Untapped Talent
Unleashing the Power of the Hidden Workforce
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Praise for *Untapped Talent*

“Dani Monroe effectively combines research, case studies, storytelling, practical tools, and knowledge in this incredibly rich guide for recognizing and leveraging the untapped talent that surrounds us in business and in our everyday lives. *Untapped Talent* will be an invaluable resource for
all who read it.”

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—Leslie Mays, VP, Global Diversity and Inclusion, Avon

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“Untapped Talent is a refreshing read that provides extremely relevant ideas about how today’s businesses need to pursue talent in all directions. This new thinking will change the game for businesses that sometimes struggle to engage a qualified and capable team.”

—Mike Thompson, CEO, SVI

“If you are a company leader building a team and developing untapped talent, or, an individual trying to succeed on your own in corporate America, this insightful, engrossing, one-of-a kind book is perfect for you. The candid, compelling, real-life stories make the author’s points in an entertaining and memorable way.”

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—Frank X. McCarthy, President, Diverse Workplace, Inc.

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“Dani Monroe provides a voice of wisdom that rings unmistakably from a commitment to growing people, leaders, and organizations. The
Conversation about what it takes and the need to have solid global lead-

Cop ers is growing and is paramount in today’s competitive market. Dani’s insights into inclusion, talent engagement, and corporate culture lay a pragmatic and inviting path for anyone who wants to develop and grow their workforce.”

—Amri Johnson, Director, Diversity & Inclusion, Novartis Institute Biomedical Research

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To my mother, Josephine, who taught me the heart of leadership;
my father, Joseph, who broadened my horizon; and
my husband, Steven, who supported me in
“operating in purpose.”
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ny new endeavor is always scary, exhilarating, and full of questions and learning. Questions about yourself, others, and what you’re working on and how it will be received. Writing is an intimate process that one learns to trust overtime. It brings out the best of your inner thoughts and manages to raise the tension that resides within yourself between what you know, what you don’t know, what you think you know, and what you will discover.

What I learned is that I’m not the same person I was one year ago this month when I started this journey. I have faced many fears along the way and slain some of my personal dragons. I’ve learned that to write a book is a community effort, even though you spend a lot of time alone deep in thought. Without encouragement, challenge, participation, and others’ belief in me, Untapped Talent: Unleashing the Power of the Hidden Workforce may have never been written. For my immediate and larger community, a thousand thanks for just being present in my life. Especially my clients, that trusted my knowledge, skills and ability to guide them through transformative changes.

There are some in my community circle that need special attention for their special efforts. All my thanks and blessings to a person who was a
stranger and became a true friend, Stephen Caldwell, an absolute genius

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with capturing your thoughts and translating them to the page. Stephen made me make sense, and together we created an incredible book. Thank you to Tommy Spaulding, a kindred spirit and bestselling author of It’s Not Who You Know, for his introduction to Stephen, and to Mike Thompson, CEO of SVI, for his introduction to my agent, Herb Schaffner. Those four men connected the dots for me and laid the railroad tracks for my journey in becoming an author.

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They say good friends are there every step of the way, and mine really showed up. Debbie Anthony kept the cheerleading going when I was in doubt and in need of validation that I could achieve my dream. Monica

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Sturgis joined the support line with friendly phone calls that provided momentary relief. And Suzanne Owings shared guidance and insight when I got stuck and couldn’t find the open door to the next paragraph or thought. To them, I owe my deepest gratitude.

I’ve been fortunate to have been surrounded by some of the best consulting minds in the country, and that circle added their expertise to the book: Richard Mansfield, PhD, researcher; Tim Ewing, PhD, reviewer; Amri Johnson, director of Diversity at Novartis Institute of Biomedical Research; and Dr. Price Cobbs for seeing my talent in the early years and putting it into play.

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A good editor is worth her weight in gold, and Laurie Harting sharply
ened my thoughts and saved me from myself on many occasions during

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the writing process.

A lifelong thanks to my brother, Robert Perkins, and my sisters,

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others’ talent.

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support, and love as I disappeared into myself to answer my call. I stand
taller because of you.

In gratitude to all!

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Introduction: When Lightning Strikes

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Electricity is really just organized lightning.

—George Carlin, comedian

The epiphany came in stages, which, when you think about it, isn't unusual. Epiphanies, by definition, come with a flash, but that lightning-strike moment of clarity almost always develops in a storm that starts with a single cloud and builds over time.

So in 1983—in my thirties, fresh out of graduate school, and primed to launch a career in organizational development—an innocent-looking wisp of a cloud drifted along the horizon of my life. It came in the form of a magazine article featuring Dr. Price Cobbs, the famed psychiatrist,
author, and consultant based in San Francisco, California. Little did I know that it would put me on a course of discovery about untapped talents—in myself and in others.

Dr. Cobbs shook the world considerably in 1968 when he coauthored *Black Rage*, with William H. Grier, MD, one of the first books on the mental health of African Americans. It provided a revealing, painful portrait of the suppressed anger and frustration felt by millions of people still struggling to find their fit in society roughly one hundred years after Generals Lee and Grant convened at the Appomattox Court House to end the Civil War. The book also established Dr. Cobbs as a pioneering authority on what’s come to be known as “diversity and inclusion” in the workplace. He founded Pacific Management Systems in 1967, stopped seeing patients, and focused his energies on executive development and consulting that helped individuals and organizations address the realities identified in his books.

I’m still not entirely certain why Dr. Cobbs’s work struck a chord with me. My understanding of race and racial issues was very limited at the time. I grew up in a family that identified culturally with African Americans; but, in reality, we were a multicultural stew cooked in its
own little melting pot of spices. An African American man and his white Jewish wife produced the offspring known as my father, Joseph Sharfter Perkins. And Josephine Williams, my light-skinned mother, was Creole, that hard-to-define people group that originated with French, Spanish, and black settlers and grew to include just about anyone in southern Louisiana who “mixed” with them. Together, Joseph and Josephine raised eight children with skin hues as different as the paints my dad mixed to brush on the walls of the houses on California’s Monterey Peninsula. I was the youngest and the only one with a college degree. My plans, quite simply, were to change the world. But I’d never considered working in diversity and inclusion. As I mentioned, that phrase hadn’t even been coined. So after finishing Pepperdine’s organizational development program in 1983, I looked for work as a consultant on large system change projects. I wanted to help businesses on issues pertaining to mergers and acquisitions, downsizing/rightsizing, organization transitions, and leadership development.

That’s when I came across a Black Enterprise article in which Dr. Cobbs talked about how African Americans and Latinos could grow as leaders in