

I WAS BORN AND raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and, due to certain circumstances at home, matured mostly on my own. I taught myself how to budget my money, balance a checkbook and pay bills, good housekeeping, how to cook and entertain, how to be gracious and well mannered, and the importance of daily exercise, good hygiene and sexual discipline. All this led me to believe that what teenagers learn about manhood as they become adults is either by chance, accident, or observation. Impressionable young men crave and need the knowledge and experience of older, accomplished men to avoid the pitfalls so many of them face on their way to adulthood.

This lack of positive role models is widespread and not specific to one race, class, region, religion, or sexual orientation. And it has the potential to affect current and future generations. Being a man has always involved so much more than his putting his pants on one leg at a time. Many questions confront him every day of his life. How does his body affect his self-image? What about his race, or socioeconomics? What if he decides to be openly gay? What if he is more artistic than intellectual? How does he relate to other men? How does he relate to women? What if some of his aspirations have not been fulfilled? Is he too old to turn his life around, or to find love? What if he has health issues that burden him? What if he is a father or guardian? What if he has everything he's always wanted—what happens next? Why does everyone expect so much out of him merely because he is a man?

*From Man to Gentleman* contains things I would tell males of all ages about being successful and accomplished, about striving to be the best men they can be. In it is what I've learned about life—sometimes the hard way—and the wisdom, advice and direction given to me by my mentors, by men *and women* I've admired, and by friends and family. During my personal evolution I have taken these variables and shaped my life into something I am immensely proud of. This journey is the daily and life-long work of being a man, and in the course of this work I have become a

gentleman.

I recall my father's funeral and standing before all his friends and family. So many people had known and loved him. They all shook my hand and remarked that my father was a good man, that he spoke often of me, that he was proud. Later, I thought that if I had that many people who thought that highly of me, I would die half the man he was. In thinking of him, I made a vow to pass on all that I have learned, and continue to learn, in my pursuit of becoming a gentleman. My wish is that *From Man to Gentleman* will guide men to be the best they can be. That it will help them navigate the rocky road through life, so they can thrive and live their lives to the absolute fullest, bringing positivity and goodness into the world, and then in turn reaching back to help others. To me this is—and always will be—the mark of a true gentleman.