



Alaafia Kids Tidbits



Are Mixed Race Adolescents Mixed Up?

There was a very provocative article that should be of interest to everyone in the mixed race community published in the November 2003 issue of the American Journal of Public Health. Dr. J. Richard Udry and Janet Hendrickson-Smith, with the Carolina Population Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill along with Dr. Rose Maria Li published an article titled ***Health and Behavior Risks of Adolescents with Mixed-Race Identity***. The stated objective of their study was to compare the health and risk status of adolescents who identify with one race with those identifying with more than one race. The researchers collected data from the self-reports of race from 90,000 American adolescents, using the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, which purportedly provides a large representative national sample of adolescents in grades 7 through 12.



Are Alaafia Kids mixed up?

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Letter from

Happy Spring, Everyone!



***What's My Heritage? Coloring-Story Book* will be published this spring!** Finally, the newest Alaafia Kids product will be published this month! We have been working with Canadian graphic artist Elena Stebakova for almost a year tweaking every last detail of the twenty-four

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Alaafia Kids Company

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Special Points of Interest:

- ☺ Research Studies on Mixed Race Adolescents
- ☺ Soon-To-Be-Released *What's My Heritage? Coloring-Story Book* by Alaafia Kids Company
- ☺ Mariah Carey Spotlight
- ☺ Project RACE

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Respondents could report more than 1 race. The results of the study according to these researchers showed that mixed-race adolescents showed "higher risk when compared with single-race adolescents on general health questions, school experience, smoking and drinking, and other risk variables." These results led Urdu to conclude that "adolescents who self-identify as more than one race are at higher health and behavior risks." The researchers also concluded that their "findings are compatible with interpreting the elevated risk of mixed race as associated with stress not found in youth of a single race."

Some of the specific findings of this study were startling. Urdu claims that mixed race adolescents are more likely to suffer from depression, substance abuse, sleep problems and various illnesses. This study found that youth who called themselves biracial were more likely to have sex at younger ages, access to guns and poorer experiences at school.

"It did not matter what races the students identified with," Urdu says. "The risks were higher for all of them if they did not identify with a single race."



RESPONSE of Alaafia Kids Company to the Urdu Study

Alaafia Kids Company finds several things wrong with this study and so calls into question its findings.

First, the population for this study was only 90,000 individuals. It may sound like a lot, but statistically speaking, it really isn't especially given that there are more than 4.5 million multiracial children eighteen or younger in the United States. Granted, that's not 4.5 million adolescents, but the number of mixed raced adolescents is still much larger than 90,000. This means that Urdu's findings may be true for his population, but a global generalization about all mixed race youth cannot be made based on this study alone. For a broad claim to be made, there would need to be much larger populations studied in several distinct studies, preferably by different researchers at locations throughout the country.

Secondly, respondents in the Urdu study were asked to identify all parts of their racial heritage, but they were NOT asked to identify the racial category with which they most identify. It seems that this distinction is more pertinent than the monoracial/biracial distinction used in the Urdu study because it reflects HOW individuals see themselves.

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pages of this coloring-story book. We've taken so much care because we wanted to get everything right about the African village scenes. The book is written so that young children ages 4-8 can understand what "heritage" means. It begins with an African American boy asking his parents what "heritage" is. He's heard that his "heritage" has something to do with books, food, drums, and masks, but wants clarification. The book's scenes go from an American living room to Africa. Every major aspect of African life in many different contexts is portrayed. The book's rhyming text is sure to enthrall young people of African descent as well as people looking to learn about African history and culture. Jeanne Yacoubou, owner and founder of Alaafia Kids Company, developed a 50-page Activity Guide to accompany *What's My Heritage?* The Guide contains references to National Education Standards in most subjects for all the activities, making this book suitable as a learning tool across the curriculum.

Those interested in pre-ordering the book may contact *Alaafia Kids Company* at Jeanne@AlaafiaKids.com. *Alaafia Kids Company* offers educator's discounts on its products.

Anansi

Answers

Dear Anansi,

I'm a mixed race eighth grader in middle school. My mom is white and my dad is black. I try to make friends but get rejected every time. I'm really starting to feel down on myself. What can I do?

Amy in FL

Dear Amy,

Adolescence can be a difficult time. Remember that you're just getting to know who you are like everyone is.

Talk to you parents and look to them for support and love. Ask them to help you seek out people your age who are mixed in your area. Contact the MAVIN Foundation to find out about the closest mixed race group in your area. The [Parent Resources](#) page at www.AlaafiaKids.com lists links for this and other groups.

Get to know people at local community centers and schools. This may take some time and effort but it's worth it.

Anansi

MARIAH CAREY

Editor's Note: *Mariah just captured another Grammy in February 2006 for Best R&B Contemporary Album.*

One very famous *Alaafia Kid* celebrating a spring birthday is none other than Mariah Carey. Mariah, the best-selling female artist of the 1990s who is currently enjoying comeback fame with her 2005 release of *The Emancipation of Mimi*, was born on March 27, 1970 in Huntington, New York. Her parents, white Irish American Patricia, and black Afro-Venezuelan Alfred, divorced when she was just three after years of experiencing racial prejudice. Besides all the racial slurs, their dogs were poisoned and their cars were set on fire. The family moved frequently around the New York area trying to escape racism but the stress eventually led to the family's breakup. Mariah and her two older siblings was raised by her mom who juggled several jobs to make ends meet. Mariah saw little of her father.

When Mariah was three, her mom discovered her musical gifts. While her mother, an opera singer and voice coach, was rehearsing an Italian opera, Mariah began to point out mistakes her mom was making, *and* showing Patricia how they were supposed to be performed...in Italian! Her mother began giving Mariah voice lessons to improve her range and technique and showing her the love, support and confidence that only a mother could provide.

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"Mixed race" identity may not really be the predominant way multiracial youth think of themselves. There are so many different mixes possible that a single mixed race identity may not even exist. Each mix has its own characteristics that differ more on an individual basis than they do on a group basis. A predominant racial identity is something that may be more meaningful to mixed race youth.

Finally, *Alaafia Kids Company* would like to comment on Urdy's statement that attempts to explain what he sees as the "high-risk status" of multiracial adolescents. He says that "[T]he most common explanation for the high-risk status is the struggle with identity formation, leading to lack of self-esteem, social isolation and problems of family dynamics in biracial households."

It appears that this statement is unjustified and misleading. Adolescence is a time when all youth, single or mixed race, are preoccupied with identity formation and finding their place in the world. Although mixed race youth may have more to deal with than single race youth, it is not

self-evident that mixed race adolescents are "high risk" because of it. Many adolescents of all types find adolescence difficult as they build their self-identities and could engage in "high risk" behavior as a response.

Furthermore, Urdy implies that the family dynamics of biracial households are "problematic." We are curious to know on what basis Urdy is making this claim. Is there evidence to show that biracial families are more dysfunctional than single race families? We would like to see it because we do not know of any such statistic.

Another study published in 2004 was done by Wen-Hung Kuo, a Research Fellow at the National Development and Research Institutes. Kuo conducted in-home interviews and compared adolescents of single races with those of biracial backgrounds with differential identities (e.g., those

Mixed RACE

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SPOTLIGHT on an ALAAFIA KID... *Mariah Carey*

Spending much of her time alone at home, Mariah became so engrossed in music that she often spent long nights practicing with local musicians. She missed a lot of school as a result. By the 6th grade, she was given the nickname "Mirage," as she never really seemed to be in class. Mariah was a good writer, composing poetry and writing songs when she made it to school.

After high school, Mariah moved to NYC looking for stardom. As a backup singer for Brenda K. Starr, she accompanied Starr to a party and got noticed by a Columbia Records executive, Tommy Mottola. They eventually married in a Princess Diana- Prince Charles-type wedding, but divorced four years later.

Mariah's professional music career began with the release of *Mariah Carey* in 1990. She co-wrote all of the compositions and would continue to co-write nearly all of her material for the rest of her career. The album debuted low on the U.S. Billboard chart, but ascended to number one only two months after its release, where it remained for eleven weeks. It produced four number-one singles, making Mariah a star in the United States. In 1991, Mariah won her first and only Grammy Awards yet: for Best New Artist and Best Female Pop Vocal Performance. From then on throughout the 90s, Mariah had a #1 album, leading Billboard to name her the "Artist of the Decade."

In 1999, Mariah released *Rainbow*. According to Mariah, the album represents her message of hope for racial unity for the new millennium. Possibly, her 1998 romance with the Yankee's multiracial player Derek Jeter, stimulated her resolve. (In fact, Mariah stated afterward that while the timing was not right for their relationship, it did teach her that multiracial families could function well.)

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who call themselves "black" even though they are mixed race). In this study, unlike the Urdy study, mixed race respondents had the opportunity to choose their "predominant" race. The Kuo study considered behaviors including suicidal attempts, depression, sexual behavior, smoking regularly, and drinking alcohol unsupervised.

This study made some distinctions that the Urdy study could not. For example, the Kuo study showed that adolescents of mixed-race background were not more depressed than any of the single-race groups nor did the mixed race youth attempt suicide more often. In terms of cigarette smoking and unsupervised alcohol use, whites were more likely to engage in these behaviors than either blacks or Asians. For cigarette smoking, only biracial white/Asians who identified as whites had comparable prevalence with single-race whites. Black adolescents were more likely to have had sexual intercourse compared to whites or Asians. Interestingly, biracial black/white adolescents who identified as black were more likely to be sexually active than biracial black/white who identified as white.

Because the Kuo study asked about mixed race identity in a way that allows respondents to choose the race with which they most identify, *Alaafia Kids Company* finds the Kuo results more believable than those of Urdy's study. By making this distinction, Kuo cannot be accused of overgeneralization like Urdy can. Although Kuo admits that the small numbers in many groups may have precluded statistical differences from being seen, it seems that identification toward one race is more of a predictive factor of risky behaviors among bi-racial adolescents than simply being mixed-race. *Alaafia Kids Company* hopes to see more

research on these important questions using much larger population sizes to reconfirm or to refute Kuo's and Urdy's findings.



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Alaafia Kids Company really likes this album because it ties in nicely with our rainbow children theme as seen in our logo as well as our hope for racial unity. A poem on the inner-cover of the album expresses her dream. The first single from the album was *Heartbreaker*. This song gave Mariah her 60th week in the singles #1 spot breaking The Beatles record of 59 weeks.

Mariah used her music to recount her personal life and express her deepest feelings about it. For example the single *Can't Take That Away*, refers to Mariah's perseverance to survive and become successful despite years of struggling. Another deeply personal song (on *Rainbow*), *Petals*, it is a moving account of her life as a self-conscious girl through her maturation as both a musician and as a woman.

Mariah's music is as mixed as she is. On *The Emancipation of Mimi*, her latest Grammy-winning release, Mariah embraces both mainstream pop and urban influences. *We Belong Together*, a single from that album, remained number one on both the pop and hip-hop charts for more than three months. The track was nominated for four Grammy awards: Record of the Year, Song of the Year, Best Female R&B Vocal Performance, and Best R&B Song. *Don't Forget about Us* became Mariah's seventeenth #1 in the U.S. Mariah falls right behind Elvis with eighteen number-ones and The Beatles, who had twenty number-one singles.

It may be her African American and Latino roots that enable her to be so versatile. This also may be what surprises many people. Mariah says that "I've always said that my father is half black and half Venezuelan and my mother is Irish. But people don't understand. They can't fathom that I'm African American, Venezuelan and Irish." She goes on to say "And maybe there are some people out there who think a quarter Venezuelan is not a lot... Well, I may be only one quarter, but it's a strong quarter."

Mariah excels as a soprano getting her talent from her mother's side. The Guinness Book of World Records awarded her the record for highest note

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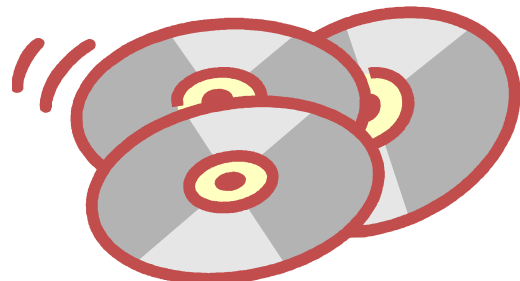
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hit by a human in their March 2003 edition for hitting the G7 note during a live performance of *The Star-Spangled Banner*. This note was previously considered beyond human range. Mariah also holds the record for largest vocal range, hitting a note as low as A2.

Mariah is a philanthropist, with a special place in her heart for children. She is the founder of Camp Mariah in Fishkill, New York for inner-city youth. The Camp's goals are to encourage young people to embrace the arts, introduce them to career opportunities, and build self-esteem. The Camp's philosophy was echoed in NYC in 1995: "This is for all of you out there, reaching for a dream - don't ever give up! Never ever listen to anyone, when they try to discourage you, because they do that, believe me!" In 1999 Mariah won the Horizon Award at the Congressional Foundation Awards for her work with and for children.

Mariah has donated time and millions of dollars to organizations such as the Make-A-Wish Foundation, the National Adoption Center, and the Fresh Air Fund. Carey has also performed as part of 911 and Hurricane Katrina fundraisers.

Mariah's latest project will be great for *Alaafia Kids* and families. Mariah has decided to fictionalize her life story and adapt it into a series of illustrated children's books titled *Automatic Princess*. The protagonist is an orphaned girl who is biracial. Let's hope that Mariah will give the story a great ending!



Surfing the.....

Multicultural Web

Project RACE

<http://www.projectrace.com/>

Founded in 1991, this nonprofit advocates for multiracial children and adults through education, community awareness and legislation. One of its major goals is for a multiracial classification on all school, employment, state, federal, local, census and medical forms requiring racial data. They also work to make it known that without proper racial and ethnic classifications, multiracial people are "invisible" in the health care system, possibly creating potentially life threatening situations for certain mixed race individuals. For example, multiracial children are at risk for improper medical screening for diseases that affect certain racial groups. Multiracial people with leukemia and other blood diseases in need of bone marrow transplants are another group of mixed race people whose needs may go unrecognized. These people have the best chance of a bone marrow match from someone with the same genetic makeup but if doctors are not aware of the mixed race identity of patients, these patients will not be adequately helped.



The daughter of the Executive Director of Project RACE, is the President of Teen Project RACE. This page of the website serves as a great online meeting place for mixed race youth. You'll see pictures of many young mixed race celebrities on this page. You may be pleasantly surprised at who you see there!

This site also has links or references to all the press they have received over the years, especially on the U.S. Census issue as well as to all news that have spotlighted mixed race people or issues. The site contains a great archive of articles that are of interest to the mixed race community.



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World's Children Celebrating Our
Diversity and Heritage



Alaafia Kids Company was founded in 2004 by Jeanne Yacoubou, freelance writer, former educator, and now homeschooling mom to three children. Jeanne is married to Malik Yacoubou from Benin, West Africa.

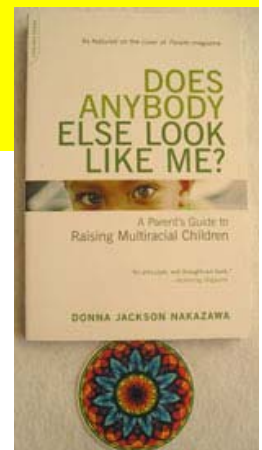
Alaafia Kids Company specializes in multicultural gifts for children. We sell items that mixed race and transracially adopted children will love including handmade multicultural dolls, handmade African clothes for children and our own line of educational products with multicultural themes including Reusable Alphabet Art Flip Charts, coloring-story books, and puzzles. We also carry multicultural books, music, and arts and crafts supplies. Our web address is <http://www.AlaafiaKids.com>

Book Nook *Does Anybody Else Look Like Me? A Parent's Guide to Raising Multiracial Children* by Donna Jackson Nakazawa © 2003, Paperback

This book gets to the heart of the matter for all parents of mixed race babies, children, and adolescents. For *Alaafia Parents* who want to know how to deal with some of the challenges faced by their children from the early years through adolescence, this is the book to have! It is filled with the author's personal anecdotes that mixed race parents will relate to and understand. The author writes in very accessible language about issues that biracial young people face citing plenty of credible sources on which she bases her claims. She also makes many perceptive comments and helpful suggestions about being biracial in today's society in the final chapters of this comprehensive book.

In light of the inaccuracies and overgeneralizations propagated by some of the research studies on mixed race individuals, (such as the Urdy study considered in the lead article of this edition of *Alaafia Kids Tidbits Newsletter*), parents of mixed race children need a book like this to help themselves and their children cope in and with a society that may not readily accept them.

Alaafia Kids Company highly recommends this book for parents. It is available in paperback through *Alaafia Kids Company* on its [Multicultural Books Page](#).



Does Anybody Else Look Like Me? A Parent's Guide to Raising Multicultural Children