

## Arts & Entertainment

# FILM REVIEW: 'Sweaty Betty' Has Quirks

This gritty comedy feels like a Blackface, street-smart 'Babe' reboot

By Kam Williams  
For The Skanner News

In 1965, the federal government issued the historic Moynihan Report chronicling the collapse of "The Negro Family" which it blamed on a host of social woes afflicting inner-city African American communities. A half-century later, Blacks and Whites still remain substantially separate and unequal.

Evidence of the disparity abounds in *Sweaty Betty*, a super-realistic buddy flick set in a Prince George's County, Maryland ghetto located in the shadow of the nation's capital. There, we find a cornucopia of colorful characters inhabiting a den of iniquity that it's hard to believe exists, but obviously does.

The stars of this must-see adventure are Rico and Scooby, a couple of uneducated, unemployed, unmarried single fathers. To call the pair actors would be far too generous, since they're obviously simply



'Sweaty Betty'

playing themselves.

That makes it difficult to discern whether one is watching a comedy or a documentary, although that dilemma only adds to the quirky picture's appeal. Everybody on their block speaks such inscrutable Ebonics that directors Joseph Frank and Zachary Reed had the good sense to use subtitles, despite the

fact that the entire cast is speaking in English.

The dialogue is not only grammatically incorrect but is invariably delivered laced with expletives and the N-word. And the conversations are precisely what one might expect of 20-ish baby-daddies with nothing better to do all day than hang out on the street.

One minute, our heroes

are commiserating about the burdens of fatherhood, the next, they're shamelessly flirting with a couple of cute honeys passing by. Meanwhile, their neighbors appear to be equally rudderless, as they spend their time boasting, twerking, mugging for the camera and/or engaging in meaningless chatter.

Oh, *Sweaty Betty* does have a rudimentary plot, which revolves around a couple of pets: a pig named Charlotte, and a pit bull the protagonists can't decide what to call: Cocaine, Killer or Petey (since it looks like the pooch on *The Little Rascals*).

These wannabe entrepreneurs have been raising the hog in the 'hood with hopes of having it become the mascot of the Washington Redskins. So, on home gamedays, they drive the half-ton oinker to the stadium via pickup truck to participate in all the parking lot hoopla. Unfortunately, it eventually comes to the attention of the local animal control officer that somebody's raising a farm animal in a residential neighborhood.

But don't be fooled. *Sweaty Betty's* storyline is inconsequential, at best. Yet, it remains highly recommended for cinematic voyeurs who like laughing from a safe distance at the outrageous flamboyance of a hot ghetto mess.

A blackface variation of *Babe* (1995) with street cred!

★★★★ Excellent

Unrated

In Ebonics with subtitles

Running time: 94 minutes

Distributor: Breaking Glass Pictures

# Mia Wenjen Talks About Multicultural Children's Book Day

By Kam Williams  
For The Skanner News

Mia Wenjen blogs at PragmaticMom.com on parenting, education and children's books. A dorm room entrepreneur with her creative staffing company, Aquent, ranking #12 on the Inc. 500 list when she was 26-years-old, Mia has always championed social justice. Her staffing company was the first to offer medical benefits to temporary workers.

These days, the mother of three is focused on getting diversity, multicultural and inclusive books into the hands of the kids who need them most. She co-founded Multicultural Children's Book Day (see more information at <http://multiculturalchildrensbookday.com/>) to shine the spotlight on authors, illustrators and diversity characters so kids of color could find themselves in books.

Because her children are one-fourth Japanese-American, one-fourth Chinese-American and one-half Korean American, she personally sought out books where they could see themselves; something that she didn't have growing up, despite being a bookworm who read every single biography and fiction chapter book in her Southern California elementary school's library.

Blogging on KidLit for five years helped her realize that there simply isn't enough representation of kids of color in children's literature. Furthermore, the books that do exist don't get the exposure they need and deserve. So, she's made it her mission to dedicate her blogging efforts to promoting children's authors of color.

“It's about validating your right to be part of the mainstream as a child of color

That's how she found Valarie Budayr from *Jump Into a Book* who proposed creating a day to celebrate multicultural books for kids, and thus Multicultural Children's Book Day was born. And they hope you will join them on Jan. 27.

**Kam Williams:** Hi Mia, thanks for the interview.

**Mia Wenjen:** Thanks so much for having me, Kam.

**KW:** What inspired you to found the Multicultural Children's Book Day?

**MW:** Lee and Low Publishing had a blog post on how the number of diversity books for kids has not changed in 14 years. I was shocked and dismayed. I put it out on my Facebook that, from now on, I would focus on diversity authors, illustrators and characters on my blog. Valarie Budayr, of *Jump Into a Book* blog, saw my post and contacted me about creating a day to celebrate multicultural books for kids. I said, "You can do that?" And she said, "Yes, you just do it." So we did.

**KW:** What effect does access to literature celebrating diversity have on children during their formative years?

**MW:** It's about validating your right to be part of the mainstream as a child of color. Do you see yourself in the media and in books and how are these role models being portrayed? I also think when kids see a reflection of themselves in books, they are more prone to relate to the character and book, and this might spark an interest in reading.

**KW:** Do multicultural books benefit white kids, too? Or is primarily for minorities?

**MW:** The world around us is changing. In the year 2042 which is just 26 years from now, Caucasians will not longer be the majority in the United States. That's not so far away. But in other respects, like special needs, kids of this generation have more special needs classmates than ever before, and learning how to get along with everyone is going to be a valuable life skill when they enter the workforce. Whether it's race, special needs, religions

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Our family wage agenda reflects our commitment to people working in the building trades, and to workers everywhere. In this small way, we are doing our part to help people achieve the American Dream. This dream that workers can hold dear regardless of race, color, national origin, gender, creed, or religious beliefs.

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