



Blanche Kelso Bruce was born a slave in 1841, yet, remarkably, amassed a real-estate fortune and became the first black man to serve a full term in the U.S. Senate. He married Josephine Wilson—the daughter of a wealthy black Philadelphia doctor—and together they broke down racial barriers in 1880s Washington, D.C., numbering President Ulysses S. Grant among their influential friends. The Bruce family achieved a level of wealth and power unheard of for people of color in nineteenth-century America. Yet later generations would stray from the

proud Bruce legacy, stumbling into scandal and tragedy.

Drawing on Senate records, historical documents, and personal letters, author Lawrence Otis Graham weaves a riveting social history that offers a fascinating look at race, politics, and class in America.