

Ain't That a Mother: Postpartum, Palsy, and Everything in Between

Adiba Nelson

Blackstone Publishing (May 3, 2022)

Hardcover \$27.99 (240pp)

978-1-79993-226-0

Afro-Latina Adiba Nelson's memoir-in-essays *Ain't That a Mother* concerns dating, motherhood, parenting a disabled child, and breaking generational habits—as much about reparenting oneself as it is about parenting another.

Nelson explores “generational curses” like single parenting, infidelity, and domestic violence. But after spending her younger years vowing to break family cycles of abusive partners and single parenting, she wound up in the same position. Instead of being defeated, though, she pushed forward, doing whatever was necessary for her daughter, even if it meant relying on food stamps or moving back in with family members.

Glowing when its focus is Nelson's daughter, parenting, and the ableism that she and her daughter dealt with because of her daughter's high medical needs, this book engages in plain talk about the realities of raising a disabled child in a world that often requires parents to advocate for their basic accessibility and inclusion. When Nelson's daughter's preschool deemed the girl a safety hazard because she used a stander to be mobile, Nelson advocated for her, exemplifying parental love in action.

Nelson's blunt honesty, humor, and constant inner voice are vivifying forces. That forthrightness doesn't extend into every tale—the story of how Nelson met the man whom she married and later divorced is given scant attention in comparison to the other major romantic relationship in the book, which was abusive. Still, the book works toward her realization that she is deserving of love and whole as a person regardless.

Ain't That a Mother is a forthright memoir-in-essays about parenting, growth, and love, even in the most uncertain of times.

JAIME HERNDON (March / April 2022)

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