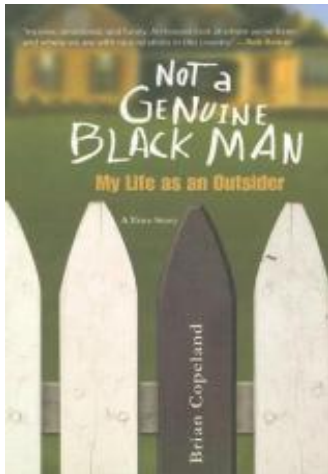


# Not a Genuine Black Man: My Life as an Outsider

by Brian Copeland



## About the Book

For the first time in its nearly ten-year publishing history, MacAdam/Cage plans to bring a previously published hardcover title, Brian Copeland's **Not a Genuine Black Man**, out as a trade paperback. Based on Copeland's wildly successful one-man play, **Not a Genuine Black Man** is a thoughtful take on what it means to be an outsider --- and a moving portrayal of one man's resilience and courage in reclaiming his identity.

In the summer of 1972, when Brian Copeland was eight, his family moved from Oakland to San Leandro, California, hoping for a better life. At the time, San Leandro was 99.99% white and widely considered to be one of the most racist enclaves in the nation. This reputation was confirmed almost immediately: Brian got his first look at the inside of a cop car, forced into the backseat after walking to the park with a baseball bat in hand. Days later, Brian was turned away by several barbers who said "we don't cut that kind of hair." And that Christmas, while shopping at a local department store, Brian was accused of stealing and forced to empty his pockets in front of store security.

It was a time that Brian spent his adult years trying to forget, until one day an anonymous letter arrived that forced him to reevaluate his childhood: "As an African American, I am disgusted every time I hear your voice because YOU are not a genuine black man!"

A poignant, hilarious, and disarming memoir about growing up black in an all-white suburb, **Not a Genuine Black Man** is also a powerful contemplation on the meaning of race, and a thoughtful examination of how our surroundings make us who we are.

## Discussion Guide

1. Do you think that a majority of the black population has been affected by various acts of prejudice against them?

2. How can we identify racism within ourselves, even if we think we aren't racist (maybe we are)?
3. What was the turning point in the book where Brian felt 'genuinely' black? What inner feelings brought him to that point?
4. Imagine what it would be like to have a lifetime of pain heaped upon you because of the color of your skin. How would it feel to you? How would you adapt to it?
5. Do you think Brian's mother, Carolyn, was right in trying to bring up her family in a white enclave despite the costs to her family in suffering racism?
6. How does Brian's family's situation in the 1970s compare with that of the Middle Eastern or Hispanic emigration experience of today?
7. How does Brian's family's move into a white enclave in the 1970s compare/contrast with the contemporary issue of gentrification?
8. Brian has been accused of being an 'Oreo cookie' (white on the inside). Is there any validity to analogies such as 'Oreo,' 'banana' or 'coconut' or are they simply pejoratives? Is it an expected adaptation to living in a 'white' neighborhood? Does 'keeping it real' foster racism against whites?
9. When was a time in your life when you were 'the only one'? What did it feel like? How did you react to the situation?
10. There are several success stories in the book. Name them.

## Author Bio

Brian Copeland is an award-winning writer, stand-up comedian, television host, radio personality, and actor. His one-man show, also entitled **Not a Genuine Black Man**, was the longest-running solo show in San Francisco history and went on to acclaimed runs in New York City and Los Angeles. He lives in San Leandro, CA, with his wife and children. To find out more about Brian Copeland, visit [www.BrianCopeland.com](http://www.BrianCopeland.com).

## Critical Praise

'the reader by turns laughs out loud or struggles along with Copeland. From anecdotes of a nerdy black kid in a racist town, to his grandmother's confusing advice to 'Act your age, not your color,' to his mother's struggle to be a proud black woman and simultaneously assimilate, to his own struggle to represent himself as an adult and a public figure, Copeland's memoir is engaging, and always well-intentioned and genuine.'

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