

to explore the author's own past, present and future.

Randall, a Chicago-born poet and author, opens **The Dead Don't Need Reminding** in Oxford, Mississippi, where he is attending an M.F.A. program. There, living in the South for the first time in his life, he reflects on the origins of plantation-style architecture in the university's modern-day fraternity houses and endures violent encounters with racists. He seeks out the history of his Southern-born great-grandfather who "fled his home under threat of tar and feather." Throughout, he riffs on Miles Morales, Jordan Peele, "BoJack Horseman" and many more cultural touchstones to tell stories of his lineage, of himself and of the places that shaped his family.

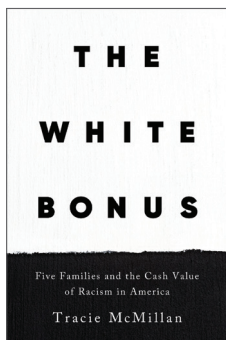
While there are tender notes in his writing, Randall never avoids the violence of our American history and present, writing that "white supremacy is a death cult, a religion for the feral." And, "America is a gaping mouth with an insatiable appetite for Black suffering, Black labor, Black cool, Black flex, Black silence, Black death."

This is a story not just about a Black man surviving a visit to the Deep South, but about him staying alive long enough to learn where he came from. Our narrator invites us to witness his vulnerability and imagination, shepherding us through time and place from Chicago to the South and back again as he shares his research into his lineage and the depths of his depression. Through smart cultural critique to rich poetic imagery, Randall's writing moves at a quick pace that reflects his city roots; but when he slows down to describe the lands and people that haunt him, we witness a gifted Southern storyteller. And so we gather on the porch, waiting to hear this story, low and soft, drifting through the kudzu.

—*mónica teresa ortiz*

★ The White Bonus

By Tracie McMillan



SOCIAL SCIENCE

Acclaimed journalist Tracie McMillan's muckraking, experiential methods have earned her prizes, acclaim and the special animosity of Rush Limbaugh, a sure sign of the power of her investigative work.

With **The White Bonus: Five Families and the Cash Value of Racism in America** (Holt, \$32.99, 9781250619426), McMillan offers a

powerful and necessary exposé of the financial benefits of whiteness in the U.S.

In a style reminiscent of Barbara Ehrenreich, **The White Bonus** spotlights five working- and middle-class white families, including a very revealing and honest look at McMillan's own. The book examines how zoning laws, discrimination in trade unions and the failure of school desegregation have rippled into the present, giving white families what McMillan calls the "white bonus," a multigenerational "societal and familial security net unavailable to Black Americans." In chapters focused on school, work, poverty and crime, McMillan develops case studies of how individuals and families benefit from whiteness even when they are accused of crimes or are scraping by on minimum wage. McMillan's quantitative analysis starkly reveals how American institutions continue to benefit white people at the expense of Black Americans.

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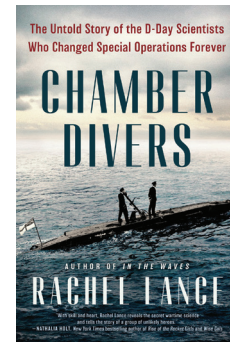
Each case study is supported by extensive interviews and reporting, and presented with novelistic detail in a propulsive narrative. A chapter about the Becker family of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, illustrates "the steady reemergence of racially homogeneous schools after a few decades of progress toward racial integration" that followed *Brown v. Board of Education*. The Beckers bucked the trend of white flight and sent their children to local public schools that had predominantly Black student bodies. While the oldest sibling benefited from "gifted and talented" programs that primarily served white students in an otherwise diverse student population, the youngest sibling experienced a stark decline in educational quality at the same school after many of the white families left the district.

McMillan's own family story is told with admirable honesty, particularly regarding the impact of her father's abuse after her mother's death. These autobiographical chapters not only provide a detailed financial accounting of her own family's white bonus, but also brilliantly shape a central insight that analogizes its dangers: The silence surrounding domestic violence is replicated in our society at large when we avoid addressing the impact of structural racism. Remaining silent about either is incompatible with morality.

—*Catherine Hollis*

Chamber Divers

By Rachel Lance



HISTORY

June 1939: British naval sub HMS *Thetis* sinks in sea trials. Ninety-nine people die. August 1942: Allied forces raid the coastal town of Dieppe in German-occupied France. Thousands are killed,

captured or wounded. Luckily for the Allies in World War II, a group of scientists in London risked their lives in secret pressure chamber "dives" to give future underwater and amphibious missions better odds.

Author Rachel Lance is a biomedical engineer and blast injury specialist who has worked on underwater equipment for the U.S. Navy, making her unusually suited to unveil the forgotten story of these scientists in **Chamber Divers: The Untold Story of the D-Day Scientists Who Changed Special Operations Forever** (Dutton, \$32, 9780593184936).

Their project at University College London was led by J.B.S. Haldane, a brilliant, annoying eccentric who hired scientists shunned by others, among them Jewish refugees, women and Communist sympathizers. As the bombs in the Blitz exploded around them, these scientists subjected themselves again and again to dangerous pressure in chambers that simulated deep underwater dives in order to design more effective breathing equipment for submarine crews, frogmen and torpedo riders.

Relying on their experiment notes, Lance takes us inside the metal tubes where scientists suffered life-threatening injuries. She explores their backgrounds and relationships, which included a love affair between Haldane and research colleague Helen Spurway. And she ranges throughout combat zones to show the dangers of underwater action. But Lance's singular strength is her lucid explanations of complex science, making it accessible to untrained readers. Lance also uncovers the combination of official secrecy, prejudice against outsiders and bureaucratic skulduggery that obscured this story until now.

Lance begins her book with the Dieppe disaster and ends with D-Day—an Allied triumph that might have gone badly wrong without the chamber divers' dedication and resilience. **Chamber Divers** is a necessary reminder that not all war heroes were on the front lines.

—*Anne Bartlett*