



A Detroit Anthology

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Detroit is a city of stories. In this, we are rich. We begin with abundance.

But while much is written about our city these hard days, it is typically meant to explain Detroit to those who live elsewhere. Much of this writing is brilliant, but our anthology, this anthology, is different: it is a collection of Detroit stories for Detroiters. Through essays, photographs, poetry, and art, this anthology collects the stories we tell each other over late nights at the pub and long afternoons on the porch. We share them in coffee shops, at church social hours, in living rooms, and while waiting for the bus. These are stories addressed to the rhetorical “you”—with the ratcheted up language that comes with it—and these are stories that took real legwork to investigate. We may be lifelong residents, newcomers, or former Detroiters; we may be activists, workers, teachers, artists, healers, or students. But a common undercurrent alights our work that is collected here: we are a city moving through the fire of transformation. We are afire.

Featuring essays, photographs, poetry, and art by Terry Blackhawk, Grace Lee Boggs, John Carlisle, Desiree Cooper, dream hampton, francine j. harris, Steve Hughes, Jamaal May, Tracie McMillan, Ken Mikolowski, Marsha Music, Shaka Senghor, Thomas J. Sugrue, and many others.

A Detroit Anthology Details

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From Reader Review A Detroit Anthology for online ebook

Connie Harrison says

Fantastically brutal in presenting the love-hate relationship of being a Detroiter, new or old, given the ironic historical circumstances that have befallen the great city. The very things that gave rise to its glory are the very things that catalyze its fall from grace. Loved Marsha Music's writing. Great collection indicative of a collective of artist-movement that is community based. Must read more from Rust Belt Chic Press.

Christie Bane says

I love Detroit, but I don't pretend to understand it or own any part of it. This book is full of writings by people who both understand it and are part of it. Little by little I am getting to know Detroit.

Christine says

The opening pieces were too dry for me, maybe because I read and hear the news of Detroit regularly. The poetry and short prose pieces didn't do much for me either. The book took off with I'm from Detroit which explored what it means to say one is from Detroit. The pieces about growing up and leaving or staying in the neighborhoods touched me the most, especially the ones that didn't call for the past or renewal.

Dave says

Worth the read (even if you're not a Detroiter -- and I'm not, but know a bit about the city from friends and relations) if only because all the pieces are extremely short, too: read one or two or three in a sitting, and put the book down until you're ready to read another. A couple of the pieces are eye-openers about different aspects of big American cities, their successes, their failures, and some possible reasons about why... Example: Reading about the Redwings' (ice hockey) stadium is an essay NOT about the team itself, but something bigger than that: a good discussion about the arena and the somewhat unsuccessful space it occupies in the large 'urban-renewal' area it has a part of: a nice 'food for thought' piece about the building of sport mega-complexes in which the lessons learned could be very applicable to other big cities around the US. ...

Lee says

This anthology of stories - a collection of stories, reflections and poetry about the experience of life in Detroit - was beautiful. As a recent arrival in the metro Detroit area, I was intrigued by the perspectives about Detroit's recent history economically, culturally, racially and individually.

I am very glad these stories have been made available, and even more glad that I read them.

Pete says

biased, since I work for the company that published this book, as with Cinci book. But if you care about 1) Detroit 1a) places like Detroit 2) the human soul you will find this book rewarding. Stories about places that are coping with loss in the way that Detroit is and has been and will be tend to only capture one or several--not all--facets of the struggle. I wouldn't burden this book with saying that it covers everything, but these essays/poems/stories/photos capture more of what makes Detroit great than any other single volume. Many many green-gold cans of Vernor's raised to Anna Clark's great editing eye and the wonderful contributions from a diverse chorus. Books like this are why I edit/write/wake up.

Anna says

Yeah, I'm giving this five stars. Yeah.

Megan says

A collection of short essays and reflections on Detroit. My favorite essay was the opening piece by Aaron Foley, who also wrote How To Live In Detroit Without Being A Jackass, which I read recently.

Alyssa says

Beautifully and thoughtfully curated, this book painted a lush picture of life in Detroit. I know Anna is a champion of representing the city's complexity and nuance, and the selection and diversity of essays really showed us that.

Cindy says

This collection of essays both personal and informational, poetry, and photos is probably interesting only to those with a Detroit connection. Since I have lived about 40 miles north of Detroit for 40 years, much of the material was familiar to me. Disturbing and depressing mostly, though there were some hopeful and upbeat selections as well.

Allan says

I've read a number of books on modern day Detroit, a city whose story fascinates me, which is why I decided to buy this one last year. It's described in the intro as 'a book by Detroiters for Detroiters', and I'd say that this may be the reason why I didn't enjoy the book as much as I thought I would. There are some interesting

pieces within, but often I feel my lack of local knowledge hampered my comprehension. I also have to admit that the poetry was completely lost on me.

I still feel that Charlie leDuff's *Detroit: An American Autopsy* is the strongest book I have read about the city-while this one has its merits, it is definitely a more specialised read.

Eddy says

An honest, heartbreakin, and sometimes vulgar look at Detroit, through the eyes of its residents.

Bill DeGenaro says

Read much of this volume with my honors students as they worked on ethnographies of fieldsites in and around Detroit and the stories deepened their perspectives. Really appreciated the pieces that drew on thick description and other ethnographic methods in service of more essayist ends.

Marilyn says

I read this book in fits and starts. I devoured the first 75 some pages in a matter of hours and then didn't pick it back up again for days. Then I would read another hundred pages in one go and not pick it up again for weeks. Because I read it the way I did, my reaction to this book is kind of all over the place.

At first I was going to give the book a 4 or 5 stars because I found myself in this book, particularly in Shannon Shelton Miller's "I'm From Detroit". Countless conversations I've had that go something like: "Oh you're from Detroit? What part? Like, Ferndale or Royal Oak?" "No, I'm from Detroit. Downtown." "Oh...." Long awkward pause. Recently even, decades after I moved out of the city, I mentioned to someone that I grew up in Detroit. Her reaction was "Did you like it?"

But then I got disappointed with, what felt to me, the prevalence of white voices from people who did not grow up in Detroit. Although, later on in the book, Licherman's "My Detroit" reminded me that not having grown up in Detroit does not necessarily mean a person has no connection to the city. I guess I should have learned this from my son who has acquired some Detroit affectations from my husband despite not having grown up there. Although, he'll never be a true Detroiter because of that. And the last story in the book, "The Kidnapped Children of Detroit," reminds readers that those who claim heritage to the city do so without also claiming the racism that chased their ancestors out. Yes, I am a beneficiary of white privilege and I no longer live in the city, but I'm proud of the fact that my mom and dad moved into the city in 1966 and lasted over 30 years until, not the black people or crime, but the casinos chased them away.

Up and down, up and down my reactions went. Disappointment until I found my grade school best friend's father mentioned directly in the book and that made me feel connected to it again. Then, disappointment returned and I stopped reading for awhile. I was on track to give this book a middle of the road 3 stars until I found my father in the book. He is not directly mentioned, but during those 30 years he lived in the city, he was one of its city planners. In "Lost in Hockeytown," Lewis and Mondry talk about the Detroit's city planning and while I do not believe my father worked on the plans for Joe Louis Arena, he was working for

the city in the 60s, 70s, and 80s during one of Detroit's redevelopment initiatives. I guess I am proud of the fact that, despite not being a born and raised Detroiter, he loved the city and helped to shape its architecture and geography. My father left his mark on the city, even if his name is forgotten and some of his projects have fallen to ruin.

That was when I decided I couldn't give this book less than a 4 stars. This book includes ALL the voices of Detroit. Voices of the truly Detroit-bred - black, white, and otherwise. Voices from people like my father, from people whose connection to the city predate their existence, from people who think "they have come to save Detroit, but...[really have] come to Detroit to BE saved" ("The Kidnapped Children of Detroit" by Marsha Music), from people who have accidentally contracted the "Detroit virus" (Shaun S. Nethercott) and found themselves extending a few weeks' trip to the city into settling into a new home. So now, I am torn - what rating do I give a book that so eloquently reflects an essential part of my identity, but disappointed me at the same time?

Before I decide, I want to highlight some of the stories I haven't mentioned already that I really enjoyed. The poetry did not touch me like I would have hoped. I suspect that had I experienced it read aloud by the poets I would have had a much different reaction. That said, two of the poets did stand out to me: Jamaal May and Chantay "Legacy" Leonard. I rather loved May's poem "There Are Birds Here." It must be read and not explained, but suffice it to say that I loved how he connected Detroit's history to birds. It might be kind of silly, but I actually love seagulls. They represent for me the city of my youth and the northern country of my heart. My white privilege and my Polish grandmother means that I summered in Leelanau Peninsula every year growing up. Right along Lake Michigan where the seagulls represent that idea of "Pure Michigan" - unadulterated nature (although that is a lie), shining water, brilliant beaches, and Jonathan Livingston. And when I came home to the city, the seagulls would be there to meet me. I lived downtown not far from the river and everyday when I went to work as a teenager, there they'd be in the parking lot. So, it might be silly, but I rather like seagulls.

I also really liked Leonard's "Motown Atlantis":

Engraved in my soul.
No price renders me amenable
to part with the real estate of my heart.
Squatters' rights are revoked.
Ownership is written in veins
& the love of Detroit.

Some the stories I enjoyed the most were "Desolation Angel" (John Carlisle), "The Imam I Knew" (Omar Syed Mahmood), "Fauxtopias of Detroit Suburbs" (James D. Griffioen), "Awakening" (Maisha Hyman Sumbry), "Down in Detroit" (Terry Blackhawk), and "Playing Ball" (J. M. Leija). Although most of those are from the last part of the book, which are the stories that are freshest in my memory.

I also really enjoyed the following lines:

"So yeah, Detroit will be just fine. Even if you don't think so." ("We Love Detroit, Even If You Don't" - Aaron Foley)

"Here in the Motor City, we take an almost perverse pride in doing things the hard way, or whatever way that means we can be left alone to do our thing however we want." ("Music as the Missing Link" - Keith A. Owens)

“There are youth with pants four sizes too big walking along side hipsters with pants two sizes too small.”
 (“The Detroit Virus” - Shaun S. Nethercott)

So, what rating should I give this book? I've oscillated between a 3 and a 5, so reason should say I should give this a 4. It is not a perfect book and probably more properly deserves a 4 stars. However, upon writing this review, I realize that I interacted with this book in so many different ways and it represents so many different perspectives of the city of my youth and my heart that continue to inform my now, that, for me, I have to give it the higher rating of 5. So, 5 it is.

Sarah says

I love decay. Reading the stories about the decay of Detroit fed that love of decay. This collection of short essays takes a very real look at the decline of Detroit.
