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Pastor releasing fourth book

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The Rev. Bob Uzzel is, after years of work and more interviews than he can count, wrapping up work on his fourth book — *The Durhams of Fairfield; An African American Genealogy*.

Preorders will be available soon through various outlets after publishing by Wild Horse Media Group, with a release slated in June, Uzzel said. A June release will wrap about 37 years of work on the project.

"It's been a long journey, but I'm just elated to have it finish, finally," he said.

Uzzel said it began soon after his marriage to wife Debra in 1977, with influence from the projects of Alex Haley, who published the opus "Roots" in 1976.

Uzzel said he read the books *Roots*, *Queen*, and *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, watched the miniseries based on the books, and was inspired to tell the story of his wife's family, the Durhams.

He found that though no one in the family was adept at research or had an inherent interest in genealogy, he was able to glean significant background information through personal interviews with surviving family members.



Uzzel

"Some were in person, some were by phone, some of it was through researching Census records, some through slave schedules, Internet resources, letters from family members and other sources," Uzzel said.

"Some people use the expression 'an intellectual itch that needs to be scratched.'"

Of the many varied stories associated with the Durham family, he said he linked the family roots to the slaves of the family of Robert Winfield Durham. Evidence indicates that "Gobi," the patriarch of the Durham family, along with his wife and five older sons, were slaves in Fairfield County, S.C., and that Gobi died there. Uzzel's work reveals that patriarch's wife gave birth to a son Isaac Durham who came to Louisiana and joined a mother and brother

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in Texas shortly after emancipation. They apparently lived east of Fairfield, Texas, in the Butler community of Freestone County. In the Butler community, Durham is a common name, and some descendants of the Gobi sons still farm land in the area, Uzzel said.

He is certain there is more than a coincidental connection between the family's apparent roots in Fairfield County, S.C. and settlement in Fairfield.

Uzzel said he is thankful to have the support of family and the aid of the Durhams in his effort on the work, and he has invested a great deal of time and energy, effort and finances into it.

That work has created interest in the Durham family to learn more about its roots, and he hopes it creates a story that has interest for others in the community through its connections to history and the present.

"I've given a lot of years to it," Uzzel said. "It's a matter of persistence. You plug away at it, and if you're enthused enough, sometimes that enthusiasm rubs off on other people."