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## Book Review - Greetings from New Nashville: How a Sleepy Southern Town Became "It" City

Asha Hagood

Georgia Public Library Service, ahagood@georgialibraries.org

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## Off the SHELF

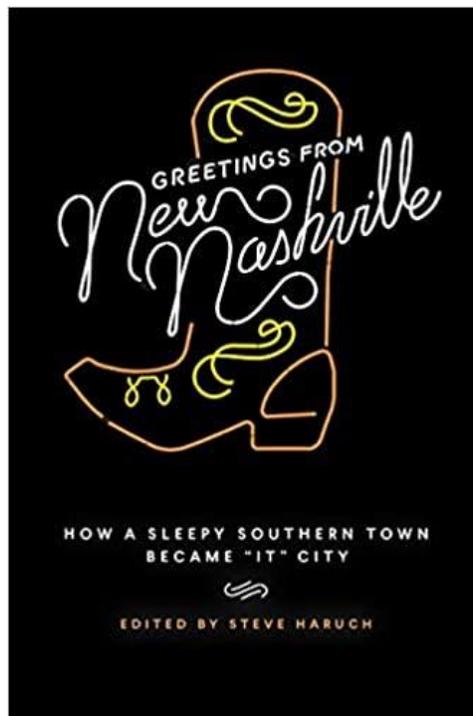
**Greetings from New Nashville: How a Sleepy Southern Town Became "It" City** edited by Steve Haruch (Vanderbilt University Press, 2020: ISBN 9780826500274, \$24.95)

Steve Haruch knows Nashville. In his second published book, *Greetings from New Nashville: How a Sleepy Southern Town Became "It" City*, he takes a deeper dive into matters he had previously covered for NPR and the *New York Times*—honky-tonks, the Grand Ole Opry, and all manner of things synonymous with Nashville.

Right out of the gate, the introduction acknowledges that “it’s hard to pinpoint the exact moment the sleepy town of Nashville became a real city.” What follows is an account—almost a litany—of Nashvillian musicians, celebrities, scandals, and even weather events that led up to the once sleepy town being dubbed an “It City” in 2013 by a journalist for the *New York Times*. And that’s just the introduction.

The content that follows dissects the conundrum at the heart of the book—Nashville is no longer an idyllic, sleepy town, and she has enjoyed some development and progress, but just what monstrous thing was stirred awake? Each chapter—essays and excerpts from other published authors—offers musings on some aspect of Nashville, from sports teams and hot chicken (their signature dish) to historic music landmarks and desegregation.

The book starts with lighter fare, like the acquisition of an NHL team and the hot chicken phenomenon, and wends its way to heavier topics, like the “second wave gentrification” impacting the lower-middle class and the police shooting and subsequent slandering of Jocques Clemmons, a Black man, following a traffic infraction.



Haruch doesn’t shy away from the examination of race within the context of Nashville’s history. There’s the inclusion of a poem by Tiana Clark entitled “Nashville,” which corrals so many issues central to the problem of racism, including gerrymandering, gentrification, and statues and icons of the Confederacy.

Betsy Phillips’s essay “Perverse Incentives” closes out the book with a sentiment that captures the overarching tone of the editor and many of the contributors. Phillips addressed a “simmering resentment” regarding all the money the

city manages to proffer for development incentives “but not for schools.” Phillips wrote, “and now with all the new buildings and the downtown packed with tourists—all the money pouring into the city that isn’t making the lives of ordinary Nashvillians better—that resentment is beginning to boil over.”

A book this packed with historic events, social commentary, and the like could easily be a boring, labor intensive read, but *Greetings* manages to avoid that, offering a mélange of

voices and writing styles. It would be a great addition to the 900s (history & geography) section of any library and, were it not for the omission of an index, it could almost function as

a textbook for a course on the ill effects of becoming a tourist destination.

*Asha Hagood is Outreach Librarian at Georgia Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled*