

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

By Jennifer Teege, Nikola Sellmair

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The *New York Times* bestselling memoir hailed as “haunting and unflinching” (*Washington Post*), “unforgettable” (*Publishers Weekly*), and “stunning” (*Booklist*).

When Jennifer Teege, a German-Nigerian woman, happened to pluck a library book from the shelf, she had no idea that her life would be irrevocably altered. Recognizing photos of her mother and grandmother in the book, she discovers a horrifying fact: Her grandfather was Amon Goeth, the vicious Nazi commandant chillingly depicted by Ralph Fiennes in *Schindler’s List*—a man known and reviled the world over.


Although raised in an orphanage and eventually adopted, Teege had some contact with her biological mother and grandmother as a child. Yet neither revealed that Teege’s grandfather was the Nazi “butcher of Plaszów,” executed for crimes against humanity in 1946. The more Teege reads about Amon Goeth, the more certain she becomes: If her grandfather had met her—a black woman—he would have killed her.

Teege’s discovery sends her, at age 38, into a severe depression—and on a quest to unearth and fully comprehend her family’s haunted history. Her research takes her to Krakow—to the sites of the Jewish ghetto her grandfather “cleared” in 1943 and the Plaszów concentration camp he then commanded—and back to Israel, where she herself once attended college, learned fluent Hebrew, and formed lasting friendships. Teege struggles to reconnect with her estranged mother Monika, and to accept that her beloved grandmother once lived in luxury as Amon Goeth’s mistress at Plaszów.

Teege’s story is cowritten by award-winning journalist Nikola Sellmair, who also contributes a second, interwoven narrative that draws on original interviews with Teege’s family and friends and adds historical context. Ultimately, Teege’s resolute search for the truth leads her, step by step, to the possibility of her own

liberation.

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Editorial Review

Review

New York Times Bestseller

“Jennifer Teege’s new memoir traces the pain of discovering her grandfather was the real-life ‘Nazi butcher’ from *Schindler’s List*.”—***People* magazine**

“Haunting and unflinching . . . A memoir, an adoption story and a geopolitical history lesson, all blended seamlessly into an account of Teege’s exploration of her roots.”—***Washington Post***

“A stunning memoir of cultural trauma and personal identity.”—***Booklist*, starred review**

“Unforgettable. . . Teege’s quest to discover her personal history is empowering.”—***Publishers Weekly***

“An important addition to narratives written by descendants of war criminals. A gripping read, highly recommended for anyone interested in history, memoirs, and biography.”—***Library Journal*, starred review**

“[A] journey of self-discovery.”—***Metro US***

“[An] amazing story of horror and reconciliation and love.”—**John Mutter, *Shelf Awareness***

“The high quality of the writing helps to convey this incredible but amazingly true story.”—**Association of Jewish Libraries**

“This book is not for the faint of heart, but it is fascinating and fair. There are no easy answers to the issues raised in this book, but they exist for both groups of descendants. Readers will be challenged to think about a major event in world history from a perspective that is rare but surely significant.”—**Gerhard L. Weinberg, History Book Club**

“A powerful account of Teege’s struggle for resolution and redemption, the book [is] itself a therapeutic working-through of her history, as well as a meditation on family.”—***The Independent* (UK)**

“Courageous. . . the memoir invites rereading to fully absorb Teege’s painful search for answers, for a sense of identity and belonging and for inner peace. Readers won’t help but feel for her. Teege discovers, however, that history’s shattering truths have the potential to make us more whole.”—***Seattle Times***

“[Teege’s] message is an important one—that we have the power to decide who we are.”—***Seattle Weekly***

“In honest, direct, and absorbing prose, Teege and coauthor Nikola Sellmair confront highly personal repercussions of the Holocaust. . . The book’s real triumph is in its nuanced, universally appealing portrait of an individual searching for her place in the world. Just as Teege’s chance encounter with a library book led her to question the fundamental assumptions of her life, so too the reader. . . will be forced to reconsider the wide-ranging impact of past injustices on present-day relationships.”—**The Jewish Book Council**

“A discomfiting but clear-eyed journey of self-discovery and identity reconciliation that first-time author Teege relates with admirable straightforwardness and equanimity.”—*In These Times*

“The alternating narrative between Teege and co-author Sellmair offers a refreshing and ultimately impartial analysis. Teege’s heartfelt commentary and Sellmair’s objective narrative produce a layer of balanced interpretation and insight.”—*New York Journal of Books*

“Teege’s story is at times heart wrenching, and yet, full of her own stark honesty and surprising wisdom as she ponders the impacts of one’s family history.”—*Manhattan Book Review*

“Jennifer Teege has a fascinating story.”—*Washington Independent Review of Books*

“Teege’s story is one of questions as much as answers. Her honest self-examination makes for a provocative, unpredictable story of an understanding still in progress.”—*Columbus Dispatch*

“As spellbinding as any horror fiction, but it’s true, and grippingly filled with personal details that ensnare the reader. . . . Fascinating.”—*Jacksonville Clarion-Ledger*

About the Author

Jennifer Teege worked in advertising for 16 years before becoming an author. For four years in her twenties she lived in Israel, where she became fluent in Hebrew. She graduated from Tel Aviv University with a degree in Middle Eastern and African studies. Teege lives in Germany with her husband and two sons. A *New York Times* and international bestseller, *My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me* is her first book.

Nikola Sellmair graduated from Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich and has worked in Hong Kong, Washington, DC, Israel, and Palestine. She has been a reporter in Hamburg at Germany’s *Stern* magazine since 2000. Her work has received many awards, including the German-Polish Journalist Award, for the first-ever article about Jennifer Teege’s singular story.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Clair Lemanski:

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