

## BOOK REVIEW

Reviewed by Ruffina Oserio for Readers' Favorite

**A White Duck in a Black Pond: Race, Identity, and Privilege** by Dane Wycoff delivers a compelling exploration of race and identity through the author's unique upbringing, mainly within a predominantly Black community, while struggling with his white appearance. The narrative follows Wycoff's childhood in the 1950s and 60s, depicting a turbulent journey marked by harrowing experiences with bullying, family dynamics, and evolving self-identification that ultimately leads to his struggle for acceptance in a racially divided society. Born to a White mother and an African American father, his white pigmentation gives him the shade of skin that makes him rejected by both whites and Blacks. As he faces the intersection of privilege and prejudice, the reader witnesses his transformation from a timid child dealing with violent neighborhood bullies to a young adult yearning for freedom and identity.

Dane Wycoff's memoir represents a microcosm of society's racial tensions. His mixed-race siblings face issues with their identities, each drawn into their battles against a culture that values the color more than the worth of individuals. Wycoff's white skin affords him privileges but isolates him from the community he identifies with. The themes of race, identity, and privilege resonate powerfully, reflecting not only the personal but also the systemic disparities faced by individuals categorized by race. His complex relationship with his estranged father, who embodies denial and suppression, is developed alongside the love and acceptance found in his mother and the community. *A White Duck in a Black Pond* brings to life the chaotic streets of Aliso Village in the 1950s and the suffocating walls of his grandparents' home. Wycoff's experiences are punctuated by stark violence and brief moments of childhood innocence. The memoir underlines the persistent theme of conflict between self and society, belonging and rejection. This is a well-crafted memoir with resonant themes, superb writing, and spot-on social commentary.