



FATHER'S DAY

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Sunday, June 16, 2013

Charles H. Smith, Lectionary Team Cultural Resource Commentator

I. Historical Background and Documents

Father's Day has taken on new and exciting meanings as our culture has forged new definitions of marriage and family over the past three generations. Any attempt to ignore this cultural evolution will leave a void in our understanding of the challenges facing religious leaders serving contemporary families. And any attempt to comprehend the complexities facing the African American family unit must begin with its African roots that brought to America unique family structures that could be traced from the country, region, or tribal unit of origin. Many family structures were represented including the modern day nuclear family, polygamy, and tribal.

The term *father* cannot be restricted to terms of biological origin. Its concept must be expanded to become a metaphor for a paternal relationship inclusive of kin and non-kin relationships. It is defined by a conscious emptying of one's self into one's own children and/or into a community of children. It was this fatherhood concept that saved the black family during slavery. It was why Frederick Douglass called his extended male protectors on the plantation "uncles," according to plantation etiquette, as a matter of respect, due from the younger to the older slaves. There was not to be found, among slaves, a more rigid enforcement of the law of respect to elders than they maintained.

In my book Frederick Douglass,¹ Douglass recalls that slavery does away with fathers, as it does with families. Slavery has no use for either fathers or families, and its laws do not recognize their existence in the social arrangements of the plantation. Probably the most severe blow to the African American family during slavery was the *Valuation and Division*, a process where enslaved blacks were sold. The valuation and division of the enslaved, among contending white heirs, took place when the enslaved were divided from their family.

The concept and role of fatherhood has been in constant change from African culture via the Middle Passage, slavery, Reconstruction, sharecropping, legalized segregation, and discrimination to the current state of affairs with fathers.

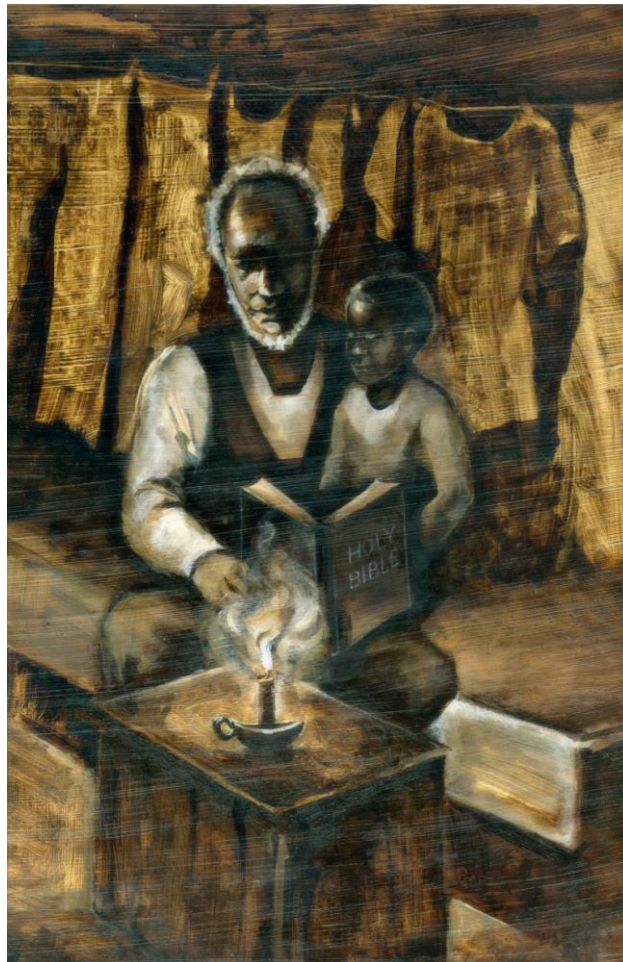
Seventy-two percent of African American children are born to unwed mothers. Many fathers are incarcerated. Forces have been at work for years to destroy the black family. I shall never forget building 150 apartment units in Huntington, West Virginia, for low-income families. Qualified applicants had to be either dirt poor or on welfare. Men and women refused to marry because it would increase their income just high enough to be ineligible. With both incomes, they were very poor.

Economics and racial discrimination still play a role in the devastation of families. These factors do not excuse the cultural period of self-inflicted moral permissiveness and degradation reflected in the negative baggage load of hip-hop culture. This social phenomenon has had a predominately negative impact on boys, who are future fathers. The decline and fear among families negatively impacted often leave them in a state of defeatism. However, today's text suggests that we move from defeat and moral inertia and take responsibility now for our children, just as God has taken responsibility for and carried us.

Instead of using Father's Day to ridicule and put down the absent father, I am suggesting that we spend time lifting fathers who have faced harsh and devastating situations, and still under the guidance of God produced the strongest families in African American history. Today's text from Deuteronomy suggests that the role played by God the Father is to be carried out in our family lives regardless of life's threats. God carried us and we are to carry our children.

II. Connections to Today's Text

"Fatherhood" and "Grandfather hood" inter-generational began in slavery. The following true story is packed with symbols: education, the role of sacred text, moral sources, continuity, and fearlessness.



SCIPIO

Thomas L. Webber in his Walk Deep Like the Rivers (1978) cites a tragic story that takes place in slavery and sheds light on the power of our text in Deuteronomy by revealing generational fatherhood, facing threats from the enemy, and how God's people are being led by God. In Webber's book, he tells the story of a grandfather who refused to be gripped by fear and threatened by the nightriders.²

During slavery, "slaves known to have the ability to learn to read or write were severely whipped or threatened with the dismemberment of a finger or branding on the cheek as a sign to the other blacks of the fate awaiting those who would learn forbidden skills and as a signal to whites to keep the marked slaves separate from other blacks."³ Jamie Parker's grandfather, and fellow slave, Scipio, seen in the image above, was put to death for attempting to teach Jamie to read and spell from the Bible.

The unique importance of this story is manifested in myriad ways throughout African American and American history and culture. It speaks of a man, undaunted by the ever-looming threat of death, still attempting to forge a legacy of education, because he knew what it would mean for the future of the next generation. He did his part to carry them as far as he could. The story behind this now-famous image should be told in churches everywhere.

III. Songs That Speak to the Moment

Our first selection is "Faith of Our Fathers." We can see and feel our present realities, and the sight is often fearful and threatening. Too often, today, we can only discern the future through fear, as our fathers did through the long valley of slavery, reconstruction, sharecropping, and legalized segregation. However, because of their relationship with the Divine, our fathers knew that a day of emancipation, when jubilee could be declared, would come, despite their present realities.

Faith of Our Fathers

by Frederick William Faber

[verse 1]

Faith of our fathers, living still,
In spite of dungeon, fire, and sword;
Oh, how our hearts beat high with joy
Whene'er we hear that glorious Word!

[refrain]

Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

[verse 2]

Faith of our fathers, we will strive
To win all nations unto thee;

And through the truth that comes from God,
We all shall then be truly free.

[refrain]

Faith of our fathers, holy faith!
We will be true to thee till death.

[verse 3]

Faith of our fathers, we will love
Both friend and foe in all our strife;
And preach thee, too, as love knows how
by kindly words and virtuous life.⁴

Our second selection is a Negro Spiritual, "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me." It seems that life can constantly give us reasons to be terrified. When we believe we have mastered our season of life, the season changes. Yet when we realize that it is God who carries us, if we walk with Him, we can go past the fear into faith toward God. He is a faithful father who will carry us all the way until we reach our final destination. This can give fathers the courage to face their internal and external adversaries and go forward.

I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

I want Jesus to walk with me.
I want Jesus to walk with me.
All along my pilgrim journey,
I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my trials, Lord, walk with me,
In my trials, Lord, walk with me,
When the shades of life are falling,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my sorrows, Lord walk with me,
In my sorrows, Lord walk with me,
When my heart is aching,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.

In my troubles, Lord walk with me,
In my troubles, Lord walk with me,
When my life becomes a burden,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me.⁵

IV. Fathers Who Overcame Negative Circumstances



Rev. Thomas Horace Smith's Story

Circumstance: Unwed Mother, Absent Father

“Contradictions of life are not in themselves either final or ultimate. Your existing circumstance should not define who you are or what you should become.”

My oldest brother, John, tells the story of my father's plight being born to an unwed mother and having an absent father. It should give encouragement to children of unwed mothers and a challenge to fathers who need direction and support from the church and community so that they can be fathers who stick and stay.

My brother John recalls the story of our father, Thomas, who we will call Tom. He lived in two worlds, both of which were characterized by abject poverty. From Sunday night to Friday afternoon, he lived with his maternal grandparents, Benjamin and Matilda Strider, on Thomas Street in the east end of Lexington.

On Friday afternoon he would walk ten miles to Jonestown out in the country where he would stay with Lucinda Strider, his mother, until Sunday afternoon. Lucinda gave birth to Tom before she was married. Her father was a Methodist Episcopal minister. Tom had only one coat and one pair of trousers, which were given to him. That outfit he would wear to Constitution School each day, and on Friday evening, he would walk back ten miles to Jonestown where his mother, Lucinda, would wash his clothes. He would then help his stepfather Zephaniah Yates with chores on the meager little farm.

Tom was rejected by his mother's other children, who resented him. They refused to accept him as their older brother. They constantly whispered about him being illegitimate. Tom pondered, "How can they hold him responsible for the circumstances of his birth, over which he had no control?"

Later in life Tom began to feel an awakening of his spiritual consciousness and finally submitted to his call to ministry. By this time, he had become a successful small business owner. It was quite a come-down from a relatively successful little business adventure to pastoring small churches.

Tom embraced and lived the spirit of our text with the help of his devoted wife, Helen. In spite of his circumstance, he finished high school, matriculated in college, and earned a Bachelor of Divinity, which few black or white clergy had at the time. Tom took care of his children while serving as minister of several small churches and lastly a medium-sized congregation in Lexington, Kentucky. He was known as the 'Dean of Preachers' of this day. His wife never worked outside the home but they sent eight of their children to college, although Tom's income never exceeded sixty dollars a week.

Under the guidance of God, all of his children and 99% of the grandchildren were led into fields of human services.

Tom's Children (My Family Tree)



Mary Smith Simpson
Educator
Kentucky State University

Mary Smith's Children

Son

Clay Eddie Simpson
Educator
HHS Health Officer

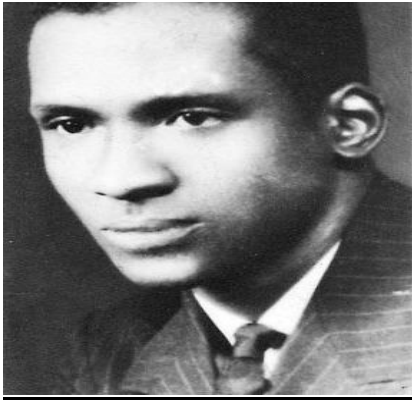
Daughter

Sarah Helen Thomson
Medical Technologist



Daughter
Roberta Hall Slade

Educator
Musicologist



John T. Smith

University of Kentucky
First black to receive a PhD from
Univ. of Kentucky and its first black
vice president

Minnie Smith Hall
Speech Pathologist
University of Kentucky

Daughter of John T. Smith

Ethelda E. Smith
Computer Specialist

Sons of John T. Smith

Thomas Horace Smith III
Industrial Supervisor

Nathan Depratt Smith
Real Estate



Gloster M. Smith
Clergy- Pastor

Daughters of Gloster Smith

Mary Estill Smith Crutchfield
Educator

Jhonna Smith
Educator



Horace R. Smith
Clergy - Pastor
Funeral Home Director
Prairie View Texas University

Son of Horace R. Smith

Horace Ray Smith Jr.
Civil Rights Compliance Officer



William H. Smith
YMCA Director
University of Indiana

Sons of William Smith
William Smith, Jr.
Recreational Administrator

Jeffery Keith Smith
FBI Agent

Daryl Wayne Smith
Utility Economic Officer



Charles H. Smith
Pastor, Writer

Daughters of Charles Smith
Jacquelyn Lapeyrolarie
Interior Designer

Debbie Selena Smith
Advertising Representative

Stephanie L. Poole
Medical Doctor

Caroline E. Smith
Student - Marketing

Kristen R. Smith



Dr. Clay Simpson Sr., MD's Story

Circumstance: Poverty

“Poverty will not define me nor control my destiny.”

My oldest sister, Mary, married Dr. Clay Simpson. Her daughter, Sarah, tells the vivid story of her daddy's struggle to become a doctor. Clay was born on a small farm near Notuslga, Alabama. He was a small, thin man around 5' 7" with an oblong, deep, rich, chocolate face. His long eyelashes framed

his slightly droopy eyes, and his high cheekbones were highlighted by streaks of immature gray in his sideburns.

My daddy's father knew him well and realized that he was not fit to work on the family farm. He called him lazy but made arrangements for him to work in the home of Dr. John Kenney, who planted the seed of medicine in his mind and spirit. Although Clay's daddy's farm produced cotton, corn, peanuts, and pecan trees of plenty, by the time he had to deal with white merchants to sell his goods, there was little or no money left for Clay's education.

Clay's main tuition was paid by the state of Alabama with the encouragement and support of Dr. John Kenney. He finished Tuskegee Institute and was under the tutelage of none other than Booker T. Washington, the Virginian who journeyed to Alabama and established a school to educate black folks.

Clay graduated with a degree in Agriculture from Tuskegee. Being encouraged by his mentor and under the direction of God, he bought a one-way bus ticket to Nashville to attend Meharry Medical School with no money for tuition or housing. He sat outside the president's office demanding to see him to stay in school. After several days, the president finally found him a private room and provided a loan for tuition with the understanding that he would pay it back as soon as he could.

Clay worked every summer and as many weekends as possible as a Pullman Porter to pay his way through medical school. He finally graduated and moved to Ornesboro, Kentucky, where he served white and black patients with less than one third ever paying him for his service. His house visits were \$3 per person. He married my older sister, Mary, and they had two children who continued his medical history and served the poor and downtrodden. Their children continued his service in the following disciplines: medical physician, educator, journalist, recreational specialist, and airline administration.



Clay Simpson Jr., PhD

Public Health Deputy
Assistant Secretary for
minority health in the Dept. of
Health and Human Services

V. Organizations for Black Men⁶

Black Men Raising Girls Alone

Black Men Raising Girls Alone is an organization dedicated to strengthening the moral and spiritual fiber of young black women who are parented only (or primarily) by their fathers.

Boot Camp for New Dads

Boot Camp for New Dads (BCND), formed in 1990 to help new fathers “hit the ground crawling,” is rapidly developing into a national support network for men confronting the realities of fatherhood.

Father and Family Link

Father and Family Link is a resource dedicated to serving the needs of fathers and families by providing current, reliable information from various fields. Their database consists of entries retrieved or received from various organizations that conduct research, study policy, and/or provide counseling in the field of fathers and families.

FatherNet

FatherNet produces information on the importance of fathers, fathering, and how fathers can be good parents and parent educators. It includes research, policy, and opinion documents to inform users about the factors that support and hinder men’s involvement in the lives of children.

Father to Father

Father to Father is a national effort to unite men in the task of being a strong and positive force in their children’s lives. It does this with assistance from central resource teams, local communities, or agencies.

The Fatherhood Project

The Fatherhood Project® is a national research and education project that is examining the future of fatherhood and developing ways to support men’s involvement in child rearing. Its books, films, consultations, seminars, and training all present practical strategies to support fathers and mothers in their parenting roles.

The Father’s Network

The Father’s Network is a website created for fathers and families raising children with special health care needs and developmental disabilities.

MELD

MELD’s mission is to strengthen families by improving the quality of parenting in the United States. The program’s national headquarters are in Minneapolis, Minnesota, where its city-wide demonstration informs MELD’s work in over 25 states across the country.

National Center for Strategic Non-profit Planning and Community Leadership

The NPCL’s website provides details about NPCL’s public and customized workshop series to help community-based organizations and public agencies better serve young, low-income, single fathers and fragile families.

The National Center on Fathering

The mission of the National Center for Fathering is to inspire and equip men to be better fathers. In response to a dramatic trend towards fatherlessness in America, the Center was founded in 1990 by Dr. Ken Canfield to conduct research on fathers and fathering, and to develop practical resources to prepare dads for nearly every fathering situation.

National Center on Fathers and Families (NCOFF)

Operated by the University of Pennsylvania, NCOFF provides extensive research and related information on fathering. This is one of the most comprehensive research-grounded sites on fathering and families.

National Fatherhood Initiative

The mission of the National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) is to stimulate a society-wide movement to confront the growing problem of father absence and to improve the well-being of children by increasing the number of children growing up with involved, committed, and responsible fathers in their lives.

National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families, Inc.

The National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families, Inc. (NPNFF), is the national individual membership organization whose mission is to build the profession of practitioners working to increase the responsible involvement of fathers in the lives of their children.

Welfare Information Network (WIN)

WIN is a special activity of the Finance Project, a national initiative to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of public and private-sector financing for education, other children's services, and community building and development. The Finance Project develops and disseminates information, knowledge, tools, and technical assistance for improved policies, programs, and financial strategies to help children and families.

VI. Making This a Learning Moment

The church needs to embrace a new concept of the “village” to save new generations of potential fathers. Demographics movements in communities have virtually erased the practicality of the old “village” community arrangement. However, mentoring through cooperative arrangements with community-based institutions can still make it possible for the village to mentor potential fathers. **Use this day to plant the seed in a newsletter. Be prepared to build an infrastructure for delivery. See the example from a newsletter that was used at the church from which I retired last year.**

Know Where Your

Christian Beliefs Collide with Secular Culture

BE PREPARED TO STAND FIRM ON GOD'S PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

- FATHERS FOR YOUTH BUILDERS -

TO BUILD CHRISTIAN RELATIONSHIP

TO VIEW LIFE THROUGH THE EYES OF CHRIST

Fathers Carrying Children- Bible Studies

Fathers Village Movement

'Building and Leading a Christian Life'

Every generation stamps its distinct signature on the world. Each cultural group reflects its own ideas, behaviors, expectations, work ethics and values. Over the decades sociologists, media and historians have studied, defined and labeled these significant cultural and generational demographics. Sociologists sometimes disagree over the precise timeline dates and every trend does not fit every person. Hip Hop is a sub group to the current Generation. GOAL is to lay a solid foundation so they can carry children to the next generation.

*Deuteronomy
1:29-31*

I said to you, "Have no dread or fear of them. The Lord your God, who goes before you, is the one who will fight for you, just as He did in Egypt before your very eyes, and in the wilderness, where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, just as one carries a child, all the way that you have traveled until you reached this place."

JUBA BIBLE STUDY SERIES





SECULAR HIP HOP FACTS

- **Hip Hop Culture** is a secular movement birthed in the streets, which reflects its attitude, look, verbal acuity, social economic conditions, rebelliousness, language, hairstyles and clothing. Hip Hop advocates often justify their ruthlessness to outside generations to assure outsiders that they are loyal to the streets.
- **Hip Hop** adherents often struggle for self-identity using verbal dexterity as a vehicle for creative expression of ideas and creative expression of self.
- **Hip Hop** has its roots in African tradition transferred to an urban cultural style and mindset. It is a universal vehicle for youth rebellion, verbal street smartness, and street arrogance. It lacks educated gurus. demanding unity of its adherents,

CHRISTIAN Worldview

SOUL – True essence, an implanted uniqueness with capacity for relationship with God.

SELF – Intrinsic worth builds self-esteem, identity, and an acceptance of others rooted in acceptance of self.

SIN & SHAME – Discern distortion and deviation from a sense of wholeness and harmony with God that leads to a sense of incompleteness.

SALVATION – Obtained in a new identity and an authentic personhood represented in Jesus the Christ, thus reconciling one to God, self, neighbor, and nature.

CELEBRATION – Celebrating a life in the kingdom of God, being for others, and a life of grace filled with vision and hope.
Literature - Email
charleshsmith31@comcast.net

SECULAR HIP HOP World Views

HIP HOP NEGATIVES

- It flirts with spirituality on the fringes. It presents a pseudo spiritual facade.
- It is self-centered, surface, one-dimensional.
- It exploits sexuality in African American women.
- It is plagued by guns, loud cars, violence, and obscenities and disrespect for females.
- It has developed its own views on morality, sin, and shame without biblical foundation.

HIP HOP POSITIVES

- It is linguistic, artistic, universally known.
- It can be an educational tool especially for urban youth.
- It reflects reality as experienced by its adherents.
- It draws on African cultural skills often without knowing it.
- Its rap is poetry. Its use of technology is innovative in creating new sounds.
- It exhibits many different types of intelligence.

MESSAGES FROM OUR
LEADERSHIP

CALENDAR OF
EVENTS

SUCCESSES AND
FAILURES

RECRUITMENT
STRATEGIES FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE

INNOVATIVE
TEACHING AND
LEARNING MODELS

TEACHING
TECHNIQUES

LESSON PLAN
STRATEGIES

WEBSITE RESOURCES

VII. Images of Black Fathers in Film⁷

The Pursuit of Happiness (2006). Message: Fathers teach sons to persevere through poverty.

Based on the true story of Chris Gardner and starring real-life father-son duo Will and Jaden Smith, *The Pursuit of Happiness* follows Gardner (Will Smith) and Christopher Jr. (Jaden Smith) as they sleep in a church's homeless shelter and even in a San Francisco train station bathroom while Chris struggles through an unpaid internship at a stock brokerage firm. In 2010, the real Chris Gardner authored another book, *Start Where You Are*, and has been touring the country giving financial seminars.

Boyz in the Hood (1991). Message: Fathers teach sons what it means to be a man.

Furious Styles (Laurence Fishburne) didn't flinch at keeping it real with his son Tre (Cuba Gooding Jr.). Among his words of wisdom for Tre: "Any fool with a d*** can make a baby, but only a real man can raise his children." Seems like President Obama took a page straight out of *Furious*'s lines in John Singleton's directorial debut when he gave his Father's Day speech in 2009.

He Got Game (1998). Message: Men with absent fathers must forgive them.

In this Spike Lee film, young Jesus Shuttlesworth (Ray Allen) is one of the most sought-after high school ballers during the college draft. So much so that New York's governor offers his father, Jake (Denzel Washington), a few days out of prison and a shorter sentence to convince his son to choose the governor's alma mater. Jake, who went to jail for killing his wife, has a hard time convincing his son that he has his best interests at heart.

In His Father's Shoes (1997). Message: Try seeing life through your father's eyes.

On a shopping trip, Frank Crosby (Louis Gossett, Jr.) and his son Clay (Robert Richard) buy a pair of wing-tipped shoes. Shortly thereafter, Frank dies from cancer. When Clay puts on the wing-tipped shoes, he's transported back to the '60s as his father, as a child. Watch as he gives a report on John F. Kennedy's assassination—before it has happened—by channeling his adult father.

The Gospel (2005). Message: Forgiving one's father helps one love himself.

After his mother dies, singer David Taylor (Boris Kodjoe) decides he'd rather make it big than stay in the church. So he leaves the congregation of his father, Bishop Fred Taylor (Clifton Powell), to skyrocket up the Billboard charts. David returns to the church after his father falls ill, and he must figure out how to save the church—and save himself in the process.

John Q (2002). Message: A father stops at nothing to help his child.

John Quincy Archibald's son Mike (Daniel E. Smith) had no greater hope than to become the world's next wrestling star. But after collapsing in the middle of a baseball game, the boy must get a heart transplant the family cannot afford. Faced with financial struggles, insurance battles, and a mountain of frustration, John Q (Denzel Washington) locks down the hospital and holds patients hostage in order to force a surgeon to operate on his son.

Once Upon a Time When We Were Colored (1995). Message: Grandfathers can teach powerful

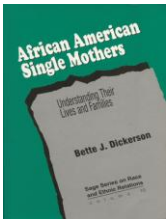
messages.

Cliff (played by Charles Earl Taylor Jr. at 6; William Norwood Jr—aka Ray J at 12; Damon Hines at 16) is actually raised by his great-grandparents. But as Roger Ebert points out in his 1995 review, one of the most poignant scenes is when Poppa (Al Freeman Jr.) takes Cliff into town and traces the letters “C” and “W” on the separate bathrooms for “coloreds” and “whites” to teach the young man about racism and segregation.

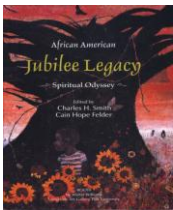
Souder (2003). Message: A Father provides guidance.

Set in rural Louisiana in the 1930s, the Oscar-nominated film follows the Morgans, a black sharecropping family. In order to put food on the table, Nathan steals a ham and is sentenced to a year of hard labor. “Son, don’t get too used to this place. I want you to beat the life they got all laid out for you. I love you, son,” Nathan Lee Morgan (Paul Winfield) tells his son, David Lee Morgan (Kevin Hooks) after he is released from the labor camp.

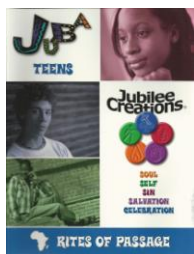
VIII. Books to Enhance Your Understanding of Fatherhood⁸



Dickerson, Bette J. African American Single Mothers: Understanding Their Lives and Families. London: Thousand Oaks, 1995.



Smith, Charles H. and Cain Hope Felder, eds. African American Jubilee Legacy: Spiritual Odyssey. Nashville, TN: Townsend Press, 2001.



Smith, Charles H. Juba Teens: Rites of Passage. Nashville, TN: Townsend Press 2001.

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1. Smith, Charles H. Frederick Douglass: Fighter for Justice. Nashville, TN: Townsend Press, 2001.

2. Webber, Thomas L. Deep like the Rivers: Education in the Slave Quarter Community, 1831–1865. New York, NY: Norton, 1978.

3. Pierson, Emily Catharine. Jamie Parker, the Fugitive. Hartford: Brockett, Fuller, and Company, 1978.
4. "Faith of Our Fathers." By Frederick William Faber. African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, 2001. #409
5. "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me." Negro Spiritual. African American Heritage Hymnal. #563.
6. "Resources for Fathers." Fatherhood Resources: Web Sites and Organizations. Online location: www.agoodblackman.com/fd_links.shtml.
7. "Celebrating Black Fathers and Sons in Film." *The Root*. Online location: www.theroot.com/multimedia/celebrating-black-fathers-and-sons-film.
8. For all books by Charles H. Smith, e-mail charleshsmith31@comcast.net.