



# Behind the Eight Ball: Sex for Crack Cocaine Exchange and Poor Black Women

*Tanya Telfair Sharpe*

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**Behind the Eight Ball: Sex for Crack Cocaine Exchange and Poor Black Women** Tanya Telfair Sharpe  
Inner-city black women open their hearts to share the pain of crack addiction and its consequences

Behind the Eight Ball: Sex for Crack Cocaine Exchange and Poor Black Women documents an American tragedy that highlights the widening gap between social and economic classes. In their own words, poor black women—nameless, faceless, and marginalized by poverty—share the details of their lives before and after crack cocaine invaded their communities, each recalling the circumstances of her introduction to the drug and her first experience using sex to support her addiction. These candid interviews expose the socioeconomic changes in inner-city neighborhoods that created the perfect conditions for a crack stronghold; the crack cocaine economy's impact on the lives of inner-city residents; and the social and familial consequences of crack addiction among poor, black women.

Behind the Eight Ball: Sex for Crack Cocaine Exchange and Poor Black Women places crack addiction, crack-related prostitution and its consequences, STDs, HIV, and pregnancy into the context of the larger social issues of inner-city poverty, race, gender, and class. This unique book reveals the sex-for-crack barter system as evidence of a long-term social exclusion and systemic racism that has worked to destroy the self-image of poor black American women. The women interviewed reflect this negative image, exchanging sex for crack on a regular basis to support their addictions at the risk-and reality-of unplanned pregnancies.

*“The baby I am carrying now, I don’t know who the father is. There are a few (men) that I had sex with around the time I got pregnant—that day. But which one it is, I don’t know who.”*

Behind the Eight Ball: Sex for Crack Cocaine Exchange and Poor Black Women examines:

- why poor black women addicted to crack are disproportionately at risk for sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, and unplanned pregnancies
- how the social and economic characteristics of poor black communities support crack distribution and consumption
- how crack use and the exchange of sex for crack damages struggling black families
- why the care of many children is entrusted to child welfare agencies
- how and why women are marginalized in the crack culture

Behind the Eight Ball: Sex for Crack Cocaine Exchange and Poor Black Women is an insightful and enlightening look at the motivations behind the decision to risk illness, injury, disease, death, and pregnancy to support addiction.

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