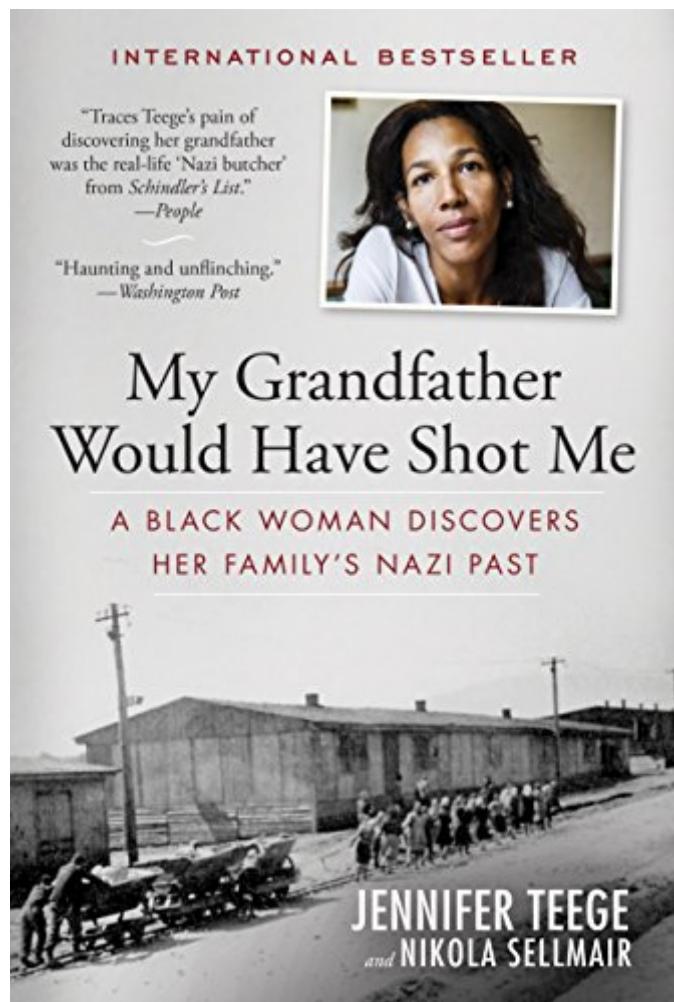


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My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me: A Black Woman Discovers Her Family's Nazi Past



Synopsis

Now in paperback: The New York Times bestseller memoir hailed as "unforgettable" • (Publishers Weekly) and "a stunning memoir of cultural trauma and personal identity" • (Booklist). At age 38, Jennifer Teege happened to pluck a library book from the shelf and discovered a horrifying fact: Her grandfather was Amon Goeth, the vicious Nazi commandant depicted in Schindler's List. Reviled as the "butcher of Poland" • Goeth was executed in 1946. The more Teege learned about him, the more certain she became: If her grandfather had met her "a black woman" he would have killed her. Teege's discovery sends her into a severe depression and fills her with questions: Why did her birth mother withhold this chilling secret? How could her grandmother have loved a mass murderer? Can evil be inherited? Teege's story is cowritten by Nikola Sellmair, who also adds historical context and insight from Teege's family and friends, in an interwoven narrative. Ultimately, Teege's search for the truth leads her, step by step, to the possibility of her own liberation.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The week before I came across this book, I strangely became interested in what happened to the

children of the Nazi leaders. I say strangely because I never really even thought about the matter before that time, although I've read quite a bit about the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. I then went online and watched an old "60 Minutes" episode of some of the adult children discussing their Nazi fathers. At least two had surgery to prevent them from having children for fear of having evilness in their bloodlines. Thus, I think in some ways it was for the best that Jennifer Teege did not discover who her grandfather was until she was a happily married mother in her 30s. It was not something she grew up with. Instead, she grew up as an adopted half-black child in a German family. Her family life was good, though, and she was treated no differently than the family's two sons, and the three siblings seemed close. However, when she came across the library book by her mother discussing her grandfather, nothing was obviously ever the same again. This book discusses Ms. Teege's feelings during that traumatic time period, and describes her searches for the truth; as well as her discovery of the stories of other children and grandchildren of Nazis. Coauthor Nikola Sellmair provides an additional enlightening voice, with chapter sections of her own, including discussions with a psychiatrist who specializes in treating those who had Nazi parents. Since I've read no other books on the topic, I can only guess

My Review: The title of this book piqued my interest immediately. And when I found out that it was a memoir written about a bi-racial woman who finds out her grandfather was one of the most brutal Nazis I knew I wanted to read this book because it took a look at the effects of WWII from a totally different viewpoint. It brings to light the question of how the family members of Nazi war criminals came to terms with their family member's horrific past deeds. Teege gives her readers a glimpse into the history of her birth family. I assumed going in that I'd get a better picture of her grandfather, Amon Göth, the notorious commandant of the Płaszów concentration camp in occupied Poland (who was also one of the main characters in the movie Schindler's List). But this book isn't about Teege's grandfather because she was adopted at a young age and had never met Göth. Instead the book focuses on how Teege comes to terms with her grandfather's past, her emotional abandonment by her birth mother, her feelings about being adopted (which never felt overly positive) and her time in Israel. I appreciated how Teege struggled to come to terms with the grandmother she loved who had also been Göth's girlfriend. I would have loved to have gone deeper into why and how the grandmother ignored the horrific situations (shootings, beatings ...) that she saw when she lived in an elegant home with Göth just outside the concentration camp. Unfortunately the pace throughout the book was very slow and I found that quite a lot of the book was reiterated to the reader. In the end, although the book was written sensitively and

thoughtfully I thought that the information given could have been written in a short story format.

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