today are aware of discrimination. He offers three steps to "boost our political engines:" educate children in critical thinking; stop diluting democracy by pressuring uninformed people to vote even if they're not interested; and broadcast a "non partisan fact check and logical analysis" after every political speech. Idealistic, but accurate. His frank discussion of the effects of racism could be applied to other forms of discrimination, including ageism. "When whites turn to look at us," he says, "the first word that pops into their heads is 'black.'" And after a certain age, people are defined by the number associated with their birth date. Yet when he gives a list of prejudices, age isn't mentioned, presumably included with "and more." I wasn't expecting the strong chapter on women, hitting the high points of sex discrimination. He points out that women are still judged by looks, referring to the song in Chorus Line about the woman who got more roles after plastic surgery; he notes that women in the media aren't real. Yet the increasing demands for "looking good" have created an industry of waxing and polishing. Women appear in websites and social media with professional make-up, perfect hair, and smart little dresses that show off their bare arms. Women in public appear in stilettos. Surprisingly, Abdul-Jabbar doesn't mention the WNBA in the section on women and sports; he acknowledges that society isn't kind to strong women, yet omits mention of stars like Brittney Griner and Diana Taurasi. However, he's really solid when he writes about the unrealistic admiration we have for stars as role models; we don't really have a land of opportunity. If he'd been a foot shorter, he says, he'd be a high school history teacher trying to save for retirement. The deck is stacked against the poor, especially those who are black and poor. The last part of the book offers a road map for change. I agree with all - especially the part about reforming the bail system - except the suggestion to strengthen unions. Unions may have been effective once. Now, when you talk to people who are actually in unions, you often hear stories of favoritism and even corruption. I have heard some people say, "I'm glad we have the union," but I've heard others say the union actually harmed them by enforcing rules with unintended consequences. Finally, Abdul-Jabbar takes on issues of aging. Here he's on shakier ground. While he notes that we shouldn't point to star athletes as proof that anyone can make it, he cites examples of exceptional seniors in politics, art and athletics. The truth is, people age in such diverse ways you can't generalize. Not everyone can run for president at 75, but you can't assume nobody can. Getting rid of stereotypes is an uphill battle. Almost every day we see some insult directed at seniors on Facebook, and we see well-intended humor that's totally insulting; a typical example is an older woman dancing, with comments about how "cute" she is. Once I commented about an ad

where children wore Halloween costumes as "old people" complete with gray hair and canes; people said, "Lighten up." I hope Abdul-Jabbar keeps writing about this topic, although he gets some of it wrong. Earlier Social Security is less critical than early Medicare, and retirement age isn't about health issues: it's about overt discrimination in the workplace. The real solution is to encourage seniors to venture into entrepreneurship. He refers to AARP as an advocate for seniors, but it's actually a for-profit insurance company that actually does little to help an aging population. AARP perpetuates stereotypes, serves primarily the healthy-and-wealthy segment, and ignores age discrimination in the workplace. AARP endorsed a Dummies book about getting jobs over 50, which I reviewed here; it's easily the worst book on careers I've ever seen. Overall, the book is extremely thoughtful and well-written. It's encouraging to see a basketball star use his fame to speak out freely and say things that need to be said. Unfortunately, I suspect the book will find an audience among those who are predisposed to agree with him, so he'll be preaching to the choir rather than converting the biased.

Kareem is an extremely skilled writer. He has excellent concrete ideas at the end of each chapter to combat racism, sexism, and classism. He has collected an impressive amount of social science data to support his points. Only two things detract from this book. 1. the ties to the current election. The issues existed before Trump and Clinton and will be there after. I would be remiss to see this book become dated by this approach. 2. the lack of consideration of evolutionary psychology. Kareem is at a loss to describe the origins of tribalism. With a quick perusal of evolutionary theory, everything makes sense. And with this approach some of the simpler suggestions become suspect. Despite these two comments, read this book. The rhetoric in the first two chapters is worth the price of the book.

Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Hall of Fame professional basketball player, has written an insightful book examining some of the many challenges confronting America today: race relations, gender inequality, class disparity, sexism, aging, and the toxic politics of the 2016 race for the White House. The author has penned 12 books, and this may be his most important. He urges us to use reason, insight, and critical thinking when dealing with the challenges of today. The book is loaded with factual studies, references to social media, and a lifetime of experiences from this UCLA History Major Scholar-Athlete.

I wish I could give this book 5 stars. But that's because I agree with most of the author's opinions.

That's not a good reason to 5-star a book because even though I agree someone else might as justifiably disagree and the book probably would be one or 2-stars for them. In fact, there already are some reviews that rate the book 2 stars probably because of Kareem Abdul-Jabbar's positions on issues. The problem with the book is that it is a free-ranging monologue about subjects we all have opinions on. It doesn't appear that the author has special expertise that qualifies him to prevail, but given that this is a monologue, not a dialogue, there's no chance for the reader to have a say. On those subjects where the author's experience or expertise is special, the writing is more interesting. My favorite chapter is #3 Religion: Worship at Your Own Risk. In this chapter, he addresses terrorism, Muslims' views of extremists, why he converted to Islam, and more. His deep principles and sensitivity to issues are apparent in this chapter. He also shares some facts I had never heard before. It was a lively, even captivating, discussion. But most of the other chapters were a bit like sitting down with my wonderful Uncle Charles for an evening of his opinions on social issues ... with a lot of the same references to popular music, film, comedy, and literature. The concerns are real and relevant, but it may be that a book format is just not the way these ideas and opinions are best served.

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