

THE UNTOLD STORY OF  
THE AFRICAN AMERICAN  
WOMEN WHO HELPED  
WIN THE SPACE RACE



THE BOOK THAT INSPIRED THE FILM  
FROM TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX

# HIDDEN FIGURES

MARGOT LEE SHETTERLY

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

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# DEDICATION

*To my parents, Margaret G. Lee and  
Robert B. Lee III, and to all of the  
women at the NACA and NASA who  
offered their shoulders to stand on*

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## AUTHOR'S NOTE

“Negro.” “Colored.” “Indian.” “Girls.” Though some readers might find the language of *Hidden Figures* discordant to their modern ears, I’ve made every attempt to remain true to the time period, and to the voices of the individuals represented in this story.

## PROLOGUE

Mrs. Land worked as a computer out at Langley,” my father said, taking a right turn out of the parking lot of First Baptist Church in Hampton, Virginia.

My husband and I visited my parents just after Christmas in 2010, enjoying a few days away from our full-time life and work in Mexico. They squired us around town in their twenty-year-old green minivan, my father driving, my mother in the front passenger seat, Aran and I buckled in behind like siblings. My father, gregarious as always, offered a stream of commentary that shifted fluidly from updates on the friends and neighbors we’d bumped into around town to the weather forecast to elaborate discourses on the physics underlying his latest research as a sixty-six-year-old doctoral student at Hampton University. He enjoyed touring my Maine-born-and-raised husband through our neck of the woods and refreshing my connection with local life and history in the process.

During our time home, I spent afternoons with my mother catching matinees at the local cinema, while Aran tagged along with my father and his friends to Norfolk State University football games. We gorged on fried-fish sandwiches at hole-in-the-wall joints near Buckroe Beach, visited the Hampton University Museum’s Native American art collection, and haunted local antiques shops.

As a callow eighteen-year-old leaving for college, I’d seen my hometown as a mere launching pad for a life in worldlier locales, a place to be from rather than a place to be. But years and miles away from home could never attenuate the city’s hold on my identity, and the more I explored places and