



13 Days in Ferguson

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On August 14, 2014, five days after the fatal shooting of Michael Brown ignited race riots throughout the city of Ferguson, Missouri, the nation found an unlikely hero in Captain Ron Johnson of the Missouri Highway Patrol. Charged with the Herculean task of restoring peace between a hostile African American community and the local police, Johnson, a 30-year law enforcement veteran and an African American, did the unthinkable; he took off his bullet-proof vest and joined the protesters.

The 13 days and nights that followed were the most trying of Johnson's life--professionally, emotionally, and spiritually. Officers in his own command called him a traitor. Lifelong friends stopped speaking to him. The media questioned and criticized his every decision. Alone at the center of the firestorm, with only his family and his faith to cling to, Johnson persevered in his belief that the only way to effectively bridge the divide between black and blue is to--literally--walk across it.

In *13 Days in Ferguson*, Johnson shares, for the first time, his view of what happened during the thirteen turbulent days he spent stabilizing the city of Ferguson, and the extraordinary impact those two historic weeks had on his faith, his approach to leadership, and on what he perceives to be the most viable solution to the issues of racism and prejudice in America.

13 Days in Ferguson Details

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From Reader Review 13 Days in Ferguson for online ebook

Socraticgadfly says

People expecting a quasi-legal fault-finding with the Ferguson PD or anything else, should move on.

Instead, this is a mix of what Ron Johnson did on the streets of Ferguson combined with a mini-biography of how he became a captain in the Missouri State Police and got to this point.

Take it at face value and it's a five-star book.

Contra some reviewers, while some of Johnson's actions might be moderately second-guessed, he made no big mistakes. Then gov-Jay Nixon was among those who said so.

Otherwise, it's sad to see racism still inside police departments. I hope Johnson made some friends to replace those he lost. I hope some white officers and black residents both found enlightenment. And, I hope that a certain string of leftists will accept that not all black police officers are co-opted by "the system." Johnson clearly was not.

Jeanette says

It's his memoir and his experience. For that it is a 5 star.

It's faith based and heavily emotive at core telling of his own "outlook" and experiences for the 13 days in Ferguson after Michael Brown's demise.

To paraphrase Ronald Johnson "people are just people" and "I came in with some bias, and left with bias against me".

The way it is written (style is so heavily emotion sodded yet coupled with such serious responsibility "eyes") in a rather meandering manner that doesn't always connote subsequent reality. Where are people who live in Ferguson shopping now?

I feel truly sorry for the demolished or burnt out residents and store owners who had nothing to do with most events at all and Ronald Johnson's wife in particular. Some of the onus of his actions (Ronald Johnson) were not wise. Nor to most involved, productive, either. Idealism means little to widows and children survivors.

Stephen Yoder says

This was a fast read. In one sentence this book could be summed up as: Relationships between African-Americans and law enforcement may be difficult, but being an African-American law enforcement officer may be even more difficult at times.

Captain Johnson had an unenviable assignment -- to calm the streets of Ferguson, MO subsequent to riots that broke out after a young unarmed black man was shot by a policeman -- and he succeeded.

Johnson's story is not lengthy or excessively wordy. Johnson himself comes across as humble and able to engage in self-criticism.

A good book. I'd love to have Capt. Johnson over for dinner, or have him police my town.

I rec'd an ARC in exchange for the notion that I might write a review.

Sarah says

13 Days in Ferguson is one of the most eye-opening books I've ever read, and I've read thousands of great books.

Captain Ronald Johnson of the Missouri State Highway Patrol was put in charge of the chaotic situation that raged in Ferguson, MO after Michael Brown's death in August 2014. In this book, he tells his story of 13 days of difficult service in his beloved hometown, about 100 miles from where I live.

In 13 Days in Ferguson, Capt. Johnson gives a play-by-play view of what really happened during those two difficult weeks for Missouri and the whole nation. Michael Brown's death touched a nerve for people who had felt invisible, marginalized and discounted for generations. This book gives them a voice and affirms their struggles, which I had never really considered before.

13 Days in Ferguson has helped me see various sides of the entire picture of racism. Through Capt. Johnson's stories, I empathized with the fears of the white cops, the frustration of restless young black men, the deep hurts of black mothers, and the press members' desire to tell the truth. The excerpt of his powerful, heartfelt speech at Michael Brown's memorial service resounded in my heart for days after reading.

Capt. Johnson paints a vivid, multilayered portrait of a complex problem with compassion and understanding for everyone involved while still holding criminals responsible for their actions. He had an incredibly tough assignment for those 13 days, which he has turned into a valuable lesson for all who read this book.

From start to finish, this book is packed full of surprising, challenging, thought-provoking viewpoints on racism and prejudice in my home state and the whole nation. I desperately need these paradigm-shifts as a Christian, Caucasian, Missourian, and mother of three.

Capt. Johnson opens the book with a scene of misunderstanding--his misinterpretation of interaction with whites, which instantly disarms you, because you can put yourself in the same situation. He talks about facing prejudice from fellow officers and shares an interesting vignette about being pulled over in his hometown after the riots stopped. I appreciated the humility and compassion in his writing voice. We all struggle with racism in our hearts, and it won't get any better until we start listening to each other.

Once in a while, a book comes along that permanently changes your perspective on an important topic; 13 Days in Ferguson is that book for me.

No matter which side of the political fence you stand on, Capt. Johnson has some wise, well-earned opinions to share with you. His voice is gentle yet strong, and I have immense respect for his vantage point.

If you're looking for a book to challenge your assumptions and help you reconsider your stance on our cultural issues, 13 Days in Ferguson may be the most important book you read in 2018.

Tyndale Momentum graciously provided a review copy of this excellent book for me.

Jackie says

Inspiring

Very few books have the ability to influence society. This book is one of them. A story most Americans know, told by the man trying to prevent what could have turned out to be a full on civil war, fought on the streets on everyday America. Many historical/biographical books are difficult to read... This book was so well written that the account flows in an easy to read and understand format. The best nonfiction I've read in a very long time. Giveaway win.

Christina says

This is a memoir that focuses heavily on the author's personal experiences. That's natural for a memoir, but I had hoped to come away from this book with a deeper understanding of what the Ferguson Riots were really about. However, Johnson takes a very broad approach to the events through much of the book. Mostly, he notes that people were upset, angry, and felt they weren't being heard. But I don't know what it was they wanted heard. They wanted answers, but the questions aren't made clear. He listens, but we don't get a lot about what he hears.

I wonder if Captain Johnson's goal was more to give a model about how police can do a better job of becoming part of the community, than to address Ferguson in particular. Toward the end, he meets with a group of high school student, one of whom finally articulates what seems to be a key driver behind the protests and riots. One young women says they don't trust the police because, "we feel that you think you're above the law.... you act like you can do basically anything you want—*anything*—and get away with it, because you wear that uniform."

Primarily, the memoir follows how Captain Ronald Johnson dealt with being abruptly thrust into leadership in a very volatile situation. There is no one to give him guidance or advice, and he doesn't seem to seek it. I imagine he was chosen for the very reason he struggles. He identifies with both groups—the police officers and the protestors. But reading his account, he seemed to identify more with the protestors, and I empathized with the officers as he seemed willing to sacrifice their safety in an effort to resolve the issue. He wants to communicate with the protestors, but when he is among the officers he is leading, he is silent. Maybe that's customary in leadership in police situations, but he often references that his fellow officers resented him, and I wonder if it's because as a leader he didn't communicate with or empathize with them. But I do admire that he was leading by example.

He also shares how it feels to be the target of racism. I was surprised at just how frequently racist comments were used against him just in the 13 days covered in this book, at how often a particular word is still used.

Captain Johnson is a Christian man, and he shares his faith overtly throughout the book, but as his faith and not in an evangelical manner. He is open and honest about his feelings and regrets. But I can't help but think

it is the nature of memoir to edit what you share because what you share will be permanent and public. I think everyone who writes a memoir is affected by this. How a person wants to be perceived and remembered is going to impact what they share, and don't share, and how they share it. An author's motives behind why he's writing the book will shape the content.

I imagine there was a lot more Captain Johnson could have shared about his thoughts and feelings. I think that would have made this a more powerful book, but I don't think it would have reflected his goal for the book. I think his goal was to look at what happened in a way that would not reignite strife. He was working toward bringing peace, and sharing a positive model for how to improve relations between the police and the community.

Scott S. says

"Since taking over the responsibility for security in Ferguson, I've felt even more alone than ever. But as I look at these [rosary] beads in my hand, I know that I'm not alone. I have a 'partner'!" -- page 207

Captain Ron Johnson, a veteran officer with the Missouri Highway Patrol and a native to the general area, was assigned by the state government to be front-line commander for all police operations in the powder-keg situation of Ferguson, MO in August 2014. How does a person handle being in such an unenviable but necessary post? Johnson relies on his strong Christian faith, as well as a certain faith in his fellow human beings, but do not mistake him as naive or weak. From this memoir of those tumultuous two weeks, he comes across as an thoughtful moderate or 'middle of the road' sort of guy, willing to listen to / attempting to find a common ground with both sides in a touchy situation. You get the impression that he would bust heads only as an absolute last resort, but he'd much rather "want civility to prevail . . . I want peace. That is after all, my ultimate role - peacekeeper."

I also liked reading about the brief sections about his background, the experiences and family life that influenced him on becoming a police officer and affects his decision-making process on the job.

Anna says

This is one of the best books I have read in a very long time. I could not put it down. I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys memoirs or wants to learn a little more about what happened after the death of Michael Brown. It really opens your eyes to the relationship between race and law enforcement.

Lisa says

4.5 stars. When the events happened in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014, I only casually followed the news. I didn't understand all of what was happening and I didn't always know what to believe. This is why I like first-person accounts of events, and while I know that Ron Johnson's account doesn't tell the whole story, it's an important work.

13 Days in Ferguson walks readers through Johnson's experience as a Missouri State Highway Patrol captain from his initial response to the protests and violent acts after Michael Brown's death to his charge to lead the

security effort in Ferguson to his vision for Ferguson in the future.

I wanted to read this book because of Johnson's perspective--as a black man and a law enforcement officer, he has a unique position in the conversation about race and policing. I felt he was honest in his recollection of the events and he didn't paint one group in a more favorable light than the other. He strikes me as a man caught in the middle and using that position to try to bridge the gap. I was inspired by his community policing efforts and the sincerity of his hopes.

I'm glad I added this to my racial justice reading.

LaDonna says

Star rating: 5.0+

?????

*Michael Brown's shooting ignited the fire.
Michael Brown's body burned the city down.*

Did I get your attention?

Reading books about social issues, political and social unrest, and challenges within the African American community is nothing new to me. The common thread for all of my prior reads is that they speak to the voices of the disenfranchised. They never speak from the voice of *the man*. I honestly never considered that a law enforcement official had anything to add to the story. That is, until now...

*"We're all biased in some way, every one of us. It's what we do with our bias that matters.
We can't allow it to affect our attitudes, influence our decisions, or inform our behavior...Ignoring our biases or believing they are truth...that's when bias becomes bigotry and prejudice becomes racism".*

Captain Ronald Johnson's memoir is a profound and candid tale about the 13 days that kept this country's eyes glued on the city of Ferguson, Missouri. Captain Johnson does not shy away from speaking about how his spirituality, his ethnicity, and his upbringing influence the man and leader he has become.

"I believe--with all my heart--that every good policeman must have compassion. Empathy. We need to feel for each other. We need to learn to lead with our hearts..In order for policing to work, we have to come into the community, talk to the people...and listen. We have to listen".

Captain Ronald Johnson, along with Alan Eisenstock, has produced a poignant and eloquent work that chronicles his experiences while leading the law enforcement efforts during one of our most turbulent times in modern history. Johnson does not shy away from his own fears and apprehensions.

"Hope will arise--from our pain, from our distrust, from our sorrow, from our ashes".

Overall, I found this book easy to read and extremely refreshing. Here it is a story about a man trying to maintain his *humanity* during a time of severe civil unrest. Here it is a story about a man, in uniform, trying to maintain the law of the land, while trying to ensure that people he serves are protected, seen and heard.

"We have to keep reaching--until our hands are no longer empty...until we can hold on to each other".

Make time for this book...?

Robert says

Very engaging book. Fantastic first hand account of what it was like to be there and the toll it took on our law enforcement. The author being from the area and being able to sympathize with both sides, fighting his feelings and duties, taking flack from peers and neighbors. Very good read.

Lauren Sparks says

#45 for 2018 Find my review at <http://laurensparks.net/2018/08/13-da....>

Richard says

Besides my general interest in a topic like this, I have particular interests. First, I live in and grew up in St Louis County, 20 miles more or less from Ferguson. The events here were a little bit personal. Second, I hold elective office in my municipality in south St Louis County, and have had for a few years. I wanted to learn from Capt. Johnson: what happened, why did it happen, how did he (and others) manage the crisis, and what are some of Capt. Johnson's perspectives that I don't have (of which I know there are many)? Instead of just reading the book in a detached way, I was trying to think along with Capt. Johnson. If I had some of these responsibilities, how would I respond? What choices would I have to make, and what might the repercussions be? How would our own police department react? If I were a Ferguson councilman, what might I have done to make things better?

i appreciated the book, but there were a few aspects i wasn't crazy about. First, the book reads sort of like

Johnson's personal diary. We get a lot of his ride on the emotional roller coaster. At times I would have liked to read less about how he was down, then up, then down, then up again, and more about what he actually did and the decisions he made. Second, I kept wondering how he was exercising his command duties when he spent so much time walking up and down West Florissant? He didn't give as much as I would have liked on the coordination of the various units under his command.

(PS- For those who do not live in the area, the street name is pronounced with the accent on the first syllable: FLOOR-ih-sent. Non-locals tend to want to pronounce the name like a fluorescent light. There's also a nearby municipality called Florissant.)

Putting these criticisms aside, I learned a few key things. For one, I think Johnson was absolutely right to not engage the people who were burning down some of the businesses early on with overwhelming force. He could have had a Watts situation on his hands, which would have made a bad situation much worse. I didn't understand the decision at the time, but a major police or National Guard clash with the mob resulting in significant casualties would have scarred the area for decades. At that time, property damage was not worth taking lives.

I appreciate the empathy Capt Johnson has for the community. All police departments and, for that matter, all government bodies need to deal with the public with professionalism, consideration, and respect. The rules are only the rules because we make them so. We need to adjust when the rules become part of the problem. It's difficult because organizations tend to become insular. Those who serve the public must always strive to do just that. It's too easy to forget who you are supposed to serve. Ron Johnson doesn't forget. He is a man I would be proud to know.

Mya Alexice says

This book, from the perspective of the captain in charge of police forces during the upset in Ferguson, Missouri, should be required reading for those who feel "on the fence" about the issue. Johnson brings nuance, sentimentality, and honesty to a heated issue. It is very Christian faith-based, so if that isn't your cup of tea, it might put you off a little. However, it is still very much worth a read.

Amanda H says

This book was a well written memoir on Captain Ronald Johnson's time in Ferguson as a State Trooper when he helped restore the peace after the rioting started. I can't imagine what it would have been like to be there at that time, but this book gives readers a glimpse into what it was like for Captain Johnson. Thought provoking and insightful, this was a wonderful read on some difficult subjects. This book should be required reading. I received this book from Tyndale in exchange for my honest review.
