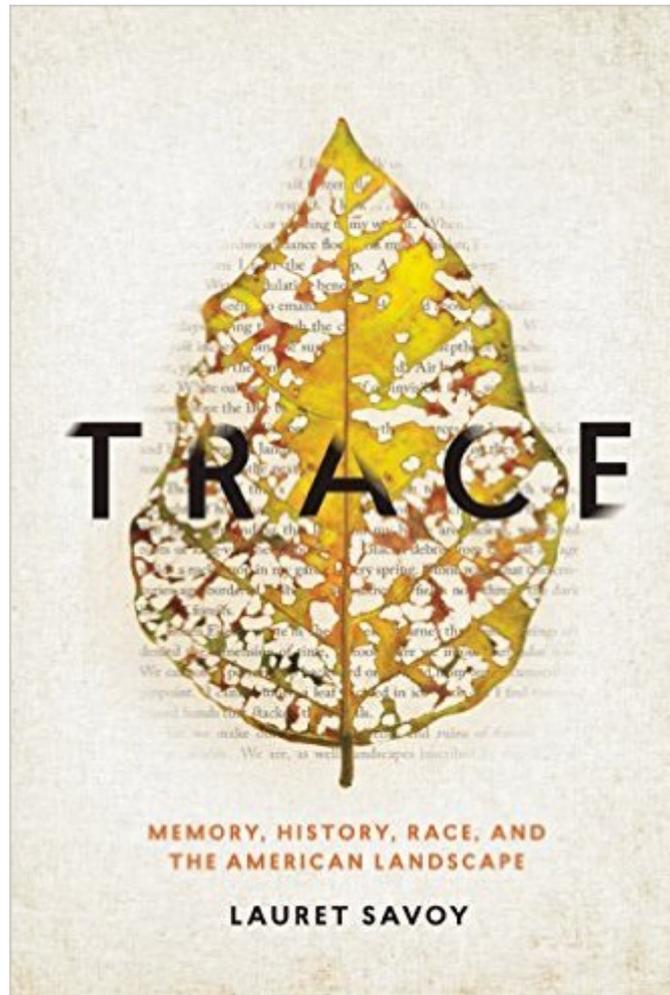


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# Trace: Memory, History, Race, And The American Landscape



## Synopsis

Sand and stone are Earth's fragmented memory. Each of us, too, is a landscape inscribed by memory and loss. One life-defining lesson Lauret Savoy learned as a young girl was this: the American land did not hate. As an educator and Earth historian, she has tracked the continent's past from the relics of deep time; but the paths of ancestors toward her—paths of free and enslaved Africans, colonists from Europe, and peoples indigenous to this land—lie largely eroded and lost. In this provocative and powerful mosaic of personal journeys and historical inquiry across a continent and time, Savoy explores how the country's still unfolding history, and ideas of race, have marked her and the land. From twisted terrain within the San Andreas Fault zone to a South Carolina plantation, from national parks to burial grounds, from Indian Territory and the U.S.-Mexico Border to the U.S. capital, *Trace* grapples with a searing national history to reveal the often unvoiced presence of the past. In distinctive and illuminating prose that is attentive to the rhythms of language and landscapes, she weaves together human stories of migration, silence, and displacement, as epic as the continent they survey, with uplifted mountains, braided streams, and eroded canyons. Gifted with this manifold vision, and graced by a scientific and lyrical diligence, she delves through fragmented histories -- natural, personal, cultural -- to find shadowy outlines of other stories of place in America. "Every landscape is an accumulation," reads one epigraph. "Life must be lived amidst that which was made before." Courageously and masterfully, Lauret Savoy does so in this beautiful book: she lives there, making sense of this land and its troubled past, reconciling what it means to inhabit terrains of memory and to be one.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Thoughtful and loving despite descriptions of incidents that made me wince, Trace lays out the complicated history of origins, place names, honoring (or dishonoring) the ancestors. For instance, she has visited historic sites where the guides are uncomfortable discussing the slaves who worked there and were buried there, and she spends much of her journey around the US looking for origin stories her parents were uncomfortable telling her. After reading it, I donated it to my town's Multicultural Network library, it must be read, savored, shared.

Trace is superb, evocative and illuminating, often magical. Savoy carries the reader across time and space along the social fault lines of America, and the ways in which this is reflected in personal story lines, and the appropriation and naming of place.

From its first pages to its last, this book holds the reader with its unforgettable stories and a singularly beautiful voice. This is a gifted writer and thinker who uses her artistry to blend her voyage of discovery of her highly diverse ancestors with the evolution of the landscapes in which this voyage occurred. Some of these scenes will never leave me. It is not possible to accompany her to some of these places at the intersection of memory, race, and landscape and come away unchanged.

I really loved this book. The depth with which she builds her landscapes left me in awe and illustrated just how troubled our recent history is, while reminding me that it is part of a larger story. It was personal and introspective without being insular. It could be fairly dense, and will require another pass.

It's very difficult to weave social, personal, historical, and scientific (here, geologic) issues and information into a coherent, compelling story. That Savoy has done so is a testament to her skills as a writer. Bravo.

An incredible read- a book that will be cherished alongside the works of Leopold, Wendell Berry and Terry Tempest Williams. Highly recommended!

Terrific book. Family history blended with landscape history illuminating things that have been suppressed for too long

Although the reading is often dense, the methodology and the stories she tells along the way kept me engaged. She writes well and beautifully combines history, place and people on her quest.

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