



Into White

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When a black teenager prays to be white and her wish comes true, her journey of self-discovery takes shocking--and often hilarious--twists and turns in this debut that people are sure to talk about.

LaToya Williams lives in Birmingham, Alabama, and attends a mostly white high school. She's so low on the social ladder that even the other black kids disrespect her. Only her older brother, Alex, believes in her. At least, until a higher power answers her only prayer--to be "anything but black." And voila! She wakes up with blond hair, blue eyes, and lily white skin. And then the real fun begins . . .

Randi Pink's debut dares to explore provocative territory. One thing's for sure--people will talk about this book.

Into White Details

Date : Published September 13th 2016 by Feiwel & Friends

ISBN : 9781250070210

Author : Randi Pink

Format : Hardcover 288 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Magical Realism, Fiction, Did Not Finish

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Riley says

I tried. I really did.

I knew going into this that the concept of a black girl's wish to turn white comes true would be a hit or miss. And this totally missed.

Instead of dismantling racial stereotypes this seemed to just reinforce them. No one in this book is seen as anything but their skin color.

The writing also felt very juvenile and seemed better fitting of a middle grade title.

Saania Zee Jamal ? says

I can already sense someone or the other getting offended over this book... ?_? *fingers crossed she pulls it off*

The FountainPenDiva, Old school geek chick and lover of teddy bears says

It took me a day to finish this, but I needed time to collect my thoughts. I'm still trying to process it all, so this review is going to be totally raw. I'm going to have a LOT to say.

Into White is a novel in which white supremacy is not centered in the ways we're used to. White people are not the default heroes here. There are no #notallWhitepeople characters having their V-8 moments. Yes, most of the main white characters are caricatures (with a dash of truth), which to me was the point. After all, Black people have spent ages being caricatured in the media. Asking for complexity in regards to our lives is like pulling teeth or dismissed as more SJW-dom. Or publishers insisting that complex Black characters that aren't slaves child soldiers, survivors of famine, or drug dealers/gangbangers "don't sell".

It's also a novel that decided the most important issue is racism, not rape culture or eating disorders (which some reviewers were not happy about). It's not just white racism, but intra-racism which is a tragic byproduct of a supremacist society. It's also a novel about whiteness being so over the top, yet how many YA and NA novels are guilty of glamorizing whiteness, glamorizing slut shaming, and normalizing rape culture? A lot. In fact, our entire media normalizes and glamorizes white supremacy. It always has. Think about it: a superhero movie with predominantly White casts as leads (including at least one Chris) is just another day at the office. A superhero film with a predominantly Black cast has some folks screaming "reverse racism". A film featuring a ton of aliens in a galaxy far, far away is fine. A Black stormtrooper had fanboys losing their little minds.

This normalization and glamorization of white supremacy has real effects on Black people. Look up the famous Kenneth and Mamie Clark doll experiment. Or the recent video of the White mother who thought filming the reactions of her daughters after given Black dolls was funny (one cried, the other looked disgusted). Black girls are being suspended and Black women are being discriminated against for wearing natural and/or protective hair styles like afros and braids. Dark-skinned Black people are thought of and often depicted as "dangerous", with dark-skinned Black women viewed as "ugly". Remember what happened with comedian Leslie Jones.

This is far from just an American problem, not with the popularity of bleaching creams in Asia, India and Africa.

That's why *Into White*, as over the top as it may be, is also an unflinching look at what white supremacy does to impressionable young minds. Latoya Williams hates her skin. She hates her name. She hates the burden her dark skin has unfairly placed upon her. She hates the fact that she doesn't fit anywhere - too Black for White people and not Black enough for Black people. Her pain is real. She sees nothing but whiteness as respect and the epitome of beauty and goodness. Is it any wonder she says this:

"Hey Jesus?" I whispered, looking out of my bedroom window. "I can't take this anymore. This filth. This curse. This...race."

Then does this:

"You said that if I seek you first, the rest shall be added to me. Well, my rest is the power to wake up any race I want. Please, Lord, make me anything but Black."

When I read that last line, I heard the pain of so many Black people. I saw the reason why lighter-skinned Black people were willing to risk potential exposure in order to "pass" for White. I was reminded of Toni Morrison's heartbreaking *The Bluest Eye*. That even as a little girl, I wanted to have "good hair" so that I could go swimming and that it wouldn't be so 'hard' to comb. Like many, I'd learned early on that my natural hair was "bad".

More thoughts to come....

Kali Wallace says

Randi Pink's *INTO WHITE* is heartfelt, painful, profound, and incredibly important--an exploration into racism, sexism, and classism in modern America, an unflinching look at the bigotry and prejudices that wear people down from the outside and gnaw at them from the inside, but ultimately hopeful--about people, about the world, about the fact that things can get better. It's about faith and family and a loving, gentle look at where strength comes from.

It's also really, really, really funny. I feel like that might be easy to overlook when reading the cover copy and descriptions, because the subject matter is so important and sensitive and the story itself absolutely heart-wrenching, and the observations it makes about the world frequently brutal, but oh my god, people, this book is so damn funny. The narrator's voice is beyond fantastic. I was laughing out loud on every page--even when I was also crying and raging at how bad things could be. I don't know how Randi Pink gets that balance, but she does, and I adore the result.

I want Toya (or, barring that, the author) to come sit next to me and chat FOREVER because I would never get tired of the razor-sharp and hilarious way she has of looking at her world and the people in it, with humor and cleverness even when that world and those people are causing her a great deal of pain, or when she's lashing out to cause pain for others.

One more thing: It also has one of my favorite relationships between a sister and brother that I've read in YA in a long time. There's nothing wrong with my own real life genius older brother, but I'm going to pretend Toya's brother Alex is my *other* real life genius older brother for a while, if nobody minds, because he's just that lovely.

Kate (GirlReading) says

Into White was one of my highly anticipated releases of 2016 but sadly I was a little disappointed. I wasn't the biggest fan of the writing style but for me, the main thing that I didn't enjoy was that I felt as though it perpetuated and reinforced some harmful stereotypes and stigmas surrounding topics such as eating disorders and sexual harassment. Once I read these aspects, amongst other things I didn't love too much, I found it hard to enjoy the reading experience!

I did think certain aspects of it were really interesting to read and I think a lot of people will take a lot of different things away from this book, both positive and negative, as there are many levels to it, but unfortunately it wasn't really for me. That being said, I'm extremely interested and intrigued to read/hear what others think of it, more so than what I thought of it myself, as I do think the premise of it was very interesting and something I think a lot of people will have varying opinions on! As of right now, I'm still undecided on how to rate this, as I don't want to influence anyone not to buy it, since I do think it there are elements to it that could be something a lot of people might be able to relate to and find very interesting and enlightening to read!

YupIReadIt says

NO JUST NO! I'm not even going to finish this.

Liselle Sambury says

TRIGGER WARNING: discussions of rape and attempted rape scene

The Good Bits.

Latoya

I related a lot to Latoya, in thinking of how I felt growing up and also in her current life. She's frustrated with the skin colour she was born into and sees the injustice that comes along with it. There's clearly a lot of desperation for her to live in a world that caters to her vs. one that criminalizing her. Sometimes she frustrated me, but I understood her more deeply than I have any character I've ever read.

Supporting Characters

I loved Latoya's brother because he was an example of a black male determined not to let discrimination hold him back from achieving his goals. And I loved how much he cared about Latoya even if she wasn't always great at doing the same. Her parents, I initially found to be caricature-like, but as the book went on they revealed more layers of themselves and became more complex. And I think you can say that for the rest of the main characters in this book. People revealed more of themselves that what meets the eyes.

Black Culture

The benefit of reading an #ownvoices book by a black author is that she intimately understands many of the nuances of black culture. And I loved that she addressed the things that we, as a culture, do to bring one another down. There's a focus on being light or dark skinned, having bad hair or good hair, or being 'black enough'. Even I make self-deprecating jokes about being 'really white.' And she addresses how damaging that can be within the culture. Because on top of any discrimination from anyone else you're also dealing with discrimination within your own race. And that's SO important to talk about.

Social and Political Aspects

As per the trigger warning I included above, there is an attempted rape scene in the book. I'm not a fan of rape included that even whiffs of being a plot device, but the novel portrayed it well, I thought. It addressed not only the difficult emotional trauma that comes with it but also the injustices with reporting rape. And of course, issues of racism were included throughout the book. Including how certain opportunities are withheld and how people treat you.

Sour Grapes.

Depiction of Racism

For me, the depictions of racist remarks said by white characters to black characters often felt unreal. I couldn't picture someone saying that to anyone's face. BUT I grew up in Toronto, Canada where racism takes a much more subtle form. For example, someone might look extra long at an interracial couple but no one would ask why you were with that person. At least, not in my experience. But since the author is from the town she wrote about, I have to assume that it's VERY different there. I think whether you relate to these overt racism scenes will depend on where you grew up/where you've been.

The Last Bite.

I wish this book was around when I was a little odd black girl in school who wanted to be anyone but myself. When I was teased and ignored and blamed my skin. I wish I had been able to read this when I felt personally victimized for being black. I think I would have learned to love myself sooner in my own skin than I did.

When POC talk about representation this is what they mean. This feeling of relating so deeply to a character's experience because it is almost exactly your experience. To feel like a book is addressing you directly. THIS is why diversity in books matters. And this is why #ownvoices matters.

And I will promote this book like crazy if it means one black girl can read it and know that she's worthy in her own skin.

Steph Sinclair says

I hate to say it, but this was Terrible.

Alice Cai says

5* (Tbh I think the characters in this are great. All super interesting and entertaining.)
IT HAS A GOOD MESSAGE IN THE END OK

Wow...I don't even know where to start. I'm pretty sure this is racist. Every single negative stereotype about black and white people was in this. I loved when the white dude showed up and started talking about FOX news. On that note, THIS IS THE GREATEST OFFENSIVE HUMOR BOOK EVER. Every time something stereotypically fucked up was introduced I just smiled to myself. Oh god it was incredible. I TOOK THIS STORY AS SATIRE BY THE WAY. It was so offensive that it actually started to have a good meaning about being yourself by 1/3 in. Let me explain the story.

The main character's name is Toya short for Latoya. She is Black. She goes to a primarily White school and desperately wants to be White. She prays for Jesus to make her White...and BAM she's White. She appears Black to her family, but White to people outside. ALSO JESUS SHOWS UP WHEN SHE CALLS FOR HIM. It didn't happen as often as I would have liked and I thought Jesus would be like this hipster type character, but he was actually really nice.

WHEN SHE'S A WHITE GIRL NAMED KATARINA AND PRETENDS TO BE FROM KANSAS:
My eyes closed automatically. "Jesus." I'd said it before I'd realized.

"Excuse me?" Mrs. Roseland replied. My eyes opened to Jesus standing behind Mrs. Roseland, pointing at tiny Kansas City on the giant wall-sized map. Everyone gawked at me, and no one paid any attention to the magical man standing at the head of the class. Clearly, no one else saw him. I went with it.

"Oh, no worries, I would be happy to." I curtsied. It just seemed appropriate to curtsy. Jesus's finger vanished milliseconds before my finger touched the map. "Oh, I see! Missouri and Kansas share Kansas City."

Emily May says

"Hey, Jesus?" I whispered, looking out of my bedroom window. "I can't take this anymore. This filth. This curse. This... race."

"Please Lord, anything but black."

This could have been a very interesting book about race, racism (external and internalized) as well as self-image, but it just didn't work. It was messy, overly-simplistic and, if you'll excuse the pun, very black and white.

I've been counting down the days to this book's release. A story where a black girl prays to be white and has her wish granted sounded unique, brave and the perfect potential for a look at what it's really like to be a black teenage girl in a mostly white high school - and how different things are when she turns white. Toya's disdain for other black people, plus her disgust for her own skin and hair, and her idolization of white traits, is discomfiting, but I assumed it was going to lead into an important lesson about society's very white

standards of beauty, etc.

It didn't. I believe the author had good intentions, but the execution of this novel gets the heavy subject matter all wrong.

The first problem is that none of the characters, including Toya, are ever anything more than the colour of their skin. They are black or they are white, they "talk black" or they "talk white" and that's basically their personality. Rather than humanizing different races, it feels offensive to both, especially as **almost every single white person is openly racist** and just generally unpleasant to everyone. When Toya becomes the white Katarina and befriends two white girls, she sees them call a guy with Down Syndrome a "retard".

They're also ridiculously immature and say stupid things like:

*"I'm a size six," I said slowly, to make sure they understood.
They laughed like I'd made a joke. "Six is fat, Kat," said Amera. "And we can't hang with fat people. You want to aim for two or less."*

To be honest, the whole book **reads very young** and comes across in an immature, OTT and simplistic way.

Into White is a strange book in many ways. It's not serious enough to be a harrowing look at the issues, but it's not funny enough to be satirical. I think, maybe, it tries to be. But I personally didn't find it funny when Jesus literally appears in Toya's room and is like "Yo babe, you are special so I granted your wish and made you white". WTF?

The blurb itself asks "Toya is suddenly white, blond and popular. Now what?" and it's very telling. I got the feeling that the author wasn't quite sure how to answer that "Now what?" There obviously needed to be some challenging of the notion that white = better, but instead of taking an in-depth look at race and uncovering the ways our society hurts young black people, girls especially, the book instead opts for the message that **hey, white people got problems too. They starve themselves to be skinny and guys want to rape them because they're the hot ones.**

I'm not joking about this. The conclusions drawn from this interesting premise of a black girl becoming white is that rich white people's lives suck too. Huh? That's not even what we were talking about, is it? How did a book about how black teenagers view themselves become a lament on #whitepeopleproblems?

Beyond being a very simplistic portrayal of what it means to be black or white, it's also just kind of offensive, right?

Then there's a romance. A highly idealistic and unconvincing romance in which the black boy who bullied Toya before is suddenly sweet and understanding. It's all like this. Everything is too easy; nothing has any depth or complexity to it. A book with such a bold premise should challenge, make waves, make you think.

And it doesn't.

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Bodea says

This is either gonna be really good or really bad.

Caleb Roehrig says

This is a touching and heartfelt book, filled with humor and hope and some very important lessons about identity and learning to love yourself. INTO WHITE is a modern fairy tale by way of *The Twilight Zone* - a Cinderella story in which Cinderella discovers, only by having her most fervent wish granted, that she's been wishing for the wrong thing all along. It's a brilliant premise, and a novel that will speak to countless young people who are trapped in the ugly echo chamber of self-loathing.

Randi Pink brings a sense of fearlessness to this amazing debut - an unflinching portrait of racism (internal, external, institutional,) insecurity, and a desperation to fit in - but the book brims with humor as well. You'll find yourself laughing, even when your heart aches for Toya, a complex and believable heroine who makes terrible (and utterly relatable) choices, and then learns from the consequences. Her journey to self-acceptance, to seeing herself the way she should, is going to be so very valuable to young people of color.

For anyone who is interested in educating themselves about race and white privilege - regardless of ethnic background - this is a pretty great place to start. I would pair it with Karen Hattrup's thoughtful FRANNIE & TRU for a correlating perspective, to open a long-overdue dialogue about racial sensitivity. This is a tremendous novel, and I am so lucky to have had a chance to read it before it hits the shelves.

Merphy Napier says

My very first impression of this book was how racist it seemed to black people. Every black character was stereotypical and victimized. It honestly sounded like a white person trying to apologies for their race.

Then I looked up the author and found out that she was a black woman. So I said, "Hey, I have no idea what it's like to be black, maybe this is how it is for some people - especially in the deep south."

Then, when our main character turns white and we start interacting with white people each one was shallow, horrible, and unapologetically abusive. Then I realized that this was just a book of extremists. No matter what ethnicity we were looking at, everyone sucked and no one was the average person - they were all the exception to the rule - the worst of the worst.

So the first half of the book was enlightening to me. I got to see extreme racism and how it effected this one girl. That's why it got two stars. Because I've lived in a lot of different places all over America but I've never experienced people (of any race) who outright hated someone for their color. I know it's out there, but I've never seen first hand. And to experience what some people have to put up with is eye opening and healthy. Even though, honestly, the book is offensive to basically both races mentioned in it, I was able to get past that and appreciate what the author was doing.

Then we got to the second half of the book. Which was just pointless. It was like the point of the story was achieved but the page count was too small so she just added crap. It turned into just a regular novel written to young kids with a romance and non-important issues that seemed bigger than they were and then everything is resolved and wrapped up in a nice little bow. It was like reading two different books and it was weird. The first half of the book was majorly flawed but useful. The second half was simply not necessary.

But it's less than 300 pages so if you're interested give it a read and get out of it what you can.

<http://www.merphynapier.com/>

Annamaria says

"I'd never been so sure of anything in my life: White would be better. Now, I wasn't so sure."

I marked this book it as to read as soon as it showed up on Goodreads because a) the cover just caught my eye and didn't let go and b) I had just added Blackass to my list, which has a very similar premise, but being Into White a young adult I thought it would have been closer to me.

What I was expecting from this story was a deeper look into racial differences and racism in general, seen from the point of view of a young black girl who experiences the full spectrum of these differences by waking up one morning suddenly white. Now, our main character is LaToya Williams, a young girl who is bullied and ostracized on a daily basis at school, she has serious issues of low self esteem and a deep hatred for who she is and how she looks. On this particular day she goes to sleep, but not before having prayed with all her heart to just be white, she's so certain that by not being a black girl anymore she'll finally find happiness. Her prayer is granted, Jesus ascends from the Heavens and talks to her (which I genuinely found weird and parodical). He tells her that she was so sincere and hurt in her prayer that of all people he's decided to help her. She chooses the name Katarina and begins her new life as a white girl. Here I think that all the focus of the story gets lost. Toya/Katarina seems more concerned with boys, parties and the questionable companionship of the popular girls. She starts receiving so much attention now that she's white even though I believe that her looking like the stereotype of a Swedish girl, blonde, beautiful and blue-eyed helped her cause quite a lot. This attention though quite soon morphs into something sinister, Toya sees that from the other side of the looking-glass things *look* better but in reality are not. White girls starve themselves in order to maintain unattainable beauty standards and will speak ill of anyone who they find unworthy. White boys will try and rape you at every given occasion and treat you like dirt once they have not obtained what they wanted. And that's it. That's what I got from this story. Later on LaToya finds value in who she, and makes actually good points:

"They possessed power because we gave them power, not because they were worthy of it. The realization sent shock waves through me, lifting some of the burden that had been weighing me down."

But I think that the overall message that could have been explored in much more depth was just merely scratched, the writing felt amateurish and most of the time the plot kept running in circles without making any actual point. Pity.

India Brown says

This book was enjoyable, the concept was super interesting, but there are two problems I've had with this book! I feel as though Toya's exploration into loving her blackness was based more off of missing the LIFE she had while she was Black, not her actual blackness. On the contrary, I feel like the only thing keeping Toya from not liking being White was her personal White experience. There wasn't a clear moment, to me, where Toya thought she was beautiful because of her Blackness, not in spite of it.

I did love the exploration of Black Colleges/Fraternities + Sororities and would maybe like to see a sequel where she goes to college or something!
