

# Book Review

## Compelling True Story of One Man's Search for His Multicultural Roots

- **Title:** *A Wealth of Family: An Adopted Son's International Quest for Heritage, Reunion, and Enrichment*
- **Author:** Thomas Brooks
- **Subject Categories:** Multicultural / African-American / Adoption
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Life wasn't easy for eleven-year-old Thomas Brooks. As a young African American, he battled racial stereotypes at school even as he searched for a place among his peers. In *A Wealth of Family: An Adopted Son's International Quest for Heritage, Reunion, and Enrichment*, Brooks tells of growing up in and around Pittsburgh as the only child of a struggling single mother. And in the midst of life's normal chaos, she suddenly revealed to him that she was not his biological mother but that she had adopted him shortly after his birth in 1966.

It was a revelation that would ultimately change the life of Mr. Brooks. Although he put thoughts of his biological heritage on hold as he made his way through high school and college, he eventually decided it was time to learn about where he came from. He was twenty-five years old when, after a few months of thought, he decided to search for his biological parents. It was 1992, during his last semester of MBA studies at the University of Maryland.

"Even though I had known of my adoption since I was eleven years old and had a very good relationship with my adoptive family," Brooks writes, "I had a growing need to know more about my biological background. Because I knew nothing of my biological parents and their heritage, I felt somehow that my own human identity was partially lacking." He compares this sentiment with that of many African-Americans whose family heritages were erased by centuries of slavery, but points out that in his case, even the previous generation was a mystery.

What this introspective and earnest young man learned was anything but ordinary. "I have discovered that there is a great deal in my heritage of which to be proud," he writes. "There is the courage and integrity of my Kenyan father. The odyssey of my ancestors on my biological mother's side, who escaped the murderous persecution of the Orthodox Russians against Lithuanian Jews, is impressive and compelling. There is my individual piece in the large and grand African-American experience, growing up in a dynamic family in Pittsburgh."

The book details his subsequent trips around the globe, to Great Britain where his biological mother lived with her children—his siblings—and to Kenya where his African biological father lived, which proved to be life-changing journeys for Brooks. It is a story, he writes, that he hopes will inspire readers to explore their own lives, cultures, and relationships.

This moving saga of adoption, reunion, and heritage delivers an insightful viewpoint on multicultural families and wonderful anecdotes on how to triumph over racism and poverty.

Thoughtful and well-written, *A Wealth of Family* is actually a wealth of inspiration. It is a must read for anyone with a strong sense of family.

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