

ative stereotypes of minority intellectual inferiority.”

The authors kept a close eye on those minority students—about 9 percent of the blacks and 7 percent of the Latinos—who had doubts about their own abilities and were self-conscious about the views of teachers, or who doubted their own ethnic group’s abilities. In their first term of college, those students “earned significantly lower grades and failed courses at much higher rates than other minority students,” the authors say.

This is like reading Harry Potter. You have to start with the first book to appreciate the wonders of the next few. So plunk down your \$29.95 and get ready for an interesting trip.

JAY MATHEWS is a Washington Post education reporter and columnist.

“Oreo” Nation

By David J. Garrow

THREE DECADES AGO, DURING my final undergraduate semester, I ventured south to visit the graduate school I’d decided to attend. Upon returning north, I told my best friend that during the trip I’d met a young woman whom I’d slept with. My friend was eager to learn more, but when I mentioned that the woman was black, he reacted with unabashed horror and salacious curiosity.

This long-forgotten memory came to mind while reading *Interracial Intimacies*, a rich and outspoken new volume by Randall Kennedy, an African-American law professor at Harvard. More precisely, it recurred during Kennedy’s discussion of “racist folklore that equated amalgamation with something akin to bestiality” and his assertion that, even a quarter-century after my experience, there remains an “active belief, still widespread, that interracial sexual affection is shameful.”

Kennedy’s long book is thoughtful and wide-ranging, spanning everything from the slavery era to present-day battles over interracial adoption. His early chapters synthe-

size a burgeoning historical literature on pre-20th century American interracial intimacy. Most readers will readily accept Kennedy’s observation that “it would be difficult to construct a context more conducive to sexual exploitation than American racial slavery.” But some may be surprised to learn that after the Civil War, lawmakers’ efforts to prevent interracial unions actually increased: Anti-miscegenation statutes criminalizing interracial marriage were widespread across the entire United States by the beginning of the 20th century. Only in 1967, 13 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, did the U. S. Supreme Court finally declare such laws unconstitutional in the case of *Loving v. Virginia*.

While much of Kennedy’s book is historical, his legal realism—his belief that individual feelings often trump written rules—informs his political worldview. History, he explains, generally shows that “the transformation of public opinion is even more important than the transformation of legal formalities” for achieving social change.

He applies this perspective most explicitly to his long discussion of current interracial adoption policies. Today, as in the past, a disproportionately large number of parentless children are black. Notwithstanding the South’s heritage of expressly prohibiting interracial adoption, by the late 1960s, the number of such adoptions nationally had begun to rise. By 1971 more than 2,500 black children annually were being adopted into white homes.

But the following year the National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW) declared that black children should be placed only in black homes. As a result, within two years, interracial adoptions declined by more than two-thirds. The group’s advocacy of race matching in adoption, Kennedy notes, “eerily echoed the rhetoric of white segregationists.” Yet even as recently

as 1985, the NABSW reiterated that “the placement of black children in white homes is a blatant form of race and cultural genocide.” Their belief, Kennedy explains, is that “interracial adoption will create a host of ‘Oreos,’” much as those who oppose cross-racial adoption of Native American and Asian children fear the production of “apples” and “bananas.”

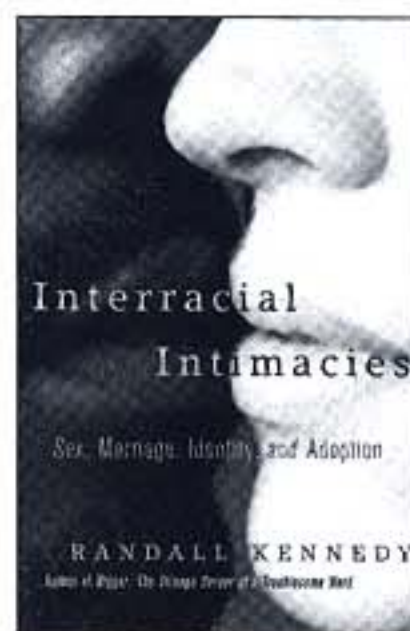
Kennedy’s opposition toward these racist attitudes is intense. “Race matching,” he writes, “is in essence just another form of racial profiling,” applied in this instance to prospective parents rather than travelers, and Kennedy believes that its proponents should be forced “to defend the racial discrimination they embrace.” He further suspects that strong race-matching tendencies

persist among social workers, even where statutes or policies expressly forbid it, and that such deception by officials is widespread “even while under oath in court proceedings.”

Kennedy’s antipathy toward using race as a factor in interracial adoption leads him toward explicit opposition to affirmative action. He is laudably frank in acknowledging this and admits his ambivalence about continuing such

programs. “They have performed a great service,” he writes, but their use of race is “a toxic activity” that should be avoided if at all possible. But Kennedy is unequivocal about what he values most: “if dismantling affirmative action must be a part of the price of effectively doing away with race matching, ... I, for one, am willing to pay.”

Quite admirably, Kennedy recognizes that his hostility toward race matching is analytically inseparable from opposition to racial preference programs. In fact, what he says of proponents of race matching may likewise apply to the many people in American higher education who obfuscate and dissemble when con-



INTERRACIAL INTIMACIES:
Sex, Marriage, Identity,
and Adoption
by Randall Kennedy
Pantheon Books, \$30.00

fronted with probing questions about the specific details of preferential admissions policies. "Sincere proponents of bad ideas are often the worst kind of fanatics," Kennedy explains. "True believers" will fight for what they know is right "even if it entails engaging in deception."

Kennedy concludes that "we should distrust all who would draw racial lines, even (or perhaps especially) when they insist that they are doing so for good reasons." His own yearning for "a society in which race has become obsolete as a significant social marker" may strike committed racialists as naive, but Kennedy rightly sees himself as championing Frederick Douglass's amalgamationist dream that someday all Americans will be "blended into a common nationality." *Interracial Intimacies* is an important, challenging, and thought provoking step toward that goal.

DAVID J. GARROW is the author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Bearing the Cross, a biography of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Rove Rage

By Jamie Malanowski

IF KARL ROVE WERE A STOCK, this might be a good time to short him. It's not that I think he's about to go on a losing streak. Hardly—he may have a great many victories in him yet. But when people are calling you "Boy Genius" and they're not being sarcastic—people, for example, like Lou Dubose, Jan Reid, and Carl M. Cannon in their new book *Boy Genius: Karl Rove, the Brains Behind the Remarkable Political Triumph of George W. Bush*—you have to think that this may be just about as good as it gets.

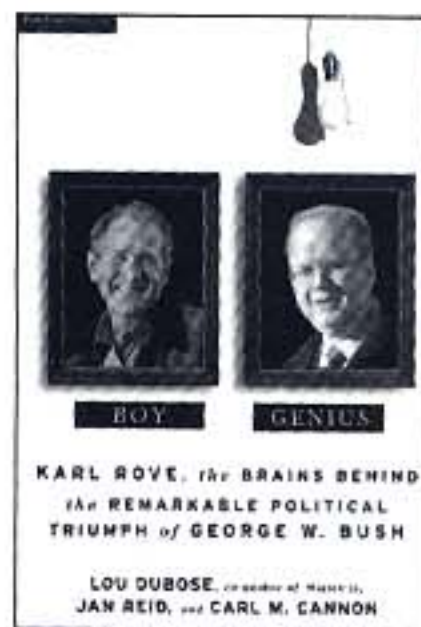
First, there's the genius business. The authors make the case that Rove is a highly talented operative who pretty much does nothing but win. They present him single-minded and highly prepared, with a

shrewd eye for political talent, and an admirably ruthless willingness to go for the jugular. They give us a good long look at his career, taking us on a fan's tour of a quarter-century of Texas state politics. Believe me, to love this book, you're going to have to be the kind of person who gets the vapors from reading sentences like, "With Rove handling his direct mail, Clements was in even better shape for his 1982 reelection bid against Mark White, the tall, drawling centrist attorney general who had replaced John Hill." It's the kind of book that will have the same effect on Charlie Cook that Grateful Dead concerts have on Bill Walton.

But what's interesting about all these campaigns is to see just how seldom Rove-run operations make mistakes. It's always the other fellows who don't read the land right, or who make the faux pas, or who have some skeleton in their closets, or who don't realize they've lashed themselves to some position that's going to anchor them in the political deep. Look no further than the 2000 election: It was Gore, with all his assets, who couldn't get out of his own way. Bush simply kept putting his best foot forward, and in the end, that was enough to put him in the position where the Supreme Court could elect him president. Not fumbling and not committing penalties may not be enough to get a football coach declared a genius, but it will win him a lot of games.

What does get someone like Rove declared a genius is pulling off the upset. The managers of Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy weren't thought of geniuses. Rove is acclaimed a genius by these writers and others because Bush was such a decided underdog—a man whose political gifts were then, and to a sur-

prising degree remain, "misunderestimated." Rove also gets recognized for the astonishing Republican rout in the 2002 midterms. The reason



BOY GENIUS:
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by Lou Dubose, Jan Reid,
Carl M. Cannon
Public Affairs, \$15.99

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