

African-American Fiction Roundup

By Hattie H. Vines and LaSaundra Y. Vines

Mystery and romance are among the genres featured in the latest crop of popular fiction by and about African Americans. With one exception, these titles are recommended for public library collections; they would make good choices for book clubs as well.

Culberson, San. *In Between Men*. New York: Dafina Books, 2007. 310 pp. ISBN 0-7582-1522-2, \$14.00 (pb).

Hope Williams is a bored, spoiled, and selfish wife and mother. She is also a successful bank executive who is used to getting her way in the workplace. Leaving aside her domineering husband, Ray, she has a life for which most women would give their right arm. Hope feels she needs a real change in her life. She attends a banking conference where she again meets handsome Anthony Bolden. They start out as friends and e-mail buddies, but the relationship quickly develops into something more.

The situations that lead to turmoil between Hope and her husband seem unrealistic and padded—just unnecessary and meaningless conversation between the couple, not nearly enough reason to seek an outside relationship! This one falls short of Culberson's debut novel, *In the Nick of Time*. Perhaps if the author had spent more time developing Hope's mother as one of the main characters, this story could have been a winner. I would not recommend for public library fiction collections.

Murray, J. J. *Can't Get Enough of Your Love*. New York: Dafina Books, 2007. 296 pp. ISBN 978-0-7582-1399-0, \$15.00 (pb).

Erlana J. Cole is a woman who is out to defy the conventional methods of finding, having, and keeping a man. Though she claims she is looking for Mr. Right, she wants to have her cake and eat it too. She successfully juggles three very different men (a Latino mechanic, a Black professional, and a White cemetery owner) at one time and lives vicariously through the exploits of each of her "friends." She enjoys the time she spends with each man, but as she adds more dimensions to each relationship, the juggling act rapidly gets out of control and things start to fall apart all around her. Erlana has to decide what she really wants out of life and with whom she really wants to share her life. This edgy romance is recommended for larger public libraries and book clubs.

Poole, Daaimah. *All I Want Is Everything*. New York: Dafina

Books, 2007. 309 pp. ISBN 978-0-7582-2060-8, \$15.00 (pb).

Poole does an excellent job of telling the story of Kendra Michelle's quest for fame through her singing. Kendra was once voted Most Likely to Succeed, but now that she is an adult, working as a bartender is not her idea of success. She is tired of the monotony of her current life and decides to pursue her dreams.

Kendra quickly realizes that most things she'd heard about the music industry are true and that everything comes with a price. When it looks like she is going to have to turn away from her dream once again, she is forced to evaluate what she knows about herself and what she wants from life.

This book is recommended for both libraries and book clubs.

Underwood, Blair, with Tananarive Due and Steven Barnes. *Casanegra: A Tennyson Hardwick Story*. New York: Atria Books, 2007. 308 pp. ISBN 978-0-7432-8731-9, \$25.00.

Tennyson "Ten" Hardwick is a struggling actor, a "pretty boy," and a former gigolo. Ten tries to hold things together until the part he's been waiting a lifetime for finally comes along. When he bumps into Serena, a beautiful ex-client and actress, she invites him to her home, where he spends the night. He looks forward to renewing their relationship, but the next news he hears is that lovely Serena has been murdered. Since he had just spent the night with her, he correctly assumes that the police are looking for their main suspect, Tennyson himself! Ten vows to hunt down the one responsible for her murder while keeping one step ahead of the law. In the meantime, Ten has to take care of his father who has left the police force and is in rehab following a stroke. The story is action-packed and filled with dirty cops, illegal drugs, prostitution, and murder. The authors have brilliantly executed a real page-turner with a story so absorbing that it keeps the reader wondering, "who done it?" until the very end.

This mystery novel is highly recommended for all fiction collections and adult book clubs.

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