

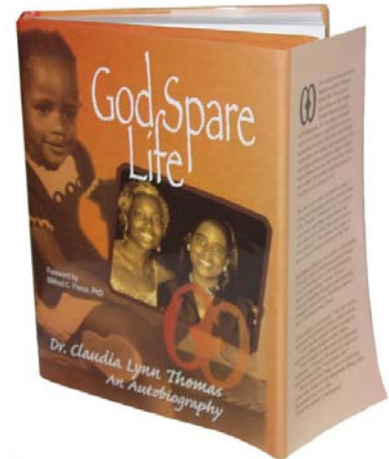
Book Review:

God Spare Life

An Autobiography by Dr. Claudia Lynn Thomas

God Spare Life, a book of memoirs written by Dr. Claudia Thomas, is a remarkable story of growing up Black and female during the turbulent 1960s, and of achievement gained through hardship and persistence. Dr. Thomas begins her story at a critical time in her life – as she lay in a hospital bed dying of kidney disease. She takes the reader through her mother’s long ordeal of caring for her, and of remembering the fateful events that led up to that moment.

Through vivid recollection and marvelous storytelling, we learn about Dr. Thomas’s happy childhood, of being home-schooled, of being taught that anything and everything was possible – even for a poor black girl growing up in a world of social change. There is no flower power in this story.



The underlying theme that Black is beautiful resonates throughout the book, through Claudia’s struggle to embrace her black childhood, into her confusing teen years, and through her college years, all the way to her shining achievement of becoming the first black woman orthopedic surgeon in the United States.

A prime example of the strength and commitment Claudia has for her heritage and her work, shows in Chapter III, “Takeover” which details the occupation of the Main Building at Vassar, when thirty-four black female students lead a protest of the treatment of Blacks at the college by staging a three-day sit-in. The “Students’ Afro-American Society (SAS)” of which Dr. Thomas is the leader, risk arrest, expulsion, or worse – but ultimately force the college to accept their demands. This is now a part of Vassar’s history, and has been added to their historical archives.

The story doesn’t end there. *God Spare Life* continues to capture Dr. Thomas’s life as a practicing surgeon on the isle of St. Thomas, where she was married – after a whirlwind courtship. During her time on St. Thomas, Dr. Thomas details her growing dissatisfaction with her marriage, her commitment to her patients, and treats the reader to a powerful chapter on Hurricane Hugo, as he rips and tears the entire island apart... devastating everyone and everything. This fateful event provided the title for Dr. Thomas’s book. On St. Thomas, a familiar greeting among the residents is, “God spare life.”

Her story continues through her dreadful illness and slow recovery. Finally, to her triumph – living to practice once again, here in the U.S. – and how she ultimately ends up becoming her mother’s caretaker.

God Spare Life is full of historical perspective as well as providing a glimpse into the mind and heart of a black woman as she moves from childhood to adulthood, from being home-schooled to living in an all-white dormitory at a prestigious college, from being dependent on others to finally achieving independence herself. Published in both hard and soft cover by Windsor Media Enterprises, this book is available on their website at www.wmebooks.com.