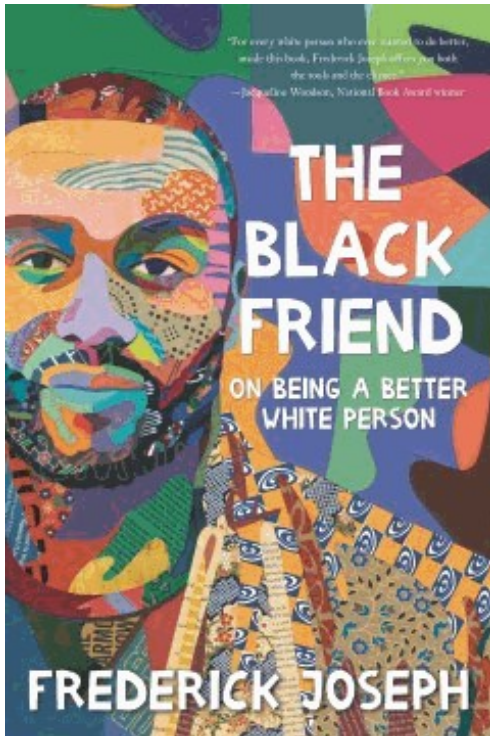


THE BLACK FRIEND: ON BEING A BETTER WHITE PERSON



Young Adult

By Frederick Joseph

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Book Summary:

The book teaches young adults about the ideologies of white privilege, anti-racism, cultural appropriations, and others.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains controversial social, political, and racial commentary; inflammatory racial commentary; references to racism; mild/infrequent profanity and derogatory terms; and violence.

2 / 5

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

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preface	<p>When I wrote this book, I had one goal in mind: try to help make things better. In the case of racism and white supremacy, the word better is difficult to define. This is because, as discussed throughout this book, racism and white supremacy influence literally everything.</p> <p>...Racism and white supremacy are the root causes of world-altering moments, such as the murder of Michael Brown in 2014, as well as subtle moments, such as a white woman clutching her purse closely when I enter an elevator.</p> <p>In the first case, better would be defined as the police no longer murdering Black people. In the other, better would be defined as white women no longer leaning into racist stereotypes about Black men.</p> <p>...But both cases do share one common denominator: the humanity of Black people being stripped away.</p> <p>...My hope is that this book will be a tool to help others see and understand the obvious and not-so-obvious ways in which racism and white supremacy not only have infected our society but are actually the foundation of it.</p> <p>...As I write this, you are still too young to understand that to be Black in America is to be left with two options: either you pretend oppression isn't happening or you fight back.</p> <p>...What's destroying the house—what's destroying us—is racism and white supremacy.</p> <p>...Such is the reality in this land where Black people are murdered for simply existing.</p> <p>...Why she didn't object when I told her I was going to write a book to help white people unlearn white supremacy.</p> <p>...The same pandemic that has ravaged the Black community more than any other, because of the historic inequities in America.</p> <p>...Trying to make sure her eldest son doesn't become another victim of a virus that has already disproportionately decimated the Black community and furthered the health, wealth, and education gaps in this country.</p> <p>...Never before have we seen people so overtly weighed down by this many oppressive systems at one time. While we have to worry about losing our jobs and feeding our children during a pandemic, we also have to worry about those same children being shot by the police while playing outside.</p> <p>...But Black bodies being left hanging from trees or dead in the street is an older and more insidious problem, and the opportunity to defeat it has once again presented itself.</p> <p>...We don't get to unpack our fear of white supremacists lashing out while at these protests, not while Ahmaud Arbery is gunned down by white supremacists for simply jogging. White supremacy. Racism. Police brutality. A global pandemic. Staggering job losses. A white supremacist in the Oval Office.</p> <p>...In every state and around the world, people have begun to rise against the tyranny of white supremacy.</p>
1	For me, that has meant spending a lot of my time as an adult discussing white supremacy, white privilege, and the negative aspects of whiteness in general.
2	But, as a Black person, I speak on behalf of people of color (except those of us on Fox News) when I say: WE HAVE A WHITE PEOPLE PROBLEM.

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3	<p>I define anti-racists as people who understand that white supremacy isn't something to empathize with Black and brown people over. It's a destructive system and existence that white people created, and anti-racists are actively trying to end it. ...You'll notice I don't capitalize the w in white when referring to white people, though I capitalize the B when referring to Black people. This is a personal preference, because white people are simply defined by the color of their skin, while Black people are a cultural and ethnic group.</p>
15	<p>The world needs you to step up, or get out of the way. (Imagine me saying this in my most superheromonologue-like voice.) Particularly if you are a white person. The world needs to be better, and because of the power that white people hold in our society, much of that change needs to start with white people. The oppression that white people have inflicted on people of color since, well, damn, the very inception of this country can only be undone by the oppressors (white people).</p>
17	<p>WE WANT YOU TO SEE RACE</p>
24	<p>There are two sayings that almost every person of color has heard various times in their life: "Why does everything have to be about race?" and "I don't see color." These sayings are directly responsible for many of my migraines over the years, and more important, they are part of the reason for a lack of racial progress in this country.</p>
27	<p>I've come to realize that a fear of accountability is why white people say things like "I don't see color" and "Why does everything have to be about race?" Because to see my color, to see my culture, to see my race, would also mean taking responsibility for how white people have historically treated people my color, with my culture, from my race. ...More important, talking about and combating racism doesn't "make everything about race"—racism makes everything about race, and racism can be found in every part of society. From our educational system to our legal system, nonwhite people are disproportionately mistreated and oppressed.</p>
28	<p>One of my favorite things about Angie is how her work is authentically Black and relatable while holding white people and oppressive systems accountable. ...She experiences, of course, racism, police brutality, systemic racism. All of these things affect her life, affect her world.</p>
31	<p>I'm going to assume (hope) that you've heard of Black Lives Matter—the movement that started in the wake of the murder of Trayvon Martin, which seeks to draw attention to the disproportionate degree of police violence experienced by Black people in this country. You've probably also heard of All Lives Matter, which might seem like a fairly neutral statement but is actually anything but. (And then there's Blue Lives Matter—the movement to remind everyone that white killer cops are people, too.) All Lives Matter is directly related to white people not wanting to see color and not wanting to make things about race. It's an effort to derail the people who are saying that Black lives matter while they are burying children like Trayvon Martin and Tamir Rice. It's an effort to neutralize the message that we need to uplift the importance of Black lives because so many people act as if those lives don't count. I want you to see my race, and I want you to see the race of other people of color and the traumas</p>

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	many white people have caused us, and I want you to own those traumas and to be better.
35	As I look back, another reason I hate that white kids called us Oreos is because many white people hate, and I mean HATE, being referred to as foods. If you call a white person “mayonnaise” or “mayo,” many of them will lose it. But there is nothing more intense (or funnier, assuming you’re at a safe distance) than seeing a white person lose their damn mind about being called a “cracker.”
38	A large part of white privilege is that it steers white people toward their cultural comfort zones. In countries like America, where most aspects of culture are controlled by white people, their culture has become the norm or mainstream. In America, almost everything you can think of has been created to be comfortable and familiar for white people, and everything else is usually “other,” “diverse,” or “different.”
50	It’s important not only for white people to see that people of color exist in various ways; it’s also important for people of color to see themselves that way.
54	If I were to list my top five films, The Godfather one and two (we don’t speak of three) would be in that group. And the one time that they referenced Black people in either of those films, they were using the word “nigger.”
55	I was asked whether I wanted to censor it, or write “n-word,” since the book is intended for a white audience, who shouldn’t be saying that word. But that isn’t authentic. So I will say this: if you’re not Black, don’t say it.
68	If the president of the United States (I’m referring to Trump) and the media consistently call Mexicans dangerous, rapists, and thieves, for example, a person hearing this could assume it’s true and therefore expect every Mexican to be dangerous, a rapist, or a thief. So any Mexican they find to be an upstanding person is now the exception rather than the rule.
70	What I realized was that the more well spoken I was, the more polished I was, the more put together I was, it went from white people’s surprise to their disdain, because as much as they think they like a well-spoken Black person, you go from the well-spoken negro to the uppity negro very quick, and what they don’t like is a Black woman that is too free, too well spoken, too this, too that.
71	Often when white people find themselves in situations where people of color are simply better at something, they become resentful and sometimes even dangerous. ...But no one assumes, just because some white people are thieves or are uneducated, that most if not all white people share these traits, and that those who don’t are the exceptions.
72	Too often people of color are not treated as people at all but rather as ideas: the sum of what people have assumed and the little they’ve seen in passing. It’s not only unfair; it is deeply racist and can be extremely detrimental. This dehumanization is part of why people have been enslaved and why people are killed by trigger-happy police officers.

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74	<p>The difference in white people making and verbalizing those assumptions is that in our society, white people often exist with privilege and power in spaces that people of color don't.</p> <p>...This is how systemic racism works. It's not just a matter of blatant racism; it's also about conditioning people to think less of themselves.</p>
75	<p>We're not an assumption, we're not words like "thug," we're not a statistic, we're not a part of your imagination, and we are certainly not to be held to white standards.</p>
77	<p>As I mentioned once or twice (maybe a billion times), my high school was much whiter than I was used to. My middle school, however, was predominantly Black, though many of the white kids were still very popular—and very problematic</p>
87	<p>[In school] you're going to learn about white people. You're going to learn about the white history makers.</p> <p>You're going to learn about the white politicians. You're going to learn about everybody of note that we think needs to be told to you who happens to be white. If they're Black, if they're brown, if they're Asian, if they're Native American, [then, according to the schools] it's not as much of worth to you.</p> <p>...What Xorje is talking about here is white standards. And not just white standards, but white heterosexual cisgender standards. If you deviate from any of these "norms," you're considered "other."</p>
90	<p>Now in the age of Brexit, people are way more vocal about their xenophobia and their racism.</p>
91	<p>It's just a roundabout way of showing that something isn't normal because it isn't white.</p>
93	<p>From what I'd heard, or maybe just seen in movies, the white kids threw the types of parties where people did keg stands, shotgunned beers, played beer pong, and listened to whatever music was popular at the time.</p>
103	<p>This is the issue of cultural appropriation.</p> <p>From white women wearing their hair in box braids to non-Native Americans wearing stereotypical Native American attire on Halloween (or anytime), cultural appropriation is one of the most frequently disrespectful and racist occurrences in society.</p>
133	<p>They knew how to play their whiteness to their favor.</p>
135	<p>This might have been my first time fully understanding just how powerful white privilege could be and the power white people hold within the justice system.</p>
136	<p>In the eyes of the police, my friends and I (and Kenneth, too) were just a bunch of Black kids starting trouble, regardless of what had actually happened.</p>
139	<p>Having the ability to survive without having to know or develop a level of respect for groups of people is part of the legacy of American racism and white privilege.</p> <p>This is the same racism and white privilege that allow young white men to disrespect young Black people, yet the police are ready to kill the young Black man for standing up for himself.</p> <p>This is probably part of the reason someone like Kenneth thought that he needed to let white people act a certain way around him.</p>

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	...We may have both been survivors trying to get by, and that meant lessening ourselves for the white people around us.
147	The professor responded, "This was a demonstration of the impact of systemic racism and white privilege. Most of you just experienced a fraction of what Black and brown people in America face every day in our justice system, education system, and professional system. In fact, that fraction was so difficult for you that you forgot that you were in a lesson about racism. White people have oppressed their way into a head start from slavery to mass incarceration. Y'all are lucky you even got to take a shot; most Black people don't even get that."
148	But the YouTube video was a drilled-down demonstration of why my mother and grandmother had always told me, "Black people have to work two times harder and be twice as good."
153	He told us that we were just as good as, if not better than, the other team, and neither they nor he could understand as white people how hard it is to be nonwhite and try to do something while held back by racism.
155	I spoke with activist Jamira Burley about her thoughts on affirmative action, and why it's important that people of color be given opportunities in traditionally white spaces.
156	Also what we've often seen is that those resources are actually being taken up by others, many times by middleclass white folks, especially women, because white women are actually beneficiaries of affirmative action. ...There is a narrative that affirmative action and programs like it, such as welfare, were created to help Black people. But in reality many of these programs benefit white women and poor whites more than other groups.
159	We live in a country founded on land stolen from Native Americans and built by people stolen from Africa. A country that claims the value of "liberty and justice for all."
163	Making friends was about who had extra Xbox controllers or, for some, fake IDs for beer.
167	Abbie and Parker went first and made the point that they felt I was being helped because I'm Black, and the residence staff wanted them to lose because they're white, and that was reverse racism. "Reverse racism" is not actually a thing.
169	And the truth is, racism and racist systems in America don't adversely impact white people. This is because all aspects of racism in America are rooted in white supremacy and are designed to negatively impact everyone except white people.
172	White men, without a doubt, are the most powerful group in America. But white women enjoy as much white privilege as white men. White men are rightfully always on the hook. White women wouldn't argue that white men aren't racist, right? We just all assume that white men are racist. But white women have been let off the hook for that entire thing all this time until recently. ...In just a few words, she was able to capture the essence of how white people who aren't straight men exist within and benefit from white supremacy.
173	It's white women who get Black men killed all the time. Let's not forget Emmett Till.

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175	<p>Saira’s points and quotes help frame not only the impact of generations of trauma from white supremacy but also why it’s crucial that we understand the intersections of privilege and power among white people.</p> <p>...Only a straight white man would deal with less oppression, because that group holds the most power.</p> <p>And Abbie, Parker, and I each face far less discrimination than Black transgender women, who have to deal with the oppression of white supremacy, transphobia, and the patriarchy.</p>
185	<p>The last thing we needed was a car full of young people of color fighting on the highway. It would have been like Christmas morning for some racist police officer.</p>
198	<p>I think we deserve to be angry. As you’ve read, it would be an extreme understatement to say that being a Black person in society is hard.</p>
216	<p>Because Black kids don’t get to make mistakes. Black kids don’t get to be kids. Black kids get judgment and bullets.</p> <p>Remember when I said I was scared to have children of my own? It’s because bringing Black children into the world means there will be another generation thrown into a toxic society filled with daily microaggressions. It means they will have a life filled with tragic moments fueled by racism.</p>
221	<p>As I’ve mentioned throughout the book, inequality is built into every aspect of American society, giving Black and brown people less access than white people to education, employment, and power.</p>
222	<p>“All Lives Matter” is a phrase that started being used in response to the Black Lives Matter movement. Black Lives Matter is a call to action for Black people to no longer be murdered by white racists and to receive equal treatment under the law. In response, All Lives Matter aims to say that everyone should matter equally—but ignores and rejects the lived experiences of Black people.</p>
223	<p>Black Lives Matter (BLM) is a movement, phrase, and hashtag started by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi as a direct response to consistent violence and racism against Black people. The movement gained popularity and support in 2013 and 2014 after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the murder of Trayvon Martin and the murders of Eric Garner and Michael Brown by the police. Its message and call to action are simple: in the face of Black people’s lives being carelessly taken, society should be forced to understand that the lives of Black people matter.</p>
224	<p>The United Kingdom was once a member of the European Union (EU), but in 2016, a slim majority of UK citizens voted to withdraw from the EU, largely due to widespread xenophobia and a political campaign based on misinformation and fear.</p> <p>...Color blindness is when people say they “don’t see race,” which is impossible, as the concept of race was designed to be something people could see. How else would you know whom to give power to and whom to enslave?</p> <p>People who claim to be color-blind are attempting to express that they don’t have racist attitudes or thoughts as an individual—but fail to realize that this does more harm than good. What they are actually doing is choosing not to be uncomfortable, not understanding that even if they don’t take issue with other races, many do.</p> <p>The only way to actually make a change is to acknowledge and support someone else’s experiences due to their race, not ignore them.</p>

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	<p>...But it quickly turned into an excuse for many, especially white people, to deny that race is a factor in everything from discriminatory government policies; unequal treatment by law enforcement; voter suppression; access to jobs, goods, and services; and on and on.</p> <p>By ignoring the role race plays in these issues, you are guaranteeing that nothing will change for those being oppressed or disproportionately impacted. Ultimately, “color-blind” simply means turning a blind eye to the problems faced by people of color.</p>
226	<p>Cultural appropriation is often done by a dominant culture appropriating a disadvantaged culture.</p> <p>...In America, our educational system was developed by white people, and still today, most of the decision makers are white. Thus, often what and how we learn in school is through a white lens.</p> <p>In most schools, students don’t learn about the history of people of color in America other than during a designated month, and the history we are taught is often biased in favor of white people. For instance, from an early age we learn about Europeans coming to America but rarely about the genocide and trauma they inflicted upon the indigenous peoples.</p>
229	<p>Most things that are mainstream in America are things that appeal to white people because the people deciding what gets made are predominantly white.</p> <p>...Black people are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of white people. When slavery was outlawed, states turned to mass incarceration as a means of using forced labor to increase the profits of business and individuals. And again, I suggest watching Ava DuVernay’s 13th to learn much more.</p> <p>...One of the first things we learn about America in school is this melting pot concept, the idea that we are all here working and living well together. Ultimately, not only is that not true; it also lets white people escape accountability for creating systems and moments to separate everyone else from white people.</p>
230	<p>Merriam-Webster covers it pretty well here, defining microaggression as “a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group.”</p>
232	<p>Systemic or institutional racism is a kind of stealth racism. It’s the reinforcement of white supremacy through various strategies, plans, and parts of everyday life. It’s the inequality that is built into our laws, our economic system, our criminal justice system, our housing system, our health care system, our educational system, our entertainment. As I said, it exists in just about every single thing you can think of.</p>
233	<p>The talk we get is about the fact that the world will be more difficult for us as Black children as well as adults, and about how to be cautious and respond in situations involving the police or other authorities, who are often white.</p> <p>For example, we are taught that if we are stopped by a police officer, not to move suddenly, to announce all of our movements, and to speak in ways to make the officer as comfortable as possible. This is an effort to prevent an officer from shooting and killing us.</p>
234	<p>One of the most destructive aspects of racism and white supremacy is how Black and brown children are treated and viewed.</p>

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235	<p>White privilege is the unearned, built-in, disproportionate access to resources, power, and justice that white people experience over nonwhite people as a result of systemic racism.</p> <p>White privilege is rooted in colonization, though white supremacy has existed since . . . well, since “white” has existed, and anything else became “other.”</p>
236	<p>White savior moments also fail to account for the fact that opportunities for white people to “help” typically only exist because systems and acts of white supremacy created these conditions of inequality.</p> <p>...“White standards” refers to the idea that beauty and cultural norms typically associated with white people are what all racial and cultural groups should aspire to.</p>

Profanity/Derogatory Terms	Count
Ass	7
Nigger/Nigga	11
Piss	1
Spic	2