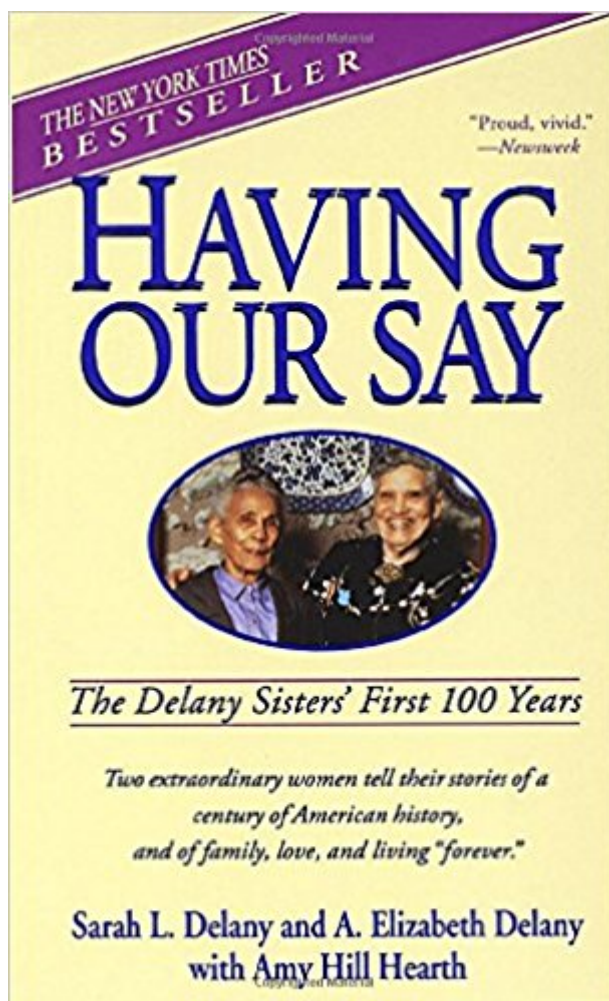


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# Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years



## Synopsis

Warm, feisty, and intelligent, the Delany sisters speak their mind in a book that is at once a vital historical record and a moving portrait of two remarkable women who continued to love, laugh, and embrace life after over a hundred years of living side by side. Their sharp memories show us the post-Reconstruction South and Booker T. Washington; Harlem's Golden Age and Langston Hughes, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Paul Robeson. Bessie breaks barriers to become a dentist; Sadie quietly integrates the New York City system as a high school teacher. Their extraordinary story makes an important contribution to our nation's heritage and an indelible impression on our lives.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"I never thought I'd see the day that the world would want to hear what two old Negro women have to say," says Bessie Delany. But Bessie and her sister, Sadie, born in 1893 and 1891, saw plenty, by eating a low-fat, high-vegetable diet and outliving the "old Rebbys [rebel] boys" who once almost lynched Sadie. This remarkable memoir was a long-running bestseller, spawning a Broadway play and adding to their list of seasoned acquaintances (Marian Anderson, Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, Cab Calloway) such spring chickens as Hillary Clinton. Born to a former slave whose owners broke the law by teaching him to read, the sisters got a solid education. North Carolina was paradise--despite the Rebbies--until Jim Crow reared its hideous head. The girls had loved to ride in the front of the trolley because the wind in their hair made them feel free, but one day the conductor sadly ordered them to the back. The family moved to New York, where Bessie became the town's second black woman dentist and Sadie the first black woman home-ec teacher. They befriended

everyone who was anyone in the Harlem Renaissance (their brother won the 1925 Congressional primary there), pursued careers instead of husbands, and lived peacefully together, despite their differences. Sadie was more peaceable, like Booker T. Washington, while Bessie was a W.E.B. Du Bois-style militant. They're funny: Bessie notes that blacks must be sharp to get ahead, "But if you're average and white, honey, you can go far. Just look at Dan Quayle. If that boy was colored he'd be washing dishes somewhere." And they are wise: Sadie says, "Life is short, and it's up to you to make it sweet." --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this remarkable and charming oral history, two lively and perspicacious sisters, aged 101 and 103, reflect on their rich family life and their careers as pioneering African American professionals. Brief chapters capture Sadie's warm voice ("Now, I was a 'mama's child' ") and Bessie's fiestiness ("I'm alive out of sheer determination, honey!"). The unmarried sisters, who live together, tell of growing up on the campus of a black college in Raleigh, N.C., where their father was an Episcopal priest, and of being too independent for the men who courted them. With parental influence far stronger than that of Jim Crow, they joined professions--Sadie teaching domestic science, Bessie practicing dentistry. In 1920s Harlem they mixed with black activists and later were among the first to integrate the New York City suburb of Mount Vernon. While their account of the last 40 years is sketchy, their observations about everything from black identity to their yoga exercises make them worthwhile company. Freelancer Hearth, who wrote an initial story on the sisters in the New York Times in 1991, has deftly shaped and contextualized their reflections. Photos. 35,000 first printing; first serial to American Heritage; BOMC alternate. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

With Black History Month starting today, and March being Women's History Month, I'm surprised this book hasn't received more attention. Two independent, accomplished, educated black WOMEN who both lived past 100, spanning the entire twentieth century, tell their remarkable life stories. They were daughters of the first ordained black Episcopal minister in this country, who was actually a slave himself until the age of seven. This brings home that what may seem like terrible events from long ago, weren't as far removed from our time as many think; these women lived in OUR lifetimes, born in the 1890's, living through 1994 and 1999. Already senior citizens when they marched with Dr. King, they lived the history of both the Women's Rights and Civil Rights Movements. Not a long book, you'll really love getting to know these two remarkable sisters, each with their own personality and outlook on the events we know as history, but that they LIVED.

This is an excellent read and is probably even more relevant today than it was when originally written. These two amazing women speak from their hearts to tell what it was like growing up in segregated Raleigh, North Carolina and their long lives in Harlem in New York. Their openness and honesty come off of every page. I found their courageous stories very inspirational but also found they have put their finger on the issues of race that are very appropriate today. This is not a tirade, it is a story of the trials and tribulations faced by ordinary citizens of this country. It is a call to awareness. It's also a good read. It should be mandatory for some of our political leaders today.

One of the great chronicles of black life in 20th century America. Though hardly typical of their place or time, the Delany sisters are engaging, opinionated raconteurs who hold nothing back on their observations, feelings, and experiences. This dual memoir, masterfully shaped from months of oral interviews with these feisty, funny centenarians, went from being a big best-seller to a beloved classic. . . as it should!

These two sisters have good old fashioned styles of talking and such modern sensibilities. They keep up with all the news and their opinions are plainly stated. I wish I knew a little more of their interactions with their family, but a. Happy to see how they relate to each other. THEY GIVE ME HOPE AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ME IN MY OLD AGE.

I loved this book! The stories the two sisters told about their family and lives were fascinating. I was inspired by their love and courage. Credit must go to the author. The book was well written. She did a great job of writing the chapters in Sadie and Bessie's voices. A good read from beginning to end.

What a treat to read their stories. Lovely ladies, pioneers in many ways. I would have liked to have met them.

This book was recommended to me by my daughter when she was in high school. So I recommended it to our book club. It is the story of two black sisters who lived to be over 100 years old. I believe a play was made out of the book years ago. Their story is heartwarming and also a look at African American history in the United States. The feel is similar to the movie "The Butler" that is out now. Their story is simpler-- but it shows how important it is to take the long view on trials and tribulations in life. It also shows how one good buddy, in this case, a sister, can help you get

thru anything. Upholds good old fashioned values, integrity, faith, always do the right thing. Ah that we could all live our lives to such a long story-- and say it is a life well lived. It is an African-American story that is a universal story of love and how it fosters longevity.

Loved this book. It is a biography of two "colored" sisters, born and raised in North Carolina following the Civil War. If you want to understand better what happened with civil rights following the Civil War and into the 20th century, this is a fabulous first-hand account. But, more than that, it is an account of a really close family who stick together and thrive despite the adverse conditions of their time.

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