



Black Fathers: A Call for Healing

Kristin Clark Taylor

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We are in need of our fathers. Our stomachs are growling; hungry for their presence. Our throats are parched; thirsty for the moment, the minute, the second they walk back into our lives and bring the smiles and certainty and solidity that only a father can provide.

Our fathers of yesterday--and the countless, faceless fathers of today who too often go unnoticed and unappreciated--are the reason we need to rejoice. These strong black men were and are the backbone of the family unit, holding things together as the stress and strain of daily life does all it can to stretch and tear apart the fabric of our family lives. These are the men we celebrate. These are the fathers we thank.

That being said, there still exists a gaping hole where our fathers used to stand, stalwart and strong, at the epicenter of our lives. It is a hole that seems to be growing deeper and darker; a hole that represents their alarming absence and swallows up our black children, leaving them angry, despondent, and "hurting like when you get the wind knocked out of you," as one young man described it to me. A hole which forces single black mothers, strong and resourceful as they may be, to play a role that is psychically and emotionally impossible--the roles of both father and mother simultaneously. The two-in-one parent. As dedicated, determined, and amorphous as many of my single sister-mothers are, they *cannot be fathers*. I will not--*cannot*--mince words, struggle for verbiage which is genteel and inoffensive, or dance daintily around the ugliness of the absentee father. But I can offer shared quotes, personal stories, and inspiring life lessons that I've received from others during the writing of this book that redeem and uplift those fathers who *are* there. Who do care. Who somehow manage to blend and balance the qualities of courage, leadership and authority with compassion, gentleness, humility and respect. Who reach out to their child during both the happy *and* the sad times, or when the *one thing* that child wants more than anything in the world is to hold his daddy's hand and secure that special place in his heart.

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