



**Title:** We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy

**Author:** Ta-Nehisi Coates

**Imprint:** One World

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# BOOK RESUME: WE WERE EIGHT YEARS IN POWER

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

“We were eight years in power” was the lament of Reconstruction-era black politicians as the American experiment in multiracial democracy ended with the return of white supremacist rule in the South. In this sweeping collection of new and selected essays, Ta-Nehisi Coates explores the tragic echoes of that history in our own time: the unprecedented election of a black president followed by a vicious backlash that fueled the election of the man Coates argues is America’s “first white president.”

But the story of these present-day eight years is not just about presidential politics. This book also examines the new voices, ideas, and movements for justice that emerged over this period—and the effects of the persistent, haunting shadow of our nation’s old and unreconciled history. Coates powerfully examines the events of the Obama era from his intimate and revealing perspective—the point of view of a young writer who begins the journey in an unemployment office in Harlem and ends it in the Oval Office, interviewing a president.

*We Were Eight Years in Power* features Coates’s iconic essays first published in *The Atlantic*, including “Fear of a Black President,” “The Case for Reparations,” and “The Black Family in the Age of Mass Incarceration,” along with eight fresh essays that revisit each year of the Obama administration through Coates’s own experiences, observations, and intellectual development, capped by a bracingly original assessment of the election that fully illuminated the tragedy of the Obama era. *We Were Eight Years in Power* is a vital account of modern America, from one of the definitive voices of this historic moment.

## REVIEWS AND PRAISE

“A master class . . . Anyone who wants to know who we are—and where we are now—must sit with [Ta-Nehisi Coates] for a good while. . . . It should inspire us as writers, and as Americans, that he urges us . . . to become better—or at least clearer on why we’re not.” —Kevin Young, *The New York Times Book Review*

“Interspersed among the essays are introductory personal reflections. . . . Together, these introspections are the inside story of a writer at work, with all the fears, insecurities, influences, insights and blind spots that the craft demands.” —Carlos Lozada, *The Washington Post*

“Coates . . . eloquently unfurls blunt truths. . . . Such a voice, in such a moment, is a ray of light.” —*USA Today*

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“Indispensable . . . bracing . . . compelling . . . A new book from Coates is not merely a literary event. It’s a launch from Cape Canaveral.” —Jennifer Senior, *The New York Times*

“Essential . . . Coates’s probing essays about race, politics, and history became necessary ballast for this nation’s gravity-defying moment.” —*The Boston Globe*

#### **AWARDS AND ACCOLADES**

- Winner of the 2018 Dayton Literary Peace Prize for Nonfiction
- Finalist for the 2017 *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize
- Finalist for the 2018 PEN/Jean Stein Book Award
- Named One of the Best Books of the Year by: *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *Time*, *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and more

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