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Incorporating her father's common sense and folk wisdom, a biography by a New Jersey doctor tells how her parents, who held down multiple jobs and transmitted strong values to their six daughters, inspired them to reach success. Reprint. Tour.

The Ditchdigger's Daughters: A Black Family's Astonishing Success Story Details

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From Reader Review The Ditchdigger's Daughters: A Black Family's Astonishing Success Story for online ebook

Janice Rogers says

Such a good book! True story of a black family, 5 girls growing up in the 50s and 60s. The uneducated father had the goal for them to all become doctors. The mother had gone to college for 3 years to be a teacher, but didn't have the money to finish. Education was so important to the family. Read to find out what happened.

Arni Vidar Bjorgvinsson says

This book chronicles the lives of the Thornton family, a black family living in a transitional time in US history. It is very interesting and obviously focuses a lot on racial integration and the monumental issues that black people had to face at the time, but it's not preachy or overbearing in the telling. Just the simple facts of life at the time. As a story, therefore, I really enjoyed it.

The reading, however... well, it's not good, let's put it like that.

Not only does the narrator seem to more or less ignore punctuation and normal speaking cadences, but sometimes the editing makes it even worse. This actually detracted quite a bit from the enjoyment of the book, and might have cost it a star.

I think I would recommend this book to those interested in some US black history and biographies, but definitely not on Audio. The Kindle edition isn't perfect by a long shot, but it's certainly better.

Jessica says

Okay. This is tricky to review. The story is astounding: a black ditchdigger has a goal of all 5 of his daughters becoming doctors--in the 1950s. Yvonne and her father are amazing people, who deserve a lot of credit for what they did in their lives and are exemplary in lots of ways.

However--I really had a problem with the father's SUPER controlling methods. Sometimes I was disturbed as Yvonne praises his parenting techniques and behaviors that seem damaging to me, in lots of ways. I kept thinking "this girl needs some therapy." And sometimes I was frustrated when Yvonne told us, proudly, of how she worked 80 hour weeks AND studied for boards (and got highest scores) while pregnant, WITH a 2 year old and a husband over-seas. I don't think that's awesome; I think that's stupid.

I would recommend reading it, for sure; I think I just wanted somewhere to air my input on the lifestyle choices and parenting methods the book lauds.

Luann says

This was another (audio) book I just happened upon as I was searching for drive time listening. I appreciate

most books that entertain or educate me. This memoir did both. I learned a bit about black family culture that was new to me. I was entertained by the questions it provoked. I will admit that I had some difficulty slugging through the author's description of her wedding and all the preparation leading up to it. It felt a bit like an ego trip for the author to describe such an elaborate wedding. Early in the story I wondered how the father was able to so easily control his children and whether the author would grow to realize the control. She did and was able to frame it as a positive force in her life. I had to wonder though how the story would read if it were written by one of the "rebel" sisters. Would Daddy be given so much grace?

Check out Oprah Winfrey's clip on the Thornton family: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pUfZD...>

Nandi Crawford says

I got to read this book some years back and it was one of the most inspiring books I have read in some time. I wish I had kept it because I probably would have gone the distance now. Nevertheless, it's about a regular laborer who had six daughters, no boys in the plan whatsoever. Yet, he would tell his coworkers that though he wished he had a boy, he still wanted the best for his daughters and told them that they ALL would be doctors. They didn't believe him, but astonishingly, they all became professional women, which goes to show you that you can come from humble beginnings and be the very best. So many folks have shown us that and pursue the American Dream. Great to read while pursuing yours and when life sends tough.

Stacy Beck says

Book Club choice from Emily, great choice. Inspiring & motivating. The work ethic & stamina of some people are unbelievable. This family truly succeeds in reaching for the stars.

Barbara says

Inspiring! Donald, the father, reminded me somewhat of my own father whose goal in life was to upgrade the clan through education. Thankfully, my father was not as strict and controlling as Donald. But this story leaves no doubt that parents can instill their hopes and dreams into their children.

Molly Gickling says

Loved everything about this book . . . it was so well written and inspirational! It was amazing to read how much strength and determination the family had. . . Loved it!

D.G. says

If you ever want to give up, please read this book. After reading what this family accomplished after suffering both racial and gender discrimination most of their lives, I know I will be thinking of them anytime

I want to complain or feel like I quit without trying.

The story reads quickly and is both touching and engaging. I agree with other reviewers that the first part – when the family was together and Mr. Thornton was at the realm - was more interesting but I liked how Dr. Thornton talked about her journey to becoming an Obstetrician and how many obstacles she had to face because she was both a woman and black.

Mr. Thornton's way of empowering his daughters through education reminded me of my own mother. She always emphasized the necessity of an education if I was to be independent. I've always known that she's had a deep influence in me but it wasn't as clear how much until I read this book. I never had to work as hard as the Thornton sisters (thank God! I don't know how those poor children managed!) but when I was growing up, I never doubted even for a second that I was going to college, which wasn't the norm in the poor Dominican town where I lived most of my childhood.

The narrator was very good although sometimes she would have problems pronouncing certain words, especially medical terms. This didn't mar my enjoyment of the book though because those occasions were few and far between.

Crystal Starr Light says

I read this as a young girl, and I loved it. I loved how the dad wanted so badly for something better for his daughters. I loved how the girls worked together to get themselves through college. And I love how in the end, each daughter found her passion - whether or not it was being a doctor.

Elizabeth says

Inspirational! Exceptional! I had the privilege of hearing this author speak at a recent conference. It is an amazing story of how this woman and her sister's made it from the projects of Long Branch, NJ to medical doctor through the determination of their dad - the ditch digger. It gives me a renewed renewed for physicians particularly many of those that I work with.

I highly recommend this book.

Ashley-Dior says

Loved this book! Father was a hard working man who had his daughters's interest at hand.

Danice says

A wonderful book that reads as if Dr. Thornton is sitting across from you, telling her story to you herself.

Renee says

Yvonne Thornton herself objected to the subtitle. I was uncertain about the phrasing too. However, I came to learn that the barriers to success were astonishing. This included barriers such as white supremacists, legalized racism, the cost of schooling, and distractions from career goals. Yvonne and her sisters were in a band called the Thornton Sisters in order to earn money for medical school. During that long journey for Yvonne Thornton to become an OBGYN, she describes her father's many different warnings about not letting others pull her down. His most memorable one is his metaphor about crabs in a pot that for no known reason trying to pull individual escaping crabs back in captivity.

Tandy says

While I loved the many messages of hope, hard work, kindness, and overcoming adversity, I found it to be a little slow moving for me. I'm glad I read it but it wasn't captivating.
