



# The Face That Changed It All: A Memoir

*Beverly Johnson , Allison Samuels (With) , Andre Leon Talley (Foreword)*

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**The Face That Changed It All: A Memoir** Beverly Johnson , Allison Samuels (With) , Andre Leon Talley (Foreword)

A revelatory and redemptive memoir from Beverly Johnson, the first black supermodel to grace the cover of *Vogue*, and who, over five hundred magazine covers later, remains one of the most successful glamour girls ever.

In *The Face That Changed It All*, Beverly Johnson brings her own passionate and deeply honest voice to the page to chronicle her childhood growing up as a studious, and sometimes bullied, bookworm during the socially conscious, racially charged '60s. Initially drawn to a career in law due to the huge impact the Civil Rights movement had on her life, Beverly eventually made her mark as the first black cover model of American Vogue in 1974. A successful three-decade career in modeling followed.

Offering glamorous tales about the hard partying of the 1970s and Hollywood during the '80s and early '90s, Johnson details her many encounters and fascinating friendships with the likes of Jackie Kennedy, Halston, Calvin Klein, and Andy Warhol, as well as stars such as Elizabeth Taylor, Michael Jackson, Eddie Murphy, Jack Nicholson, Keith Richards, and Warren Beatty. But not everything that glitters is gold, and Johnson's memoir reveals the countless demons she wrestled with over the course of her storied career. She brings us into the heart of her struggles with racism, drug addiction, divorce, and a prolonged child custody battle over her daughter that tested her fortitude and sanity. She shares for the first time intimate details surrounding her love affair with the late tennis icon Arthur Ashe, giving little known insight into the heart, mind, and spirit of the revered tennis legend. She also pays homage to her mentor, the late Naomi Sims, while lifting the veil off the complicated, catty, and often times tense relationships between black models during her fashion heyday. Familiar names from the catwalk, such as Pat Cleveland and Iman, appear regularly in her story, illustrating how each had to fight various battles to survive not just the system at large, but each other.

Featuring gorgeous, never-before-seen photos from Johnson's childhood and modeling days, *The Face That Changed It All* gives a no-holds-barred look at the lives of the rich, fabulous, and famous. It is also a story of failure and success in the upper echelons of the fashion world, and how Beverly Johnson emerged from her struggles smarter, happier, and stronger than ever.

## The Face That Changed It All: A Memoir Details

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# From Reader Review The Face That Changed It All: A Memoir for online ebook

## Anna says

This is a candid and honest autobiography, a revealing portrait that takes the reader from Johnson's first entry into the fashion world to her devastating downfall and triumphant recovery. Her biography is filled with the names of people in the fashion world, actors, and famous personalities. Johnson speaks of jealousy within the fashion community, her travels around the world on photo shoots, and the racism she encounters, many times being the only African American in a world that had yet to come to grips with allowing doors to be open to all. A party animal, she attends dinner parties with elite designers and other society people where drugs are readily available. She addresses the demons she struggled to overcome, her bad choices of men, and her marriages. Despite the challenges, she continued to climb the fashion ladder from the runway to finally being the first woman of color to capture the front page of Vogue Magazine. It's a poignant and intriguing account.

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## SUSAN \*Nevertheless,she persisted\* says

Was a well written and interesting account of Beverly Johnson's rise to fame in the modeling industry. She was the first black model to grace the cover of a fashion magazine.

Beverly doesn't get shady or dish the dirt,she simply talks about her life,her success,and her failures in a succinct,classy way.

Enjoyable read.

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## Barbara says

This could have been an inspiring book - perhaps a smart, hardworking model who broke the race barrier when she became the first woman of color to be on the cover of Vogue in the 70's. Instead, she seems like a flaky, insecure moron who consistently made bad decisions.

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## Shannan Harper says

I saw this at the library, and decided to pick it up. I learned a lot about Ms. Johnson, and I enjoyed the story very much. She talks about her being a model during the 70's when there were not a lot of African Americans in that job profession, as well as what was going on in her personal life.

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## **Laura Walker says**

Beverly Johnson is very courageous to reveal all that she went through with men, drugs and the fashion industry.

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## **Robin says**

So do I give this 2 stars because by the end of the book I ended up really annoyed with the author over the many bad choices she made in life plus her general attitude? Or do I give it a higher rating because I really couldn't put the darn thing down? I'll compromise and give a three star rating. That means if you want to read it, do so at the risk of occasionally wanting to throw the book across the room.

I wanted to read this as I still remember the novelty and newness of an African-American face gracing the cover of my Glamour magazines from the early 1970s, and I was interested in how she fared over the years. I thoroughly enjoyed reading about her rise to fame in the modeling world along with her experiences with many of the celebrities she met over the years. What I didn't enjoy was the constant name-dropping and how \*she\* influenced so many of these people (she even indirectly took a little "credit" for the death of Bob Marley--kid you not).

The other part of this book that I found exasperating was Johnson's feeling of entitlement, something experienced by so many celebrities who have come into great wealth. At one point, thanks to her second husband, Beverly was completely broke (she once had over \$1 million savings) and ended up not only losing custody of her daughter, but also had no home and no funds for rent. So what does she do as soon as she receives a large settlement? Buys a champagne colored Mercedes so she can look good while driving to see her daughter.

Finally, near the end of the book, regarding a possible third marriage, the author writes, "In the end, I realized we both love high drama. That was good for a movie, but not for a marriage." It was a little too late in life for Beverly to find this out about herself, and that's a shame.

If you are of the age who remembers Beverly or want to read about her experience with Bill Cosby, by all means read this memoir. I'm sure you won't be able to put the dang thing down either. And if you really want to get a feel for Beverly's personality, watch a few YouTube clips of her reality show, Beverly's Full House.

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## **Michelle says**

This was an interesting look at the woman who broke down race barriers to become an incredibly successful fashion model. I remember that I begged for a Beverly Johnson fashion doll as a child because even though I was obsessed with Christie Brinkley and other models of the era, I always thought that the clothes Beverly was photographed in were stunning. I pursued a career in costume design partly because I was heavily influenced by the colors and prints that graced models like Ms. Johnson in the eighties. Her story is candid and gives an inside view of the modeling industry and her climb to fame and fortune as well as her relationships but doesn't wander into gossip. It also has a timely account of her encounter with Bill Cosby,

which I believe may have sparked her interest in publishing her story.

I was thrilled to receive this book through the Goodreads first reads program.

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### **Aja says**

Easily one of my favorite memoirs I've ever read. Painfully honest but peppered with hilarious stories of goodwill and kindness. I LOVE this woman. But I question her taste in men, whoa lord.

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### **Martella Nelson says**

I have been a fan of Beverly Johnson since I was a little girl. Beverly Johnson no holds barred approach biography covers her traditional childhood which eclipsed into the cut-throat modeling industry. she is still standing after all drug addiction, physical abuse, and failed marriages. What a triumphant diva!

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### **Rachel says**

Meh. I started off really liking it & liking Johnson - her early professional accomplishments were impressive and she was & is still so beautiful. I found it difficult to be on her side as the story continued (or anyone's, really). She (it seemed) wanted to take credit for the positives but not take responsibility for the negatives. She almost became immature as she aged, and more dependent on addictions & other people & playing dumb about the lives around her vs. the strong, independent woman in the beginning. It's a quick read, and gives an interesting glimpse into the modeling world of the 70s-80s.

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### **Sandi says**

For a smart woman, Beverly Johnson made a lot of mistakes, esp. with her husbands, overlooking a lot of major faults (e.g. drug dealing, a reliance on HER money, no steady job, etc.)

Still this is a fascinating autobiography rich in recounting the high life of modeling in the 1960s and 70s. Most endearing is a loving chapter about the elegant first black supermodel, Naomi Sims, whose career was undermined by bipolar disorder, and who died far too young. Sims was a great role model for the young model, elegant, kind, gracious and without the jealousy and animosity of later black models who seemed to think that there could only be one top model of color.

Johnson talks about her life, the modeling industry, and racism in that world. She's forthright about mistakes she made and what those mistakes cost her along the way. Also, she recreates the glamour and amoral times of the Studio 54 era and some of the celebrities, models and others, in a very absorbing way, and has some interesting notes on American modeling doyenne Eileen Ford, which I definitely enjoyed, having read Ford's first major biography over the summer.

It's a quick read and entertaining, but at times you just want to stand BJ against the wall and lecture her on

the poor choices--big ones--that she's making. Fortunately, with a strong family and increased maturity, she pulls herself into a stronger place.

What was disappointing is that the book seems to stop in 1988! She alludes to dating actor Chris Noth, but says nothing about the relationship. Odd, since she accused him of battering her while they were a couple, and it appears that they were a couple for a significant amount of time.

I'd really have preferred that she bring her readers up to date on her life. The book is written as auto biography and not as a memoir. She's matured into a far wiser, more realistic woman and it would have been nice to have watched her further along the road.

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