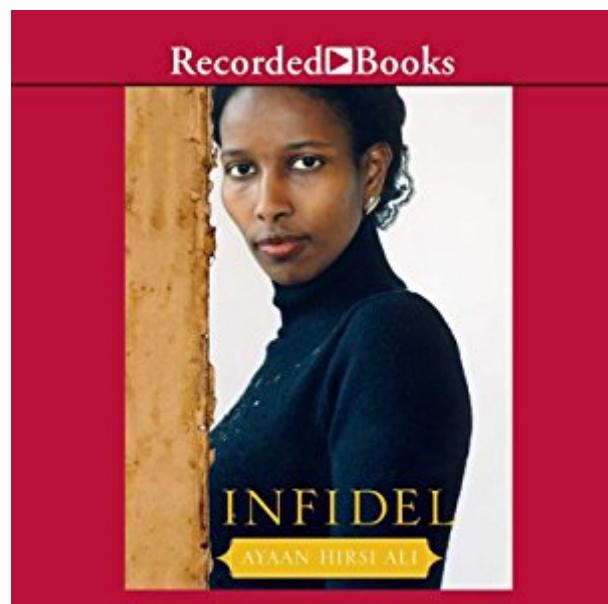


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Infidel



Synopsis

In this profoundly affecting memoir from the internationally renowned author of "The Caged Virgin," Ayaan Hirsi Ali tells her astonishing life story, from her traditional Muslim childhood in Somalia, Saudi Arabia, and Kenya, to her intellectual awakening and activism in the Netherlands, and her current life under armed guard in the West. One of today's most admired and controversial political figures, Ayaan Hirsi Ali burst into international headlines following an Islamist's murder of her colleague, Theo van Gogh, with whom she made the movie "Submission." "Infidel" is the eagerly awaited story of the coming of age of this elegant, distinguished -- and sometimes reviled -- political superstar and champion of free speech. With a gimlet eye and measured, often ironic, voice, Hirsi Ali recounts the evolution of her beliefs, her ironclad will, and her extraordinary resolve to fight injustice done in the name of religion. Raised in a strict Muslim family and extended clan, Hirsi Ali survived civil war, female mutilation, brutal beatings, adolescence as a devout believer during the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, and life in four troubled, unstable countries largely ruled by despots. In her early twenties, she escaped from a forced marriage and sought asylum in the Netherlands, where she earned a college degree in political science, tried to help her tragically depressed sister adjust to the West, and fought for the rights of Muslim immigrant women and the reform of Islam as a member of Parliament. Even though she is under constant threat -- demonized by reactionary Islamists and politicians, disowned by her father, and expelled from her family and clan -- she refuses to be silenced. Ultimately a celebration of triumph over adversity, Hirsi Ali's story tells how a bright little girl evolved out of dutiful obedience to become an outspoken, pioneering freedom fighter. As Western governments struggle to balance democratic ideals with religious pressures, no story could be timelier or more significant. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Autobiographies often suffer from late-life authorship--a time when the fires are damped and the events foreshortened by time. This one--by a woman still in her thirties--is an exception to nearly every rule of the genre. Not least for its electrifying readability: it consumed every free moment of the two days it took to finish it. Putting it down was simply not an option. This book will grab your imagination like no other, transplant you into a world you have probably never known, and introduce you to the intimate world of a muslim family swept by circumstance all over Africa, Arabia, and Europe. The complex interaction of tribes, clans, cultures, extended families and nations (and their consequences) isn't dryly analyzed, it is woven into a personal drama with the momentum of a locomotive. The love of family rides perilously over the jarring railbed of refugee life, of ancient and modern Islamic conflicts, all of it recounted with real compassion in beautifully clear English. This multilingual immigrant needs no ghostwriter. Unlike the collection of editorial essays which comprised "The Caged Virgin", "Infidel" is a consistently focused narrative of a spectacularly eventful life launched almost inadvertently into an unparalleled adventure in moral courage. But there's far more here than a clash-of-cultures story well told. There is no targeted rush toward a predestined liberation. The revelatory discovery of western freedoms comes late in the book and gathers like a slow-motion sunrise. Only in the final chapters does she defect from Muslim culture, graduate from the University of Leiden, become a Dutch legislator, a target of Islamic terrorists, and an incendiary revolutionary for Muslim womens' rights.

"Infidel" by Ayaan Hirsi Ali is a must-read book by a heroine of world historical importance. Years from now, maybe even centuries from now, her depth and integrity, and the depth and integrity of others like her, will still be having a positive impact on the world. Please don't misunderstand this book. "Infidel" is NOT a right-wing tract or a left-wing tract; it is not a feminist pamphlet or an apologia for the West. "Infidel" is NOT an attack on Muslims. "Infidel" is a beautifully written work of art. If you were living on another planet, where there were no Muslims, no Westerners, no 9-11, you would still want to read this book for its profound human depth and its literary value. Ayaan Hirsi Ali takes the particular -- her own extraordinary life lived in Africa, Saudi Arabia, Europe and North America, lived as a hyper-devout Muslim and lived as a new atheist -- and, with the clarity of an

electron microscope, depicting every detail, she creates a work of universal resonance. Have you ever been afraid to defy convention? Have you ever suffered to learn that your family's and people's traditions were not as benign as you had been taught to believe? Have you ever witnessed injustice and not known what to do? Have you ever wanted to be a hero or a heroine? If so, then you will see yourself in this book, even given its exotic details. Its exotic details include a heartbreakingly graphic scene that describes how madrassah -- Koran school -- pupils brutalized a girl they dubbed "kintirleey," that is, a girl whose private female anatomy had not yet been mutilated, as per Muslim-African custom. This scene is written in the most simple of language. You could read it with the television on in the background.

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