



# A River Moves Forward

*Selena Haskins*

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## **A River Moves Forward** Selena Haskins

Connie Morris grows up in Chicago's Cabrini Green projects, and suffers abuse from her father. When tragedy strikes the family, Connie is virtually the last survivor, and ends up homeless until an unexpected hobby leads to fortune and fame. At the peak of her career, someone from her past tries to destroy everything she has worked hard for. Connie could possibly lose it all, including herself. On the other side of Chicago is Dean Wilson, a cocky police officer whose marriage ends tragically. Soon he meets Connie and the two fall in love, but when they learn their paths have crossed before, it sends them on an emotional ride that could prove to be too much. What happened in their past could possibly ruin their future or make their love strong enough to forgive and move forward.

## **A River Moves Forward Details**

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Author : Selena Haskins

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# **From Reader Review A River Moves Forward for online ebook**

## **Roy Huff says**

This book had a lot of interesting aspects that I could relate to having grown up in an environment with many similarities! The story looks historically at the nature of relationships within African American culture and family. The book takes a look at how drugs, the family unit, and other aspects within this society have had an impact on families living within the community. I thought the character development and complexity of Connie was quite impressive. I would like to read subsequent books in the series, if there are any, and am looking forward to reading more from this author. This one is definitely worth checking out.

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## **Adrienne Thompson says**

Connie is a character for whom trouble seems to chase her down and lurk around every corner just waiting to pounce on her. There were times when my heart would break for her. Other times, I found myself rooting for her. This book is packed full of emotion and spans several years, definitely giving you a bang for your buck. There were some editing issues, and at times I felt there could have been more show and less tell, but the book was engaging and the characters were very realistic. As this is the author's first book, I can see a lasting, successful literary career in her future. Good job, Selena!

Adrienne Thompson  
Author of the Been So Long Series

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## **Christoph Fischer says**

"A River Moves Forward" by Selena Haskins is a great epic novel of historical value. The story begins with a family moving to Chicago in the 1950s to put an extramarital affair behind them.

After setting the scene of the family background the story eventually focuses on Connie Morris, daughter of an abusive father and a tough talking mother.

Spanning three generations this touching family drama touches on many sensitive issues, such as poverty, teenage pregnancies, family values and racial integration.

Told with some twists and unexpected turns this is a gripping and entertaining read as much as it is moving and beautiful. The plot moves along fast and homes in on yet another complicated love story.

Haskins keeps her readers on their toes and yet manages to teach us a lot about her characters and their personal growth.

Quite an emotional experience and for this European reader quite informative in terms of historical context.

An added bonus are the many musical references that served for me as a great frame of reference and brought an extra charm to the writing.

A rich and rewarding read.

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## **B.R. Snow says**

Two thumb up to **Selena Haskins** for her compelling novel, *A River Moves Forward*, a work that spans several decades and traces the Morris family's epic challenges and struggles in the housing projects of Chicago and beyond. **Haskins** deftly weaves a variety of issues into the narrative that include various types of abuse, adultery, self-identify and, of course, the personal struggles and family dysfunction that ensue.

*A River Moves Forward* deals with tough issues and grim realities but, despite the dark subject matter and tragedy that befalls this family, rather than come across as bleak, through her great collection of characters – most notably her protagonist, Connie - **Haskins** offers hope and redemption.

**Haskins** has delivered a thoughtful and powerful drama about life and survival and I highly recommend it to any reader looking for a story that grabs you by the throat and demands that you pay attention.

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### **Nicole Dunlap says**

A River Moves Forward is a novel full of passion, family drama ups and downs that tug at my emotions. The Morris girls have had a hard life from the start; a drunken daddy and very soon into the book there's even more family woes. I enjoyed reading about the main character, Connie and how she grew up. At first her identity is a little iffy and though it's sad there'll be room for funny moments as she tries to fit in. Then she grew to be confident and didn't need no man to tell her anything. The romance aspect was just what I needed and the on again off again over the years had me going.

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### **Jacquilynn Martine says**

This was a terrific book.

A real life kind of tale that is strong in the roots of the past. I enjoyed reading this and every character in it was very believable. I felt everything that Connie was going through. The writer made her feelings and tribulations very real as well as the story. This is a wonderful tale of time and of great strength by a one woman's determination.

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### **Lita Burke says**

A River Moves Forward by Selena Haskins is a contemporary novel about a mother, Frieda Morris, and her struggle to better the lives of her children.

Frieda and her husband Mason move to Chicago to cover up the shame of her having a white man's baby while Mason was in the military. They pick up the pieces, and their family expands to three daughters: Donna (nicknamed Peaches), Connie, and Gina (nicknamed Baby). The abusive Mason deserts the family, and Baby's murder by a jealous best friend, are some of Frieda's heartaches.

The story told the reader about a mother trying to do the right things for her family. I very much wanted to immerse myself in Frieda's world, but found little I could latch onto. The narrative was told in third person, and only related events. There were few passages that engaged the senses, so the story did not tell the reader the sounds, odors, or even the sensations of cold or heat against a character's skin. The story needed more

descriptions of the surroundings to bring Frieda's world to life. Frieda was an admirable character, and I very much wanted her to overcome life's challenges, but it was difficult join her on the journey.

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### **Simon Okill says**

A River Moves Forward by Selena Haskins is an astounding achievement in drama or as we say over here in UK - kitchen sink drama. Over several decades we are shown the harrowing life of Connie Morris from birth to proud parents to an unexpected rebirth much later in life. Connie's birth destroys her parents happiness as her blue eyes give away her altered bloodline. Her father descends into alcoholism and brutality until the family is forced from their home to the new ghettos of Chicago. Here, Connie grows into adulthood without her father and a mother slowly falling apart as terrible pressures leave her a wreck. Gangland killings, drugs, murder, single parenting, keeping a decent job - all the things that we struggle with are much worse for the Morris family. And yet Selena manages to infuse hope in every page and instil the desperate need to turn the next page.

I thoroughly enjoyed this FIVE STAR drama that perfectly encapsulates the struggles of the poor, whether black or white and shows we can all do better if we put our minds to the task.

I highly recommend this wonderful book to readers of all ages.

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### **Claudette Alexander says**

When I started to read the story, it reminded me of my own childhood experience growing up with a similar Connie in my elementary school. A white woman with black siblings being a mystery to me and everyone else for a long time.

The story focuses on Connie and her trials and tribulations in being the anchor for her family. Her determination to make a better life for herself, daughter and sister and escape from her poverty stricken neighbourhood. It showed a strong willed woman who got her man on her own terms. It showed you can be broken and get healed. In the end love does conquer all.

I was surprised about Peaches dad's final demise. In spite of his brutal treatment of his kids they still forgave him enough to show up in his final hours. This just shows the heart of family. The ties that bind.

The story ends with Connie to begin a new chapter in her life heading to California with her family and her long time friend and lover, Dean. All in all a good read.

The book could have done with another round of editing as there were a few glaring mistakes that could have been picked up through the editing process. However the errors were not enough to throw you off the story.

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### **Darliss Batchelor says**

**Great read!**

This is my first book by Ms. Haskins. I enjoyed Connie's story from her childhood to her adulthood. This book explored many themes including issues related to poverty, substance abuse, abuse and others. I'm anxious to read the sequel.

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### **Alan Hardy says**

This novel shows life as it is. Through the story of Connie, a girl of mixed race, who suffers abuse and deprivation in her childhood, we encounter the problems and tribulations which confront all ordinary people, whether through relationships or the vices and temptations that can assail us all. Connie becomes a symbol for all of us, and points the way forward with the hope that problems of poverty, upbringing and chance can be overcome. This is also a great love-story, told with many twists and turns. The author is a great storyteller and we are kept on the edge of our seats throughout. This is a brilliantly-told story both of the brutal realism of life and the hope that can still be found within such a life. Check it out.

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### **Janice Ross says**

Life can be complicated and life can be heartbreaking; in fact, there are times when life smiles upon you, but you just can't accept the happiness. "A River Moves Forward" is a tumultuous tale of an African American family's struggle. Selena Haskins provides a well-laid examination into the cause and effects of emotional, physical and substance abuse. She even ventures into identity and cultural issues within race and society.

Kudos to you Selena Haskins for formulating a novel that encompasses decades, from the 50s on, of the Morris family's devastating existence. Upon venturing into the first several chapters of "A River Moves Forward", readers could not imagine the events that would lie ahead in the hopes of a mother - Freda, as she tries to struggle through a failing marriage while forgiving her own shortcomings. Yet, she finds strength in providing her daughter's - Donna "Peaches", Connie and Baby "Gina" with the best life she could - although it is in Chicago's Cabrini Green Housing Projects. Hope could take her but so far, until unimaginable tragedy destroys the family. I am not one to spoil a story, so I will not provide any more detail; however, I will encourage you to get lost in Selena Haskins's powerful story of life.

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### **OOSA says**

Cat

Connie Morris grew up in the Cabrini Green Projects in Chicago, known as one of the roughest projects around. The middle sister, she always felt different. Not only was her skin tone a lighter shade than her two sisters, she also had an unusual eye color. Her mother adored her while her father was mentally and physically abusive towards her. Why? She did not know.

When tragedy strikes, Connie discovers a secret her mother kept hidden from her. She is left wondering about her true identity and what she plans to do with her life. When a friend suggests a way to make a little money, Connie never expected it to lead to something that she could make into a career. Being in the public eye, her face is plastered in the papers and on TV. In all her successes the one thing she is lacking is true love. When she thought she found it, she put her career first. Will it be too late to rekindle the fire that once

was? Or will it be too little, too late?

"A River Moves Forward" by Selena Haskins was a novel about family, love, lies, betrayal and learning to let go and move forward. Although fictional, it read like an autobiography at times. Connie's character was easy to relate to.

There were quite a few editing issues throughout the novel. Saturated with so many details, the story was slow in spots. Also, it became repetitive with the back and forth with Connie's love interest and it left this reader frustrated. The ending was cut and dry. Meaning after all was said and done, the story was wrapped up like a pretty present with a bow on top. It was just too sudden and too neat.

Reviewed by: LeonaR

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## **Mark Combs says**

A River Moves Forward, the debut novel by Washington, DC novelist Selena Haskins, tells the story of Connie Morris, and her time growing up in, and finally escaping the crime-ridden housing project Cabrini-Green. The book is filled with tragedy and heartbreak, broken and repaired relationships, along with a measure of redemption.

There were times, however, when I felt as though I was reading a history textbook. Historical events were often presented with all but the vaguest, general connections to the story. The author would have been better served weaving these events directly into the story line, using them as a means of indirectly enhancing the struggles of the main characters, and of African Americans of that particular time period. In other words, she could have had the main characters discussing and interacting with these issues as they related to the current times, and to their own struggles. There were also numerous instances when the author also chose to tell the reader that something happened, rather than showing it happening, perhaps through the eyes of a main character. One example of this is the main character Connie's descent into alcohol addiction. Readers mostly hear about how bad her drinking is becoming, rather than being shown the disastrous effects of her drinking through her eyes, and the eyes of those closest to her.

There were also lots of issues with the basic mechanics of composition. The biggest of these was the author's use of paragraphs that quite literally went on for pages, containing expository passages and, very often, dialogue between multiple characters.

Additionally, there were numerous instances when words were misused, mistakes that should have been identified and corrected during the editing process. One example that came to mind was the use of the word "descent," when the author meant to say "decent," as in "Their mother allowed them to go to descent parties..." Another example was the use of "riff" (defined as a short musical phrase) instead of "rift," as in "Because of this, a riff ensued between Connie, Billy and Upper management." These simple, fixable errors really detracted from the story.

In spite of the aforementioned issues, A River Moves Forward is a somewhat compelling, multi-generational story. The book's dialogue had an authentic feel, and the author did a pretty good job of developing the main characters.

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## **Bee L. Kirk says**

One of the things I love most about reviewing books is the opportunity it affords me in sharing the range of emotions I go through while reading a book. As I'm reading, I never think about the reviewing aspect until I'm completely finished because I don't want to misjudge someone's work or jump to conclusions.

I read *A River Moves Forward* about two weeks ago and I'm just now writing the review. This is due to several reasons. The most important being the fact that I wasn't sure how to approach this review, I didn't know where to start or how it would end.

I have a confession to make...no this has nothing to do with the FB confession epidemic, I really have a confession. I judge books by their cover. I'm trying to retrain my brain but it is so hard. The first thing I see often draws me in or turns me away. So when I saw the cover for *A River Moves Forward*, I really didn't know what to expect. I love city skylines and the cover for *A River Moves Forward* has a beautiful one displayed in conjunction with a calm and unwinding waterfront. It all gave me a sense of ease.

Looking back on it now, the cover is very misleading. *A River Moves Forward* is anything but calm. I was on a roller coaster of emotions almost from the beginning. Author Selena Haskins gives the reader an inside view of life as most of us have never experienced it. It's a time period piece, something else I am hesitant about. After reading this novel, I have changed my mind about that also. She made everything seem so relatable, you forget that it takes place in the 1970's. I began reminiscing about the music that my parents would play around the house, which solidified my bond with the characters.

Cabrini Green Housing Projects is the location that most of the most heart wrenching events occur. I've never lived in, "The Projects" but Selena Haskins made me feel like I had. I've never had a sibling strung out on drugs, but Selena Haskins made me wonder what it would be like. I've never been beaten but Selena Haskins made me realize how blessed I have been.

*A River Moves Forward* is by far more than just a nice cover, it will take you on a journey of ups and downs. You'll be sad and happy. Anger will cause your face to blush and teenage love will make you remember those innocent days.

I would definitely recommend this book!

The Bee Count: 9

1-3 Bee's => Sorry I read it

4-5 Bee's => I found watching paint dry more exciting

6-7 Bee's => Congrats on Publishing a book

8 Bee's => Very Good Book, Would Recommend it!

9 Bee's => Extremely Glad I read It!! Can't wait to talk about it on my Internet Radio Show (City of the Guardians Blog Talk Radio.com)

10 Bee's => I can't breath, I want more, RIGHT NOW!

Bee L. Kirk, Author of *City of the Guardians*: Introducing Alex Honor



Author Selena Haskins information:

Website

Goodreads

Amazon

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