



James Baldwin : Collected Essays : Notes of a Native Son / Nobody Knows My Name / The Fire Next Time / No Name in the Street / The Devil Finds Work / Other Essays (Library of America)

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Novelist, essayist, and public intellectual, James Baldwin was one of the most brilliant and provocative literary figures of the postwar era, and one of the greatest African-American writers of this century. A self-described "transatlantic commuter" who spent much of his life in France, Baldwin joined cosmopolitan sophistication with a fierce engagement in social issues. Edited by Nobel laureate Toni Morrison, the Library of America's *Collected Essays*—the most comprehensive gathering of Baldwin's nonfiction ever published—confirms him as a uniquely prophetic voice in American letters.

With burning passion and jabbing, epigrammatic wit, Baldwin fearlessly articulated issues of race and democracy and American identity in such famous essays as "The Harlem Ghetto," "Everybody's Protest Novel," "Many Thousands Gone," and "Stranger in the Village." Here are the complete texts of his early landmark collections, *Notes of a Native Son* (1955) and *Nobody Knows My Name* (1961), which established him as an essential intellectual voice of his time, fusing in unique fashion the personal, the literary, and the political. "One writes," he stated, "out of one thing only—one's own experience. Everything depends on how relentlessly one forces from this experience the last drop, sweet or bitter, it can possibly give." With singular eloquence and unblinking sharpness of observation he lived up to his credo: "I want to be an honest man and a good writer."

The classic *The Fire Next Time* (1963), perhaps the most influential of his writings, is his most penetrating analysis of America's racial divide and an impassioned call to "end the racial nightmare...and change the history of the world." The later volumes *No Name in the Street* (1972) and *The Devil Finds Work* (1976) chart his continuing response to the social and political turbulence of his era and include his remarkable works of film criticism. A further 36 essays—nine of them previously uncollected—include some of Baldwin's earliest published writings, as well as revealing later insights into the language of Shakespeare, the poetry of Langston Hughes, and the music of Earl Hines.

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