

Book: Skin color not arbiter of morals

"Making Friends with Black People"

By Nick Adams ;
Dafina Books ; Paperback;
\$14.00; 193 pages
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*Review by Kam Williams
Special to Sentinel-Voice*

"NIGGER. White readers, I should warn you right now that if reading this particular epithet makes you un-

comfortable, you're going to be in for a rough ride. In order to get you used to seeing it, I thought I would go ahead and desensitize you a bit. Feel free to say it out loud...

Nigger... nigger... nigger... nigger... nigger... nigger..."

I suppose any subject is fair game when a comedian decides to write a humor book. Perhaps this explains why Nick Adams would open his how-to primer designed to help White folks feel comfortable around African-Americans with a shocking chapter devoted to the N-word.

Adams, a stand-up who's appeared on "BET Live" and on Oxygen's "Girls Behaving Badly" blames his elders for the explosion of the use of the term among the Hip-Hop Generation.

"Where the hell do they think we got it from?" he asks. "We didn't invent the [N-word]. We learned it from them."

Excuse me, but isn't it possible that Adams was raised by a couple of self-hating ignoramuses, and that there are many other Black households where uttering the epithet would result in your having your mouth washed out with soap?

"Of course, we wanted to use it when we grew up," he continues. "What did they

expect us to do, treat the word like we did religion, and just forget about it once we grew up and moved away from home?" Now, that's a hypocritical and very revealing comment, for the author is simultaneously saying he finds it easy to ignore God, but that he can't help but compulsively express the N-word.

Next he says, "Older generations tend to view history through rose-colored glass," implying that people my age look back a little too fondly upon the Civil Rights Era and that we ought to get with the program and accept the N-word as a part of everyday conversation.

Notice that Nick never indicts Whites as the source of the slur; in fact, he alleges that Blacks were upset when Caucasians stopped using it. So, needing someone to complain about, the old fogeys began unfairly taking their frustration out on their kids for only echoing what they'd heard around the house.

This opening chapter closes with what he calls a "Niggerlogue" in which he reminisces that the first nick-

name his father gave him was "Big Nigger."

I don't know, maybe the jokes were lost on me, because Mr. Adams' intended audience is White people. I never found myself even cracking a smile while perusing the pages.

I just came away praying that no one White who might want to befriend me reads this trash and takes any of his inane advice to heart. I remember once hearing Ralph Nader remark that he was wary of comedy because it was often used as a means of communicating hateful ideas you couldn't say in a direct manner.

For this reason, I am concerned about the damage that "Making Friends With Black People" could cause, even in the name of laughter. For the best thing about it is its inviting cover, which features the author's head superimposed on that of the farmer holding the pitchfork in Grant Wood's classic portrait "American Gothic."

The lesson learned here is that you still can't judge a book by its cover any more than it's fair to think you know all about a person from their skin color.

Will.i.am questioned in Berlin nightclub brawl

BERLIN (AP) - Black Eyed Peas frontman will.i.am was being investigated by authorities in a nightclub brawl that broke out at an after-show party, police said.

Will.i.am, whose real name is William Adams, was allegedly part of a fracas that broke out last Thursday at Berlin's downtown 40seconds club, said police spokesman Ronny Frank.

From what police know, a fight broke out about 1:30 a.m. Thursday between the club's doorman and the group's bodyguard, Frank said.

"A champagne bottle was used, but as far as what the singer did, there are various reports that contradict one another, and it's not yet clear what happened," Frank said.

All three men were taken into custody for statements and contact details and then released, he said. Police were investigating all three on possible charges of causing bodily injury and causing serious bodily injury.

Police did not release the names of the doorman and the bodyguard.

There was no immediate comment from the Black Eyed Peas, and no statement was posted on their website Friday, tabloid newspaper B-Z reported. The Black Eyed Peas were scheduled to play in Montreux, Switzerland, on Saturday, and it wasn't clear where they could be contacted for comment.

According to the newspaper, the band and their entourage had packed the VIP section of the club, but their bodyguard kept waving in more people.

Club manager Torsten Schermall said the fight broke out after his security guard told the bodyguard not to let any more people through.



William Adams is part of Black Eyed Peas.

"He didn't pay any attention," Schermall was quoted as saying.

Photos published by the newspaper included one photo of the doorman — blood covering his face — grappling with the bodyguard.

Many bottles and glasses were thrown around, the newspaper said. "It was a witches' cauldron," 26-year-old actress Romina di Lella, who was in the VIP area, said. "I haven't ever seen anything so brutal. They were at each other for five minutes."

Brand

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ranked No. 6 on Agenda's report.

Louis Vuitton, which tied with Cristal at No. 8 on the list, declined to comment on the association. So did No. 2 Nike.

John Crawford, a spokesman for Bentley Motors (No. 4) released a short statement that said in part that the company "believes that increased interest in the [brand], from any [market], is good for the brand as a whole."

An executive at Mercedes-Benz, part of DaimlerChrysler AG, viewed the attention from a business standpoint.

"Hip-hop is really a language of the younger generation and it's always great for a brand to be relevant with

the younger or next generation of buyers," said Kass Dawson, who heads emerged markets at Mercedes-Benz.

"We consider it a compliment of the highest order," Dawson said, adding that Mercedes has sponsored events related to awards shows and hip-hop magazine parties.

"It really speaks to what our brand stands for — the success, status, aspirations."

Cadillac spokesman Kevin Smith gave props to celebrities, including rappers, and their fondness for the Escalade for the company's resurgence. Cadillac has loaned vehicles for placement in videos and movies, he said.

For the prototype of the 2007 Escalade, the company

invited about 35 celebrities to an exclusive viewing.

Even Rouzard, the executive atop the Cristal brand, seemed to realize the potential impact a boycott by hip-hop devotees would have on his bottom line.

After Jay-Z announced the boycott of Cristal, Rouzard issued a statement to "set the record straight and express our gratitude that people from a diversity of cultures and countries have been enjoying our wine."

Rouzard characterized Jay-Z's accusations as "unjust."


Moreover, Rouzard said, the company has been "a little bit dismayed at seeing our wine sprayed around in celebration instead of being savored in a glass," in reference to scenes in rap videos.

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