



Reaching for the Moon: the autobiography of NASA Mathematician Katherine Johnson

Books Reviewed:

[Reaching for the Moon: the autobiography of NASA Mathematician Katherine Johnson](#) [1]

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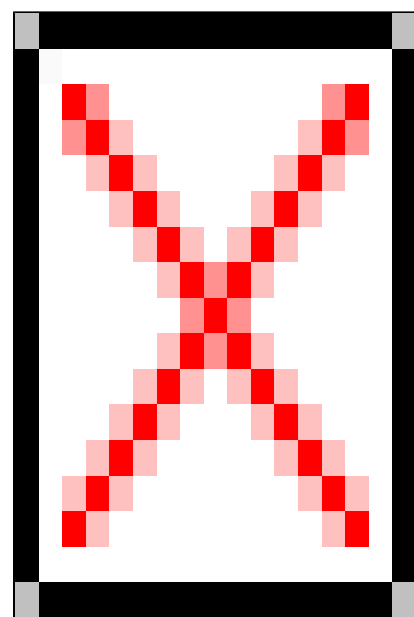
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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4



The film **Hidden Figures** told of the story of three African American mathematicians who had a pivotal role at NASA in putting a man into orbit. This amazing autobiography by Katherine Johnson, who died in 2020 aged 102, tells a much more remarkable story of one of those women. Katherine Johnson's parents were determined their children would go to college and this was instilled in them from an early age, at a considerable personal cost. Katherine showed a remarkable aptitude for Mathematics and with the help of a particular professor determined to become a research mathematician. Despite several setbacks along the way and the considerable difficulties encountered by the fact that she was an African American and a woman, this she achieved, helping to put John Glenn into orbit and also men to the moon.

But this story is so much more than one woman's remarkable life, as it portrays very starkly, the appalling iniquities of the segregation of white and 'coloured' Americans in the US as she was growing up, and as her own three daughters grew up too. At that time African Americans were called Coloured or Negroes, not terms used nowadays. Alongside

Katherine Johnson's own career path she tells of the difficulties encountered by both men and women at the time, the fact that they had to be more qualified than white people to teach for example. Schools were segregated with lesser facilities for 'coloured' children, but better teaching. Through it all runs the support of the community, family, church and each other, also of course her love of mathematics. She must have been an inspiring teacher!

Girls of all ages need to read the story of this amazing woman, not just because she fought against all the odds to succeed because of her colour, but because she was a woman, and a woman mathematician to boot!

Just a small point, the paper is horrid to handle and the typeface is very faint, such a pity.

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