



# Breaching Jericho's Walls: A Twentieth-Century African American Life (Excelsior Editions)

*Allen B. Ballard*

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*An award-winning African-American historian and novelist takes the reader on an exciting journey from a segregated Philadelphia childhood in the 1930's to mid-century Paris, Moscow, Cambridge, and Manhattan.*

A rich narrative recounting the life story of award-winning African American historian and novelist Allen B. Ballard, *Breaching Jericho's Walls* takes its readers on an exciting journey from a segregated Philadelphia community in the 1930s to mid-century Paris, Moscow, Cambridge, and Manhattan. The author reflects on his own pioneering role as he expands his horizons, as one of the first African American students at Ohio's Kenyon College, studying abroad in France and sharing a café table with Richard Wright and James Baldwin, serving in the military in the American South and attending graduate school at Harvard University. Becoming one of the nation's first black Russian specialists, Ballard studies in post-Stalinist Russia for a year, where, among other adventures, he spends a month with Michael Gorbachev and his wife, Raisa, on a Soviet farm. Though he tells his own personal story within *Breaching Jericho's Walls*, Ballard also portrays the experiences of those northern African-Americans whose generations bridged the gap from the legacy of slavery to the breakdown of the segregated system in the 1950s and 1960s while revealing the crucial role that individuals like civil rights leader Paul Robeson, Olympic athletes Jesse Owens and Long John Woodruff, and scholar Alain Locke played in inspiring the hopes of an oppressed and downtrodden race. A memoir filled with entertaining anecdotes and insightful reflection, *Breaching Jericho's Walls* offers Ballard's compelling personal story and reveals how, brick by brick, African Americans built the road that led to the election of President Obama in 2008.

"*Breaching Jericho's Walls* is a journey-through-life book that takes the reader to interesting and very different (surprisingly so) sites of memory where compelling experiences take place. I couldn't stop reading." — Gloria Wade-Gayles, editor of *My Soul Is a Witness: African-American Women's Spirituality*

"This is a rich memoir of African American middle-class life in the midcentury; it complexly considers the relationship between and amongst class aspiration, academic achievement, masculinity, and diverse African American cultural attitudes. It's immediately relevant to contemporary debates about schooling, race, and differential achievement; it is rich in detail about segregation, civil rights, and African American achievement in the arts, athletics, scholarship, and business." — James C. Hall, author of *Mercy, Mercy Me: African-American Culture and the American Sixties*

Allen B. Ballard is Professor of History and Africana Studies at the University at Albany–SUNY and Professor Emeritus of Political Science at City College of New York. His previously published works include two books of nonfiction, *The Education of Black Folk: The Afro-American Struggle for Knowledge in White America* and *One More Day's Journey: The Story of a Family and a People*; and two novels, *Where I'm Bound*, a Washington Post Notable Book of the Year and *Carried by Six*, winner of the "Honor Book Prize" in Afro-American Literature from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association.

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