



The Sweet Hell Inside: The Rise of an Elite Black Family in the Segregated South

Edward Ball

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From National Book Award winner Edward Ball comes *The Sweet Hell Inside*, the story of the fascinating Harleston family of South Carolina, the progeny of a Southern gentleman and his slave, who cast off their blemished roots and prospered despite racial barriers. Enhanced by recollections from the family's archivist, eighty-four-year-old Edwina Harleston Whitlock -- whose bloodline the author shares. *The Sweet Hell Inside* features a celebrated portrait artist whose subjects included industrialist Pierre du Pont; a black classical composer in the Lost Generation of 1920s Paris; and an orphanage founder who created the famous Jenkins Orphanage Band, a definitive force in the development of ragtime and jazz.

With evocative and engrossing storytelling, Edward Ball introduces a cast of historical characters rarely seen before: cultured, vain, imperfect, rich, and black -- a family of eccentrics who defied social convention and flourished.

The Sweet Hell Inside: The Rise of an Elite Black Family in the Segregated South Details

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From Reader Review The Sweet Hell Inside: The Rise of an Elite Black Family in the Segregated South for online ebook

Jessica says

Absolutely fascinating story...Ball mines his family tree yet again for a book that explores race in the US and the ramifications of slavery on subsequent generations. Nonfiction but reads like plot driven fiction.

Ruby Hollyberry says

Mostly about the early history of African American art and music, through the lens of the Harlestons and their family and associates who were involved. If I were more interested in art and/or jazz, I'm sure I'd have been fascinated.

Kathryn Bundy says

It's really a 4. something kind of book. I previously read another Edward Ball book, "Slaves in the Family" and liked it as well.

A substantial amount of research went into this book as well as a genuine affection for the subject. The multi-generational story of this family contains all the elements of good fiction --- outsized characters, love and betrayal, honesty and subterfuge, struggle and victory. It encapsulates the history of the country, not just the south, as members of the family spread from their beginnings in Charleston, SC to other parts of the country. There are plenty of tangential tributaries, particularly in the world of the arts, especially early jazz.

I learned many pieces of history that I'd not encountered before, which is something that always excites me. If you have an interest in African American and Southern history, don't miss this book.

Rosie says

absolutely amazing!

highly recommended

Carol says

As well-written and interesting as Slaves in the Family. Not a source book for white pride, for sure. Remarkable family, not always in positive ways. But remarkable just the same.

Jennice says

It is historical non fiction but it read like fiction, if that makes any sense. I really enjoyed and will probably read another book by Edward Ball.

Diane Eskridge says

my low rating is more reflective of my reading interest rather than the book itself.

Becky says

This book was okay, but it's not nearly as good as Ball's "Slaves in the Family." :(I had such high hopes.

Linda says

Very interesting reading, continually saddened by how little our society has advanced in "liberty and justice for all."

Heather says

So thoroughly well written and researched! Highly recommended if you are interested in this genre.

Gerry says

Ball has written a detailed and fascinating account of the Harleston-Jenkins families of Charleston, South Carolina, from their beginning with eight offspring of white planter William Harleston and his black slave Kate to the present, basing much of the narrative on the oral history shared with him by Edwina Harleston Whitlock, the last living descendent who actually knew "Kate's eight," and also a distant cousin of Ball's, one he discovered while researching his earlier book, *Slaves in the Family*.

Lizzie says

I like family histories, so I enjoyed this book that tells the story of the descendants of a white man and his black concubine. They were among the elite of black society in Charleston, South Carolina. One of the sons was a talented artist who actually supported himself with his painting for a time, but continued to run the family undertaking business.

Ball was approached by an eighty-something woman who was the caretaker of her family's history, because of his book *Slaves in the Family*, and he was a good choice. At the end, he describes this woman's comments about white people and how she still doesn't trust them and doesn't know many, which surprised me a bit. But I can't say that she's different from 80-something white women I know, or that I don't have prejudices myself.

Damian says

Great true story about the most powerful American family you never heard of. Still around today and still very influential. Gives you another perspective about some important American political events and insight into how the country has been divided much more along class than race for longer than we think.

Les says

More of a 3.5 stars for writing and a 5 for level of research. There is something to being a legally disenfranchised group of people in a "wealthy" nation largely built on the sweat of said group. It makes for an odd family history such as this one. Like "Warmth of Other Suns" (4.5 stars), must be challenging to neatly weave together so many threads without being repetitive (and he could have dropped the term "colored" when the times did). VERY informative about black, and thus American, history. Hope he paid her/her estate.
