



# Adam By Adam: The Autobiography of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.

*Adam Clayton Powell III*

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## **Adam By Adam: The Autobiography of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.** Adam Clayton Powell III

One reviewer wrote: Powell's life story is amazing. Unfortunately, his contributions to the cause of civil rights have been lost in the media coverage that he brought upon himself. His flamboyant life style, absences from congress, lavish spending at tax payer expense all did serious damage to his image. Probably the most damaging was his refusal to deal with a law suit brought by one of his constituents who he referred to as a "bag lady" while appearing on a TV talk show. The TV station settled with the woman for \$1700 and it went away. However, Powell stonewalled the case for years until he was ultimately charged with criminal contempt of court. The case had gone through dozens of court hearings, several trials and numerous judges. There were even offers from supporters to pay the woman and get rid of the case. But Powell refused. It got so bad that he could only go to his district on Sunday. Otherwise, he would have been arrested. He admits that his handling of the case was a major mistake. In an era when JFK's romantic engagements were kept secret and before the Gary Hart affairs, Powell was able to get away with a life style that was literally filled with wine, women & song. Even his position as a Baptist minister did not limit his life style, his affairs or his three marriages. ADAM BY ADAM was written near the end of Powell's life. In reading Haygood's account of his final days, you see a man trying to hold on to the past. He is alone, sick, abandoned by his former friends. His finances were shot, he had no place to go. He was very much alone. When Martin Luther King and other civil rights leaders met with LBJ, Powell was excluded. At the March on Washington in 1963 he was not allowed to speak. For a man with his ego, it must have been terrible. Powell was a loner who never listened to anyone. He had no close advisors. In many respects his life had a sad ending. But still his contribution to African American history should not be forgotten.

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