



A Search Past Silence: The Literacy of Young Black Men (Language and Literacy Series)

David E. Kirkland

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This beautifully written book argues that educators need to understand the social worlds and complex literacy practices of African-American males in order to pay the increasing educational debt we owe all youth and break the school-to-prison pipeline. Moving portraits from the lives of six friends bring to life the structural characteristics and qualities of meaning-making practices, particularly practices that reveal the political tensions of defining who gets to be literate and who does not. Key chapters on language, literacy, race, and masculinity examine how the literacies, languages, and identities of these friends are shaped by the silences of societal denial. Ultimately, *A Search Past Silence* is a passionate call for educators to listen to the silenced voices of Black youth and to re-imagine the concept of being literate in a multicultural democratic society.

David E. Kirkland is an associate professor of English and urban education at NYU Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development. He is currently in the Michigan State University College of Arts and Letters where he directs The Center for Applied Inclusive Teaching and Learning in Arts and Humanities.

“These remarkable insights make it possible for us to reject the caricatures of Black males so that we can see them as they are.”

—From the Foreword by **Pedro Noguera**, Executive Director, Metropolitan Center for Urban Education, New York University

“*A Search Past Silence* urges us to *listen*, and by doing so, to make audible the previously silenced voices of so many young Black men and their families and communities in our midst. The poets and performers, the writers and troubadours, all those Black men who forge literacies in spite of it all, have never had a better narrator. This beauty of a book deserves to be read and reread.”

—**Sonia Nieto**, Professor Emerita, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

“For those who don’t know that young Black males from the hood read—and even write, believe it or not!—*A Search Past Silence* will be a haunting wake-up call. The book represents a crowning achievement, dazzling in its rhetorical power, captivating in its poetic eloquence.”

—**Geneva Smitherman**, University Distinguished Professor Emerita, Michigan State University

“David Kirkland sounds the voices of six young men through his own poetic voice. He crafts words that bring readers into these young people’s lives as they try to make sense of the confusing, oppressive, self-shaping powers of race, gender, and poverty as lived experience. This is a moving, utterly unique contribution to our collective understanding.”

—**Anne Haas Dyson**, Professor, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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