



World of Books
by
Dottie Butler

THE BLACK EXTENDED FAMILY
by
Elmer P. Martin
and
Joanne Mitchell Martin

In spite of slavery and its effects, black families have existed, survived and endured for centuries. The separation of husbands, wives and children only caused black families to strengthen rather than disintegrate. The general accepted attitude is that poverty, disorganization and crime are prevalent among blacks, but these are not conditions peculiar to the Afro-American culture. These are parts of the total American culture. These are not conditions caused by weaknesses of the black family, but are caused by weaknesses in American society and government.

The fact that blacks are strong survivors is evidenced by their continued ability to struggle in spite of poverty, unemployment and lack of education. After the freed slaves failed to receive the "forty acres and mule" they had been promised, they pulled themselves up and set forth to succeed as best they could. Separated families traveled hundreds of miles in an effort to reunite. Ties had been formed during their bondage and were not easily broken. Brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, husbands, wives relied on one another for strength. They unflinchingly gave assistance when and where needed. Thus the extended family emerged. (It actually began in Africa where family life was organized around elaborate kinship ties and a strong sense of community.)

The Black Extended Family by Elmer P. and Joanne Mitchell Martin diligently describes the black extended family, its strengths, weaknesses, functions, goals and capabilities for survival. There is usually a strong dominant family member who acts as the leader and provides a home base for other family members. This is generally a mother or father but is sometimes a brother, sister, aunt or uncle. When other family members need a home, financial assistance or simply moral support, they know they can turn to this dominant figure. The authors found that these individuals expended much energy in "keeping the family together," "making it," "getting by," and "getting over."

Black extended families have traditionally existed in rural areas. Urban migration, middle class status and a selfish desire to succeed have created problems with the sustenance of extended families causing them to deteriorate. Consequently, many blacks talk about "going back home" and unless they regain their sense of God, sense of family, sense of community, sense of struggle, and sense of identity, the core of their existence--the extended family--will cease to be.

Readers can appreciate the positive theme of this book. It reveals the struggles and strengths of Afro-American society and illustrates survival techniques for this darker race. It tears down many of the stereotypes assigned to the black family. Many of us who are urban creatures under the age of forty cannot identify with the extended family as depicted by the Martins, but perhaps we can evaluate our family situations, identify our values and perhaps re-define our goals thus salvaging and rebuilding the remains of black America, its culture and unity.

Mrs. Brice Honored at Recent Reunion

Mrs. Mary P. Brice of Winston-Salem was guest of honor when the 1963 graduating class of R.L. Norris High School in Thompson, Ga., held its reunion July 5-6.

Mrs. Brice was a former teacher and advisor to the class.

A former teacher at Anderson Senior High School, Mrs. Brice retired as director of senior citizens activi-

ties for the Experiment in Self Reliance in 1978. Now a minister, she preached her trial sermon last year and was ordained last April.

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