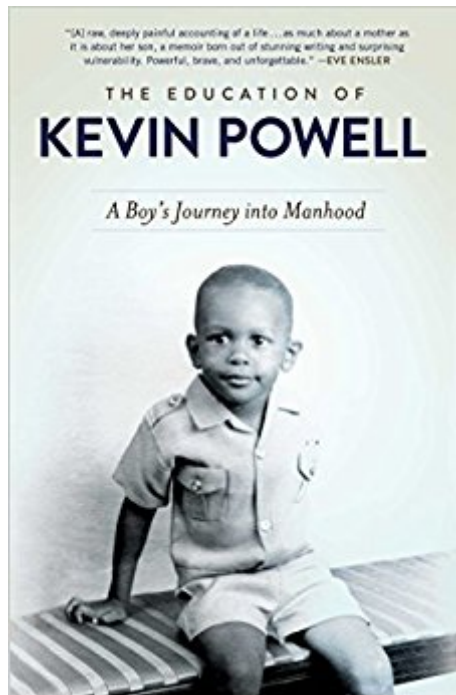




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# The Education Of Kevin Powell: A Boy's Journey Into Manhood



## Synopsis

In the spirit of Piri Thomas's *Down These Mean Streets* and Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, writer and activist Kevin Powell's memoir is an illuminating education for us all. • (USA Today) "vividly recounts the horrific poverty of his youth and his struggles to overcome a legacy of anger, violence, and self-hatred. When Kevin Powell was three, he discovered the volatile nature of his world: a place of pain, poverty, violence, fire, rats, roaches, and a fear that would haunt him for years; but also moments of joy, transcendence, and belonging. By the time he graduated from high school, something his single mother and his grandparents did not do, Powell had survived abuse, abandonment by his father, debilitating low self-esteem, a police beating, and years of constant relocation "from school to school, neighborhood to neighborhood. He was left feeling isolated, wondering if his life had any value, and doubting that he would survive to see old age. In this unflinchingly honest autobiography, Kevin Powell reflects on his tumultuous, turbulent passage from child to man. He revisits the path that led him to become a successful writer, public speaker, activist, and cast member on the influential first season of MTV's *The Real World*. He also recalls the terrible lows he endured of depression, thoughts of suicide, alcoholism, bankruptcy, doomed relationships, failed political campaigns, and the soul-shattering murder of Tupac Shakur. Time and again, Powell harks back to lessons his mother taught him as a little boy: never stop learning, never stop telling the truth, always strive to be a better man, do what is right. Written with urgency and insight by one of the most gifted voices of our times, *The Education of Kevin Powell* is a powerful chronicle of healing and growth, survival and redemption. Ultimately, Kevin Powell's journey is our journey, too.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“The Education of Kevin Powell is a raw, deeply painful accounting of a life born of poverty, racism, abandonment, abuse, and complicated love. It is a memoir as much about a mother as it is about her son, a memoir born out of stunning writing and surprising vulnerability. A memoir of rage and insight, heartbreak and hunger. Powerful, brave, and unforgettable.” • (Eve Ensler, author of *The Vagina Monologues*) “Poignant and transformative. This story of Black male life in our patriarchal culture, from boyhood to manhood, is raw and passionate. It offers a true and honest portrait of all that Black males endure to survive and, more importantly, to cope with trauma, and to heal and thrive. It should be read by everyone who claims to care about the fate of Black males in America.” • (BELL HOOKS, author of *The Will to Change*) “Powell’s education is one with lessons for all of us, a riveting story of conflicted manhood, the ups (and definitely the downs) of the class structure, and the ongoing racial drama that has characterized America from the jump. To understand Powell’s triumphs, defeats, and refusal to give up, even when all the odds were against him, is to understand America writ large. His personal commitment to justice and equality for all, made clear here as the outgrowth of a life often marked by injustice and hardship, is one we should all hope to mimic.” • (TIM WISE, author of *White Like Me*) “This dynamic memoir takes us through a personal journey of pain, growth, triumph, defeat, and finally reclamations of his gifts and importance in U.S. letters. Using his journalist’s keen eye, he also recalls key events and people over the past forty years in American culture, music, and politics: the birth of hip-hop, poetry slams, the life and death of Tupac Shakur, Los Angeles’ rebellion after the acquittal of police in Rodney King’s beating, the rise of Barack Obama, and more. The intersections make his story your story, his voice that of a generation.” • (LUIS J. RODRIGUEZ, Los Angeles Poet Laureate, author of *Always Running*) “As a charismatic speaker, leader, and a very good writer, Kevin Powell has the courage...to be fully human, and this will bring the deepest revolution of all.” (GLORIA STEINEM, Author of *Revolution from Within*)

Kevin Powell, a native of Jersey City, New Jersey, is the author or editor of eleven previous books. He is a native of Jersey City, New Jersey. Thanks to a college financial aid package, he studied at Rutgers University and has gone on to write for publications such as The Huffington Post, CNN.com, Esquire, Rolling Stone, the Washington Post, Vibe, and the Guardian. He is also the

president and cofounder of BK Nation, an American organization focused on civil rights, human rights, and equal opportunities for all people. Powell is a proud long-time resident of Brooklyn, New York. Visit [www.KevinPowell.net](http://www.KevinPowell.net) and [www.BKNation.org](http://www.BKNation.org).

In a world that appears to be more and more polarized, it is often a struggle to see reality from someone else's perspective. Often the assumption is that there are simple answers, of the "one size fits all" variety. The brilliant thing about this book is how much the book isn't about the author - but the journey and the education - and that makes it stunningly easy to find oneself able to identify with the impact felt by both the author, and the incredible array of others. I suggest, implore, and invite you to read this book, prepared to discover a new example of manhood - strong, honest, willing to explore and engage in true dialogue - that ultimately celebrates what is extraordinary about being alive.

I have said that I have never ever, ever, evva, evva written an author about their book. This was a phenomenal read!! I initially wanted to read the book to gain some insight into raising a black male child because I just obtained my license for foster parenting. I plan to adopt a boy. I'm a single black woman and I come from a two parent family with just one sibling (a sister). So, I don't know much about single parenting or little boys. But this book is sooo much more than what I thought it would be. I learned more about myself and MY journey than anything. We are from the same generation. So, as I was reading this story, I was also in my own memories. Many of those memories are very painful. There were times I shed tears. This memoir made me feel and think about things that I had forgotten. So much so, that several times I had to put the book down for a few days to regroup. It was heartwarming to hear a black man express his emotions so honestly without anger or aggression. This memoir really personifies exactly my reasons for wanting to raise a son. The greatest accomplishment I feel I could obtain would be raising an emotionally healthy black man. This memoir will be xmas and birthday gifts for the men in my life and it will be among the list of mandatory reading for my future son!

This memoir exceeded my expectations for its honest account and Powell's willingness to keep learning, growing, and discovering more about himself and the world around him. Admittedly, I was turned off by his abusive past and approached the book as a skeptic - unsure if there was much to be said that could change my initial impression. How wrong I was to feel that way. It's precisely that past and Powell's refusal to gloss over or excuse such behavior that made learning about his life so interesting. We never hear him blame others or even his experiences for causing his temper but it's

knowledge of his living in extreme poverty, violent childhood and feelings of abandonment that humanize him in a way that I wasn't prepared to do. Highly recommend this book.

So I loved the rich and vivid memories of Kevin's youth, that was great, but made the book somewhat slow, but very personal and focused on the key elements that showed why he went through so many struggles as an adult, and like many of us, fell back into the same pitfalls over and over again. I appreciated the honesty and candor of growing up black in America with the constant struggles all African American men face. I also noticed his frequent conflicting thoughts and words he used throughout his life. It was interesting his connection with Tupac, and his back and forth behavior, and Kevin's mirroring of similar issues and situations in his life. I think that is something many men go through, and I connected with similar bouts of misogyny, frustration, anger throughout my life as well. Good book, this has encouraged me to finally take a stab at reading some must read books that has shaped Mr. Powell's life. Seeing Kevin speak in person, and then reading this much into his life was fantastic, it really made me think about my life, struggles, failures and successes, and how we have to keep going and striving for something greater.

Before purchasing this book, I didn't know too much about Kevin Powell. I saw him on a panel with Bell Hooks that focused on black men and masculinity. The panel was very informative about the way black men are and the way their masculinity is perceived. Kevin was very open to telling about his past but didn't want to tell too much because his book would be releasing soon. After watching the panel, I knew that I would want to read this book and I am glad that I did. Kevin makes a point to talk a great deal about his childhood and through that we see how what he experienced as a child shaped him as an adult. I think that so much of his life parallels that of many young men in the black community and he triumphs through it. This book can serve as a guide for young men seeking to turn negative into positive.

In all honesty, I was glued to this book from beginning to end, to the point that it drugged me from another book. First and foremost, Kevin has been dealing with anger issues all his life as he states. It's interesting because I know a colleague who has led a very similar life as far as his experiences and lack thereof. As I was reading I was waiting for the next episode to arrive and to no surprise it did, episode after episode. Reading this reminds me of the hard life my mom has lived, only problem is that my Mom doesn't think she has any problem. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and learning more about K. Powell. I recall him from the first season of the Real World. I now understand WHY. He's

always had merit as black people have always been the constant underclass in America. Going forward, I hope Kevin can control those inner demons that possess him.

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