



On the Other Side of Freedom: The Case for Hope

DeRay Mckesson

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"On the Other Side of Freedom reveals the mind and motivations of a young man who has risen to the fore of millennial activism through study, discipline, and conviction. His belief in a world that can be made better, one act at a time, powers his narratives and opens up a view on the costs, consequences, and rewards of leading a movement."--Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

From the internationally recognized civil rights activist/organizer and host of the podcast Pod Save the People, a meditation on resistance, justice, and freedom, and an intimate portrait of a movement from the front lines.

In August of 2014, twenty-nine-year-old activist DeRay Mckesson stood with hundreds of others on the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, to push a message of justice and accountability. These protests, and others like them in cities across the country, resulted in the birth of the Black Lives Matter movement. Now, in his first book, Mckesson lays out the intellectual, pragmatic political framework for a new liberation movement. Continuing a conversation about activism, resistance, and justice that embraces our nation's complex history, he dissects how deliberate oppression persists, how racial injustice strips our lives of promise, and how technology has added a new dimension to mass action and social change. He argues that our best efforts to combat injustice have been stunted by the belief that racism's wounds are history, and suggests that intellectual purity has curtailed optimistic realism. The book offers a new framework and language for understanding the nature of oppression. With it, we can begin charting a course to dismantle the obvious and subtle structures that limit freedom.

Honest, courageous, and imaginative, *On the Other Side of Freedom* is a work brimming with hope. Drawing from his own experiences as an activist, organizer, educator, and public official, Mckesson exhorts all Americans to work to dismantle the legacy of racism and to imagine the best of what is possible. Honoring the voices of a new generation of activists, *On the Other Side of Freedom* is a visionary's call to take responsibility for imagining, and then building, the world we want to live in.

On the Other Side of Freedom: The Case for Hope Details

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From Reader Review On the Other Side of Freedom: The Case for Hope for online ebook

Caroline says

Once in awhile I want to give a book six stars, this is one of them. DeRay Mckesson writes beautifully and intelligently about his life, about St Louis, about the structure of America's police forces, and about politics. I am sad that this young man did not get elected mayor of our city! I remember reading or hearing somewhere in the run-up to the primary that he was the candidate with the most clearly articulated and thought out platform, and that was enough for me. I have already pulled my favorite quotes put on Facebook, so I will just say that his remarks on the American obsession with earning/deserving and on the disdain in some liberal quarters for 'reform' bear thinking about. More, please.

Susan says

This book is part memoir and part discussion of racial issues that affect the US. DeRay McKesson relates life experiences while also making you think how society is set up. This book is a must read.

I was provided a copy of this book by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Antoinette Perez says

READ THIS. I'll definitely read it a second time, and probably a third.

chantel nouseforaname says

You have to appreciate what DeRay has contributed to the culture.

An idea that he discusses is that sometimes, *a lot of the time*, people just need someone to point their "founder" label at to make sense of shit that happens in the world. They need to label someone "*founder of a movement*" to either point their hate at or point their love at and he's been, a lot of the time, the focal point of that sort of attention; whether or not he wanted it.

Then there's this kind of underlying conversation or inner-battle that comes through the text here where it seems like he's not intentionally trying to battle with if he deserves that label although he rejects it.. you get a sense sort of that he's vying for it, *but not really*. I don't know. It's an underlying tone that I as the reader felt when he described his involvement in the movement. He states that he didn't aim for the "founder of a movement" tag, nor did he want or accept it, that it just sort of manifested the way that it did. I thought that it was honest to see him draw attention to that point because it further highlights that realistically; community ownership and representation matters, even in a crisis, as it should. For people who live in Ferguson and have been organizing against the injustice from time, representation is important. It's important for DeRay to acknowledge that many people directly from that community that he leant his face to have been fighting for justice for ages.

I don't want to say that he admits he's a vulture; but I do want to say that he admits it's important to be there for others and create family and build community when you see something happening that's unjust. It's important to Colin Kaepernick and stand for something.

WHICH IS WHY I ALSO only gave this book three stars. I'm tired of seeing faces telling *their* stories even though it's *their* book. I know that's a wild concept; but hear me out. I think it's important to continue with the legacy of what you're doing and what you've started to do in the public sphere. I want to see people with platforms amplify the voices that they are trying to amplify by busting open space. Critique and dissect the injustices yes! catalogue them and make them open for public view! You've done a lot for justice (for example he talks about working with academics to index police killings based on already-published news stories to get a clearer picture of the numbers of civilians killed by police), you're doing all this important work so why not fight forward still, sharing educational pieces that incorporate your story instead of your story that incorporates educational pieces deep-rooted in a "*look what i did*" sort of mentality. It's important to tell your story and yes, the book is good; but it brings about the taste of why people have issues in the first place with DeRay's approach to things. I think if you're really going to tell your story you have to deep dive into your story, that's what people really want to know. Like I feel like the chapter about his mom could have been a whole book. I feel like the chapter about black men, love and homosexuality from the lens of someone in the public eye in a freedom-fighter position is a HUGE story. Maybe he didn't want to jump all the way in, but doing a little touch of it just felt like you don't really want to tell your story, but you have to - for a purpose of.. what exactly? Creating some *sort* of narrative about your ... Exactly.

I completely understand what he's saying as well when he talks about the need to think of change and reform in multi-leveled ways. It's important to connect with people who don't share the same viewpoints as you (his attempt at connecting We the Protesters w/ Bernie Sanders and backing Hilary Clinton). It's important to trying to push the envelope by a method of engagement rather than separatism. I completely agree. I just wish that he'd have put diverse perspectives at the forefront. BUT I GET IT, this is his story. It could just be the first of many and he decided to start his authorial output with himself; which is a good place to start but, a man's story is never not heard; so, I mean. **shrug***

One of the crucial takeaways that I derived from this book is that it's important to tell the truth. I'm repeating myself a little but I think it's his strongest message. It's important to stand for something. More important than all of it - sometimes it's just important to put your money where your mouth is to sort of just be there. Just be present to document and transmit. We need everyone to see us, the US pushing forward for change. We need them to see that we ain't going anywhere. That we are here. Not a faceless mass, actual people in a fucking huge mass that grows exponentially by the day.

DeRay takes a lot of flack. ANYONE on twitter knows this. This book is really great in the sense that it shines a light into the man and his background that not a lot of people get to hear about. I would love to read a book by Johnetta Elzie and her thoughts and viewpoints on any variety of topics. I look forward to that.

Margaret says

A memoir and call for action, in *On the Other Side of Freedom* Mckesson tells his story of the Ferguson protests, his research into police brutality, his life as a gay black man, and his decision to join politics. I love the content of this book. I would think it would be hard for anyone to refute his evidence about the need for new police guidelines and a rethinking of how we handle crime and deviance in the US, but what I've learned about most of the people who disagree with me on this issue is is that they rarely care about research.

He also discusses the philosophy of hope vs. faith, and the stories that get told and the ones that are hidden.

At times the switches between past and present, research and the personal, was jarring for me.

This is a must-read for 2018, and very short. The audiobook was under 5 hours. The author reads it himself, and it's a good listen.

Ellen says

DeRay's Pod Save the People is appointment-listening for me. I always always get amazing information and news and inspiration from the news team on this weekly podcast. This book really is a longer version of the inspiration pieces that DeRay always starts the pod with. This is in no way a history of the Black Lives Matter movement or even the Ferguson protests. It begins there, but does not dwell on the specific events. Instead, it's more a rumination on the power and purpose of protests and how to create communities of power and justice and equality. It's a solid collection of essays, with some really thought-provoking bits that I'll copy down and keep thinking about for years to come.

Bonni says

A breathtaking book. DeRay is able to "zoom in" to stories from his own life and masterfully "zoom out" to present compelling data regarding mass incarceration, gun violence, racial inequality, and more.

The last chapter (Letter to an Activist) is worth the price of admission alone. He stresses the importance of African Americans needing to insist that others be able to hold their anger and not expect them to "perform" as if they are happy. He also gives each of us plenty of reasons for hope.

Gina says

This is a really beautiful and personal book.

I especially appreciated the inclusion and naming of people who could easily be forgotten, generally for some reason that makes them easy to marginalize: gay, a woman, a pregnant teenager. Those constraints put on acceptance constrain the fight for freedom.

One of those was Marcus Anthony Hunter, who first used #blacklivesmatter in the context of "black migration and movement is the defining characteristic of growth in cities and always has been". The hash tag has been so strongly associated with death, and there are reasons for that, but it was an interesting perspective and it helps open the mind to new possibilities, which is truly important for freedom.

Mckesson does an eloquent job of finding his personal and using it to understand the political.

Jess says

? Read it now ?

Nadine says

On the Other Side of Freedom: The Case for Hope is a meditation on resistance, justice, freedom, and a call to arms because standing idly by doesn't cut it anymore. Making your voice heard among the voices that wish to silence you is as important as ever because everything that's been fought for and won is now under attack. McKesson started a podcast awhile back with a monologue that resonated with me about protecting the win. It's no longer not enough just to win. You have to then continue fighting for more while protecting what's already been achieved. I think On the Other Side of Freedom is just that. Detailing the fight, what's been achieved, and what still needs to be accomplished.

“What it's taught me is that freedom is fragile, and that's a lesson that I never want to forget.”

I decided to pick up On the Other Side of Freedom because I listen to Pod Save the People on a weekly basis. Though I'm not American, so a lot of the more specific issues do not necessarily apply, the larger scope of the pod does. It's important to me to be informed, so that I can do all that I can to check my white privilege. Books like these are a constant reminder that the work is never done.

The only issue I had with On the Other Side of Freedom is that McKesson skims the surface of the topics covered in each part. There were so many times I wanted him to expand further and dig deeper on topics like technology, police brutality and inequality, his relationship with his mother, and his experience as a black gay man.

“We do not stand in the shadows of those who came before us, but in their glow. And the glow exists because they put forth a vision of the future and they fought for it. We did not invent resistance or discover injustice in August 2014. We exist in a legacy of struggle, a legacy rooted in hope.”

Overall, On the Other Side of Freedom is a great place to start if you're looking for a deeper look into the social justice movement by someone who has been on the frontlines.

Joshunda Sanders says

How can you not know about Deray and his everpresent blue vest? This beautiful memoir has some lovely additional details about it, of course, but what is most resonant is additional information about his connection to his family, how he came to be engaged in Ferguson and the larger Movement for Black Lives and his uniquely graceful, eloquent description of moving from being quiet about his sexuality to speaking up, along with the heart-tugging beauty of his relationship with his birth mother and the others who have mothered him. Deray is a masterful storyteller, with a keen grasp of history. There is a curious gap in the timeline he gives for Black Lives Matter and obvious names missing (as though knowledgeable readers will be able to fill them in) even as he makes meaningful points about who gets to claim the founding or origins of a movement and who gets erased and who tells those stories (or who doesn't). In this lovely and significant book this moment is not a reason to throw Deray away or disregard any of his truths. It's merely notable and a moment that is in stark contrast to the transcendent beauty and clarity and call of specific moments and people by name that are so moving throughout most of its pages.

Susie Dumond says

DeRay Mckesson is a powerful advocate who has become one of the most visible leaders of the #blacklivesmatter movement. This book is part essay collection and part memoir, and delves into his beginnings as a protester, experiences in activism, and advice for fighting against white supremacy and police violence. Mckesson does a great job of making the personal political and using his own memories as a mirror for society. I feel like it took a while for his unique voice and perspective to emerge from the text, but overall, it's a meaningful glimpse into an incredible movement.

Christina says

DeRay!!! I love him and was so excited to finally read this. It's short, but gives you a good look at what he stands for and how to fight against injustice as well as some personal stories so you understand his background. He's inspiring!

Emmanuel says

So much power in these pages, but can I also say that this is the single greatest opening line of an essay?: "It wasn't that I didn't believe in god, but that I believed in Storm from the X-Men more." <3!

Kent Winward says

Nothing bad here, but not a lot that stands out. Nothing quite like Ta nehisi Coates or Cornell West.
