



Black Boy White School

By Brian F. Walker

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He couldn't listen to music or talk on the phone without her jumping all over him about what they listened to up in Maine, or how they talked up in Maine, or how he better not go up to Maine and start acting ghetto.

Maine.

Anthony's mother didn't even know where it was until he'd shown it to her on a map, but that still didn't stop her from acting like she was born there.

Anthony "Ant" Jones has never been outside his rough East Cleveland neighborhood when he's given a scholarship to Belton Academy, an elite prep school in Maine. But at Belton things are far from perfect. Everyone calls him "Tony," assumes he's from Brooklyn, expects him to play basketball, and yet acts shocked when he fights back.

As Anthony tries to adapt to a world that will never fully accept him, he's in for a rude awakening: Home is becoming a place where he no longer belongs.

In debut author Brian F. Walker's hard-hitting novel about staying true to yourself, Anthony might find a way to survive at Belton, but what will it cost him?

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Black Boy White School By Brian F. Walker Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #325550 in Books
- Brand: Harper Teen
- Published on: 2012-01-03
- Released on: 2012-01-03
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .89" w x 5.50" l, .75 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 256 pages

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review Like the protagonist of his hard-hitting debut novel, Walker grew up on the streets of East Cleveland until he was sent to a boarding school in the Northeast. Anthony “Ant” Jones, an “inky black knot of a fourteen-year-old,” has no interest in leaving East Cleveland (where drugs and violence reign) to attend predominantly white Belton Academy in Maine. Then Ant witnesses the drive-by shooting death of a friend, and suddenly Maine seems like the safer option. But life is far from perfect in the Belton bubble: the white students expect him to play basketball (he doesn’t) and assume he’s from Brooklyn (he’s not). Over the course of his year at the academy, Ant’s intense exploration of his own identity leads to more questions than answers—for example, is he Ant, as he’s called in Cleveland, or Tony, a nickname given by white students? How can he live in two worlds and yet feel like he belongs in neither? Walker grapples with these questions of belonging and examines the subject of race relations with unflinching honesty. Both the Cleveland and Maine characters are authentically drawn, and, like Sherman Alexie’s *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* (2007), this powerful novel is certain to spark thoughtful discussion. Grades 9-12. --Ann Kelley

About the Author

Brian F. Walker grew up in East Cleveland, where he ran with gangsters, drug dealers, and thugs until age fourteen, when he was sent to an elite boarding school and a world he had no way of understanding. For the past seventeen years he has taught high school English, coached basketball, and served as an admissions officer at a prep school in Weston, Massachusetts. He recently won a grant for fiction writing from the Massachusetts Cultural Council, in addition to numerous awards for playwriting, short stories, and journalism. Brian lives in Massachusetts with his wife and daughter.

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Estelle Hicks:

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