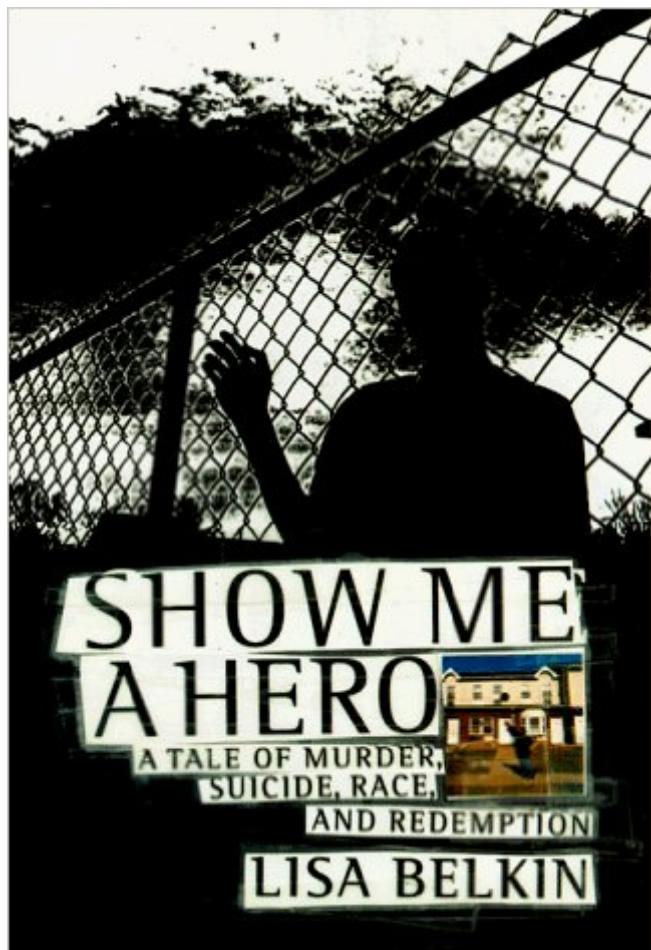


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Show Me A Hero: A Tale Of Murder, Suicide, Race, And Redemption



Synopsis

In the grand reportorial tradition of J. Anthony Lukass's Common Ground, SHOW ME A HERO is a tale of one city, divided by fear and racism, murder and politics, and notions of home and community. When Nicholas Wasicsko was growing up, he knew he was going to be mayor of Yonkers. The other kids teased him about his dream, calling him "The Mayor" on the basketball court. But on November 3, 1987, when he was only twenty-eight years old, Nick did indeed become mayor - in fact, the country's youngest. It turned out to be less than a dream job. The city had just been slapped with a court order demanding that it build public housing on the white, middle-class side of town in order to right what the judge saw as intentional, decades-long pattern of segregation. Shortly after taking office, and after careful deliberation with the city's lawyers, Nick agreed to comply with the court order. This decision would lead to a virtual civic meltdown, and the shattering of his own hopes and dreams. SHOW ME A HERO is about the battle between the judge and Nick's city, and also about what happens after - after the lawyers have gone, the protesting has stopped, the townhouses have been built, and the newcomers have moved in. It's about Alma Febles, a magnetic young mother desperate to move her three children into a real home. It's about the nearly blind Norma O'Neal, who couldn't get home health care in the projects. It's about Mary Dorman, an activist-first, against housing; then, gradually, for it - for the first time in her life. And it's about Nick Wasicsko and his wife, Nay, trying to build a life amid the political rubble. SHOW ME A HERO is a riveting tale, made more urgent by the fact that the hard lessons Nick had to learn are ones that countless cities will face in the future. Across the country, monolithic housing projects are being demolished and replaced by scattered-site public housing built in middle-class neighborhoods. One by one, these cities will learn, as Yonkers did, as Nick did, what this means for a nation whose people preach diversity but who are most comfortable when surrounded by others like themselves.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A well done look at the diversifying of America. Lisa Belkin, a NY Times reporter, gives us this look at the city of Yonkers, NY and the ramifications of a Federal Court Justice requiring said city to provide public housing on it's East Side, the good side of the tracks. Belkin has taken the events in a chronological order from many different views: Nicholas Wasiscko, voted in as the youngest mayor of any major U.S. city; Judge Sand, the Federal Court Justice; Mary Dorman, a citizen from the East Side who joined in with the protestors; Alma Febles, a single mother with young children from the West Side; and Norma O'Neal, a health care provider from the West Side who's eyesight was deteriorating at a rapid rate are some of the main characters in this unfolding crisis. The United States Justice Department filed suit against the city of Yonkers and was soon joined by the Yonkers Branch of the N.A.A.C.P. in claiming that the city had systematically kept the Black citizens down by continuing to provide Public Housing on the West Side of the city only. They claimed this created a ghetto environment that led to a lack of advancement of the population. When Judge Sand issued his 163 page opinion, it quickly became a hot topic within the city residents and the upcoming Mayoral and Council race debates. Nicholas Wasiscko, who had wanted to be the mayor of Yonkers since his early teens, saw this as a means of separating his views from his opponents and declared he would not follow the decision if elected. The election was a very close one, but he won. As he began overseeing new city council meetings, large throngs of citizens began appearing and protesting the ruling.

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