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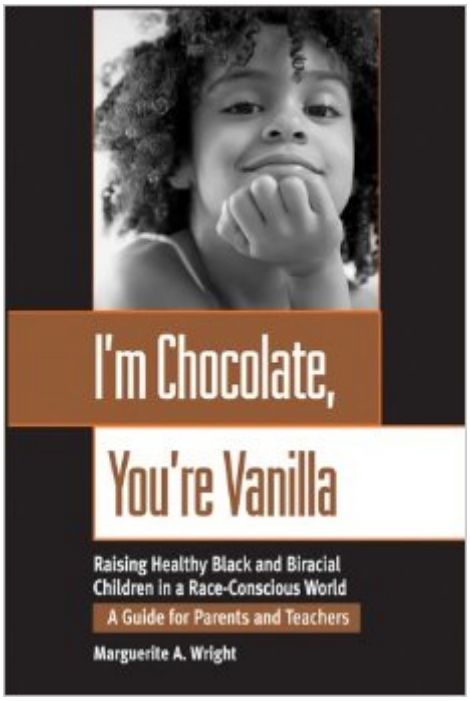
I'm Chocolate, You're Vanilla: Raising Healthy Black And Biracial Children In A Race-Conscious World



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Synopsis

This superb, rational, and highly readable volume answers a deeply felt need. Parents and educators alike have long struggled to understand what meanings race might have for the very young, and for ways to insure that every child grows up with a healthy sense of self. Marguerite Wright handles sensitive issues with consummate clarity, practicality, and hope. Here we have an indispensable guide that will doubtless prove a classic. --Edward Zigler, sterling professor of psychology and director, Yale Bush Center in Child Development and Social Policy A child's concept of race is quite different from that of an adult. Young children perceive skin color as magical--even changeable--and unlike adults, are incapable of understanding adult predjudices surrounding race and racism. Just as children learn to walk and talk, they likewise come to understand race in a series of predictable stages. Based on Marguerite A. Wright's research and clinical experience, I'm Chocolate, You're Vanilla teaches us that the color-blindness of early childhood can, and must, be taken advantage of in order to guide the positive development of a child's self-esteem. Wright answers some fundamental questions about children and race including: * What do children know and understand about the color of their skin? * When do children understand the concept of race? * Are there warning signs that a child is being adversely affected by racial prejudice? * How can adults avoid instilling in children their own negative perceptions and prejudices? * What can parents do to prepare their children to overcome the racism they are likely to encounter? * How can schools lessen the impact of racism? With wisdom and compassion, I'm Chocolate, You're Vanilla spells out how to educate black and biracial children about race, while preserving their innate resilience and optimism--the birthright of all children.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The book covers a lot of ground. But as a father of a biracial son the most relevant parts for me dealt with light-skinned and biracial children. An important theme of the book is "Don't racialize childhood": Young children should be shielded from our adult racial baggage for as long as possible. Wright believes that early teaching about race and racism tends to result in black children feeling needlessly powerless and confused about their place in this world.Wright encourages parents to raise older children in such a manner as to teach that integration and educational success are fully consistent with "being authentically black." On this important issue, she encourages parents to become aware and resist notions of black identity that rest on longstanding white racist stereotypes that have been internalized by many African Americans. For example, successful blacks (particularly successful black men) are often derided as "oreos" or "sell-outs."Sometimes Wright seems to downplay the degree to which residual white supremacy continues to constrict the lives of black children. For example, regarding the classic issue of black "self hatred," she argues that it is rare for young black children to be ashamed of themselves or their race unless they have been abused or explicitly taught racist attitudes by caregivers. On this point, her position differs somewhat from social psychological research that argues that black kids identify with whites because whites simply have more power, wealth, and social status in American society. Yet, I believe Wright is correct when she encourages parents not to get too bent out of shape if their child goes through a stage in which he or she insists that he or she is white.

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