



Love and Marriage in Early African America (Northeastern Library of Black Literature)

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Love and Marriage in Early African America brings together a remarkable range of folk sayings, rhymes, songs, poems, letters, lectures, sermons, short stories, memoirs, and autobiographies. Spanning over 100 years, from the slave era to the New Negro Movement, this extraordinary collection contradicts or nuances established notions that slavery fractured families, devalued sexual morality, distorted gender roles, and set in motion forces that now produce dismal and dangerous domestic situations. A culmination of twenty years of diligent research by noted scholar Frances Smith Foster, this anthology features selections on love and courtship, marriage, marriage rituals, and family. A compelling introduction places the primary texts in their social and literary context. A bibliography offers suggestions for further reading.

This volume includes materials by well known writers such as Frances E. W. Harper, Charles Chesnutt, and Alice Dunbar Nelson, but the majority of works are previously unknown or difficult-to-access materials. Many provide startling contrasts to representations in canonical literature. For example, “Patrick Brown’s First Love” is a radical alternative to Frederick Douglass’s “The Heroic Slave,” and Thomas Detter’s “The Octoroon” replaces the traditionally tragic mulatto trope with a female protagonist who shocks and awes. Love and Marriage in Early African America also changes our ideas about the relationship between religion and politics in early African America by featuring texts from the Afro-Protestant press; that is, the publishing organizations, writers, and reading groups under the direct auspices of, or publicly associated with, Afro-Protestant churches.

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