



Hidden Figures: The American Dream and the Untold Story of the Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win the Space Race

By Margot Lee Shetterly



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The #1 New York Times bestseller

The phenomenal true story of the black female mathematicians at NASA whose calculations helped fuel some of America's greatest achievements in space. Soon to be a major motion picture starring Taraji P. Henson, Octavia Spencer, Janelle Monae, Kirsten Dunst, and Kevin Costner.

Before John Glenn orbited the earth, or Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, a group of dedicated female mathematicians known as “human computers” used pencils, slide rules and adding machines to calculate the numbers that would launch rockets, and astronauts, into space.

Among these problem-solvers were a group of exceptionally talented African American women, some of the brightest minds of their generation. Originally relegated to teaching math in the South's segregated public schools, they were called into service during the labor shortages of World War II, when America's aeronautics industry was in dire need of anyone who had the right stuff. Suddenly, these overlooked math whizzes had a shot at jobs worthy of their skills, and they answered Uncle Sam's call, moving to Hampton, Virginia and the fascinating, high-energy world of the Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory.

Even as Virginia's Jim Crow laws required them to be segregated from their white counterparts, the women of Langley's all-black “West Computing” group helped America achieve one of the things it desired most: a decisive victory over the Soviet Union in the Cold War, and complete domination of the heavens.

Starting in World War II and moving through to the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement and the Space Race, *Hidden Figures* follows the interwoven accounts of Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson and Christine Darden, four African American women who participated in some of NASA's greatest successes. It chronicles their careers over nearly three decades they faced challenges, forged alliances and used their intellect to change their own lives, and their country's future.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Meticulous... the depth and detail that are the book’s strength make it an effective, fact-based rudder with which would-be scientists and their allies can stabilize their flights of fancy. This hardworking, earnest book is the perfect foil for the glamour still to come.” (**Seattle Times**)

“Much as Tom Wolfe did in “The Right Stuff”, Shetterly moves gracefully between the women’s lives and the broader sweep of history . . . Shetterly, who grew up in Hampton, blends impressive research with an enormous amount of heart in telling these stories (**Boston Globe**)

“Restoring the truth about individuals who were at once black, women and astounding mathematicians, in a world that was constructed to stymie them at every step, is no easy task. Shetterly does it with the depth and detail of a skilled historian and the narrative aplomb of a masterful storyteller.” (**Bookreporter.com**)

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

Margot Lee Shetterly grew up in Hampton, Virginia, where she knew many of the women in her

book *Hidden Figures*. She is an Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Fellow and the recipient of a Virginia Foundation for the Humanities grant for her research on women in computing. She lives in Charlottesville, Virginia.

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