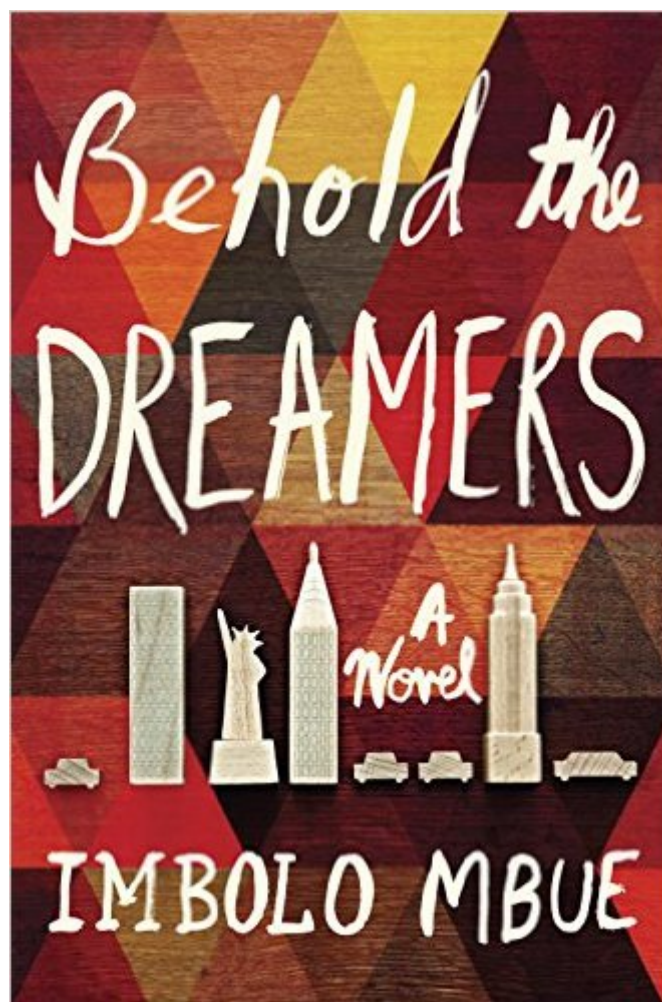


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# Behold The Dreamers: A Novel



## Synopsis

A compulsively readable debut novel about marriage, immigration, class, race, and the trapdoors in the American Dream—the unforgettable story of a young Cameroonian couple making a new life in New York just as the Great Recession upends the economy. Jende Jonga, a Cameroonian immigrant living in Harlem, has come to the United States to provide a better life for himself, his wife, Neni, and their six-year-old son. In the fall of 2007, Jende can hardly believe his luck when he lands a job as a chauffeur for Clark Edwards, a senior executive at Lehman Brothers. Clark demands punctuality, discretion, and loyalty—and Jende is eager to please. Clark’s wife, Cindy, even offers Neni temporary work at the Edwardses’ summer home in the Hamptons. With these opportunities, Jende and Neni can at last gain a foothold in America and imagine a brighter future. However, the world of great power and privilege conceals troubling secrets, and soon Jende and Neni notice cracks in their employers’ façades. When the financial world is rocked by the collapse of Lehman Brothers, the Jongas are desperate to keep Jende’s job—even as their marriage threatens to fall apart. As all four lives are dramatically upended, Jende and Neni are forced to make an impossible choice.

Praise for *Behold the Dreamers*—a debut novel by a young woman from Cameroon that illuminates the immigrant experience in America with the tenderhearted wisdom so lacking in our political discourse . . . Mbue is a bright and captivating storyteller. • “The Washington Post” —Mbue writes with great confidence and warmth. . . . There are a lot of spinning plates and Mbue balances them skillfully, keeping everything in motion. . . . A capacious, big-hearted novel. • “The New York Times Book Review” —Mbue’s writing is warm and captivating. • “People (book of the week)” —[Mbue’s] book isn’t the first work of fiction to grapple with the global financial crisis of 2007–2008, but it’s surely one of the best. . . . It’s a novel that depicts a country both blessed and doomed, on top of the world, but always at risk of losing its balance. It is, in other words, quintessentially American. • “NPR” —Imbolo Mbue’s masterful debut about an immigrant family struggling to obtain the elusive American Dream in Harlem will have you feeling for each character from the moment you crack it open. • “In Style” —This story is one that needs to be told. • “Bustle” —Behold the Dreamers challenges us all to consider what it takes to make us genuinely content, and how long is too long to live with our dreams deferred. • “O: The Oprah Magazine” —[A] beautiful, empathetic novel . . . Mbue’s narrative energy and sympathetic eye soon render . . . commonplace ingredients vivid, complex, and essential. • “The Boston Globe” —A witty, compassionate, swiftly paced novel that takes on race, immigration, family and the dangers of capitalist excess. • “St. Louis Post-Dispatch” —Mbue [is] a deft, often lyrical observer. . . . [Her] meticulous storytelling announces a writer in

command of her gifts, plumbing the desires and disappointments of our emerging global culture.â Minneapolis Star Tribune âA revelation . . . Mbue has written a clever morality tale that never preaches but instead teaches us the power of integrity.â Essence

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In *Imbolo Mbue*'s masterful novel, about a married couple from Cameroon fighting to live in America and find the American Dream, there is a scene where the husband Jende, a chauffeur, tells his rich boss, Clark Edwards, a Lehman Brothers executive, that where he is from in Cameroon as you drive upon the Limbe city limits there is a sign that says Limbe is the city where everyone is your friend. The Limbe sign is a symbol of ambivalence to Jende. On one hand, the loving community connection is a place of love and innocence; on the other hand, Limbe is a city where you're stagnant, where you can never be a somebody. This novel is about Jende and his wife Neni, a pharmaceutical student, moving away from innocence and landing in Harlem and trying to find the American Dream of Privilege, Power, and Consumerism. Jende and Neni are too wise and complex to not notice materialism's traps, but even their awareness and small town values don't seem to diminish consumerism's spell on them. Indeed, much of the novel's tension is watching Jende and Neni, fighting tooth and claw to make it in America, bearing witness to the obnoxious privilege and extravagance of Clark Edwards and his family. This fever dream of consumerism, however, comes to a shrieking halt in 2008 when the Great Recession kicks Lehman Brothers off a cliff. Jende watches his boss Clark Edwards in the aftermath of his company's near death and he must re-evaluate his pursuit of the American Dream. At one point in the novel, he

says to himself regarding the Great Recession: "In many different ways it would be an unprecedented plague, a calamity like the one that had befallen the Egyptians in the Old Testament.

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