FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

More Than Sex: Reinventing the Black Male Image
George Edmond Smith
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Based upon the anecdotes that he tells from his own practice, Smith seems like the type of physician that is too often missing in these accelerated times: one who talks and, more importantly, listens to his patients, often uncovering the underlying reasons for their visits to his office. More and more frequently, he has noticed, black men are coming to his office with sexual problems. Their difficulties are often not caused by any physical problems but rather by the pressures exerted by a society with a warped view of black male sexuality.

These men are reporting problems with failed or failing relationships that are related to sexuality-often the men are unable to commit to a single woman as they follow the "booty call," and just as frequently they report that they fear losing their partners and their manhood if they are unable to perform sexually as expected. Smith's topic here is the complex matrix of black male sexuality in America and the problems that black men and their families are experiencing.

Smith's patients are so concerned with fulfilling the societal role of black stud that they fail to see the terrible toll that expectation extracts from them. Smith often gets these reluctant men to talk by sharing his own struggles with sexuality, as he does throughout the book. The topics range from issues of sexual abuse to sexual power to the impact of missing fathers on young boy's developing sexuality. The most vivid moment in the book comes when Smith recounts a patient who as a ten-year-old boy witnessed a rape of a classmate by several older boys. A few years later he saw her on the playground and became sexually aroused at the memory. When she turns down his advances, he verbally lashes out, telling her she got what she deserved.

If the strongest sections of the book are such case studies, the weakest parts of the book are Smith's dips into broader history. Smith blames many of the problems with black male sexuality on the legacy of slavery, and while he may very well be correct, he offers no substantial evidence to support his assertion, depending instead upon over generalizations. Most suspect are periodic assertions about healthier sexual and family attitudes that existed at some unspecified time for blacks in Africa. Smith romanticizes Mother Africa and treats that vast

continent's thousands of cultures as a single entity. Smith's topic is an important one, but this book, while making an important step in broaching the subject, fails to engage it fully.

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