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Posted on 12 July 2017 By Natasha Diaz

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This is an OWNVOICES book, everyone I flew right through COLOR ME IN I even forgot to eat at one point and I wondered why I felt so weak This is a story mixed race girl learning

where she fits in We navigate through two different cultures as our protagonist as she wanders through heartbreak and joy This book pulled me into Naveah s world We really see how she grows This book is definitely going to change its readers A great debut of 2019 Please note that I received this book via NetGalley This did not affect my rating or review Color Me In has a young adult character that I think some readers will definitely enjoy We follow 15 year old Nevaeh Levitz who is dealing with the fall out of her parents separation She and her mother are living with her mother s relatives in Harlem while her mother tries to move forward Nevaeh feels trapped between the world she came from rich and affluent and where she starts to feel comfortable with her black relatives in Harlem and starts putting together the pieces of her mother s history Diaz gets into colorism, being biracial, racism, Judaism, and first love I think she does a great job juggling all of this, though at times parts of Nevaeh s journey feels a little forced Nevaeh feels like a person split in two Though she s biracial Jewish and African America she is still seen as a white girl living with her relatives in Harlem Her mother and father have separated with Nevaeh feeling lost due to her father being gone for two months while her mother sinks further into depression Nevaeh is finally getting to know her aunt, uncle, and three cousins We slowly find out that Nevaeh s father kept her mother from seeing her relatives and there definitely seems to be subtle and not subtle signs of racism coming from him And we get to see how Nevaeh finds out about where she came from on her mother s side and how she s not just one thing The secondary characters were developed well though I thought that Nevaeh s father was just a hot mess I wish that Diaz had delved into the father s actions because it was heavily implied he looked down upon his wife s blackness, but no one came right out and called his behavior racist You can see why Nevaeh s mother is depressed and realizing how she gave up her sense of self a black woman who was a child of immigrants to marry a rich man who wanted her to deny that part of herself in order to fit in We also have Diaz including a Rabbi Rabbi Sarah who starts to teach Nevaeh about Judaism and prepares her for her Bat Mitzvah I did find Rabbi Sarah to be a little unorthodox though with how she talks to Nevaeh I just once again don t know how realistic that would be with an adult and a 15 year old I thought that Diaz s relationship with her aunt was quite realistic and I felt pangs for Nevaeh trying to fit in with her cousins and the constant rejection from one of them I thought the writing was sharp in places, but honestly the way that Nevaeh and her cousins speak though sounded way too old Not that all teens run around speaking broken grammar, it just sounded like they were making too many speeches For example, when Nevaeh goes back to her school and addresses the principal and other adults I just felt like it was too try hard in that moment Also incorporating some of Nevaeh s writing poetry wrecked the flow for me at times I also thought including Nevaeh s mother s diary tripped things up a bit too The setting of Harlem came alive based on how Nevaeh sees it, places, and people Nevaeh s father s home seems separate from her and every time she goes back there it gets a little worse The ending leaves things slightly unfinished for Nevaeh and her father, but definitely in a solid

place with her mother, aunt, grandfather, and cousins. [Download Book] ? Color Me In ? Debut YA Author Natasha D Az Pulls From Her Personal Experience To Inform This Powerful Coming Of Age Novel About The Meaning Of Friendship, The Joyful Beginnings Of Romance, And The Racism And Religious Intolerance That Can Both Strain A Family To The Breaking Point And Strengthen Its Bonds Who Is Nevaeh Levitz Growing Up In An Affluent Suburb Of New York City, Sixteen Year Old Nevaeh Levitz Never Thought Much About Her Biracial Roots When Her Black Mom And Jewish Dad Split Up, She Relocates To Her Mom S Family Home In Harlem And Is Forced To Confront Her Identity For The First Time Nevaeh Wants To Get To Know Her Extended Family, But One Of Her Cousins Can T Stand That Nevaeh, Who Inadvertently Passes As White, Is Too Privileged, Pampered, And Selfish To Relate To The Injustices They Face On A Daily Basis As African Americans In The Midst Of Attempting To Blend Their Families, Nevaeh S Dad Decides That She Should Have A Belated Bat Mitzvah Instead Of A Sweet Sixteen, Which Guarantees Social Humiliation At Her Posh Private School Even With The Push And Pull Of Her Two Cultures, Nevaeh Does What She S Always Done When Life Gets Complicated She Stays Silent It S Only When Nevaeh Stumbles Upon A Secret From Her Mom S Past, Finds Herself Falling In Love, And Sees Firsthand The Prejudice Her Family Faces That She Begins To Realize She Has A Voice And She Has Choices Will She Continue To Let Circumstances Dictate Her Path Or Will She Find Power In Herself And Decide Once And For All Who And Where She Is Meant To Be This is probably closer to a 4.5. Some books just surprise you in the best of ways When I added this book to my TBR, I only expected to read a nice YA coming of age contemporary, but wow did I get so much I m emotional and delighted and thoroughly impressed, so let me share my thoughts Nevaeh s life is completely turned upside down due to her parent s separation and she is struggling to find her place in this new reality She wants to fit in with her mother s very religious Baptist family living in Harlem, but she has never the chance or maybe even desire to explore her Black identity before, so she doesn t know how to do it She tries to channel her confusion, her rage and her feelings into her writing but she is still afraid to show it to anyone But slowly with the help of her extended family, the friends she makes in the vibrant community and getting to know her mother better through her old journal, she starts expressing herself through spoken word poetry She is also initially hesitant to understand her Jewish identity but that slowly changes because of the influence of the very interesting Rabbi Sarah I liked how the author shows us all facets of Nevaeh she isn t perfect, just a realistic teenager with faults, who doesn t know everything, makes mistakes and can t even understand why she is wrong but ultimately she owns up her mistakes and tries to correct them, strives to be better Every other character in the book also has their own arc They all influence Nevaeh in her growth, but they have lives and their own issues independent of her That s why this book is reading about the daily lives of a family and their friends, rather than just about the main character Her mother s despair because of the divorce and her deep rooted anxieties are

cleverly integrated into the story through the journal, which was also probably one of the hardest parts of the book to read. Jordan is her vivacious cousin who has dreams and ideas for her future, but has to constantly fight for her opportunities because the world doesn't think a young Black woman deserves them. Stevie is Nevaeh's best friend and I just adored his wit and his confidence to go for what he wants. Her aunt Anita comes across as abrasive but they are so many layers to her character and it was beautiful to get to know her. And Rabbi Sarah is one of my favorites, faithful but also open-minded, she is charming and delightful but there's also a deep sadness in her. She plays such an important part in the book and I would have loved to get to know her better, but the way her arc is written is kinda perfect for this story. I wasn't sure what to think of Jesus initially but I liked the developing romance. He is also probably one of the most sorted characters in that he knows what he wants from his future and has worked hard for it, despite the world trying to snatch it away from him. Abby is the typical mean girl classmate and Ashleigh is the usual evil stepmother while I understood the parts they played in Nevaeh's character growth, they both didn't feel as real as all the other characters in the book and that's probably my only issue with this book. There are so many themes explored in this book, I'm just in awe of the author for being able to talk about all of them in a sensitive manner. The main theme is obviously the issues faced by biracial people, their confusion with finding their place and trying to fit in with both sides of their identity. Both Nevaeh and Stevie have similar kinds of issues personally, but they also affect them differently in the outside world because Nevaeh is white passing and he is not. She makes mistakes and is forced to check her privilege many times, sometimes brutally until she realizes that her privilege allows her to voice her thoughts in a safer manner and sometimes, she has to use this privilege to just listen and give the opportunity to other marginalized voices to speak. There are just so many instances of racism in the book, both micro-aggressions and some outright ones we see how it chips away at the soul of the person who has to encounter them everyday but still wake up and go through it all over again, knowing that their life maybe cut short with even a little misstep. This harsh reality is depicted with raw honesty in the book and it just pained me so much. On another note, the despair of having to go through a divorce after having depended on a person for years is also depicted in a very real manner. The one part which I felt really hard though was, how deep it cuts to lose a childhood best friend and having to go through life without being able to share everything with them. As a single child like Nevaeh, I understood her pain all too well even though my circumstances were different, but I think books should highlight the deep impact that friendships have on us and how losing them affect us even profoundly than a romantic breakup. Finally, I just want to say that pick up this book and I promise, you will be affected. It is brilliant, insightful and heartfelt and you just can't help but feel the raw emotions that the characters are feeling. It clearly shows that this is the author's lived experience, a fictionalized version of her own life which makes every word feel very honest. The author's note at the end is even moving. However, this is a very character-driven,

slice of life kinda story and there is not much of a plot, but it didn't impact my reading experience at all. It's an amazing debut and I can't wait to see what the author has for us in the future. The story is a good coming of age tale, asking readers to respect boundaries and understand that labels cause harm than good. The main character requires a good deal of space to figure what she wants and how her voice will handle society on her own terms. While slow sometimes, I would recommend this story to those seeking validation in a world offering little. *COLOR ME IN* is rhythm. Music. Poetry. It's a thrumming in your chest, a pulse in your veins. Diaz's words reveal the power of Nevaeh, a young woman torn between two worlds, not knowing who she is or where she fits in, as she fights against the privilege that comes with her skin. It's filled with strong female characters who challenge Nevaeh's sense of normalcy, and young males who prove that societal expectations are wrong when it comes to men of color. As Nevaeh learns about her Jewish faith from her father's side, and her Baptist faith from her mother's side, she also catches a glimpse into the reasons behind her parents' crumbling marriage as she reads through her mother's old journal. *COLOR ME IN* is a poignant, important story filled with faith and family that will challenge your experiences in every way as you read. Highly, highly recommend. I all but stood up and cheered when I got to the end of this book about a teenage girl coming of age in circumstances that were infinitely relatable to me, having grown up in a blended, multicultural family. Nevaeh processes trauma, navigates her identity, comes to terms with her own privilege, and discovers a sense of self all in the midst of a narrative that will have you laughing and crying sometimes at the same time. This is courageous story telling and I can't wait to read from Natasha Diaz in the future. 4.5 stars. ARC provided by the publisher and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. You know when you read those contemporaries that you don't expect to relate to on a heart aching level, but they just surprise you in so many ways. That was *Color Me In* for me. I requested this book from Netgalley for 1. that beautiful cover and 2. because I think it is important to keep my reading diverse and read ownvoices stories from many different kinds of people. *Color Me In* follows a mixed race Jewish African American girl in high school whose parents have just separated. The book is about her journey finding where she fits in in all the different aspects of her life, coming to terms with her parents not being exactly who she thought they were, friendship, and first love. I was hooked on this story from the very beginning. I've never experienced a lot of the things Nevaeh experiences in this book, but I immediately related to her problems with her parents. I don't think I have ever read a book about someone whose parents are currently going through a divorce and it just continued to pull at my heart strings in a very validating way. We love getting validation from books. That was, of course, not the only thing I adored about this book. I cannot believe this was a debut. The writing was just absolutely exquisite. It had such a good pace and I loved the way the chapters were set up. There was always something happening in the plot. Sometimes it felt like there was so much at once, but I thought it was done very well and that is very realistic for the mind of a high school girl.

My only issue with this book is I felt the main antagonists were a bit too one note and could have been fleshed out a little. Sometimes these high school girls just felt like super villains and I think some development from those characters would have been amazing to the plot. Overall, I just really loved this book and I highly recommend it.

We all make assumptions about each other. It doesn't matter if you're family or a stranger on the subway we do it everywhere, even here, in our safe spaces, where we're supposed to love each other up and down. With straight brown hair and pale skin, no one realizes 16 year old Nevaeh is half black. She's not popular at her white NY prep school and with her black fam, she sticks out like a sore thumb. So where does she fit in? When her dad, white, Jewish, and filthy rich is caught cheating on her mom, Nevaeh moves in with her family in the city with her grandpa, aunt, and two very opinionated teen twin cousins causing Nevaeh to confront her biracial heritage and her privilege for the first time.

Color Me In is a truly phenomenal debut, following a richly complex character who struggles to figure out who she is. An ode to the multitudes girls of color contain within themselves, I was deeply impressed by how many themes operated inside *Color Me In*. I was impressed at Diaz's ability to balance those themes and to fully explore each. Some of my favorite elements were:

- 1 Loving a parent with deteriorating mental health
- 2 Balancing multiple ethnic and religious identities
- 3 Coming of age
- 4 First love
- 5 Bullying

The writing was lyrical, but easily digestible with hilarious dialogue which alleviated tension brought in by heavier discussion topics. I enjoyed moments where Nevaeh has to confront her privilege and how to use it so much. She is a regular kid she makes mistakes, but it was elating to watch her learn from them. Diaz gives us a refreshingly real story about growing up, especially in a New York setting. I found myself relating so much to Nevaeh as someone who is both biracial and a New Yorker. It pulled at my heart to watch her learn how to love, how to be a good friend, how to be who she is, and to learn about how the world sees her.

For *Color Me In* I only have two points of criticism:

- 1 Didn't like the way fat characters were described
- 2 All of the female antagonistic characters embodied either the airhead or the she devil stereotype. The attitude that female villains should be either hyper sexual or unintelligent is outdated and should be retired from our literature.

Other than those things, I dig this story and will be:

- 1 Buying it
- 2 Reading it again and again.

4.5 stars

People are always going to want to split you into pieces so they can feel comfortable with who you are, and I am sorry no one ever sat you down to prepare you for that. Nevaeh is caught between two worlds. Her parents have separated and so not only does she have to deal with that trauma but they are apart of two different cultures and so Nevaeh feels like she is not enough of one or the other to lay claim to those identities and speak for them. She's also grappling with the privileges afforded to her because of her proximity to whiteness. I think this book will resonate with teens going through a similar situation. It was interesting the way her parents separation was presented. No information was given to Nevaeh. She just had to deal with the aftermath. That's how some kids of divorced separated parents feel. They are just expected to deal with it with no explanation or time to process their feelings. I

was so thankful Nevaeh had her Auntie Anita because my adult brain kept screaming Why is no one talking to Nevaeh about what it going on We all have that one Auntie in our family that at first may seem a bit mean but in the end she had our back all along When she gave Nevaeh the auntie speech, I felt that in my soul One of the hidden gems in this novel is the poetry I loved it every single time it popped up It was like a little surprise on the page Reminded me of my teen self when I used to spend hours in the field adjacent to our neighborhood writing poetry to deal with my feelings about the things going on in my life It just may be my favorite part of the book. **Bold Poignant Inspiring** A love letter to those who may be need to hear that it s okay to be their authentic self That it s okay to be a part ofthan one world You can choose both. P.S And since I m a potterhead I appreciated all the Harry Potter references. Thank you to the publisher for providing me with eARC to review.



And

I throw
my arms
out, And
I scream
so

they
can hear
me, And

I match
the wind
and
rain
in
their
fervor,

**Color
Me In**

And
I
stand
on

the other
side
a Novel

of the
shadows,
And I
refuse
to be
washed away.

**Natasha
Diaz**

New Post

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The Hunted
Holes
Knight of the Purple Ribbon
Cruel Beauty
The Titan's Curse
The Final Reckoning
The Great Hunt
To Darkness Fled
SilverFin
The Oaken Throne
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Mattimeo

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Lord Brocktree
The Hero of Ages
The High King
The Pull Out Method