

Book Review: Memoir 'Felon-Attorney' Beats the Odds

By Kam Williams
Special to *The Skanner News*

Felon-Attorney

by TheArthur Duncan II,
Esquire

Mascot Books

Paperback, \$19.95

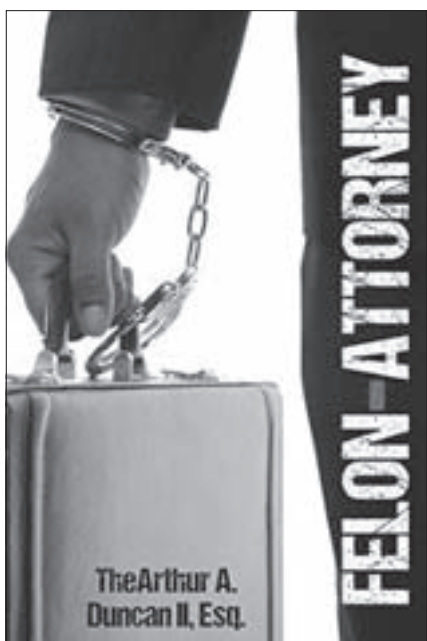
244 pages

ISBN: 978-1-63177-187-3

"From hustling crack on a corner to practicing law in a courtroom... this is my story! I am living proof that despite your past, your dreams can still come true..."

My story begins as I escape the violence of the Crips and Bloods street gangs in South Central LA and the abuse of a cocaine-addicted stepfather, only to go back to Buffalo, New York and perpetuate both ills by becoming a drug dealer myself. Ironically, I became a part of what victimized my family and me in Los Angeles...

I wound up in prison and had to put my life back together. While incarcerated, I found the God in me that I had long buried. After 3 years, I was released back into society and tempted by



my old lifestyle, but... I succeeded."

-- Excerpted from the Bookjacket

Probably the most popular genre of non-fiction being written by Black folks nowadays is the overcoming-the-odds autobiography. I mostly pass politely when asked to review these titles because, hey, just about everybody has faced their share of adversity. However, I made an exception for TheArthur

Duncan's memoir, *Felon-Attorney*. This opus is special, given how low he sank before bottoming out, and how high he has risen since turning his life around.

The brother's story starts in Los Angeles, where he was born in 1969, though he was raised in Buffalo, New York by his maternal grandparents, Mary Jane and the Reverend James Smith. After graduating from

the 8th grade, TheArthur went back to L.A. to spend his summer vacation with his mother.

However, he decided to stay, which on the surface seemed to make sense since both his parents resided there. However, in the process, he had to leave behind in Buffalo his grandparents, friends and a tight-knit community. And, unfortunately, he would have a tough time making the adjustment to

the heart of the 'hood.

Of course, it didn't help that TheArthur didn't live with his dad but with his drug-addicted stepfather. In the absence of a solid male role model to emulate, he ended up dropping out of school to pursue a trio of dubious pipe dreams: pro basketball, rap music and drug dealing, which eventually landed him in prison.

TheArthur was born again

behind bars, where he began to turn his life around. He has made the most of that second chance, not only graduating from college, but law school to boot. He's also married the love of his life, Latisha, and the two are raising their five children back in Buffalo. Furthermore, he currently serves as a Deacon at First Calvary Missionary Baptist Church where he mentors at-risk

kids and counsels married couples in crisis.

In *Felon-Attorney*, TheArthur recounts in very compelling fashion how he lifted himself from the societal scrap heap to morph into a pillar of the community.

An uplifting, modern parable about a real-life Prodigal Son proving that anything is possible with faith in the Lord.

Book/CD Review: 'Dreams Are Made for Children'

A Delightful, Jazzy Tome For Tired Tots

By Kam Williams
Special to *The Skanner News*

Dreams Are Made for Children: Classic Jazz Lullabies

Compiled by Misja Fitzgerald Michel

Illustrated by Ilya Green

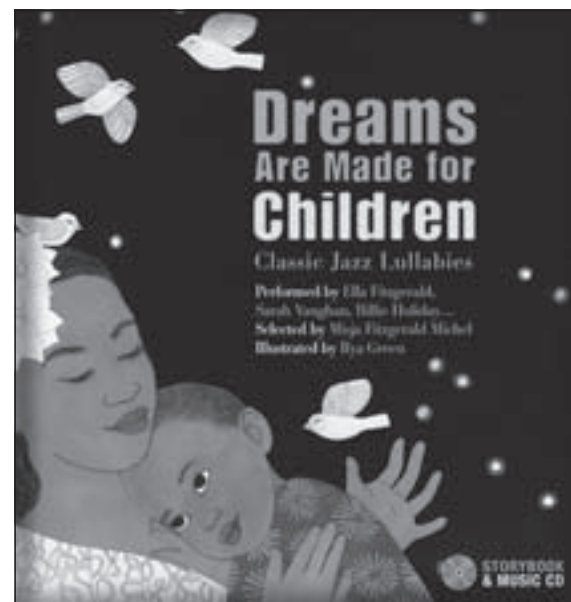
with a CD featuring a dozen songs performed by Ella Fitzgerald, Judy Garland, Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra and others

The Secret Mountain

Hardcover, \$16.95

36 pages, Illustrated

ISBN: 978-1-937269-50-0



"Sometimes, a little jazz is all you need for a good night's rest!"

Dreams Are Made for Children features... a selection of timeless... popular standards from the golden age of jazz... that will lull babies into a sweet, blissful sleep. Lyrics and brief explanatory notes with whimsical, dream-like illustrations accompany each song... The music was selected by Misja Fitzgerald Michel, a Paris-based jazz musician, and noted children's illustrator Ilya Green created the colorful images in the 36-page hardcover book."

-- Excerpted from the Bookjacket

As a child of the '50s who was weaned on jazz, I often worry whether or not the music I most identify with my formative years might one day disappear. After all, only a handful of the legendary players are still alive, and fewer and fewer nightclubs seem to cater to devotees of the once-dominant medium.

For this reason, it is a blessing to find *Dreams Are Made for Children*, a bedtime picture book which comes with a CD featuring a dozen performances of classic lullabies by a variety of jazz greats.

There's "God Bless the Child" by Billie Holiday; "Over the Rainbow" by Judy Garland and "My Funny Valentine" by Chet Baker, to name a few.

Each of these sleep-inducing serenades is accompanied by lyrics printed against an appropriately-themed backdrop.

For example, "Over the Rainbow" includes a rainbow, Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion.

It also explains that Garland originally sang the tune in *The Wizard of Oz*, and that the film was based on a children's novel published by L. Frank Baum in 1900.

In the entry for "My Sleepy Head" we learn that Nat King Cole "had a wonderfully gentle, deep voice" and that he "played the piano with a subtle nervous swing."

The title track, "Dreams Are Made for Children," is performed by Ella Fitzgerald, one of the greatest jazz singers of all time, who was blessed with a three-octave range and a rare talent for improvisation.

A delightful tome for tired tots designed to introduce the next generation to jazz, America's classical music.

We honor the many accomplishments of African Americans.

It is our primary goal as a labor union to better the lives of all people working in the building trades through advocacy, civil demonstration, and the long-held belief that workers deserve a "family wage" - fair pay for an honest day's work.



A family wage, and the benefits that go with it, not only strengthens families, but also allows our communities to become stronger, more cohesive, and more responsive to their citizens' needs.

Our family wage agenda reflects our commitment to people working in the building trades, and to workers everywhere. In this small way, we are doing our part to help people achieve the American Dream. This dream that workers can hold dear regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, creed, or religious beliefs.

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