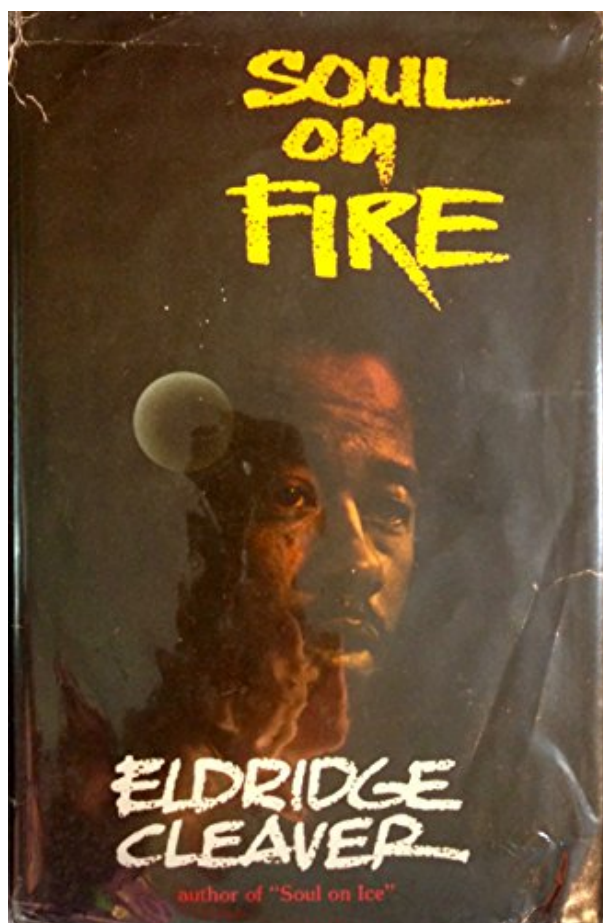
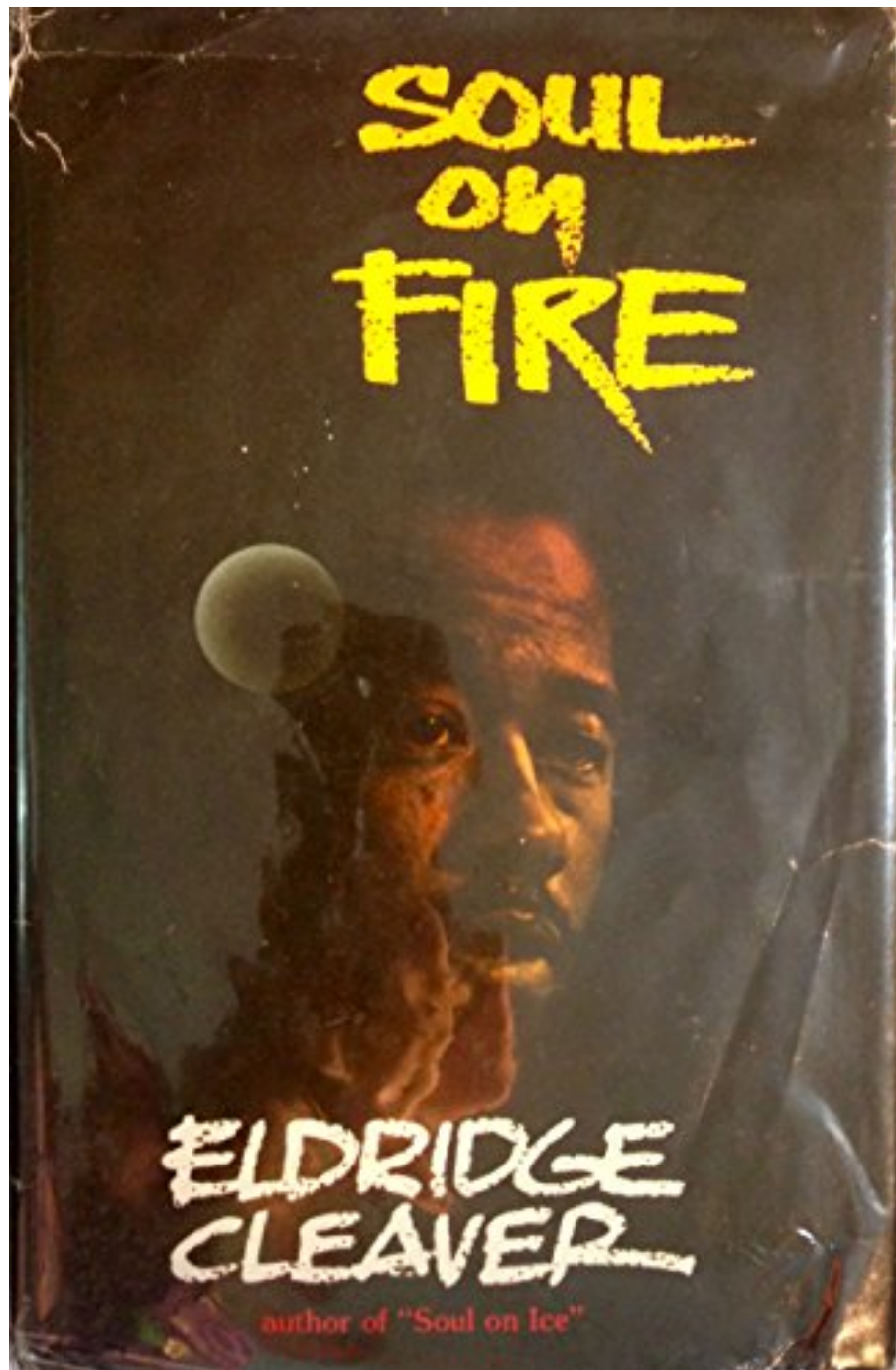


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SOUL ON FIRE BY ELDRIDGE CLEAVER PDF

How could Eldridge Cleaver, with his background-militant, violent, criminal expect the public to believe that he is now a Christian? Soul on Fire answers the questions that have confronted the public mind ever since this ex-Black Panther returned to America to face trial. In Soul on Fire, Eldridge Cleaver tells of his childhood and young adulthood; the years which shaped him into the man he was to become. Here is the tumult and violence of the 60's-from the viewpoint of one of that decade's most notorious outlaws; a viewpoint that will surprise some and outrage others.

Here is Eldridge Cleaver's personal account of his cloak-and-dagger escape into exile; a flight toward the "workers' paradises" of communism-the doctrine that he came to espouse as the answer for America's problems. Soul on Fire is a chronicle of high hopes and noble aspirations-and the shattering disillusionment which resulted from the unique close-up look into the governments of North Korea, North Vietnam, China, Russia, Cuba, and the Third World which Eldridge, as revolutionary, was afforded. Soul on Fire reveals the marvelous paradox that became Eldridge Cleaver's life, once he found the answer he had-unaware-been looking for all along. For here is his account of being a free man in Paris, yet miserable to the point of near-suicide; and returning to a jail cell in California, yet being happy to the point of tears. Soul on Fire is a story for the times, for it includes the drama of so much of recent history-the hopes, the dreams, the political and spiritual seeking that have occupied young and old alike. Has Eldridge Cleaver really experienced something that offers an answer to his-and a generation's-seeking? In Soul on Fire, you'll find the answers-from the man himself.

- Sales Rank: #733022 in Books
- Published on: 1978
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Binding: Hardcover
- 238 pages

Most helpful customer reviews

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

I always love a testimony about an evil man turning to Jesus ...

By Sue Reade

I knew nothing about this subject or man so I found it quite interesting. It was very detailed about his life when he was involved in The Black Panther movement. I always love a testimony about an evil man turning to Jesus and becoming saved. I was very saddened to read through further research that he did not hold on to his Christian faith though.

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful.

Controversial, anti-communist, manifesto, swept under the rug?

By King of Controversy

In many ways this seems a companion piece to his earlier work "Soul on Ice". In some ways this seems more controversial or anti-American. He talks about police brutality, police overstepping their authority

(warrantless searches) and murder by police. Cleaver's seventeen year old friend, Bobbie Hutton, was murdered in police custody. With Cleaver as a living witness. Cleaver chronicles Hutton as the first of 19 Panther members, sympathizers, or young black men, killed by 'justifiable homicide' across the country during 1968 and 1969. I'd heard some of these stories before but never knew the killing was 48 hours of Martin Luther Kings assassination. In the Village Voice it was later reported, "Cleaver said that he led the Panther group on a deliberate ambush of the police officers". This book is mostly about police misconduct, so there's no tally of the number of police allegedly killed by Panthers, or killed during 1968 and 1969. The memoirs of surviving family members don't seem to be big sellers on the college lecture circuit or adored by the in-crowd either. Neither does Cleaver's *Soul on Fire*, for that matter. There are very few links to this book. I believe this is the first review on Amazon. Even the copy I had from the library looks as if it may have never been checked out before.

Soul on Fire is a more proper autobiography than his earlier book. There are plenty of photos of Cleaver in Peking, Hanoi, Paris, Africa, and photos of his parents and children. The contents are for the most part in chronological order with Cleaver simply talking about experiences he's had from early childhood up until the publishing of the book. I suppose the major theme of the work is his disenchantment with communism. Ishmael Reed, in the introduction to *Soul on Ice*, writes, "He wrote a second book, *Soul on Fire*, which in many ways was as absorbing as *Soul on Ice*. But like Till Eulenspiegel, he had worked his tricks too many times; the book was ignored and his description of his conversion to Christianity, mocked".

Cleaver writes, "Since I covered so much of the Black Muslim routine in *Soul on Ice* and my deep attachment to the personality and teachings of Malcolm X, it is important therefore to discuss some topics that I purposely avoided in that first book". He adds that he never quite shared the hatred some had for all whites and that he began to gravitate towards the writings of Karl Marx and the communist manifesto. When he went into exile after being 'wanted' by the police, where so many black leaders seemed to go, he wound up in Cuba. He quotes a young black cuban army officer there, Captain Toro, "the last white hope of the traditional Cuban ruling class, which, given the choice between a black-led revolution and a white one, had chosen Fidel". Cleaver didn't like Cuba or his treatment at their hands and left for Algeria.

There's a humorous story, not in this book, about how when Timothy Leary fled to Algeria, Cleaver put him under house arrest as being an enemy of the people/revolution. Leary promoted drug use. Cleaver would go on to visit North Korea, China, Central Africa and North Vietnam (while the US was at war with them) and was treated as a VIP. Cleaver claims that the North Vietnamese paid his living expenses while he lived in Algeria and later in France. He writes, "By 1969 The Black Panther paper was saturated with Mao slogans". He quotes several passages, including one from the Omaha Nebraska branch, that are word from word taken from the Little Red Book.

Cleaver writes that the biggest break he had with the communists was when his children were born. He also began to break with the Marxists (and he would challenge their dignitaries and translators some the way he had challenged America) when he saw Marxism put into practice. He notes a humorous exchange he had with a public official in China. When asked how many black Americans there were, Cleaver exaggerated a figure of 40 million. The official responded, "ah, we have some villages that size". Also Cleaver didn't like the enforced mentality of everyone saying the exact same thing (this public official excluded). In his head he began to take stock of the way things were done overseas as compared to America. Of Algeria he says a citizen might just disappear, "When the Algerians clamp down, I'm talking about a coffin lid, not a closed door". Cleaver would finally say, "I'd rather be a prisoner in America than free anywhere else".

Cleaver notes that, "very carefully, communism had divided everything into materialism and idealism. Everything you couldn't measure or weigh, well, that was idealism, and therefore it didn't exist. Music,

poetry, your soul, and everything that is related to religion was false". I've noticed this of progressive activists myself. After deconstructing all values as oppressive, nothing other than materialism remains, an endpoint opposite the one progressives would make claim they are for bringing about. Not that I disagree with the communists, or begrudge Cleaver's flight overseas, in fact, I think the whole thing was a gigantic fraud designed for the purpose of discrediting communism, I just don't want the 'communists' I know teaching my son in Bible school. Can we outlaw Sunday school. . .? Please!

At one point in the book Cleaver has a run in with the chief of police in Algiers. Cleaver was 'running a stolen car ring' for one thing. He was buying European cars on 'credit' and selling them in Africa and the Mideast. So, even exiled in Africa Cleaver was still outsmarting and getting over on the white man. As the Algerian authority tries to delicately chastise him, or make Cleaver see this officials side, the conflict in a way makes Cleaver look bad. It's written in a way, as if Cleaver is a bit self absorbed and can't see the error of his own ways or his own arguments objectively.

At one point after leaving Algeria for France, he talks about a white frenchman's view of anti-colonialism, "I felt there was something blind and indiscriminate about his total condemnation of the white race and total absolution of people of color". At an earlier point in the book, Cleaver writes, "Many people have the idea that, once upon a time, america was a peaceful garden of eden and then along came the black panther party which in turn gave rise to chaos. That is a patently false impression". Well, the Panthers didn't exactly invent 'anti-colonialism'.

When Cleaver returned home (in custody) from exile overseas, he writes, "members of the black panthers held a series of press conferences denouncing me as an FBI informer and CIA agent. . . all of my old friends, with the exception of one or two rejected me". Let me be honest here. Wasn't sure where I'd put this in here, or what I would say (imagined something a lot more eloquent or informative than this) let me just say, I think they are all the police.

He talks about religion on occasion in his two books. . . Here he notes the Nation of Islam's claim that America is the 'Babylon' referred to in the book of Revelations. It isn't till the very end, though, that we read about Cleaver's conversion. It came almost suddenly at the end. Then the back cover lists quotes from religious figures praising the work, in such a way you might expect to see this book sold at church - after a visit from Eldridge Cleaver, visiting clergyman. I think if it were more in depth on his conversion it might have raised our guard and had the reader wondering if this is trying to talk us into something or selling us or justify something.

Cleaver became a conservative republican. . . but, reading an interview he had with NPR, about a year before his death, Cleaver was definitely a 'new republican'. He wasn't ashamed of his Panther past, from the excerpt in the interview, and many of his views seemed quite liberal. Always his own, and a renaissance, man.

6 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Read this back in 1998

By Matthew C. Christian

I read this book after reading "soul on ice". I liked the earlier book, but it actually leaves out quite a bit. In this book its more autobiographical. I really enjoyed his descriptions of actual communism, and not the idealized version that we read about typically.(My wife lived in Eastern Europe in the 80's) Overall I think it was much better than his first book, and fills in some of the holes.

See all 10 customer reviews...

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