

## Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness?

Written by Book Review by Kam Williams  
Sunday, 18 September 2011 12:32

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*"We're in a post-Black era when our identity options are limitless. And there's no going back... Post-Black means we are like Obama: rooted in but not restricted by Blackness... Our community is too diverse, complex, imaginative, dynamic, fluid, creative, and beautiful to impose restraints on Blackness... In this book, I seek to legitimize and validate... that the definitions and boundaries of Blackness are expanding... into infinity."* □

### **-Excerpted from Chapter 1 (pg 12)**

The election of Barack Obama as President of the United States led many a pundit to conclude that America had entered a post-racial age. That notion was somewhat easy to digest given that the Genome Project had simultaneously determined, scientifically, that there's only one race, the human race.

Now, three years later, Touré is ready to up the ante by suggesting that we're post-Black, too, and he's enlisted the assistance of over a hundred leading African-American luminaries from all walks of life to make his case. By the way, I capitalize "Black" but not "white" for the purposes of this review, since that's the approach employed by the author in *Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness*, a fascinating examination of the question of whether 21st Century Blacks are simply too diverse to be pigeonholed anymore.

Touré intriguing thesis is based both on anecdotal and empirical evidence, as his semi-autobiographical text is almost equally divided between his own personal reflections and responses elicited from his subjects on a variety of subjects. The opus was ostensibly inspired by the deep scar left by his having been embarrassed back in college by a presumably "Blacker" classmate who questioned his street credentials by shouting "Shut up, Touré! You ain't Black!" at him in a very public forum.

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Unprepared for the humiliating slight, Touré sort of slinked away instead of responding with a pithy retort. However, that ain't the case today, as he has matured over the intervening years into a rather witty and loquacious journalist prepared to engage on virtually any topic of conversation, as reflected by his omnipresence on the TV airwaves where he is regularly consulted as an expert on popular culture.

Arriving at post-Blackness must have been no mean feat for this brother from Beantown who admits that "it was impossible for me as a small child in Boston to not notice the racism around me" in a hostile city that "my parents felt was dangerously racist."

Among the probing questions Touré posed to each of his contributors were such thought-provoking conversation-starters as: "What does being Black mean to you?" "What is the most racist thing to ever happen to you?" "Would you be comfortable eating watermelon in a room full of white people?" "What do you think of the N-word?" "Do you love America?" "Are there advantages to being light [skinned]?" and "Do you think Blacks have ways of imposing limits on Black identity?"

The participants in Touré's impromptu survey ranged from Reverends Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson to Professors Henry Louis "Skip" Gates, Cornel West, Marc Lamont Hill and Alvin Poussaint to television news correspondents Soledad O'Brien, Juan Williams and Roland Martin to talking heads Harold Ford, Jr. and Shelby Steele to artists and entertainers like Questlove, Chuck D, Talib Kweli, Paul Mooney and Kara Walker.

The diversity of insights and opinions and shared in this enlightening treatise leaves no doubt that, while a monolithic Black mindset might have served a very valuable purpose from the slave days right up through the triumphs of the Civil Rights Movement, there are now as many different ways to be Black as there are African-Americans. And if that's the definition of post-Black, there's obviously nothing to fear about it, so it's time to blend inside the proverbial melting pot simply as unhyphenated Americans.

To order a copy of Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness, visit:

<http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1439177554/ref%3dnosim/thslfofire-20>

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What It Means to Be Black Now

by Touré

Foreword by Michael Eric Dyson

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