



All Our Names

By Dinaw Mengestu

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Named a best book of the year by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *NPR*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, and *The Daily Beast*

A sweeping, continent-spanning story about the love between men and women, between friends, and between citizens and their countries, *All Our Names* is a transfixing exploration of the relationships that define us. Fleeing war-torn Uganda for the American Midwest, Isaac begins a passionate affair with the social worker assigned to him. But the couple's bond is inescapably darkened by the secrets of Isaac's past: the country and the conflict he left behind and the beloved friend who changed the course of his life—and sacrificed everything to ensure his freedom. From acclaimed author Dinaw Mengestu, here is a love story for our time.

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All Our Names By Dinaw Mengestu Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of the Month, March 2014: Idealism, disillusionment, justice and love--these are the topics beautifully explored in this novel by the MacArthur "Genius" grantee and author of *How to Read the Air*. A young African man called Isaac has come to the Midwestern United States, where he embarks on a relationship with Helen, a social worker, who, for all her heart and intelligence, has trouble understanding him. Part illusion, part product of the revolutionary past in his own country, Isaac purposely makes himself unknowable. Who is Isaac (nicknamed "Dickens" by some, for his love of the writer) now? And who was he as a student in Ethiopia? Do names and times even matter? Sometimes lyrical, sometimes plaintive--"He's the closest thing I have to a past in this country," Isaac explains to Helen about a friend from home--Mengestu's novel is about a young man coming to terms with his past and trying to determine his future. But it's also a searing, universal story of emigration and identity. --Sara Nelson

From [Booklist](#)

Mengestu's previous novels (*The Beautiful Things That Heaven Bears*, 2007; *How to Read the Air*, 2010) established him as a talented writer interested in the imaginations, memories, and interpersonal collisions of African immigrants in the U.S. His latest, which presents the parallel narratives of a melancholy social worker in the American Midwest and a bookish witness to revolutionary violence in Uganda, returns to themes of alienation and exile but also explores the challenges and possibilities of love amid bleak circumstances. Both of his protagonists are drawn to a man named Isaac. Both stories take place in the early 1970s, a time of conflict in African states emerging from colonial rule as well as a time of persistent racial tensions in the U.S. The author highlights the dense slums of Kampala with the same intensity as he does the flatness of his midwestern farm town. But Mengestu is less interested in photographing a particular historical moment than he is fascinated by the dangers each setting imposes upon his vulnerable protagonists and their fragile relationships. And in the end, despite the bleak settings, tenderness somehow triumphs. --Brendan Driscoll

Review

"Beautiful. . . . Mysterious . . . you can't turn the pages fast enough." —*The New York Times Book Review*

"Heart-rending. . . . Both invokes and channels *Great Expectations*—a novel, like this one, about letting go of myths we'll never inhabit, so that we might craft new stories that free us to live." —*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

"A subtle masterpiece." —NPR

"Deeply moving. . . . Mengestu writes . . . with poignancy and psychological precision. . . . With great lyricism and ferocity." —*The New York Times*

"Taut and swift . . . with an abiding mystery driving it forward...One reads to the end . . . with a kind of desperate intensity. . . . Extraordinary." —*The Boston Globe*

"Disarmingly tender. . . . Finely calibrated." —*The Wall Street Journal*

“Mengestu’s voice is a finely tuned instrument. . . . Its words may be simple, but *All Our Names* speaks volumes.” —*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Delicately drawn. . . . The emotional power of *All Our Names* seeps through lines that seem placid on the surface. . . . This is not an immigrant story we already know.” —*The Washington Post*

“Beautifully written. . . . A powerful new addition to a growing list of accomplishments for Mengestu.” —*Chicago Tribune*

“Powerful.” —*Christian Science Monitor*

“Magnificent. . . . Mengestu seamlessly weaves together a disturbing story of parallel lives and plots.” —*CounterPunch*

“Elegiac. . . . A mourning for what has been lost not so much by any individual, but by whole countries and even a continent, as power corrupts absolutely and leaves its citizens with two choices: Endure or escape.” —*The Seattle Times*

“[Mengestu] is rapidly becoming a writer on the global stage.” —*The Guardian* (UK)

“Mengestu is the best writer of the African diaspora we have, and this book expands upon and updates his craft.” —*The New York Observer*

“The story of Helen and the two Isaacs, and the ways their longings mesh or don’t, has a subtle power that gets under the surface of events to explore the complexities of human relationships.” —*The Columbus Dispatch*

“Mengestu grounds big ideas about an uprising in Africa in simple emotions. The story’s narrator, a student turned revolutionary, gets swept up in love as easily as he does in politics.” —*Time Out New York* (critics’ pick)

“The enigmatic Isaac radiates a sense of quiet purpose that makes him both substantial and immensely appealing. Mengestu’s assertion of the claims of the self against the ideologies of tribe, nation or home is all the more powerful for being expressed through paradox.” —*London Review of Books*

“Subtly powerful. . . . We need globe-straddlers like Mengestu to show us that love, like hate, respects no borders.” —Boris Kachka, author of *Hothouse*

“Extraordinary. . . . A fierce and tender examination of identity, love, disillusionment, friendship and sacrifice.” —*The National Post* (Toronto)

“Writing with the kind of effortless ease suggestive of much painstaking struggle, Mengestu locates the novel’s horror not in war per se, but in those seemingly born to its bidding.” —*Toronto Star*

“Mengestu portrays the intersection of cultures experienced by the immigrant with unsettling perception. . . . [He] evokes contrasting landscapes but focuses on his characters . . . who are all caught in a cycle of connection and disruption, engagement and abandonment, hope and disillusion.” —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review, “Pick of the Week”)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Edna Pilon:

Information is provisions for those to get better life, information today can get by anyone from everywhere. The information can be a know-how or any news even a problem. What people must be consider when those information which is inside former life are challenging to be find than now's taking seriously which one works to believe or which one typically the resource are convinced. If you receive the unstable resource then you have it as your main information we will see huge disadvantage for you. All those possibilities will not happen in you if you take All Our Names as the daily resource information.

Larry Murray:

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Cathy Lantz:

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Arlene Miller:

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