



Colors

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While out in Reno at a conference, I was asked what I thought about the indigo children. The blank look on my face spoke volumes. I was given a brief introduction to indigos and presented with a book. *The Indigo Children: The New Kids Have Arrived*, by Lee Carroll and Jan Tober (Hay House Publisher, 1999). I read it on the flight back. Every so often I read a book that should not have been published. This is one.

The book is a compilation of chapters by professionals (Ph.D. and M.D.) as well as by parents and others. Bottom line? This is a book about an allegedly new type of child in our midst. Indigo children are referred to as "the new children," "the New Millennium children," "other worldliness," and "angels."

At the start of Chapter 1 is the question, "What is an indigo child?" It is a child with an unusual set of psychological attributes and shows a new pattern of behavior. Carroll and Tober list several traits common to indigo children including:

1. They come into the world with a feeling of royalty.
2. Self-worth is not a big issue. They often tell parents "who they are."
3. They simply will not do certain things; for example, waiting in line is difficult for them.
4. They often see better ways of doing things, both at home and in school, which makes them seem like "system busters."
5. They are not shy in letting you know what they need. (Carroll & Tober, 1999, pp. 1-2)

The book is an endless litany of super and superb qualities possessed by these children ranging from incredible cognitive skills, to supernatural insights, to spiritual giftedness.

The implicit message is that these children know more than adults, cannot be controlled by adults, and are going to bring on a new world order. I would have laughed and left the book in the airplane seat pocket, but I also realized this is a dangerous movement that should be addressed.

What I read in the book is that over and over these children are referred to as gifted and, in particular, as spiritually gifted. And I was informed by those in Reno that parents of indigo children want to get their kids into gifted programs because of their "indigo-ness."

The field of gifted has, and continues to have, more than its share of critics. I think the field has come a long way in beating back the label of elitism and has focused on the scholarly understanding of individual differences, and in particular, exceptional abilities in the academics and the arts.

The Carroll and Tober book is a distortion of the concept of giftedness. They are not talking about kids who happen to have exceptional abilities (giftedness); rather, they are talking about kids who have other-worldliness qualities, angels beyond the scope of mortals. What's worse, these indigo kids don't have to carry out the garbage, a requirement that I have of all budding prodigies.

Rather than dismiss this, I want to make a statement to my colleagues in the field. The indigo children movement is not about children, and it is not about the color indigo. It is about adults who style themselves as experts and who are making money on books, presentations, and services. It is about parents who are not satisfied with the blessings of having children, but need to feel that they have "other-worldly angels" sent here to spiritually save the world.

These experts and parents will attempt to align with the field of gifted through the opening of spiritual giftedness. This form of giftedness is receiving some attention in the mainstream gifted field. I think there is legitimate reason to study spiritual giftedness, which includes the ability to experience heightened states of consciousness, the ability to sanctify everyday experience, and the capacity to be virtuous (Piechowski, 2003). A number of writers and researchers are helping us to understand spiritual giftedness and how it manifests itself in children and adults (e.g., Coles, 1990; Emmons, 1999; Noble, 2000; Piechowski, 2003). So spiritual giftedness becomes the entry for the indigo movement. The proponents will try to gain mainstream respectability for their ideas. How?

The simplest way is to have "known" names in the field speak at their conferences. My message to my colleagues in the field: "It's not worth the speaker fee." Do not have your name and reputation used to give credibility.

Second, advocates will propose presentations on indigos for national, international, and state conferences on gifted. A referee system should keep them out, but the attraction of something "new," "creative," and "spiritual" is tempting as a way to say we are open to new ideas. This is not a new idea. This idea that there are the "chosen" children, the select, the angels among us is old and has had a destructive history.

I am concerned when children are seen as being beyond the rules. We need to work with teachers and parents so that kids will understand that schools need to be a place of respect so that teaching and learning can take place. The last thing schools need are kids who are "right" and whatever they want to do is beyond reproach. Kids need to learn and develop their abilities. Adults need to take responsibility. Everyone needs to do chores, regardless of "color."

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