

# Kori D. Miller

Author \* Essayist \* Storyteller

## **Why did you write *My Life in Black and White: A Book of Experiences*?**

The short answer is that I wanted to learn how to self-publish an e-book, and later a POD book. The longer answer is that I wanted other interracial children to know that they aren't alone in their experiences. I also wanted my children to know my story without having to talk about it all of the time. They can simply read the book. If and when they have questions, I'll answer them.

## **Some reviewers described portions of your essays as “ranting” or sad. What do you think of that?**

Each essay was written at different points in my life spanning more than twenty years. Writing essays is, more than anything else, a way for me to process my emotions about an event or experience. In that way, it's like poetry. The sad comment(s) arise from the reader's reaction to the experiences I'm describing. They feel sad because I was treated a certain way. Empathy is a good thing. It helps to open our eyes to the world and see things from a different perspective. I wouldn't change anything about those negative experiences. They made me a stronger, more empathetic, and understanding person. I'm probably a humanist, in part, because of how I was treated by others.

## **How do you feel about the reviews you've received?**

Reviews are, for the most part, subjective. I'm pleased when someone tells me that something I wrote resonated with or helped them. If someone indicates that they don't like an essay, that's fine. I write personal creative non-fiction. I find feedback regarding structure and organization helpful, but other than that, a review is simply a person's opinion.

## **What's the most offensive question you've been asked about your race?**

That's a tough one. Unfortunately, there are several from which to choose. At the top is certainly the person who questions whether my children are mine. That speaks volumes. My husband never gets asked this question. A close second is “What are you?” And, maybe the people who assume I'm Hispanic because of the way I look.

## **How do you handle those awkward moments?**

It's important to assess the person's intent. Not everyone is trying to offend me. Some people truly don't know how to ask the question or what question to ask. I've often been asked, “What's your nationality?” when what the person really wanted to know was, “What's your race or ethnicity?” I also tend to use humor to diffuse a situation. A smile can go a long way to help effective communication.

**How do you identify yourself?**

It depends on the situation. I consider myself to be interracial because I feel it's more inclusive of my ethnic and racial background. I love the expression on people's faces when I explain that I'm at least half (probably slightly more, actually) Irish. Recently, my family learned all about my parent's racial/ethnic breakdown through DNA testing. It was fascinating and eye-opening. I'm proud of my heritage.

**What are people most surprised by when they speak with you?**

I think people are surprised to learn that my parents have been married for more than 43 years. They seem to expect that I come from a dysfunctional, broken home. That's their assumption before learning more about me or reading my book.

**You've only done one live interview about this book. Why?**

I don't like dwelling in dark places. For me, writing the essays was an outlet. Focusing my energy on negative experiences that are long-past isn't productive. I prefer looking for the upside whenever possible.

**Do you think race relations in America are better?**

Yes and no; Mostly, no, but ask me again in a few years. I think race is still a very difficult discussion especially between blacks and whites. To be honest, this is a question I've been asked repeatedly, but mostly from white Americans. I'm not sure what they're hoping I'll say.

**Are there benefits to being interracial?**

Absolutely! I consider myself a "blender." Because I look the way that I do, I visually fit into several different groups. I love that. In my experience, the way I look has aided my ability to communicate with numerous people from a variety of backgrounds.

People like to put everything into neat categories, and I like to challenge that perspective when it comes to race. I'm not black, I'm not white; I'm both. Deal with it. Some people really don't like that. They seem to want you to choose because "that's the way it is." Well, in my mind, it's only that way because people choose for it to be that way.