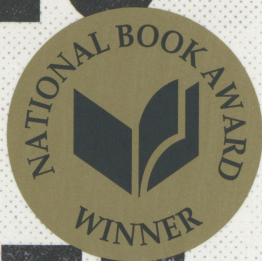
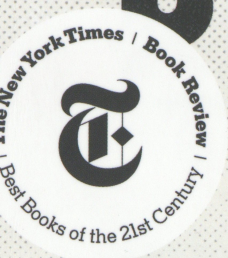


#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

TA-NEHISI

COATES



BETWEEN

THE WORLD

AND ME

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"This is required reading." —Toni Morrison



**#1 *New York Times* bestseller •
National Book Award winner • Named one
of *Time's* ten best nonfiction books of the
decade • Pulitzer Prize finalist • National
Book Critics Circle Award finalist**

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about America's history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race," a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black people—bodies exploited through slavery and segregation and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?

Between the World and Me is Ta-Nehisi Coates's attempt to answer these questions in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory journeys, from Howard University to Civil War battlefields, from the South Side of Chicago to Paris, from his childhood home to the living rooms of mothers whose children's lives were taken as American plunder. Beautifully woven from personal narrative, reimagined history, and fresh, emotionally charged reportage, *Between the World and Me* clearly illuminates the past, bravely confronts our present, and offers a transcendent vision for a way forward.

12/1/2026
TOM
Giff

Praise for
Between the World and Me

"I've been wondering who might fill the intellectual void that plagued me after James Baldwin died. Clearly it is Ta-Nehisi Coates. The language of *Between the World and Me*, like Coates's journey, is visceral, eloquent, and beautifully redemptive. And its examination of the hazards and hopes of black male life is as profound as it is revelatory. This is required reading."

—TONI MORRISON

"Powerful and passionate . . . profoundly moving . . . a searing meditation on what it means to be black in America today."

—MICHIKO KAKUTANI, *The New York Times*

"Extraordinary . . . [Coates] writes an impassioned letter to his teenage son—a letter both loving and full of a parent's dread—counseling him on the history of American violence against the black body, the young African-American's extreme vulnerability to wrongful arrest, police violence, and disproportionate incarceration."

—DAVID REMNICK, *The New Yorker*

"Brilliant . . . a riveting meditation on the state of race in America . . . [Coates] is firing on all cylinders, and it is something to behold: a mature writer entirely consumed by a momentous subject and working at the extreme of his considerable powers at the very moment national events most conform to his vision."

—*The Washington Post*

“An eloquent blend of history, reportage, and memoir written in the tradition of James Baldwin with echoes of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* . . . It is less a typical memoir of a particular time and place than an autobiography of the black body in America. . . . Coates writes with tenderness, especially of his wife, child, and extended family, and with frankness. . . . Coates’s success, in this book and elsewhere, is due to his lucidity and innate dignity, his respect for himself and for others.”

—*The Boston Globe*

“For someone who proudly calls himself an atheist, Coates gives us a whole lot of ‘Can I get an amen?’ in this slim and essential volume of familial joy and rigorous struggle. . . . [He] has become the most sought-after public intellectual on the issue of race in America, with good reason. *Between the World and Me* . . . is at once a magnification and a distillation of our existence as black people in a country we were not meant to survive. It is a straight tribute to our strength, endurance and grace. . . . [Coates] speaks resolutely and vividly to all of black America.”

—*Los Angeles Times*

“A crucial book during this moment of generational awakening.”

—*The New Yorker*

“A work that’s both titanic and timely, *Between the World and Me* is the latest essential reading in America’s social canon.”

—*Entertainment Weekly*

“Coates delivers a beautiful lyrical call for consciousness in the face of racial discrimination in America. . . . *Between the World and Me* is in the same mode of *The Fire Next Time*; it is a book designed to wake you up. . . . An exhortation against blindness.”

—*The Guardian*



“Coates has crafted a deeply moving and poignant letter to his own son. . . . [His] book is a compelling mix of history, analysis and memoir. *Between the World and Me* is a much-needed artifact to document the times we are living in [from] one of the leading public intellectuals of our generation. . . . The experience of having a sage elder speak directly to you in such lyrical, gorgeous prose—language bursting with the revelatory thought and love of black life—is a beautiful thing.”

—*The Root*

“Rife with love, sadness, anger and struggle, *Between the World and Me* charts a path through the American gauntlet for both the black child who will inevitably walk the world alone and for the black parent who must let that child walk away.”

—*Newsday*

“Poignant, revelatory and exceedingly wise, *Between the World and Me* is an essential clarion call to our collective conscience. We ignore it at our own peril.”

—*San Francisco Chronicle*

“Masterfully written . . . powerful storytelling.”

—*New York Post*

“One of the most riveting and heartfelt books to appear in some time . . . The book achieves a level of clarity and eloquence reminiscent of Ralph Ellison’s classic *Invisible Man*. . . . The perspective [Coates] brings to American life is one that no responsible citizen or serious scholar can safely ignore.”

—*Foreign Affairs*

“Urgent, lyrical, and devastating in its precision, Coates has penned a new classic of our time.”

—*Vogue*

“Powerful.”

—*The Economist*



“A work of rare beauty and revelatory honesty . . . *Between the World and Me* is a love letter written in a moral emergency, one that Coates exposes with the precision of an autopsy and the force of an exorcism. . . . Coates is frequently lauded as one of America’s most important writers on the subject of race today, but this in fact undersells him: Coates is one of America’s most important writers on the subject of America today. . . . [He’s] a polymath whose breadth of knowledge on matters ranging from literature to pop culture to French philosophy to the Civil War bleeds through every page of his book, distilled into profound moments of discovery, immensely erudite but never showy.”

—*Slate*

“Vital reading at this moment in America.”

—*U.S. News & World Report*

“[Coates] has crafted a highly provocative, thoughtfully presented, and beautifully written narrative. . . . Much of what Coates writes may be difficult for a majority of Americans to process, but that’s the incisive wisdom of it. Read it, think about it, take a deep breath and read it again. The spirit of James Baldwin lives within its pages.”

—*The Christian Science Monitor*

“Part memoir, part diary, and wholly necessary, it is precisely the document this country needs right now.”

—*The New Republic*

“A moving testament to what it means to be black and an American in our troubled age . . . *Between the World and Me* feels of-the-moment, but like James Baldwin’s celebrated 1963 treatise *The Fire Next Time*, it stands to become a classic on the subject of race in America.”

—*The Seattle Times*



“Riveting . . . Coates delivers a fiery soliloquy dissecting the tradition of the erasure of African-Americans beginning with the deeply personal.”
—Minneapolis *Star Tribune*

“[*Between the World and Me*] is not a Pollyanna, coming-of-age memoir about how idyllic life was growing up in America. It is raw. It is searing. . . . [It’s] a book that should be read and shared by everyone, as it is a story that painfully and honestly explores the age-old question of what it means to grow up black and male in America.”
—*The Baltimore Sun*

“A searing indictment of America’s legacy of violence, institutional and otherwise, against blacks.”
—*Chicago Tribune*

“I know that this book is addressed to the author’s son, and by obvious analogy to all boys and young men of color as they pass, inexorably, into harm’s way. I hope that I will be forgiven, then, for feeling that Ta-Nehisi Coates was speaking to me, too, one father to another, teaching me that real courage is the courage to be vulnerable, to admit having fallen short of the mark, to stay open-hearted and curious in the face of hate and lies, to remain skeptical when there is so much comfort in easy belief, to acknowledge the limits of our power to protect our children from harm and, hardest of all, to see how the burden of our need to protect becomes a burden on them, one that we must, sooner or later, have the wisdom and the awful courage to surrender.” —MICHAEL CHABON

“Ta-Nehisi Coates is the James Baldwin of our era, and this is his *cri de coeur*. A brilliant thinker at the top of his powers, he has distilled four hundred years of history and his own anguish and wisdom into a prayer for his beloved son and an invocation to the conscience of his country. *Between the World and Me* is an instant classic and a gift to us all.” —ISABEL WILKERSON, author of *The Warmth of Other Suns*

BY TA-NEHISI COATES

The Message

The Water Dancer

We Were Eight Years in Power

Between the World and Me

The Beautiful Struggle



Between the World and Me





Between the World and Me

Ta-Nehisi Coates



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**For David and Kenyatta,
who believed**





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*And one morning while in the woods I stumbled suddenly
upon the thing,
Stumbled upon it in a grassy clearing guarded by scaly oaks
and elms
And the sooty details of the scene rose, thrusting themselves
between the world and me. . . .*

—RICHARD WRIGHT



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YAYASAN
KEPIMPINAN
PERDAMA

Between the World and Me





I.

*Do not speak to me of martyrdom,
of men who die to be remembered
on some parish day.*

*I don't believe in dying
though, I too shall die.*

*And violets like castanets
will echo me.*

SONIA SANCHEZ



Son,

Last Sunday the host of a popular news show asked me what it meant to lose my body. The host was broadcasting from Washington, D.C., and I was seated in a remote studio on the far west side of Manhattan. A satellite closed the miles between us, but no machinery could close the gap between her world and the world for which I had been summoned to speak. When the host asked me about my body, her face faded from the screen, and was replaced by a scroll of words, written by me earlier that week.

The host read these words for the audience, and when she finished she turned to the subject of my body, although she did not mention it specifically. But by now I am accustomed to intelligent people asking about the condition of my body without realizing the nature of their request. Specifically, the host wished to know why I felt

that white America's progress, or rather the progress of those Americans who believe that they are white, was built on looting and violence. Hearing this, I felt an old and indistinct sadness well up in me. The answer to this question is the record of the believers themselves. The answer is American history.

There is nothing extreme in this statement. Americans deify democracy in a way that allows for a dim awareness that they have, from time to time, stood in defiance of their God. But democracy is a forgiving God and America's heresies—torture, theft, enslavement—are so common among individuals and nations that none can declare themselves immune. In fact, Americans, in a real sense, have never betrayed their God. When Abraham Lincoln declared, in 1863, that the battle of Gettysburg must ensure “that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth,” he was not merely being aspirational; at the onset of the Civil War, the United States of America had one of the highest rates of suffrage in the world. The question is not whether Lincoln truly meant “government of the people” but what our country has, throughout its history, taken the political term “people” to actually mean. In 1863 it did not mean your mother or your grandmother, and it did not mean you and me. Thus America's problem is not its betrayal of “government of the people,” but the means by which “the people” acquired their names.

This leads us to another equally important ideal, one



that Americans implicitly accept but to which they make no conscious claim. Americans believe in the reality of "race" as a defined, indubitable feature of the natural world. Racism—the need to ascribe bone-deep features to people and then humiliate, reduce, and destroy them—inevitably follows from this inalterable condition. In this way, racism is rendered as the innocent daughter of Mother Nature, and one is left to deplore the Middle Passage or the Trail of Tears the way one deplores an earthquake, a tornado, or any other phenomenon that can be cast as beyond the handiwork of men.

But race is the child of racism, not the father. And the process of naming "the people" has never been a matter of genealogy and physiognomy so much as one of hierarchy. Difference in hue and hair is old. But the belief in the pre-eminence of hue and hair, the notion that these factors can correctly organize a society and that they signify deeper attributes, which are indelible—this is the new idea at the heart of these new people who have been brought up hopelessly, tragically, deceitfully, to believe that they are white.

These new people are, like us, a modern invention. But unlike us, their new name has no real meaning divorced from the machinery of criminal power. The new people were something else before they were white—Catholic, Corsican, Welsh, Mennonite, Jewish—and if all our national hopes have any fulfillment, then they will have to be something else again. Perhaps they will truly become American and create a nobler basis for their myths. I can-



not call it. As for now, it must be said that the process of washing the disparate tribes white, the elevation of the belief in being white, was not achieved through wine tastings and ice cream socials, but rather through the pillaging of life, liberty, labor, and land; through the flaying of backs; the chaining of limbs; the strangling of dissidents; the destruction of families; the rape of mothers; the sale of children; and various other acts meant, first and foremost, to deny you and me the right to secure and govern our own bodies.


The new people are not original in this. Perhaps there has been, at some point in history, some great power whose elevation was exempt from the violent exploitation of other human bodies. If there has been, I have yet to discover it. But this banality of violence can never excuse America, because America makes no claim to the banal. America believes itself exceptional, the greatest and noblest nation ever to exist, a lone champion standing between the 'white city of democracy and the terrorists, despots, barbarians, and other enemies of civilization. One cannot, at once, claim to be superhuman and then plead mortal error. I propose to take our countrymen's claims of American exceptionalism seriously, which is to say I propose subjecting our country to an exceptional moral standard. This is difficult because there exists, all around us, an apparatus urging us to accept American innocence at face value and not to inquire too much. And it is so easy to look away, to live with the fruits of our history and to ig-

nore the great evil done in all of our names. But you and I have never truly had that luxury. I think you know.

I write you in your fifteenth year. I am writing you because this was the year you saw Eric Garner choked to death for selling cigarettes; because you know now that Renisha McBride was shot for seeking help, that John Crawford was shot down for browsing in a department store. And you have seen men in uniform drive by and murder Tamir Rice, a twelve-year-old child whom they were oath-bound to protect. And you have seen men in the same uniforms pummel Marlene Pinnock, someone's grandmother, on the side of a road. And you know now, if you did not before, that the police departments of your country have been endowed with the authority to destroy your body. It does not matter if the destruction is the result of an unfortunate overreaction. It does not matter if it originates in a misunderstanding. It does not matter if the destruction springs from a foolish policy. Sell cigarettes without the proper authority and your body can be destroyed. Resent the people trying to entrap your body and it can be destroyed. Turn into a dark stairwell and your body can be destroyed. The destroyers will rarely be held accountable. Mostly they will receive pensions. And destruction is merely the superlative form of a dominion whose prerogatives include friskings, detainings, beatings, and humiliations. All of this is common to black people. And all of this is old for black people. No one is held responsible.



This is your country,
this is your world,
this is your body,
and you must find
some way to live within
the all of it.

 **Kinokuniya**

BETWEEN THE WORLD

AND ME

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