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**DeWolf, Thomas Norman
INHERITING THE TRADE:
A Northern Family Confronts Its Legacy
as the Largest Slave-Trading Dynasty in U.S. History**

Memoir of the author's journey, with a group of cousins, to retrace the route of the infamous "triangle trade" that made their ancestors rich.

In 2001, 46-year-old DeWolf was a writer and public official living in a mostly white Oregon county. He describes himself as largely unconcerned with race and racism. Then, the bombshell: Contacted by Katrina Browne, a distant cousin from Rhode Island, he learned he was descended from a family that included, across several generations, some of the most notorious slave traders in American history. James DeWolf (1764–1837), one of five brothers dispatching slave ships from the busy port of Bristol, R.I., epitomized the family's immersion in slaving; he became a U.S. senator and was estimated to be the second-richest man in America at his death. At the urging of Browne, who was confronting her heritage by making a documentary film, the author and eight other cousins gathered with her in Bristol and journeyed as a group to Ghana, on Africa's west coast, and then to Cuba, following the historic path that brought molasses from Cuba to be made into rum in New England, then traded in African ports for human beings. DeWolf's journal of the trip unveils some mixed feelings among his cousins; for himself, it sparked a life-changing awakening to a world of regret and shame. Intense conversations with black tourists in Ghana, for example, brought the realization that he had never talked this way with African-Americans at home. Racial reconciliation is imperative, he resolves, even if it requires reparations distributed to those "stuck at the bottom."

His conclusions will be controversial, but DeWolf's intimate confrontation with white America's "unearned privilege" sears the conscience.