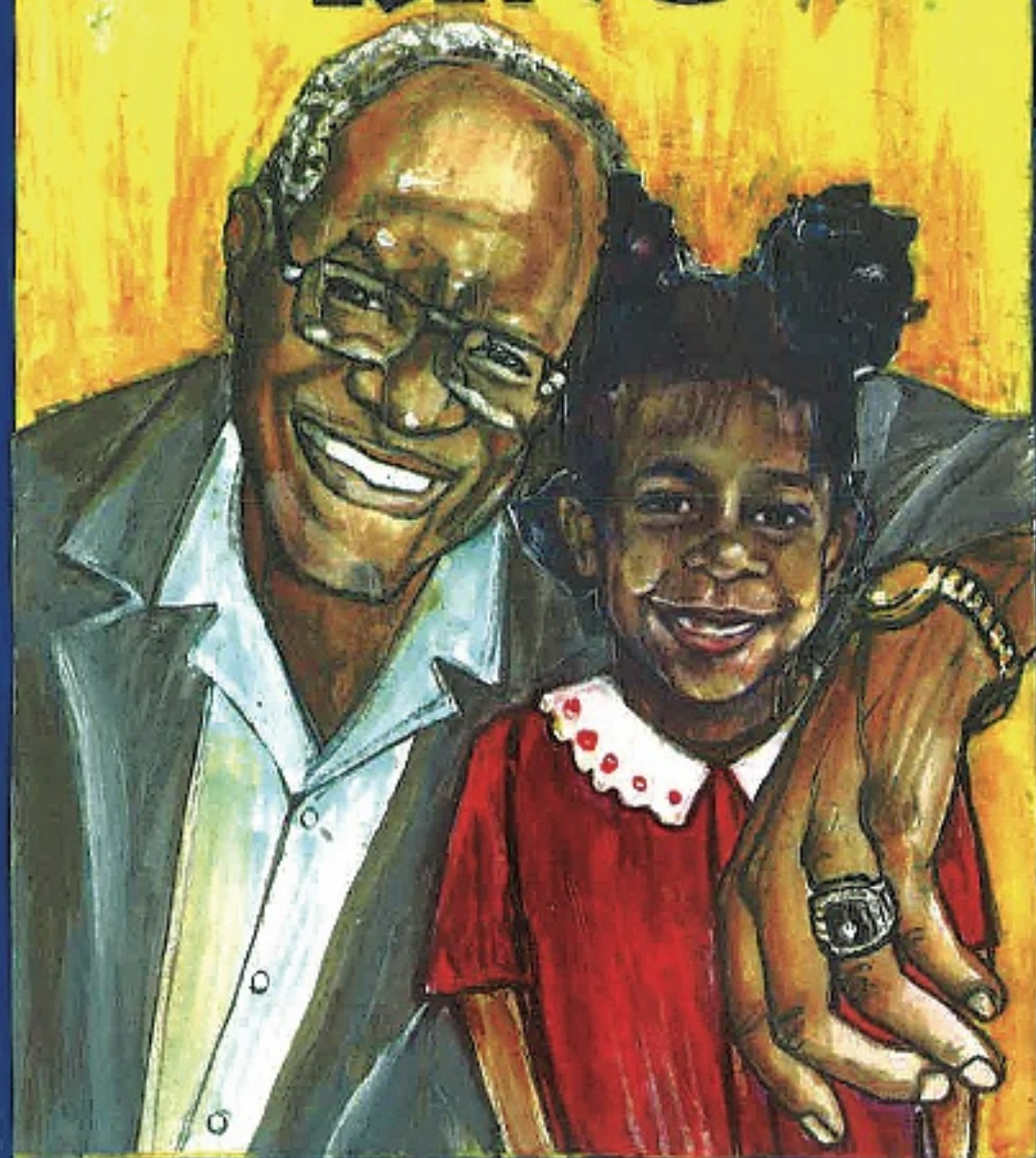
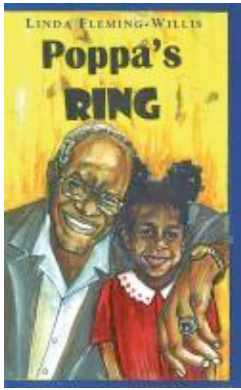


LINDA FLEMING-WILLIS

Poppa's RING





Poppa's Ring provides a glimpse into the personal life of Bill Willis. Legendary to football fans, Bill was a role model to his children, grandchildren, and others. Bill was the tall, gentle giant who cooked and allowed his grandchildren to help. He taught them about birds, and the importance of keeping your word. When his granddaughter, Imani, loses his NFL ring, it provides an opportunity to share an experience Bill encountered when football was segregated.

Poppa's Ring

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Poppa's Ring

By

Linda Fleming-Willis

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ISBN: 978-1-63491-191-7

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., Bradenton, Florida.

This story is based, in part, on actual persons and events. The author has taken creative liberty with many details, and has added some fictional situations to enhance the reader's experience.

Printed on acid-free paper.

BookLocker.com, Inc.
2016

First Edition

When she opened her eyes, she spied two of Poppa's rings on the counter as well. One had a big diamond in it that was twinkling at Imani, and she immediately picked up the ring and tried it on.

"Wow," she said. "This is a big ring!" Imani tried it on every finger on both her hands, and the ring did not fit. She placed it on her nose like a clown's nose, and it still did not fit. She sat down on the floor and began to try it on her toes.

"Bingo!" she said as she placed it on her big toe. "A perfect fit!" And, no wonder, because Imani's big toes were just like her Nana's!

Imani jumped up and started dancing and prancing through the house. The twinkling ring on her big toe excited her, and it seemed to be winking at her as she did cart wheels, twirled, and imitated all the moves Ms. Stephanie, her ballet teacher, taught her. She sat down to admire Poppa's ring, but it was no longer on her foot!

"Oh no!" She moaned. "Where's the ring? It has to be in the house somewhere!" Imani ran from room to room looking for the ring, but she did not find it. Poppa returned to the kitchen to complete his salad, and found Imani crawling around on the floor.

"Imani, one baby in the house at a time is enough," he said jokingly, "and you have already had your turn. Round up the rest of the family so we can have some lunch."

Poppa's Ring



“O.K. Poppa”, she said and reluctantly ended her search for the ring. “Wash your hands. It’s time to eat,” Imani shouted, and Kisa, Jehuti and Trey all marched into the kitchen to wash their hands.

“Has anyone seen my other ring that was on the counter?” Poppa asked. Everyone, including Imani said, “No.”

“What did you ask babe?” Nana inquired.

“I was asking the children if they had seen my other ring. I put both my OSU and 1950 NFL championship rings on the counter while preparing lunch, and now one of them is missing,” he said.

Nana looked keenly from one grandchild to the next. “Do you all know how important that ring is to your Poppa?” she asked.

“No,” they all said.

“Slide into the breakfast nook and let me tell you about that ring.”

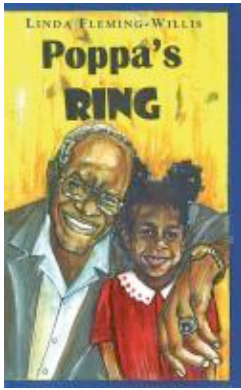
Nana and Poppa pulled up a chair and Nana began to share a story.

“All of you know that your Poppa played football at East High School, The Ohio State University, and professionally for the Cleveland Browns in what was called the All-American Football Conference, right?”

“Yes Nana.”

“Do you know that he has been inducted into the high school, college and professional football halls of fame?”

“Wow Poppa!” they all exclaimed.



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