



My Mother the Cheerleader

By Robert Sharenow

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My Mother the Cheerleader By Robert Sharenow

Louise Collins was pretty certain that nothing all that exciting would happen in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans, where she lived with her mother in their boarding house, Rooms on Desire. Every day was almost the same: serve cranky Mr. Landroux his meals in bed, visit Antoine's Pick-a-Chick with Charlotte, and wear out the pages of her favorite novels by reading them over and over. But when desegregation begins, Louise is pulled out of school and her mother joins the Cheerleaders, a group of local women who gather every morning to heckle six-year-old Ruby Bridges, William Frantz Elementary's first African-American student.

Then one day a Chevy Bel Air with a New York license plate pulls up to the house and out steps Morgan Miller, a man with a mysterious past. For the first time, Louise feels as if someone cares about what she thinks. But when the reason for Morgan's visit comes to light, everything Louise thinks she knows about her mother, her world, and herself changes, abruptly and irrevocably.

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review When her mother pulls Louise, 13, out of class to protest the forced court-ordered integration of her school in New Orleans in 1960, Louise never gives the political issues a thought. Everyone knows segregation is the way things are. Sure, she does feel bad that first-grader Ruby Bridges has to endure the vicious racist insults from the white crowds outside the school every morning. Louise's mother, Pauline, is one of those jeering "Cheerleaders." Then New York editor Morgan Miller comes to stay in Pauline's run-down boardinghouse, and his quiet outrage makes Louise begin to raise doubts and questions. But he is a Jew and he may be a Communist, and the Klan goes after him. There is some plot contrivance as Louise acts as sleuth and eavesdrops on the grown-ups. But stirring secrets drive the plot, about Louise's family and about Morgan's, and Pauline turns out to be more than just a vain southern belle; even her politics change, a little. In his debut novel, television producer Sharenow challenges the view that those cheerleaders shouting the n-word were just a few crazy freaks. Readers will be held fast by the history told from the inside as adult Louise remembers the vicious role of ordinary people. For younger children, suggest Ruby Bridges' *Through My Eyes* (1999) and Ruth Vander Zee's *Mississippi Morning* (2004). Rochman, Hazel

About the Author

Robert Sharenow is an award-winning writer and television producer. His most recent novel, *The Berlin Boxing Club*, was awarded the Sydney Taylor Award by the Association of Jewish Libraries and received starred reviews from *Publishers Weekly*, *School Library Journal*, and *Kirkus Reviews*. He also serves as executive vice president and general manager of Lifetime. He lives in New York with his wife, two daughters, and their dog, Lucy.

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