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Publication Date: 10/15/2022  
ISBN: 9780820363066 (\$22.95)

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**Award-Winning Fiction Collection Examines the Effects of Racism and Classism on an Upper-Middle Class Black American Family**

Los Angeles, CA (May 2022) — Toni Ann Johnson’s *Light Skin Gone to Waste* (October 2022, University of Georgia Press) features stories that delve into how racist ideas burrow into Black and White families and infect them for generations. This linked collection is inspired by Johnson’s experience growing up in a middle-class Black family living in a White, working-class town in mid-century Upstate New York. **Winner of the 2021 Flannery O’Connor Award**, the book was selected and edited by Roxane Gay, who said of the collection:

“Toni Ann Johnson’s *Light Skin Gone to Waste* is one of the most engrossing short story collections I’ve read in recent memory. These interconnected stories about a Black family living in a predominantly White suburb of New York City are impeccably written, incisive, often infuriating, and unforgettable . . . With a deft eye for detail, crisp writing, and an uncanny understanding of human frailties, Toni Ann Johnson has created an endlessly interesting American family portrait.”—**Roxane Gay, author of *Bad Feminist***

Johnson has been a playwright and screenwriter whose work focuses on race, and yet it was decades before she took on this fictionalized version of her family’s experience. Johnson says “I didn’t see what was noteworthy about my dad’s experience as a Black psychologist, or my mother’s as a Black female business owner, or mine as the perpetual only Black girl. In the last decade, I began to see how our experience contributes to the cultural conversation.”

The stories begin in 1962, with Philip and Velma Arrington’s move to the small town of Monroe. After initial racist resistance, they settle in. Phil joins the tennis club, begins his private practice, and soon has affairs with White women. Velma opens an antique shop and hires a White maid. They have a child, buy new homes, collect art, go skiing, and have overseas adventures. It seems they’ve made it in the White world. However, their daughter Maddie, one of the only Black kids in the town, faces the brunt of the racism her family’s money, education, and light skin can’t protect her from.

As the stories unfold, we learn how childhood trauma, race, class, and colorism have played a part in both Phil and Velma’s development. Simultaneously, we follow how these same effects develop Maddie’s multifaceted identity. The collection is as much about the complexities of race relations as it is about the cause-and-effect parenting has on one’s psychological development. If Maddie is injured by her experience with racism, her parents’ unwillingness to protect her is as much to blame as the racists themselves.

A dazzling collection, *Light Skin Gone to Waste* examines race, class, community, family, and the meaning of home.

**TONI ANN JOHNSON** won the 2021 Flannery O'Connor Award for her linked story collection *Light Skin Gone to Waste*, selected and edited by Roxane Gay. She's the author of the novel *Remedy for a Broken Angel* (2014), which was nominated for an NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work. Johnson's novella *Homegoing* (2021) won Accents Publishing's inaugural novella contest. She's a two-time winner of the Humanitas Prize for her screenplays *Ruby Bridges* (Disney) and *Crown Heights* (Showtime). Essays and short fiction have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Coachella Review*, *Hunger Mountain*, *Callaloo*, and many other publications.

**If you would like more information or to interview Toni Ann Johnson, please contact Alyssia Gonzalez at [alyssiaccg@gmail.com](mailto:alyssiaccg@gmail.com).**

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