



The Color of Water

James McBride

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The New York Times best-selling story from the author of The Good Lord Bird, winner of the 2013 National Book Award for Fiction.

Who is Ruth McBride Jordan? A self-declared "light-skinned" woman evasive about her ethnicity, yet steadfast in her love for her 12 black children. James McBride, journalist, musician, and son, explores his mother's past, as well as his own upbringing and heritage, in a poignant and powerful debut, *The Color Of Water: A Black Man's Tribute to His White Mother*. The son of a black minister and a woman who would not admit she was white, James McBride grew up in "orchestrated chaos" with his 11 siblings in the poor, all-black projects of Red Hook, Brooklyn.

In *The Color of Water*, McBride retraces his mother's footsteps and, through her searing and spirited voice, recreates her remarkable story. The daughter of a failed itinerant Orthodox rabbi, she was born Rachel Shilsky (actually Ruchel Dwara Zylska) in Poland on April 1, 1921. Fleeing pogroms, her family emigrated to America and ultimately settled in Suffolk, Virginia, a small town where anti-Semitism and racial tensions ran high. At 17, after fleeing Virginia and settling in New York City, Ruth married a black minister and founded the all-black New Brown Memorial Baptist Church in her Red Hook living room. "God is the color of water," Ruth McBride taught her children, firmly convinced that life's blessings and life's values transcend race.

Interspersed throughout his mother's compelling narrative, McBride shares candid recollections of his own experiences as a mixed-race child of poverty, his flirtations with drugs and violence, and his eventual self-realization and professional success. *The Color of Water* touches listeners of all colors as a vivid portrait of growing up, a haunting meditation on race and identity, and a lyrical valentine to a mother from her son.

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