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Skin Deep

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Bradman wanted to 'put together a collection of short stories that tackled the subject (of racism) head on'. That is precisely what **Skin Deep** is. A collection of fine stories which 'help us understand why racism happens and what it does to people'. The stories are by writers from around the world and they tackle racism in many different guises, perpetrated by many different types of people. What impressed me is that none of them falls into the trap of stereotyping the perpetrators of racism in the same way as racists stereotype their victims. In fact, stories such as 'Zebra Girl' and 'Smoke' are bold enough to tackle that unspoken taboo: racism amongst victims of racism. Both of these stories illustrate that the perniciousness of racism goes beyond the actual injustices suffered by victims. As Steve Biko once said: 'the most potent weapon in the hands of the oppressor is the mind of the oppressed.' In these two stories, the victims of racism have imbibed racism to such an extent that they racially oppress themselves and others. Janet McDonald has black people treating one another differentially because some are 'light' and others are 'dark'. Sean Taylor shows us the extent to which we who are 'not white' have allowed racists to, apartheid-like, divide us. Alan Gibbons' contribution - 'The Blokes' - demonstrates the converse of Biko's statement: that the mind of the oppressed can be an equally powerful weapon to defeat racism. Then there are stories like Farrukh Dhondy's 'The Great Satan' and Nick Gifford's 'Assignment Day' which poignantly show us the extent to which victims of racism will go to escape it. All the stories, as Bradman says, are 'about living breathing characters and their problems that go straight to the heart'. That's what makes this collection worth reading. Not just its important and topical theme, but the diverse and interesting way in which the storytellers tackle the subject matter. And because they tell their stories well.

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