

Parallel Time: Growing Up in Black and White

Brent Staples



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In this evocative memoir, Brent Staples poses some compelling questions: Where does the family end the self begin? What do we owe our families and what do we owe ourselves? What part of the past is a gift and what part a shackle?

As the oldest son among nine children, Brent grew up in a small industrial town near Philadelphia. Scholarship opportunities pulled him out of the black world where he had grown up into a world largely defined by whites. Meanwhile, as the industries that supported his hometown failed, and drug dealing rushed in to fill the economic void, news of arrests and premature deaths among Brent's childhood friends underscored his precarious perch in a mostly white environment. The death of his younger brother -- a cocaine dealer murdered by one of his "clients" -- propelled Brent into a reconsideration of his childhood that offers vivid portraits of family values that supported, pressures that tore apart, and the appeal and pain of living as an adult in a world that was literally and figuratively miles away from the one he knew as a child.

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