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## Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D. Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? And other conversations about race. Basic Books, 1997

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*Review:*

**Beverly Daniel Tatum, Ph.D., *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations about Race.* Basic Books, 1997.**

*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* by Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum is a comprehensive guide that explores several main points and the distinct complexities of race-related topics. Tatum discusses where the idea of race came from, what prejudices and privileges are at work in society, and how an appreciation for one's culture is essential to one's well-being. Eloquent and intelligently written, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* is a must read for anyone interested in exploring a book that provokes thought.

The book is laid out in several easy-to-read categories. In the introduction, Tatum expresses her interest in race-related topics and provides her background in clinical psychology. She emphasizes how each one of our actions is important and can make a difference. The text is divided into five parts: A Definition of Terms, Understanding Blackness in a White Context, Understanding Whiteness in a White Context, Beyond Black and White, and Breaking the Silence. It concludes with an Epilogue, entitled Continuing the Conversation, and an Appendix, which contains an excellent annotated bibliography of texts on racism, racial identity, education in antiracist ideology, and multicultural children's books. Tatum includes a discussion guide loaded with questions ripe for civil discourse.

The question presented in the book's title leads the author to bring several important thoughts to the table. For example, she explains that "The original creation of racial categories was in the service of oppression" (17). Tatum also discusses how biologists state that the only race that is scientifically supported is the human race. She describes prejudice as "a preconceived judgment or opinion, usually based on limited information" (6). On the topic of white privilege, Tatum points out that some people refuse to acknowledge its existence and this is society breathing in the smog of perceived superiority. She states, "We may not have polluted the air, but we need to take responsibility for cleaning it up" (6). Whether you agree or disagree about the existence of white privilege, check out the book and make your own conclusions.

Dr. Tatum has a very intelligent way of making readers understand how certain common terms are actually incorrect. She highlights that using "the term non-Whites is particularly offensive because it defines people in terms of what they are not. Do we call women 'non-men?'" (15). Furthermore, the term "minority" is in actuality a misnomer because these "minorities" represent a majority of the world population. According to Tatum, the term "Black" is more appropriate for persons of color than "African-American" because there are people in the United States who fall under this category but are not of African origin. These are just a few elements that make up this critically-acclaimed book. I recommend this book for anyone with an interest in exploring an exciting topic because it relates what all of us should at least be exposed to and take a moment to think about. Furthermore, the book confirms the notion of knowledge being necessary for enlightenment and truth. The book lays out a foundation of understanding past racial interactions in America and gives us all hope and reason for a better tomorrow.

One can readily see why it earned "The National Association of Multi-Cultural Education's 1998 Multicultural Book of the Year."

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