

Rogue Librarians, Episode 3 The Hate U Give: Part 1 (Why It's Banned)

Welcome to the third episode of Rogue Librarians, a podcast in which three librarians discuss banned books. We are your hosts, Marian, Dorothy, Alanna, and we are the Rogue Librarians. We would love for you to participate in our discussion. Please visit www.theroquelibrarians.com if you would like to leave a comment or question.

We always like to start our podcast off with a book that we've recently read because as of course we're librarians, that's what we do. Um And so I'll just start um a book that I've read recently is a nonfiction book called *Caste*, which was researched and written by Isabel Wilkerson. Um and it's particularly apropos of *The Hate U Give*, the book that we're talking about this time, because it is a very detailed, somewhat disturbing history of the caste system in America and um it's highly recommended though. I will admit that it was a very very difficult read and I had to put it down many times because I found myself getting really depressed um reading it but I still think it's super important. Um You guys, how about you, Alanna, what have you been reading?

I decided to read the prequel to *The Hate U Give*, *Concrete Rose*, and it was the background for Starr's parents, and I really enjoyed learning what they were like as teenagers. And I highly recommend it. You can read it before or after reading *The Hate U Give*, which we're going to talk about today. And was that book written before or after. After. That's what I thought. Apparently, a lot of her fans wanted to know—Angie Thomas's fans—wanted to know what Starr's father was like when he was young. And so that's why she decided to write the book.

Very cool. Well, I have been reading *Pride and Prejudice*, which (one of my favorites), despite its storied history, I had never read. I had seen several adaptations, so I know the story, but I'm reading along with the podcast called *Hot and Bothered* where they're doing a deep discussion and it's very, very interesting to like understand what was happening politically, what power women did and didn't have. So I'm enjoying it.

Well, that sounds great, Dorothy and thank you all for that. I wanted to jump in here again before we get into *The Hate U Give* specifically. Um and just go back and review what's happened since our last podcast on the book *Gender Queer*. Um we had mentioned at that point that there

was a court case pending in Virginia Beach where um Some folks had claimed that the book was obscene and therefore should not be sold or at least should be re-sectioned at the local Barnes and Noble and a court decision came down on August 31. So just recently Um of 2022 and the Virginia Court actually dismissed the lawsuit, which is a big victory for *Gender Queer*. They claim that the book is not obscene. And not only that they went into their old Virginia decade obscenity laws and struck that down. So it was a really big win for for the state of Virginia I think. And of course Kobabe's response, the author, was that e was relieved and I think many of us can agree with that.

Alright. We also wanted to mention that Banned Books Week is coming up when and well at the time that we are recording this whether or not we have it posted before that I don't know. So but banned books week is the ALA's annual week to call attention to censorship and it's September 18-24 this year, 2022. So whether you're listening to this episode before, after those dates consider the American Library Association's theme for the year: Books unite us, censorship divides us. And I think that's a fabulous lens through which to look at *The Hate U Give*.

Yes, I think that's a great plug for that. So thank you for that Dorothy. Yes. And as we've said, we will be discussing *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas today. And it was the fifth most frequently challenged book in America in 2021, according to the ALA. And it has been banned for several reasons, particularly profanity, promoting an anti-police message, indoctrination of a social agenda, violence, drug use and sexual references. We're going to be talking about those things in more detail later in the episode. As a trigger warning, we wanted to mention that this book focuses on the murder of a teenager by a police officer, and it's if that is too disturbing for you to listen to, then we recommend that you skip this episode and the next episode because we will be talking about it in some depth.

Also, a caveat about our discussions of racism. We are three white women, and although we deeply empathize with the black characters in the novel, we realize that we have not experienced many of these situations ourselves because of our white privilege. So please let us know if we make mistakes, and please know that we intend no harm. We want to be as aware of these issues as possible and try to understand them as well as possible.

And on that note, Marian, I believe you mentioned, and correct me if I have this wrong, but that you were speaking with someone who maybe has lived some of this and they had something interesting to say about reading the book.

Absolutely. A friend of my daughter's was visiting over the weekend and um saw my copy of *The Hate U Give* sitting on the dining room table and I asked her if she had read the book and um she is African American. She was actually born in Togo Um but grew up in the United States and I asked her if she'd read *The Hate U Give* or seen the movie, and she just kind of snickered and said, oh no, I don't read books like that. And I said well do you mind if I you know talk to you about it a little bit and she was great and and I said you know I just want to pick your brain, you know we're doing this podcast. And she said yeah, she said um she said you know when you when you grow up in a community, when you know a community that experiences this as a day to day reality, you don't need to read the book, you live it. And it was it was just very eye-opening to me even to have that perspective because as a librarian, Um and as Alanna said, as a white librarian, I always feel like I want to have books in the library that include characters that look like you know the people who are reading the books and so of course I would want to have a book like *The Hate U Give* in my library and many others. Um but I hadn't really considered the fact that maybe I wouldn't want to read this book if I were living in black, you know a black person living in America today and living this as a daily life. This is not an escape for me. This is this is too much of my life in my face.

And the same with the trans books like they want to read about trans people just being themselves and not about the trauma of being a trans person. And this totally makes sense. So in many cases I think these books are written for the white audience to try to help us understand what's happening. So I just thought it was an interesting perspective.

It was a really interesting perspective and Dorothy, thank you for reminding me. I'm really glad you brought that up. Um so let's go back a little bit on track to the background on *The Hate U Give* by Angie Thomas. So this book was published in 2017 Um a movie version of it came out in 2018 and got a 97% positive rating on Rotten Tomatoes and also won several awards. The book was a *New York Times* bestseller and also won several awards including a 2018 Coretta Scott King author honor, a Michael L. Printz Honor, and the Odyssey Award for the best audio book for kids and teens um which is um I listened to it and I highly recommend it. That's that's fantastic. Okay. I was thinking how great it would be to listen. I haven't been listening but to

listen to it to hear the code switching. Yes, would be very cool. And it is wonderful for that reason and many others. I now I want to go back and listen to it. I've read it.

So I read the book in 2017 when it was first published. Yes, I picked it up and jumped right into it. I couldn't put it down. I actually read the book while I was in the hospital after having some surgery in June of 2017 and it was amazing. I mean there are, well, I had two surgeries in 2017, so it might not have been the first one, it might have been the second one, but regardless what I remember is it was sitting on my little bedside table when you know the different doctors, nurses and various other people in the hospital would come in to check on me and everyone noticed it. Everyone um many of the people were people of color. Um and every single one said out loud the title when they saw the book, which was really compelling to me because oftentimes I have a book, well, all the time I have a book and the books don't typically get that reaction, but this one really did. And I like to think that, you know, that may be just me reading that book, put it out there, that this exists and that it's something that should be looked into. And I did tell some of the folks who asked more about it what it was about, but it was it was just a just an aside, but I thought it was really compelling.

Um All right. Is it okay if I give a quick summary of that. Okay, So ““After Starr and her childhood friend Khalil, both black, leave a party together, they are pulled over by a white police officer, who kills Khalil. The sole witness to the homicide, Starr must testify before a grand jury that will decide whether to indict the cop, and she's terrified, especially as emotions run high. By turns frightened, discouraged, enraged, and impassioned, Starr is authentically adolescent in her reactions. Inhabiting two vastly different spheres—her poor, predominantly black neighborhood, Garden Heights, where gangs are a fact of life, and her rich, mostly white private school—causes strain, and Thomas perceptively illustrates how the personal is political: Starr is disturbed by the racism of her white friend Hailey, who writes Khalil off as a drug dealer, and Starr's father is torn between his desire to support Garden Heights and his need to move his family to a safer environment.”

And this was, as you could probably tell as I was reading it there, from *School Library Journal*, as opposed to me extemporizing.

Yes. And we wanted to mention that Common Sense Media recommends this book for teenagers 13 and older because of some of the things we already mentioned. So there's a lot of

swearing violence and including being there when Khalil dies talking about sex, teens drink alcohol and smoke marijuana at a party. Adults are described as being addicted to drugs and teens and adults are described as selling drugs. So for all of those reasons. It's recommended for um teenagers and we agree with that, I've always recommended it for eighth graders and those older just 13. Yeah.

Yeah. And actually a lot of schools who have adopted this as part of their optional reading list um are recommending it for ninth grade and so well and middle school oftentimes is where they start to really experience the micro aggressions. Well I don't want to denigrate any microaggressions they have experienced before then, but middle schoolers are really good at micro aggressions and microaggressions. So it's definitely a time when that's whether you're personally involved that it's happening around you.

Yes, when I looked at Common Sense Media, I it was really interesting to read the reviews that teenagers have written for it and um one that particularly struck me was a teenager who wrote, "Such an amazing read. Well written, thorough, deep, sensitive... all together a completely thought provoking book. Reading some reviews I find a lot of people (adults) think that this book has too much swearing, but I think it just helps you understand Starr's situation much more. Some hard subjects just can't be talked about in PG. I read this when I was 13, and I believe as long as you are mature, interested, and feel passionate about its content, you could read this without any problems. Awesome role models. You'll really find yourself understanding important controversial issues like the black lives matter movement much more. Completely recommend it!"

And I have to say that I agree with what this teenager wrote because if you want the book to be realistic, it can't be PG, and I think what Angie Thomas chose to include in it made a lot of sense.

If you've ever walked in the halls of a middle school, you know that they swear and even (the shock!), if one kid is not swearing, they're hearing it all over the hallways. Absolutely and plenty of them are very sweet and don't, but they as always pointed out to my husband, they've been on the internet, they most certainly have Yeah.

Yeah. And I can also just tell you from the perspective of a person who has dabbled in writing myself um that writing authentic dialogue is extremely difficult and when I have had um my daughter and other family members read my work, the criticism I always get is that my dialogue is not authentic enough and literally my my daughter will say mom people don't really talk like that, that's just not you know, so to a credit to Angie Thomas that she's written a book that's so authentic that people think it's too profane, which if you're if you're you know, just to tag on to what you guys said, if you are living real life, you know that the the way people speak is not necessarily the way our parents or grandparents would want to hear but it is authentic.

I do love when they're discussing THUG life and The Hate U Give that statement which we'll get into in more detail that she censors herself talking to her dad and then the second time she says the F word and dad's like watch your mouth. So I thought it was cute, a cute little shout out.

But then in the book he's always swearing and he always has to put money in the swear jar. So yes, it's funny. He wants her to act differently from himself. Yeah, that's a great point.

So we thought we would go into the historical context for the book and the Black Lives Matter movement is what we want to focus on particularly. So the book focuses on police violence towards black people, which as you likely know, has been a huge issue for many generations, but it has been in the media much more recently. And Black Lives Matter started with a hashtag in 2013 after the acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer and thereafter became an organization and a movement. The mission for Black Lives Matter, or BLM, is, "We're working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise. We affirm our humanity, our contributions to this society, and our resilience in the face of deadly oppression." Do you want to go into some more details?

Well, what I wanted to jump in and say is, you know, this is, this hits home a lot for me because I was working in a retail store in 2020 when Breonna Taylor was murdered by the cops doing a no knock warrant. Um in Louisville Kentucky and um I have personal connections to Louisville Kentucky. I happen to be living there at the time that this happened. And I remember so very vividly all of what went down. Um, I remember the shock, the horror. I remember all the conversations that went back and forth on facebook with people who were backing the blue and people who were backing Black Lives Matter. And then there were all these people jumping in with All Lives Matter. And there were just so many conversations and misunderstandings that

that came out at that point in time. Um, you know, the store that I was working in at the time, um, did not want to post a Black Lives Matter poster, many other retail stores did. Um, and it really bothered those of us who worked there because we felt like this is a very important moment in history in a time where we really need to show our support for an extremely important movement. And um, I personally went to a few of the rallies downtown in Louisville for Breonna Taylor and they got violent, um, not necessary, not because of the Black Lives Matter marchers, but because of the mercenary activists who happened to come into town etcetera. Um, but the point being one of the rallies that I went to, there were, there were some very eloquent speakers and one of the persons just, you know, talked about why we need to teach people about Black Lives Matter and why All Lives Matter is not acceptable at this point. And the bottom line is, most of us are not being targeted. We, as white women, our lives are not being targeted right now—black lives are—and so we need to put our efforts into pointing out the areas of, you know, this particular issue in our world that needs to be addressed. Um no one is saying that all lives don't matter, what we're saying is all lives aren't being targeted. Black lives are and so this is the focus right now. We need to ensure that everyone believes that black lives matter, and, until that happens, we can't rest on all lives matter. So I found that really, really compelling.

And just to name a few: 2014, Michael Brown was murdered in Ferguson by police officer Darren Wilson, which led to a lot of the protests, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Sandra Bland, Philando Castile, and, as you mentioned, Breonna Taylor. So I think this book is nicely book ended with, it's been going on for a while and it continues to happen, you know, so it's not like this book is the first book to bring it up over the last word on anything.

Yes, yeah, I completely agree with that. And in the book, uh Angie Thomas does mention some of these real people, as well as Emmett Till, whose brutal lynching helped spark the Civil Rights Movement in 1955. So Angie Thomas, as we said, published this book in 2017, but she began writing it as a short story when she was in college in response to the police shooting of Oscar Grant in 2009 and she put it aside for a long time because she said it was “emotionally taxing to write,” which I can completely imagine; it's emotionally difficult to read, and I can imagine that it's even harder to write about things like this. But when the book came out, she gave an interview with *Ebony Magazine* in 2017, and this is a long quotation, but I thought I would read it because it explains so well what she was trying to do here.

“But after Trayvon Martin happened, after Mike Brown happened, after Tamir Rice, and then Sandra Bland—those four cases really pushed me. When you hear politicians and others on television basically blaming somebody for their own death, when you see Trayvon Martin being put on trial more so than George Zimmerman, when you see Michael Brown being put on trial more so than the gentleman that killed him, you’re seeing Tamir Rice, a 12-year-old child being blamed for his own death ... you get angry and frustrated and hurt. And the only thing I knew how to do was write. So I picked the story back up in 2014, 2015. And another thing that really got me was Trayvon Martin’s friend Rachel Jeantel [I’m not sure if I pronounced her last name correctly] and the criticism that young lady received because people didn’t think she presented herself the proper way, whatever that’s supposed to be. I remember being so angry because people were more focused on how she was saying things than what she was saying. And I wanted to write a young Black girl who, by their standards, presents herself the way they think she’s supposed to present herself. It was kind of like my middle finger to all of the critics. We can present ourselves well, if you want to call it that, and we can play your game how you want us to play it. But you probably still won’t listen.”

That just gave me chills. I saw her at the National Book Festival (wonderful!) when the Hate U Give came out, which was which was fantastic. Was it great to see her in person? It was so great and I didn't know nothing about. That's where I heard about the book was by seeing her. I usually just go park in the YA room and see who shows up and definitely was impressed and read the book.

Well, let's get into why it was banned in some more detail. So Marian, do you want to start us off with that? Well sure, so why it was banned, we talked about um you know, just very quickly the profanity being an issue. Violence being an issue and the anti police message being an issue. Um so the first time the book was banned was in 2018 [actually, it was 2017]. Um and this was when a school district in Katy, Texas. Um the superintendent decided to remove the book claiming that it was vulgar. Um Students and teachers at that point were appalled that this book was taken out of their library and out of their reading list. And so they got a petition signed by 3700 people and um took it back to the superintendent. The superintendent initially said, my decision stands, but three months later, um he allowed the book to be put back onto the optional reading list with parental consent. So, um you know, it's one of those things that you know, when a school district bans a book um It starts a lot of conversations um but Angie Thomas's reaction to that banning was um and this is from November 30, 2017, she said, ““I'm saddened to hear

that a school district in Texas banned [#TheHateUGive](#), but I'm also empowered - you're basically telling the kids of the Garden Heights of the world that their stories shouldn't be told. Well, I'm going to tell them even louder. Thanks for igniting the fire...I get it - some educators have an issue with the language. I will not criticize anyone for that. But I wrote it because I have a HUGE issue with how little value is given to black lives. I can only hope that you'll look past the curse words and see that.”

So um that was Angie Thomas's response to the initial book banning (on twitter). That was going to be my question. Correct. So that was in a tweet. Then in 2018, the Fraternal Order of Police chapter in the South Carolina town of Mount Pleasant “sought to have *The Hate U Give* removed from the Wando High School’s list of optional reading assignments for incoming high school freshmen, along with the book *All American Boys* by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely.”

Okay, so I have a question then, is this where we come up since we're mentioning those two books together with promoting an anti police message in indoctrination of a social agenda. Yes, exactly. So the fraternal Order of Police chapter said the “books are almost an indoctrination of distrust of police and we've got to put a stop to that.” Both books deal with the issue of police brutality. Um following a request for reconsideration, the school decided to retain both titles on the list and this of course comes from an article um the marshall um library um and their list of banned books.

So I can't wait to get into a discussion of how it's actually presented, but the real red flag for me is this idea of banning anything because of indoctrination of a social agenda, as if every other book on the shelf isn't an indoctrination of a social agenda, right? Simply by putting all stories of a particular kind in the libraries, we are indoctrinating people. And I think back to um a ted talk the danger of a single story by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who is an author, and she talks about growing up in um I'm gonna forget which town, to which country, in Africa that she lives in. But she grew up in Africa, and she read she had a lot of books, all of the YA stuff that they had was about white people in England, right? So, she would write stories that had people eating apples and talking about the weather, and, you know, how ridiculous is that had nothing to do with her life. But she just felt like that's what you had to write about if you were going to write a book. So, I just wanted to point that out anytime. I see that that's the reason a book is being banned, alarm bells go off in my brain.

Well, and certainly, you know, you've also got to see the conflict of interest here. I mean, that's what just blatantly jumped out at me when I was like, seriously, the Fraternal Order of Police, like, what voice do they have in this there, you know, I mean, if they're coming at it from a parent perspective, and they're worried about the profanity or the violence. I mean, maybe then they have a leg to stand on. But you're basically a fraternal order of police and, you know, not to bash the police because that is not my agenda here. I support police officers and I'm grateful for the protections that they offer us in the law and order. However, as is any institution, they are flawed. We're all flawed people. And it's built into the system. It is, and we all know that that police departments have good people and police departments have bad people and police departments have people who are suffering post traumatic stress disorder from previous, um, situations that have happened in their lives, as are we all but, but for a police department to not own up to its own failings, and I'm not specifically talking about South Carolina, but just in general. Um, but for the Fraternal Order of Police of this department to say, this book must be banned because it makes us look bad essentially in my mind. That's what they're saying. You know, maybe you just need to look at yourself.

Well, should we go into our discussion of the pros and cons now that we've talked about some of the issues with why it's been banned? So, let's start with the pros, because I think we all agree that there are so many pros to this book and since we've been talking about the response of some police officers to the book, I thought I would mention first that one of the things I think this book does really well is it does go into the nuances of several issues, including police violence. So the book is very upfront that not all police officers are bad. Um for example, Starr talks about how her Uncle Carlos is a police officer. And when early in the book, I think he tries to make it clear, you know, like police are trying to do the right thing. But as the book goes on, I think you understand more and more that the institution is part of what's to blame because there is this assumption of many white police officers that a black person is suspicious no matter what. And so just seeing Khalil and Starr together in a car, the cop immediately jumps to assumptions and um, because Khalil did not follow the script that black children are taught by their parents. Um, you know, he talked back to the officer um, and just by having a normal human response to this situation, um, it escalated the situation that the police officer caused by pulling him over in the first place for um his tail light being out. If I remember correctly, there was some question as to whether that was exactly, and you know, seeing a hairbrush and assuming it's a gun, seeing him open the door and assume he's automatically going to, you know, grab a

gun or something like that. So the, I think it makes it really clear that um, yes, police officers can be racist, but there's racism built into the system and

Um, just sorry, sorry. Just to all the listeners, I'm an interrupter. So I apologize in advance. I get so excited and I have stuff to say and I have to say it right now. She did such a good job of even the subtext. There had been a shooting at a party 10 minutes before this happened. So of course the cops were nervous that someone had a gun. Well, probably also hearing that on their radio.

Yeah, that's certainly possible. Another way I thought Angie Thomas goes into the nuances really well is that you understand why people join gangs. You understand why people sell drugs and you understand the limited opportunities that the black people in their neighborhood garden heights have. And by going into a discussion of systemic racism, you understand that sometimes it seems like there are no good options and people are joining gangs for protection. They're selling drugs because they're trying to make ends meet. Um, Khalil for example, his mother is addicted to drugs. So Starr's horrified at the idea that he was selling drugs, but his grandmother has cancer and they don't have enough money to put food on the table and pay for lights and things like that. So he seemed to feel that it was his only option. And um if you read Concrete Rose you, it goes into that in much more detail when Starr's father Maverick um talks about why he feels this need to join a gang and need to sell drugs even though he doesn't like the idea of either of those. So I I just thought that the book goes into those issues and a lot of depth and it's not clear all the time that this person, this character is completely good. This character is completely bad. But you get a lot of the gray areas.

Even when we're experiencing Starr's reaction to the cops father talking about the incident on TV, you know, you're simultaneously feeling because we were there in the vehicle, you know, point of view with Starr feeling the outrageous, you know, like differences in the story but the voice that it's telling it and it's making us angry is not that of the cop but the cop's father and you know, I just, I feel that that's also an interesting nuance because it's all of the voices around an incident that amplify certain points of view that make it so hard to have the conversation right?

And I want to jump in here too because the way that the scene is described and this is in the 1st 25 pages of the book. Um, and this is like a what 200-300-page book. So, but the way that the scene is described in the book, okay, Khalil number one doesn't have a father figure in his life.

Um in in you know this particular character and you know, and that's that's an issue because Starr talks later about having you know, gotten the talk from from her parents about, you know when a cop pulls you over, not if, but when a cop pulls you over this is what you do, you keep your hands on the wheel where they can see you at all times etcetera etcetera etcetera and you do everything the cop says okay, but I want to talk about about a different issue here which is the cop and this is this is pervasive in our society, cops have maybe too much control in the sense that I mean Khalil asked the cop why did you pull me over if we are pulled over? We, any of the three of us, white women sitting here if we are pulled over and we're sitting there and and we rolled down our window as the cop walks up to us and we say why did you pull me off over officer? The police officer would probably answer us, but maybe not because it's every person is subject to whatever the cop is in control of at that time that they pull us over and we're all in that situation. So I remember it wasn't that long ago that I was pulled over for speeding in what I will call a speed trap? But that's beside the point, Um I was driving through a town where the speed limit dropped from 65 to 40 in like no time at all going down the mountainside. Okay. So I didn't get my speed down fast enough. The next thing I know I have lights behind me, I had a lot of the same reaction that Starr describes feeling in this book. The shoot, what's going to happen? Um I'm using non profanity for the purposes of the podcast. That's not at all what I was thinking. I'm pretty sure we're okay. So, but the cop, you know, is clearly signaling me because I'm kind of hoping, yeah, maybe it's not me. But I get over to the right lane and the cop gets over behind me and like shit this is really about me. So I get off at the exit and pull over and you know, I'm sitting there shaking because a cop has pulled me over and it's 9:30 PM and I'm by myself in a town that is not my hometown because I'm on a road trip and a cop is coming up to me and I'm thinking what's going to happen here, I mean, so, you know, I found my grab my license and registration because I know that's coming and I'm sitting there with my hands on the steering wheel just like um Khalil should have done? And the cop comes up and he tells me, you know, do you realize you were going X Y. Z speed and then X Y. Z speed limit zone and I said oh I am so sorry officer, I you know I had my car on cruise control which I did because I was trying not to get a speeding ticket and it dropped so fast and you know I didn't get it down, I'm sorry. And then license registration and it's all very brisk. There is no politeness, it is not Good evening ma'am, how are you doing tonight? It is not you know, may I please have your license and registrations. It's all very force force force force and I don't know if that's tipping police, that's what they're taught to do, but there's there's a power trip happening that I feel happens with any, any time that you're getting pulled over and yet at the same time I'm sitting there literally thinking to myself, okay, I'm a white woman. If I were a black woman, this could go down real bad. If I

were a black man, I might get taken down to the station. And long story short, my citation was reduced down, I'm going to say because I have a stellar driving record and no points on my license. But also I'm a white woman. If I were a black man with a stellar driving record, I will bet you that it would not have been reduced down to what it was reduced down to that.

That is one of the ways to describe the Black Lives Matter movement that I have heard. That makes a lot of sense to me, which is when I as a white woman get pulled over, I'm thinking to myself, oh man, I'm gonna get a ticket and if a black person is pulled over there thinking I could die, I mean it puts it in a pretty stark difference. Yes, all of our lives matter, but I'm a lot likelier to come out of that situation alive, right? And I think you get such a good sense of that in the book too, as one of the things I really liked about the book as well was how you see Starr's reaction to witnessing her one of her best friend's deaths. Um the fact that she also lost her other best friend from childhood um in a drive by shooting and you see her dealing with the grief and trauma in a very realistic way and the story is very gripping because we're waiting for the grand jury to meet were waiting for their verdict.

Um and the book keeps reminding us of the number of weeks since Khalil was killed. And I thought um Starr's friends compare her to two Angry Harry from the fifth book. Love that because because Angry Harry just saw someone die. Exactly, and experiencing trauma. Exactly, and I thought that is a really good, you know, they don't understand what's going on with her, they don't understand why she's acting differently but it makes so much sense because you've just seen someone you care about die and um in general I really liked Starr's character and she's just um funny and honest and I thought it was great having her as the narrator and really understanding these things for the first time.

She does not start off as an agenda of cops are bad, it's white against black, you know she's very much part of a white school, has a white boyfriend but her family is very much about black identity and she's just starting to really put all of these pieces together and partly because she has to now because of this situation. I think she changes so much throughout the book and really becomes an activist by the end. I know that we've got to save this conversation because I have a lot to say about the structure of the book.

Okay great, we'll say that and the only con that I could think of was that some of the minor characters I didn't think were fleshed out quite as well, like Hailey, her friend who says really

racist things, I think I understand why Angie Thomas made that decision but sometimes certain characters have a lot more depth and it's Starr's family, I would say who has the most depth to their characters, I think that she tries to make her at least a little bit better understood through their history as well. But yeah, Hailey definitely stands in for all the microaggressions and in fact Angie Thomas said this as much when I saw her, somebody asked do people really say things like that, like the fried chicken comment which we can get into the next episode as well. But um she told a story of being at a like a Christmas party with the, where you, where everyone brings a gift and then you trade off who Secret Santa style, you don't know who's, who's who's and she ended up with this little water gun and someone actually just says uh the black girl gets a gun, like it's just a funny joke, you know, and the audience was like good Lord, even the young children got that, that was maybe not an appropriate joke to make, you know, so so that is Hailey's job in the book.

And I just want to go back to just for a second, you know, I talked a little bit ago in our previously about the bannings you know, the 2017 or 2018 banning the 2019 banning with the fraternal Order of Police this year 2022 a recent attempt to ban the book was done by North Allegheny High School in Allegheny, Pennsylvania, which is a predominantly white suburb. Um and the book ended up being allowed to be an optional ebook on the book's list. Um but only after a lot of students came out against the banning and said, you know what they thought were good reasons to read the book, which is terrific. And one particular quote just really struck me and kind of pertains to what we've been talking about, which is um this is the students quote, the resistance is so clearly a and they were talking about the resistance to the banning. Um is so clearly the resistance of having the book in the, in the um in the classrooms. Yes. Um the resistance is so clearly a reflection of the inability of our community to acknowledge the unsettling situations black Americans go through and I thought that that was such an important awareness um of teachers should be teaching what's real authenticity and and what allows us to get along with and live within our community and for a student to be able to understand and speak on behalf of a difficult book maybe for their community to be taught and discussed, I think is really valuable because yeah, we need to have these com conversations, we need to be able to look at each other with empathy and compassion. I am imagining how much more valuable it is, let's say to maybe read this in a class and for the whole class to then discuss the issue of whether they are feeling guilty as opposed to parents saying, I don't want my child to feel guilty when in reality I think what's happening is that the parents are feeling guilty, but if you give the

students an opportunity to discuss that feeling and talk about why or why it is or is not an appropriate feeling, then I can process it and we can move on to something better.

I think that takes us to why we think it's worth reading. Both of you have been getting at this already, but I loved a quotation that Angie Thomas said, she said, I look at books as being a form of activism. Sometimes they'll show us a side of the world that we might not have known about and this goes back to what we were saying earlier that it does seem like white people are perhaps the main audience for this book to help them understand why black lives matter and why and what it would be like to be in Starr's position or Khalil's position and um this book continues to be relevant. It was only published five years ago, but um we mentioned earlier, George Floyd's murder in May 2020 which inspired protests around the country and around the world. And in April 2021 the police officer who killed him was found guilty of unintentional, second degree murder, third degree murder, and second degree manslaughter and sentenced to 22 and a half years in prison and this was the first white Minnesota police officer to be convicted of murdering a black person because as we know, this rarely happens and so George Floyd's murder has led to some changes. Some police departments are trying to change. Um some are some states are trying to ban chokeholds or neck restraints, but there is there's still so much work to be done and I think it's so important for young people, especially to be exposed to these issues and to learn how important it is for us to truly believe that everyone matters.

I mean, other reasons that I think it's worth reading, I'm going to go back going to circle back to the banned books theme books unite us, censorship divides us. If we can read and understand from another point of view what's happening that brings us together and when people stand up and say your point of view is not valid, then we're all fighting with each other plus any time a book is winning multiple awards. One of the things you have to sort of prove or are supposed to prove when a book is banned is that there is no redeeming value in the book and this book has redeeming value in spades, both literarily, which we can talk about next week or next time. And um socially yeah.

For sure and I'd like to also follow up what you just said Dorothy with another concept, which is that this book takes racism um and and tackles it as a reality. Um and not as a history lesson and it forces the reader to be present in the book to consider how you would react, how you would feel. It makes you think of your own personal experiences. Um and it also makes you be much more self aware of things like the chicken comment, fried chicken comment that we're

going to talk about in more detail in the next episode. Um, but just things that come out of our mouths or things that don't come out of our mouths but jumped into our head as an assumption, you know about, oh wait because Khalil might have been a drug dealer, but he wasn't pulled over for having drugs and no drugs were found on him. Is that a reason why he should have been shot and killed? Um and we've probably all asked those questions I know specifically with the Breonna Taylor case that drugs was part of that conversation as to why the police officers were barging into her home with guns a blazing and so many shots fired. You know, just want an endangerment. Um, and and there are lots of people who said, well she got what was coming to her because she was associating with a drug dealer or she was a drug dealer. You know what? Um nobody deserves to die. Nobody deserves, well nobody deserves to die. But also you cannot go into a situation making assumptions like that correct, correct. And we're all entitled to as Americans. Our constitution entitles every single one of us to be innocent until proven guilty by a jury trial of our peers.

And you know, I I think because we don't want to have the entire conversation nor could we even effectively have an entire conversation about Black Lives Matter and systemic racism. But I do think that maybe we can look up some good resources to put in the show notes uh for people who are interested in, you know, finding places where that discussion is happening uh in a more focused way.

And I think that that's a great way to wrap things up. So in our next episode we will discuss the book in more detail. So it will include some spoilers. Um so please join us for a close reading of *The Hate U Give*'s characters, themes and significance. It would if you would like to leave us a question or a comment, please visit us at www.theroguelibrarians.com. If you're enjoying this podcast, please subscribe on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Stitcher, or wherever you find your podcasts, and thank you for reading with us. Books are meant to be read.