



Biracial in a monoracial world

A generation's search for freedom

Throughout my life, I have felt as though I lived in two worlds. I grew up in a two-parent, interracial household (Mom was white; Dad was black), with a biracial sister. Our house was in a quiet and safe community in Pittsburgh surrounded by “rough” neighborhoods. All my neighborhood friends were black, and, until recent gentrification efforts, the only white person I encountered at home was my mother. Meanwhile, I attended white Catholic schools. From elementary school to college, I sat in classrooms with a white population that (in my estimation) never dipped below 90 percent. Growing up, I bused from my white schools to my black neighborhood daily. Racial parity was the norm for me.

Having one foot firmly planted in each racial world meant that I was never fully a part of either. Black friends saw me as “not really black.” No less evident was partial rejection by my white friends. Sometimes they expected me to evoke my “black side” and fit into their preconceptions of blackness, such as when we played basketball or danced. To them, I was unthreatening because I was (here it is again) “not really black,” but it was equally apparent that I was “not really white.” I was both white and black, but “not really” either.

I tried many solutions to resolve this internal struggle. Assuming that the two races within me were competing for dominance, I performed according to my ideas of whiteness and blackness. I attempted to act out each race in various situations, but each attempt ended with me losing myself. After I took a race theory class in college, I concluded that I was a freak and would never fit into society's neat racial categories.

I lamented this freakishness of biracialism for a long time before embracing it as the unique call of Christ on my life.

By virtue of our freakish existence in a world defined by racial categories, biracial people are living proof of the absurdity of that world. In a society that preaches “not seeing color” as the solution to the social sin of racism, biracial people display so many “colors” that either ignoring or categorizing

them becomes impossible. These colors coexist side by side in a blessed harmony, exposing our culture's futility in dividing and pitting them against one another. Freed of definition, we are released into a beautiful, if often painful, ambiguity. Not limited by one vantage point, it's as if we were free to take in the whole world, to see its racialized identities in all their complexity. In that place beyond all social construction, we meet Christ.

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Biracial people exist in a world that tries to tear us apart, as if we were racial chimeras, and to bestow on us stereotypes that we have not earned. It is our calling to battle those misconceptions, to expose the world's foolishness, and to live in the freedom to which God calls all peoples of all races. As we do this, we who are biracial serve as witnesses to monoracial people. Because Christ absolves everyone from the expectations of “whiteness,” “blackness,” and any other racialness—without eliminating whatever history and meaning a person identifies in his or her own race(s)—we are now a people “free at last, free at last.” It's the kind of freedom that comes, not when you no longer see difference, but when you are finally able to see each person in his or her own particularity—and the multitudes contained therein.

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