

CORNEL WEST

One of America's most provocative public intellectuals, Cornel West has been a champion for racial justice since childhood. His writing, speaking, and teaching weave together the traditions of the black Baptist Church, progressive politics, and jazz. The *New York Times* has praised his "ferocious moral vision."

Currently the Class of 1943 Professor at Princeton University, West burst onto the national scene in 1993 with his bestselling book, *Race Matters*, a searing analysis of racism in American democracy. *Race Matters* has become a contemporary classic, selling more than a half a million copies to date. In addition, West has published 18 other books and has edited 13 texts.

West earned two bachelor's degrees from Harvard in three years, *magna cum laude*. Martin Kilson, one of his professors there, describes West as "the most intellectually aggressive and highly cerebral student I have taught." After earning his Ph.D. at Princeton, he became a professor of religion and director of the Afro-American Studies program there. West has also taught at Union Theological Seminary, Yale, Harvard, and the University of Paris.

In his last book *Democracy Matters*, West analyzes the arrested development of democracy both in America and in the crisis-ridden Middle East. He argues that if America is to become a better steward of democratization around the world, it must first recognize its own long history of imperialist corruption. His latest CD, *Never Forget: A Journey of Revelations* is a collection of socially conscience music featuring collaborations with Prince, Outkast, Jill Scott, Talib Kweli. West also offers commentary weekly on *The Tavis Smiley Show* from PRI.

West was an influential force in developing the storyline for the popular *Matrix* movie trilogy and has served as its official spokesperson, as well as playing a recurring role in the final two films.