



The book cover features a central white circle with a dotted red border. The background is split vertically: the left side is dark grey with faint, light grey handwritten text, and the right side is light grey with faint, dark grey handwritten text. The text on the left includes 'Journey to America's Whitest Black Kid', and the text on the right includes 'Journey to America's Whitest Black Kid'. The author's name is centered within the white circle.

MICHAEL  
GORDON  
BENNETT

AUTHOR PRESS KIT

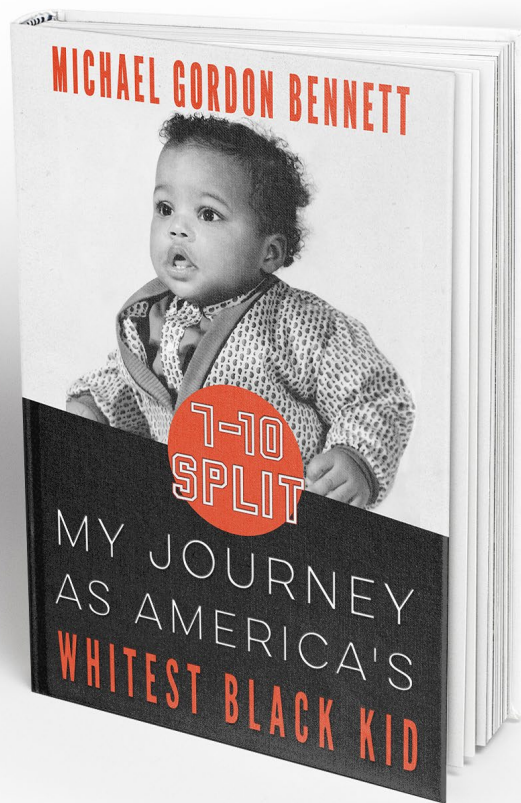




# 7-10 SPLIT: MY JOURNEY AS AMERICA'S WHITEST BLACK KID

"...a news flash announcing King's assassination appeared on the screen...My playmate's father rushed to the television set, stepped over me as if I were a piece of dog excrement on a city sidewalk, and turned up the volume".

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## SYNOPSIS

This compelling memoir examines the life of a military brat juxtaposed against the ugliness of America's original sin. In a country so racially polarized, belonging is a matter of survival---but Michael Gordon Bennett suffered the ultimate identity crisis. Who was he? Where did he belong? His ignorance of all things black and white proved his undoing leading to a period of homelessness. It begins in Madrid, Spain during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, where Michael is so far removed from the struggle, he thought himself more Spanish than a black American. He eventually migrates to a junior high school in the Deep South suffering through the first year of "forced busing" in the name of desegregation. That was followed by graduation from a Colorado high school with him as the only black male in his senior class. Those disparate circumstances left Michael ostracized and alone.

oooo  
"...many of my  
black friends  
weren't going  
to eat that first  
day, or any  
day..."



# FACT SHEET

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7-10 Split:  
My Journey As  
America's Whitest  
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Michael Gordon  
Bennett

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**KINDLE**

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**MICHAEL IS AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEWS, APPEARANCES, PRESENTATIONS  
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# AUTHOR BIO



my  
journey  
as  
a  
child



# MICHAEL GORDON BENNETT

"I had nothing in common with my black classmates except skin color."



Author, actor, host, travel expert and entrepreneur Michael Gordon Bennett was born January 1958, in Atlantic City, New Jersey. He was born in the BC era (before casinos) when the town was famous for its nightlife, the Boardwalk, beaches, the Miss America Pageant, boxing and the world famous board game Monopoly.

Michael left AC a year after his birth when his father joined the United States Air Force. As a brat, Michael lived in New Hampshire, Spain, Maine, Florida and Colorado.

Two years after high school, Michael joined the Air Force as a computer systems analyst with tours of duty in Panama City, Florida and San Antonio, Texas, plus countless temporary duty assignments, including a trip to South Korea.

After military service he dabbled in the acting world to pay his college tuition and support his young son. Michael appeared in numerous commercials, had a short arc on a soap opera, hosted a travel show and appeared in several movies.

Finally, 17 years after high school graduation, he earned that elusive Bachelor's degree in Journalism from California State University Northridge. Earning his degree fulfilled a dream decades in the making.

After college, he landed positions in radio and television news in Los Angeles with stints at KNX Radio and KCOP television. Michael was also an advertising sales executive at the Los Angeles Daily News.

After three years in television news, the opportunity of a lifetime presented itself when he became Senior Producer for the Travel Channel. He has now been involved in travel and tourism for nearly two decades, and is arguably the foremost African American travel expert in the country. His stories have appeared in numerous national and travel trade publications. He speaks at travel trade shows and provides marketing expertise to destinations worldwide.

Michael was appointed to the marketing/advisory committee for BrandUSA, the public/private partnership signed into law by President Barack Obama as part of the Travel Promotion Act, in 2010. The mission of BrandUSA is to promote the United States as an international travel destination.

Michael is currently working on an exciting new venture in travel and tourism. Stay tuned for future announcements.

Never too far away from his love for Hollywood, Michael has consulted on numerous film and television projects, with a few of his own in various stages of development under his company banner Bennett Global Entertainment (BGE).

7-10 Split: My Journey as America's Whitest Black Kid is a memoir of his experience growing up in a racially polarized world he knew little about. His story is chalked full of life experiences that collectively gives him a unique perspective on the destructive forces of America's original sin, and the strength of the human spirit to overcome those evil forces through love and compassion for our fellow man.

"I realized through writing my memoir I have a love for the written word. Seeing my words in print is exhilarating. I have several more books in the offing that will be a lot more challenging than my memoir, and I can't wait to get started."

"That realization was a bitter pill to swallow for a kid who never thought color mattered."



black kid  
whenever  
a 9-11

"The chasm created by the black students was not out of fear, or respect, but one of strange curiosity".



## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

Where did the portion of your book's title, 7-10 Split come from?

You wrote this book 10 years ago, why did you wait until now to release it?

Your father is from Baltimore, and you briefly mentioned your journey to Baltimore for the first time in 1970, two years after the big riots following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., ...what do you make of recent events as compared to what you observed back then?

What was your inspiration for writing the book?

Do you feel you would have been more in touch with black America, had you lived in the United States at the height of the Civil Rights Movement? After all, these were your pre-teen years; you certainly couldn't have been expected to grasp the magnitude of the movement.

How old were you when you saw a black neighborhood for the first time? Describe the obvious culture shock and how you coped?

"Forced busing" in the name of school desegregation made national news in the 1970s with riots and demonstration all across the country. Yet, in your book, you mention how peaceful your transition was in Florida. Why do you think your experience in Panama City was so different?

You talk a lot about poverty in your book, especially during your junior high school years, where many of your black classmates were starving, unable to afford \$1 for school lunch. I understand you tried to help, how?

You wrote in your book that you were the only black male in your high school graduating class. What's it like to be the "only?"

Why on earth would you, as a black man, return to the Deep South after high school expecting a brighter future?

You were homeless for a time after you returned to Florida, how does someone with your background wind up in such a predicament?

You write about love and hatred from both the black community and the white community. Share a couple of examples and how you dealt with the obvious divide.

Your father played a key role in your life, and not always positive. Outside of you, he's the central character in your book. How did his serving a year in Vietnam affect him, you, and your family?

Your mother is the glue that held your family together, did she ever talk to you about black America, and if not, why not?

You were determined to earn a college degree despite so many, so close to you who tried to suggest otherwise. Give us a sense of why a college degree was so important to you, and what you had to do to earn your degree?

Lack of equal opportunity continues to plague this country. What has to happen based on your experience to fix the problem, or at least improve opportunity?

What do you want people to take away from your book?



# BOOK EXCERPT

## 7-10 SPLIT: MY JOURNEY AS AMERICA'S WHITEST BLACK KID

I have vivid memories of the breaking news reports announcing the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968. There seemed to be a sense of profound anger and sadness by many locals in this northern Maine hamlet. But I also detected a sense of giddiness from others.

I knew absolutely nothing about Dr. King. Dad appeared reticent to share any knowledge he had of Dr. King, leaving me to figure out for myself, was King a good man, or evil, like I overheard some whites claim. It's hard to fathom how a ten-year-old, living in the 1960s, had never heard of Dr. King. In hindsight it's embarrassing.

In 1969, I got my first taste of my own blackness living in Atlantic City, New Jersey. We moved to New Jersey to live with family while dad served in Vietnam. The experience proved an eye-opener, an entire black community, who knew? It seems silly now, but at age eleven, the striking contrast between my previous world and the black community scared me. My path to black oblivion had already been firmly established—I knew zilch about black America.

I'd lived in overwhelming white communities my entire life, indifferent to their presence in my surroundings, or the dearth of blacks. Most of my neighbors' were white. Most of my friends' were white. Most of my classmates' were white. Most of my teachers' were white. My parents' had several friends and co-workers who were white and treated us as extended family with spare keys to their homes.

My skin color mattered little until Atlantic City. Even when I noticed the difference in living standards, it did little, at that moment to alter my perspective on race in America. Initially I thought my observations were an

anomaly. I simply had no internal compass by which to measure.

When we arrived at Tyndall Air Force Base, Florida for dad's new duty assignment in August 1970, I became part of a group of students "bused" in the name of school desegregation. I didn't realize all schools weren't the same. I'd never heard of the Ku Klux Klan, knew nothing about "separate but equal," or what it meant to be a black person living in the Deep South.

Tyndall sits on the Gulf of Mexico in Florida's panhandle, about one hundred miles from the Alabama state line. The beaches are beautiful, and belied the racism, abject black poverty, and subjugation that existed in the area at the time.

I learned, and learned quickly, my white world was smokescreen not based in reality, but more on a unique set of circumstances that left me ill equipped for a time, to handle what lay in front of me. I'd been unceremoniously dumped into a Race 101 class without the prerequisite courses.

Experience can be the worst teacher, it gives you the test first, and instructions afterwards.

Four years later I'd found my way to what could easily be described as the make-believe set of the television series Happy Days—the quintessential white suburban school. Dad's new duty assignment in the fall of 1974, took us to the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA), Colorado Springs, Colorado.

It would be difficult to get any whiter than Air Academy High School. Air Academy had three African American students my junior year. By my senior year, I'd be the only black male in my graduating class. My new circumstances gave credence to my belief that I was the Whitest Black Kid in America. I was certainly the loneliest. I counted my friends at Air Academy on one hand. I hated what were supposed to be the best years of a person's life.

Things like dating, school dances, and sports were fraught with danger. I became persona non grata at most school functions for nothing more than having dark skin.

Then in arguably the biggest mistake of my life, I moved back to Panama City a year after high school searching for friends, familiarity, and comfort. At a time when most upwardly mobile African Americans fled the South, I returned thinking it would be a launching pad to the future. I'd never heard of the Great Migration of the 1920s that led millions of African Americans north and west to escape Jim Crow. While Jim Crow was technically over, the migration continued.

Within six months I'd be homeless.