

Mixed: Exploring What It Means to Be Blended in America

Jeanne Jones

Mascot Books (May 4, 2021)

Softcover \$19.95 (128pp)

978-1-64543-630-0

Mixed is a memoir by a mother who channeled her concerns for her family's safety into learning about the impact of racism and colorism on interracial families.

Jeanne Jones considers how implicit bias impacted her blended, biracial family in her memoir *Mixed*.

Born into a religious family in a majority white city in the Midwest, Jones did not expect to be exposed to people from all walks of life. However, she made friends with boys from the group home where her father worked, often from Black and brown families, and grew close to her neighbors of mixed heritage.

Disparities between how others responded to her and her friends were obvious to her from a young age, but did not fully click for her until college. After a failed marriage that produced her oldest son, she married a Black man, also with a son from a previous relationship. They had twins. Witnessing the differences between her and her husband's experiences when they were out with their children drove home the realities of prejudice and implicit bias; she decided to educate herself, and to find ways to use her experiences to confront those realities.

Its tone exploratory, the book expresses wonder at turns, and is didactic in sharing information in other places. It integrates hate crime statistics with Jones's research-based understandings of the topics she confronts. Anecdotes about growing up below the poverty line by choice, spending time around the group home, and fears for her husband and college-aged son are included, and insights are drawn from articles about the perceived roles of multiracial children in society and the intersections of racial privilege and religious privilege in the US.

Still, there are instances of unexamined privilege in the text, as with a prescription that children be taught to see and understand racism and implicit bias from a young age—an obvious act in communities of color. An account of watching a violent assault with her son in order to have a conversation about what to do if he found himself in a similar situation arises; Jones expresses surprise when he proves aware of the thin line already. Key differences between how they move through the world are apparent, even before they are acknowledged.

The book is directed at other parents with biracial children, but its treatments are uneven: half of it focuses on Jones's personal experiences and seems aimed at white people on the brink of accepting that racism and implicit bias are rampant in society, while the other half focuses on Jones's relationship to her husband and her biracial children. Particular focus is put on the intersections of colorism and racism, as her husband is dark skinned and one of her twin daughters is pale, blond, and blue-eyed, while the other is not.

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DONTANÁ MCPHERSON-JOSEPH (June 1, 2021)

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