

Set Your Purpose

What does it mean to be multiracial? Read this article to find out about some famous multiracial people.

Not Just Black or White

by Louise Lampi



Mariah Carey

Black, white, **Hispanic**, Asian, or Native American? These days, most people give **credence** to the idea that people can belong to more than one race. Those who have a black father and a white mother can identify themselves as either black or white—or both. A person can be Hispanic and Asian or Native American and European. When people call themselves multiracial, it means they honor and accept more than one **ethnic** group as part of their heritage.

Singer Mariah Carey's mother is white and Irish. Her father is black and Venezuelan. Actress Halle Berry, golf star Tiger Woods, and actor Keanu Reeves are all multiracial. Derek Jeter, the New York Yankees ballplayer, is multiracial, too. His father is African American, his mother is white and Irish.

Jeter remembers that some of his high school classmates were perplexed. White students thought he was black. Black students presumed he was white. Others would walk up to him and start speaking Spanish.

"I'm biracial," Jeter says. "People ask if I'm black or white. I'm both. I'm not one race."

Devon Sutherland, 13, faced myriad questions from classmates about his race. They would ask him in the cafeteria of his middle school in Montclair, New Jersey. "They're just confused," says Devon, who has a white mother and a black father.

At least two million multiracial people live in the United States today. There may be as many as six million. As that number grows, the idea that every person has to be of just one race is being **surpassed** by the multiracial concept.

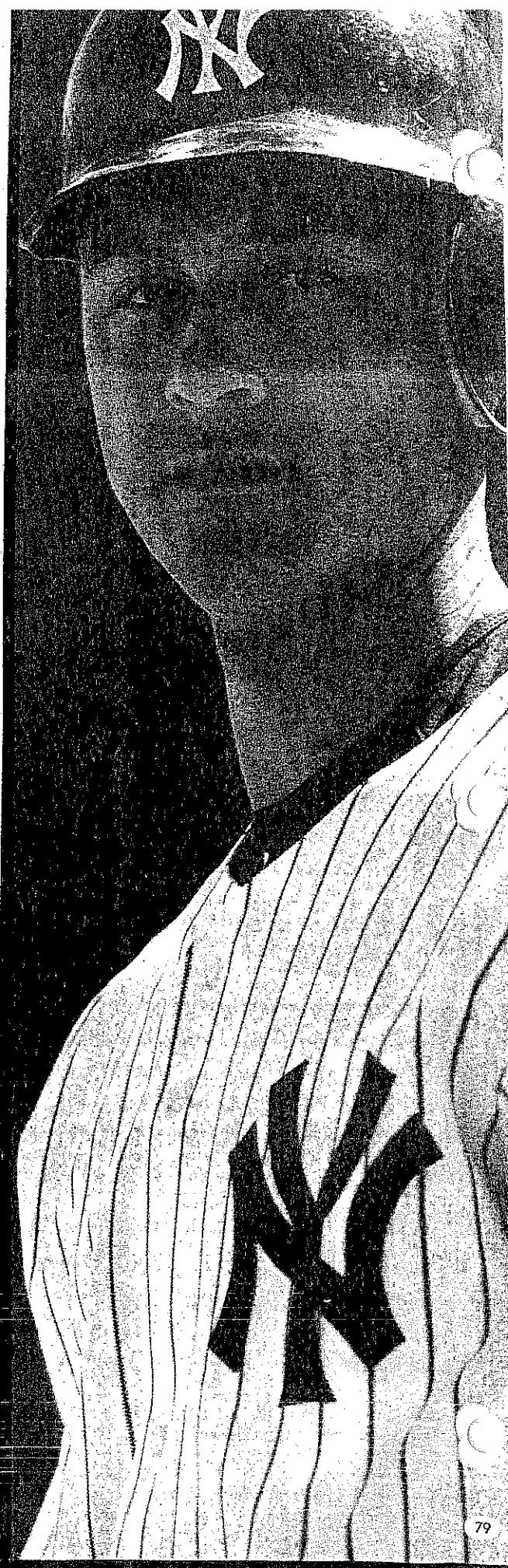
"Not all people fit neatly into one little box," say Ramona Douglas. She leads a group that supports multiracial Americans. "People should have the choice to identify themselves as they **perceive** themselves, not as others do."

Jeter was asked which he would choose if he had the choice of being all black or all white. He said he would choose both. "I wouldn't change a thing. I have the best of both worlds."

Think About It

What does Derek Jeter mean when he says he has the best of both worlds?

Derek Jeter



Check Your Understanding

Fill in the letter with the best answer for each question.

- According to the article, being multiracial means
 - (A) enjoying the best of both worlds.
 - (B) being a member of more than one race.
 - (C) not wanting to change who you are.
 - (D) confusing friends and strangers.
- The main idea of this article is that
 - (A) multiracial people face great difficulties.
 - (B) being multiracial is nothing special.
 - (C) more people in the United States now consider themselves multiracial.
 - (D) many celebrities are of mixed heritage.
- Which detail does not support the main idea of this article?
 - (A) There are millions of multiracial people in the United States today.
 - (B) Derek Jeter is both African American and Irish.
 - (C) Devon Sutherland is in middle school.
 - (D) Attitudes about racial identity are changing.

- Why might people identify themselves as multiracial?
 - (A) They are proud of their ancestry.
 - (B) There aren't enough multiracial people living in the United States.
 - (C) The law requires them to do so.
 - (D) They don't know who their ancestors are.
- What is the author's purpose?
 - (A) to inform
 - (B) to entertain
 - (C) to express an opinion
 - (D) all of the above

Vocabulary

Find each vocabulary word in the selection. The words and sentences around it will help you figure out its meaning.

Fill in the letter with the best definition of the underlined word.

- Are you of Hispanic, Asian, or Native American heritage?
 - (A) Latin American
 - (B) Japanese
 - (C) Greek
 - (D) Canadian
- Most people give credence to the idea that people can be multiracial.
 - (A) grief
 - (B) comfort
 - (C) acceptance
 - (D) lip service

- Multiracial means that more than one ethnic group is part of a person's heritage.
 - (A) relating to a group of people with the same race or country of origin
 - (B) relating to a group of athletes
 - (C) relating to a group of students
 - (D) relating to a group of famous people
- The idea of a single heritage is being surpassed by the multiracial concept.
 - (A) imitated
 - (B) overtaken
 - (C) left out
 - (D) repeated
- People should identify themselves as they perceive themselves, not as others do.
 - (A) respect
 - (B) see
 - (C) write about
 - (D) present

Word Work

Number prefixes come at the beginning of a word. They give clues about the meaning of the word. The prefix **bi-** means "two." The prefix **multi-** means "many."

A **biracial** commission is composed of people representing **two races**.

A **multiracial** neighborhood is composed of people of **many races**.

Read the words with the number prefixes *bi-* or *multi-*. Then write the word that best completes each sentence.

multiple multilingual multiculturalism
biannual bilingual

- To honor the many diverse cultures in this country is to respect _____.
- There are _____ benefits to being a member of more than one ethnic group.
- If people grow up speaking two languages, they are _____.

- A _____ report is one that comes out every two years.
- If a person is fluent in many languages, he or she is considered _____.

The **long-i** sound can be spelled several different ways.

unite **idea** **might** **try**

Write the word in the sentence that has the long-i sound. Then underline the letters that spell the sound in each word.

- Derek Jeter's high school classmates asked about his heritage.
- What is Mariah Carey's family background?
- She has a white mother and a black father.
- Many people identify themselves as multiracial.
- Tiger Woods and Keanu Reeves are both multiracial.

Write Now

In the article "Not Just Black or White," you read that millions of people in the United States are multiracial and the number is growing. What can people do to celebrate the racial diversity of the United States?

- Plan to design a poster that will celebrate our multiracial culture. Copy and complete a chart like the one shown to help organize your thoughts. First, list some facts about multiracial people. Then, suggest reasons for celebrating racial and cultural diversity.
- Create your poster. Don't forget to add a picture or drawing to add visual interest to the poster.

Facts about multiracial people	Reasons to celebrate racial and cultural diversity
Millions of people _____	To show that diversity is accepted
Multiracial people have contributed _____	We can learn a lot from our differences