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A Rebellious Boy S Journey Through The Wilds Of Urban America And The Shrapnel Of A Self Destructing Family This Is The Riveting Story Of A Generation Told Through One Dazzlingly Poetic New Voice MK Asante Was Born In Zimbabwe To American Parents A Mother Who Led The New Nation S Dance Company And A Father Who Would Soon Become A Revered Pioneer In Black Studies But Things Fell Apart, And A Decade Later MK Was In America, A Teenager Lost In A Fog Of Drugs, Sex, And Violence On The Streets Of North Philadelphia Now He Was Alone His Mother In A Mental Hospital, His Father Gone, His Older Brother Locked Up In A Prison On The Other Side Of The Country And Forced To Find His Own Way To Survive Physically, Mentally, And Spiritually, By Any Means Necessary Buck Is A Powerful Memoir Of How A Precocious Kid Educated Himself Through The Most Unconventional Teachers Outlaws And Eccentrics, Rappers And Mystic Strangers, Ghetto Philosophers And Strippers, And, Eventually, An Alternative School That Transformed His Life With A Single Blank Sheet Of Paper It S A One Of A Kind Story About Finding Your Purpose In Life, And An Inspiring Tribute To The Power Of Education, Art, And Love To Heal And Redeem Us I was awarded this book in a Goodreads giveaway, but plan on buying for the young men in my extended family Now I see why reading was illegal for black people during slavery I discover that I think in words The words I know, the things I can think about. Reading was illegal because if you limit someone s vocab, you limit their thoughts They can t even think of freedom because they don t have the

language to p 229 I certainly wish many young men would have this epiphany about reading And that s why this book is important, it can be inspirational for youth everywhere who feel locked out and left behind I think MK has done a superb job in representing his generation His journey thus far told with a hip hop sensibility is certainly one that will resonate with many. Buck is MK s story of coming of age in 90s Philadelphia With a father that was is a legendary educator, scholar and lecturer, and a mother who also was a celebrated educator in her own right, it s hard to understand how MK came so close to the third rail Again, a close reading of this memoir will reveal it s essentialness The way his life unravels and plunges him onto the road to self destruction is finely detailed A two parent household doesn t guarantee one will be kept from the vices of the hood Especially given a father who is often absent and a mother struggling with mental illness. When MK s older brother gets locked up, his world begins to really spiral out of control We meet the various friends that orbit MK s universe The acting out and the anger is easily identifiable, because the family structure is broken, the secondary institutions are broken and the community is in chaos All of this is bravely shared, and hip hop lyrics are frequently added to the pages as sort of a soundtrack for his life This is an excellent book for any youngster struggling to find their place in this thing called life MK s voice feels authentic, and his talent for writing is obvious You sometimes worry that memoirs are often embellished to give the author a harder edge or a hero image, you don t feel that that at all in this book The genuineness of this story will prove important to its ultimate success, because today s youth can sniff out fakery with the greatest of ease Thankfully, MK does an excellent job of keeping it real. The book ends prematurely in my opinion and my only wish was for of his story I think it is important to talk about how he became a tenured professor The detail of that specific passage could act as a blueprint for the inspired reader Perhaps a second volume is planned, and the hope for that is, may it be as nourishing and honest as this one has been. buck n a fashionable and typically hell raising young man 2 racial slur used to described black men 3 a young black man what s up young buck 4 the act of becoming wild and uncontrollable he went buck wild 5 a dollar 6 to fire gunshots buckshots in the air 7 to go against, rebel

buck the system Everybody calls me young buck when they see me Asante's journey from inner city street punk in Killadelphia to college professor is a wild ride Knowing the outcome doesn't dull the description of his path sexy, wild, ugly, and redemptive There is a kind of love shown between family members in this ghetto life that may be greater than all other loves because it flows despite real failures by real people A little light, and a little faith in a kid backed into a corner seems to have made a difference Not every intervention can be as timely, but the results are unequivocal. This book was assembled from fragments in a teen's life in the late nineteen nineties My copy of this title was published in 2013 the paperback will be released in May 2014 The language and sensibility wears a noticeable twelve year lag, it seems to me, but it is instructive none the less How far we seem to have come in ten years, all of us I wonder if Asante would agree, or if he would say that nothing has changed Perhaps nothing substantive in the lives of Killadelphians has changed, or changed enough. The main thrust of the narrative, however, is perennial A young boy discovers the voices of all who have come before him and realizes that the paths ahead are many and varied and bear no resemblance to the one he walks daily in his neighborhood I spit lyrics to songs under my breath all day, every day It's like hip hop Tourette's The book is punctuated with stanzas that suit the action, his own and those of others, suitably referenced One can tell words, descriptive words, are his passion The story introduces street life through street slang I particularly liked the device of reading Malo's mother's diary to learn what she was thinking as she lay torpid and drugged through Malo's teen years His father quit town to save himself, and his brother got himself locked up All in all a harrowing upbringing, but kids still learn without being in school It's what they learn that is at issue Asante still has a way to go to break into Literature but his path is true and his talent real He is a good mirror I note he is a filmmaker. Asante has a right to be proud And whoever gave him the chance to get out of the hood has a right to be proud. I learned of this title from a NoViolet Bulawayo's BN interview, and have thought of that recommendation several times since. Gaining a toehold in starting this book can be tough, but I urge you to stick with it You will be rewarded with a story that will stay with you It is

uplifting without a shred of sappiness The title of the book is apt I loved all the applications of the word buck that were used If you are a lover of adroit turns of phrases, you will dig on the ones contained in here and they are many My favorite was a man who was so fat he runs out of breath trying to catch his breath Memoirs as a whole are not my first choice, but this one spoke to me I may not have always been familiar with the street lingo that was used, but the context steers you where you need to go A very worthwhile read. This was a first reads giveaway, thank you. I was so excited for MK Asante's BUCK When I read the synopsis earlier this year, I just knew I had to read this man's story of triumph BUCK is a very moving literary work I see why CNN and Maya Angelou gave Asante such praise He is truly a brilliant writer so descriptive and in touch with his audience, he easily transitions from slang, vulgarity, and the rawness of a life of oppression to a language readily identified as poetic Asante shows that the two are very much connected and forces you to like it I thoroughly enjoyed the memoir, it lived up to my expectations, it deserves its hype If you're afraid of vulgarity, afraid to escape your box of safety, afraid to read what it is to be Black and male in America, then don't get this memoir BUCK is not easy to read or forget, it's frightening, it's shocking, it's appalling But it's also a story of hope, expectation, and need for better It's weird how something can be so unappealing and inspiring simultaneously but BUCK is just that I recommend it completely. In the early 90s I managed a couple of Black bookstores and one of our most popular titles was Afrocentricity by Molefi Asante This book was the foundation of a cultural movement at the time that sought to strengthen the ties between African Americans and their African heritage But while Professor Asante was on the lecture and media circuit, the foundation of his home life was crumbling. M.K Asante Malo has written an incredible memoir of his adolescence in Philadelphia With his older stepbrother in prison, his mother struggling with a mental illness and a father always away, Malo is forced to navigate his own path through a life of gangs, violence and drugs What sets this apart from other coming of age urban stories is Malo's intelligence, and his need to connect with the family that has abandoned him in a sense Discovering his mother's diary, instead of feeling invasive,

helps him learn about the woman she was and has become, while the published excerpts give the reader insight into a mother's fear of losing her sons to the streets. Malo's story of transformation through his discovery of his love of the written word is one of the most beautiful I've read all year.

ATTENTION April 2014 change I have revised this review to show a well deserved 5 rather than 4 star rating I am an experienced reviewer now, and I see some ratings from earlier reviews were a bit too high or low based on the standard for 2013 overall 2014 reviews are on target I'm not marking down any I think I may have given a star too many because it seems unnecessary and kind of mean But, I thought I ought to show full regard when merited with my rating if I am serious enough to actually have written a review in the first place To fail to make this change would do the work and the writer a disservice Thanks for reading scanning this review, everyone Cheers. Original Review This is a fascinating memoir, but it reads like a superb novel The sophistication of M.K Asante's work reflects long study and practice of his craft to say nothing of great giftedness as a writer It veritably oozes ambition in the best sense possible The book is a coming of age story set in an African American family who we meet living in the Philadelphia area Asante's style can be described as urban influenced, and much of his story has to do with the specifics of his youth in urban environments with their attendant dangers and disadvantages, peculiarities and personalities, and unique and rich local cultures, which variously impact Asante However, its major theme has to do with his self education and deepening understanding of himself and where he comes from This story shows the coming of age of an intellectual and an artist, and it places itself squarely within a long and broad literary tradition in that respect. Most prominent among the strengths here, Asante is fearless in his largely successful experimentation with form, which gives his story a unique and distinctly appropriate voice and correspondingly authentic effect on his audience He uses language with great purpose and frequent brilliance His work is unmistakably art. On the other hand, the organization didn't always seem to be in perfect step with the content of the story on occasion, his brilliant range of formal approaches looked to be applied somewhat haphazardly Some of his lyricism fell flat as well,

even though much of it was wonderfully evocative and original. In sum, *Buck A Memoir* is a fine work of literature that bears a lot of scrutiny close or multiple readings of the text will enrich understanding and stimulate. However, some elements of the book are much stronger than others. Still, I strongly recommend reading this book, if for no other reason than it will give you insight into the true masterpiece s M.K Asante will author in the years to come among many other things. I received my copy of this book from the Goodreads First Reads giveaway program. The fall in Killadelphia Outside is the color of cornbread and blood Change hangs in the air like the sneaks on the live wires behind my crib I received a copy of this book via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Every American teenager goes through a period of rebellion as s he tries to figure out who s he is, apart from the parents But for no other group in America is this transition as dangerous as for young black men Malo s older brother is in jail His father is always traveling his mother, depressed His schools some give him a pass and don t require him to do much of anything, long as he keeps playing basketball Others are like a holding pen, the teachers flat out telling the students I m just here for the paycheck It s amazing that any of them make it out of there alive, and sadly, too many don t Malo loses his best friend, Amir, and afterward, the funeral director takes him and his friends in the back room He shows us the coffins and tells us, The little ones, for teenagers like y all, are my best sellers and business is booming Booming The best memoirs let you crawl inside the skin of someone who s not like you, and MAKE you feel it, as if it is your own life I was not only feeling for and with Malo, I was actually nodding to the raw beauty and poetry of hip hop lyrics, the way they perfectly fit the narrative of the story. I also got a glimpse inside his mother s head, through her journal entries, which Malo reads shares here She is battling her depression so hard like a lot of people, the drugs sometimes help and sometimes turn her into a zombie, but she keep fighting for her younger son until finally, she finds a school that gets him They make him write, and in writing, he finds his own voice Holding the pen this way, snug and firm in my fist, makes me feel like I can write my future, spell out my destiny in sharp strokes I couldn t help thinking of A mind is a terrible thing to waste, yet we do waste so many minds, so

many bright young men and women of all colors and ethnicities COULD give back so much If only we tried a little harder, found the key to reaching them, instead of warehousing them in school until they are 18, then warehousing them in jail ever after. There are many definitions of the word buck it s a term for a person, for money, for an act of rebellion, or of sex, and in the end, M.K Asante claims it for his own Became a doer, dream pursuer, purpose driven Past meets the future In between no longer and not yet Rise up, young buck, never forget This book is going to stay with me for a long time. There are spoilers coming There s just no other way to review this one. MK Asante was born in Zimbabwe, but the first time we meet him is in Killadelphia, Pistolvania His family is out of control, and consequently, so is he His brother is deep into gang life, running guns and drugs By the time he is 12, MK has favorite porn artists, is sexually active, and doesn t think twice before leaping into a stolen car alongside his brother, who goes by Uzi He adores his brother His brother is 16 and assumes that he won t stay long behind bars for the things he does because he is a minor We never learn for sure whether he is sent to live with a relative in Arizona to keep his influence from affecting MK too late or because the local heat has a real itch for him Once he is there, however, he is tried as an adult for rape, for having sex with a 13 year old Caucasian He thought she was 16 It s a huge blow to everyone when he draws hard time. Let s pause here a moment If you know absolutely no street lexicon USA , and if you regard the Philadelphia police force as brothers and comrades, keep your wallet in your pocket If you aren t sure, or have seen the cops in major metropolitan cities do low income teenagers and even those from the middle class irreparable harm and no good or not much , you might be in the right ballpark. I hope you are, because this is a powerhouse of a memoir But there is no glossary, so for example, if the word blunt means something that is not sharp edged, and nothing else, you may get dizzy and give up If you don t know the difference between nigga and the N word, and who can say it and who can t, move on to the next selection on the shelf But if these things have become either part of your own lexicon, or are familiar because of young people in your life who say them, you can read this just fine and Google any parts where you have difficulty It s well

worth it. Oh, and lest I forget, here it is YES I got this book free, from the Goodreads giveaway. If this had been a lousy read, my gratuity would have been withholding my review. Nobody gets five stars out of me unless I think what they have to offer is worth five stars. The one question I have about this one, is where this urban jewel has been hanging for the last several years. All of hip hop lyrics, the songs of urban protest, are from the 90s. It is true that Tupac lives on forever, but in 2013, it seems to me that some years have gone missing nevertheless. I hope Random House hasn't bought the rights to this book and then parked on it for awhile, and I hope it comes out soon. I began reading within 48 hours of the Trayvon Martin verdict. My own large family is multiracial, and my youngest son, who is African American and 25, was just packing to move out of the house and in with some friends. Reading the first chapters of this book gave me such an anxiety attack that the man did well to get out of the house before I started sewing name tags into his hoodies and packing him a plastic lunch box to take to school and work. I'm exaggerating, but only a small amount. I think this is a time when family members of young Black men are watching their own closely and holding their breath. Carole Amina, the mother who provides counterpoint to Malo's MK's narrative, is anxious too, but mental illness and a deteriorating marriage have deprived her of her voice. She loves her son, but has lost all authority and communication with him. She begs him to take care of her, and he recognizes, when his father leaves, that he is the man of the family. He has been deprived of his childhood somewhere along the way. He learns his mother's thoughts only by reading her diary. He is chronically truant from the private Quaker school she and her husband have sent him to, but she isn't worried about that. She isn't worried about the fact that he and a friend regularly steal her car and ride around in it until dawn, even though he is way too young to even have a learner's permit. I want to scream at her, Why the hell not? That's the easy part. The school principal wants to talk to his family, but nobody is available. Ultimately, MK's mother attempts suicide not for the first time and is institutionalized, as her daughter has already been. When she comes home, Malo's father, a man known and respected as a civil rights activist and scholar, leaves her. His sole remaining child is enraged by his abdication. Every time his father loses

control of the household, his response is absence. The hard part is to say, What would you do here Can you correct the problem with social workers and foster homes I don't think so Most foster kids vote with their feet They stay for dinner, maybe try to round up some cash, then hit the bricks and don't go back. Can you fix the problem with a good school Yes, no, and maybe. I send my own children to a really wonderful alternative school It has made a huge difference for my kids who were at risk, and also for the child who was always the perfect example But if other things get bad quickly enough, the school can't do a damn thing. The Quaker school was majority Caucasian at a time when the author of *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria* says is actually when Black teens need an immersion experience to foster their sense of self The Quaker school, though some of the staff appeared to mean well, either wrote Malo off as a bad seed and face it, how many academics want to hear fuck you from an angry student, or decided that he could not produce, as the high school basketball coach gives him permission to spend his class time shooting baskets if he'd prefer. A gym is a safer place than the streets but what kind of education is that Is this really the best a gifted young Black man can expect Not only no, but hell no The alternative school is one his mother finds after he has been arrested He agrees to give it a try, and for amazingly the first time, he is asked in a friendly, personal yet not invasive environment to write something anything. As a retired language arts and history teacher, I find this dreadful Every kid should be given this type of opportunity I am appalled by the public school teachers who flatly tell the students they don't want to be there and only show up for the paycheck Are they expecting the students to react with understanding I taught in high poverty schools, too, and you can bet your bottom dollar that I apologized to my students if there wasn't a desk for everyone, and I found a spot for everyone to sit down until I could rectify the situation Malo was robbed both by the Quakers and the public school system. The alternative school helps him find his own voice He discovers that until he has begun to read, he has no vocabulary, and without a good vocabulary, he wasn't able to express himself But the other critical factor is the reemergence of his father, who to be fair has been trying to call him, trying to get in touch with him, but

Malo has been unable to forgive him for abandoning the family and leaving his mother to flounder unaided in an untenable situation. When Malo is arrested, he refuses to phone his father, not wanting to give into his own need, or to see his father's disappointment. His father finds out and comes to pick him up anyway. And though I have given away a large part of his story, I will leave the climactic scene between the two of them for the reader. Later, Malo performs at a spoken word session when his girlfriend signs him up. The poem *Buck* is one of his own. He tells us that he finally understands why it was illegal to teach a slave to read and write, because there is so much power in the written word. And he decides that he wants to be a writer. He is. In a world turned upside down by violence, escaping the danger is often not a simple solution. Such is the case in M. K. Asante's new book entitled *Buck: A Memoir*. Born to American parents in Zimbabwe, their return to the US and the subsequent years haven't always been kind. In fact, we first meet him as his family is spiraling out of control, fueled by the street life mentality of the neighborhood in Philly, with an older brother in a gang and street name of Uzi, this 12-year-old boy is living far beyond what is age appropriate in many areas. With an absent father and a mother who is severely mentally ill, and often hospitalized, Malo is often left to his own devices after his brother's quick disappearance. His mother is ineffective, in fact she begs him to step up and be the man of the family, a child playing adult for years before it should have been necessary or acceptable. This is not an easy read, nor should it be. Language is the words of the street, and those unfamiliar will be searching the internet to find appropriate translation and meaning. But for those who allow the words and the incredibly honest narrative to take them for the ride, it will be one of the most enlightening of their lives. Be warned that this story is strong in language and imagery is often graphic and will be shocking in all good ways to those unfamiliar with the urban and impoverished areas of our country's cities. Yet the growth, talent and determination of this young man and his struggle to learn and grow, to find himself and build a sense of accomplishment that won't be shattered with gunfire and jail is well worth your time. The largest discovery we are treated to, and one that brings this story to a focal point is the oft-used pen is mightier than the sword. When Malo is able to both

recognize the truth in the statement, and apply it to his own learning and growth, and in doing so wanting to become a writer he has arrived M.K Asante has offered us one version of a writer, and made it entirely his own, and a writer to watch he most certainly is I received an ARC copy of the book from the publisher via NetGalley for purpose of honest review I was not compensated for this review all conclusions are my own responsibility.

