



Revealing Eden

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Eden Newman must mate before her 18th birthday in six months or she'll be left outside to die in a burning world. But who will pick up her mate-option when she's cursed with white skin and a tragically low mate-rate of 15%? In a post-apocalyptic, totalitarian, underground world where class and beauty are defined by resistance to an overheated environment, Eden's coloring brands her as a member of the lowest class, a weak and ugly Pearl. If only she can mate with a dark-skinned Coal from the ruling class, she'll be safe. Just maybe one Coal sees the Real Eden and will be her salvation her co-worker Jamal has begun secretly dating her. But when Eden unwittingly compromises her father's secret biological experiment, she finds herself in the eye of a storm and thrown into the last area of rainforest, a strange and dangerous land. Eden must fight to save her father, who may be humanity's last hope, while standing up to a powerful beast-man she believes is her enemy, despite her overwhelming attraction. Eden must change to survive but only if she can redefine her ideas of beauty and of love, along with a little help from her "adopted aunt" Emily Dickinson.

Revealing Eden Details

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From Reader Review Revealing Eden for online ebook

Steph Sinclair says

"I believe that anyone who reads the novel will understand its strong stance against racism."

-Victoria Foyt (Judging A Book By Its Cover Gives Birth To Racism)

Well, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but you failed. Badly. To say *Revealing Eden* is offensive is such a massive understatement. I couldn't even stomach more than a few pages at a time. It was like taking a spork to your eye, but then it breaks leaving you with only the handle to carry out your dark deed. Even with the obvious racism aside, the *Revealing Eden* is simply not good. From the dialogue to the characters to the plot, it was very badly written. A tragic mess.

There are a few things you should know before reading this review:

1. I am an African-American.

2. I went into this book knowing I would probably dislike it. Why?

-Because I'm obviously masochistic.

-Because I'm taking one for the team. You're welcome.

-Because Foyt made a statement that not many African-Americans had read her book. Here I am and yes, we still exist.

3. I will most likely address a few statements made by Foyt about her novel as it pertains to *Revealing Eden*.

4. Oh, and this review is kinda long. Sorry about that. LOADS to cover. >.<

Apparently, according to Victoria Foyt the population of white people have plummeted due to an increase in sun radiation, leaving black people in charge. My first issue was with the lack of science in that premise. (And no. Throwing out random scientific names of insects, animals and plants does not signify that you've done your homework.) If the sun's radiation was *that* bad, being black won't do you that much good. What's even more odd is that for majority of the novel, Eden is hanging out outside **in the sun without** her coating (more on that later). I kept waiting for her to complain about how hot it was or that her skin felt burnt, but it never happened. Her father is working in a lab attempting to genetically alter people so that they have animal traits and no one has created a better sunblock or, I don't know, CURED CANCER?! Where is the logic in that?

Whites in this novel are considered a burden to society since they have such a low rate of survival. If one does not have a mate by age 18, they are to be sentenced to death. There seems to be an obvious solution to this hypothetical problem: breed out the weaker genetics. But instead white people are oppressed just for the sake of oppression. And even though Eden knows she has had two mating offers, she refuses to accept either one, choosing to wait for her "Dark Prince" in hopes that he will pick up her mating option. Her reasoning?

"Because I don't want my child to be all Pearl. I'd rather be dead than mate with one of my kind."

sigh I can't believe I have to break this down, but if a black person and a white person have a baby, that doesn't automatically guarantee a dark-skinned baby. In fact, some may have very fair complexion. Funny thing the way genetics works. But what did I expect? Almost all the dark-skinned people in *Revealing Eden*

were black as night. The one person who *is* mentioned with brown skin is assumed to be mixed. *Shaking my head* It was then I should have realized that logic was not going to be *Revealing Eden's* strong point.

In order for Eden to fit in, she walks around with a coating of "Midnight Luster" on her skin and hair. She talks about dying her hair black and I couldn't figure out why she was doing that. Doesn't Foyt know that black peoples' hair is not actually black? Is that a common misconception even today? It's weird because it's something I've never thought of before. Sure, there are some whose hair is black, but it's not very common at all. It was the little things like that were I noticed a trend beginning: Foyt did absolutely no research on African-Americans or any other race for that matter. It is very evident by her constant reliance on black stereotypes applied even to white characters.

***Warning: Many quote-inducing headdesking ahead.**

Applying black stereotypes to a white female to generate sympathy for the main character:

"White people were lazy good-for-nothings with weak genetics."

A black woman's figure categorizing her status in society:

"Voluptuous, with raisin-colored skin, everything about Ashina screamed ruling class."

facepalm:

"On the main stage a band of Coals performed in whiteface."

Oh and I can't forget about the constant theme running rampant that black people are out to get the white people. As if black people, that are now in charge, have nothing else better to do with their time than antagonize others. White women everywhere are doing the "White Woman's Workout." >_>

Every black person in the world is out to get white people:

"She suspected that each and every Coal passerby wanted to hurt her..."

It's always black people:

"All of a sudden, she heard two men behind her. Coals, she figured by their careless, drunken laughter."

Songs about black men raping a white girl:

Little Pearly whirly,
lost inside the mines;
tossed from Coal to Coal, in fear, she whines,

"I'm sorry, Mother,
he said he only wanted to see my white skin shine."

Even more rape comparisons:

She felt more violated than if she'd been raped.

Go on and scream. Let it out.

And on and on it goes. But then it gets worse when because there doesn't seem to be any indication that slavery or the Civil Rights Movement ever happened. How was she being oppressed? Well as far as I can tell, white people were well-fed, had their own places, had jobs etc. The biggest thing against them was the mating age, having to wear their "coating" (I'm not sure if that was a law or anything) and getting rude remarks from black people. On a few occasions Eden even wishes the world could go back to a time where white people were free to go outside with their white skin without being persecuted. She frequently says that a black person couldn't possibly understand what it was like to be in her shoes. *slow blink*

"Someday, when you're locked up in a cage, Bramford, maybe you'll understand what it feels like to be an outcast."

If only Bramford knew what it was like to be an outcast.

Maybe now he would know how it felt to be judged by your appearance.

What did Bramford know about disappointment?

Yeah, that's not offensive at all. Not one bit. #sarcasm

And then there is the issue of the FFP A.K.A. the Federation of Free People, "a militant organization of Coals that vowed to rid the planet of Pearls." Pause. *deep breaths* How am I supposed to take that? The Federation of **FREE People**? Get me off this planet. I'm just going to leave that alone before I start seeing blood-red. Too late, I just saw red. Excuse me.

Okay, sorry about that. That was a tad awkward.

I also want to address the titles given to the races.

White- Pearls

Asian- Ambers

Latino- Tiger Eyes

Black- Coals

Albino- Cottons

Are you kidding me? Coals? As in black as coals? Pearls? As in precious pieces of jewelry? Cotton? As in what my ancestors were forced to pick in the fields? Do I even need to explain how offensive that is? And Foyt's response to the backlash of these titles?

"Why are whites called Pearls, while blacks are called Coals? Imagine a gritty, post-apocalyptic world where all that matters is survival. What good will a pearl do you when luxury items have no use? Coal has energy, fire, and real value. It is durable and strong, not easily crushed like a pearl. Pearl is a pejorative term here. Coals are admired. Coals oppress Pearls because they fear that those with light skin will add to a population unable to survive "The Heat," and drain meager resources."

No, no, no, no. NO! You do not give a title that has been used as a racial slur to a people who have been oppressed. You do not do that. And if you think any of that is okay, something is deeply wrong with you. By no stretch of the imagination can "Pearl" be considered a racial slur. Unless, along with common sense, this society has happened to lose every dictionary in existence. In which case, I shall provide the definition.

pearl1 ? [purl]

noun

1. a smooth, rounded bead formed within the shells of certain mollusks and composed of the mineral aragonite or calcite in a matrix, deposited in concentric layers as a protective coating around an irritating foreign object: valued as a gem when lustrous and finely colored. Compare cultured pearl.
2. something resembling this, as various synthetic substances for use in costume jewelry.
3. something similar in form, luster, etc., as a dewdrop or a capsule of medicine.
4. something precious or choice; the finest example of anything: pearls of wisdom.
5. a very pale gray approaching white but commonly with a bluish tinge.

Yup, that is just the title I would give to a group that is being oppressed. Tell them they're *worthless* while giving them a name that **literally means precious**. Moreover, if "Coal" supposed to be a positive title, highlighting their strengths, then why is "Cotton" considered derogatory? By definition cotton is a very useful resource. It's strong, durable, able to withstand cold and hot temperatures. So what's the deal here?

Only Cottons, the derogatory word for albinos, were lower, and they were extinct.

I don't think for a second Foyt didn't know what she was doing when she wrote that because in the beginning of the novel she calls "Coal" a racial slur herself.

Before she knew it, she blurted out an incendiary racial slur. "Gets your hands off of me, you

damn Coal!"

First of all, I'm surprised she was still alive after saying that to someone of the elite class. Surely if Pearls are so worthless and oppressed, there would be severe consequences for an action like that? Second, Foyt is again baking her cake and trying to stuff her face with it too. Which one is it? It's either a positive term or a racial slur. It cannot be both. I'll tell you what I think. I think Foyt was just trying to smooth things over with her choice of words. And failed, I might add, because my bullshit meter is about to explode.

In the second half of the novel I had no idea what was going on half the time. The scenes were very jumbled with no clear direction of where the plot was headed. World building left way too many holes in the story. Because surely there are more races on Earth than just the ones listed in *Revealing Eden*. Character interactions were much of the same confusion. But I think that it mostly had to do with the fact that Eden was a fucking idiot. Her stupidity burned. For real.

From this day forward I can never say Bella Swan was the worst. Eden is the worst protagonist I have ever read. Not only does she completely miss the point over and over again, regardless of how many times it is spelled out, but she is extremely selfish and all around unlikable. There is a scene in the novel where Eden happens across an anaconda and I felt myself rooting for the snake. Sadly, he didn't win. *weeps*

One thing that was clear was how Eden suddenly became attracted to Bramford after he became half beast. One minute she is talking about how sexy he is and the next she is calling him names, even after he saves her life several times. (Bold is mine.)

That **dumb beast** had been gone since yesterday afternoon.

And why had she thought the dress would please such an **insensitive brute**?

"Is this where you lock up your victims? **You're an animal**, Bramford."

The **selfish beast** simply dropped the subject and ignored her.

Also she likes to ride him like an animal:

She sunk her fingers into his long silky hair, like reins on a horse. As if she controlled the beast. Eden knew it wasn't true, but she enjoyed the illusion just the same.

What. The. Hell. A black man is turned into an animal and you have your white protagonist daydreaming about riding him like a frickin' pony? I just... can't.

When I finally finished reading *Revealing Eden* I had to ask myself what kind of person would think any of this would be remotely okay? Foyt says:

"So yes, this book is meant to provoke the white community that has never experienced racism or been oppressed because they have been in the majority in this country."

I take issue with the white community only able to be provoked by featuring a white girl who is oppressed by black people using the very same stereotypes we fight against everyday. So, yes. I taking extreme offense to that. If Foyt is indeed "color blind" as she claims then making readers connect with a black character shouldn't be a problem for her. But instead she chose to "turn racism on its head" and say, "Black folk, I know you guys have dealt with some really rough shit in the past, but what if it happened to white people?" No, just no. The African-American community exists **because** of the oppression. It is **our** history, **our** roots. It is the one thing that must be left alone. You can't just take that away from us and apply it yourselves and make us look like the bad guys in your novel! This is one of the few times where I had to sit back and wonder who could possibly enjoy this book.

"And if you ask if all these reviewers are white then consider that you have a racist point of view."

Oh, really? Racist point of view? Racism isn't dead. It's something that many of us has to face everyday. As a people, it is ingrained in our society that our features are less desirable than that of whites. There are somethings some people will never understand. They have never had to walk in the shoes of another race and therefore they have limited understanding on what it means to be a Person of Color. When you get followed around in a clothing store because of your skin color, when you can't go into the 7-11 with your hoodie on, when a job tells you your natural hair is "unprofessional," when your 4-year-old daughter asks you why her hair doesn't "go down like a princess" as if hers could never be considered as such, when you see celebrities of your race white washed in ad campaigns, when your male relatives are arrested for *looking* suspicious, when you see your grandparents cry after Obama was elected because they thought they would never live to see the day where a black man held office, when you know there are some parts of the country where you are just not welcome because of your skin color, or when you walk down the aisle of your local book store and all you see on the book covers are white people, with a small section devoted to African-Americans, you realize you are living in a white world. Racist point of view? Wherever would one have gotten that?

I think this goes without saying: **NO STARS FOR YOU!**

SARCASM ALERT

You didn't think I'd just leave it on that unhappy note did you? Pfft, as if!

Ay yo, if black people truly ruled da world we damn sure wouldn't be toting 'round some whack name like "Coals." Naw, we'd go for something MUCH more gangsta like, **Chocolate Thundas**. Then we'd go n' elect Snoop Dogg as our president and Dave Chappelle as our VP, ya feel meh? **We'd give women back control of their bodies.** We'd legalize MJ and the national anthem would be "Young, Wild and Free." We'd move the capital to the ATL, where we like to "throw dem bones." Grillz would be covered by dental insurance. **Free health care to all citizens.** Oppress white people? Naw, we ain't got time fo' dat shit, man! We'd be too busy spending our reparation money from da Gov'ment, giving back to the economy.

Chicken spots n' drive through liquor stores would be on every corner. You welcome! (So what, we get drunk...). 12pm would be a mandatory nation wide nap time, which no one would pay any attention to. Fuck the system! (So what, we don't sleep...). Though dey should 'cause "The Itis" is a very serious condition affecting 1 out of 2 black folk e'rywhere. And finally, random flash mob dances would be to songs like "Lean Wit It, Rock Wit It" and "We Fly High" (We just havin' fun and we don't care who sees...).

We stay fly. No lie. You know dis...

Book was provided by publisher/author via NetGalley for an honest review.

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Jessie says

" In a post-apocalyptic world, everyone must live underground to protect themselves from the extreme heat on Earth. People with white skin, called Pearls, are the most susceptible to die from The Heat, and most have already perished. ... In the story, because Caucasians have less melanin in their skin to protect them from the sun's burning rays, they are branded as inferior Pearls. Dark-skinned people, or Coals, have more resistance to the Heat, and therefore, now rule society ... their stunningly dark skin that carries the greatest amount of melanin...makes them the strongest, most powerful race alive "

Sorry, bro, melanin doesn't work like that. Melanin \neq sunscreen. There isn't that big of a gap of melanin levels between light-skinned people and dark-skinned people. Even disregarding the racial factor (I'm sure there are other people better suited to argue that angle), the entire premise is unlikely and not properly explained. The amount of melanin your skin only affects your original color - however, the more active your melanin, the easier you tan in the sun. How well you tan is not related to the natural coloring of your skin. I am naturally pale, being Chinese, but I don't burn; during the summer, I get dark enough to be mistaken as, say, Filipino. Being naturally dark-skinned would only afford you a minuscule advantage, as there is a known correlation between burning/tanning and the natural lightness of your skin, and if the sun was bad enough to kill people if left out unprotected, both would be affected.

There's also another point - how long did this apocalyptic heating-of-earth take? Supposing the above didn't apply, and blacks are immune (maybe they stole the world's supply of sunscreen and formed a cult, only distributing it to people deemed dark enough), it still doesn't make much sense. Assuming it takes place as a gradual change, then, if anything, then the fair-skinned would have time to seize upon the fact that they are at a disadvantage. If anything, there would be mass riots against the dark-skinned races by the lighter folk, and they'd probably have enough time to come up with theories on how this entire thing was a conspiracy against *them*, and wipe out a fair amount of the naturally invulnerable.

The only way that light-skinned people would be put at such a disadvantage would be if it happened almost instantaneously, which is pretty much impossible, unless the earth somehow shifts a few million miles closer to the sun overnight. Good god, it takes a special kind of author to write a potentially good, insightful novel about racial dynamics as another bid for white supremacy.

I wish authors would put more thought into their fictional worlds which, even "fictional", have to at least make *sense*, and fully explain them, instead of just writing another cheap publicity stunt thriller-romance advertised as the "next hunger games" - no, thank you. There is only a certain amount of disbelief readers are willing to suspend without putting the book down and thinking, "What the fuck did I just read?"

(I didn't even *like* the Hunger Games all that much.)

Rose says

Initial reaction: Before I start this review, I want to clarify a few things. First, I've read the whole of this novel. I'm not judging it on the cover (though I think in the measure of this review, I'd like to talk about that separately), and I'm not judging it on just the premise alone - I read the entire book. Technically I read this book twice if I count the hour long read that I zipped through to see what would happen with it (this was in a copy loaned to me at first, but then when NetGalley approved me, I returned the copy and went by the NG's e-copy to make my notes and highlights), and then another time for clarity of details. I've taken notes, I've highlighted my e-copy to include excerpts and statements in the following review. So I've been through the whole of this with a patient eye. Probably too patient, and probably moreso than many of my peers would probably be if they knew what was in this book.

Second, I'm a woman of color, and an avid reader. I'm not one to skirt talking about racial issues and the harsh realities that people of color face each day. I think being able to recognize multiculturalism in our society is an important thing, and talking about racial/cultural differences and hardships and being able to come to terms with them comprise much more than talking about the differences in our skin tones.

So, Victoria Foyt writes a YA novel that promises to "turn the tables" on racism. To make a young adult audience understand that there's more to a person than just their race. She aims to create a novel that approaches racial attitudes with sensitivity and fresh insight.

Well, I'm here to say for the record that Ms. Foyt failed miserably on all those counts.

Is there a coming of terms for Eden finding acceptance for who she is? Ultimately yes, but goodness it was a rocky road of ill description to get there, and it manages to insult multiple minority groups in the process (Thank you for thoroughly insulting African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, the Huaorani people, Aztec culture, among other groups). I would not recommend this for a YA audience, to be honest, and I'm going to outline just how badly it comes across. The characters are flat, the worldbuilding is lazy, the research and science is haphazardly drawn, the handling of racial issues I can't even begin to say how mediocre they came across, and the premise/execution is not only incendiary, but also misogynistic and culturally inaccurate, with many elements thrown together without much rhyme or reason. Much of the narrative is naive, completely skewed, and I was not only offended, but horrified at the level of ignorance.

This by no means a reflection of reality or even a plausible future. It's drivel.

In due perspective, if this book is any reflection upon the author's ideas on racial relations, cultural expansion and love in today's culture, I think Ms. Foyt has a long path of learning to do.

Full review:

I'm going to be personal for a quick before diving headfirst into this review. This is the hardest review I've ever had to write, and as such it's difficult to know where to begin with Foyt's work. I don't get into the habit of telling people what or how to write, but it comes with the territory that if you write on a subject of any tonality - especially if you're dealing with tough issues like racism, prejudice, and establishing cultural histories in a constructive manner - you have to be knowledgeable and sensitive to your subject(s).

I believe that Victoria Foyt lacks understanding of any of the cultural histories that she expounds upon in this book. Her point on using the book as a way to illustrate how racism hurts and how to come terms with loving one's own identity is mostly lost with how disconnected it is with its subject matter. It's as if she looked on Wikipedia and said "Ooh, here's an indigenous tribe (Huaorani), and I'll pick from these groups (i.e. Aztec), and I think I'll put this cultural historical backdrop with this other one, mix it up and see what happens. Ta-da! I'm 'cultural'!"

That's clearly no way to go about it. It's never a good idea to approach dealing with racial/cultural acceptance by perpetuating fears, clichés and practicing tunnel vision when it comes to the crude perception, description and depiction of ANY group. Foyt, unfortunately, violates all of those respective dimensions. I struggle between thinking whether she was aware of this, or if she really approached it without knowing just how incendiary it would come across. It's difficult to say she was completely unaware of them because the elements are so infuriating and blatant.

If you take the book by it's barest bones, taking out the racist/misogynistic/non-sensical language - it progresses as a very formulaic YA dystopian romance. Girl resides in post-apocalyptic society ravaged by a natural disaster that decimates the population. Girl is among the minority living under the rule of an oppressive majority, even among some who seek to eliminate her kind. Girl seeks to escape with her father - who's working towards a way to live in the society against the dictations of the oppressive majority rule and societal limitations. Girl meets member of the majority that she absolutely hates and doesn't understand, but then she comes to *love* him by some turns of events. And Girl must join forces with that Majority member to overcome obstacles to their plight and their *love*. By the end, Girl comes to accept her role in the world, comes to find happiness with those she's aligned with, and moves forward to the next plight of her journey. The end.

Sounds harmless if you think about it that way, right? I almost wish it had become another story entirely, because those bare bones aren't a bad format, but the details of the story are ultimately what will matter in terms of how the story comes across.

Let's consider the other elements, starting with the cover and how it ties in with the story. Horrid Photoshop attempt aside (and I would not have picked up this on the cover alone - it's just not flattering), there's a lot about this cover that does tie in with the story. I can't hide the fact I'm offended by it, both with the premise and collective story behind me. I said this once in another review I wrote (via "League of Strays" by Schulman), but I think it bears repeating here: "...the one thing that should be clear is that a person of any age should never feel afraid enough to hide who they are - no matter what the dimension entails - gender, age, race, orientation, religion - what have you."

In this case, the storyline deals with race and how a girl has to hide herself to be a part of another race in order to blend and abide by the terms of her society. I'll leave you to think on that while I move to the other elements of the cover. The eyes above the half-white, half-"disguised" girl are those belonging to a jaguar, which is the partial identity of one of the "majority" members that the main character comes into company with during the story. And finally - the leaves represent the jungle/forest that the story eventually transitions to.

I'm going to take extra care in saying this next bit. Let me explain this because the author may not have intended to do it and may defend it in every argument she makes to kingdom come, but the implications are that on the cover and IN the collective story - it uses Blackface and mocks the experiences of people of color. *This whole book* is a mockery of the experiences of people of color - of multiple groups of people of color.

You might be thinking, "Rose, why would you say these things when it's obvious that the author says she's speaking against racism in this book?" Well, let's get into the specifics of the story, out from the bare bones.

17-year old Eden Newman is the protagonist of this book - the girl showcased on the cover. There's no subtlety in her naming - it draws upon Creationist allusions in Christianity, which means somewhere down the road, the creation of a new race is probably going to have something to do with Eden. This is further asserted with Eden's appointed role in this dystopian society - she has to find someone to mate with before her 18th birthday or else be cut off from the limited resources in the environment desolated by solar overheating. The problem, in Eden's view and with her role in the respective society, is that she's a "Pearl", the pejorative for Caucasians in this story. There are other specific pejoratives in the story as well - "Coal" for Black, "Amber" for Asians, "Tiger Eye" for Latinos. "Cotton" even for Albinos. *rolls eyes*

I have a problem with the use of slurs in this book, not just for the naming but for their respective, and I would say inaccurate, function in this work. For one, slurs are intended to dehumanize and degrade the person or group they're oriented toward. They are supposed to harm/hurt. "Cotton" and "Coal" - in the real world, have been used as pejoratives before, with various combinations. If the author had bothered to do her research (even taking as much as 2 minutes to search on Google) on the etymology of slurs and where some of them are derived, maybe - just maybe, she would know how they function. Precious stones are NOT slurs. And I don't buy the explanation Foyt gave in the aftermath of criticisms of this. Quoted from the author's post:

"Why are whites called Pearls, while blacks are called Coals? Imagine a gritty, post-apocalyptic world where all that matters is survival. What good will a pearl do you when luxury items have no use? Coal has energy, fire, and real value. It is durable and strong, not easily crushed like a pearl. Pearl is a pejorative term here. Coals are admired. Coals oppress Pearls because they fear that those with light skin will add to a population unable to survive "The Heat," and drain meager resources. "

Three counterarguments to this: first, this isn't just a black/white issue - Why were the other races given their respective naming in measure of precious stones? That was never explained in the book - not for function nor offending context (much like neither Coal or Pearl were explained - if your book doesn't explain these things, it's a bad sign.). Second, isn't it contradictory for a slur against a respective group to have such a championing meaning? If the term "Coal" is a pejorative AGAINST the race it's intended for, and Eden uses it AGAINST the group she hates, why is it that the meaning is actually COMPLIMENTING their role in the society? Sense this does not make. (Even still, the argument Foyt makes with coals vs. pearls is inaccurate with respect to their physical properties.)

Third: if these identifications are meant to be slurs - why are they championed as identification for these groups than what they're actual names are concerned? Does everyone in this society identify by the slurs used against them, or is Eden just that racist? If it's an actual "slur" as it's intended, then maybe she would realize how wrong it was once she ended up with the man she supposedly loved, because she would know its use would be offensive, just as much as Pearl was when used against her.

Even with these considerations, I was far more offended by the frequent uses of "bitch" towards women in this book and the italicized use of "them" in this book than some of the so-called slurs that are used. Eden's the target of one of those uses of "bitch", but the others are used by Eden to describe her "Coal" female superiors among others. For example:

"That bitch Ashina was fifteen minutes late, and Eden wanted her break." (Chapter 1, not really characteristic of someone who's in fear for her life and has dwindling self worth in the presence of the majority rule, is it?)

"Was the bitch trying to set her up?" (Chapter 7, Eden referring to Ashina yet again...)

"Jamal and that bitch were in cahoots?" (Chapter 7, Eden reflecting on Jamal's - a "Coal" she admired and trusted at one point in the story - betrayal and referring to Ashina, AGAIN.)

"Damn Bramford for picking the lock on her heart. Damn the hunger the kiss had awoken in her. And damn that conniving selfish bitch, Rebecca." (Chapter 31 - Eden falling in love with her "Coal" counterpart, Bramford - who's actually helping Eden out of the oppressive society alongside Eden's father. Rebecca is Bramford's former DECEASED lover, who Eden is jealous of, though it should be noted that Rebecca betrayed Bramford. Eden actually acts for a time in the guise of Rebecca as to fool Bramford and "make him suffer". I'm not even going there. I just can't.)

Then there are the uses of the italicized *them*, which are patronizing enough towards "Coals". They're supposed to be the oppressive majority in this book, but I couldn't help but think how insufferable Eden was with her use of these terms. It was hard to feel sympathy because Eden sounds like a spoiled brat instead of someone who's suffering under oppressive rule. Examples:

"And yet if Eden were one of *them*, she would be safe." (Chapter 1, Eden claims she wants to be a part of the majority because she thinks they're more "beautiful" and "safe", but this comes across as patronizing.)

"Eden flinched. One of *them* was touching her." (Chapter 1. Sure, Ms. Foyt. You're writing about racial relations and understanding prejudice, and yet you have one of *them* touching the character and inciting fear and disgust at the gesture from Eden's viewpoint. Seriously, this isn't right.)

"She suspected that every Coal passerby wanted to hurt her, though the statistical odds against that were high. And her sensors, which automatically translated the babel of foreign languages into English, the official language, told her it wasn't true. Still she could never shake the fear of being around so many of *them*." (Chapter 3)

The last one I'm quoting as stand alone because it was the one that shook me the most, though there are a total of about 9 instances in the text where *them* used, probably in the first five or six chapters. It presumes the assimilation of languages in this supposed distant future, plus establishes a fear factor against another race than hers in this supposed future. How is this not an example of Eden being prejudiced herself? How the heck is this turning the tables on racism?

It should be noted that Foyt had many chances to show why the different divisions between these groups were, and to delve into the complexity of the hatred and dissention among them. She didn't do that.

I'm getting a little ahead of myself because I haven't expounded on the direction which the story takes from it's initial grounds, but rather trying to outline its constructional problems. So now I'm going to take a bit to talk about the characters and progressive plot.

We've met Eden and know her aim in the society is to mate and survive in her respective society according to the "rules" established, but there are other people around her who are also in her inner circles. There's her father, who just so happens to be a genius "Pearl" scientist who's trying to find ways of surviving the "Heat" so they can emerge from their underground society and live among the realm without being under the rule of the "Coal" majority. There's also Bramford, a high ranking member of the majority class of "Coals", who secretly helps Eden and her father both by subjecting himself to experiments that mess with this DNA and are supposed to be adaptations that will help them live on the surface.

The scientific explanations in this book are bogus, if even in just the premise alone. I don't know if Foyt knew about the existence of "melanin theory" and how it's been knocked down many times as unscientific and culturally incendiary (especially in how it contributes to racism within and outside of their respective populations), but this book plays into that non-theory very heavily. While it is true that melanin does act to counter effects of UV rays from the sun, it's not an absolute shield. The effects of global warming as being a "cautionary warning" in this book are noted, but it's not a heavy theme. It's just a plot device. Not to mention the book completely skirts the issue of how adaptation comes into play when residing in a specific environment, and how melanocytes adjust melanin production depending on the climate one lives, and that CAN shift with generational adaptations. Still, high melanin count doesn't mean an absolute protector for people of color. If the elements are enough to where a large population dies from the affects, and it kills life on the surface, then it's going to be a factor in killing people regardless of their skin tone.

I'm not sure what Foyt was thinking with a lot of the leaps taken in this work. It doesn't feel realistic even considering the sci-fi/fantasy tag. Trying to also legitimize the science in this by throwing in scientific names for species didn't help matters much either, I saw right through it and found the alternating names distracting and far too heavily loaded into the work.

In any case, Bramford, Eden, and Eden's father are working under secrecy, even as there are external forces at work in the society that threaten them. Eden's actions get them into trouble when she spills secret information to someone she thought was an ally (Jamal, a "Coal" she thought was a potential mate). Adding to the complication are a group called the FFA, who champion eliminating all "Pearls" from existence *rolls eyes*. There's really not much about the FFA to really note their respective role in the story.

Eventually, the plot shifts to where they have to escape the lab, and Bramford, as a result of the experiments becomes a half man/half jaguar adapting to the environment. I guess Foyt was right on one note about this being a "Beauty and the Beast" love story, but it's so farfetched and plays right into so many racial stereotypes. It's not even subtle. I never knew the point where Eden really shifted into loving Bramford. It was more like a light switch that suddenly came on in the progression of the story. Eventually Eden finds herself in the company of the rainforest and the Huaorani (which...I don't understand how a rainforest would be able to survive some of the disaster elements this book gave from the beginning? Another point of contradiction.)

Misrepresenting the Huaorani culture and Aztec histories, as well as trying to blend Christian elements within it or whatever else the author was trying to do with it threw my patience out the window. I read on to the end, but didn't have any investment in the characters to care. even when it eventually reaches it's noted resolution and "lesson".

I'm going to stop here, because there are far too many problems in this work to be able to write about in the mishandling of racial issues and cultural expansion. It's incredibly patronizing to people of color on multiple standpoints, for someone supposedly writing to be against racist principles and establish cultural understanding, it doesn't help Foyt's case. This needed a far more able, sensitive, and knowledgeable voice to carry the respective story.

I would not recommend this book for anyone, let alone a YA audience.

Overall score: 0.5/5

Note: I received this as an ARC from NetGalley, from Sand Dollar Press/Bookmasters.

Kerry says

- Blackface is not edgy or progressive.
- Naming a race of people "Coal" is not a compliment.
- Telling us that "Pearl" is a slur does not make it so.
- Claiming that the world's hierarchy is dependent on skin tone does not mean that you can separate people based on race while ignoring their actual skin color.
- Calling your heroine's love interest a "beast" does not imply his supposed beauty and high status.
- Questioning the existence of an African-American community of readers will make me side-eye you damn hard.
- Telling us that this "terrifying" dystopian future is "all too easy to imagine" is ignoring the prevalence of racism and white privilege that currently exists in our society.

We get it - You believe that special white snowflakes always deserve to be the heroine because their lives are oh so hard. Why not just come out and admit to all the racist imagery and insulting propaganda you're publishing? This book is disgusting.

There is never a reason to make racism about white people. Repeat that as many times as you have to before it finally sinks in.

? Half Blood Prince ? says

i actually read this a long long time ago, and it invoked me to such anger, i can't believe i haven't put up a review for it.

well, since it was a very long time ago, i've forgotten much of what happened in the book. one thing that **did** happen [and **quite consistently** throughout the book] that i will **never** forget, though, was **racism**.

so.

1) Pearls. Ambers. Tigers-eyes. And then, Coals. That is blatant racism right there, smacking you in the face. Do you want me to believe that the term "Pearl" is supposed to, in any way, belittle or insult or put shame to the white class?

2) Man/animal hybrid loving? if that didn't just put up the squick factor, i'm not sure what did.

3)

"(...) this is about an interracial relationship in a post-apocalyptic world. Or more narrowly, if you take out the question of race, a Beauty and the Beast story (...)"

I'm sorry, but you **cannot** take out the "question of race" in a book that is **in fact** *about* race. And since Eden our PEARL is in a pseudo-relationship with Bramford the COAL, that makes our poor, subjugated, woe-is-me White Girl the **Beauty**; while ugly, oppressive, monstrous Bramford the Black Guy is the **Beast**.

4) This coming from a woman who's not sure African-Americans even read any more. I shouldn't be surprised by the author's frame of mind, though, growing up as a privileged white girl sometimes does that to a person. I'd like to think - or hope, at least - that I managed to steer clear of that route.

I'm too harsh on her, of course. Being "**slandered with an ugly epithet**" at a young age must have been traumatizing for her. Oh, it's not like she didn't have any friends at school and everyone avoided her because she was a POC; it's not like she couldn't get a job, or had to face sexual harassment at every street corner because of her skin colour; but **she was insulted** with a term normally used for an African-American, and **that is bad enough**. So she **knows** what it feels like, you see? She **understands** what it's like to be on the brunt end of racism. So she **speaks for us all** when she wrote this book of reverse-racism.

Stevie says

People, this book is terrible. But first, let me tell you something about growing up black in the United States. There are not enough positive FICTIONAL people of color for you to look up to. If there's a person of color in a novel, the odds are that they won't be a person of color in the movie. Hell, people will complain if they are because they "just didn't see that character that way". In other words, to them, white is the racial default and they have poor reading comprehension skills. If you're lucky, somebody might find you a book on African American folktales but a good majority of them, specifically geared for kids, are out of print now. Maybe you get a black Disney princess but even then, she's made a frog for most of the movie so she might as well be from the planet Mars for all you know. But I digress...

The point is that media in the Western world repeatedly tells people of color that their bodies are commodities, that their skin and hair is ugly and dirty and unkept, that if their skin is too dark, they aren't beautiful. Skin lightening creams and relaxers exist for a reason that covers a lot of hurt and shame for a ton of people. Society doesn't hold us up on a higher pedestal racially, at least not over white people who will always be at the top, no matter how many people immigrate, no matter how many brown babies are born. It's a painful, confusing thing to be a black teenager when you're trying to figure out your identity but the media geared toward you just reflects the same tired cliches that trick you into being less than without even realizing it half the time or, shit, realizing it and still doing it anyway.

I say all of this to say that this book is horribly offensive. It doesn't put a spin on racism, it doesn't SAY ANYTHING DEEP about racial relations. If anything, it perpetuates the same tired stuff. Save the white people? Nobody will want to MATE with white people because they want to mate with the exotic other? Black people are more desirable for mating because of their skin color? And how about calling black people "coals" while the other races are other racist yet beautiful gem terms? What about the blackface that this book is encouraging as a survival strategy? And that's not even going into how horribly anti-feminist this work is (I NEED TO BREED DAMMIT SOMEBODY HAND ME A CRAYOLA MARKER) or about how albinism is placed on a lower rung. This book is terrible. It hurts me to even see that it exists. Yeah, some people are gonna like it. Scroll down and brace yourself for pain. Some teenagers of all races won't see what's wrong with it. And that's part of the problem.

The idea of reverse racism is not new nor will it ever be. The idea of white people being oppressed by people of color will never be a new thing. Hell, the idea of the white woman as a delicate, scared little bird who has to be sexually desirable or she'll DIE is as old as the Bible. But I bet you that Foyt HAS NO CLUE about how this book makes somebody who isn't white feel and I bet you that she doesn't care either. I bet you all of this negative attention will make this horrible book make lots of money. Because racism and prejudice on

this scale is institutionalized. It's become ingrained in a society that applauds over a book that makes slaves food for vampires. And that's not even talking about socially or about how rap music has become manufactured to show off a culture that's fictional from the tip of its head to the bottom of its feet.

Screw this book, screw its author, screw anybody who likes it.

Marisa says

This is a terrible idea for a book. As a woman of color, I find it extremely offensive to see a woman in blackface on the promotion, a comparison to *Beauty and the Beast*, where a black man is considered 'beastly', and the names of the two races themselves - 'pearl' for white and 'coal' for black - what is this author trying to convey here? I'm sure anyone with a brain can guess. As a young adult, my intelligence is insulted - how could this be considered good literature when it blatantly trivializes the trials and tribulations of actual slavery? It can't - this book is absolute trash.

Tenth says

I only read the first chapter of this book, and I barely even made it that far, because this book is so painfully racist.

Supposedly by making white people an oppressed group and black people the dominant group this book 'turns the tables on racism' with the intent of showing readers that racism is bad. But in practise it seems to just be an excuse to frame black people as dangerous and threatening and white people as poor little victims, reinforcing racist stereotypes. Even the title of the series "Save the Pearls" (which translates from this book's jargon to "Save the Whites") sounds like the type of thing you come across on racist extremist websites that fearmonger about white people 'dying out' because other races are apparently such a threat. Not to mention that in the society Foyt dreams up white people apparently spend all their time in blackface, a device she uses without seeming to display any sort of knowledge of, or concern about, how it has been historically (and contemporarily, sadly) used as a tool to mock and spread stereotypes about black people.

If you want to read YA fiction which genuinely uses the tool of switching around who is the oppressor and oppressed in order to give the reader a different perspective on racism, try *Noughts and Crosses* by Malorie Blackman. A much less offensive, much more nuanced, and all around better written YA book that explores issues of race.

John Egbert says

Edit 8/4/2012:

"Conceivably, if the book had not reached the African-American community of readers, if such a category still exists, perhaps there might be some backlash."

-Victoria Foyt

She did not just go there.

she did not just go there

-some guy on Victoria Foyt (no not really) (but still)

When I get depressed, I don't want to be around other people. I usually sit in an empty room. Sometimes I'll use art therapy and draw something glittery and happy to make me feel better. Other people? They like hugs. Me, I hate even being *near* people when I'm feeling down.

So now you understand why I spent a lot of time alone after reading the first ten pages of Save the Pearls.

Art therapy? This is what I drew while fuming and angsting over Save the Pearls:

I was not a happy camper. There are a multitude of reasons why.

I mean, even if I were to overlook the blatantly racist premise and plotline, Revealing Eden still sucks.

The author can't write her way out of a fucking box. First of all, Eden is hardly a *character*. I've seen potted plants with more personality. I would have rather the book be written from the perspective of a potted plant, in all honesty.

Revealing Cedar... Save the Trees #1. Would have been more interesting and thought provoking than this.

But I'm getting away from point. Secondly, if Eden had a personality you would be sure Foyt would tell you exactly what it is. Because she makes sure to tell every fucking other thing. Does this woman even know the meaning of the word "show"?!

She couldn't have been less subtle if she taped her book to a club and proceeded to whack me over the head.

The world in which she tries to place us in is so obviously fake. It doesn't feel sci-fi or post apocalyptic. While with good post-apocalyptic books (Angelfall, for instance) I was able to get into the setting almost immediately, every mention of the *oh so horrible* society Eden was living in had me groaning in agony and clawing at my eyes and face.

"Pearls, which was the derogatory term for whites..."

OH YEAH I'M SURE

IT CERTAINLY SOUNDS LIKE ONE

I mentioned in an update how slurs have reasons as to *why* they are slurs.

The most infamous n word, as I mentioned, could be translated to mean "black object". So, yeah, you can take a wild guess as to why it's offensive. (For the purpose of now we're going to disregard the hundreds of years of baggage piled on top of that, which is another reason why pearls is shit and doesn't work.)

A pearl is a precious gem! *HOW IS THAT OFFENSIVE?* And, okay, even disregarding the fact that it is *a precious gem* I could say "well maybe they're calling them useless clam spit". But even then, to call another group you're trying to oppress a pearl and *then* turn around and call yourself a *coal*? What the motherfuckery...

I guess the Coals are just that shitty at oppressing people.

The more of the book I read, the more I felt like asking Foyt what the *frex* (view spoiler) she was thinking when she wrote this. And I only got to page ten, mind you.

And even then, at the time I was speechless. Other than the underlying instinctive reaction to deliver a good kick to the crotch of whoever was responsible for this, I think looked pretty much like,

Because, how, how can you write this.

And not know.

How offensive it is.

Maybe if Foyt was a teenager, a twelve year old at that, I would have understood. Like how five year olds do the supposedly native american mouth call thing without knowing it's racist because nobody ever told them? Maybe? But Foyt is a grown woman. She should know better. And that only made it *worse*.

Of course, then there's the obvious. That she does know. And she just doesn't care. Which is what I'm going to assume.

So, in conclusion, Foyt:

DISHONOR ON YOU.

DISHONOR.

Because, you know what? You are dishonorable. You are dishonorable for writing this book. You are dishonorable for thinking you're doing anyone a favor by publishing this. *You are dishonorable*. You have no honor. None. You say you're 'turning the tables on racism'. Oh please. The only thing you're doing is *contributing* to racism. Yes. It's true. Believe it or not the premise of "white people being oppressed by evil and savage black people" isn't a new thing. You are not original. You are not helping by perpetrating this. You are not helping. *Stop*.

If you really want to help, you know what you can do?

Yes, that is about the only thing *you* can do to help. Sit in the fucking shame cube and show your remorse for this disgusting "book". Go on, now.

Everyone who isn't Foyt... I would recommend staying away from this so called novel. Sure, I know that you may be curious, but believe me, it won't cause you anything but pain. And if you're *really* lucky, it will make you hate humans and feel like shit after you read it.

Like me.

Now if you'll excuse me I'm going to consume so much chocolate my very *being* will become a mix of cacao, sugar and milk. Have a nice day.

gabriela says

racist. racist. racist. This person puts everything into perspective much more eloquently so I leave her open letter to the author here:

Dear Victoria Foyt,

I had never thought I'd have to write a letter like this. I'd thought that perhaps people knew some things were off limits, and that such things were off limits because they still cause hurt to very real and very subjugated people, but I was wrong.

Mrs. Foyt, I'd like you to know that I'm only nineteen, a young Black person budding in a world where I am (whether consciously or otherwise) considered less than because of my race. Even as a light-skinned Black person, I face fetishistic catcalls from white males, propositions for sexual conduct and marriage and discrimination in the job market.

I'm sure you're not interested in reading about my life, and that's perfectly fine. I'm sending you this email, not to inquire, but to share my feelings on your (latest?) book "Save the Pearls".

You see Mrs. Foyt, I was under the impression that you were indeed "turning the tables on racism". The phrase itself acknowledges that in today's current world situation, white people cannot and do not face racism on institutional and global levels like counterparts of color. My interest was piqued to see just how your book would manage to flip the script.

I would like to say that I was surprised at how dreadful the concept of your book is, but I wasn't. People of color are always let down in various forms of media and entertainment; we receive mere morsels compared to our white counterparts in terms of representation, acting roles, and complex character writing in novels.

Mrs. Foyt your book isn't turning the tables on anything. In fact, you are helping to mold young minds such as mine to further ignore the plight of people of color and disrespect the historical pain they've been through. Your book, your youtube channel — it encourages blackface, a practice used to dehumanize black people. I'm sure you're aware of the racist minstrel shows performed in the U.S. and if not, I implore you to use Google's search engine to read about it as well as view film evidence that portrays black people in a less than favorable light (to say the least). The mentalities and stereotypes blackface created have not dissipated over

the years Mrs. Foyt. People of color, black people specifically (I speak of them because I am black myself), still suffer from the detrimental acts committed by racist white people in the past. Hell, we still suffer due to detrimental acts committed by racist white people NOW.

My point concerning blackface is that, regardless of your intentions, blackface is hurtful and painful to black people. The historical pain and agony of being dehumanized, subjugated, murdered, lynched, raped (all in masse) cannot be separated from blackface for the sake of a novel written by a white woman. It CANNOT. I am writing this email to essentially express how I and many other black people feel; we are appalled by your racism, and yes, you are indeed being racist.

Your novel is no “neo-racist” treasure. It fails to address the issues people of color face today, something that could be done even if your novel focuses on “subjugated” white people. The terminology used in your novel reveals your racist subconscious (a subconscious white people as well as people of color possess): white people are referred to as ‘pearls’ I believe? And Asians are referred to as ‘ambers’? I also understand that Latin people are called ‘tiger-eyes’? These are all precious or semi-precious gems, of value on the market today. Do you see what I’m getting at? The black people in your novel are called coals, a term that actually has a historical background. Many dark skinned black people (I’m not particularly sure if you know any) have had themselves negatively likened to coal at some point in their lives, and if not, they’re among the lucky ones. It is evident that your novel doesn’t truly “turn the tables on racism” as you suggest, but rather, offers a common and wrong perspective on social dynamics through fantasy and post-apocalyptic science fiction.

The wide bracket you’ve place people of color under fails to take several things into account, things I hope (but doubt) you’ve addressed in your novel: what of pale-skinned black people? Are they pearls? East Asians, whose skin color is sometimes more fair than that of white people, and more prone to damage — are they considered pearls or do they remain ambers simply because of their race? Dark skinned southeast Asians, does their status improve to that of coals? There are pale skinned Latin@s, indigenous Latin@s, afro-Latin@s... have you taken them into account as well? It seems as though your book doesn’t acknowledge the racial complexities of our current world, nor does it take into account the future race-mixing that would occur before your apocalypse.

But in all honesty, your narrow-minded perspective on racial features pales (no pun intended) in comparison to the blackface which you encourage on your youtube channel. As I’ve stated before, blackface carries with it the weight and agony of widespread dehumanization and genocide; I often have an extremely difficult time explaining the severity of this to my counterparts in school as well as to adults who haven’t taken the time to learn about societal issues. I do not think you understand the gravity of encouraging impressionable people to commit blackface — regardless of its intention or purpose. You are fostering more ignorance through your young adult novel, and contributing to the silent killer that is covert white supremacy. Mrs. Foyt, you may think you’re showing appreciation for people of color, for dark skin (as I’ve noticed through your descriptions of dark skin) but there is a fetishistic tone that disturbs me, especially as someone (who is just one voice of millions) who is often harassed because of the hypersexualized nature associated with my race/skin color.

Your book has been published already and I doubt you’ll do any changes to anything you’ve already written because of a solitary letter sent by a lightskinned negro, but I hope you’ve taken the time to read this opinion, an opinion that actually matters much more than usually credited for; a person of color’s views on race and racism are always of the utmost importance, considering the discrimination and subjugation we face. This letter might have saddened you, might have angered you, but I hope that if you have indeed felt these emotions while reading this, you’ve considered the emotions of the people of color who were so deeply

offended after having read the premise of your book and also after having read your book. I hope you considered the black people who were (once again) emotionally wounded, after viewing how you've encouraged blackface and used it as a mere plot device for a novel. I hope you considered my anger and my hurt, the emotions I have to stifle on a day to day basis in order to function in a world that will never care about me as much as it will care about you.

Thank you for your time.
I am not expecting a reply.

- CC

<http://damnlaiyoffthebleach.tumblr.com/>

Nepeta Leijon says

EDIT #2

"Conceivably, if the book had not reached the African-American community of readers, if such a category still exists, perhaps there might be some backlash." - Victoria Foyt

And here is my response to this:

"The problem with Victoria Foyt is that she is ignorant. Is she really implying that African Americans do not read? How ignorant can someone be? Well, Victoria Foyt has obviously proved me wrong. There are still people as shallow and racist as her.

Not all African Americans are idiots, you know, Mrs. Foyt. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Nepeta Leijon, a concerned citizen against discrimination and idiotic authors."

Roxie Rex on Victoria Foyt

EDIT

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/victori...>

Read this. Just go and read it. Wow, Foyt, just when I couldn't think that you were more ignorant, I was proven completely wrong.

Oh, how terrible, they thought you were African American. BOO HOO. People think I'm white (And I'm an Italian-Hispanic) all the time.

DEAL WITH IT.

Also, maybe you should listen to the Sufferer's Last Sermon. Sure, it's fictional, but it has a good message for racist pricks like you.

Let's talk about racism and this book.

This book is *not* about racism. This book is pretty much shaming black people and putting white people on a high pedestal.

So, they're called *pearls*. What's the world called? *Oyster*?

So, Asians are Ambers, Hispanics are Tiger's Eyes, and blacks are COALS? Wait, why the fuck not obsidian? Also, is the author an idiot? I'm part Spanish and I have green eyes that are pretty fucking large. And I'm light skinned.

CONGRATULATIONS ON STEREOTYPING AND CATEGORIZING, FOYT. YOU GET NOTHING!

I have seen the videos of this book and I have gagged and choked while watching them. Really, black facing? Go fuck yourself. Yeah, go do it. People like you, Foyt, disgust me.

Is this your measly attempt to make a book on 'reverse racism'? Because, let's face it, there is *no* such thing as reverse racism. If you are a Hispanic person disrespecting a white person because of their skin color, you are racist. Same applies if the situation is vice versa.

There is absolutely *no* reason this book should have *ever* been written.

Yes, I will admit, as a light skinned person, I haven't had to experience much racism, but when I see my best friend crying her eyes out because someone called her the 'n' word and I end up reading a book like this where black people are called COALS, it makes me want to punch someone.

Let's stop the racism. It's pointless, stupid, and hurtful. We are all people.

And Foyt, do not keep on writing such a racist series. It gives a bad example to young adults.

Mel (who is deeply in love with herself) says

I saved my review yesterday without even finishing it. Here's the full thing.

Sometimes, people are convinced that they have the lower hand in life. They think the world's against them, that they are at the bottom of society's rungs. And sometimes, that is simply not the case. Victoria Hoyt has envisioned a world in which black people (or Coals) are at the top of society's social hierarchy because of their dark skin colour. White people (or "Pearls") are at the bottom of the hierarchy because of their pale skin colour.

I refuse to read a book which has such blatant racist undertones.

I mean, come on. Pearls and Coals?

Let's see what Pearls comes up with, shall we, when I Google it?

M'kay.

And now the Coals.

And here's a bonus picture, less than half the page down!

And we're expected to believe the *Pearls* need saving? It's the fricking *Coals* that need saving, from such an ignorant author!

And don't even get me started on the protagonist's name. Eden? Eden? Go and Google Image "Eden" and see what comes up. Seriously, do it.

(view spoiler)

Yeah. For somebody who seems intent on spitting in the face of racism, Ms Hoyt sure seems to be doing the exact opposite. Even when Caucasians are in the *minority*, they are, essentially, the "upper" class.

And the synopsis? Apparently, Eden's father is the only one on the planet who can save humanity. Guess what? He's white, too. It seems the beast-like Coals can't do *nothing* without the help of **The White Man**. You know how, in Avatar, the native tribespeople (or N'avi) were doomed to die until Jake Sully came along? It's like that.

It seems Victoria Hoyt can't get over the fact that white people are now at the bottom of the ladder. Which is absurd, considering she's the one who's created this class system in the first place. Maybe she's too reluctant to let go of her privileged life as a Caucasian living in an American town, in which the only non-Caucasians she saw was her housekeeper and a few Cubans in her private high school. Maybe she can't let go of The Good Life a Caucasian usually has. She just can't resist giving them the upper hand. There's "Eden" with the Paradisiacal name. Her father, the man with the power to **save the world!**, and the general name given to Caucasians: Pearls.

Combatting racism, my ass.

****edit****

A friend drew attention to this article the author's written. Just when you think it can't get any worse....it does.

Isa Lavinia says

Originally posted at Paperback Wonderland.

This book was one of the most racist things I have ever read.

The bare bones of the plot: a world where black people are the oppressing majority and white people are the oppressed minority. Obviously, the concept isn't new. It was done - and well done, at that - by Malorie Blackman in her Noughts and Crosses series. If you're interested in the premise, but you dislike blatant racist propaganda, give that one a try.

You could assume this reversal would serve to de-construct issues surrounding racism (as happened in Blackman's books). You'd be wrong. The way this goes about reads more like, "how can we make everyone care about the racism POC have to endure? I know! Let's get a pretty, blond, white girl to go through that!" It's a mockery, a dystopian what-if, with all its horrors, of what is a reality to POC to this very day.

Foyt doesn't just reverse social roles, as Blackman did, she comes up with a dystopian, post-apocalyptic future in which solar radiation ("The Great Meltdown") killed almost everyone - except most black people. Even though UV radiation's effects on the immune system and eyes are independent of race, and it's never clearly explained how humanity managed to survive in a world where flora and fauna have been decimated - the ever present holograms, as far as I know, won't fill your belly or keep you from getting rickets. But moving on.

This book is so messed up that I honestly need to give examples so people don't accuse me of making it up. So...

"Had Peach forgotten that Eden's skin only had a dark coating? Maybe she was passing, after all. Wouldn't that be nice?"

The book starts off with black face and I'm not even going to touch that one, because it's too obvious to anyone with a functional brain. In this book, the author goes so far as to have "*a band of Coals*" known as "*The Lost Caucasians*" performing in **whiteface**. I'm also not going to go off on how problematic the whole issue of passing is. Anyone with the bare minimum knowledge of history already knows it. The author addresses it only as problematic insofar as it is just another way the protagonist fails to see how beautiful she really is. I mean... I mean, really. I don't even know anymore.

"She was a lowly Pearl, worth nothing in a world ruled by dark-skinned Coals."

I'm sure that, if asked, Foyt would have a very witty justification for "Coals" - the way she chose to term the black majority in the book. Exposure to solar radiation will make you perish of "The Heat", and those who survive it are the "Coals" - hahaha, get it?

Too bad that when in context - in this case, comparing it to what other races are called - "Coals" is still insulting. Get this, the extinct albinos are "Cottons" (I swear I'm not making this up to better showcase how absurdly racist this is, Foyt really seems to have gone out of her way to be insulting), white people are "Pearls" - of course there are black pearls but let's ignore that and focus on the fact that pearls are precious gems and coals are... coals. So what happened is that, in a dystopia where black people are the ruling class, they chose a derogatory term for themselves? Am I getting this right? Because don't let yourself be fooled, the ruling majority is the one who decides who is who and what is what. So black people decided they would be Coals and white people would be Pearls? Was it a racist naming decision by the author or was it a racist

implication that black people are so ignorant they don't even understand the value dissonance of their choice? It's really a choose your flavour of racism issue here.

Don't let this whole naming thing distract you, even though Pearls are the lowest of the low, the protagonist still finds time in her busy schedule of being oppressed to be racist:

"Ashina jumped up and grabbed Eden's lab coat. "Are you calling me a liar?"

Eden flinched. One of them was touching her. White-hot light exploded in her head. Before she knew it, she blurted out an incendiary racial slur.

"Get your hands off of me, you damn Coal!"

Can you imagine how this would work out in the real world - I don't even need to add, "back when...", I mean **now**.

"Because of [Eden's father] high intelligence scores, they had overlooked his race and given him the position of lead scientist at Resources for Environmental Adaptation, or REA. He even had secured Eden a plum researcher's job at the lab. They were the only Pearls allowed to work there."

Never mind that brilliant POC find their paths barred when they try to make it in Academia today, not even worth mentioning how POC scientists were treated in the real world social period corresponding to this novel. The fact that her father is a "Pearl" but still the lead scientist is, by itself, unbelievable, not only that but he managed to get his 17 year old daughter a position in a top scientific facility. But let us set aside the absurd to explore the ever popular "white man saves the day" aspect of it, shall we? I mean, really, even in a world where they are at the bottom of the social ladder, and all but extinct, the white protagonists still manage to save the "ignorant" POC. Well done. And it gets worse:

"Eden might be powerless, but she smiled at the secret knowledge that she was one of only three people who understood how he was about to change the world, and possibly, even save it."

Not only do white people save the day, but the POC don't just lack the ability to save themselves, they lack the very capacity to even understand how it happens at all.

"If Eden wasn't mated in six months when she turned eighteen—the deadline for girls—she'd be cut off from Basic Resources, and left outside to die."

Why? Why provide this incentive for the reproduction of a race deemed inferior? Let's take a look at how that worked out in the real world. African slaves who their owners thought were no better than animals, were bred as such, to make strong slaves, thus serving a purpose to their exploiting oppressors. However, in this world, "Pearls" don't seem to fare too well. Their position would be even less regarded than Native populations back in the day, I mean, at least the Natives didn't just up and die if left on their own as Pearls do - and what happened to Natives under the colonizers? Genocide, that's what. They scattered them, took away their lands and resources, took the children away from their parents to effectively destroy their culture and, to this day they are extremely oppressed. There are no incentives given to rebuild their great nations, be it in the US, be it in Canada, be it in Australia, Native populations are always amongst the poorest.

But I guess the "Pearls" would have to "get mated" because how can you have a YA book without the heroine discovering that her reason to go on is finding and keeping a man? Unthinkable.

Bramford, her boss and potential romantic interest has skin *"the color of storm clouds"* so I don't know if Foyt was being poetic and saying he was dark, or being insulting and saying he was ashy to the nth degree, like, "That dude really needs some lotion, his skin... storms a brewing. You see that man and he only makes sense in a production of *The Tempest*, hovering overhead".

Jamal (of course, he'd be named Jamal, of course) "*My Dark Prince*" (Eden's words, not mine), her other love interest "*Unlike most of his kind, he was colorblind*" - I don't know how, in this day and age, an author - therefore a person who knows how to read - has not yet grasped the concept that being "colorblind" regarding race is, in fact, racist. You have to be in a position of privilege to have the option to ignore race, if you check your privilege you will not say ignorant things like, "I don't see race." Really, it's not a complicated concept.

Eden, as a character, is horrible. Whiny, racist, full of self hatred and always expecting her problems will be solved by her "Dark Prince" who always calls her "Little Bunny" and "pet" and despite this she can't wait to be mated to him and have his babies. I thought it unlikely he'd be interested in her, considering her personality alone all issues of race aside (view spoiler)

And if all this mess wasn't bad enough there was some bestiality sprinkled on top of the whole thing.

By the way, I think Foyt forgot something in her list of "thank yous":

Amanda says

This is a racist piece of shit excuse for a book. I'm sorry, but I can't take a book that "turns the tables on racism" by--once again--victimizing poor, young, fragile caucasian girls and vilifying POC seriously. There is no excuse for blatant racism. The cover of this book uses blackface. One of the core concepts of this book is using blackface.

Pretty blond-haired blue-eyed white girls using blackface is NOT turning the tables on racism. Stop pretending like it is, and stop adding fuel to the fire.

The terms for POC are offensive and ill-issued. Black individuals are referred to as Coals (the image draws to mind dirty, undesirable, disposable); Asian individuals are referred to as Ambers; Latino and Hispanic individuals are referred to as Tiger's-Eyes; meanwhile, caucasians are referred to as Pearls (precious, rare, etc.). THIS IS RACISM. It's not even masked racism; it's in your face, on the page. On page nine, it shines through clear as day--our protagonist refers to a POC as "them." (Italicized, by the way.)

Take me back to the time when teenagers read books of solid merit and upstanding moral meaning; perhaps this is the time when dystopian actually meant something in the literary world, where Bradbury and Orwell and Huxley and Atwood and Heinlein and their contemporaries reigned. I'm getting quite tired with the authors who have the strongest influence over today's youth exacerbating a problem rather than attempting to navigate the terrain constructively and without a whiny, self-pitying protagonist floundering in the way.

I am ashamed that this book is being taken seriously. I am ashamed that it's winning awards. I am ashamed that people not that much younger than me are the target market and are being exposed to this bullshit. I'm ashamed that a grown-ass woman would think that it's okay for her to write about something that she's never had any kind of experience with. I shouldn't feel the need to apologize for every white writer out there, and it shouldn't be my job. Get this shit off the market and don't let your kids read it.

Inah says

This is such a racist piece of cr*p. Dear white people, don't make racism about you! It's getting embarrassing.
