

all mixed up

the Amy Hodgepodge book series celebrates diversity

The term “hodgepodge” could define the ethnicity of most Americans: a bit of Irish, a dab of American Indian, a slather of French, a dollop of Danish all turned out in a brunette, blue-eyed American. But some children, whose features don’t allow them to “melt” into the melting pot which is America, often feel more different than others. Children can be very sensitive to differences in themselves and others. It was for these children that Kim Wayans and Kevin Knotts wrote their Amy Hodgepodge book series.

In the series, Amy Hodges is a fourth-grader excited to be starting “real” school after years of being

home schooled. Her enthusiasm turns to anxiety when she is teased for being different. Amy is of mixed race background: part Asian, part Caucasian and part African American. The first book in the series, “All Mixed Up,” follows Amy as she makes new friends and discovers other children are “all mixed up” just like her. Though the Amy Hodgepodge series deals with

children such as bullying, social and economic difficulties, friendships and more.

Kim, an actress, screenwriter, and member of the famous Wayans family of entertainers, was inspired by her extended family to write the Amy Hodgepodge series.

“We have 38 nieces and nephews, a lot of whom are multi-racial,” says Kim, a beautiful woman



KIM WAYANS AND KEVIN KNOTTS WERE IN TULSA TO TALK ABOUT THEIR BOOK SERIES FOR CHILDREN.

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racial diversity, the books also tackle other challenges common to

who exudes energy, compassion and authenticity. “We wanted to give a face and voice to multi-racial children. We wanted our nieces and nephews to have positive role models.”

Additionally, it was important to Wayans and Knox that the characters in their stories look, dress and act like children. “We wanted our readers to see our characters behaving like children, and dressing like children,” says Wayans, who is adamantly opposed to what she sees as society’s trend to sexualize children. “When there is no line determining when adulthood begins, it’s not good for children or for society,” says Wayans.

According to Wayans, the response to the Amy Hodgepodge books has been overwhelmingly positive and heartwarming. “We have lots of stories, especially of

girls, who say, ‘Amy looks just like me!’ We also have parents and grandparents saying, ‘These books have helped my child so much. Now she is proud of being multi-racial.’”

“We can see the appreciation in childrens’ eyes when we talk to them,” says Knox, an actor and screenwriter who is both movie-star cool and warmly approachable. “They are relieved to know that other kids are having the same problems.”

Wayans and Knox were in Tulsa October 20th to present their books to the Laura Dester Shelter. Their visit was sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Tulsa. During the visit the couple read from an Amy Hodgepodge book and gave each child at the shelter a signed copy of the book.

“Our books help all children embrace diversity,” says Wayans, “And the reality is, that’s the world we are living in today.”



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