

Manufacturing Interracial Family Memoirs for the Post-Racial Market (1996-2016)

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While the US Supreme Court decision *Loving v. Virginia* legalized interracial marriage in 1967, it was only in the 1990s that one could witness a broad paradigm shift toward the cultural legitimization of interracial kinship. Part of this cultural shift was the emergence of numerous autobiographical bestsellers that focused on experiences of interracial family life, ranging from James McBride's *The Color of Water* (1996) and Barack Obama's *Dreams from My Father* (1995/2004) to Bliss Broyard's *One Drop* (2008). Building on Julie Rak's research on the larger memoir boom since the 1990s, this paper subsumes these works under the umbrella term "interracial family memoirs" and unfolds their formulaic production in a market that capitalized on the fantasies of a post-racial America.

First, memoir is highlighted as a technology through which private individuals could assert interracial familial belonging in public. I identify and analyze a set of recurring autobiographical scripts and explain how interracial family memoirs consistently translate the previous taboo of "miscegenation" into the alleged fulfillment of civil religious mythology that celebrates "America" as a democratizing melting pot.

Second, I ask how the redemptive formula of the interracial family memoir is not only manufactured by a larger social desire for racial reconciliation, but also by the politics of specific publishing companies and, where applicable, their imprints. I track which publisher and imprint focused on what kind of memoir model, what kind of stories were actively recruited by agents, and what kind of stories were rejected to sell the idea of the interracial family as a unifying bridge across the historic color line.

Bio:

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