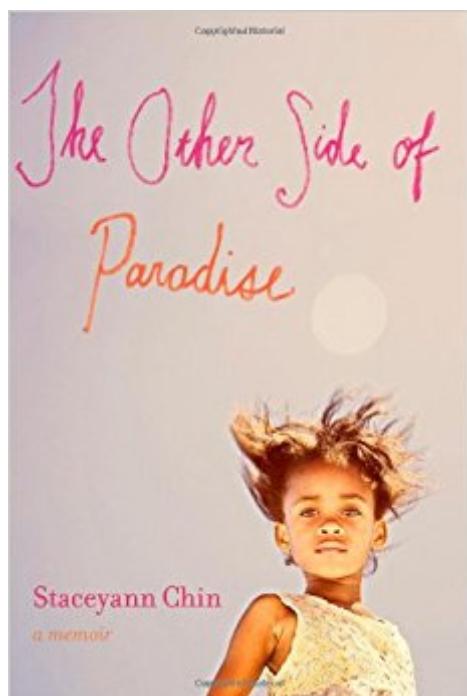


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# The Other Side Of Paradise: A Memoir



## **Synopsis**

Staceyann Chin has appeared on television and radio, including The Oprah Winfrey Show , CNN, and PBS, discussing issues of race and sexuality. But it is her extraordinary voice that launched her career as a performer, poet, and activist. Here, she shares her unforgettable story of triumph against all odds in this brave and fiercely candid memoir. No one knew Staceyann's mother was pregnant until a dangerously small baby was born on the floor of her grandmother's house in Jamaica, on Christmas Day. Staceyann's mother did not want her, and her father was not present. No one, except her grandmother, thought Staceyann would survive. It was her grandmother who nurtured and protected and provided for Staceyann and her older brother in the early years. But when the three were separated, Staceyann was thrust, alone, into an unfamiliar and dysfunctional home in Paradise, Jamaica. Told with grace, humor, and courage, Chin plumbs tender and unsettling memories as she writes about drifting from one home to the next, coming out as a lesbian, finding the man she believes to be her father, and ultimately, discovering her voice. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Starred Review. A fresh, forthright, affecting memoir by Jamaican performance artist Chin finds warmth and humor in her abject, parentless childhood. The Paradise of the title is the slum of Montego Bay, Jamaica, where Chin spent her hardscrabble adolescence, and her remarkable memoir is framed around her mother's rejection of her and her older brother, Delano, and the

uncertainty about who Chin's father really was. Born to a young, street-savvy girl with a penchant for distinguished older men with money; (in this case, a local Chinese businessman who always insisted he was not Chin's father), Chin spent her early years along with Delano under the care of their stern, God-fearing, illiterate grandmother. Early on, the spirited, defiant youngster learned to lie about her parentage, while the poverty and neediness of the siblings rendered them charity cases for relatives in Bethel Town and Kingston. Once, their mother came to visit them from where she lived in Montreal, Canada, though she quickly foisted them onto other relatives for good, leaving Chin, at age nine, to fend for herself in the shack of her harsh great-aunt whose boys routinely attempted to rape her. Nonetheless, Chin excelled at school, thanks to financial help from the man who refused to acknowledge his paternity, and became an emigrant success story later in New York. Her courage in coming out as a lesbian underscores her intrepidity in making this story her own. (June) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"A completely absorbing account of how a girl born into denial and contempt can grow up resilient, sane, and full of purpose. She also shows me a culture I knew far too little about -- the everyday life of young people in Jamaica and the threat of violence looming over anyone who might be too independent or queer or outrageous. How wonderful that this outrageous, talented, determined woman has given us her story." -- Dorothy Allison, author of *Bastard Out of Carolina* and *Cavedweller*"Staceyann Chin's memoir is a heartbreaking feat of unflinching memory and language. Set in a Jamaica far from the tourist brochures, *The Other Side of Paradise* is Chin's rich and nuanced story of family and abandonment, love and brutality, and a child's struggle to survive and find a home that will accept her. A remarkable young woman emerges, whose gift for poetry has been forged by poverty, religiosity, and a circle of adults who found the child in their care. This is A Portrait of the Artist written for our age. I love this book -- and I am completely hamstrung by the feelings it evokes." -- Walter Mosley"The human family is a complex ecosystem, a magnificent experiment of righteous diversity. *The Other Side of Paradise* captures the evocative struggle of one strong but fragile flower. Staceyann breaks our hearts a little, and then brings us safely, gratefully, home." -- Rebecca Walker, author of *One Big Happy Family* and *Black White and Jewish*"Staceyann's courage, sensitivity, and bravery are exposed on these vulnerable pages. Captured is the fire, passion, and light I experience when she performs. Liberating, beautiful, and life-affirming, *The Other Side of Paradise* is simply incredible." -- Russell Simmons, author of *Do You!* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I bought this book after looking for LGBTQ non-fiction by black women. I also bought it because I remember enjoying some of the author's spoken word poems a few years back. As someone who hasn't read non-fiction in ages, I ended up being incredibly moved. This book has the author telling the story of her life in Jamaica, trying to feel part of a family and become something more than the narrow things people tell her to be. Given that she suffers from parental abandonment, physical & verbal abuse, poverty, and sexual assault, this wasn't always easy to read. Yet there were also better moments that involved things such as her grandmother, her intelligence & academic achievements, and her passionate & outspoken spirit. For those who enjoy the author's spoken word poems, you see the experiences that influenced her work & fiery word delivery. As a queer black woman who has endured years of verbal abuse & depression, this memoir gave me hope that I can have a better life. Thank you, Ms. Chin.

If I was able to give this book 10 stars I would! I've read many memoirs/biographies over the years but this one stands out above them all. Staceyann Chin's story is real, raw, and believable. It's a story of many immigrant children who were left "back home" while their mothers (it's mostly always the mothers) went to seek a better life in America, Canada, England, Germany, etc. The one constant in her life, her grandmother, reminds me of my grandmothers, who were also constants in my life. The story is very well threaded together and at times (actually most of the time) you're rooting for her to overcome and succeed. If you're Jamaican or really a West Indian from any of the other islands, you really should read this book. But, that doesn't mean that anyone who is human shouldn't read it too.

Title: The Other Side of Paradise  
Author: Staceyann Chin  
Book Review First off....wow! Staceyann Chin immediately captures the readers focus from the prologue. It isn't so much her literary elegance mixed in a cocktail of emotion, vulnerability and conviction, but her ability to depict her story in such a raw manner that demands your attention. You see her grow from a child to a strong woman, overcoming odds such as abandonment, neglect, lack of love, and even sexual assault. It is at times heartwrenching, inadvertently evoking compassion and sympathy from the reader, but it ends with closure, peace of mind and so much promise. This is an excellent read. Definitely a page-turner. I would recommend this book to everyone.  
Star Rating: \* \* \* \* (5)

Of Jamaican and Chinese descent, Chin brings us into her story for the very first pages and takes

us along for a life filled with the love of her grandmother and brother, culture from growing up in Jamaica that is reflect in the dialect and interactions between family and friends and finally the drama of being gay/bi-sexual in a society that is often less than accepting.

I so enjoyed reading this book! It had me drawn in from the moment I started reading! I had the wonderful experience of meeting this talent writer in person at an event in Philadelphia. She was hilarious and entertaining! That was when I had bought her book in hard cover and had the joy of getting it signed by Staceyann Chin. She was so personal and awesome. So when I later came across her book again in digital print I had to have it in this form as well. The book is very well written and really grabs the reader's attention throughout the book. I hope to have the opportunity of seeing her at another book signing in the future. The book sends you through a mix of emotions, sadness, anger and happiness. I have never read any thing like this. I just love her memoir and I am not into memoirs but this one was just too well put together to pass up. I thank her for sharing her pass experiences with the world. I could see this being made into a box hit movie some day!

I am Jamaican and when I read the book I had a different context than a non Jamaican or someone who has not lived in the island would have. The issues with poverty and children who do not have a consistent or stable parental unit or family is something that as a county Jamaica struggles with every day. The issue that being a homosexual who is "out" in Jamaica is slightly different from the time when the author was writing about but there is still not the acceptance that would be hoped for and there are no persons in prominent business or political positions who have stated their sexuality in that regard which is what it would take to move the issue to the next level (although it really is no one's business but their's and I understand why they would not want to be the sacrificial lamb for the cause). The book was well written although the sections at the start when she was supposed to be younger were written in a tone that seemed to be that of an older voice. It is a good book and it showed the social issues that has resulted in many of the problems that Jamaica is experiencing now.

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