

## Perseverance Through Severe Dysfunction: Breaking the Curse of Intergenerational Trauma as a Black Man in America

**Reggie D. Ford**

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*Perseverance Through Severe Dysfunction is a compelling memoir about dealing with trauma and overcoming barriers as a Black person in America.*

In his earnest memoir *Perseverance Through Severe Dysfunction*, Reggie D. Ford goes over personal struggles and confronts the mental health effects of poverty and racism.

The book begins with an important discussion of what PTSD is, including its symptoms, causes, and the stigma around it. It debunks the myths associated with the disorder, argues that not only military veterans experience it, and asserts that people's perception of traumatic events is subjective. It suggests helpful solutions for mental distress, including exercise, meditating, and journaling, and it goes over the benefits of counseling. This is a preface to Ford's exploration of the significant challenges that Black people face in seeking professional intervention for mental health conditions.

Ford grew up in the inner city of Nashville, Tennessee. His mother was resilient but emotionally detached. His father was incarcerated several times and was many times absent during his son's childhood. Meanwhile, Ford, a brilliant student, was accepted into a prestigious private school. As a minority in the school, he experienced racism and felt isolated. Still, he was the first person in his family to graduate from college, and he became an accomplished entrepreneur.

Ford discusses racial disparities in America via topics like the Black Tax (the economic burden that Black people experience to support their families), parental absence, and teen pregnancy in Black communities; his perspectives are strengthened by statistical nods. And his text is open and moving, with candid descriptions of intimate moments: he expresses anguish over learning about his father's arrests and the deaths of multiple friends, and discusses his experiences with homelessness and living in the projects. He conveys disillusionment following his alienation from family members after bitter disputes, and covers the crushing deaths of his grandparents.

The text keeps its audience in mind throughout its personal accounts, and actionable lessons are drawn from the events of Ford's life. He explains that a friend taught him to respect people regardless of their economic backgrounds, and that he learned to lead, not follow, from his mother. He also draws upon his father's mistakes as life lessons. On more general topics, like racism, trauma, and the gaps in the criminal justice system, further reading suggestions are included in the footnotes and beyond.

Though it deals with multiple topics, the book remains centered on the generational traumas that Black people experience. Having grown up around crime and without a close relationship to his biological father, Ford's father suffered from trauma that impacted his own capacity as a father; this impacted his son.

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barriers as a Black person in America.

EDITH WAIRIMU (May 20, 2021)

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