



★ **The Blue Is Where God Lives**

Sharon Sochil Washington

The Overlook Press (Apr 11, 2023)

Hardcover \$27.00 (288pp)

978-1-4197-6710-4

In Sharon Sochil Washington's *The Blue Is Where God Lives*, a Black woman makes discoveries about her family and herself.

Eighteen months after her daughter's murder, Blue is still lost in a haze of grief and guilt, borne of both the violence and the fact that she never wanted children to begin with. She hopes that a week-long stay at The Ranch, a remote religious retreat, will bring her peace. Instead, she begins experiencing visions of the past—glimpses of her own ancestors, who have moved time and space to protect and guide her.

Blue's family history is, like that of too many Black families, shrouded by white people's lies and scarred by violence, from enslavement and rape to poverty and medical racism. Trauma and disappointment pass from mother to daughter, trapping them in circumstances they cannot bear only because they know no other way to live. But the family line is also filled with flawed yet strong women who do the best they can with what they have: Amanda is a shapeshifter who fights to free enslaved people and make others understand the true nature of oppression, while MaryMadeline's well-meaning anxiety over Blue's future ends up ensnaring her in a life as limiting as MaryMadeline's own.

Harrowing and challenging, Blue's journey forces everyone to contend with the complexities of race, color, gender, and parenthood. The weight of history threatens to crush her until, after decades of struggle, the magic that once enriched and protected her family allows her to receive an empowering revelation: words created the trap into which Blue fell, and words are the tool by which she will free herself.

The Blue Is Where God Lives is an incredible tale about how language and memory can remake culture, history, or a single life.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (March / April 2023)

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