



## Of Color

**Jaswinder Bolina**

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Drawing on personal experiences and cultural analysis, Jaswinder Bolina's essay collection *Of Color* is an important examination of race in the US.

The son of Sikh Punjabi immigrants by way of London, Bolina writes about navigating a country that only partially accepts him. His essays contemplate the pressures placed on writers of color and record scars left by racist encounters. They ponder how immigration changes, or fails to change, both immigrants and the cultures they join.

Powerful as they move from personal experiences into larger questions of art, race, and politics, the essays include "Writing Like a White Guy," in which Bolina's father suggests that he Westernize his name to make publication more likely, while white classmates assume that he will have more success if he highlights his race. Asking what is at stake when choosing one's subject matter, Bolina shows that, whether they like it or not, every choice a writer of color makes is fraught with meaning. From here, he considers how the writing of immigrants and people of color is changing literary history.

"White Wedding" is about what led Bolina to adopt the American practice of marrying for love instead of letting his parents find him a match. His personal account of marrying a white woman leads to intriguing insights into the psychology of attraction. In "American, Indian," descriptions of how Bolina's family has adapted to life in the US flow into meditations on how, sometimes, people who have immigrated become the ones who want to stop others from doing the same.

Suggestive and thought-provoking, the essays are written in a clear, graceful style that keeps the focus on Bolina's stories and ideas. *Of Color* is an essential text set at the intersections between art, race, power, and culture.

REBECCA HUSSEY (July / August 2020)

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