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Powerful new historical fiction series, in the style of The Work & The Glory, that tells the stories of early African-American members of the Church.

Co-author is Darius Aidan Gray. Margaret Blair Young teaches creative writing at Brigham Young University. Darius Aidan Gray is a former journalist. His grandfather was born a slave; his great grandfather was a slave near Independence, Missouri, and appears in the book.

One More River to Cross Details

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Kristi says

A very thought-provoking book for an LDS reader. I intend to give myself time to "digest" as I read this series. I've come away from this first book with some sad memories, some "theological" questions that will be put on my proverbial shelf to be answered in the next life, and thankfully some wonderful examples of faith.

Definitely read all of the endnotes. The authors have a good understanding of human nature and a fresh new "voice" in which they write. But it was nice to discern between imagination and facts.

My lasting impression in finishing: Oh how much need have I of developing similar faith, hope and love! And oh how grateful am I that eternal judgment rests in Another's Hands!

Emily says

A well-researched and well-written story about the black Mormons who were part of the early days of the LDS Church. This was part of LDS history that I knew little about before reading these books. It walks the fine line between history and historical fiction. It is fiction, since the authors put words and thoughts into character's mouths that can be inferred from other things that they said or did, but that didn't necessarily happen as portrayed in the book. But the research is so good that the authors' assumptions are believable, and I learned a lot from this series.

Lindsey says

Very few books have impacted me like this one. This historical fiction book is based around the life of an actual young black Mormon pioneer woman who lived in the household of Joseph Smith. I developed so much love and admiration for this woman, Jane Manning, that I gave my daughter her name... Eva Jane.

Danna says

This book is similar to the Work and Glory books but is written in an African American perspective. It is one of three books in the series. I enjoyed learning about pioneers who were of a minority early in the church. They aren't usually talked about. So many don't realize that there were members of color in the Church of Jesus Christ of Later Day Saints when Joseph Smith first organized it. Joseph Smith was a wonderful man who accepted all of different background and ethnic background. One of the co-authors belongs to the Genesis ward/branch (African American members)in SLC.

Sherry says

finished this awhile ago but forgot to post. I really enjoyed reading about the early days of the LDS faith through the eyes of a few black saints with great faith. What courage it must have taken to join in with a bunch of sometimes rude and judgmental people who instead of looking at the heart looked at the color. Not sure I will read the other two books but I did enjoy this one.

Cindy says

Many outside the LDS church, and more than a view within, know very little about the stories of the Black LDS pioneers who joined the church in the early days and crossed the plains to start lives in the land of Zion. Unfortunately, their lives were made more difficult by the racial stereotypes they faced even among their new brothers and sisters in the gospel. This is a retelling of some real historical figures, most notably Elijah Abel, freed slave and first black member of the church, and Jane Manning, a free woman who traveled 400 miles on foot to join the Saints in Missouri and became a personal servant in the Smith household. Both were intimately acquainted with the Joseph Smith and his family.

Their stories are interesting and reasonably well told. Each chapter concludes with a few notes on the real historical facts. However, these accounts are not really woven together and it remains several different stories instead of one. I would like to read the next book in the series, but it wasn't quite as good as I had hoped. 3.5 stars

Heidi-Marie says

I read this in my LDS Lit class and one of the authors came in as the guest lecturer. It was a fantastic book--a side of LDS history that I was not at all familiar with. (And that can be a hard thing to find for me!) It was so well-written and very well researched, too. But I had a personal connection that endeared the book to me--it includes as one of its main characters Green Flake. Green was my ancestors' slave whom they freed when they joined the Church. But he refused to leave them and considered himself a tithing slave with his service all being for the Lord. I have grown up knowing good stories of this man, so it was wonderful to read of some of his history in this book. He is the only main character in the book whose descendants are still active members of the Church today.

Karlie says

Fascinating history of notable black Mormon pioneers. Each chapter ends with notes on what details in the chapter were actual facts, which I really like. Because they are trying to be true to the historical characters, it is not as compelling as some historical fiction that may have more fiction than fact, but it is definitely more interesting than a biography format (I have a hard time reading biographies!)

I love the Prophet Joseph even more after learning what he said to Orson Hyde when asked what advice the Prophet would give a man coming into the Church with one hundred slaves (at a time when a number of

saints from the South owned slaves): "Educate them and give them equal Rights." He also once said, referring to slavery, "It makes my blood boil within me."

It seems that some of the persecutions of the Mormons in Missouri may have been related to slavery issues since a lot of the Missourians were slave holders from the south (it makes more sense why they were so mob-like and abusive to the Mormons; such a racially prejudiced atmosphere would be quick to fight against anyone that was not just like them). Missouri wanted to be a slave state and it made them nervous that such a large group of north-easterners immigrated to their state, that likely would not have the same political interests. One notable example recorded states that a Mormon went to the polls to vote and a member of the mob standing by said that a Mormon had no more right to vote than a negro. Oh, and not to mention, Willard Richards reported that the mob that killed Joseph had painted their faces "to look like a gang of Negroes."

It made me cringe several times, hearing some of the racial intolerance and ignorance among the saints. It just proves that people are not perfect, but God and the restored church are.

I plan to read the next 2 books in the series.

Russell says

This book took me about a week to read and I was quite enthralled in reading it. While it is a historical fiction, it is also quite well documented. I appreciate the end-notes at the end of each chapter explaining various historical citations and explanations. I only rated it 3.5 because the book revolves around multiple characters in an attempt to explain their various life histories. This book is the first in a trilogy and maybe that's the reason that the chapters seem a bit disparate. They typically focused on a single character in a given period of time and rarely smoothly flowed together. However, the authors' intents are more for a historical feel rather than functional novel. So that offsets the bumpiness.

I did like this book for everything I learned about the Black Mormon Pioneers. I just so feel for their situation and more than once quite upset at the way they were treated (fictionally or not). I would recommend this book to others considering the characters' little-known impact on the early Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.

Sadie says

I'm not typically an LDS (mormon) fiction reader as I find most of the books to sweet, too unreal, and the characters have such perfect faith, such perfect outlooks on life that it becomes hard for me to not roll my eyes let alone relate to the characters. This book was different. This wasn't so much fiction but real people in real situations with real feelings and it was well researched. I enjoyed learning aspects of the pioneer story that I haven't learned before, specifically that of the black pioneers and how they came to become members of the church as well as the additional sacrifices they make in doing so. It was a refreshing real look at church history. I will read the next one in the series. If you choose to read this book do not miss the footnotes at the end of each chapter.

Alicia says

I bought this on a whim, not even knowing what it was really about but that it was a good price and looked interesting. I'm so glad I bought it because I would like to buy the other two in this series. I would almost give it a 5 star, but I can't say it was one of my favorite books of all time. I did, however, really, really like it. So 4 1/2 stars. Wonderful historical fiction. I loved the historical part and all the references and facts at the end of each chapter so that I knew exactly what was taken from history. I love getting to know the first African American converts and pioneers of the LDS church. They were all so amazing!! They truly sacrificed so much for the church and truth they believed in, despite so much persecution inside and outside the church.

Chris Jensen says

AMAZING untold story of black Mormon pioneers in the early day of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. It made me cry, laugh, excited, and awestruck to learn of the stories of these tremendously faithful saints and their journey to follow God despite slavery, bigotry, poverty, and religious persecution. It tells the account of Jane Manning James who felt inspired to trek over 800 miles on foot to join an obscure religion and people she hardly knew in Nauvoo, Illinois, as well as Elijah Abel a runaway slave that became one of the first black members ordained to the priesthood, served a mission on the east coast, and was good friends with Joseph Smith's family. It shows the socio-cultural struggles of the Church with regards to racial equality and slavery after the death of the Prophet Joseph Smith, despite his many sermons on equality and repugnance of slavery. I feel blessed to have found this book, and my faith has been strengthened by the powerful examples of these little known pioneer saints. Every Latter-Day Saint should read this book and add their stories to the Church history narrative we share as a global faith.

Becca says

A wonderful account of the first black Mormon converts. It's historical fiction (kind of like the Work and the Glory series), but 90% of the characters are real people, and their histories are extensively researched and reconstructed (and documented in the notes in the back).

It's a fantastic book, because it portrays well the spectrum: of personalities, the struggles, the faith, the prejudices, the emotions, all of. It gives you a good sense of what those times must have been like, without necessarily giving a simple picture. What faith! What trust in God! Amazing men and women! A must-read for all those who've wondered more about that sticky question of what it was like to be black and Mormon before 1978.

Teresa Osgood says

I won this book a couple of years ago, and I'm glad I finally read it. It tells the stories of a handful of black converts in the early days of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I had heard of one before, Jane Manning, whose photo appears on the cover of this edition. Her story is told in some detail, as well as that of Elijah Abel, a missionary in New England. Others are mentioned in such detail as is available. I'm impressed

with the carefulness of the research for this book. Notes are provided at the end of each chapter, detailing which parts of the story are true. Most quotations from prominent characters come from statements they actually made. And the hard things, the abuse of slavery and prejudice of even the nicest people, are accurate. This dedication to fact makes the flow of the novel as episodic as real life. It's not a book I couldn't put down. But I was intrigued enough to pick it up again.

Terry Earley says

I liked this one better than the first book in this series.

It described, in novel format, the lives of pioneering black LDS people very well. I came to love and respect Jane Manning James and Elijah Abel, these two Saintly people, as well as the others described, more than I did before. As a special bonus, there was a piece on the settlement of San Bernardino, California, my mother's birthplace.

A perfect read to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the priesthood revelation.
