

# how to get over

t'ai freedom ford



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An astonishing debut, *how to get over* is part instruction manual, part prayer, part testimony. It attempts to solve the reader's problems (by telling them how to get over), while simultaneously creating them?troubling the waters with witness and blues. ford's poems witness via a series of "past life portraits" that navigate personal space as well as the imagined persona. These portraits conjure the blues via the imagined lives of the inanimate (a whip, a machete), the historic (a Negro burial ground, Harriet Tubman, The Red Summer), the iconic (Pecola Breedlove, Richard Pryor, Rodney King). At the same time, these portraits focus on the past lives of the author and grapple with themes including sexuality, sexual abuse, and substance abuse.

The collection's namesake poems speak to bullying and homophobia, blackness, whiteness and gentrification, and even directly address pop culture icons like Kanye West, Chaka Khan, and Nicky Minaj. Grounded in memory and re-memory, these poems pray in the voice of the ancestors and testify on their behalf. ford's poems not only remind how the history and legacy of slavery placed African-Americans at an unfair disadvantage, but attempt to illuminate the beautiful struggle of a people's endurance and resilience. The reader embarks upon a journey through these poems, circa 1787 to 2013, and emerges realizing that everything is connected?the ways we live, lie, love, and die?the ways we all get over.

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