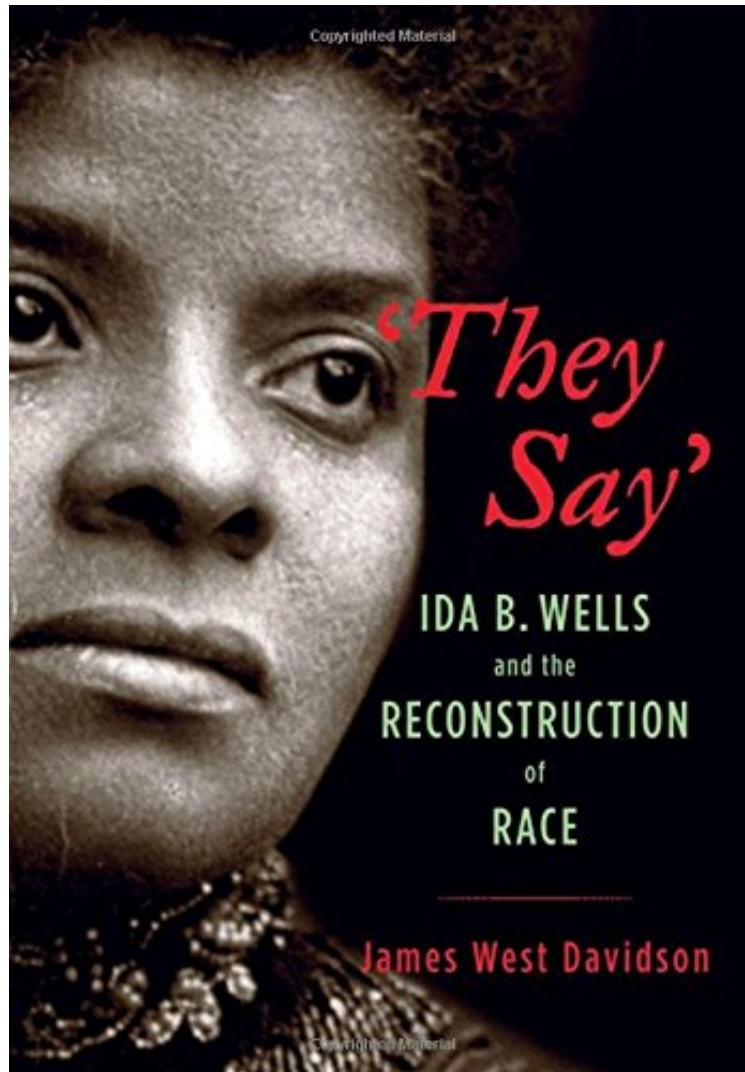


(Download) "They Say": Ida B. Wells and the Reconstruction of Race (New Narratives in American History)

"They Say": Ida B. Wells and the Reconstruction of Race (New Narratives in American History)

James West Davidson

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James West Davidson : "They Say": Ida B. Wells and the Reconstruction of Race (New Narratives in American History) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised "They Say": Ida B. Wells and the Reconstruction of Race (New Narratives in American History):

13 of 15 people found the following review helpful. A Scholarly Narrative AttemptBy Mithridates VI of PontusThis great book on Ida B. Wells is not and explicitly does not try to be a biography but rather a scholarly narrative history. This is a noble attempt for which the book deserves praise since the historical narrative has long been a neglected and maligned form of serious history in a field dominated by scholarly monographs. Instead of chronicling all Ida's life as

do traditional biographies (the narrative stops in the late 19th century) Davidson tries to examine the ways that former slaves "reconstructed their identities" after the Civil War. Ida B. Wells is more than simply a vehicle for this lofty goal for this is distinctly her NARRATIVE that describes her immense struggles and immense victories. Ida B. Wells (July 16, 1862 - March 25, 1931) was born in Holly Springs Mississippi a two months before the Emancipation Proclamation. Her father was a carpenter born from a black mother and white plantation owner father who treated his son very well (meaning he had a profitable trade after the war). He became an outspoken proponent of black involvement in southern politics sometimes risking his life to vote. Some of the most interesting parts of the book examine the ways that the Southern Democrats prevented ex-slaves from voting. Her mother was cook who advocated the Victorian ideals in her household after the war. At the tender age of fourteen Ida's parents died in a Yellow Fever outbreak and she took over as surrogate mother to her young siblings. Ida was educated at the local college and became a teacher before finding her real passion while living in Memphis - journalism. She wrote outspoken political pieces dealing with key issues of the day (it was very rare for a women to be writing for newspapers, yet alone political articles). She waged a campaign against the increasing segregation in the railroads and was even forced to leave the newspaper she was co-owner of because her articles were seen as too controversial. She was an advocate of civil rights (traveling to the UK and all around America), women's rights in the male dominated field of political journalism, and launched anti-lynching campaigns. James West Davidson's book uses her early life (not a heavily documented period) to examine the KEY reconstruction issue that of self-definition in post-slavery new world where the "socially constructed definition of race [became] spelled out with greater and greater specificity" (pg ix). Davidson does a brilliant job weaving in sections of the education of blacks of the day, the beginnings of the Ku Klux Klan, even the growing postcard fad as Ida B. Wells comes into contact with these phenomena. This is a relatively new form of writing, one which tends to defy easy definition, and my primary critic comes from the fact that the narrative form forces all the analysis of her life to a lengthy Afterwards. Most readers (myself and my history honors reading group included) will be confused as to the purpose of such a form, in comparison to a more traditional biography until reading the massive Afterward. All in all this is a very well written book that certainly adds to existing scholarship on this remarkable woman. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great story a really great Eye opener By Ebony Preston Great story a really great Eye opener. 0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Katrina Wesley Good

In 'They Say,' James West Davidson recounts the first thirty years in the passionate life of Ida B. Wells--as well as the story of the great struggle over the meaning of race in post-emancipation America. Davidson captures the breathtaking and often chaotic changes that swept the South as Wells grew up in Holly Springs, Mississippi: the spread of education among free blacks, the rise of political activism, and the bitter struggles for equality in the face of entrenched social custom. When Wells came of age she moved to bustling Memphis, where her quest for personal fulfillment was thwarted as whites increasingly used race as a barrier to separate blacks from mainstream America. Davidson traces the crosscurrents of these cultural conflicts through Wells's forceful personality, intertwining her struggle to define herself with her early courageous, and often audacious, behavior. When a conductor threw her off a train for refusing to sit in the segregated car, she sued the railroad--and won. When she protested conditions in segregated Memphis schools, she was fired--and took up journalism. And in 1892, when an explosive lynching rocked Memphis, Wells embarked fully on the career for which she is now remembered, as outspoken anti-lynching writer and lecturer. Period photographs from postcards, newspapers, and Wells's own diary further engage readers in this dynamic story. Richly researched and deftly written, the book offers a gripping portrait of the young Ida B. Wells, who directly encountered and influenced the evolving significance of race in America.

"Lynching is the greatest disgrace in our history, and Ida Wells-Barnett was its most courageous assailant. James West Davidson has written an eloquent account of the growth of Wells-Barnett's self-defined persona as a black woman, journalist, and fearless crusader. Refusing to accept an identity shaped by others--'they say'--she boldly told the world that 'I say' who I am and what I stand for."--James McPherson, author of *The Battle Cry of Freedom* and *The Mighty Scourge* "How did Ida Wells become the woman who challenged the silence of America on lynching? James Davidson shows us by re-creating the world of African Americans during the turbulent decades after the Civil War. A touching, compelling portrait of an important life in crucial times."--H.W. Brands, University of Texas at Austin, author of *Andrew Jackson and The Money Men* About the Author James West Davidson is a historian and writer. He is coauthor of *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*, *Nation of Nations: A History of the American Republic*, and *Great Heart: The History of a Labrador Adventure*.