

Spiritual Shackles

Okeyo A. Jumal

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Reviewed by Beverly Pechin for Reader Views (10/06)

It is rare to look at a book that contains over 500 pages and turn the last page wishing there was more, yet Mr. Jumal has a way of making you want the story to continue on forever. While the story itself is anything but incomplete, it truly creates an atmosphere of depth that goes beyond reading an ordinary book and makes the reader want more.

A combination of gritty reality and intricate fiction, Jumal tells of the times and lives of a community known as "Ebonyville" as if it were happening while you read. Dealing with a time when racial riots were common and blacks had to fight for everything they had, he manages to weave in the intricate love and visions of his characters while sharing their trials and tribulations as they strive to become more than anyone had imagined 'people of their kind' could be.

As he takes you through the lives of five children into their adult lives, you will come to love, hate and feel so deeply for them. It's unimaginable that you can walk away from this story without a deluge of feelings. As they grow from infancy to adulthood, their caretaker, "Mama Vye", uses her unusual as well as unconventional ways and beliefs to create solid human beings out of children who others may otherwise give up. Mama Vye, instead, teaches them their roots and their value as African Americans by investing her love, time and efforts into their lives.

With a story that weaves love, hate, horror, deceit and mystery together you will dive into the book with heart and soul once you meet the characters. Was it coincidence that these five children are brought into Mama Vye's life or was it destiny?

Every page you turn takes you deeper and deeper into the lives and ways of these people, while sharing their moments of gratitude, happiness and grieving. While you see the reality of the world as it was during those times, you will walk away wondering how we survived as a nation with such a huge amount of hatred in the homes and businesses of what we called a 'free nation'. As you read about the lives of those involved, you will come to realize we are all truly human in so many of the same ways, including strength when we most think we have none left.

Absolutely riveting, touching and downright gritty reality make this a must read book for everyone. As a touch of history combines with a realistic touch of fiction, you will watch a story of life, itself, unfold and walk away a more complete human being.