



The New Black Politician: Cory Booker, Newark, and Post-Racial America

Andra Gillespie

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At the beginning of the Twenty-First Century, a vanguard of young, affluent black leadership has emerged, often clashing with older generations of black leadership for power. The 2002 Newark mayoral race, which featured a contentious battle between the young black challenger Cory Booker and the more established black incumbent Sharpe James, was one of a series of contests in which young, well-educated, moderate black politicians challenged civil rights veterans for power. In *The New Black Politician*, Andra Gillespie uses Newark as a case study to explain the breakdown of racial unity in black politics, describing how black political entrepreneurs build the political alliances that allow them to be more diversely established with the electorate.

Based on rich ethnographic data from six years of intense and ongoing research, Gillespie shows that while both poor and affluent blacks pay lip service to racial cohesion and to continuing the goals of the Civil Rights Movement, the reality is that both groups harbor different visions of how to achieve those goals and what those goals will look like once achieved. This, she argues, leads to class conflict and a very public breakdown in black political unity, providing further evidence of the futility of identifying a single cadre of leadership for black communities. Full of provocative interviews with many of the key players in Newark, including Cory Booker himself, this book provides an on the ground understanding of contemporary Black and mayoral politics.

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