



No Crystal Stair (Coretta Scott King Author Honor Books)

Vaunda Micheaux Nelson

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A documentary novel of the life and work of Lewis Michaux, Harlem bookseller

'You can't walk straight on a crooked line. You do you'll break your leg. How can you walk straight in a crooked system?'

Lewis Michaux was born to do things his own way. When a white banker told him to sell fried chicken, not books, because Negroes don't read,' Lewis took five books and one-hundred dollars and built a bookstore. It soon became the intellectual center of Harlem, a refuge for everyone from Muhammad Ali to Malcolm X.

In No Crystal Stair, Coretta Scott King Award-winning author Vaunda Micheaux Nelson combines meticulous research with a storyteller's flair to document the life and times of her great uncle Lewis Michaux, an extraordinary literacy pioneer of the Civil Rights era.

'My life was no crystal stair, far from it. But I'm taking my leave with some pride. It tickles me to know that those folks who said I could never sell books to black people are eating crow. I'd say my seeds grew pretty damn well. And not just the book business. It's the more important business of moving our people forward that has real meaning.'

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