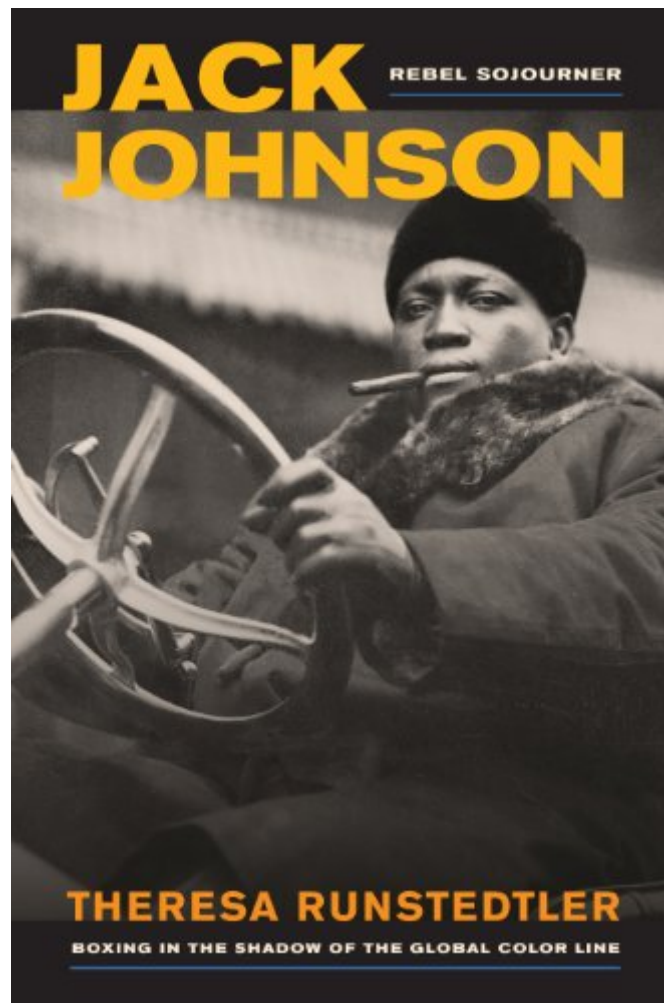




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Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner: Boxing In The Shadow Of The Global Color Line (American Crossroads)



Synopsis

In his day, Jack Johnson—born in Texas, the son of former slaves—was the most famous black man on the planet. As the first African American World Heavyweight Champion (1908–1915), he publicly challenged white supremacy at home and abroad, enjoying the same audacious lifestyle of conspicuous consumption, masculine bravado, and interracial love wherever he traveled. Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner provides the first in-depth exploration of Johnson's battles against the color line in places as far-flung as Sydney, London, Cape Town, Paris, Havana, and Mexico City. In relating this dramatic story, Theresa Runstedtler constructs a global history of race, gender, and empire in the early twentieth century.

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Customer Reviews

On May 14, 1913, Jack Johnson, the world's first black heavyweight champion, was convicted by an all-white jury under the Mann Act and sentenced to 366 days in prison and a hefty, \$1,000 fine. Born of the white slavery hysteria of the early 20th-Century, the Mann Act sought to prohibit the

transportation of women across state lines "for the purposes of prostitution or debauchery, and for any other immoral purpose." But while intended to defy the forces of prostitution, the vaguely-worded law criminalized many forms of consensual sexual activity, resulting in political blackmail and bullying. The first person to be ensnared by this controversial legislation was Johnson whose interracial, romantic encounters not only encroached too closely on America's rigid color line but also its unbendable sexual frontier. The brash and formidable pugilist, who punched his way to the top of the boxing world, shattering white-hopes and swelling the white man's burden along the way, could not dodge the jab of trumped-up charges against him. Despite the fact that the activities leading to his arrest occurred prior to the passage of what otherwise became known as the White-Slave Traffic Act, Johnson was nonetheless found guilty of violating the law. One month later, he was a transatlantic fugitive on the run. For the next seven years, he journeyed throughout England, France, Russia, Spain, Argentina, Barbados, Cuba, and Mexico in an elusive search for a place where he could escape the constraints of racial prejudice. With edifying and engaging prose, Theresa Runstedtler chronicles these years Johnson spent in exile, analyzing the racial skirmishes the bombastic prizefighter confronted as he discovered Jim Crow in its borderless, global variety. She weaves together a brilliant and well-researched narrative that rescues the fighter out of popular memory as an apolitical figure and reveals him to be a diasporic hero who became the focal point of an international strategy to maintain white supremacy. In doing so, she not only contributes a useful study for scholars of imperialism, masculinity, and popular culture to engage but also complicates the growing literature in transnationalism with an indispensable examination of race and sport.

I was interested in this book because I had previously read *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson* years ago. Runstedtler's work started very slow. The book is about Johnson's life but also the political environment of the parts of the world where Johnson lived and traveled. I thought it would be solely based on Johnson's life. Unlike *Unforgivable Blackness*, which took a "micro" approach, *Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner* takes a "macro" approach.

Dr. Runstedtler's work, *Jack Johnson, Rebel Sojourner*, does an outstanding job of highlighting racism within the context of professional boxing. The implication that this work is merely a "mislabeled essay" is simply a failure to understand the sheer impact in which Jack Johnson's life plays in athletics today; especially considering the overwhelming number of African-American and Afro-Latino athletes who, in many ways detailed by this work, continue to be exploited regardless of any adverse financial, physical, or psychological affects. I plan to contribute a full review of this book

soon however, in the meantime, I highly recommend that any who enjoys reading a brilliantly researched work should buy a copy. You will not be disappointed.

this is someone's doctoral dissertation and fails to reveal compelling facts or observations of Jack Johnson the man that were not known but does reveal a universally shared conspiracy of white supremacy and economic complicity that hastened Johnson's demise and character assassination.

I really enjoyed reading this book on Jack Johnson. I particularly liked how Theresa Runstedtler consistently underscores that discussions about race, mass culture and politics are interrelated. As someone interested in US history, this book drew attention to a figure I was less familiar with. I would recommend it for anybody interested in sports and/or US society.

Dr. Rundstedtler offers a powerful and insightful history of Jack Johnson and global white supremacy. Her work chronicles not just Johnson's career and his place within and beyond the ring, but the lessons we can learn about white supremacy, globalization, and international relations through his career. The book an important contribution within sport studies, history, and American Studies, highlighting how its always bigger than a game.

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