Live-away, low-income black American fathers do not have an easy life. They are America’s public enemy; they descend from a history of tenuous economic and social circumstances; they experience high levels of incarceration; they face unemployment and relatively low levels of education and income. As men though, they are expected to be financially responsible for their children. They are generally blamed for the increasingly high rates of poverty among African American children. Yet, they increasingly find it difficult to meet their financial obligation to their children. And their general roles and functions as live-away parents are not clearly defined within their relationships with their children’s mothers. Other than child support, public institutions provide little support to guide and define the criteria for “good” live-away parenting. How then do low-income, black live-away fathers decide on what is or is not appropriate parental behavior? The answer to this question, replied one father, is: “It isn’t easy.”

In part 3 of our story we listen as fathers describe what it is that they do as fathers for their children (chapter 6). But men’s parental engagement occurs at varying levels. Some men are there everyday. Others have no involvement in their children’s upbringing. Some felt overwhelmed with life issues and chose to withdraw from parenting altogether. In chapter 7 these fathers discuss their often heartrending decisions to disengage as parents and become daddies their children may never get to know. In chapter 8 we learn that regardless of their ideals and goals as fathers, men’s desire to be good fathers is one fraught with hurdles. Still, many fathers persevered and overcame seeming limitations to be what they considered the best possible daddies to their children.