



## Reach: 40 Black Men Speak on Living, Leading, and Succeeding

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**Reach: 40 Black Men Speak on Living, Leading, and Succeeding** From Atria Books

*A New York Times and Washington Post Bestseller*

In this timely and important collection of personal essays, black men from all walks of life share their inspiring stories and ultimately how each, in his own way, became a source of hope for his community and country.

*Reach* includes forty first-person accounts from well-known men like the Rev. Al Sharpton, John Legend, Isiah Thomas, Bill T. Jones, Louis Gossett, Jr., and Talib Kweli, alongside influential community organizers, businessmen, religious leaders, philanthropists, and educators. These remarkable individuals are living proof that black men are as committed as ever to ensuring a better world for themselves and for others.

Powerful and indispensable to our ongoing cultural dialogue, *Reach* explodes myths about black men by providing rare, candid, and deeply personal insights into their lives. It's a blueprint for better community engagement. It's an essential resource for communities everywhere.

Proceeds from the sale of *Reach* will go to BMe Community, a nonprofit organization dedicated to building caring and prosperous communities inspired by black men. *Reach* is also a Project of the Kapor Center for Social Impact, one of the founding supporters of President Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

“There is a great need right now for more positive conversations about Black men in America. *Reach* is an excellent resource to guide those conversations. The men whose stories are shared in this book make a powerful argument for the value and grace of every human being.” (Archbishop Desmond Tutu)

"As Ben Jealous says in his introduction to *Reach*, 'We cannot imitate that which we have never seen, heard, or read about'—and I am grateful for these powerful stories showing us all the kinds of leaders our Black boys can grow up to be." (Marian Wright Edelman, President, Children's Defense Fund)

“*Reach* is more than a collection of individual stories. At its core it’s a book about choices, about how each one of us has the option to live a life with meaning and purpose.” (Ilyasah Shabazz, author of *X: A Novel*, *Malcolm Little*, and *Growing Up X*)

“Energetic and inspiring . . . This is a moving book that will motivate readers to join these agents of change.” (*Publishers Weekly*)

“Inspiring stories of personal struggle and triumph.” (*Booklist*)

“This book is seriously ground breaking. Not to mention addictive! I couldn't stop reading the essays and was especially taken with D'Wayne's and Yusuf Shakur's journeys of hope. It should be a requisite part of America's English curriculum." (Alisa Swidler, *Town & Country*)

“A serious book of essays . . . These powerful accounts will prove immensely useful for all readers who want to understand the titular points of living, leading, and succeeding.” (*Library Journal*)

"This bold, illuminating and often surprising collection of first-person narratives is essential to understand the lives of black men in America. It reveals pathways, deeds and dreams that rarely make the news." (David Bornstein, author, *How to Change the World*)

"The leadership that pours out of the pages of *Reach* is priceless. The lessons, the wisdom, the know-how of these great leaders will touch and transform the present as well as generations to come inspiring them to REACH for so much more." (J. Ivy, poet and author of *Dear Father*)

*Reach* truly packs a punch . . . I can definitely see it being a great gift for any young man on his way to high school, college, or post-college life.” (*Terri Schlichenmeyer, North Dallas Gazette*)

#### About the Author

Ben Jealous is the former President and CEO of the NAACP and a renowned public figure with a broad national audience. He is also a partner at Kapor Capital, an Oakland-based firm that leverages the tech sector to create progressive social change. A Rhodes Scholar, Jealous has been on the “40 Under 40” lists of both *Forbes* and *Time*. In 2013 *The Washington Post* referred to him as “one of the nation’s most prominent civil rights leaders.”

Trabian Shorters is a social entrepreneur with over twenty years of experience in diverse fields including

national service, technology, nonprofit, and philanthropy. An expert on using asset framing to address social problems, Trabian is best known for applying it to black male issues. In winter 2011, he launched BME Community while serving as Vice President at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

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## INTRODUCTION

Ben Jealous

I was blessed to grow up in a home where stories of great black men and women were served up as frequently as spoon bread and fried apples. My grandmother told and retold stories of ancestors who had been born slaves and went on to found universities and banks and become statesmen during Reconstruction. My grandfather maintained an informal basement bar where I spent valuable evenings and weekend afternoons listening to his friends, all of whom were born into segregation but rose up above the walls of limitation. My parents told me bedtime tales about their experiences fighting Jim Crow with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Together, these stories inspired me to dream big dreams of helping to increase opportunity for all people. Perhaps even more importantly, they instilled in me the habit of seeking out the stories of others. Their stories and the dreams they inspired started me on my own path toward leadership.

Since the beginning of time, imitation has always been the first step for those who achieve great things. Children pick up sticks to reenact the battles of great soldiers. Toddlers preach to congregations of teddy bears and puppets. Babies step into their parents' shoes and try to walk. However, here's the rub: each of us can only imitate what we know. We cannot imitate that which we have never seen, heard, or read about.

Despite the rapid advances of technology, young men of color today often lack access to positive images and stories about others who look like them. With the exception of stories about one black man who lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, the reporting we see about men of color on the nightly news often leaves little good to imitate.

Occasionally, the images of our greatest heroes do break through. Black-and-white film reels of Martin Luther King Jr. and Thurgood Marshall flicker in classrooms on rainy days across the country. However, the grainy images place these icons in another era, in a time when the battles seemed perhaps simpler, the outcomes predetermined. Their lives are remembered in a way that makes them so flawless, so impossibly angelic, that their stories and achievements seem unattainable.

This is a book of everyday heroes. It is a collection of men known and unknown, most of whom have grown up since desegregation, all of whom have faced challenge, and all of whom have lived their lives in ways that are relevant to each of us. It is offered as a gift of gifts: each man featured in these pages sat down with us to tell his story so that it could be combined with the stories of others and handed down from parents, godparents, aunts and uncles, older brothers and peers to young men seeking to find their way.

My hope is that this book will empower you, as my family's stories empowered me, with examples of black men who have overcome great challenges to do even greater things. I encourage you to read these stories, to ask your elders for their own and, ultimately, empowered with that new knowledge, to live a life of meaning that will leave a legacy for generations to come.

## INTRODUCTION

Trabian Shorters

You could hear a pin drop when I told my board of directors at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation that I would step down in three months to build a new network called the BMe Community. The sudden hush was followed by raucous applause.

Through the course of my work at the Knight Foundation, I enjoyed incredible access to elite people and their information, and I stumbled upon a number of discoveries that made it imperative to launch BMe.

We are in the middle of the biggest cultural transfer in the history of the nation. The baby boomers, who have defined the American story for decades, are aging out at the exact moment that the millennial generation is coming of age. The millennials are inheriting the narrative left behind by these analog immigrants to their digital world, but they aren't necessarily embracing it.

On the contrary, America on the millennials' watch will no longer have a racial majority. All of the social myths will be updated, for better or for worse. If we make a concerted effort to understand each other over the next decade, I think we can change them for the better.

This optimism is based, in part, on the social science that has permeated popular culture over the past few years—the research and writing of Daniel Kahneman, Chip and Dan Heath, and others. Our brains use all sorts of shortcuts to process information. People make decisions based not upon facts, but upon their *perceptions* of reality, and these perceptions are primed by the stories already running in our heads. As a result, we are prone to certain consistent, persistent mistakes in perception. One of these mistakes is that “what you see is all there is.” When black males are portrayed everywhere we look in a negative light, our brains—no matter our race or sex—are prone and primed to believe that this portrayal is correct, even the norm. In fact, it's not. Not by a long shot.

People, however, need more than just statistics to change their perspectives. Statistics are often rejected if they do not reinforce preexisting beliefs. On the other hand, *stories* involving relatable characters are “experienced” by the mind. When we hear a story, we put ourselves in that person's shoes for a minute. The story gives us an opportunity to reconsider our perspective and position. And we tend to choose the perspective that leaves us looking the best, even if that means discarding a mistaken position from before.

This is a book of stories about men whom you know but perhaps have not been receiving fully. They are normal black men. They are good men. They are imperfect men, flawed, with struggles just like yours and decisions just as good or just as poor as some that you've made. Every one of the men in this book is also a community builder, somebody who wants us all to live in a more caring and prosperous world.

We encourage everyone, of all races and sexes, to explore life through the eyes of these men. Once you do, it will become very easy to see brothers like these in your day-to-day life.

The mission of the BMe Community is to build caring and prosperous communities inspired by black men. All proceeds from the sale of this book will go to support that positive aspiration. Anyone can join the BMe Community, regardless of race or sex, because our mission is actually about building communities, not about saving the black man. We believe in building upon positive people, positive aspirations, and positive opportunities to tell the truth to one another and work together for a better future.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Sophie Clark:**

Do you have favorite book? When you have, what is your favorite's book? Book is very important thing for us to know everything in the world. Each guide has different aim or goal; it means that guide has different type. Some people experience enjoy to spend their time for you to read a book. They are reading whatever they have because their hobby will be reading a book. Think about the person who don't like looking at a

book? Sometime, particular person feel need book if they found difficult problem or perhaps exercise. Well, probably you will want this Reach: 40 Black Men Speak on Living, Leading, and Succeeding.

**Mary Brown:**

Book is to be different per grade. Book for children right up until adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important usually. The book Reach: 40 Black Men Speak on Living, Leading, and Succeeding seemed to be making you to know about other know-how and of course you can take more information. It doesn't matter what advantages for you. The publication Reach: 40 Black Men Speak on Living, Leading, and Succeeding is not only giving you considerably more new information but also to get your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your own spend time to read your book. Try to make relationship together with the book Reach: 40 Black Men Speak on Living, Leading, and Succeeding. You never experience lose out for everything should you read some books.

**Carmen Helton:**

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**Zandra Woods:**

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