

# Tome cheers Black fathers

**Color Him Father: Stories of Love and Rediscovery of Black Men;** Edited by Stephana I. Colbert and Valerie I. Harrison; Foreword by Dr. Haki Madhubuti; Kinship Press; Paperback, \$14.95; 219 pages, illustrated. ISBN: 0-9778418-6-3  
**By Kam Williams**

"My dad has a gentle spirit and quiet determination. He worked 30 years for the U.S. Postal Service, beginning as the first Black window clerk in Oklahoma City. He ignored 'suggestions' from White folk that he ought not apply for the job. And when he was hired, spent the first several years eating his lunch in the men's room; at that time, Black folk were not permitted to eat in the Post Office lunchroom. If asked, each of my siblings has a special story of my dad. This is mine..." —Excerpted from the chapter "My Favorite Green Dress" by Stephana Colbert

At a time when the image of the Black male has been badly tarnished by a media barrage of negative stereotypes, "Color Him Father" arrives as a very welcome breath of fresh air. For in sharp contrast to the prevailing portrayal of African-American fathers as absent, unemployed, unreliable, and unavailable emotionally, this collection of childhood memoirs recounts touching tales of men who exhibited extraordinary integrity, strength and dedication, and often in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

The uplifting tome was the brainchild of two attorneys, Stephana Colbert and Valerie Harrison, who edited the book along with contributing entries of their own. The text essentially consists of around three-dozen, heartfelt reminiscences by successful African-Americans about the generally unpretentious, male role models who made a difference in their lives.

"Color Him Father" is an

invaluable addition to the body of Black literature precisely because of the fact that it represents a celebration of simple men who went to work to put food on the table and to keep a roof over their families' heads at a time when racism had severely limited their education and work options.

Yet, embracing a vision of better days for their offspring, they persevered, and we see how that dedication has reaped rewards by reading the brief bios of the children who write about them.

It is important to note that not all the honorees here are biological fathers. "Color Him Father" contains equally emotional testimonials to stepfathers, grandfathers, a spiritual mentor, a co-worker and others who played a pivotal part in raising these children.

The book also includes family portraits, which is great, since that enables one to get a good feel for the subjects of each narrative.

Rather than play favorites by picking which remembrance affected me most deeply, I'll just say that I found my eyes welling up on more than one occasion. Repeatedly, I recognized some aspect of my own experience in these distinctly African-American tableaux, and couldn't help but acknowledge my own debt of gratitude to my recently departed father.

He overcame considerable adversity to put all five of us kids through college on a blue-collar salary, while remaining married to my mother for over 50 years until the day he died.

In sum, without any pretense, "Color Him Father" serves up an encouraging diversity of authentic anecdotes about some humble souls, men just being the nurturers and providers that they naturally are.

A long overdue tribute to the fading memory of the greatest men of the best Black generation.



## KEYS TO A CURE

American singer Alicia Keys, right, and UN AIDS envoy Stephen Lewis, left, sing with grandmothers from around the world affected by AIDS at an event raising awareness about the disease at the 16th International AIDS Conference in Toronto on Sunday. HIV/AIDS scientists, activists and journalists, numbering roughly 27,000 in total, have descended upon Toronto for the once-every-two-years International AIDS Conference.

## Your Horoscope Says... Aug. 17-Aug. 23

### ARIES

Hello, home life: After a busy week, all you want to do is savor the feelings of domesticity at home. Or perhaps go shopping to spruce up your living space. Whatever you decide, do it with a close friend. You'll both enjoy the week more if you are together.

Soul Affirmation: Trust gives me a deep sense of peace and joy.

Lucky Numbers: 18, 21, 37

### TAURUS

Hardly anyone alive learns new skills in an instant, so cut yourself some slack if you feel you've made a beginner's mistake somewhere. Mistakes are part of the learning process that is called Life, so self-correct and proceed with happiness.

Soul Affirmation: My emotions provide me a pathway into the sunshine of my being.

Lucky Numbers: 17, 29, 45

### GEMINI

A happy week is in store for sociable you. Lots of friends and a party or two or three will keep your energy bright. Use caution while driving, and watch for a pleasant surprise or two this week. Spend some time enjoying your fondest memories.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy the spirits of people whose spirits are akin to mine this week.

Lucky Numbers: 9, 14, 24

### CANCER

Your sense of self is feeling unusually well-defined. And it's causing you to look confident. People will notice your regal bearing and noble outlook this week. Let your image work for you. Approach others with your ideas. They will believe in you.

Soul Affirmation: Knowing I can

do it is the biggest preparation for getting it done.

Lucky Numbers: 45, 51, 53

### LEO

You'll have a busy week as the energy around you seems super-charged. With everyone rushing about, you'll wonder how you'll get anything done, much less the things you feel you must get done. Not to worry. Stay calm and flexible and a way will be found.

Soul Affirmation: Anticipation of a beautiful night will light up my week.

Lucky Numbers: 31, 46, 55

### VIRGO

You may feel a bit crabby about your health early this week. If you feel you need a physical checkup, make the appointment this week. If you want to feel and look better this week, skip lunch and take a walk instead.

Soul Affirmation: I enjoy learning new things about myself this week.

Lucky Numbers: 22, 38, 42

### LIBRA

All vibes are positive this week, and your vibration may be the most positive of all. Many friends and family members may call, and all will want to see you. You've got a way with words this week, so use them to spread the sunshine around.

Soul Affirmation: I master fear by knowing that all is well.

Lucky Numbers: 1, 33, 35

### SCORPIO

Breathe deeply when a challenging situation arises. Know that you can handle it. Panic is the only real enemy. Your charm can give you the Midas touch. Flirt! Go for what you want! Lay it on thick when others need an ego boost.

Soul Affirmation: What I need to be is fully present inside of me.

Lucky Numbers: 6, 15, 40

### SAGITTARIUS

You may find that discussions at home have taken a sudden, spiritual orientation. Give everyone room to express their personal beliefs without trying to preach your point of view. Your open-mindedness helps you with deep learning this week.

Soul Affirmation: The winner is me. I smile for the cameras.

Lucky Numbers: 31, 32, 54

### CAPRICORN

Feeling bold, are we? Well, go with the flow of your feelings. No other sign can call on inner courage as easily as you. Whether at home, at work, or out on the town, let your personal statements be stylish and bold!

Soul Affirmation: This week is the week the Lord has made. I rejoice in it.

Lucky Numbers: 23, 38, 52

### AQUARIUS

Tempers may flare around you this week, but it's nothing personal. So keep your mind on your own work and let others act up. You'll be doing yourself a big favor if you get some exercise this week.

Soul Affirmation: I change the way I look at business this week.

Lucky Numbers: 28, 32, 50

### PISCES

Restless feelings may arise over health matters, or perhaps education or the lack of it. Do what you need to do to feel comfortable with yourself. If it involves seeing a dentist or taking a class, what's stopping you? Self-improvement can be a very enjoyable game!

Soul Affirmation: Hope is future's way of shining on me this week.

Lucky Numbers: 12, 14, 21



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