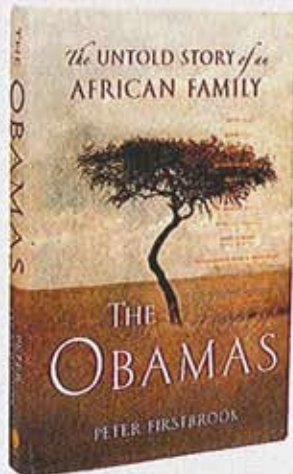


BOOKS

In Praise of Our Unbreakable Bonds

Three new books salute our phenomenal family ties from Africa to America



FROM THESE ROOTS

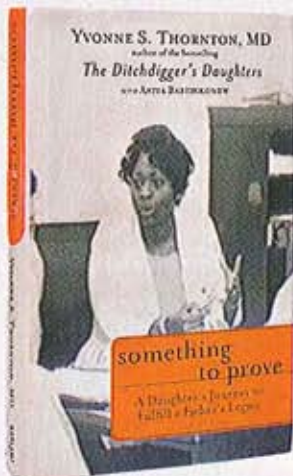
Like few others in modern history, President Barack Hussein Obama has been dissected within every fiber of his DNA. **The Obamas: The Untold Story of an African Family** (Crown, \$26) stands apart by literally finding where the President comes from. Author Peter Firstbrook, a documentary filmmaker, traces President Obama's African ancestry over 400 years to the shores of Lake Victoria in western Kenya, revealing his Luo



tribal roots. The Luo people like to say, *Wat en wat*; in other words, "Kinship is kinship." It is difficult not to think of the President's own charisma when we learn, for example, about his grandfather, Onyango, who "wanted to understand everything around him."

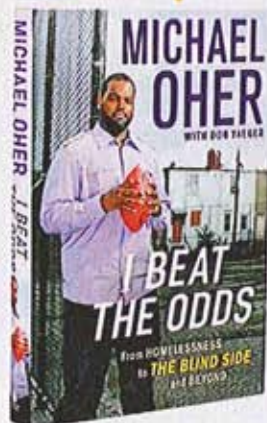
FATHER DIVINE

In her touching memoir, **Something to Prove: A Daughter's Journey to Fulfill a Father's Legacy** (Kaplan Publishing, \$24.99), Yvonne S. Thornton, M.D., the first Black woman in the country board-certified in maternal-fetal medicine, continues to hold up her father, Donald, whom we met in her first book, *The Ditchdigger's Daughters*, published in 1995. That love burns even stronger here.



DID YOU KNOW?

ETHEL WATERS WAS THE FIRST TO PERFORM "STORMY WEATHER."



A FAMILY AFFAIR

The Blind Side's Michael Oher dispels the celluloid Great White Hope version of his success with his own story, **I Beat the Odds: From Homelessness to The Blind Side and Beyond** (Gotham, \$26). Yes, the Tuohys, a White adoptive family he lived with as a teenager, were instrumental in his achievements. But in gripping prose, Oher sheds light on the cadre of other folks, including Velma, a loving foster mother who laid down rules and soothed his soul with this nugget: Though he was a foster child he was God's child too. —Ylonda Gault Caviness



Fearless talent Ethel Waters

STILL WATERS
THE MIGHTY DIVA OF STAGE AND SONG

Ethel Waters was one of the greatest performers of the past century, as Donald Bogle makes clear in the new biography **Heat Wave** (Harper, \$26.99). This page-turner details Ethel's numerous comebacks and setbacks, triumphs and tragedies, sometimes in a single year. She was for a time the most famous Black woman in America. The second Black woman nominated for an Oscar (for 1949's *Pinky*) and the first nominated for an Emmy (*Route 66*), she died at 80 in 1977 and left her mark on film, TV, Broadway and music.

—Patrik Henry Bass



TOP RIGHT: HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY; BOTTOM LEFT: SEAN GALLUP/GETTY; BOOKS: RAQUEL BICER