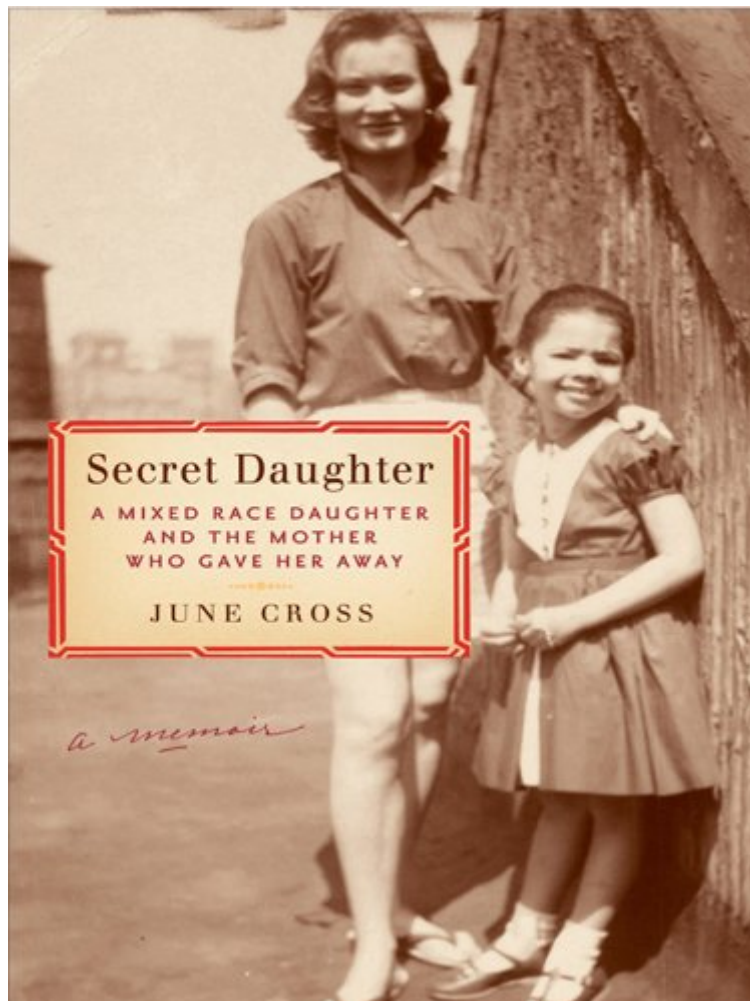




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Secret Daughter: A Mixed-Race Daughter And The Mother Who Gave Her Away



Synopsis

June Cross was born in 1954 to Norma Booth, a glamorous, aspiring white actress, and James "Stump" Cross, a well-known black comedian. Sent by her mother to be raised by black friends when she was four years old and could no longer pass as white, June was plunged into the pain and confusion of a family divided by race. *Secret Daughter* tells her story of survival. It traces June's astonishing discoveries about her mother and about her own fierce determination to thrive. This is an inspiring testimony to the endurance of love between mother and daughter, a child and her adoptive parents, and the power of community.

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Customer Reviews

Really well done! Cross juxtaposes her life with the changing social context of a nation in transition, and does full justice to both. As a reader who grew up during the same period with a mixed-race sister, the varied expressions of that transition achieved a new clarity when illuminated by Cross' experience. I had not realized that other families like ours made such different choices, assuming

that the level of secrecy maintained by Cross's relatives existed at least a decade (more, actually) earlier. I was struck by the strengths provided Cross by her foundation in a Black community - ironically, a foundation my sister yearned for and finally sought out as an adult. Ms. Cross, I doubt you'll read this, but if so, I wonder if we ever passed one another on a Roxbury street or in Harvard Square - we lived in both places when you did!

How many of us have felt "different" in our culture? Sometimes because of race, gender identification, illness, or whatever? June Cross takes us through a journey of her biracial struggles from toddler to adulthood. What courage this woman needed to survive within the secrets held in her family about her origins. Born to a white mother with overtly aspiring theater aspirations, she is forced to deny her heritage of having a black father and mixed heritage by being placed with a black "Aunt Peggy". The undertones of this book are staggering. Her mother claimed she had "no choice". I was left wondering was the choice economic or social? Her mother loved her, but placed her own goals and aspirations first by hiding her and denying her in white company. Instructed to say she was "adopted" by "a friend" from an early age, she rose like the phoenix from the ashes to graduate from Harvard, become a journalist, and subsequently teach at Columbia. This book provokes tears, anger and love all at the same time within the reader. I too grew up in the fifties and sixties. I wish we could say "we've come so far". But in my opinion, we haven't. There are many June's out there who are "different" in some way or another. They are maligned and stigmatized. We haven't come so far at all, only difference is, we make believe we have. Good for you for writing this book, June!

The Secret Daughter documents a fairly recent history of our tangled internecine racial norms as viewed through the eyes of a American child growing up in the post Brown versus Board of Education America, traversing Cross's coming of age in the sixties and adolescence and early adulthood in the seventies while coming to grips with America's intractable tribalism. It is an optimistic story however and doesn't seek to paint any villains as much as explore how family, race and social identity shape us.

June Cross was the child of a forbidden relationship between an African-American comedian and a white aspiring model/actress. June's mom dumped her off on an African-American couple, and her sporadic visits with her daughter caused June to question her own identity and how women define their beauty in this country. This book is the true story of how racism and an unstable mother affected a young girl growing up. How did she emerge from all of this with some self-esteem intact?

Maybe a stronger woman could have handled being the mother of a half-black child, but June's mom couldn't do it. I found June's step-father, Larry Storch from F-Troop, to be interesting. I think he really cared about June in his own way, but June was searching for her mother's love and acceptance; Larry couldn't fulfill that role. I felt sad for June and upset about how she was treated, but I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. It was well-written and although I wouldn't say everyone lived happily ever after, I was glad that June was able to see her own intelligence and beauty, even if her own mother didn't those many years ago.

This is a very touching story of how growing up insecure can lead a person to great strength. While a totally different story than, say, *The Color of Water*, it is an honest and sometimes brutal description of growing up a mixed race child in America. I would like to think things have changed a lot by now, but I know the problems my two biracial boys have had -- and they were adopted in the late 80's and early 90's. It took a lot of bravery for this story to be written.

This was a very sad story for the daughter. I'm glad she got it resolved.

I read this book some years after I had seen June Cross' documentary about her parents. The book is more a follow-up to the story, rather than a retelling or a sequel, but it does give you the entire story covered in the documentary. Besides providing us with some very interesting insights into the lives of the celebrities in her life, both well-known and obscure, Ms. Cross tells a fascinating story of identity and family relationships, with no easy answers, and I'd call it a very good read. I do hope Ms. Cross has in reality come to terms with the circumstances of her life as well as this book indicates that she has.

Wonderful book. True story by author, and how she faced racial discrimination in the 60's + due to having a white mother and black father. It also takes place mostly in southern NJ, where I was born and raised, so many places were familiar to me. My niece and nephew have recently adopted mixed race children, so this book was also relevant to me.

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