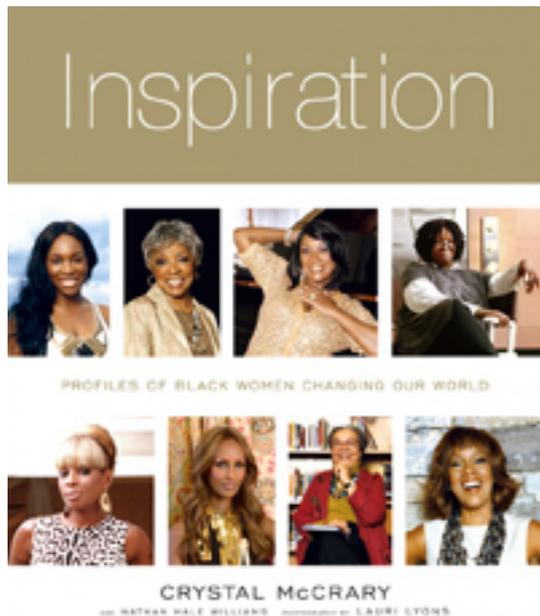


## Inspiration: Profiles of Black Women Changing Our World

Written by Kam Williams  
Tuesday, 03 April 2012 13:20

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“Inspiration allows 30 exceptional people to tell their unique stories. Each of these women takes us on her life journey, describing the people, the teachings and the circumstances that shaped her. We see the role that family, culture, community and mentorship play, as well as the influence of dreams, ambitions and ideas.

These women have achieved extraordinary success in the face of seemingly insurmountable circumstances. Even more important, each one has attributes of character--integrity, courage, energy, commitment, faith, drive--that illustrate how talent and character come together to create a rich and fulfilling life.

The results are astonishing... and I hope you enjoy and find inspiration in their stories.”

-- Excerpted from the Preface (pg. 6)

As a journalist, I’ve had the privilege of interviewing a number of the talented trailblazers profiled in this book. But while I might have done a decent job of capturing, say, Laila Ali’s dogged determination, Raven-Symone’s admirable maturity, or Soledad O’Brien’s sheer brilliance, those *tete-a-tetes* still seem to pale in comparison to the emotional depth of the material captured on the pages of *Inspiration*. Perhaps that’s because the author, Crystal McCrary came up with the idea of having her contributors relate their life stories in their own unique voices. Consequently, other than First Lady Michelle Obama’s, the bios in this intimate opus are written in the first person, and each sister sounds ever so authentic whether reflecting upon what really matters most to her or about how she managed to reach the pinnacle of success in her chosen field.

For example, Children’s Defense Fund founder Marian Wright Edelman devotes much of her memoir to bemoaning the breakdown of the family. “The rituals and structure of childhood have been torn asunder,” she says, citing their pivotal importance in terms of teaching values.

“When I was a child,” she continues, “most people didn’t have a whole lot, but they shared what

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they had. They valued children, and they valued education... Family members and community elders knew that education was important.”

Coincidentally, Melody Hobson, President of Ariel Investments, pays tribute to Ms. Edelman in her entry, identifying the inveterate child advocate as one of her heroes. Melody recalls literally bursting into tears during a conversation between them when the altruistic Edelman matter-of-factly stated her only regret, namely, “I haven’t done enough.”

After beginning with Michelle Obama, the balance of Inspiration is arranged alphabetically, with each entry being accompanied by striking photographs of the subject. Among the other icons offering priceless pearls of wisdom are singer Mary J. Blige, environmentalist Majora Carter, prima ballerina Misty Copeland, actress Ruby Dee, comedienne Whoopi Goldberg, supermodel Iman, choreographer Judith Jamison, ex-Essence editor Susan L. Taylor, and tennis star Venus Williams, to name a few.

An ideal Mother’s Day gift of sufficient substance to continue to grace a coffee table for generations to come.

Inspiration:  
Profiles of Black Women Changing Our World  
by Crystal McCrary with Nathan Hale Williams  
Photography by Lauri Lyons  
Stewart, Tabori & Chang  
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