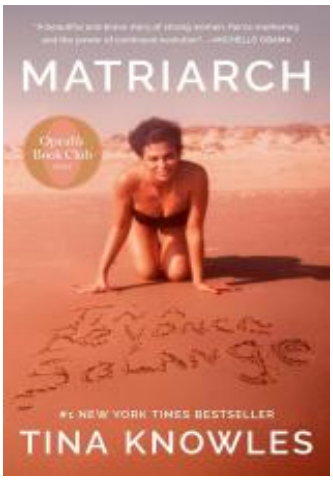
Matriarch: A Memoir

by Tina Knowles



About the Book

A revealing personal life story like no other --- enlightening, entertaining, surprising, empowering --- and a testament to the world-making power of Black motherhood.

?You are Celestine,? she said. She squatted to push the hair off my face and pull leaves off my pajama legs. ?Like my sister and my grandmother.? And there, under the pecan tree, as she did countless times, that day my mother told me stories of the mothers and daughters that went before me.

Tina Knowles, the mother of iconic singer-songwriters Beyoncé Knowles-Carter, Solange Knowles and bonus daughter Kelly Rowland, is known the world over as a Matriarch with a capital M: a determined, self-possessed, self-aware and wise woman who raised and inspired some of the great artists of our time. But this story is about so much more than that.

MATRIARCH begins with a precocious, if unruly, little girl growing up in 1950s Galveston, the youngest of seven. She is in love with her world, with extended family on every other porch, and the sounds of Motown and the lapping beach always within earshot. But as the realities of race and the limitations of girlhood set in, she begins to dream of a more grandiose world. Her instincts and impulsive nature drive her far beyond the shores of Texas to discover the life awaiting her on the other side of childhood.

That life?s journey --- through grief and tragedy, creative and romantic risks and turmoil, the nurturing of superstar offspring and of her own special gifts --- is the remarkable story she shares with readers here. This is a page-turning chronicle of family love and heartbreak, of loss and perseverance, and of the kind of creativity, audacity and will it takes for a girl from Galveston to change the world. It?s one brilliant woman?s intimate and revealing story, and a multigenerational family saga that carries within it the story of America --- and the wisdom that women pass on to one another, mothers to daughters, across generations.

Discussion Guide

Act One: A Daughter

1. Why do you think Tina Knowles chose the title MATRIARCH for her memoir? Who are the matriarchs in your own life?

2. We?re all shaped, in part, by where we are raised. How did growing up in Galveston shape Tina? How did your hometown shape you?

3. Discuss Tina?s experience as a child at Holy Rosary --- and what it meant to her when her mother took the nuns? side. After finally having had enough of the nuns? abuse, young Tina decides to leave Holy Rosary. How was she able to accomplish this as a young child? What strengths did she draw upon? At her new school, what does her decision to change her name from Celestine to Tina represent in terms of finding her voice, even when feeling unprotected as a young Black girl?

4. How does Tina react to similar situations during her own daughters? education, like the racist teacher who bullies Solange?

5. What does it mean for Tina when her teacher, Miss Olivier, tells her she?s smart and belongs in a higher-level classroom? In your own life, who is someone whose early belief in you made a difference?

6. There are many moments throughout their lives when Johnny and Tina look out for each other. Discuss some of the ways Tina looks out for Johnny. Why are these instances significant?

7. Our parents? experiences and traumas can shape our lives in surprising ways. How do Tina?s parents? lives --- even events that happened before she was born --- affect her own becoming? How have your parents? experiences affected you?

Act Two: A Mother

1. What are some of the major turning points in Tina?s life? What do these points have in common?

2. How does Tina?s relationship with Johnny influence who she becomes? How does Johnny?s influence shine through both Beyoncé and Solange?

3. What internal strengths does Tina draw upon to start Headliners? How do these strengths continue to help her as she begins styling and designing for Destiny?s Child and beyond?

4. What sacrifices --- personal, professional and familial --- did Tina have to make in this era of her life? What sacrifices have you had to make in your life? Were they worth it? Explain.

5. There are many moments when Tina?s daughters are either explicitly or implicitly told they are less than --- both in

school in Texas and later in the music industry. How does Tina respond to this? What do her actions tell us about her style of mothering?

6. ?There is a long tradition of Black families expanding to include people as need and love have called for it,? Tina writes. She and her kin have always used an expansive definition of the word ?family.? How have these relationships influenced the trajectory of Tina?s life? What might be challenging about this? Who are the non-blood kin that you consider family?

7. What is the most surprising thing you learned from MATRIARCH?

Act Three: A Woman

1. ?We?d been a couple for more than thirty years,? Tina writes of her divorce from Mathew Knowles --- after many attempts. ?I lost not just a husband, but a witness to each other?s lives. It was as if I?d stored three decades of home movies and photo albums in a library, then watched it burn down.? Discuss this passage and its evocative imagery. Have you ever experienced a loss that felt like this? How was Tina able to leave Mathew for good, when so many women cannot? What did she draw upon to not only make the decision, but to continue making the decision?

2. What does it mean for Tina to finally choose herself? Talk about a meaningful time when you put yourself first.

3. Tina is incredibly protective of her family but finds it more difficult to be her own protector. Why do you think it can be so difficult to see ourselves as worthy of that same care?

4. Despite the privilege and fame Tina has accrued, she is still condescended to and dismissed when she meets with the oncologist --- something that many women, especially Black women, have also experienced. What advice do you think Tina wanted to impart to her readers by sharing this story?

5. What scenes or passages from MATRIARCH will stay with you? Why?

Author Bio

Tina Knowles is an American businesswoman, fashion designer, art collector and activist. Born Celestine Ann Beyoncé in Galveston, Texas, to a longshoreman father and seamstress mother, she learned dressmaking at an early age. In 1986, she opened Headliners, a groundbreaking hair salon that became a multimillion-dollar phenomenon in Houston.

As a stylist, designer and mother, she helped guide the day-to-day path of Destiny?s Child --- the music group comprised of Beyoncé Knowles, Kelly Rowland and Michelle Williams --- to global commercial success. With her daughter, Beyoncé, she cofounded and ran the House of Deréon, a clothing line named for her mother, later adding the Miss Tina line, which revolutionized size inclusivity.

In 2024, she helped to create Cécred, Beyoncé?s hair-care line. Her philanthropic portfolio includes the nonprofit

performing arts organization WACO Theater Center; The Knowles-Rowland Center for Youth in Houston; and Tina?s Angels, her thriving mentoring program for at-risk youth in South Central Los Angeles. She serves as chairwoman of BeyGOOD, a nonprofit dedicated to establishing economic equity through a wide array of initiatives. Tina Knowles is a grandmother of six and a Matriarch to many.

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