



## LESSONS IN GRATITUDE

### A Memoir on Race, the Arts, and Mental Health By Aaron P. Dworkin

*Lessons in Gratitude* tells the story of Aaron Dworkin, a MacArthur Fellow, social entrepreneur, and spoken word artist who has dedicated his life's work to changing the face of classical arts in the world. The themes of persistence, passion, and loyalty shine through stories of an unhappy childhood, a lifelong search for identity, and the obstacles of race, culture, and class. Readers will learn how the author greets these challenges and how they drove him to make a difference for people who are shut out of opportunity. Persistence in the face of multiple failures and false starts ultimately led Dworkin to create the Sphinx Organization, whose mission is to address the underrepresentation of Black and Latinx people in the field of the classical arts.

Aaron's unique journey, which begins with his adoption by a white Jewish couple from Chicago at two weeks of age, leads him to the ultimate reunification with his birth family at the age of 31. *Lessons of Gratitude* is a coming of age story that examines the difficulties of biracial identity across generations and the challenges that mixed race families still face today. It is also a painful and honest adoption memoir, further complicating the narrator's experiences of racial identity throughout his life and shaping his experiences with his own children. Through his work in the arts and the impact of this work, Dworkin has been able to "pay forward" the first thing that offered him unconditional love—music.

**Aaron P. Dworkin** is a Poetjournalist, Professor of Arts Leadership & Entrepreneurship at the University of Michigan, and Founder of the internationally acclaimed Sphinx Organization.

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"Aaron Dworkin's memoir is as captivating as reading a novel; except it is a true story. . . More important is how he learned to understand flaws in the system, affirm his identity, and support others; lessons from which we can all benefit."

—Jane Chu, 11th Chairperson,  
National Endowment for the Arts

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