

## Book Reviews

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### **Raise Up a Child: Human Development in an African American Family**

Edith Hudley, Wendy Haight, and Peggy Miller.  
Chicago: Lyceum Books, 2003.

**Reviewed by Dawn Wright Williams**

In *Raise Up a Child*, storyteller Edith Hudley shares her life experiences growing up in rural Texas during the Jim Crow era. Presented as an oral history, Wendy Haight and Peggy Miller explore the life of Edith Hudley and show how the strength of her family and extended community supported her to overcome life's obstacles and live a fulfilled life.

*Raise Up a Child* focuses on human development, in particular child development in African American families. Authors Haight and Miller recognize the lack of research focusing on the development of African American children and other children of colour within the context of their particular cultural values and beliefs. To expand the field of child development, they believe that a diverse group of voices needs to be heard.

This book is written for a dual audience; the authors describe it as a “hybrid text, reaching a general readership and a more specialized audience of scholars and practitioners.” They seek this dual audience by offering Edith Hudley’s life story in her own words and supplementing it with a “series of scholarly interludes.” Alternating between colloquial narrative and informed analysis, the book follows the various phases of Hudley’s life and offers practical scholarly insight for those in the human development professions. As well, there are three appendices that refer to the important events and people in Hudley’s life, and provide academic notes that give the anthropological and sociological contexts for her narrative.

The work is comprised of five major parts that recount the significant memories and experiences of Edith Hudley, while demonstrating the effects

of her having a loving and spiritually enriched childhood that carried her through difficult life experiences. She lost her mother at age ten, for example, and experienced racial discrimination and sexual exploitation. The unique offering of this book, however, is its examination of Hudley's positive life experiences. Haight and Miller argue for the importance of Hudley's story, not as a stereotypical "virtuous, strong black grandmother" story, but as a contrast to the typical "risk and disadvantage" narratives that are often found in scholarly works on African American human development.

Edith Hudley's vibrant and colourful stories evoke the joyful memories she has of her childhood with her parents, of growing into adulthood, and becoming a wife and mother herself under the supportive guidance of the "other mothers" she had in her life. Further, she shares the story of becoming an "other mother" to her own granddaughter, who was abandoned by Hudley's daughter-in-law, and to the other children she cares for from her Utah church congregation.

*Raise Up a Child* offers an African American perspective on child rearing that reflects a general spiritual and cultural experience that is shared historically by many in African American communities. It offers readers a first-person account and demonstrates the need to study diverse cultural models of human development. It also serves as a useful instructional text for readers interested in positive child rearing practices.

## Family Secrets: Crossing the Colour Line

Catherine Slaney.

Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2003.

### Reviewed by Karen Nelson Villanueva

In 1975, when a renowned sociologist and authority on Black people in Canada discovers the Abbott Collection, Catherine Slaney's uncle decides that it is time to reveal the family secret: that Slaney's family is descended from Dr. Anderson Ruffin Abbott, the first Canadian-born Black doctor. At age 24, Slaney and her family discover their Black heritage when they were formerly living as white.

Published by Natural Heritage Books, a publishing house that celebrates the rich history and contribution of Blacks in Canada, *Family Secrets: Crossing the Colour Line* attempts to tell the story of Slaney's ancestors. The author traces the Abbott's history as former slaves in the United States, their arrival in Canada, how her great-great-grandfather, Anderson Ruffin Abbott, became