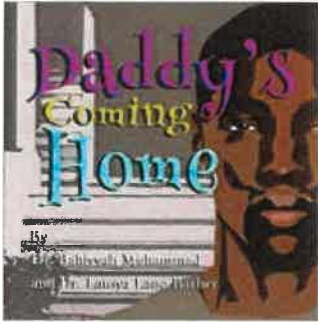




BOOKSHELF



“Daddy’s Coming Home” and “Mommy’s Coming Home”

Written by Dr. Latoya Lane Barber, Ph.D. and Dr. Bahiyah M. Muhammad, Ph.D. Independently published (2020). 24 pp.

REVIEWED BY *Alexander Carrigan, associate editor for the American Correctional Association*

It can be quite challenging for a child to see their parent incarcerated. The sudden loss of that person from their daily life can challenge their routine and lead to many issues as a result. It can be just as challenging for the child to readjust when their parent returns. To help children understand the process of incarceration, there is a need to provide literature to help them understand the process and adjust to the return of their parents from a correctional facility.

That’s why it helps to find books like “Mommy’s Coming Home” and “Daddy’s Coming Home.” Written by two women who have been heavily involved in the corrections field, these books are a pair of children’s books that track the return of a

formerly incarcerated parent to their home. Both books are the same text, swapping pronouns, titles and illustrations depending on whether it’s the mother or the father who is returning, but follows the same general practice of speaking to the child about what it means now that Mommy or Daddy is returning home after time in a correctional facility, and how both parent and child can adjust to the new normal.

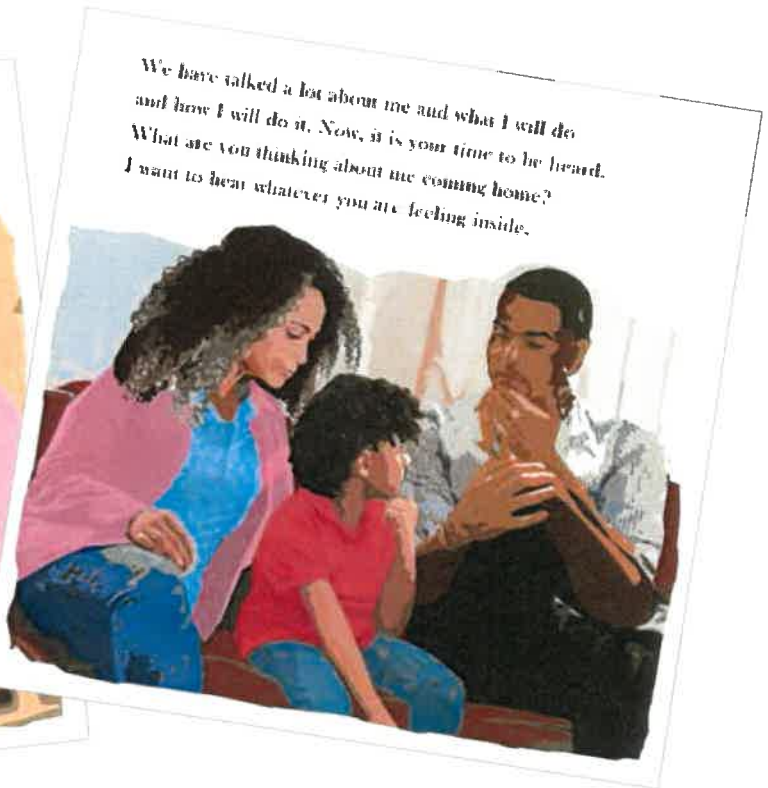
Drs. Latoya Lane Barber and Bahiyah M. Muhammad wrote the books with a loving, comforting tone that makes it easy for children to understand and be calm enough to listen to the parent speaking to them. The books are written broadly enough that it’s more focused on the objective of adjusting to the parent returning home and rebuilding their relationship with their child. It’s more about the home life, not so much the life behind bars, as this book isn’t concerned with teaching children about the correctional system, but more about the challenges that reentry provide and how everyone in the household can adjust to it.

The books speak to the reader in a way that makes it easy to

understand the requests. The parent is informing the child about the need to communicate, the need to plan, and the need to be open and honest with one another as they go forward. It doesn’t put the onus entirely on the parent or the child to handle these new circumstances but acknowledges that it’s a group effort. The parent’s requests are simple, primarily requesting patience and understanding from the child. The child is expected to know the parent will be in need of time to readjust, and that there are a few basic tasks a child can do to make the transition easier.

The books focus on the need for communication and planning to deal with reentry, which are encouraging to strengthening the relationship of the parent and child.

It also helps that the illustrations included with the books help make the text more palatable and encouraging. The illustrations by Lauera VanderHeart are warm and positive, with bright colors and smiling people. The images of the parent while incarcerated are drawn to show the parent full of longing and hope to see their child again, which minimizes the severity of the sentencing, but makes it easy for children reading to



understand the parent is somewhere else. The remaining images encourage the experiences the parent and child could have once the parent has returned home, where they can play in their yards or go for family walks to help with the transition.

The authors include several pages at the end of the books to help with this process. The pages include work for both the parent and the child. The parent has a daily planner in which they can try to plan out their new schedule to acclimate to their home life and work on their relationship with the child. The child has pages for them to add their own schedule as well. Alongside some blank pages for additional note taking, the pages ask for both the parent and child to share expectations and ideas for the day, which would allow

them to communicate and work out scheduling that can provide time for education, play and bonding experiences. Because there are planners for both parent and child, this aids in their communication and allows their relationship to start with this request to plan a day, something that could be expanded upon as time passes.

“Mommy’s Coming Home” and “Daddy’s Coming Home” are a helpful and sweet pair of books for children of incarcerated people. The books focus on the need for communication and planning to deal with reentry, which are encouraging to strengthening the relationship of the parent and child. The books could benefit from making the note and memo pages perforated and removable, or to include details about where to get additional pages

in the event that schedules change or more work needs to be done, but the books represent that first step that needs to be taken for those returning home from prison in rebuilding and strengthening their relationship with their child or children, making these books useful to any incarcerated individuals about to be released. ♦

NOTE: As the books are independently published, it is recommended they be purchased from Dr. Latoya Lane Barber’s personal website.

Please visit this link for more information.