

Graduate Project: African-American Bibliography

By: Kristina Ashton

Bruning, Jr. and John Robert. (2001). Elusive Glory: African-American Heroes of World War II. Greensboro, NC: Avisson Press Inc.

The basic idea of this book is that African-American men who fought for the U.S. during World War II struggled against immense odds to overcome institutional prejudice and pave the way for a future desegregated military.

There were fifteen individuals that served in the ground forces or were pilots in the air corps that are profiled in this book. The best-known figure is Ben Davis, Jr., who flew scores of combat missions with the Tuskegee Red Tails (a.k.a. Tuskegee Air Men). The book is divided up into smaller chapters that show how each of these individuals contributed during their time served in combat instead of covering their entire lives. Through introductions to the two sections and an epilogue, Bruning ties these stories together to emphasize a greater message. These men exemplified courage in fighting for a country that had not yet recognized them as equal members but would later honor them for their bravery and sacrifice. They were pioneers in getting the United States government to consider changing the face of our fighting forces to represent Americans of all backgrounds-based on merit, not ethnicity.

Harding, Vincent, Kelley, Robin D.G. and Lewis, Earl. (1997). We Changed the World: African Americans, 1945-1970 (The Young Oxford History of African Americans, V. 9). Oxford, GB: Oxford University Press.

This wonderful book examines African-American life at the close of World War II. It describes their struggles for freedom and justice during the 1940s and 1950s, it also discusses the explosive years of the 1960s. For all of the continuity of African-American history, along with the long history of struggling, the years between 1945 and 1970 represented a new moment for all African-Americans. It was a time for new possibilities and new visions, a time when black Americans were determined to be the architects of an inclusive America that championed human rights for all.

Holliday, Laurel. (2000). Dreaming In Color Living In Black And White : Our Own Stories of Growing Up Black in America. New York: Simon Pulse.

Seventeen African Americans who vary in age from teen to senior citizen recount pivotal, painful experiences from their youth that exposed them to the continuing reality of racism in 20th-century America. Their occupations include church minister, English professor, death-row inmate, school librarian, journalist, psychologist, and college student. The accounts bear

witness to cruelties or injustices that shaped their attitudes and futures and propelled them toward retaliation, self-reliance, perseverance, and justice. Issues of affirmative action, racial inferiority, cultural differences, slavery, and black pride are raised. An epithet shatters an interracial childhood friendship; a white teacher disparages the abilities of two African-American students; an 11-year-old boy is arrested and brutalized by two sheriffs after robbing a white boy; a shy, outcast sixth grader strikes out at the racism around her; and a Yale student with limited finances justifies shoplifting books from the college bookstore. The narratives span the last fifty years and though several accounts seem to contradict Dr. King's nonviolent ideals.

Johnson, Angela. (2000). Heaven. Chicago, IL: Thorndike Press.

The author explores the themes of what makes a place home and which people family. Fourteen-year-old Marley's tranquil life in Heaven, Ohio, turns hellish the day her family receives a letter from Alabama. The note from the pastor of a church that was destroyed by arson requests a replacement for Marley's baptismal record, and reveals that "Momma" and "Pops" are really Marley's aunt and uncle, and mysterious Jack is her true father. In this montage of Marley's changing perceptions, Johnson presents fragments of the whole picture a little at a time: images of people, places the Western Union building "1637" steps away from Marley's house and artifacts, a box filled with love letters between her birth parents, gain significance as Marley begins to make sense of the past and integrate her perceptions into her new identity. The poetic metaphors describe a child grasping desperately for a hold on her reality. The melding of flashbacks and present-day story line may be confusing initially, but it becomes easier the further into the book one gets because they all relate in some way.

Kelley, Robin D.G. and Oxford University Press. (1996). Into the Fire--African Americans Since 1970: African Americans Since 1970. Oxford, GB: Oxford University Press.

This is a well-researched, immensely readable book represents African American history and brings it back to back to life. Several general histories that are covered are studies of the politics, social and economic conditions, and culture of blacks in America. The authors make good use of the quotations used from interviews with former slaves that were taken in the 1930s; Reconstruction Era pension examiners' interviews with Black Civil War widows; Freedmen's Bureau records, etc. They also use quotes from a variety of memoirs, biographies and autobiographies, and oral histories, to examine, among other topics, the rebirth of black nationalism; the neoconservative movement; black feminism; interethnic tensions; and the emergence of rap music and hip-hop culture. Black-and-white period photographs, posters, prints, letters, and other artwork lend emphasis to

salient points made in the texts. Both authors include a useful chronology and extensive lists for further reading; additionally, and appends the civil rights amendments to the U.S. Constitution.

Khorana, Meena. (1998). Critical Perspectives on Postcolonial African Children's and Young Adult Literature. Portsmouth, NH: Greenwood Press.

Over that past few years there has been a growing tendency for children to take a psychological approach towards African children's literature in the United States. This book tells the perspectives of those that lived through the postcolonial days in the United States and were African American. Recent publications have been moving away from general country surveys or studies of publishing conditions to works that analyze literary structures, themes, and illustrations. Also included are Marxist, feminist, and postcolonial theories to interpret the literature. This book covers both sides of the arguments towards colonial African children literature from a postcolonial perspective.

Kutenplon, Deborah and Olmstead, Ellen. (1995). Young Adult Fiction by African American Writers, 1968-1993 : A Critical and Annotated Guide. New York: Garland Publishing.

Around 200 books for young adults by African American authors published between 1968 and 1993 are reviewed, included works from small presses and by new authors, discussed: themes, plot, character development, and sensitive issues. An introduction discusses milestones in this body of literature, analyzes bibliographic and critical publications, and offered guidelines for evaluation of books in terms of treatment of race, class, sexuality, and ability.

Raboteau, Albert J. (2001). Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans. Oxford, GB: Oxford University Press.

This wonderful novel includes an informative and brief introduction to African-American religious traditions. The book opens with a realistic portrayal of a 15th-century slave raid off the coast of western Africa, with Raboteau powerfully demonstrating the devastation slavery wrought upon individuals and families of Africa. Then he paints the sensibilities of many African religions. He sweeps through the independent black church movement of the 19th century, chronicling how the joy of emancipation dissipated into bleak despair as African-Americans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries struggled to achieve economic and social parity. The last few chapters discuss the Great Migration and the rise of new religious movements in the North, such as Islam. Raboteau does not neglect the conversion of many African-Americans to age-old religious traditions.

Schraff, Anne E. (2004). Wilma Rudolph: The Greatest Woman Sprinter in History. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers.

This is an objective and honest book that describes the Olympic medalist's life from her childhood struggles with polio, her resolve to walk normally, and her emergence as a high school star athlete. Schraff also mentions incidents of racism, Rudolph's status as an unwed mother at age 17, and the pressures she faced while trying to support her family. A final discusses her legacy and the impact she still has today. The writing is clear and engaging. Black-and-white photographs of Rudolph and her teammates and coach, as well as other notable African Americans such as Jackie Robinson and Martin Luther King, Jr., are scattered throughout.

Smith, Karen P. (1994). African-American Voices in Young Adult Literature. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.

A collection of fourteen essays of young adult, African-American literature. Highlights a variety of text styles, including: biography, poetry, fiction, and horror by well-known and unknown authors, such as: Virginia Hamilton, James Haskins, and Octavia Butler, discussing issues such as feminist concerns, race, and class. Other topics include African-American periodicals, and the dispersion of African-American young adult literature. For library education faculty and students.

Trotter, Joe W. and Oxford University Press. (1996). From a Raw Deal to a New Deal: African Americans, 1929-45 (The Young Oxford History of African Americans ; Vol. 8). Oxford, GB: Oxford University Press.

Trotter examines the important events and major forces of 1929-1945 in the U.S. from the perspective of African Americans. He notes that while they made socio-political, economic, and cultural advancements through a plethora of New Deal-created opportunities, many blacks were concurrently being treated as second-class citizens and suffering racial violence at the hands of disgruntled, fearful working-class whites. He also shows that it wasn't until 1935 that the "raw deal" began to be transformed into a "new deal." He attempts to make it clear that federal response was helpful, but that it was the efforts of African Americans themselves that brought about the changes for the future that lead to things like: full citizenship, civil-rights protection, and economic gains. He uses his research and knowledge to backs up his conclusions with an archive of evidence gleaned from primary sources and generously quoting African Americans who lived and struggled during the period. A wondrous selection of black-and-white historical pictures are also included.

Wilds, Mary. (2004). I Dare Not Fail: Notable African American Women Educators. Greensboro, NC: Avisson Press Inc.

Wilds describes the lives of eight educators, including include Maria Louise Baldwin, Mary McLeod Bethune, Mary Ann Shadd Cary, Marva Collins, and Charlotte Forten Grimke. These are women whose lives should be celebrated and whose accomplishments should not be forgotten as each one struggled in her own way to make a difference in the lives of African-American children. Unfortunately, the writing is a bit dry, the text contains many proofreading errors, and the punctuation is often dubious. Each profile opens with a poorly reproduced black-and-white photo.

Wooton, Sara M. (1999). Oprah Winfrey: Talk Show Legend. Brookshire, TX : Enslow Publishers.

A biography of the performer and talk show host, discussing her childhood of neglect and her rise to the top of the entertainment world.