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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ GENERAL FICTION

Here and Now

Kimberla Lawson Roby
Kensington Books (October 1998)
Unknown $22.00 (279pp)
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The new book by BlackBoard's best-selling author Kimberla Lawson Roby, Here and Now, tells the stories of two sisters in a family deeply committed to hard work, education, and social mobility in a distinctly African-American voice.

Marcella is the single mother of two struggling to support her children and fulfill her long time dream of graduating from college. She envisions a perfect life for her family if she can just earn enough money to get out of subsidized housing, off food stamps, and free of the children's deadbeat father. Racquel already has the "perfect" life that Marcella dreams of: an education and career, a good husband, a beautiful home in the suburbs. She has everything but the child that she desperately wants. A series of deaths, tragedies and heart breaks test both sisters in their assumptions about their own and each others lives and force them to come to terms with their ambitions.

Roby's narrative is fast paced. She does a lot of the talking for her characters, often providing extraneous information that doesnt really move the story along. There are so many chatty asides by the narrator that she almost becomes a third character herself. That the story never develops to a central crisis or point of tension also gives the book the feel of someone sitting at a kitchen
table relating a story to a friend.

Roby's male characters are indistinctly drawn, but it clearly isn't their story. The three generations of female voices in this story sing out loud and strong. And what they sing the loudest is their tenacious hold on the values that allow them to endure even when their world starts to fall apart. These fictional characters are empowered African-American women and Robys contribution can be valued for that alone.
NAVA HALL (January / February 1999)

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