

Someone Has Led This Child to Believe

Regina Louise

Agate Bolden (Jul 10, 2018)

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Regina Louise was a child of the system. She spent time in every way station it provides: placement with extended family, foster care, a mental health facility, and a group home. The only experience child welfare didn't provide was adoption, despite a willing adoptive parent and mutual rapport. Her memoir, *Someone Has Led This Child to Believe*, traces the destructive deferment of a child's needs and the rapprochement offered by a defiant survival into adulthood.

Louise's first experience with family was a slow process of learning she was unwanted. Early on, Louise intuited adults were the enemy because, all too often, they expected children to answer with adult insight, as if their lack of parents was an earned autonomy orchestrated by the children themselves. This was not true, and inevitably, the disconnect between perception and reality led to blame, hostility, aggression, and often, abuse and violence.

Rather than provide safety and succor to society's most vulnerable, the child welfare system experienced by Louise preyed on the children in its care. Blind to Louise's lack of family and community ties, a hostile social worker raged about Louise's perceived rejection of blackness, making her a personal project with overtones of vendetta. Surrounded by messages of worthlessness, Louise's survival strategy became equal parts loyalty to herself and patrolling of herself to pass as normal, as deserving, as enough.

There's pain and beauty in Louise's vulnerability and her willingness to evict personal experience from the singular realm of self and take it into the world. As she says, "This is the task of anyone who carries the burden of her own unworthiness: ... to wipe someone else's fatalistic narrative of what our lives will be from our consciousness, hand it back to them and say: 'I believe this belongs to you.'"

LETITIA MONTGOMERY-RODGERS (July/August 2018)

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