



in the mix

THE MULTIRACIAL COMMUNITY IS GROWING AND SO IS NATIONAL ACCEPTANCE

Alicia Keys, Kimora Lee Simmons and 5.2 million other Americans identify as mixed race according to the U.S. Census. That coupled with the fact that the number of interracial marriages is swelling—5 million Americans are married to someone outside of their race—is enough to explain why acceptance of an ever-expanding multiracial culture is increasing.

That's now, but Susan Brissenden-Smith and her husband, Rudy, were ahead of the curve with their interracial marriage in the '70s.

Brissenden-Smith, 64, admits that it was difficult at times. "The '70s followed huge societal upheaval in the '60s. Miscegenation was [against] the law in many states in the '50s, so interracial dating or marriage was fairly new and novel," she shares.

"However, we were in the San Francisco area, which was [and still is] more liberal in outlook—which helped."

In addition to their rela-

tionship, raising two biracial daughters posed another challenge.

"I had people stop me in the grocery store and ask if they were adopted," says the Daly City, Calif., native. "[The multiracial community is] more accepted now. San Francisco has many 'blended' families."

Brissenden-Smith and her family settled in the right place, because nationally, 40 percent of the mixed-race population lives in the West, 27 percent are in the South, 18 percent are in the Northeast and 15 percent are in the Midwest, according to the 2000 Census, which was the first one to track these numbers. Now, the U.S. Census Bureau allows respondents to check multiple boxes when identifying race.

"Over time, I think the idea of multiracial identity, particularly with people like President Obama gaining prominence in this country, has in and of itself become less controversial," says Farai Chideya, an award-winning

journalist and author of *The Color of Our Future*.

Sara Brissenden-Smith, 33, daughter of Susan and Rudy, is pleased at the fact that there are more multicultural people in the spotlight.

"Kids now are growing up in a world where there are leaders, celebrities and high-profile people who are biracial or multiracial," says the San Francisco-based educator. "[However], America is uncomfortable discussing race. Our country has a rather extreme need for people to fit neatly into identity boxes and the reality is that multiracial people have always existed in this country."

And Chideya agrees that the conversation on race must continue in order for change to persist.

"Like everything, all forms of social change require a conversation," she expresses. "In the future, our success at dealing with multiracial identity will be contingent on how we conduct these conversations."

—Tamara Crockett

glee club

PUTTING ON A HAPPY FACE CAN MAKE LIFE SWEETER—AND LONGER

REMEMBER HOW optimistic you were as a kid? Between bills, beaus and burdens, however, it has become harder nowadays to see the glass as half full, but researchers at the University of Pittsburgh found that out of 100,000 women, those who consistently strive to see the silver lining were 14 percent more likely to live longer.



The trick to this, says Nashawn Turner, president of Uniquely Designed Coaching LLC, is aligning all elements of your life to create contentment.

"When your physical, emotional, spiritual and relational areas aren't balanced, you're not enjoying life the way that you could."

To percolate positivity, she suggests:

- Surround yourself with people you can enjoy being yourself with.
- Stop hurrying through life; allot time for responsibilities.
- Find passion—reflect on what gives your life purpose.
- Choose an area of your life to nurture daily.
- Keep a journal of things to be thankful for or do something secretly for someone else.

"Think about what you're thinking about," adds Turner, "and grab hold of the good things so that you can experience a satisfying life."

—Janelle Harris