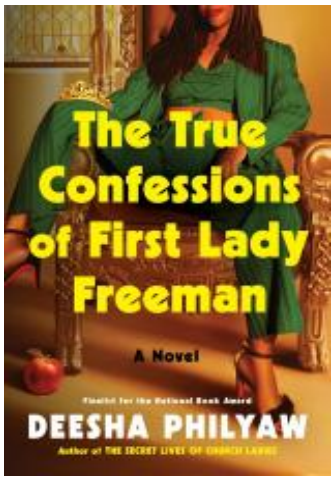
The True Confessions of First Lady Freeman

by Deesha Philyaw



About the Book

The wife of a popular and powerful megachurch pastor upends her charmed ?rags-to-Rolex? life when her secret past comes roaring into the spotlight --- in this "funny and juicy and sexy and delicious peek behind the pulpit" (Samantha Irby) from the acclaimed and beloved author of THE SECRET LIVES OF CHURCH LADIES.

From the moment Scharisse Freeman ditched her humble roots and married a megachurch pastor 15 years her senior, she?s been labeled too brash and too ?of the world? by church folks who grudgingly accepted her into their fold, and too holy by her estranged childhood bestie, Petra. Schar doesn?t have many allies, but that hasn?t stopped her from building an enviable business empire spanning books to clothing to branded products, and living the comfortable life her husband's power affords her.

On the eve of her 40th birthday, Schar gets the final bit of validation she?s always dreamt of: a coveted invitation to participate in the First Lady USA pageant. This is her chance to be accepted by the other pastors? wives --- First Ladies --- who are ?like Jesus? disciples if they had been a group of mean girls.? Finally, blissfully, the ice between Schar and the other First Ladies begins to thaw.

But as the pageant nears, a sensational scandal breaks with Schar at its center, and her carefully curated life implodes. Schar faces down shame and terrible secrets from her childhood and is reminded that in the eyes of the church, optics can matter more than the truth.

Unflinchingly funny, frank and splendidly unruly, THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF FIRST LADY FREEMAN exults in the luscious, messy pleasure of finally feeling free.

Discussion Guide

1. Do you agree with Schar?s decision to keep what she learned from Jeddah a secret, after they met in Mercy?

2. Should Schar have agreed to do the contrition campaign?

3. Should Schar have told Gabrielle the whole truth from the very beginning?

4. Would you describe Schar as a good wife? A good mother?

5. What, if anything, was David justified in asking of Schar, after the scandal broke?

6. Consider a time in your life when shame informed your decision to do (or not do) something. If you could have a do-over, what would you do differently?

7. Did you ever have a moment where you were supposed to stick to the script and you didn?t? Do you regret it?

8. Do you believe Schar was obligated to respect her late mother?s wishes regarding the circumstances of Schar?s birth and the cause of her mother?s death?

9. Are you rooting for Schar and Marcus as a couple in the future? Why or why not?

10. If you could say anything to Jeddah, what would it be?

11. Daphne: Villain or victim? Why?

12. Sheila: Invite her for tea or avoid her like the plague? Why?

13. You can invite three characters from the novel to go on your dream vacation. Who would you invite and why? Who would you absolutely *not* invite and why?

Author Bio

Deesha Philyaw is the author of the debut novel THE TRUE CONFESSIONS OF FIRST LADY FREEMAN. Her debut short story collection, THE SECRET LIVES OF CHURCH LADIES, won the PEN/Faulkner Award for Fiction, the Story Prize, and the *LA Times* Book Prize (The Art Seidenbaum Award for First Fiction), and was a finalist for the National Book Award for Fiction. Deesha is a Kimbilio Fiction Fellow, a Baldwin for the Arts Fellow, a United States Artists Fellow, and co-host of two podcasts: "Ursa Short Fiction" (with Dawnie Walton) and "Reckon True Stories" (with Kiese Laymon). She is currently at work developing TV shows based on her short fiction.

The True Confessions of First Lady Freeman

by Deesha Philyaw

Publication Date: September 29, 2026

Genres: Fiction

Hardcover: 432 pages

Publisher: Mariner Books

ISBN-10: 0063383071

ISBN-13: 9780063383074