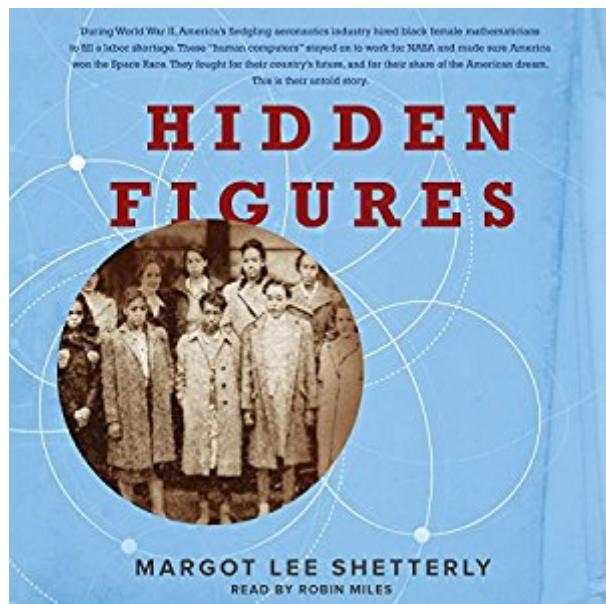


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# Hidden Figures: The American Dream And The Untold Story Of The Black Women Mathematicians Who Helped Win The Space Race



## Synopsis

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 shots 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 as they faced challenges, forged alliances, and used their intellects to change their own lives - and their country's future.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I admit I was completely ignorant of the story presented in HIDDEN FIGURES. I had no idea that black women played such a key role in our space program. It's great to finally acknowledge those who contributed so much--and received so little credit for their work. HIDDEN FIGURES tells the story of four determined black women, who overcame numerous obstacles, and worked in the space program at Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory (now known as "Langley Research Center.") It was at this Virginia lab where Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson and Christine Darden were able to employ their skills--and really make a difference. It was "behind the scenes" work back then--but now we know the real picture. To give the reader an idea of how difficult it was for a woman--much less an African-American woman--to actually become a mathematician, the author notes these statistics: "In the 1930s, just over a hundred women worked as professional mathematicians." The likelihood of a black woman actually becoming a mathematician working on the space program was about zero: "Employers openly discriminated against Irish and Jewish women with math degrees. The odds of a black woman encountering work in the field hovered near zero." Oddly, the Soviet Union actively encouraged women in engineering. The schools in the Soviet Union were  $\ddot{\text{a}}$   $\ddot{\text{o}}$ eloaded with women  $\ddot{\text{a}}$  including many of their engineering grads. Alas--that was not the case in the United States, which "struggled to find a place for women and Negroes in its science workplace, and in society at large." At the time, women generally got little credit for their work.

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