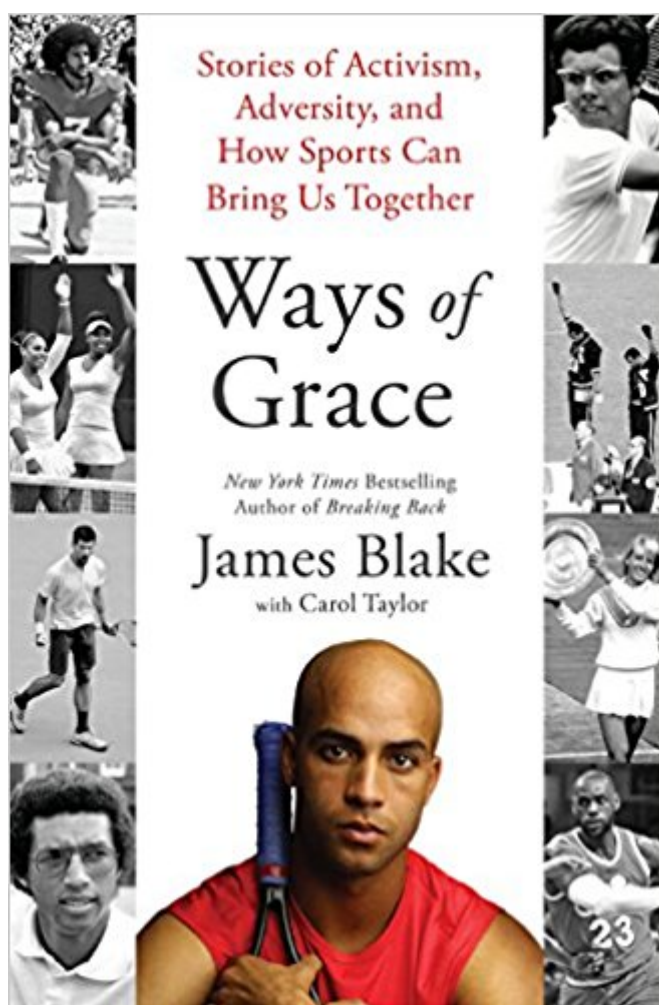


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Ways Of Grace: Stories Of Activism, Adversity, And How Sports Can Bring Us Together



Synopsis

Inspired by Arthur Ashe's bestselling memoir *Days of Grace*, a collection of positive, uplifting stories of seemingly small acts of grace from across the sports world that have helped to bridge cultural and racial divides. Like many people of color, James Blake has experienced the effects of racism firsthand—publicly first at the U.S. Open, and then in front of his hotel on a busy Manhattan street, where he was tackled and handcuffed by a police officer in a case of "mistaken identity." Though rage would have been justified, Blake faced both incidents with dignity and aplomb. In *Ways of Grace* he reflects on his experiences and explores those of other sports stars and public figures who have not only overcome adversity, but have used them to unite rather than divide, including: Aisam-Ul-Haq Qureshi, a Pakistani Muslim and Amir Hadad, an Israeli Jew, who despite the conflicts of their countries, paired together in the 2002 Wimbledon men's doubles draw. Muhammad Ali, who transcended racism with a magnetic personality and a breathtaking mastery of boxing that was unparalleled. Nelson Mandela, who spent twenty-seven years in prison for his commitment to social reform, peace, and equality yet never gave up his battle to end apartheid—a struggle that led to his eventual freedom and his nation's transition to black majority rule. Groundbreaking tennis legend Arthur Ashe, who was a model of courage, elegance, and poise on the court and off; a gifted player who triumphed in the all-white world of professional tennis, and became one of his generation's greatest players. Weaving together these and other poignant and unforgettable stories, Blake reveals how, through seemingly small acts of grace, we can confront hatred, bigotry, and injustice with virtue—and use it to propel ourselves to greater heights.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“This book will appeal not only to sports fans who want to learn more about their heroes, but also for those seeking a better understanding of why sports matter in making the world a better place.” (Library Journal)

“Blake’s new book offers examples of the power of sports to unify...Blake is using his platform to educate, inspire positive change, and support athletes who are committed to acting on their views and attempting to make a difference.” (Booklist)

“Ways of Grace displays not only [James Blake’s] character, but that of all of the athletes who have advocated for causes of social justice. This book reminds us all of the power of sports.” (Venus Williams)

“James Blake offers a long-overdue and remarkably thoughtful look at the contributions that professional athletes from across sports have made to improve their corner of the world by using their voices no matter the risk.” (Barry Scheck, founder of the Innocence Project)

“In Ways of Grace, [James Blake] proves the vital role athletes have played in furthering discussion around society’s most pressing issues. It is an inspiring and important work.” (John McEnroe)

“Writing with poise and heart, James Blake gives us a timely look at how athletes have used their voices to stand up for what’s right...The stories in Ways of Grace offer important messages of hope and demonstrate that sports have always been an important vehicle for healing our divisions.” (Marc Lasry, co-owner of the Milwaukee Bucks)

“Ways of Grace came to life soon after Blake’s false and rather brutal arrest...[Blake’s] approach was to study the lives of many athletes. Along the way he also seeks to sort out his own quest to balance life as an athlete with the desire to make a difference.” (San Francisco Chronicle)

Athletes have long been at the forefront of social change. These are their stories. In August 2015, American tennis star James Blake was standing on a busy Manhattan sidewalk and preparing to head to the US Open when he was tackled and handcuffed by a police officer in a case of “mistaken identity.” Though rage would have been justified, Blake faced the incident with dignity, using it as an opportunity to raise awareness about the dangers of racial profiling. In Ways of Grace, Blake reflects on his experiences and explores how other sports figures have used their public roles not only to overcome adversity but also to advocate for broader social justice—even when it means risking the loss of fans, sponsors, teammates, or the

freedom to compete. Discussing stories ranging from those of former Minnesota Vikings punter Chris Kluwe, who spoke out in favor of gay marriage; to Billie Jean King, who famously became the champion for women everywhere when she won the "Battle of the Sexes"; to the hard-fought journeys of Serena and Venus Williams to achieve equal pay for women in professional tennis, Blake uncovers how athletes from across the globe have used sports to unite rather than to divide. Weaving together these and other poignant stories, he also goes beyond the well-known names from sports history to reveal the important contributions from athletes seemingly forgotten, people such as Peter Norman, the Australian sprinter and 1968 Olympic 200-meter silver medalist, who stood in solidarity with Tommie Smith and John Carlos during the controversial medal ceremony and paid the price for his display back home. The result is a moving examination of how athletes have used their successes to further dialogue about our most pressing issues, despite the risks that have often accompanied that self-expression. Perfectly poised for our current political moment, a time when sports stars are leading the charge to preserve a diverse and tolerant world, *Ways of Grace* offers an urgent meditation on the rich history of athletics and activism, providing a profound testament to how the most difficult challenge for athletes frequently is not winning on the court, but standing up for their beliefs off of it.

I heard this guy on NPR and was inspired, but I already had an extensive reading list and I have never been that interested in sports. So, I went to the site to check out and maybe read a sample. There was only one review on at the moment and it was extremely negative. Some misguided person, waving his flag and not understanding that American history is a history of conflict and change for the better. So naturally, I bought the book. It's a good read and you'll learn a lot. There are a lot of people who I misunderstood and a lot of names that may be obscure, but deserve to be heard. READ THIS BOOK.

In what could have been a powerful introduction to the book, Mr. Blake recounts the event of September 9, 2015. It is entitled "Mistaken Identity". I read the introduction 3 times looking for the moment in which, Mr. Blake, a tennis player would identify himself as a black man or even a man of mixed heritage. In describing the scene, he admits that he mistook the identity of the cop who was running towards him as a friend who had recently emailed him, but as we soon see, this was not a friend and James Blake and "mistaken" the identity of the cop. However, the cop did not "mistake" the identity of Mr. Blake. The cop knew very well that he was looking for a man that fit the profile of Mr. Blake. The profile we later find out is "an Australian national". What does an Australian

national look like? Are they brown as Mr. Blake? Either way, I argue that the cop was not mistaken the identity of James Blake when he tackled him, for as we have seen in America, just because you are free and with papers (slavery times), that does not mean a white person who catches you on the streets can not rip them up and sell you back into slavery. I would like to remind Mr. Blake, his being an athlete is not an identity, and as he pleaded with the cops to check his pocket for his pass to the tennis match, they could care less because you are IDENTIFIED as a black man first. Mr. Blake, never once mentioned the deep and hurtful cause of the matter which is HE IS A BROWN MAN....no sport will change that. Playing sports may have given many a free pass in so much as they are not caught on the streets playing black. Lets get to meat of the issue and stop trying not to offend. Mr. Blake, you were identified as a black man, you misidentified yourself as other than that, which is why, you could only say while being tackled "this is wrong", instead of maybe HERE WE GO AGAIN....

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