

Biographical novel recounts the bigotry triggered by an inter-racial courtship

TORONTO, ONTARIO, CANADA, May 24, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Yorkland Publishing](#) today announced the upcoming release of social justice activist Sheila White's [The Letters: Postmark Prejudice in Black and White](#), a riveting biographical novel about the racism the author's white mother and Black father faced during their turbulent courtship in the years following the Second World War.



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Jack Lakey, former Toronto Star city hall reporter and Fixer columnist, called The Letters "a fascinating read, particularly for those who don't recognize the contributions of people like Sheila White's parents to a more egalitarian society today."

Vivian Keeler, White's mother, was an intelligent, attractive and determined white woman from a traditional Nova Scotia family who fell in love with a Black man.

Billy White was a charismatic and gifted member of a prominent Black family. He was the brother of internationally celebrated classical singer Portia White and the son of William Andrew White., a renowned minister and the first Black officer in the Canadian Expeditionary Force during the First World War, serving as chaplain with the rank of captain for the all-Black No. 2 Construction Battalion.

Vivian and Billy met at a lunch counter in Halifax in 1946. During the next several months their casual friendship blossomed into romance. But the courtship that followed unleashed a torrent of racist rants that exposed the pervasive bigotry of that time.

The Letters is based largely on Vivian's diary; a stack of heritage photo albums; Vivian's scrapbooks; a shoebox full of poems, letters and telegrams Vivian and Billy exchanged, and the overtly racist letters written to Vivian as part a campaign orchestrated by her mother to dissuade Vivian from marrying a Black man.

"Had my mother Vivian told the story here of her courtship, of coming from Nova Scotia to Toronto to marry my father, it would have been one hundred percent factual," White wrote in the prologue to The Letters.

“But because I didn’t ask many questions of my parents about the topic, I was left to guess and imagine the real circumstances in some situations....Some scenes and dialogue are pure fiction while others I extracted directly from my source materials.”

The Letters exposes how oppressive the post-war years had been for non-whites, inspires hope for a brighter future, but also reminds us that the struggle for social justice continues to this day.

“It was a shameful period of what we now categorize as systemic racism and colonial-driven white privilege. Minorities were stigmatized and faced almost insurmountable barriers to social and economic equality,” Write writes.

“The Letters: Postmark Prejudice in Black & White focuses on change for the better and on the enlightened community of progressive change-makers who welcomed my parents and the movement for world brotherhood, a call never more urgent than today.”

Toronto-born Sheila White won an African Canadian Achievement Award for Politics in Toronto in 2014 and a Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Medal in September 2022 from the Province of Nova Scotia for her work in anti-racism. She received a Canada 150 medal in 2017 and an Urban Hero Award in 2020.

White was also an invited speaker at the July 2022 event in Truro, Nova Scotia at which Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologized for the blatant racism experienced by her grandfather and the other men of the all-Black No. 2 Construction Battalion during the First World War.

White is currently lay chaplain and music director at Don Heights Unitarian Congregation.

The Letters will launch officially on July 18, 2023, but copies can now be ordered directly from the publisher, Yorkland Publishing (www.yorklandpublishing.com), at a prepublication price of \$29.95 – a \$10 discount – with expected delivery in early July.

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Ed Shiller

Yorkland Publishing

+1 647-407-2953

ed@yorklandpublishing.com

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