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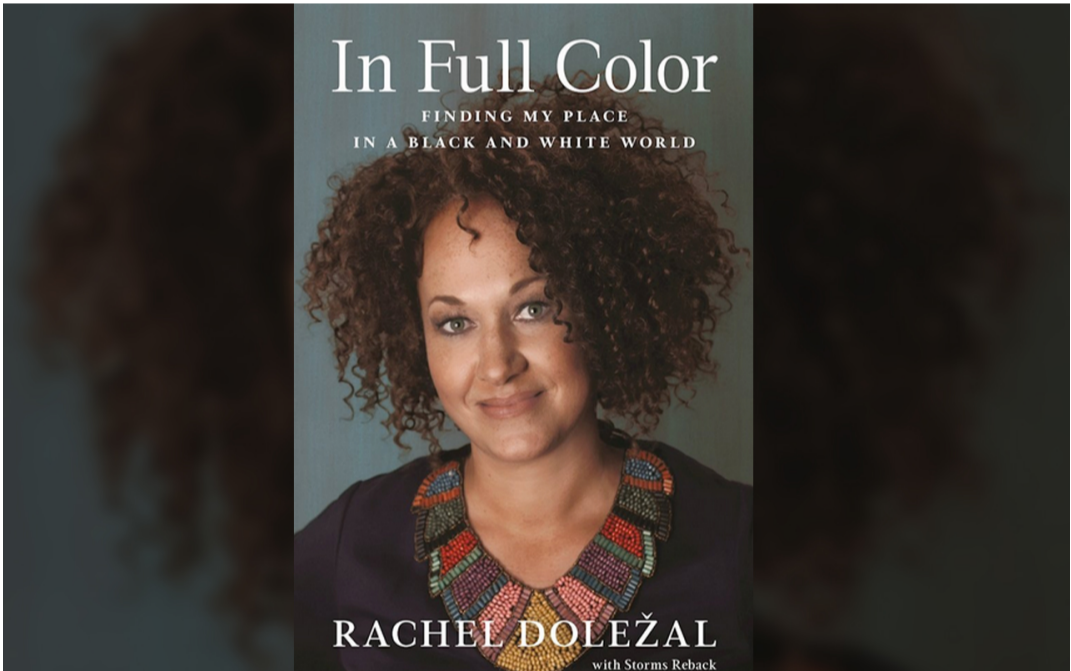
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In Response to Rachel Dolezal's Memoir on Racial Identity



By Neffer Kerr on November 8, 2016



In 2015, the world found out that our Saltine American “sista” Ms. Rachel Dolezal had been “passing” as a Black woman, as well as running the Spokane chapter of the NAACP.

Last week, it was announced that her memoir, *In Full Color: Finding My Place in A Black and White World*, on living as a Black woman will be out in the spring of 2017. Deep Sigh.

Before I even begin, let’s discuss some historical facts. While the NAACP mainly consists of African-American members, staff, and administrators, it should be understood that there were a significant amount of Caucasian supporters—and some founders of the organization. One woman in particular, Mary Ovington, was integral in assisting to establish the organization. So this is not a

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Passing. By now I'm sure that many have heard about passing. In the African-American community since the mixing of blood with slave and slave owners began, there has always been instances of what we have referred to as "passing." This was when certain members of our community were so light in complexion and their features so European in appearance, that they were able to pretend or "pass" and live as white men and women. Unfortunately, part of "passing" required severing all ties with family and loved ones and not procreating for risk of your bloodline being found out. Although many went undetected, a lot of passers dealt with a deep pain or shame for doing so, because most Black people could always tell when they saw someone who was "passing." It would appear that Ms. Dolezal has been "passing" in reverse.

So in 2015, the world found out that NAACP Spokane Chapter President Rachel Dolezal was actually a Caucasian woman who had been pretending to be Black. Now that the jokes are out of the way, let me make myself perfectly clear.

I do not care that she is White. Black and white people founded the NAACP. The whole purpose in having white allies during that time was because the socio-economic disparities and inequities that affected people of color were understood as unethical. This is still the case today.

But what's worse? A White woman who pretends to be Black while helping and making conditions better for Black people OR certain Black people with their natural Black asses, setting us back 50 years with every reality show and WorldStar video that gets uploaded? Definitely something to make you go hmmm...

The vanilla brothers and sisters who stand by us and our causes are necessary and valuable, let's not get that confused. However, I DO have a problem with the fact that Rachel Dolezal was LYING and using cultural appropriation to advance herself—like possibly taking scholarships granted under the pretext of being Black.

Why can't she just be who she wants to be and who she feels like she is on the inside?

GET THE ENTIRE HELL OUT OF HERE WITH THAT!

Herein lies the problem. People of African descent in this country have ALWAYS been the underdogs. As a whole, we have always had an inclination to be very accepting and understanding of people from other walks of life who want to be a part of us in some way, shape, or form. Many of us know that one White family in the “hood” who everyone is cool with because we all grew up together. Or the White aunt that we all love dearly because she has assimilated into the family for the last 27 years. So while it would be easy for Dolezal to be accepted by Black people with or without “blackface,” it will never be easy for us to be accepted in the same manner by her Caucasian counterparts. Usually, the one Black family in an all White neighborhood isn't received the way we would receive an all White one.

So here is why a ‘TransRacial’ argument is null void:

1) Y'all just made that s*** up 5 minutes ago, so stop it!

2) As a Black woman, I don't have the luxury of saying, “F*** this Black woman ish, I'm spraying myself down with some ‘Eau du White Privilege’ and having people call me Caitlyn!” My Black brothers don't have the luxury of yelling, “Don't shoot, I'm really a White man on the inside” when they are being profiled by certain officers who only see the color of their skin.

That is why I refuse to endorse any type of “transRacial” argument. It is foolery at its finest!

Rachel Dolezal could have easily just been like many of our assimilated vanilla brothers and sisters and said, “Look, I think Black women are beautiful. I love Black culture, and I identify the most with Black people and feel more comfortable with them” and just been herself. There was no need to fake the funk.

However, the fact that she knowingly pretended to be someone she is not is the problem. Doing that afforded her certain benefits, and the privilege of being included in certain spaces and conversations that she otherwise may have not been granted.

While I do understand that the confines of race were set up by society, in this particular scenario, I see the social construct of race differently when it comes to Dolezal being able to pick and choose what should and shouldn't apply to her based on of what race she “wants” to be.

Race is biological; it is NOT something you get to pick and choose.

The manipulation of race or ethnicity should not be allowed to serve someone's personal agenda, unless the manipulation of the social construct of race can be afforded to all people across the

It isn't that Rachel Dolezal can't be a successful and effective leader within the NAACP either. It's that she was lying about who she is as a person, which raises issues concerning her moral integrity based on such a long tenure of continued deceit.

Now if Dolezal's really a solid chick, she'll apologize in her memoir for being a liar, give zero damns about what anyone else says, keep being great at what she does for Black people, keep rocking her braids and Marley hair straw set—if *that's who she really identifies herself as*—and things will go back to normal. She'll just be that white chick down for the cause—we all know one. However, if she pulls the, "Don't punish me cause I'm a crying white woman" card then we will know it was all for show and she will reign "Catfish Queen Supreme."

Neffe Kerr is a writer based in Chicago. She also blogs for ChicagoNOW, discussing the current state of affairs, politics, entertainment, and opinion from a millennial perspective.

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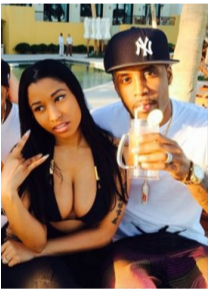
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