



ASK DEANNA!
*Real People,
Real Advice*

Ask Deanna! Is an advice column known for its fearless approach to reality-based subjects!

Dear Deanna!

Ever since childhood, my best friend has played games and told lies to blackmail people or get money. Now she's married and still doing the same thing. Her husband doesn't want children and she knows it. Her latest stunt is too much for me to handle. She told her husband that she's pregnant and she plans to go shopping with the money she's supposed to use for pregnancy termination. I feel this is too much and should tell her husband.

No More Lies
Dallas, TX

Dear No More Lies:

At what point did you decide to stop benefiting from your friends financial gain? If you've been a part of her scams for so long, I'm sure she gave you a cut of her shady earnings. You've co-signed with her for so long it's obvious she doesn't listen to you. Your best advice is to pull away and stop being a witness to her dishonesty. You'll cause too much drama if you stick your nose in the hornets nest now. In other words, mind your business.

Dear Deanna!

I'm the only 18-year-old girl in my group that doesn't have a baby. My friends are treating me differently now that they all have children and try to make me feel abnormal. I'm not interested in a baby, but I still want to be friends with them. They treat me as if I'm not good enough to be around them and they act as if they're so mature and I'm young and dumb. How do I handle this?

Shawna
Oklahoma City, OK

Dear Shawna:

You need to find your favorite song on the radio, drink lemonade and enjoy your life until you meet a husband. There's nothing cute about girls fresh out of high school two steps from a welfare office and dirty diapers. You're the winner in this bunch and you should be on your way to college and a blessed life. Go for the gold, shake it off and encourage your friends to achieve, as you avoid the baby-daddy blues.

Dear Deanna!

I spend a lot of time being friends with women, listening to their problems and just being a great guy. I'm in a situation with a friend that I now want a relationship with but she isn't interested. Once I made my feelings known she has basically kicked me to the curb. I can't understand why she took my money, used my car and came to me with all of her problems but won't date me. What did I do wrong?

A.J.
San Diego, CA

Dear A.J.

You got pimped, which is what insecure women, a few wives and silly girls do to the good men out there. You fell victim to a woman that wanted a guidance counselor and financial provider without any loving. These women are fine as long as they get what they want without giving up anything. Consider yourself blessed to be out before your credit was ruined and you were left looking foolish with a broken heart.

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Cross shines light on interracial secrets

By Alexandra Poolos
Special to Sentinel-Voice
(WOMENSE-NEWS) - June Cross couldn't be clearer about her professional identity.

"I identify as a Black, woman journalist," said the author of "Secret Daughter: A Mixed Race Daughter and the Mother Who Gave Her Away."

Cross, an award-winning producer of television news and documentaries and a professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, has a long track record of professional accomplishments. She has worked for PBS' "Frontline," CBS News and what was known as the "MacNeil/Lehrer Newshour" on PBS, covering a range of topics including the defense industry, the Middle East, poverty in the United States, welfare, Haiti and the Cold War.

During a phone interview from a San Francisco stop on her national book tour, Cross said that during her journalism career, perhaps especially when she was covering the defense industry in the early 1980s, she was distinctly aware of the "double-edged sword" of being both African-American and female.

"Being a female was always an issue," she said. "Being Black was the bigger issue. There's presumption that Blacks couldn't write, that they were there because of some affirmative action thing."

And now with her book published in June by Viking, which follows the "Frontline" documentary of the same name eight years ago, Cross has turned her professional eye on herself, telling the story of growing up as the mixed-race daughter of an aspiring White actress and a professional Black comedian. She was sent by her mother to live with an unrelated Black family in Atlantic City, N.J., at the age of four when she could no longer "pass" as White.

Cross' story is remarkable, not just for the moving and personal account of her own experience of being given up by her mother, Norma Booth, and raised by the dignified Black school-teacher whom she called "Aunt Peggy," but also for the wider lens it casts on a time in U.S. history when being a married White woman raising a mixed-race daughter was considered virtually impossible.

In her book, Cross details the complicated and intertwined relationships between herself, Booth and Aunt

Peggy. She tells of how she initially was raised alone by her mother in a New York apartment after her mother left her father, who had begun abusing her. But when Cross could no longer "pass" as White, her mother arranged for Aunt Peggy and her husband to raise her.

Booth, who eventually married a well-known White comedian and actor, stayed in regular contact with visits, letters and phone calls and was actively involved in parenting questions, if from afar. But as Cross grew older, she began to feel confusion and deep shame when her mother refused to publicly acknowledge her as her daughter and she had to live a double life.

In describing the layers of duplicity woven around her childhood, Cross also reveals telling details in the larger scenes of the civil rights and women's rights movements. She recounts scenes of visiting her White mother, who resettled in southern California, and listening to upper-middle class White women discuss their clandestine abortions. And she tells the story of the many other women who influenced her, including an older Black

woman who cleaned Aunt Peggy's house and taught Cross the power of endurance and the importance of her dignity and story.

For Cross, writing the book was mainly about understanding the constrictive position society imposed upon all three women, and she says that she wanted her book to describe both the good and the bad of these relationships and to celebrate how lucky she felt to have both women in her life. "Thank God they were both really smart and educated women," she said. "Together, they figured out how to get it right."

The power of Cross' narrative is in her painstaking examination of the relationships between herself, her mother and Aunt Peggy.

"I had two mothers and two selves and the question was how to build one woman out of that," she said.

The professionalism of her exploration is a trademark of Cross' journalism. Michael Sullivan, executive producer for special projects at "Frontline," says the film "Secret Daughter" and the subsequent memoir were a natural outgrowth of her previous work doing up-close,

in-depth reporting with a historical outlook.

"It was a difficult process for her, but she had worked on this method before," Sullivan said, noting Cross' work on such films as "A Kid Kills" and "Rosa Lee," a story about a welfare mother. "That was the grace which she brought to 'Frontline.' The people who are really stunning at the end of the day are those that do both things: those that stay faithful to themselves but who go out there and do the discipline. For all the passion she brought to these films, she never strayed from the journalism standard."

For journalist Charlyane Hunter-Gault, Cross' story makes "all Black women proud." Hunter-Gault, an Africa correspondent and book author, was at "McNeil/Lehrer" when Cross began her career there.

"I think she has opened up an avenue that people can walk down," she said. "It's not a taboo subject, but it's one that a whole generation of young people will be relieved to read. As much progress as we've made, race still touches a nerve."

Hunter-Gault says that (See Cross, Page 15)

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