



Seeking Personal Validation: The Life and Times of an African American, Female, Academic

Anece F. McCloud

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From a difficult childhood through to a rewarding career, the memoir Seeking Personal Validation follows an encouraging trajectory.

Anece F. McCloud's inspiring memoir *Seeking Personal Validation* is about overcoming various forms of discrimination, including those based in racism, classism, and colorism.

McCloud grew up in the 1940s in a small North Carolina community where light-colored black people discriminated against black people with darker skin and curlier hair. McCloud, whose complexion was darker, came from a single-parent family and an underprivileged background; she often felt that she did not belong. In school, she resolved to work hard; the decision paid off despite great hardship and loss, and she graduated from college in 1959. During her rise in the field of academia, she again encountered racism and battled health issues.

Beginning with McCloud's first recollection of community prejudice at age six, the chronological text moves from her childhood to her marriage and career. From her youth, McCloud recalls how much she longed to look more like her cousins, an outlook that she maintained as she came of age. Such recollections form the basis of later insecurities, too.

Still, McCloud's story is encouraging; she is shown facing obstacles but emerging from them stronger and wiser. Discrimination and the heartbreaking pain of losing family members are shown to have been a lot to bear, as was growing up without a father and facing the limitations exerted by poverty. Themes of working hard despite such challenges and of being encouraged by her mother to believe that education would grant her a better life pervade. Accounts of professional posts and challenges include both an early leadership role to let minority students know about programs available to them and the challenges of manic-depressive episodes and other health concerns.

In capturing family members, McCloud extends her observations to their flaws, and her candid narration is convincing. She recalls an aunt's bias against people with dark skin, and also how it did not extend to her niece and nephew; she expresses disappointment about her father's lack of involvement in her life. Straightforward language conveys events without sentimentality; there are few expressions of outward emotion.

As the book advances, it shows McCloud developing self-confidence, moving from a once insecure girl to become Associate Dean of Students at Washington and Lee University. It's a rewarding trajectory that helps to make *Seeking Personal Validation* an uplifting memoir, heartfelt as it speaks against any form of discrimination and showing that determination can lead to success.

EDITH WAIRIMU (October 23, 2019)

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