



# Philadelphia Freedoms: Black American Trauma, Memory, and Culture after King

*Michael Awkward*

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**Philadelphia Freedoms: Black American Trauma, Memory, and Culture after King** Michael Awkward  
Michael Awkward's *Philadelphia Freedoms* captures the energetic contestations over the meanings of racial politics and black identity during the post-King era in the City of Brotherly Love. Looking closely at four cultural moments, he shows how racial trauma and his native city's history have been entwined. He introduces each of these moments with poignant personal memories of the decade in focus and explores representation of African American freedom and oppression from the 1960s to the 1990s.

*Philadelphia Freedoms* explores NBA players' psychic pain during a playoff game the day after Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination; themes of fatherhood and black masculinity in the soul music produced by Philadelphia International Records; class conflict in Andrea Lee's novel *Sarah Phillips*; and the theme of racial healing in Oprah Winfrey's 1997 film, *Beloved*.

Awkward closes his examination of racial trauma and black identity with a discussion of candidate Barack Obama's speech on race at Philadelphia's Constitution Center, pointing to the conflict between the nation's ideals and the racial animus that persists even into the second term of America's first black president.

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