

Behind the Book | *All Her Little Secrets* by Wanda M. Morris

On Sale November 2nd, 2021 | TPB ISBN 9780063082465 | \$16.99/\$21.99 Can.

Being Black and female in America has never been easy. But strong Black women have left their indelible mark on me. Women like my mother, who decided she would go back to school to become a nurse even though she was in her late thirties and still raising a houseful of kids or both my grandmothers who raised their children in the segregated Jim Crow south without losing them to the noose of a tree. Strong women in tough situations who persevere feature prominently in my thriller novel, *All Her Little Secrets*.

The plot idea for the book came to me some years ago when I worked for an organization where one of the people in my department died unexpectedly. There was nothing sinister about it, but I was mortified by how quickly everyone went back to business as usual in a company that considered its employees “family.” So, who do you call “family” and why? I wanted to explore this idea in my novel.

When writing the book, I knew there two things I wanted to accomplish. First, I wanted to write a twisty mystery and I wanted to write about strong women caught up in the snare of it. The novel unfolds over the course of two timelines, so that the reader can understand how someone in Ellice Littlejohn’s position can do the things she does and why. The Chillicothe timeline is crucial to understanding the women and the circumstances that made her a present-day success story with all her strengths and flaws.

Second, I knew there were certain topics I wanted to cover – racial profiling, being “the only one” and the toxicity of office politics – that came from my personal experiences. But I also wanted to cover the full breadth of what women go through to survive and thrive being Black and female in America. Things such as violence against women and inadequate access to opportunity and healthcare. For the latter topics, I did research on issues such as aging, abortion and domestic abuse. My research included talking to family members who had lived those very experiences. Nearly every female character in this book grapples with surviving under difficult situations – Ellice, Vera, Martha, Grace and Willow too, even though she is not Black. They each handled their journeys in the best ways that they knew how.

In March 2020, I was finishing up a round of revisions with my agent. Then, the pandemic hit. Life changed for everyone and I asked myself whether my book was relevant or important given the horrific health crisis raging around the world. But writing has always been cathartic for me. So, I continued to work on the manuscript. Then, George Floyd was brutally murdered at the hands of the police in June. The universe sent the answer to my question. My book was indeed relevant and important to the conversation around race in America. Too often, the voices of women, in particular, have been marginalized or eliminated altogether from the public discourse on what it means to be Black and female in this country.

All Her Little Secrets is a thriller with heft. There are some tough issues in this novel. My hope is that the book will resonate with readers and spark critical conversations and more importantly, provoke us all to find solutions to these issues.

wm WILLIAM MORROW

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Biography

Wanda M. Morris is an alumnus of the Yale Writers Workshop and Robert McKee's Story Seminar. She was named a Claymore Award finalist for mystery writing. She is a member of Sisters in Crime, Crime Writers of Color and Mystery Writers of America. She is a corporate attorney who has worked in the legal departments of several Fortune 100 companies. An accomplished presenter and leader,

Morris previously served as President of the Georgia Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel and is the founder of the Women's Initiative, an empowerment program for female in-house lawyers.

Morris is married, the mother of three, and lives in Atlanta, Georgia.

All Her Little Secrets is her debut novel.