



The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother

By James McBride



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Look out for McBride's new book, *Five-Carat Soul*

From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Good Lord Bird*, winner of the 2013 National Book Award for Fiction, and *Kill 'Em and Leave*, a James Brown biography.

The incredible modern classic that launched James McBride's literary career.

Over two years on *The New York Times* bestseller list

Who is Ruth McBride Jordan? A self-declared "light-skinned" woman evasive about her ethnicity, yet steadfast in her love for her twelve black children. James McBride, journalist, musician, and son, explores his mother's past, as well as his own upbringing and heritage, in a poignant and powerful debut, *The Color Of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*.

The son of a black minister and a woman who would not admit she was white, James McBride grew up in "orchestrated chaos" with his eleven siblings in the poor, all-black projects of Red Hook, Brooklyn. "Mommy," a fiercely protective woman with "dark eyes full of pep and fire," herded her brood to Manhattan's free cultural events, sent them off on buses to the best (and mainly Jewish) schools, demanded good grades, and commanded respect. As a young man, McBride saw his mother as a source of embarrassment, worry, and confusion—and reached thirty before he began to discover the truth about her early life and long-buried pain.

In *The Color of Water*, McBride retraces his mother's footsteps and, through her searing and spirited voice, recreates her remarkable story. The daughter of a failed itinerant Orthodox rabbi, she was born Rachel Shilsky (actually Ruchel Dwara Zylska) in Poland on April 1, 1921. Fleeing pogroms, her family emigrated to America and ultimately settled in Suffolk, Virginia, a small town where anti-Semitism and racial tensions ran high. With candor and immediacy, Ruth describes her parents' loveless marriage; her fragile, handicapped mother; her cruel, sexually-abusive father; and the rest of the family and life she abandoned.

At seventeen, after fleeing Virginia and settling in New York City, Ruth married a black minister and founded the all- black New Brown Memorial Baptist Church in her Red Hook living room. "God is the color of water," Ruth McBride taught her children, firmly convinced that life's blessings and life's values transcend race. Twice widowed, and continually confronting overwhelming adversity and racism, Ruth's determination, drive and discipline saw her dozen children through college—and most through graduate school. At age 65, she herself received a degree in social work from Temple University.

Interspersed throughout his mother's compelling narrative, McBride shares candid recollections of his own experiences as a mixed-race child of poverty, his flirtations with drugs and violence, and his eventual self- realization and professional success. *The Color of Water* touches readers of all colors as a vivid portrait of growing up, a haunting meditation on race and identity, and a lyrical valentine to a mother from her son.

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The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother By James McBride Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #6294 in Books
- Brand: Riverhead Books
- Published on: 2006-02-07
- Released on: 2006-02-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .70" w x 5.20" l, .56 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 295 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Order this book ... and please don't be put off by its pallid subtitle, *A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*, which doesn't begin to do justice to the utterly unique and moving story contained within. *The Color of Water* tells the remarkable story of Ruth McBride Jordan, the two good men she married, and the 12 good children she raised. Jordan, born Rachel Shilsky, a Polish Jew, immigrated to America soon after birth; as an adult she moved to New York City, leaving her family and faith behind in Virginia. Jordan met and married a black man, making her isolation even more profound. The book is a success story, a testament to one woman's true heart, solid values, and indomitable will. Ruth Jordan battled not only racism but also poverty to raise her children and, despite being sorely tested, never wavered. In telling her story--along with her son's--*The Color of Water* addresses racial identity with compassion, insight, and realism. It is, in a word, inspiring, and you will finish it with unalloyed admiration for a flawed but remarkable individual. And, perhaps, a little more faith in us all.

From Library Journal

Like Gregory Williams's *Life on the Color Line* (LJ 2/1/95), these two memoirs describe growing up interracial from the perspective of the sons of African American fathers and white mothers. McBride, an accomplished journalist and musician, has viewed the yawning chasm of racial division from both sides and, despite carving out a successful life, has been scarred. Unlike Williams and Minerbrook, though, he focuses on a single, singular parent, a rabbi's daughter who later helped her husband establish an all-black Baptist church in her home and saw 12 children through college. His mother's own story, juxtaposed with McBride's, helps make this book a standout. Recommended for all collections. Minerbrook's father came from Chicago's African American high society, his mother from rural Missouri. He paints a detailed portrait of their family life, of relationships complicated by the fact that "human emotions, when mixed with racial issues, are prone to shatter like glass." Nearing middle age, he seeks out the white side of his family, who have rejected his mother and her offspring, and achieves a well-deserved catharsis. Still, his accounts of the almost unrelenting prejudice of white against black, black against white, light-skinned black against dark-skinned black, and so on are deeply disturbing. One is left to borrow the words of another recent commentator and say that this cancer does indeed make me want to holler. Highly recommended.

-?Jim Burns, *Ottumwa P.L., Ia.*

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Review

"[A] triumph."—*The New York Times Book Review*

"As lively as a novel, a well-written, thoughtful contribution to the literature on race."—*The Washington Post Book World*

"Inspiring."—*Glamour*

"Vibrant."—*The Boston Globe*

"James McBride evokes his childhood trek across the great racial divide with the kind of power and grace that touches and uplifts all hearts."—Bebe Moore Campbell

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jeffery Hall:

Here thing why this specific The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother are different and trusted to be yours. First of all reading a book is good nonetheless it depends in the content from it which is the content is as delightful as food or not. The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother giving you information deeper as different ways, you can find any publication out there but there is no reserve that similar with The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother. It gives you thrill studying journey, its open up your current eyes about the thing that will happened in the world which is perhaps can be happened around you. You can actually bring everywhere like in area, café, or even in your technique home by train. For anyone who is having difficulties in bringing the printed book maybe the form of The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother in e-book can be your alternate.

Frances Sitz:

A lot of people always spent their particular free time to vacation or even go to the outside with them family or their friend. Are you aware? Many a lot of people spent many people free time just watching TV, or playing video games all day long. If you would like try to find a new activity that's look different you can read any book. It is really fun to suit your needs. If you enjoy the book that you just read you can spent all day every day to reading a guide. The book The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother it is rather good to read. There are a lot of people who recommended this book. These were enjoying reading this book. When you did not have enough space to create this book you can buy the e-book. You can m0ore effortlessly to read this book through your smart phone. The price is not too costly but this book has high quality.

Regina Schubert:

The book untitled The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother contain a lot of information on that. The writer explains your ex idea with easy technique. The language is very clear to see all the people, so do certainly not worry, you can easy to read the idea. The book was authored by famous author. The author gives you in the new period of time of literary works. You can actually read this book because you can keep reading your smart phone, or program, so you can read the book with anywhere and anytime. In a situation you wish to purchase the e-book, you can start their official web-site and order it. Have a nice learn.

Douglas Brownlee:

That book can make you to feel relax. That book The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother was bright colored and of course has pictures around. As we know that book The Color of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother has many kinds or type. Start from kids until teenagers. For example Naruto or Detective Conan you can read and believe that you are the character on there. Therefore , not at all of book are generally make you bored, any it offers up you feel happy, fun and relax. Try to choose

the best book for you and try to like reading that.

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