



## News

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# Glasgow writer Michaela Foster Marsh's mission to tell tale of sibling love, grief and charity



By [Ann Fotheringham](#) | [@FotheringhamHT](#)  
Senior features writer



Michaela Foster Marsh. Pic: Martin Shields

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**LONG before Michaela Foster Marsh had visited her adopted brother's birthplace in Uganda, she had dreamed of what it might be like.**

"After Frankie died, I wrote a book about his life to help me deal with the grief," she recalls. "It was fiction – a story I made up based around his childhood and my idea of what his birth mother would be like.

"It is quite incredible how much of that story turned out to be true."



Now Michaela is about to publish that story in *Starchild: A Memoir of Adoption, Race and Family*. It is the tale of her journey to find Frankie's birth family, the charity she founded as a result and the school for creative arts she and her friends built for some of Uganda's poorest children.

Sadly, Michaela is once again trying to deal with grief - her partner, Scottish actor Rony Bridges, died of lung cancer last summer.

"I miss him very much," she says. "He was a huge part of the charity, too. Life is just not the same without him."

*Starchild* tells the story of Michaela and Frankie, unusual 'twins', one white, one black, who grew up together after Michaela's parents adopted the young Ugandan boy when he was 13 months old.

Tragically, Frankie died in a house fire, aged just 26, when a power failure started a blaze in his block of flats in Govanhill.

Just a few months before his death he had begun to look into his background and Michaela was determined to finish the task.

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Having traced Frankie's family to Luwero, where she had an emotional meeting with his brother, Michaela returned home - but horrified by the levels of poverty she had seen, she was determined to help the community build a brighter future for its children.

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Over the next few years, with Rony at her side and supported by friends and local businesses, she held art auctions and charity nights to raise the funds needed to build a school that would allow poorer children to access **music** and the arts.

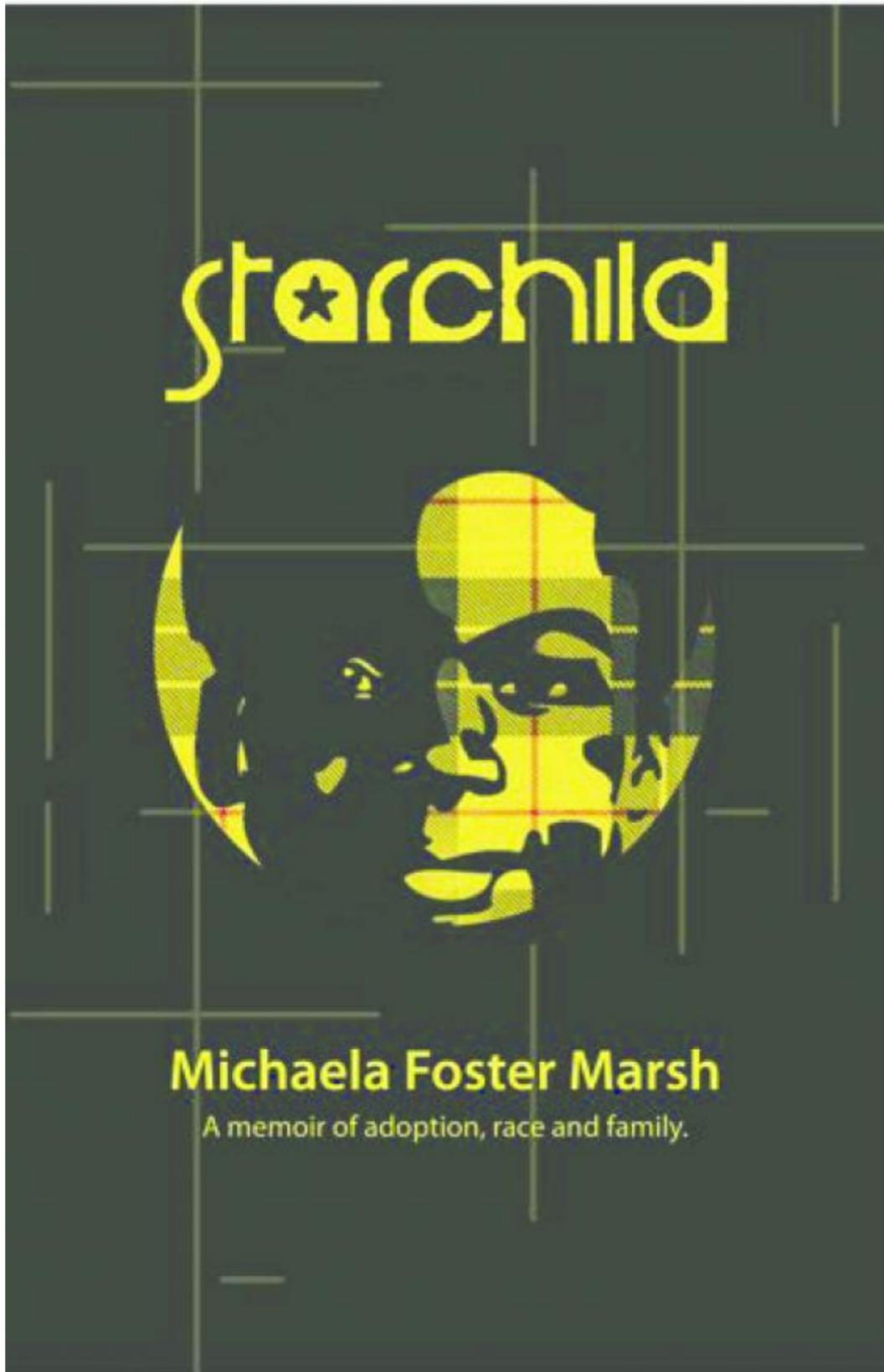
Starchild was born (the name comes from Frankie's favourite song, by Level 42) and as well as the school itself, the charity supports a local women's **health** project and has provided mosquito nets, sanitary products for teenage girls and microscopes for science classes.



Before the [coronavirus](#) outbreak, Michaela had planned to return to Uganda in July to continue work on the Sunflower Sanctuary, a new Starchild project aimed at supporting children with autism and disabilities.

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“The myths which surround children with autism in Uganda are shocking,” says Michaela, flatly. “We want to break down the stigma and create a holistic centre where these children and their families can feel safe and supported. I hope we will be able to get back there soon.”



Celebrating the publication of her book, on her own during lockdown, will feel strange, she says.

She adds, smiling: "But I'll have a glass of champagne and toast Frankie and Rony, who are with me always. Afterwards? The work will go on. There is lots still to do."

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