

## P R E S S   R E L E A S E

### **Educator and Author Debby Irving Offers Firsthand Insight to the Everyday Perpetuation of Racial Inequality by Well-Intentioned White People**

**Compulsively Readable,  
*WAKING UP WHITE: And Finding Myself In The Story Of Race,*  
Sheds Light on Why America's Racial Divide Continues to Deepen**



The last few years have provoked outrage and confusion about America's ongoing racial tensions. Consider:

- *Inflammatory words by Paula Deen, Ronald Sterling, and Cliven Bundy stirred debate about what makes for a racist.*
- *Videotaped injustices from Eric Garner to Sandra Bland made visible ongoing racial trauma formerly unknown to most white Americans.*
- *Black Lives Matter flags have been hung and torn down across the country.*
- *The massacre of a bible study group at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, SC revealed the ongoing power of America's white supremacist roots.*
- *College campuses nationwide are grappling daily with how to address landmarks named for legacies whose wealth and power were built on the backs of enslaved labor.*
- *A new presidential administration committed to "Making America Great Again" has left the United States at a fraught crossroad, divided by differential understandings of the slogan's implications.*

Unfortunately, attempts to make sense of racial events and rhetoric too often lead to increased misunderstanding. While mainstream media often brings a good/bad, black/white version of events involving individual actions, racial justice author and educator Debby Irving encourages people to bring more nuance, historical knowledge, and personal reflection to the issue.

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Irving uses her own life to explore the everyday systemic racism that goes largely unnoticed yet perpetuates long-held racialized belief systems. *Waking Up White* functions as both a "Racism 101" for white people and a rare exposé on whiteness for people of color. By sharing her sometimes cringe-worthy struggle to understand racism and racial tensions, she offers a fresh perspective on bias, stereotypes, manners, and tolerance. As she unpacks her own long-held beliefs about colorblindness, being a good person, and wanting to help people of color, she reveals how each of these well-intentioned mindsets actually perpetuated her ill-conceived ideas about race. She also explains why and how she's changed the way she talks about racism, works in racially

mixed groups, and understands the racial justice movement as a whole. For white readers wanting to further their own awakening, Irving includes short prompts and exercises at the end of each chapter.

Irving's story provides a context that allows white people to quickly grasp modern racism's inner workings and enter into conversations with new awareness and skill. It's the book Irving wishes someone had handed her decades ago. "When I finally came to understand the way racism worked," she explains, "I spent a lot of time thinking about what might have enlightened me earlier. I decided it wouldn't have been an academic book, an essay, or a book from the perspective of a person of color -- it would have been another white person describing their own awakening, with some humor, poignancy, and drama in the mix. What I needed was a memoir so irresistible that I would have read it even if racism weren't on my mind."

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### **Waking Up White Awards**

#### 2015 IPPY Award

Multicultural Non-Fiction Adult  
Silver

#### 2015 Next Generation Indie Book Award

Current Events/Social Change  
Finalist

#### 2015 Next Generation Indie Book Award

Best Cover Design  
Winner

#### 2014 USA Best Book Awards

Current Events  
Finalist

#### 2014 USA Best Book Awards

Non-Fiction Narrative  
Finalist

#### 2014 IndieFab Book of the Year

Autobiography & Memoir  
Finalist

#### 2014 eLit Award

Current Events II  
Silver Medalist