

Arts

ENTERTAINMENT

White Chocolate gets to Heart of Racial Identity

Sizzling Romantic Thriller Examines Provocative Questions

How is racial identity determined? By one's physical characteristics? Family lineage? Or the leaning of one's heart? WHITE CHOCOLATE, an exciting romantic thriller from first-time novelist Elizabeth Atkins Bowman, takes readers into the world of Taylor James, a beautiful biracial TV reporter who looks white and seizes an opportunity to use her looks in the battle against racism. While fighting for her life, she's caught in a sizzling love triangle, forced to choose between her powerful white fiancé and her biracial childhood sweetheart. This story gives a human dimension to the hotly-contested 2000 Census in which, for the first time, multiracial people will have the option of checking as many race boxes that apply, as opposed to being forced to choose just one. And since the numbers of biracial people are growing fast.

WHITE CHOCOLATE helps to give voice this growing - and often unheard segment of society. "I wrote WHITE CHOCOLATE to get people thinking and talking - about identity, loyalty, love and justice," explains Elizabeth who, like her heroine, is biracial. "This book is not only a labor of love, but the fulfillment of a longtime dream. A former reporter who covered race-relations for The Detroit News, Elizabeth did her thesis on interracial people at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism and has written several articles on the subject. "Chances are, you know who's mixed," Elizabeth says. "And you can't help but wonder what it's like, what they really go through. This is a hot issue...it's still taboo in some families. Get folks talking about it, and the air will hum with some pretty passionate debates." But



that's not the only reason to enjoy this provocative book. It's suspense-filled plot and take-no-prisoners heroine offer a fresh look at issues that simmer beneath the surface of American life. Whether you know or wonder what it's like to be biracial, WHITE

CHOCOLATE will surprise and delight you with a flavor all its own. Watch for Elizabeth's next book, DARK SECRET, coming in 1999. To arrange an interview with Elizabeth Atkins Bowman, call TaRessa Stovall, 609/642-1702.

Movie Review: Star Trek Insurrection

For Trekkies, bliss is a ticket stub away. For the rest of us, the occasional watchers or the "I-never-heard-of-the-show" folks lost in a time warp, the new Star Trek: Insurrection will be a ho-hum experience that is neither dreadful nor invigorating.

The story centers on the planet Ba'ku and its 600 inhabitants, none of whom are bald or wrinkled or fans of Regis Philbin. How can this be? And why has the android Lieutenant Commander Data (Brent Spiner), who was doing a survey on this lovely planet, suddenly gone raving

mad? Well, it all has do with an unholy alliance between the Federation and the Son'a which is headed by the evil Ru'afu (F. Murray Abraham). Ru'afu wants to ship all the Ba'kus off to another world and harness their planet's strange energy. Why would the Federation agree to such an inhumane plan even if it will eventually benefit the whole universe?

Upset, Captain Picard (Patrick Stewart) argues: "If a planet of people can be forcibly removed from their world, destroying their way of life, where does it end?" In some toy

store with hundreds of Star Trek figurines for sale?

This is little more than a generic Star Trek plot with some expensive special effects thrown in. Jonathan Frakes, who plays Commander William Riker here, as did in the TV series, directs this feature as he acts — which is poorly. There is not an interesting camera angle, not a well-staged moment and just a few satisfying performances. Patrick Stewart, as anyone who's seen him act either on stage or in films like Jeffrey can attest, knows he can do no wrong. The villainous Abraham is solidly

hissable, and Donna Murphy as a 300-year-old love interest is also quite fine. But series regulars like Cheryl Gates McFadden, Marina Sirtis,

Michael Dorn and even the oft-talented LeVar Burton register just above the cringe level. It's like they've all enrolled in the William Shatner School of Acting. This is third-rate community theater acted out on the big screen.

And if you have never viewed a Star Trek, you won't know what the hell is happening. All of the characters are written in shorthand.

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