



## **United: Thoughts on Finding Common Ground and Advancing the Common Good**

*Cory Booker*

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# United: Thoughts on Finding Common Ground and Advancing the Common Good

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**United: Thoughts on Finding Common Ground and Advancing the Common Good** Cory Booker  
**NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER** • A passionate new voice in American politics, United States Senator Cory Booker makes the case that the virtues of empathy, responsibility, and action must guide our nation toward a brighter future.

Raised in northern New Jersey, Cory Booker went to Stanford University on a football scholarship, accepted a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford University, then studied at Yale Law School. Graduating from Yale, his options were limitless.

He chose public service.

He chose to move to a rough neighborhood in Newark, New Jersey, where he worked as a tenants' rights lawyer before winning a seat on the City Council. In 2006, he was elected mayor, and for more than seven years he was the public face of an American city that had gone decades with too little positive national attention and investment. In 2013, Booker became the first African American elected to represent New Jersey in the U.S. Senate.

In *United*, Cory Booker draws on personal experience to issue a stirring call to reorient our nation and our politics around the principles of compassion and solidarity. He speaks of rising above despair to engage with hope, pursuing our shared mission, and embracing our common destiny.

Here is his account of his own political education, the moments—some entertaining, some heartbreak, all of them enlightening—that have shaped his civic vision. Here are the lessons Booker learned from the remarkable people who inspired him to serve, men and women whose example fueled his desire to create opportunities for others. Here also are his observations on the issues he cares about most deeply, from race and crime and the crisis of mass incarceration to economic and environmental justice.

“Hope is the active conviction that despair will never have the last word,” Booker writes in this galvanizing book. In a world where we too easily lose touch with our neighbors, he argues, we must remember that we all rise or fall together—and that we must move beyond mere tolerance for one another toward a deeper connection: love.

## Praise for *United*

“An exceedingly good book, and an important book, and a reminder of what makes Booker an important and, through it all, a promising public figure.”—**PolitickerNJ**

“What sets Senator Booker’s work apart from that of similar political books is that it seeks to elevate discourse rather than bring down opponents of the opposite partisan persuasion. This is a refreshing take, one that is truly worthy of study and contemplation.”—**The Huffington Post**

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **United: Thoughts on Finding Common Ground and Advancing the Common Good Details**

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## From Reader Review United: Thoughts on Finding Common Ground and Advancing the Common Good for online ebook

### Jeanne says

*Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere—and to reach out to others is very much in one's own self-interest* (p. 210).

Cory Booker is a Democratic senator from New Jersey, one of ten African Americans to ever serve in the US Senate. Three of the 100 current senators are African American, the most ever. He had served as mayor of Newark and is one of a small number of mayors to move directly to the Senate. He is a Rhodes Scholar and a graduate of Stanford and Yale Law School.

More than these things, though, Booker is a charismatic and passionate idealist, who has made some unusual life choices (e.g., living in the projects of Newark) that are atypical for a politician. In a period when cynicism and self-interest seem to reign supreme, it's difficult to not be suspicious.

*United: Thoughts on Finding Common Ground and Advancing the Common Good* is largely focused on his work in Newark, although he occasionally alluded to his election to Senate and his work there. He talked about public housing, crime, the criminal justice system, the broader effects on children and communities of the mass imprisonment of African Americans even for nonviolent offenses, and environmental activism. *United* was written to *honor the best of our history and the truth of my mentors, and to share some of the ideals they instilled in me: empathy and connection, responsibility and obligation—and, perhaps most of all, the urgent need to act* (p. 6).

Booker's description of himself is not of a man who became a politician fully formed. He readily admits to making mistakes, to having been formed by a number of mentors (mostly African American elders, including his parents, but also some Whites). His voice is refreshing. Through listening and learning from his mentors and his community, he identified more effective, often creative ways of solving the problems his community faced.

While Booker has spent a lot of energy working at a molecular level, he has also become interested in identifying and addressing the source of the problem, as with one of the parables he retold (about saving drowning children): *"I'm going upriver to find out why these children are in the water in the first place so I can stop it"* (p. 191).

If you are suspicious – as you might rightly be when you hear of a politician choosing to live in the projects – watch and listen. Do his words and actions align? At least in *United* they do.

Booker is a force to reckon with and watch.

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### Marquis Cooper says

What a GREAT read! Cory Booker is a great guy with an even more amazing story. I had no idea who he was before this book but now i feel like he's truly one of the good people in politics actually trying to make a

difference. This got 5 easy stars. I'd give it more if I could. The book goes through his life from a kid to a U.S. Senator. Amazing stories were told and to be honest I can't wait to hear them again. A must read!

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### **Christina says**

I'm a big Cory Booker fan and had no idea what he faced while running for office. (Sharpe James is shaaady. Watch Street Fight on Netflix, which gets into it much more!) This isn't a typical autobiography. Booker shares a little about his background and how and why he wanted to get involved, but it's more about the people and the issues.

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### **Rambling Reader says**

is it so wrong that I want to have his babies?

cory, marry me, my boo.

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### **Leslie says**

So, if you think that the political scene in this country is a screwed-up mess, read this book and see that there is hope. Cory Booker's story is an amazing one: educated black man chooses to go live in the projects of Newark, NJ after graduation from law school, so that he can make a difference. He soon discovers that what he envisions doesn't meet with what is needed, but he is very good at listening, working, and uniting people for a stronger community. This barely touches the tip of the iceberg of this journey--from community activist, to council member, to mayor, to junior senator. The faith, hope and vision in this book is truly inspiring.

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### **Cindy says**

Cory Booker for President! He's definitely better than any of the choices facing me currently.

I was intrigued by Cory Booker when I watched a show on PBS detailing his run against the corrupt, then incumbent mayor of Newark, NJ. Why would the intelligent, privileged son of two IBM executives choose to live in a run-down, drug-infested apartment building in a city that's not even where he's really from? Because he wants to make the world better and he's starting in his corner.

While I'm sure that Cory and I don't always see eye to eye on matters, we see eye to eye on one--something needs to be done about the state of our country, and our current actions are not having much effect. I loved how when he wasn't sure what his next course of action should be, his mother advised him, "When you don't know what to do, do SOMETHING."

Booker isn't afraid to admit when he was wrong and he always attempted to recognize the lesson to be learned from any situation. I loved that when he did decide to do SOMETHING about a situation in which he

was at a loss to improve, he decided to fast and pray and invited the community to join him. And they did. Wish we had more leaders like that! He was not afraid to learn from his elders or venture into places not deemed safe. He just dove in. And I like him for it.

I found Booker to be enthusiastic about wanting to make improvements in affordable housing, incarceration that is out of control, the environment, and many other social issues affecting our world today. And I wanted to go with him! Now he's got me thinking, what could I do in my corner of the world to make things better?

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### **Vaughn Richardson-Guy says**

I really admire Cory Booker and the journey he took to get where he is today. In "United..." he doesn't try to hide any privilege he might have had growing up in an upper middle class household. And he doesn't shy away from discussing his flaws; conversely, he is open about his "teachable moments"—times when he was blatantly wrong, and learned from his mistakes, which I find to be an important characteristic for those in leadership positions to possess. The way with which he approaches issues surrounding class and poverty and disenfranchisement—with caution, honesty and authenticity—is refreshing. And the unsung heroes—the tireless workers and community leaders and "normal folk" that often go unrecognized—that he brings into the fray and celebrates is beautiful. There are so many quotable moments here, and so many insightful lessons and situations from which to learn and tuck away for later use. It's a book I'll pass along, as well as return to, during my own journey.

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### **Kiki Bakker says**

This wasn't just a book, or a story about a politician. I just read a book that was about normal people, about us. I was inspired and moved by it and I recommend you to read it too. But again, it wasn't just a book, it was more than that.

Stephen Covey has written about a principle centered way of living, meaning a valuebased approach to everyday life. For me that is about trying your best everyday to be a little bit better than the day before. You may think this sounds idealistic. And it does. Idealism isn't about changing the world, but about improving the every day life around you. Step by step. Start with the small things, start with your circle of influence.

I remember one Sunday morning in the park during my college years. I walked in the park, brought a book and food and drinks. I wanted some quite time and I saw a couple of families with children wishing for the same. Some joy, some fun, some sun. But the park was a complete mess from the night before. Cans of beer, garbage and empty bottles lay around the grass. I stood up and took a plastic bag to put all the garbage in. After ten minutes a lady stood up and joined me. "I was bothered by it, but it wasn't until I saw you standing up that I thought of cleaning it myself too."

Cory Bookers' book is about that. About standing up and live up to your values, despite the things people expect from you. Okay, I admit, some of his stories remind me of the Wire and aren't anywhere near the situation in which I grew up or in which I live everyday. Not even close. But that's why I want people to see that his book isn't about that situation at all. It doesn't matter in what situation you live.

If you do injustice to one person, you do injustice to everyone. If you help one person, you help everyone.

The world is surrounded by people who speak values, who write about a better world. But there is just only one way of making something better and that's start doing it. You are responsible for your own environment, for your own community. We ourselves make and create our communities.

"For crying out loud, do something." That's what Booker is telling us. Roll up your sleeves and work. I was amazed by him telling that he had a great team inside and outside (!!) the city council to make his plans work. Because I've worked five years in politics, at the policy department, and I got frustrated by not seeing all of the legal measures work in practice. Nothing seemed to work, because there was no one making it work in practice.

Nowadays I have the opportunity to work on doing things everyday. I organize. And it really doesn't matter what I organize. I organize people in politics at the moment. I'm trying to make a lot of Cory Bookers in this country. I want you to be one too. I want us to act, I want us to start doing. Stop talking. Stop wishing. Stop thinking about how things get better. Step up to what your community is facing. Start seeing your surroundings, your building, your family, your school, your sportsclub as your community.

The only harm that can be done to our society is through indifference. It's not about the 10% or 20% that are doing harm to other people, it's the majority that has to stand up. As long as we are quiet, the minority of harmdoers are taking over. And harmdoers can be real harmdoers, such as the ones Booker is writing about. But it can also be small harmdoing. Teachers who don't pay attention to their students, parents who don't look out for their children. Or passengers that just spill their waste on common ground, our common ground. If we don't want the dirt, we have to clean it, is my interpretation of the message of Booker.

You can change the world on your own, by changing your world. I want to do that too. I want to change everyday. One step at the time. Treat people like you want to be treated yourself. Don't act according to rules or ethics, act in the way that you want people to act in a perfect world. Live your life the way you wish the world should be. Try a little better every day.

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### **Janet says**

I received this book after winning a Goodreads giveaway. Thank you, I truly enjoyed reading it.

I have admired Sen. Booker for a long time, after first learning about him on local television news when he first ran for mayor. Later, I saw him in two documentary series, "Brick City." He was a breath of fresh air in his community and it was obvious he had the potential to go places. As a prior reviewer noted, this is a book written by a person who plans to run for president in about 10 years or so.

That being noted, his idealist view of the interrelated nature of American society and interdependence of our people is addressed in his upbeat, optimistic manner. He lavishly illustrates his points with anecdotes about people he met and worked with as Newark's mayor. His primary concerns are discussed with a hope that together we can accomplish anything, as Mother Theresa would have said.

His concerns for the poor and forgotten are admirable. I hope his ambitions don't waylay his care for them.

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### **Melani Jaffe says**

Such an inspiration !! If you are discouraged by politics right now this will help you still believe :)

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### **jv poore says**

UNITED is less a book and more the kindest, most generous, heart-felt thank you letter to everyone who ever touched Mr. Booker's life. His story is humble, filled with hope and truly inspiring.

This was the perfect book for me to read at the end of 2016, when it seemed that the majority of the "news" was bleak, at best. At the same time, it will also be the perfect book for me to introduce to 'my' HS seniors at the beginning of 2017. I absolutely love being able to introduce a real-life hero to these malleable minds.

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### **Jean says**

In his book Cory Booker recounts stories and the lessons he learned from people who have inspired him during his life. He went to Stanford University where he played football and majored in political science. He was awarded a Rhodes Scholarship and studied sociology at Oxford. On returning to the United States he entered Yale Law School.

Booker begins his stories with the non-profit work he did with the poor while in Yale Law School. Upon graduation he went to work with a non-profit in a poor section of Newark. Over time he realized he could do more as an elected official so ran for City Council and won. As time went on he became the Mayor of Newark and currently is the Senator from New Jersey. He is the first black Senator from New Jersey.

The key item Booker emphasizes throughout the book is the need to work together across party, social and racial lines in order to accomplish the common good. The book is well written and moves along at a good clip. Booker seemed to have a major interest in the judicial system particularly as related to the blacks. Booker made no mention of the failed education experiment funded by Facebook founder that occurred when he was the mayor of Newark. I would have liked to hear his viewpoint. There was a few times in the book, I felt that Booker was preaching at me, but that passed quickly. Overall, it is an interesting look at the life of a young black man and how he took advantage of educational opportunities and acquired the help from great mentors. Hope we elect more people to government who are willing to work together rather than just fight each other. I read this as an audiobook downloaded from Audible. Cory Booker narrated his own book.

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### **Tim Baker says**

I've been a fan of Cory Booker for many years and was excited to listen to this audiobook in his own voice. Mr. Booker is such an inspiration and breath of fresh air in politics and I can only hope he will be our President in the future.

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## Corrigan Vaughan says

This is absolutely the book you write a decade or so before you run for President. It does all the things it politically should do in order to introduce him to people who have never heard of him and answer questions about his life for those who have been following his public image for a while. If you've read Barack Obama's books, you'll recognize a lot of the same techniques for painting a picture of a flawed, but overall good man. Booker casually confirms his oft-questioned heterosexuality with an anecdote about a woman he briefly and unreasonably fell for. He explains the ineffectiveness he showed on Newark's city council, as well as Mayor Sharpe James's vendetta against him (which is effing BANANAS, btdubs). He is appropriately critical of his own ego and shortcomings. He name checks God and the Bible. He accentuates his idealism, showing how it could be a weakness at times, but ultimately pointing to how much he cares about people. Having followed Booker's life and career for a decade or so and not really needing to be persuaded of his politics and character, mostly, this was an interesting glimpse at the events and ideas that led a fairly privileged kid from the 'burbs to intentionally move to the wrong side of the tracks and become a politician.

#CoryBooker4PresidentWheneverHeFeelsLikeRunning

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## Emily says

I don't know that I've ever read a political memoir that's more honest and inspiring than this one. Each chapter is a short story that reflects an overall lesson from Booker's life and career.

I was particularly fascinated by the story about the IHOP waitress and how it reflected the impact of community violence and low minimum wage on families. I was also unaware of the incredible sacrifices Booker made to start his political career in a way that ensured he understood the values of his constituents and lived his faith.

I would definitely recommend this, not just to my politically minded friends.

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