The First Black Superhero: Black Motherhood

Amongst the many images of the black experience, there is one image that stands the test of time. Whether caricatured as a syrup-making, Aunt Jemima mammy archetype or the oversimplification of black womanhood—concepts like the Madonna-whore complex, hyper-sexualization of black female children and commercialized Eurocentric standards of beauty, historically confine expressions of black motherhood, and femininity.

Black motherhood is a representation of womanhood. Historical female archetypes are utilized to articulate black womanhood, and femininity, in mainstream media and in non-people of color circles. These clichéd archetypes are dehumanizing; yet, consistently and globally circulated. They, also, serve as fictionalized versions of black motherhood. Communities of women of color have raised and are invited into the homes of non-people of color as doulas, wet nurses and nannies; yet, the fundamental understanding, self-expressions and appreciation of black womanhood is yet to be made a priority of American histories, and communities. Recently, social and political movements like the Me Too Movement, Black Girl Magic, Bring Back Our Girls, and Black Lives Matter provide an avenue of effortless and enlightened expression and narratives.

This listing provides works of non-fiction that examines historical stereotypes of black motherhood. Feminist theory, womanist interpretations and overviews of political and literary movements and major authors is incorporated. Other works of fiction, memoirs and personal narratives by major authors are amongst the latter of the listing. Film-adaptations of chronicled motherhood and bouts of womanhood are within the listing.

Resources include call numbers, for patrons to easily inquire and obtain resources. Auburn Avenue Research Library maintains non-circulating policies of its collection; however, patrons are able to utilize materials in-house. Suggested search terms and keywords are provided to further guide patron’s research amongst Auburn Avenue Research Library and the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library catalog and digital libraries. The below Boolean Operators (AND, OR, also NOT) are simple words used to maximize search results.

Forrest R. Evans
Librarian II, Reference and Research
Forrest.Evans@fultoncountyga.gov
Audio/Visual Collection:

Mother of the River
Author: Davis, Zeinabu Irene    Pub Date: 1995    Call #: VHS 791.43 MOTHER

The Color of Water: A Black Man’s Tribute to His White Mother
Author: McBride, James    Pub Date: 1996    Call #: CAS B MCBRIDE

The Women of Brewster Place
Author: Winfrey, Oprah    Pub Date: 1988    Call #: VHS 791.45 WOMEN V.1
                                      VHS 791.45 WOMEN V.2

Waiting to Exhale
Author: Terry McMillian    Pub Date: 1995    Call #: DVD 791.43 WAITING

A Raisin in The Sun
Author: Hansberrry, Lorraine    Pub Date: 1985    Call #: VHS 791.43 RAISIN

The Street
Author: Petry, Ann Lane    Pub Date: 1998    Call #: CAS 813.54 PETRY

For Colored Girls
Author: Jackson, Janet    Pub Date: 2011    Call #: DVD 791.43 FOR

Dark Girls
Author: Duke, Bill    Pub Date: 2013    Call #: DVD 305.48 DARK

The Return of Sarah Bartman
Author: Maseko, Zola    Pub Date: 2003    Call #: DVD 305.48 DARK

Siren Spirits
Author: Onwurah, Ngozi    Pub Date: 1994    Call #: VHS 791.436 SIREN

And Still I Rise
Author: Onwurah, Ngozi    Pub Date: 1993    Call #: VHS 305.4 AND

Black Mother, Black Daughter
Author: Hamilton, Sylvia    Pub Date: 1989    Call #: VHS 305.8 BLACK

On becoming a woman mothers & daughters talking together : a film
Author: National Black Women’s Health Project    Pub Date: 1987    Call #: VHS 613.9 ON
Books:

Guidebook to Relative Strangers: Journeys into Race, Motherhood, and History
Author: Dungy, Camile T. Pub Date: 2017
Auburn Avenue Research Library: B DUNGY

U.S. Women’s History: Untangling the Threads of Sisterhood
Author: Brown, Leslie Pub Date: 2017
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.40973 UNITED STATES

Maternal Metaphors of Power in African American Women's Literature: from Phillis Wheatley to Toni Morrison
Author: Moore, Geneva Cobb Pub Date: 2017
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 810.9 MOORE

Lost in the USA: American identity from the Promise Keepers to the Million Mom March
Author: White, Deborah G. Pub Date: 2017
Auburn Avenue Research Library:

Raising the Race: Black Career Women Redefine Marriage, Motherhood, and Community
Author: Barnes, Riche J. Daniel Pub Date: 2016
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.488 BARNES

When Momma Speaks: The Bible and Motherhood from A Womanist Perspective
Author: Crowder, Stephanie R. Buckhanon Pub Date: 2016
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 220.6 CROWDER

Black Women’s Portrayals on Reality Television: The New Sapphire
Author: Allision, Donnetrice Pub Date: 2016
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 791.45 BLACK

Brown Bodies, White Babies: The Politics of Cross-racial Surrogacy
Author: Harrison, Laura Pub Date: 2016
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 306.8743 HARRISON

Know the Mother: Stories
Author: Cooper, Desiree Pub Date: 2016
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.6 COOPER

Things I Should Have Told My Daughter: Lies, Lessons & Love Affairs
Author: Cleage, Pearl
Auburn Avenue Research Library: B CLEAGE
Child, Please: How Mama's Old-school Lessons Helped me Check Myself Before I wrecked Myself
Author: Caviness, Ylonda Gault
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 649.1 CAVINESS

Unraveling and Reweaving Sacred Canon in Africana Womanhood
Author: Amenga-Etego, Rose Mary           Pub Date: 2015
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 200.82 UNRAVELING

Reading Contemporary African American Literature: Black Women's Popular Fiction, Post-Civil Rights Experience, and the African American Canon
Author: Bragg, Beauty           Pub Date: 2015
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 810.9 BRAGG

Witches, Goddesses, and Angry Spirits: The Politics of Spiritual Liberation in African Diaspora Women's Fiction
Author: Marouan, Maha           Pub Date: 2015
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.5409 MAROUAN

Engaging the Diaspora: Migration and African Families
Author: Uwakweh, Paulina Ada           Pub Date: 2014
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 331.626 ENGAGING

What the Village Gave Me: Conceptualizations of Womanhood
Author: Davis-Maye, Denise           Pub Date: 2014
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.48 WHAT

Black Women and Popular Culture: The Conversation Continues
Author: Goldman, Adria Y.           Pub Date: 2014
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.48 BLACK

African Diasporic Women's Narratives: Politics of Resistance, Survival, and Citizenship
Author: Alexandar, Simone A. James           Pub Date: 2014
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 810.9 ALEXANDER

Women, Gender, and Sexualities in Africa
Author: Falola, Toyin           Pub Date: 2013
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.3 WOMEN

Black Women in Management: Paid Work and Family Formations
Author: Farmer, Diane Chilangwa           Pub Date: 2013
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 331.481658 FARMER
I Dare to Say: African Women Share Their Stories of Hope and Survival
Author: Twongyeirwe, Hilda  Pub Date: 2012
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.42 I

Prove it on Me: New Negroes, Sex, and Popular Culture in the 1920s
Author: Chapman, Erin D.  Pub Date: 2012
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.48 CHAPMAN

Invisible Families: Gay Identities, Relationships, and Motherhood among Black Women
Author: Moore, Mignon R.  Pub Date: 2011
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 306.848 MOORE

Radical Spiritual Motherhood: Autobiography and Empowerment in Nineteenth-century African American Women
Author: Haynes, Rosetta Renae  Pub Date: 2011
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 269.2 HAYNES

Motherlove in Shades of Black: The Maternal Psyche in the Novels of African American Women
Author: Pillowm, Gloria Thomas  Pub Date: 2010
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813 PILLOW

Born Southern: Childbirth, Motherhood, and Social Networks in the old South
Author: Kennedy, V. Lynn  Pub Date: 2010
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 362.1982 KENNEDY

Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States
Author: Solinger, Rickie  Pub Date: 2010
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 365.43 INTERRUPTED

Something Akin to Freedom: the Choice of Bondage in Narratives by African American Women
Author: Li, Stephanie  Pub Date: 2010
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 810.9 LI

On the Outskirts of Normal: Forging a Family Against the Grain
Author: Monroe, Debra  Pub Date: 2010
Auburn Avenue Research Library: B MONROE

Black Sexualities: Probing Powers, Passions, Practices, and Policies
Author: Battle, Juan  Pub Date: 2010
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.896 BLACK
Is that Your Child?: Mothers Talk about Rearing Biracial Children  
Author: Kilson, Marion  
Pub Date: 2009  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 306.846 KILSON

Queen of the Virgins: Pageantry and Black Womanhood in the Caribbean  
Author: Oliver, M. Cynthia  
Pub Date: 2009  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 306.4613 OLIVER

Something like Beautiful: One Single Mother's Story  
Author: Bandele, Asha  
Pub Date: 2009  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 306.8743 BANDELE

The Specter of Sex: Gendered Foundations of Racial Formation in the United States  
Author: Kitch, Sally  
Pub Date: 2009  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.8 KITCH

Reclaiming Home, Remembering Motherhood, Rewriting History: African American and Afro-Caribbean women's Literature in the Twentieth Century  
Author: Theile, Verena  
Pub Date: 2009  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 810.9 RECLAIMING

Black Woman's Burden: Commodifying Black Reproduction  
Author: Rousseau, Nicole  
Pub Date: 2009  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.896 ROUSSEAU

Women, Work, and Family in the Antebellum Mountain South  
Author: Dunaway, Wilma A.  
Pub Date: 2008  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.489624 DUNAWAY

Women in the Church of God in Christ: Making a Sanctified World  
Author: Butler, Anthea D.  
Pub Date: 2007  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 289.94 BUTLER

Cultural Sites of Critical Insight: Philosophy, Aesthetics, and African American and Native American Women's Writings  
Author: Cotton, Angela L.  
Pub Date: 2007  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 810.99287 CULTURAL

Uncertain Honor: Modern Motherhood in an African Crisis  
Author: Johnson-Hanks, Jennifer  
Pub Date: 2006  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 306.8743 JOHNSON-HANKS
Birthing a Slave: Motherhood and Medicine in the Antebellum South  
Author: Schwartz, Marie Jenkins  
Pub Date: 2006  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 618.20089 SCHWARTZ

Mother: A Cradle to Hold Me  
Author: Angelou, Maya  
Pub Date: 2006  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 811.54 ANGELOU

I'm Every Woman: Remixed Stories of Marriage, Motherhood, and Work  
Author: Parker, Lonnae O'Neal  
Pub Date: 2005  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.48 BLACK

The Black Woman: An Anthology  
Author: Bambara, Toni Cade  
Pub Date: 2005  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.48 PARKER

Rise Up Singing: Black Women Writers on Motherhood  
Author: Berry, Cecelie S.  
Pub Date: 2004  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 810.8 RISE

Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart  
Author: O'Reilly, Andrea  
Pub Date: 2004  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.54 MORRISON

Beads and Strands: Reflections of an African Woman on Christianity in Africa  
Author: Oduyoye, Mercy Amba  
Pub Date: 2004  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 276.082 ODUYOYE

Not My Mother’s Sister: Generational Conflict and Third-Wave Feminism  
Author: Henry, Astrid  
Pub Date: 2004  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.42 HENRY

Critical Race Feminism: A Reader  
Author: Wing, Adrien Katherine  
Pub Date: 2003  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.48 CRITICAL

The Archaeology of Mothering: An African-American Midwife's Tale  
Author: Wilkie, Laurie A.  
Pub Date: 2003  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 618.20089 PERRYMAN

Appropriating Blackness: Performances and the Politics of Authenticity  
Author: Johnson, E. Patrick  
Pub Date: 2003  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.896 JOHNSON
Maternal Body and Voice in Toni Morrison, Bobbie Ann Mason, and Lee Smith
Author: Eckard, Paula Gallant  
Pub Date: 2002
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813 ECKARD

The Freedom to Remember: Narrative, Slavery, and Gender in Contemporary Black Women's Fiction
Author: Mitchell, Angelyn  
Pub Date: 2002
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813 MITCHELL

Stepping Forward: Black Women in Africa and the Americas
Author: Higgs, Catherine  
Pub Date: 2002
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.48896 STEPPING

Mother imagery in the novels of Afro-Caribbean women
Author: Alexander, Simone A. James  
Pub Date: 2001
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.5 ALEXANDER

Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965
Author: Feldstein, Ruth  
Pub Date: 2000
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 306.8743 FELDSTEIN

Women in Chains: The Legacy of Slavery in Black Women's Fiction
Author: Pattopn, Venetria K.  
Pub Date: 2000
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.5 PATTON

Medicalized Motherhood: Perspectives from the Lives of African-American and Jewish Women
Author: Litt, Jacquelyn S.  
Pub Date: 2000
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.42 BERKOVITCH

Redefining Motherhood: Changing Identities and Patterns
Author: Abbey, Sharon  
Pub Date: 1998
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 306.8743 REDEFINING

Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment
Author: Hill Collins, Patricia  
Pub Date: 2000
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.42 COLLINS

Womanist and Feminist Aesthetics: A Comparative Review
Author: Allan, Tuzyline Jita  
Pub Date: 1995
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 823.91 ALLAN
The Politics of (M)othering: Womanhood, Identity, and Resistance in African Literature
Author: Nnaemeka, Obioma
Pub Date: 1997
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 809.8896 POLITICS

Not Our Kind of Girl: Unraveling the Myths of Black Teenage Motherhood
Author: Kaplan, Elaine Bell
Pub Date: 1997
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 306.8743 KAPLAN

Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
Author: Chateauvert, Malinda
Pub Date: 1998
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 331.4 CHATEAUVERT

The Other Within Us: Feminist Explorations of Women and Aging
Author: Pearsall, Marilyn
Pub Date: 1997
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.26 OTHER

Motherlands: Black Women’s Writing from African, the Caribbean, and South Asia
Author: Nasta, Sushelia
Pub Date: 1992
Auburn Avenue Research Library: WR 820.99287 MOTHERLANDS

You Can’t Keep A Good Woman Down: Short Stories
Author: Walker, Alice
Pub Date: 1981
Auburn Avenue Research Library: WR 813.54 WALKER

Zora Neale Hurston: Collected Plays
Author: Hurston, Zora Neale
Pub Date: 2008
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 812.52 HURSTON

Spunk: The Selected Storied of Zora Neale Hurston
Author: Hurston, Zora Neale
Pub Date: 1985
Auburn Avenue Research Library: WR 813.52 HURSTON

Hush Now, Baby: The Help Becomes Family
Author: Williams, Angela W.
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.6 WILLIAMS

When Washington was in Vogue: A Love Story: A Lost Novel of the Harlem Renaissance
Author: Williams, Edward Christopher
Pub Date: 2003
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.52 WILLIAMS
Suggested Works of Fiction and Memoirs, by Black Women Writers:

**Romance with voluptuousness : Caribbean women and thick bodies in the United States**
Author: Gentles-Peart, Kamille
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.4 GENTLES-PEART

**Heads of the Colored People**
Author: Thompson-Spires, Nafissa
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.54 THOMPSON-SPIRES

**Ella Baker: Community Organizer of the Civil Rights Movement**
Author: Moye, J Todd
Auburn Avenue Research Library: B Baker

**Indigo: In search of the Color that Seduced the World**
Author: McKinley, Catherine E.
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 391.0966 MCKINLEY

**Mami Wata: Arts for Water Spirits in Africa and Its Disaporas**
Author: Frewel, Henry John
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 704.947096 DREWAL

**Letter to My Daughter**
Author: Angelou, Maya
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 818.5409 ANGELOU

**When We Were Colored: A Mother's Story**
Author: Rutland, Eva
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 306.8743 RUTLAND

**I Dream a World: Portraits of Black Women who Changed America**
Author: Lanker, Brian
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 305.48896 LANKER

**Mama Knows Best: African-American Wives’ Tales, Myths, and Remedies for Mothers and Mother-to-be**
Author: Coleman, Chrisena
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 398.082 COLEMAN

**Blessed is the Fruit: A Novel**
Author: Antoni, Robert
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.54 ANTONI
The Will to Arise: Women, Tradition, and the Church in Africa  
Author: Oduyoye, Mercy Amba  
Pub Date: 1992  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: WR 261.8344 WILL

The Tradition  
Author: Brown, Jericho

The Color of Water: A Black Man’s Tribute to His White Mother  
Author: McBride, James  
Pub Date: 1996  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: B MCBRIDE-JORDAN

Nervous Conditions: A Novel  
Author: Dangarembga, Tsitsi  
Pub Date: 2016  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 823 DANGAREMBGA

Your Blues Ain’t Like Mine  
Author: Campbell, Bebe Moore  
Pub Date: 1982  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.54 CAMPBELL

The Women of Brewster Place  
Author: Naylor, Gloria  
Pub Date: 1982  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.54 NAYLOR

Maud Martha  
Author: Brooks, Gwendoly  
Pub Date: 1953  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: WR 813.54 BROOKS

One Day My Soul Just Opened Up: 40 Days and 40 Nights Toward Spiritual Strength and Personal Growth  
Author: Vanzant, Iyanla  
Pub Date: 1998  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 291.44 VANZANT

A Raisin in the Sun  
Author: Hansberry, Lorraine  
Pub Date: 1988  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 812.54 HANSBERRY

Americanah  
Author: Ngozi Adichie, Chimanmanda  
Pub Date: 2019  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 823.92 ADICHIE

Mama  
Author: McMillan, Terry  
Pub Date: 1987  
Auburn Avenue Research Library: 813.54 MCMILLAN
The Street
Author: Petry, Ann  Pub Date: 1946
Auburn Avenue Research Library: WR 813.54 PETRY

Black Girls Must Die Exhausted: A Novel for Grown Ups
Author: Walker, Tabitha

In Love and Trouble: Stories of Black Women
Author: Walker, Alice  Pub Date: 1973
Auburn Avenue Research Library: WR 813.54 WALKER
Suggested Search Terms and Keywords:
- Black Feminism AND womanhood
- Black womanism
- Women of color (WOC)
- Women of color AND black feminist
- “Black Girl Magic”
- “Black Girl Joy”
- Intersectionality
- Marginalization
- Melanin Magic AND Black Girl Magic
- Black motherhood AND womanism
- Black womanhood and motherhood
- Black womanhood AND socioeconomic
- Gender roles/ identity or limitations
- Sterilization AND black womanhood AND motherhood
- American injustices AND black womanhood AND 21ST century - Queer woman of color (QWOC)
- Hetero-normative AND black motherhood
- Queer anti-urbanism
- Colorism AND black womanhood
- “Bring Back Our Girls”
- Colorism NOT caste system
- Eurocentric standard of beauty
- The Black Madonna
- Madonna-whore complex

How to Use Booleans:

AND

OR

NOT

Both terms

Either term

Just one term

Boolean Operators are simple words to maximize search results.