

COURAGE & A DREAM – ENOUGH TO TRANSCEND BRUTAL BEGINNINGS

Childhood abuse, abandonment, beatings, maternal rejection, scandalous treatment under the guise of care in notorious juvenile institutions of Parramatta Girls Home and Hay Institution for Girls, and life on the streets of Kings Cross are just part of the extraordinary tapestry that is the life of Australian singer and entertainer, Sharyn Crystal.

This no-holds barred biography will strike a chord with many who are familiar with life in Sydney, and particularly Kings Cross since World War II.

This is not your usual celebrity biography. **The Inconvenient Child** is a gritty account of Sharyn Killens' life, beginning as an abandoned Australian black child and her struggle to survive in an often hostile white society, her journey to success as singer Sharyn Crystal then her quest to find her African American father on the other side of the world.

The story begins in Sydney 1948, when the baby Sharyn is rescued from squalid foster care by visiting champion African American boxer Freddie Dawson then taken to live in a 'party house' in the red light district of The Cross. The nightclubs of the Trocadero and the Booker T Washington Club featured in the life of her blue-eyed blond Australian mother, whose illicit liaison with the handsome black American serviceman produced Sharyn. But illegitimate children, particularly of mixed race, were no trophy in post World War II Australia. So her mother did all she could to distance herself from her inconvenient child.

At age five, Sharyn was abandoned in a convent-orphanage and suffered abuse at the hands of a cruel nun for seven years. At fifteen, after clashes over her father's undisclosed identity, the troubled disillusioned teenager was arrested back in Kings Cross as a runaway. Deemed 'uncontrollable' by the Court she was sentenced to notorious juvenile detention centers of Parramatta Girls Home then Hay Girls Institution, where she was stripped of her dignity and programmed into submission.

"This gripping biography is a mixture of shameful and dehumanizing treatment combined with a rich combination of gutsy and courageous choices," says author Lindsay Lewis, "though sometimes they are ill advised choices on Sharyn's part. What drives her is her undying love for the mother who showed her little or no love and a visceral urge to find her identity."

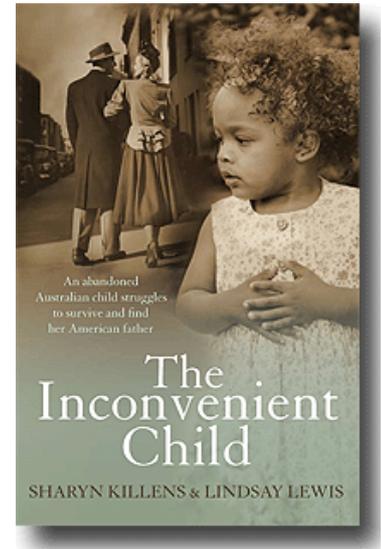
Her desperate quest to find her roots catapulted her into a journey of vulnerability and degradation exacerbated ten fold by the clashes over the secret her mother refused to reveal – the identity of her father.

But as irony would have it, the challenges of her life produced qualities of determination, courage, persistence and perseverance.

Her salvation lay in music and her overwhelming dream to become a singer. It took her on a journey through the night clubs of Sydney and onto luxury Cruise ship stages throughout the Pacific.

Her final triumph over the cards life dealt her, transported her to New York, Los Angeles then North Carolina. How she gets there, and what she discovers en route makes for riveting reading, charting some of the most shameful periods in Australia's history in terms of our treatment of marginalised groups.

The Inconvenient Child is set to alarm many who consider us a tolerant society. But most of all it stands as a testament to the courage and passion of one woman who so easily could have faded into oblivion.



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