



# Hidden Figures: The Story of the African-American Women Who Helped Win the Space Race

*Margot Lee Shetterly*

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**Soon to be a major motion picture starring Golden Globe–winner Taraji P. Henson and Academy Award–winners Octavia Spencer and Kevin Costner**

Set against the backdrop of the Jim Crow South and the civil rights movement, the never-before-told true story of NASA’s African-American female mathematicians who played a crucial role in America’s space program—and whose contributions have been unheralded, until now.

Before John Glenn orbited the Earth or Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, a group of professionals worked as “Human Computers,” calculating the flight paths that would enable these historic achievements. Among these were a coterie of bright, talented African-American women. Segregated from their white counterparts by Jim Crow laws, these “colored computers,” as they were known, used slide rules, adding machines, and pencil and paper to support America’s fledgling aeronautics industry, and helped write the equations that would launch rockets, and astronauts, into space.

Drawing on the oral histories of scores of these “computers,” personal recollections, interviews with NASA executives and engineers, archival documents, correspondence, and reporting from the era, *Hidden Figures* recalls America’s greatest adventure and NASA’s groundbreaking successes through the experiences of five spunky, courageous, intelligent, determined, and patriotic women: Dorothy Vaughan, Mary Jackson, Katherine Johnson, Christine Darden, and Gloria Champine.

Moving from World War II through NASA’s golden age, touching on the civil rights era, the Space Race, the Cold War, and the women’s rights movement, *Hidden Figures* interweaves a rich history of scientific achievement and technological innovation with the intimate stories of five women whose work forever changed the world—and whose lives show how out of one of America’s most painful histories came one of its proudest moments.

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