

Rebirth of a Dream: A Young Black Man's Fearless Mission to Resurrect His Father's Vision

Ean Garrett

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Escaping poverty can be like trying to crawl out of the belly of a snake—the constriction of adverse forces leave many feeling frustrated, hopeless, and lost. For Ean Garrett, those forces were particularly binding: his father was murdered in front of him when Garrett was just four years old, his mother suffered from drug dependency, and he endured a foster care system that held him down rather than lifted him up.

Yet, amazingly, Garrett didn't let his circumstances define him or lead him into a life of crime and poverty, a fate suffered by so many people around him. He earned a law degree and became a national spokesperson on the benefit of mentoring. Eventually, he founded the Infinite Institute, an organization that brings leadership training and entrepreneurial opportunities to young black men.

Garrett's drive comes in large part from his father, who also dreamed of rising above his circumstances and finding a life of purpose. "[M]y father was faced with a choice whether to be overwhelmed by his situation or to escape it, and he chose emancipation," Garrett writes. "With his success he was able to help those around him, while serving as a model of upward mobility."

Although he believes that the rebirth of his father's dream is what propelled him forward, it is obvious that Garrett has plenty of passion and determination of his own. So often in this inspiring and well-written memoir, Garrett emphasizes that people can elevate themselves as he has, but notes that it takes a level of fierce optimism that cannot be allowed to flicker.

That type of ferocity is what allowed Garrett to avoid becoming heavily involved with gangs or addicted to drugs himself. Also, many relatives and friends contributed to bolstering his resolve. Garrett often mentions those who step in to answer his calls for help, and it is this continual wash of gratitude and humility that balances beautifully with the steely tenacity he builds up over time.

Garrett's writing style is primarily earnest and straightforward, with little literary flourish, and he tends toward describing events in a linear chronology. That type of spare, lean prose works well here, and allows his passion to shine through. He writes, "Every day, my experiences were teaching me that if you want something and are willing to go through hell to get it, then it's yours." The relentless determination and humility that Garrett chronicles elevates the work and provides inspiration to those who might be facing the same struggles.

In chronicling his journey from poverty and difficulty to success—being a guest on Oprah, meeting Barack Obama, giving a speech on mentoring at the Library of Congress, among so many other notable achievements—Garrett doesn't shrink from relating his challenging times as well. Along his path, he has made many mistakes and poor choices, but these have served to strengthen his mission to achieve his father's dreams as well as his own.

Adversity can break you or empower you, Garrett believes. Fortunately for him and for anyone looking for a role model to follow, he chose the latter option. This exploration of determination and optimism—against seemingly impossible

odds—is an outstanding and touching memoir that resonates long after the last page.

ELIZABETH MILLARD (April 16, 2012)

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