

African-American Fiction Roundup

by Hattie H. Vines and LaSaundra Vines

Book clubs and fans of African-American fiction have much to choose from in the fall 2006 crop from Dafina Books, New American Library, and Warner Books. Some of these are single titles, while others continue an already popular story line.

Banks, Leslie Esdaile. *Shattered Trust*. New York: Dafina Books, 2006. 227 pp. ISBN 0-7582-1331-X, \$15.00 (pb).

Newlyweds Laura and James live a leisurely life in the Cayman Islands. Their idyllic existence carries with it a feeling that trouble awaits them. Here the reader becomes confused due to a lack of information indicating that the book is a sequel. The couple receives disturbing news about a brutal murder back home in Philadelphia, and they must figure out who is responsible. This modern thriller is fast-moving and should not be read without having read the previous titles, *Betrayal of the Trust* and *Blind Trust* (under the author name Leslie Esdaile). The cover misleads the reader into assuming that all the action takes place in this novel as opposed to the earlier ones. Not recommended unless the collection already holds the previous titles.

Black Artemis. *Burn*. New York: New American Library, 2006. 318 pp. ISBN 0-451-21857-4, \$13.95 (pb).

Jasmine Reyes is a Latino bail bond agent with a dark past. She wants to give "second chances" to other young offenders instead of the usual jail time. When one client skips bail, Jasmine goes looking for him and meets a handsome doctor who also has a secret. The story has lots of action, a generous amount of profanity, homophobia, and HIV. While a good read, the novel's appeal is more to the hip-hop generation and therefore not recommended for adult fiction collections.

Carter, T. P. *Behind Those Eyes*. New York: Dafina Books, 2006. 400 pp. ISBN 0-7582-1428-6, \$15.00 (pb).

Nathaniel has a good marriage with Kendra, who does her best to make up for the times she takes him away from his friends. His is a marriage that others pattern themselves after, until he meets Doctor Taiyler Richardson. Nat then has to choose between what he knows and the woman who shares his innermost thoughts and dreams. Although the story line is deeply engrossing, the book is much too descriptive. It is still recommended for book group, however.

Clark, Wahida. *Every Thug Needs a Lady*. New York: Dafina Books, 316 pp. ISBN 0-7582-1288-7, \$15.00 (pb).

Clark looks at the hard lives of best friends Roz, Kyra, Jaz, and Angel. The four have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps to become college graduates. However, they find it hard to resist the type of men their previous lifestyles attracted. Told as only a person who has walked the mean streets of life could tell it, this is a gritty and graphic look into a world not easily understood by many. Not recommended for community library collections because of its frank language, extreme violence, and sexual content.

Diggs, Anita. *Denzel's Lips*. New York: Dafina Books, 2006. 272 pp. ISBN 0-7582-1051-5, \$14.00 (pb).

Sisters Asha and Saundra, first introduced in *The Other Side of the Game*, live in different worlds—Saundra's a poor but happy existence in Harlem, and Asha's that of high society in Hercsville, Long Island. Among Hercsville's other residents are Shareeka, Penelope, and Nancy. Shareeka is married to her childhood sweetheart, Dayshawn, and spends her time trying to convince him to move back home to California. Penelope, a snobby psychologist, tries to keep her teenage daughter away from Shareeka's son. Shareeka's friend, Nancy, has serious issues of her own. Once the reader gets past the book's title (yuck!), the plot is excellent. Although somewhat rushed to a conclusion, it is highly recommended for book groups and fiction collections.

Foster, Gwynne. *When You Dance with the Devil*. New York: Dafina Books, 2006. 288 pp. ISBN 0-7582-1308-5, \$14.00 (pb).

Sara Jolene Tillman is a young woman determined to take on the world she had been denied by her overbearing, demanding, and embittered mother. After her mother's death, Sara eventually moves away and learns that the world has its own share of ugly secrets. The one her mother kept from her rocks her to her core. This is a bittersweet coming-of-age tale recommended for fiction collections and book clubs.

Hill, Ernest. *A Person of Interest*. New York: Dafina Books, 2006. 246 pp. ISBN 0-7582-1312-3, \$15.00 (pb).

Hill introduces us to Felicia Fontenot, who has returned home to care for her aging mother. Felicia finds

herself living across the street from the man she has always loved, Luther Jackson. Luther is married to the woman he once left Felicia for, and when his wife and son are murdered, he becomes the prime suspect. Told in alternating first person, riveting from beginning to end, the book's surprising and well-executed ending leaves the reader simply stunned. This one comes highly recommended for book groups and fiction collections.

Monroe, Mary. *God Don't Play*. New York: Dafina Books, 2006. 314 pp. ISBN 0-7582-0346-2, \$24.00.

Monroe fans will be delighted to see the return of best friends Annette and Rhoda, a little older and wiser. Annette is harassed by an anonymous woman who wants to take her husband. When Annette confides in her friend Rhoda, she and her teenage daughter want to lend a hand. Monroe's gift at weaving a serious but funny story is evident in this third book about the friends. She provides enough background information so that the book can be read as a separate work. Libraries with the previous titles should definitely add this one, and book groups should jump at the chance to read the continuing saga of Annette and Rhoda.

Quinones-Miller, Karen E. *Satin Nights*. New York: Warner Books, 2006. 260 pp. ISBN 0-446-57844-4. \$23.99.

The friendship between Yvonne, Puddin, Tamika, and Regina exhibit traits of a marriage: They stand together

through sickness and health, and for richer or poorer. While Puddin is wild, crazy, and never grows up, Yvonne is still looking for love in all the wrong places. Regina is torn between her ex-husband and her ex-hustling, drug-dealing lover, while Tamika struggles to keep her family safe. The author's perception of true friendship places this one on the list of recommended titles of libraries with large fiction collections.

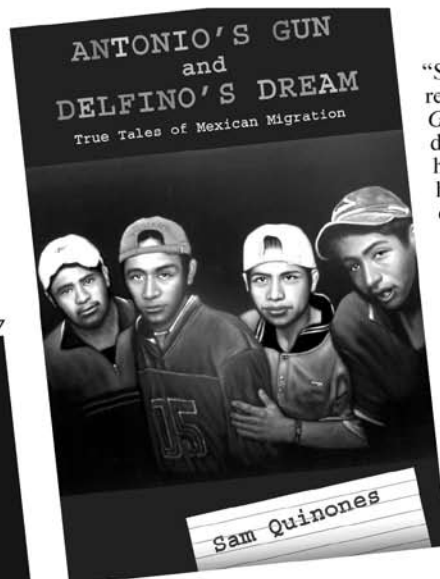
Weber, Carl and Morrison, Mary B. *She Ain't the One*. New York: Dafina Books, 2006. 198 pp. ISBN 0-7582-0721-2, \$15.00 (pb).

This one you will love because you are fans of both Weber and Morrison, or hate because it's overkill! *She Ain't the One* is a sequel to an earlier book by Morrison, *When Somebody Loves You Back*, wherein Ashlee and Darius were secret lovers. Here Ashlee meets Jay, who does not know about her psychiatric disorder. Jay also does not know the details of Ashlee's prior relationship with Darius, the father of her baby (and who is also her brother). Ashlee blames Darius for all her problems and feels that he is responsible for her mental state. When new love Jay realizes "she ain't the one," all hell breaks loose. Libraries that own the previous title should add this one to the collection.

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"Sam Quinones is a border legend. For those in the know, his reportage has been cause for celebration. Now, with *Antonio's Gun and Delfino's Dream* he takes us behind the lines and undercover. He puts a human face on 'illegal immigration,' and he gives us stunning stories of survival and dread. However, he accomplishes something more valuable than a mere parade of sensational set pieces--Quinones starts to put the complex issues in the light of understanding and hard-won wisdom."-- Luis A. Urrea, author of *The Devil's Highway* and *The Hummingbird's Daughter*

