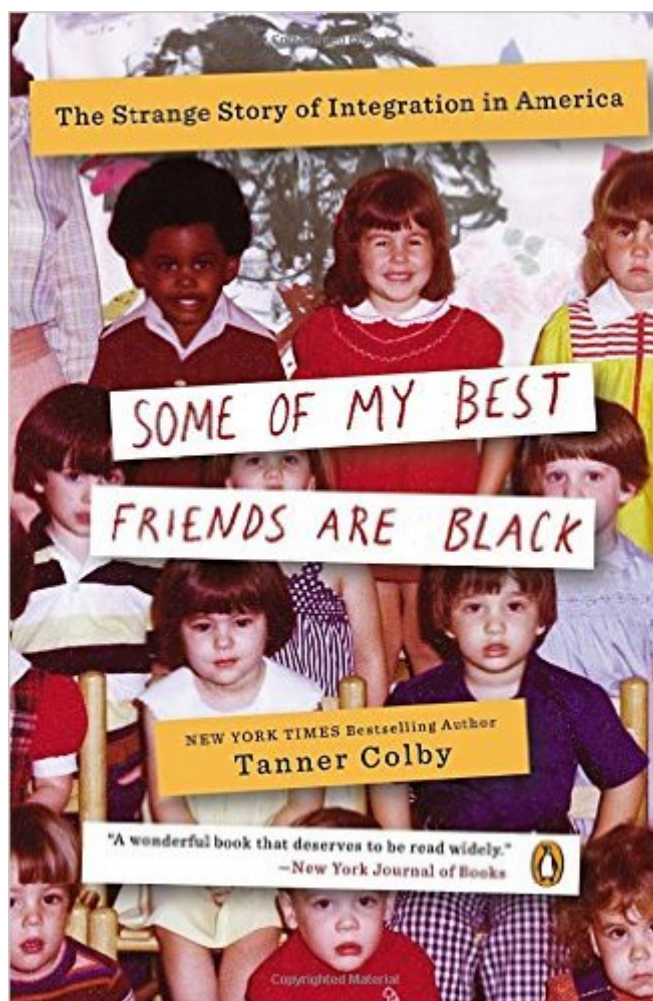


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Some Of My Best Friends Are Black: The Strange Story Of Integration In America



Synopsis

An irreverent, yet powerful exploration of race relations by the New York Times-bestselling author of *The Chris Farley Show*, Frank, funny, and incisive, *Some of My Best Friends Are Black* offers a profoundly honest portrait of race in America. In a book that is part reportage, part history, part social commentary, Tanner Colby explores why the civil rights movement ultimately produced such little true integration in schools, neighborhoods, offices, and churches—the very places where social change needed to unfold. Weaving together the personal, intimate stories of everyday people—black and white—Colby reveals the strange, sordid history of what was supposed to be the end of Jim Crow, but turned out to be more of the same with no name. He shows us how far we have come in our journey to leave mistrust and anger behind—and how far all of us have left to go.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Like many white liberals, Tanner Colby joined in with African Americans around the country, celebrating the election of "pretty much the awesomest guy to run for president in my lifetime, Barack Obama." However, as he looked around the room and around his life, he realized that he didn't have any black friends. This was the case with almost all of the white people he talked to. So he set out to write this book, exploring race in his own background and in American life. As he looked at the changing legal landscape, he realized that while under Jim Crow, the color line was kept in place with "terrorism, fear, and deliberate, purposeful discrimination," today life is

"engineered in such a way that the problems of race rarely intrude on you personally. . . . You can be white and enjoy the same isolation and exclusivity without having to do anything." For Colby, like many late 20th-century Americans, the story of race starts with forced integration of schools and the busing that made integration possible. He grew up in Birmingham, Alabama, which Martin Luther King, Jr., called the most segregated city in America. All over the South, school districts resisted integration. Breakaway school districts in white parts of town arose, as did, later, a huge number of private schools. White flight from school districts and from city cores led to even more segregation, making busing and forced integration more expensive and less practical, and, most tragically, led to the closing of many majority black high schools that had enjoyed success with black administrators, black teachers, and black students. And the dream of integration?

Cut to the Chase: Generally well written and interesting, this book is half-history, half-narrative: it starts really with the idea of how busing came about, takes us through White Flight, and quickly brings us to modern day, where we are more equal | but still not truly integrated. While the subject matter is interesting and Colby's writing is clear, the book sometimes meanders into interviews and narratives in a way that makes you lose forward momentum. Despite being very interested in the topic and the book in general, I put it down several times, and found myself skimming near the end | Greater Detail: Perhaps one of the most interesting sections to me was the introduction, or rather, how Tanner Colby went from writing about Chris Farley to realizing he'd been typecast already, and wanted a new project to sink his teeth into. He was an Obama supporter who realized that, despite the fact that we were on the eve of electing our first black president, he really had no black friends | he pitched the idea and a book was born. He goes back to his hometown, talks about Vestavia, Oxmoor, and the black kids he went to school with | he interviews one of his more successful classmates, a black girl who was taunted more by her black peers than her white classmates (and accused of being an "Oreo"), and later, interviews students currently attending his alma mater. One of the funnier bits is when a white student tries to explain what it's like; I'll give you the sample point: "I have a couple black friends, but, like, I know a lot of people in the school? I kind of feel like | like, not politically | I don't know how you'd say it | but having, like, right now, especially in this school, if you have a black person on a team, it's like | bonus points?

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