



Half and Half: Writers on Growing Up Biracial and Bicultural

Claudine C. O'Hearn

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As we approach the twenty-first century, biracialism and biculturalism are becoming increasingly common. Skin color and place of birth are no longer reliable signifiers of one's identity or origin. Simple questions like What are you? and Where are you from? aren't answered--they are discussed.

How do you measure someone's race or culture? Half this, quarter that, born here, raised there. What name do you give that? These eighteen essays, joined by a shared sense of duality, address both the difficulties of not fitting into and the benefits of being part of two worlds. Danzy Senna parodies the media's fascination with biracials in a futuristic piece about the mulatto millennium. Garrett Hongo writes about watching his mixed-race children play in a sea of blond hair and white faces, realizing that suburban Oregon might swallow up their unique racial identity. Francisco Goldman shares his frustration with having constantly to explain himself in terms of his Latino and Jewish roots. Malcolm Gladwell understands that being biracial frees him from racial discrimination but also holds him hostage to questions of racial difference. For Indira Ganesan, India and its memory are evoked by the aromas of foods.

Through the lens of personal experience, these essays offer a broader spectrum of meaning for race and culture. And in the process, they map a new ethnic terrain that transcends racial and cultural division.

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