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The Best Kept Secret: Single Black Fathers

Roberta L. Coles

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The Best Kept Secret studies the often-overlooked group of single, African American custodial fathers. While the media focuses on the increase of single mothers and the decline in marriage in the black community, Roberta Coles paints a nuanced picture of single black dads. Based on qualitative research, the author looks at the parenting experience of these fathers, who may have become single parents through nonmarital births, divorce, widowhood and adoption. The fathers, ranging in age from 20 to 76, discuss their motivations for taking custody of their children, what roles they enact as parents, what they hope for their children, how they socialize their children in a diverse society, how parenting daughters differs from sons, and what parenting has done for them personally. Coles then recommends policy changes to improve the situations for children and single parents-particularly often-unseen fathers. Filled with dynamic interviews and intriguing case studies, *The Best Kept Secret* shows that single black custodial fathers do exist and looks at the ways raising children has shaped their lives.

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