

Books for All Children: Author Fills Much-Needed Demand

Written by Ginny Grimsley
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Making the Case for Diversity in Our Kids' Literature

Need is the mother of invention, which is why Jeff Rivera decided to create a line of children's books that emphasize diversity.

"I'm the uncle of 12 nieces and nephews who live everywhere from Costa Rica to Australia to all over the United States, which is no longer the only melting pot in the world," says Rivera, author of "Um...Mommy, I Flushed My Brother Down the Toilet" and "My Two Uncles & Me," (www.jeffrivera.com), which have been endorsed by comic book icon Stan Lee and legendary best-selling novelist Jackie Collins. "There are just not enough books for little kids that represent families with diverse backgrounds, like mine, so I decided to create them."

There are still segments of society that do not embrace differences of race, culture, religion and sexuality, which is why it's all the more important for children of different backgrounds to feel included, he says.

Rivera reviews a few reasons why major publishers should consider children's books for diverse families:

- Something probably makes you unusual, too: "Some of us had attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, Asperger's syndrome, dyslexia or emotional traumas. Some of us came from

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blended families, mixed-race families, or were adopted. Some of us had gay and lesbian family members, some of us were on food stamps and welfare growing up, or were homeless, like I was. There are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists and atheists. Not everyone can be pegged into a nice square box, and our kids shouldn't be," says Rivera, a media personality featured in a variety of outlets.

- Together, 'minorities' become the majority: In the U.S., one out of five people has a learning difference; one in two children born are a minority ethnicity; and more than 14 million children have gay or lesbian parents. "When you add it all up, that's easily the majority of people in our country," he says. "It just does not make good business sense to ignore so many of us."

- Overlooked entrepreneurs: American history is rife with examples of overlooked business opportunities. Just a few decades ago there was an emerging subculture created by inner-city youth. The most prominent feature? Hip hop, or rap music. For several years record company executives dismissed the budding genre, and all the while an under-the-radar entrepreneur named Russell Simmons helped present the new music to mainstream America and the rest of the world. As of April 2011, he had a \$340 million net worth.

About Jeff Rivera

Jeff Rivera is a bestselling author, journalist and inspirational media personality whose work has been mentioned on TMZ, WABC, WNBC, WCBS, NPR and many other outlets. He is a full-time author whose humble beginnings living in poverty on welfare and food stamps as the child of a single mother, to his days living in his car and final success in media have inspired many.