



# The Envy of the World: On Being a Black Man in America

*Ellis Cose*

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## **The Envy of the World: On Being a Black Man in America** Ellis Cose

With an eloquence and compassion reminiscent of James Baldwin's *Letter to My Nephew*, Ellis Cose presents a frank and realistic examination of the daunting challenges facing black men in twenty-first-century America and offers a way out of the cycle of defeatism and despair that wreaks havoc on America's black communities.

Black men have never had more opportunity for success than they do today. Yet, as Ellis Cose bluntly puts it, "We are watching the largest group of black males in history stumbling through life with a ball and chain wrapped around their legs. If brought together in one incorporated region, the population of black males behind bars would instantly become the twelfth largest urban area in America." Add to that the ravages of AIDS, murder, poverty, and illiteracy, the raging anger between many black men and women, and the widening gap separating the black elite from the so-called underclass, and you have a prescription for a paralyzing pessimism.

But even as he acknowledges the systemic obstacles that confront black men of all social strata, Ellis Cose refuses to accept them as reasons for giving up or giving in. In powerful and stirring prose, Cose rails against the historical worldview that has categorized academic achievement as a source of shame instead of pride in many black communities; he also outlines steps black males can take to enhance their odds for success.

With insightful anecdotes about a broad range of black men -- from Franklin Raines, the first black man to run a Fortune 500 company, to unlettered ex-prisoners -- Cose documents the amazing journey the black race has made, and contemplates the challenges ahead. Both a warning of the vast social tragedy that is wasted black potential and a vital call to arms that can enable black men to reclaim their destiny, *The Envy of the World* is an honest and important book for anyone concerned about the future of America.

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