



2-1-2012

*The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, by Isabel Wilkerson, Vintage, 2010

Mary Ramsbottom

Follow this and additional works at: [https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/las\\_bookreviews](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/las_bookreviews)

---

**Recommended Citation**

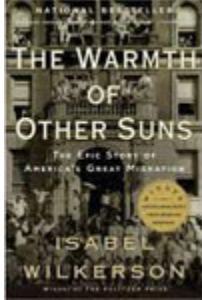
Ramsbottom, Mary, "*The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, by Isabel Wilkerson, Vintage, 2010" (2012). *LAS Faculty Book Reviews*. 103.  
[https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/las\\_bookreviews/103](https://digitalcommons.butler.edu/las_bookreviews/103)

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences at Digital Commons @ Butler University. It has been accepted for inclusion in LAS Faculty Book Reviews by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Butler University. For more information, please contact [digitalscholarship@butler.edu](mailto:digitalscholarship@butler.edu).

## Because Ideas Matter...

The faculty and staff of Butler University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences presents

### Recommended Readings



### ***The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration***

by Isabel Wilkerson, Vintage, 2010

Reviewed by Mary Ramsbottom

If your reading habits tend to a few pages a night compensated by weekend sprints, you might wonder whether *The Warmth of Other Suns*, at 500+ pages, is worth the investment. Indeed, it is. In *Suns*, Isabel Wilkerson reconstructs the Great Migration of African-American families to urban centers of the northern and western states between World War I and the 1970's. Drawing on more than a thousand oral histories, *Suns'* narrative pull comes from three families whose choices, reflecting economic and social causes common to migrations everywhere, were lent special urgency by the brutalities of the Jim Crow south. Wilkerson resists the temptation to ask Ida Mae Gladney (Mississippi to South Side Chicago), George Starling (Florida to Harlem), and Robert Foster (Louisiana to Los Angeles) to carry too heavy a representative burden for a movement encompassing millions. These lives are richly resonant, but they also display varieties in individual experience inflected by gender, geography, educational background, personality, and opportunity. Wilkerson interweaves original research and recent scholarly interpretations into the narrative; for example, she provides a welcome corrective to the dominant late-twentieth-century lament that southern migrants imported cultural and family dysfunction to northern communities. While allowing her narrators pride of place throughout, Wilkerson thus satisfies the general non-fiction reader's desire for contextualization and assessment of historical consequence.

- Mary Ramsbottom is Associate Provost for Student Academic Affairs at Butler University.