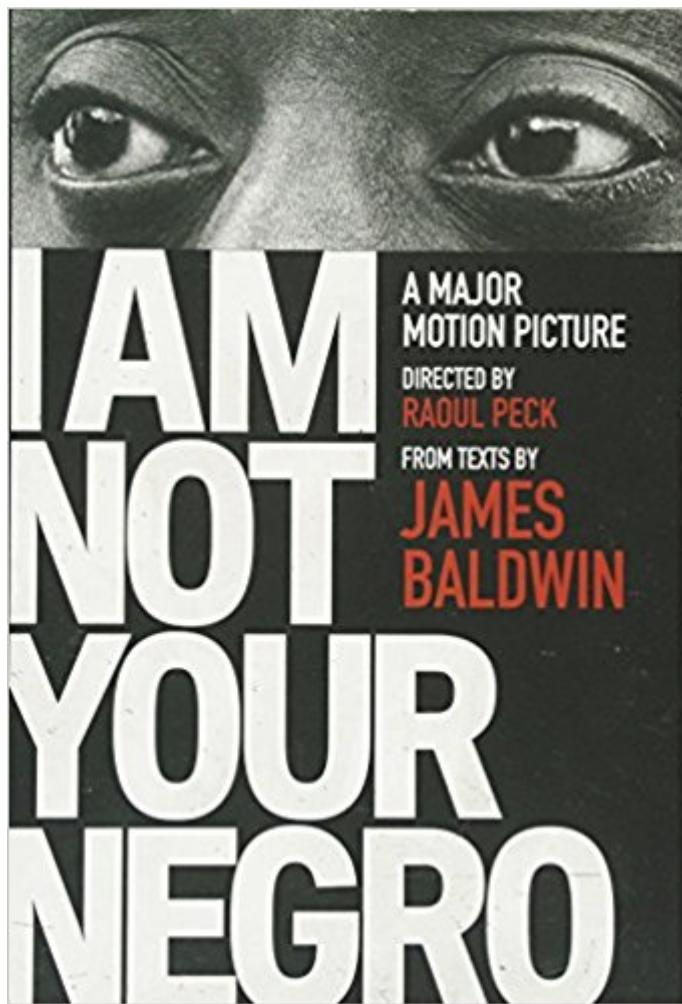


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# I Am Not Your Negro



## Synopsis

National BestsellerNominated for the Academy Award for Best DocumentaryTo compose his stunning documentary film *I Am Not Your Negro*, acclaimed filmmaker Raoul Peck mined James Baldwin’s published and unpublished oeuvre, selecting passages from his books, essays, letters, notes, and interviews that are every bit as incisive and pertinent now as they have ever been. Weaving these texts together, Peck brilliantly imagines the book that Baldwin never wrote. In his final years, Baldwin had envisioned a book about his three assassinated friends, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King. His deeply personal notes for the project have never been published before. Peck’s film uses them to jump through time, juxtaposing Baldwin’s private words with his public statements, in a blazing examination of the tragic history of race in America. This edition contains more than 40 black-and-white images from the film.

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## Customer Reviews

“*I Am Not Your Negro* is a kaleidoscopic journey through the life and mind of James Baldwin, whose voice speaks even more powerfully today than it did 50 years ago. . . . He was the prose-poet of our injustice and inhumanity. . . . The times have caught up with his scalding eloquence.” • *Variety* “A searing and topical indictment of racial prejudice and hatred in America that makes for uneasy viewing and is not easily forgotten. . . .

Vividly intelligent. • Hollywood Reporter • "A striking work of storytelling. . . . One of the best movies about the civil rights era ever made. . . . This might be the only movie about race relations that adequately explains with sympathy the root causes. • The Guardian • "Thrilling. . . . A portrait of one man's confrontation with a country that, murder by murder, as he once put it, devastated my universe." • The New York Times

JAMES BALDWIN (1924–1987) was a novelist, essayist, playwright, poet, social critic, and the author of more than twenty books. His first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, appeared in 1953 to excellent reviews, and his essay collections *Notes of a Native Son* and *The Fire Next Time* were bestsellers that made him an influential figure in the civil rights movement. Baldwin spent many years in France, where he moved to escape the racism and homophobia of the United States. He died in 1987. RAOUL PECK is a filmmaker acclaimed for his historical, political, and artistic work. Haitian-born, he grew up in Congo, France, Germany, and the United States. His body of work includes the films *The Man by the Shore* (Competition, Cannes 1993); *Lumumba* (Cannes 2000, HBO); and *Sometimes in April* (2005, HBO). He is currently chairman of the French national film school, La FAF MIS, and recently completed his next feature film, *The Young Karl Marx* (2017).

Impressionistic. Powerful. This book (and the film on which it is based) seem less intended to educate white people than to emote the perspective of one of the most perceptive and articulate 20th century voices of color. This book is not a primer for people unfamiliar with Baldwin. It's a tribute to a project that Baldwin himself didn't live to see completed. I think it works best as a companion piece to the film rather than a stand-alone book. (For instance, it includes excerpts from transcripts of movies that influenced Baldwin or that Baldwin reviewed, and these work better in their original medium.) I recommend seeing the film first, and then using the book for meditating and revisiting afterward. I'd still like to see the full manuscript of Baldwin's "Remember This House," in addition to the spliced up version used in this book. I would've liked if the book made it more clear where these particular excerpts are. It will be most successful if it points more and more readers to Baldwin's works.

What an amazing book. It is kind of the script to the movie, which I loved. Baldwin was an

astonishingly intelligent and thoughtful voice in a very troubled period. We need more voices like his now.

Raoul Peck's documentary film, "I Am Not Your Negro," is a brilliant, absorbing and stirring vision of James Baldwin as public civil rights advocate, crucial spokesperson for African Americans in a revolutionary time, a profound and eloquent voice that speaks as clearly to this historical moment as it did to the one that it originally addressed. This is a truly outstanding film, timeless in its relevance and also in its art, that I intend to share with my students for as many years to come as I am blessed to enjoy. In this particular historical moment, "I Am Not Your Negro" is absolutely necessary, irreplaceable, inimitable. With my friend, Craig Werner, the brilliant literary scholar, music critic, and cultural historian, I watched this film twice in two days and ruminated over it for much longer than it took to watch it. The importance of this book by the same title is that it allows us to examine the film and explore Baldwin's political voice more closely, checking to make sure we caught what was said, dwelling upon crucial moments and passages whose depth and complexity reward a more deliberate look. The film, however, is what really matters. My conversations with Werner, chair of the Afro-American Studies Department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where I taught for a decade, were illuminated by Ed Pavlic's 2015 book, *Who Can Afford to Improvise? James Baldwin and Black Music, the Lyric and the Listeners* and other essays by this gifted poet and literary scholar. It is hard to separate Pavlic's thought from the sparks that flew in our conversations, but it is impossible to understand them without him, either. In order to fully appreciate the film's accomplishments, serious viewers need to remember that this public and overtly political James Baldwin that Peck holds up in the film is not the only Baldwin that lived. Pavlic makes this point by differentiating between "the public James Baldwin," whom we meet here in all his power, and "the personal Jimmy Baldwin," friend, lover, raconteur among the people of the night, and "Jamie," the son and the brother, who used this name when he signed the dozens and dozens of letters that he wrote to his beloved brother David. Peck paints the public and political Baldwin, the Baldwin of his incredible speeches, so well selected and framed in "I Am Not Your Negro," who is essentially the same voice in much of his nonfiction essays, but there are other Baldwins to explore, the James Baldwin of his novels, the Jimmy Baldwin of his personal life, and the Jamie of his familial devotion. According to Pavlic, there is also a fourth Baldwin, and I think Peck captures this one quite well, too, which is "an unnamed writer who translated himself into a kind of universal human kin." "I Am Not Your Negro," both the film and this helpful book, preserves and brings to a needy and broken world the eloquence of one of its profound geniuses, whose genius, in T.S. Eliot's definition of genius, comes

from our history's most powerful expressive culture and theological vision, a poetic genius that is ever sharper the closer it stands to the heart of that tradition, a moral visionary that "left the church to preach the gospel," as Baldwin said, a universal voice grounded in love, even when it is acerbic, slashing and surgically critical, when it is redemptive gospel, when it is unflinching blues, and when it is ingenious jazz. We all owe Raoul Peck an enormous debt of gratitude, and I feel that very deeply.

I highly recommend this film as a means to understand the underlying concepts of the film in greater depth. There is simply something special about being able to read and reread the text so poignantly laid out in the field . Baldwin was a master ! This is a fitting tribute to his legacy . I have recommended this book and film to all of my friends, family, and students. I highly recommend it to anyone attempting to navigate the choppy and murky waters of race relations and the significance of having subservient citizens in contemporary 2017 America. This book and its film are exceptionally apropos considering the fascist, racist stranglehold placed upon our sleeping nation by POTUS, Donald Drumpf. Definitely a book and a film to introduce your children to the American Experience through one of its literary masters, James Baldwin :-)

A must read to add to your knowledge power

This book was excellent in knowing the thoughts of a writer that I have admired for years. His words ring true even in today's America. This book proves that history repeats itself.

Good read! The movie is the book's narration, however, read the book, see the movie, then read the book again!

This work is a true companion to the documentary. It should be read immediately after reviewing the filmExcellent read.

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