

Multi-racial children punctuate the sameness



BARB GUY

I wasn't eager to visit the Bible Belt due to its reputation for fundamentalists and bigots, especially since we've got those at home. But the big regional differences turned out to be humidity and rain.

Arriving in Louisville, Ky., we just missed a storm that brought 7 inches of rain in a single day. Six of those inches fell in 90 minutes. That's more than half a year's worth of rain in much of Utah; in some parts it's nearly a year's worth. In the place I'm visiting, it comes in an afternoon.

My husband, Chris, always told me I didn't know the meaning of the word green. I'd remark that the Wasatch Mountains were *so* green in the springtime and he'd laugh at me. Sitting now at the dining room table where he ate his suppers as a kid, and looking out the windows onto the

family's expansive property, I know Chris is right.

Green, as we know it in Utah, does not begin to cover this. Verdant, fecund, lush, opulent, efflorescent, riotous green abounds. Taking a walk, looking in every direction, from beneath my toes to 50 feet over my head, everything is green. A trunk from a large fallen tree stretches into a pond promising the relief of a bit of brown but instead it is tinged chartreuse from moss. Sunning on the log are three big green turtles. The pond itself reflects only green back to the sky.

Chris and I go to the family's picnic area behind the house and find that a wood picnic table, similar to the dusty-dry redwood sets in Utah, is instead moist and the top is covered by a thick carpet of lime green moss. An actual flower stretches its stalk out of the moss and blooms cheerily. What must it be like to sit at this table out of a storybook and enjoy an iced tea? Before I can find out, a sheet of plywood is nailed to the top in preparation for a big family picnic.

I was convinced that southern Indiana is all green because that's what you notice first. Really, the land here is rich with colorful things: white Queen Anne's lace, goldenrod, blaze orange touch-me-not, blueberry-colored poke

weed, and the six foot high lavender Joe Pye weed are blooming here. Cardinals, bluebirds, goldfinches and egrets, monarch butterflies and tiger swallowtails fly about. These colors make the green more beautiful, punctuating the lie I've told that everything is green.

Among all the festivities, someone in the family learns he is great-uncle to young children he never knew about. Upon meeting them, he finds that they, like our country's president, have been woven from different color threads. The children are multi-racial.

The new uncle takes it hard; the old unkind ways are trapped inside him, in spite of the changing world around him, in spite of the progressive family he married into long ago.

Out of nowhere, another storm. Thunder cracks as if it has split the house. The lightning is all but simultaneous. An onslaught of rain. Waves of rain. Sheets of rain. Torrents of rain.

All the raindrops that have ever, ever fallen can't match the number of teardrops bigotry has caused. Please let these kids see in the face of their new uncle only love. Please let them hear only kind words.

Little children, conceived by two people wise enough to look at

The Salt Lake Tribune

someone of a different race and
see a friend, these sweet,
gorgeous children are the
cardinals and butterflies against
the green. They are the
punctuation to the lie many of us
were told -- about race, about
sexual orientation, about religion
-- that in a good family everyone
must be the same.

*BARB GUY is a regular contributor to
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