Let Us March On

A Novel

BOOK CLUB GUIDE

Dear Reader,

I'm excited to introduce you to Mrs. Elizabeth "Lizzie" McDuffie–FDR's "self-appointed secretary on colored people's affairs."

A mouthful, I know, but hear me out...

Lizzie McDuffie was more than just a White House maid and confidante to the Roosevelts. She was a trailblazer that broke barriers and passionately championed for the civil rights of African Americans. Aside from her many roles in the White House, she was also a devoted wife, a lover of literature, and quite the entertainer. In my debut historical fiction novel, LET US MARCH ON, I get to share the most exciting and intimate parts of Lizzie's life, which has been hidden away in her unpublished memoir.

Born out of my fascination with ordinary individuals rising against overwhelming odds to elicit change, LET US MARCH ON is a story of strength, perseverance, solidarity, and a commitment to justice. In researching this book, I delved deeply into Lizzie's life and became captivated by her courage, sacrifice, and resilience–despite the struggles and challenges she faced. What truly makes Lizzie and her story unique is how she risked her new position as a White House maid to help complete strangers who had nowhere else to turn.

She is a soothing reminder that even in the shadows there is light to be found.

Thanks for taking the time to read LET US MARCH ON. My hope is that you will get to know Lizzie McDuffie and become inspired by the rich legacy she left behind.

Happy reading!

Shara Moon

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LET US MARCH ON

Based on a true story, LET US MARCH ON is a historical fiction novel that highlights the social activism of a Black woman who had access to the most powerful man in the United States. When Franklin D. Roosevelt is elected president, Mac (FDRs personal valet) joins the Roosevelt family at the White House with his wife Elizabeth "Lizzie" McDuffie. As a White House maid, Lizzie gains their respect and admiration as she utilizes her position to advocate for the African American community and their fight for civil rights during the 1930s and 40s.

MRS. ELIZABETH McDUFFIE

Discussion Questions

1. What was your initial impression of Lizzie? What about her stood out to you the most?

2. There's a line from page 94 that reads:

> "There were human lives at stake, and I felt compelled to do more than just sweep rugs and dust counters all day."

Many people feel their life consists of the mundane, i.e. getting up, going to work, paying their bills, etc. Do you think there is room in your life to do more to help the "human lives at stake"?

3. This line comes up a few times throughout the novel:

> "When the most vulnerable members of our society are in trouble, then the rest of us have an obligation to safeguard them the best we can."

Discuss how this applies to the average person who doesn't have vast political power or the ear of those who do.

4. What do you think FDR is trying to convey in the following exchange with Lizzie on page 120?

> "Lizzie, the leaders in your race are constantly speaking against segregation, so why should I segregate a race or minority?" the president countered. "I'm running for the presidency of the United States and all its people."

5. On pages 130-134, Lizzie and Kathy discuss opposing perspectives on how "Negroes" were portrayed in the book GONE WITH THE WIND. What did you think of this exchange? Were you surprised by Lizzie's perspective of the book? Overall, do you agree with Lizzie or Kathy regarding Black people's portrayal in literature or other media at that time?

6. The imagery of birds is used throughout the novel. At one point, FDR even gifts Lizzie a canary. What do you think the significance of those moments were?

7. Overall, did this book inspire you at all? What did you learn from reading it? Would you recommend it to others? Why or why not?

FEATURED DISHES

"COUNTRY CAPTAIN"

This dish, featured in chapter 7 of the novel, is said to compose of chicken, rice, raisins, tomatoes, onions, thyme, curry and garlic. It is said to be one of FDR's favorite meals. I managed to find Daisy Bonner's recipe, exactly as she prepared it for the president. Try your hand at it and let me know what you think!

Be sure to tag me on Instagram (@Shara__Moon) with your finished product. #FDRCountryCaptain

Ingredients:

1 hen or two "fryers"
3 onions, diced
3 green peppers, diced
1 cup raisins or currants
1 garlic clove
1 cup of nuts, any kind
1 large can tomatoes
1 large can of mushrooms
1 teaspoon thyme
1 small can of tomato paste
or sauce
Salt and pepper
Butter

Directions:

1. Boil hen or steam fryers.
2. Saute onions in a little butter, then add all other ingredients. Simmer for 15 minutes.
3. Skin and debone chicken, add to sauce with one cup chicken stock.
4. Simmer for 60 minutes.
5. Serve over cooked rice and garnish with a little green pepper, nuts, and raisins.

CHEESE SOUFFLE

This souffle is the dish Daisy Bonner, President Roosevelt's favorite cook at Warm Springs, prepared for him right before his death. She always served him this dish with stuffed baked tomatoes, peas, plain salad with French dressing, Melba toast, and coffee. Sorrowfully, but with a cook's pride, Daisy recalled,

"He never ate that soufflé, but it never fell until the minute he died."

Ingredients:

1 tablespoon butter
2 heaping tablespoons flour
Pinch of salt
½ teaspoon prepared mustard
½ cup whole milk
¾ cup grated sharp cheddar cheese
5 eggs, separated
1 teaspoon baking powder

Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 375° F.

2. Melt the butter in a saucepan and blend in the flour, sait, and mustard. Gradually add enough milk to make a thin sauce.

3. Add the cheese and slightly beaten egg yolks.

4. Set aside to cool until ready to bake.

5. When ready to bake, beat the egg whites stiff with the baking powder.

6. Fold the egg whites into the cheese mixture.

7. Put in a buttered, 8 x 8 baking dish.

8. Bake for 30 minutes at 375° F.

9. When soufflé is done it should be very high and brown but soft in the middle.

10. Serve immediately.