



# How to Be: A Guide to Contemporary Living for African Americans

*Harriette Cole*

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Etiquette is more than knowing which fork to use. Good manners are the rules that let us find our way in today's rapidly changing maze of lifestyles, customs and relationships. And anyone who doesn't know these rules is living and working at a real disadvantage.

Traditionally in the African-American community, practical instruction in the fundamental dos and don'ts of everyday living -- manners and etiquette -- was given by the extended family in a process called "home training." Today, though, when both parents usually have to work, and the extended family -- grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins -- is often scattered across the country, it has become very difficult for our children to receive the guidance they need. The result: Many African Americans are growing up without a clear understanding of *how to be*, how to behave with others. You may ask: Who can afford the time to worry about etiquette nowadays? The only right response to that question is: Who can afford *not* to worry? The simple fact is that it doesn't matter how smart or educated or even how rich you are -- bad manners will hold you back.

*How to Be* treats manners as a resource for the empowerment of people of African descent. Needless to say, good manners are not Black, white, brown or any other color of the rainbow, but one's race and culture do affect the content of what are called good manners. And so *How to Be* offers guidance drawn from the tried-and-true experience and wisdom of our African-American elders as well as from European mainstream traditions. Here you'll find authoritative answers to all your questions about family; the new codes of dating, love and sex; entertaining any number of guests from one to one thousand; workplace issues; and travel. Also, you'll find all the information you need to deal successfully with every one of the familiar rites of passage, from weddings to funerals and from Kwanzaa to Christmas, including religious ceremonies of all kinds; and you'll find proper forms of address and everything you need to know to write appropriate notes or letters for every occasion. In short, *How to Be* is a treasure trove of advice about the manners you need to succeed.

Fashion and lifestyle editor, author, media-trainer and workshop leader, Harriette Cole has spent her whole life and career preparing to write *How to Be*. It is a unique work, a guide to real manners for real people in a changing world.

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