



Cosby: His Life and Times

By Mark Whitaker



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The first major biography of an American icon, comedian Bill Cosby. Based on extensive research and in-depth interviews with Cosby and more than sixty of his closest friends and associates, it is a frank, fun and fascinating account of his life and historic legacy.

Far from the gentle worlds of his routines or TV shows, Cosby grew up in a Philadelphia housing project, the son of an alcoholic, largely absent father and a loving but overworked mother. With novelistic detail, award winning journalist Mark Whitaker tells the story of how, after dropping out of high school, Cosby turned his life around by joining the Navy, talking his way into college, and seizing his first breaks as a stand-up comedian.

Published on the 30th anniversary of *The Cosby Show*, the book reveals the behind-the-scenes story of that groundbreaking sitcom as well as Cosby's bestselling albums, breakout role on *I Spy*, and pioneering place in children's TV. But it also deals with professional setbacks and personal dramas, from an affair that sparked public scandal to the murder of his only son, and the private influence of his wife of fifty years, Camille Cosby.

Whitaker explores the roots of Cosby's controversial stands on race, as well as "the Cosby effect" that helped pave the way for a black president. For any fan of Bill Cosby's work, and any student of American television, comedy, or social history, *Cosby: His Life and Times* is an essential read.

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Cosby: His Life and Times By Mark Whitaker Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of the Month, September 2014: Woody Allen famously said that only creators of serious works get to “sit at the grown-ups’ table.” Comedians, in his self-loathing view, were childish, lesser, not to be respected. Perhaps one of the greatest achievements of Mark Whitaker’s *Cosby* is how forcefully it disproves that notion. According to this detailed and generous account, Bill Cosby, for all his goofy faces, physical comedy, and earnest philosophizing, has done more to change cultural attitudes than just about any “serious” actor ever could. Whether at a Greenwich Village club that also showcased Bob Dylan, or on the beloved 1960s TV show, *I Spy*, or on his wildly successful eponymous sitcom (1984-92), Bill Cosby became what Whitaker calls entertainment’s Jackie Robinson, smashing racial barriers, teaching hard truths to the black community, leading the way. (Comics as diverse as Richard Pryor and Jerry Seinfeld have acknowledged their debt to Cosby.) Whitaker dutifully takes us through Cosby’s life, from his youth in the Philadelphia projects, through his years at Temple University on a track scholarship, to unimaginable financial success and fame, to the tragic death of his only son and the complications of his 50+ year marriage to the elegant and stalwart Camille Cosby. But if some of the less savory parts of his history—the alleged womanizing and perfectionist temper tantrums—are a bit glossed over, the portrait that emerges here is of a guy who has worked tirelessly and earnestly to change the race conversation in this country, one silly bit at a time. – *Sara Nelson*

Review

“A smart, revealing biography of an iconic American funnyman. . . . A fascinating look at a complicated genius.” (*People*)

“Whitaker’s wonderfully thorough biography of America’s most accomplished comedian provides context and depth as he analyzes Bill Cosby’s work.” (*New York Times Book Review*)

Fluid, admiring, packed with detail and anecdotes.” (*Wall Street Journal*)

“Invaluable . . . Whitaker makes a convincing argument that issues of race and politics have preoccupied Cosby throughout his life.” (*New Yorker*)

“Whitaker’s clear-eyed, fair-minded and deftly written book takes up all the momentous stops of Cosby’s life’s journey . . . by allowing us to see Cosby’s tumultuous life in full, Whitaker’s book makes it possible to imagine Bill Cosby being regarded as one of the first prophets of what optimists of all colors believe will someday be a “post-racial America.” (*USA TODAY*)

“Absorbing . . . makes a persuasive case for Cosby as a groundbreaking comic and a quiet but far-ranging pioneer of black advancement.” (*Publishers Weekly (starred review)*)

“Readable, thoughtful life of the brilliant comedian and . . . an eye-opening book and a pleasure to read.” (*Kirkus Reviews (starred review)*)

“Provides an in-depth look at the triumphs and tragedies of a man who has kept America laughing for decades.” (*New York Daily News*)

“This is a compelling look at a man who has had a major impact on American race relations and television and whose “Cosby effect” helped prime the nation for its first black president.” (*Booklist (starred review)*)

“An insightful, well-researched exploration . . . a generous portrayal of a complicated yet ultimately compassionate man.” (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*)

Editor’s Picks (*Ebony*)

“Written with the entertainer’s cooperation, it is admiring but not fawning, honest but not lancing, with a narrative drive that matches the soaring arc of Cosby’s career . . . [Whitaker] has a masterly command of detail . . . a must-read for the comedian’s fans, and a book that will reward anyone interested in comedy, television or the wellsprings of popular culture.” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*)

“A solid, well-researched reminder of Cosby’s impact on the pop-culture landscape.” (*Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*)

“*Cosby: His Life and Times* tells a quintessentially American tale of adversity and triumph, influence, betrayal and—yes—lots and lots of laughter.” (*Boston Globe*)

“The book is at its strongest when the author puts Cosby’s comedy and to education into a broad social and cultural context.” (*Washington Post*)

“The biography examines the non-comedic side of Bill Cosby, and features interviews with 60 of his closest friends and associates. The author calls Cosby ‘entertainment’s Jackie Robinson, smashing racial barriers and teaching hard truths to the black community.’” (*Sacramento Bee*)

About the Author

Mark Whitaker is the author of the critically acclaimed memoir, *My Long Trip Home*. The former managing editor of CNN Worldwide, he was previously the Washington bureau chief for NBC News and a reporter and editor at *Newsweek*, where he rose to become the first African-American leader of a national newsweekly.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jacqueline Kang:

This *Cosby: His Life and Times* are generally reliable for you who want to be described as a successful person, why. The reason of this *Cosby: His Life and Times* can be one of the great books you must have will be giving you more than just simple reading food but feed a person with information that perhaps will shock your before knowledge. This book will be handy, you can bring it all over the place and whenever your conditions at e-book and printed kinds. Beside that this *Cosby: His Life and Times* forcing you to have an enormous of experience for instance rich vocabulary, giving you tryout of critical thinking that we know it useful in your day action. So , let's have it appreciate reading.

Mandy Jackson:

Typically the book *Cosby: His Life and Times* has a lot details on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of benefit. The book was published by the very famous author. The writer makes some research before

write this book. This particular book very easy to read you will get the point easily after looking over this book.

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Margaret James:

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