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Book Review: The Black Parents Handbook: A Guide to Healthy Pregnancy, Birth and Child Care

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school to warn them of the impending explosion, but . . . Sable cannot handle a stick-shift.

The second officer leaves the cruiser and makes an improper advance toward Sable. When she rebuffs him, he begins to call her names and grabs her. She pulls a knife from her purse and fatally stabs him. The other officer, by now in the cruiser, is not in a position to see what is happening. Carter and Sable jump into the Ferrari and take off. The officer in the cruiser radios for an ambulance and sends an all points bulletin—then begins a high speed chase after the Ferrari.

Sable, sensing the hopelessness of the situation, takes a gun from her purse and fires two shots at the cruiser. One of the shots hits the policeman in the temple, the cruiser collides head-on into a tractor-trailer. The time is 7:55 a.m.

Carter and Sable abandon the Ferrari at a motel parking lot and proceed to Watts in a stolen car. Upon arriving at the school, Carter tries to persuade the principal to clear the building. No deal. At 8:50 a.m., on Sable's suggestion, Carter pulls the fire alarm. He asks Sable to move the children to safety while he prepares to disengage the bomb. At 9 a.m. the school goes up in smoke. And Sable, realizing that Carter has not survived, leaves for the airport. As she is riding up a ramp to the boarding gate, she is fatally shot in the back of the neck. (The author leaves it to the imagination of the reader to decide who shot her and what happens to the others who assisted in the project).

This book is replete with profanity, most of it against the Black female. However, the author's descriptive technique is poignantly felt when one glimpses the centuries-old mis-

the Black male and female and their inability to perceive that the system has divided and conquered them.

Overall, the author has a mesmerizing fictional document that breathes life into its characters. The author does an excellent job of instilling fear in the reader by his analysis of the complicity that exists between federal, state and local governments in their efforts to keep the Black race in its place.

The author of this novel is a 1965 graduate of the Howard University School of Medicine. He specializes in psychiatry and is currently in private practice in Los Angeles. His writing style demonstrates the internalization of Black values predicated upon the riots of the Sixties and the profound impact that period had upon him. □

The Black Parents' Handbook: A Guide to Healthy Pregnancy, Birth, and Child Care

By Clara J. McLaughlin, with Donald R. Frisby, M.D., Richard A. McLaughlin, M.D., and Melvin W. Williams, M.D.
Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York
220 pp., \$10 (paperback \$3.95)

Reviewed by Judith S. Andrews

Are Black infants different from white infants? Author Clara J. McLaughlin in her new book, *The Black Parents' Handbook*, says they are. "The average Black infant develops mentally and physically at a faster rate than that indicated by the standard development scales," she writes. Further, she says, because of this, Black parents will find most child-care books wanting. McLaughlin's handbook, written in collaboration with three medical doctors—one of them her spouse—does not have all the answers—but it is a start. Hailed by its publisher as a "Doctor Spock" for Black parents, the handbook deals with a wide range of issues,

including folk medicine, genetic and medical problems, and Black pride. In addition to the discussion on special problems involving Black child-rearing, McLaughlin also gives practical advice on general child-care—from how to take temperature to toilet-training.

One of the book's interesting chapters is a discussion on voodooism and superstition, which according to the author still persist in some segments of the Black community. For example, she talks about the belief by some that a pregnant woman should rub her stomach daily with dirty dishwater in order to insure an easy delivery; the fear that a pregnant woman should not cross her legs because the umbilical cord will wrap around the baby's head and cause choking. While many of the remedies and natural herbs used by African witch doctors have become part of modern medicine, the author warns that many folk-cures can be harmful and should be carefully considered before use.

Pervasive throughout the book is the author's concern that Black children get a "special" kind of preparation to cope in society as adults. She contends that the nature of the American society makes it incumbent upon Black parents to instill in their children a strong sense of self-esteem and pride. Parents, she says, must first discover the level of their own self-esteem. She lists several questions Black parents can ask themselves to determine if they really believe "Black is beautiful." Some of the questions are:

"Do you think a baby who is born dark is not attractive? Have you ever felt envy toward a person with long, straight hair? Do you feel superior to other Blacks when you have close white friends? Are you guilty of looking at a newborn baby's fingertips or ears to see how dark the child will eventually be? Do you find it easier to accept the 1

advice of whites? Do you feel that a doctor is more competent because he is white?"

Separate chapters in the book are devoted to the selection of a pediatrician and an obstetrician-gynecologist. McLaughlin sees the selection of a doctor as extremely important to the child's psychological development. She writes: "Select your child's doctor carefully. Your child will be reared in a competitive world. He will be exposed to a number of complex social and economic situations. You need a doctor who will treat your child's physical illness and will also have an interest in him as an individual . . . He must also be able to deal with the child's emotional problems. It is important to find such a doctor at birth because he is likely to play an important role in your child's life for many years."

The author says it is necessary for Black children to have Black doctors because, "a doctor of your own race will have a better understanding of your cultural background, of your fears and beliefs." This raises several serious questions. It's difficult to believe that a doctor could have such far-reaching effect on a child's life—positive or negative. At the most, a child sees a doctor once a month for the first year of life and for checkups and sick visits thereafter. It seems to this reviewer that there are just too many other problems encountered by Black children as they grow up to ascribe such importance to a doctor. Also, it seems rather unwise to imply that only Black doctors give Black people good medical care.

McLaughlin's book is particularly effective in its description of development from birth through age six. These brief summaries can be helpful to new parents who are easily upset by what their child does or does not do. She offers an answer that a

have to crawl or walk at a certain age. However, she fails—in my view as a mother of a young child—to document her statement that Black children develop at a faster rate than other children. Nowhere in the book are these growth surveys discussed except for a brief mention in the introduction by McLaughlin, a graduate of Howard University. □

