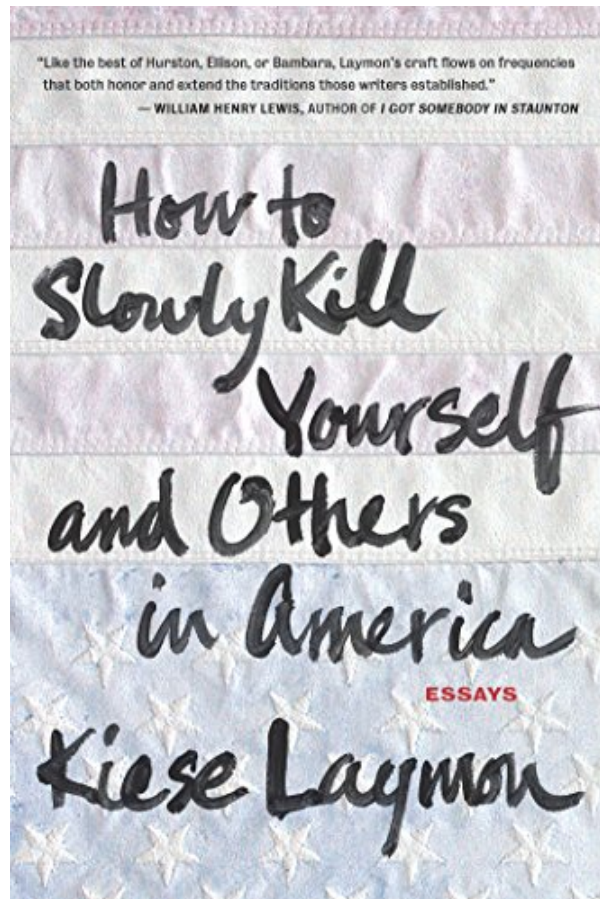


HOW TO SLOWLY KILL YOURSELF AND OTHERS IN AMERICA BY KIESE LAYMON



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— WILLIAM HENRY LEWIS, AUTHOR OF *I GOT SOMEBODY IN STAUNTON*

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Author and essayist Kiese Laymon is one of the most unique, stirring, and powerful new voices in American writing. *How to Slowly Kill Yourself and Others in America* is a collection of his essays, touching on subjects ranging from family, race, violence, and celebrity to music, writing, and coming of age in Mississippi. In this collection, Laymon deals in depth with his own personal story, which is filled with trials and reflections that illuminate under-appreciated aspects of contemporary American life. New and unexpected in contemporary American writing, Laymon's voice mixes the colloquial with the acerbic, while sharp insights and blast-furnace heat calls to mind a black 21st-century Mark Twain. Much like Twain, Laymon's writing is steeped in controversial issues both private and public. This collection introduces Laymon as a writer who balances volatile concepts on a razor's edge and chops up much-discussed and often-misunderstood topics with his scathing humor and fresh, unexpected takes on the ongoing absurdities, frivolities, and calamities of American life.

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Most helpful customer reviews

19 of 21 people found the following review helpful.

Just what I needed

By Angy

I kept thinking even before opening the pages, having already read some of the essays on his blog titled Cold Drank, that it was a book I wanted and needed my not-so-adult younger brother to read- hoping it would serve as surrogate father-like wisdom that I believed the 22-year old who has had a series of screw ups, growing up the only boy in a house of women, needed. He recently announced the pregnancy of his girlfriend who I have never met and his pride at becoming a father. Kiese wrote something in one of these essays that struck me so strongly regarding the presence of men in a young black boys life- do women need and crave the presence of a strong male figure more than a young black boy needs it? The feminist in me screams "No, I'll be damned if I ever say that I'll ever need a man in my life." My mother, aunt, and grandmother did it for me- and I damn sure don't need it, though I thought I could understand why young boys need that presence... Not saying this made me realize that I needed a man in my life, but it made me open my eyes and drop my ego a few notches. I have come to a realization over the last few weeks that at the tender age of 28, I'm both too young and too old to be as unhappy as I have been in my life since graduating from undergrad some 6 years ago where I met and silently praised Kiese. So removed from him, I wondered if I just drank the Kool-Aid that everyone was serving him as opposed of really understanding him. I read half of the book of essays on my two-hour plane ride home from Seattle to San Francisco and fought back tears and realization that maybe I needed more from this book than my brother. We don't often see things from different perspectives, and I'm saying, I understand a little bit more than I did before reading. Thank you!

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Deserves more attention than it seems to be getting here

By S. Trombley

Extraordinary. Painful to read, but also more hopeful than the title would suggest. Laymon grapples with both an unjust world and the destructive impulses it's wrought in his character. Brutally honest and funny, too.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Enter into the mind of Kiese Laymon

By FantasyCreature

I was privileged to have caught a recent lecture of Kiese Laymon in NYC. Laymon is a brilliant writer who has already, early in his career, proven himself an important rising voice in American letters. In this book, he fearlessly writes about his journey to becoming a writer from his childhood on, his family influences, his unique perspective as a Mississippi-born African-American son of a teacher; how difficult it was for him to not give up with those pressuring him to toe the line of their concept of his "genre", to follow their strict code of what "sells," and the specific issues he faced as an African-American writer in this regard. It's heartbreaking, poignant, and funny. I highly recommend you read this book and his first published novel, Long Division, which despite its YA label, is a uniquely addictive book for adults as well. I look forward to his future works.

See all 61 customer reviews...

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