



**SEPTEMBER 22, 2023 SUBMISSION**

## **Request for School Board Reconsideration of Library Media Materials**

**Author: George M Johnson**

**Title: All Boys Aren't Blue**

**Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR); Illustrated edition (April 28, 2020)**

**Request initiated by:**

**Telephone:**

**Address:**

**City:**

**Zip:**

1. To what in the book/material do you object: (Please be specific; cite pages, frames of films, dialogues, etc.)?

See attached.

2. Where did you first learn of this item?

I first heard about this book when I was doing research about issues in the Manatee County schools. I was looking for opportunities to help improve the school culture and academics. I reviewed a number of the books that were on the lists of books being banned by school districts throughout Florida and in other states. I was horrified to see the inappropriate materials that are being made available to students – our students.

I decided to become involved with the School Board Elections as a starting point. The candidates in the 2022 Manatee County School Board Elections had platforms that promised to address some of these shortcomings. I also attended some meetings with the Media Committee as they were grappling with the legislative changes that were being made in Florida, waiting for guidance on how to address challenges of some of the books that we had flagged. At these meetings I found out that materials in the Library are violating Florida Law with regard to the protection of the students from pornographic sexual materials. In addition, I take issue with books that promote immorality, drug abuse, sexual confusion, suicide, anti-America sentiments, racism, activism etc.

I am not challenging the freedom to read but wish to ensure that young people not be subject to topics that are not appropriate for their level of maturity. Public libraries and book stores are available for adults to access whatever materials that they may choose. Our schools should take the high road when it comes to our young people.

Oh -- Just a reminder, the district policy:

- Require book selections to be free of pornography and prohibited materials harmful to minors, suited to student needs, and appropriate for the grade level and age group;
- Require consultation of reputable, professionally recognized sources and school community stakeholders for each selection;
- Provide for library media center collections based on reader interest, support of state academic standards and aligned curriculum, and the academic needs of students and faculty; and
- Provide for the regular removal or discontinuance of books based on factors specified in the bill, including those removed because of an objection by a parent or resident of the county.

3. Have you read the book in its entirety?

No, the book is a collection of essays – I did not feel the need to read it cover to cover to see that it is inappropriate. I found it very distasteful. The passages that are offensive are well documented and to give you a complete list I have attached some available documentation. Please refer to passages in red for the most offensive parts.

4. Is there any additional information you would like us to consider in our evaluation?

The author is identified as prominent journalist and LGBTQIA+ activist. The definition of activism is a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue. If we allow this book in our schools we will be complicit in activism for LGBTQIA+.

5. What would you like the final outcome to be for this library media item or items?

1. Remove from all Manatee School District Media Centers – see below

Braden River High School

Lakewood Ranch High School

Manatee High School

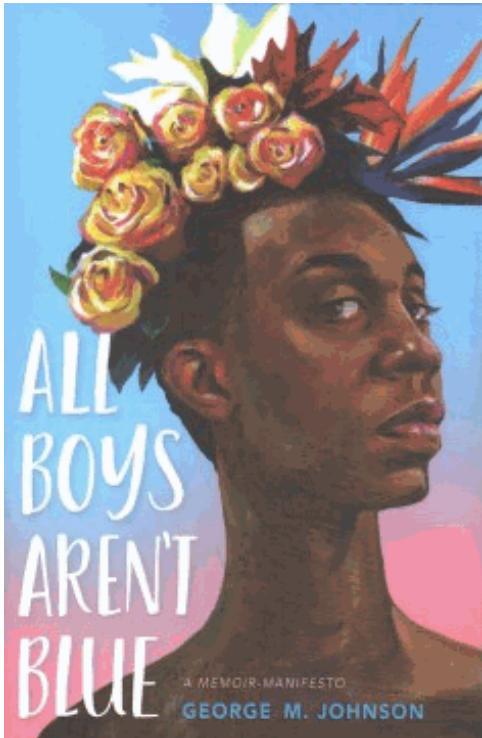
Palmetto High School

2.

This book can found in the public library (hopefully limited to adults) or at book stores so why do we need to make it available in the schools?

February 15, 2023

# ALL BOYS AREN'T BLUE



*Young Adult*

**By George M. Johnson**

ISBN:978-0-374-31271-8

## **Book Summary:**

A gay black man remembers his turbulent childhood and adolescence.

## **Summary of Concerns:**

This book contains sexual nudity; sexual activities including sexual assault; alternate gender ideologies; profanity and derogatory terms; alcohol and drug use; and controversial racial commentary.



**4** /5

**Not For Minors**  
BookLooks Review Rating

Generated by BookLooks.org 

This book will touch on sexual assault (including molestation), loss of virginity, homophobia, racism, and anti-blackness. These discussions at times may be a bit graphic, but nonetheless they are experiences that many reading this book will encounter or have already encountered.

Within these pages, the word nigger or nigga appears, sometimes in full and sometimes abbreviated as n\*\*\*\*. The same is true for fag and faggot, and their abbreviations.

Page 1

BLACK. QUEER. HERE.

Page 2

The "It's a girl! No, it's a boy!" mix-up is funny on paper, but not quite so hilarious in real life, especially when the star of that story struggles with their identity. Gender is one of the biggest projections placed onto children at birth, despite families having no idea how the baby will truly turn out. In our society, a person's sex is based on their genitalia. That decision is then used to assume a person's gender as boy or girl, rather than a spectrum of identities that the child should be determining for themselves.

...It's as if the more visible LGBTQIAP+ people become, the harder the heterosexual community attempts to apply new norms. I think the majority fear becoming the minority, and so they will do anything and everything to protect their power.

Page 3

Look up intersex if you're confused about "other."

...When our gender is assigned at birth, we are also assigned responsibilities to grow and maneuver through life based on the simple checking off of those boxes. Male. Female. Black. White. Straight. Gay. Kids who don't fit the perfect boxes are often left asking themselves what the truth is:

Am I a girl?

Am I a boy?

Am I both?

Am I neither?

Page 4

Unfortunately, we are still struggling to move the conversation past an assumed identity at birth. And LGBTQIAP+ people are not just fighting for the right to self-identify and be accepted in a society that is predominantly composed of two genders...

...I started writing this book with the intention that every chapter would end with solutions for all the uncomfortable or confusing life circumstances I experienced as a gay Black child in America. I quickly learned this book would be about so much more. About the overlap of my identities and the importance of sharing how those intersections create my privilege and my oppression.

Page 5

We all go through stages of accepting or struggling with our various identities- gay, straight, or non-identifying.

...In the white community, I am seen as a Black man first- but that doesn't negate the queer identity that will still face discrimination.

Page 6

I believe that the dominant society establishes an idea of what "normal" is simply to suppress differences, which means that any of us who fall outside of their "normal" will eventually be oppressed.

Page 7

Surrounded by whiteness, I wasn't going to dare let my classmates get comfortable using that word with or around me. Anytime a white student even tried to utter it, I checked them. White kids love to test Black kids on things like that. Certain Black kids were fighting so hard to fit in, they would let white kids steal that part of our culture just so they could pretend they were accepted in white society.

...The n-word was the last word heard by many of my ancestors when they were being beaten and shackled- forced into enslavement in a new land. It was the last word heard by my people when they were lynched as a spectacle for white people.

Page 8

At that time, I was learning how to be "a respectable negro"- with the good grades and a college degree, attempting to fit into white society,...

Page 9

But now I know that queerness is a part of Blackness, and that there is no Blackness without queer people. Then, early in 2012, Trayvon Martin was killed by George Zimmerman- and my entire perspective shifted on being a Black person in this society.

...My eyes were opened by seeing the shooting of Black people at the hands of police. Seeing the killing of Black children like Tamir Rice at the hands of police. Seeing that it didn't matter whether you were an affluent Black, a poor Black, a child, or an adult. In the eyes of society, I was still a n\*\*\*\*.

Page 10

I understand now that there is no such thing as "a respectable negro" in the eyes of society, nor was I ever made to be one. BLACK.

...That being different didn't mean something was wrong with me, but that something was wrong with my cultural environment, which forced me to live my life as something I wasn't. The fact that I couldn't see my full self in Black heroes or the history books was more about the changing of history to spare white guilt than it ever was about me knowing the whole truth.

Page 11

...I had to deal with the intersection of Blackness and queerness- and the double oppression that generates-...  
...Fighting for Blackness in a white space came naturally to me...

Page 13

I want to immortalize this...narrative of the Black queer experience that has been erased from the history books.

Page 20

My brother and I grew up middle class, or at least what Black folk were supposed to think was middle class. ...We were blessed to have parents who understood what it was like to have the bare minimum, and who ensured their kids never experienced that same plight. We are a rarity amongst most Black folks, who don't get to have intergenerational wealth like our white neighbors just one block over.

Page 22

Unfortunately, my life story is proof that no amount of money, love, or support can protect you from a society intent on killing you for your Blackness. Any community that has been taught that anyone not "straight" is dangerous, is in itself a danger to LGBTQIAP+ people.

Page 23

I used to daydream a lot as a little boy. But in my daydreams, I was always a girl.

Page 28

I wish I knew what motivated the attack. Could it have been because I was effeminate? Could it have been a race thing, since the main assaulter was a white boy from a different part of the neighborhood?

Page 31

There can be both fear of your own community and a fear of dealing with bullying from other children who don't respect your identity.

...As an adult, I have gone through the unlearning to understand that my community's treatment of Black queer children is in fact a by-product of a system of assimilation to whiteness and respectability that forces Black people to fit one mold in society, one where being a man means you must be straight and masculine.

Page 47

This is about identity. This is about culture and how it dictates what is a "good" and "bad" name, especially in the Black community. This is about the politics around sex and gender, and that when our parents choose a name that we as children are uncomfortable with, we have the right to change it.

Page 49

When we see our children not conforming to the societal standards of heterosexuality or we see them gravitating to things of the "opposite gender," I would love for us to ask the deeper questions about who and what they are.

Page 50

As we continue to grow through sex and gender, many people will take back their power and change their names-choosing one that fits the person they are, not the one society pushed them to be.

...Suffice it to say, respect people for their names, and for how they choose to identify. This also goes for respecting people and their choices of pronouns- he/him, she/her, they/them, go, goddess, or whatever. We are conditioned to think these things should be the expectations. People being allowed to be called by their chosen names and their gender pronouns is the rule.

Let yourself unlearn everything you thought you knew about yourself, and listen to what you need to know about those who navigate life outside the margins of heterosexual box. I bet most of you never thought to ever question if you even like your name. Or question if that was something you had the power to change if you didn't. I hope you will now...

Page 57

Boys were supposed to speak one way. And girls were supposed to speak another. So, I would do my best to not use girl lingo when I was around boys, and vice versa. I was "code-switching" long before I knew what code-switching was.

Page 58

I had created my first term in gay lingo, even though I didn't know what being gay was.

...Lingo that children like me were ostracized for using. Lingo that queer children today still get ostracized for using. And yet straight people use it out of context safely.

This lingo or slang was created by "Black femmes," which is an umbrella term that captures Black trans women, Black queer men, nonbinary folk, cishet Black women, and anyone else I may be missing. However, a lot of this history has been erased from those who identify as queer, which has allowed the notion that queer culture comes from emulating Black cishet women to spread. But it's not true. That erasure also allows the hetero community to get "a pass" for using language that would often get queer folk harmed.

Page 63

...I realized the only place that was truly safe for me would be in my imagination. My ability to be a kid came at the expense of my gender identity.

Page 71

...I would sit with the boys and talk about "boy" things, but then immediately go to recess and get with my girls. Code-switching like that, navigating disparate spaces like that, was pretty much normal.

Page 75

People who are straight that associate with me now, as an adult, still get questioned about their sexuality. Simply because they are friends with me. Adults who participate in homophobia create kids that do the same. Homophobia denies queer people happiness.

...Homophobia is the reason that so many who currently play sports are closeted- as there is no way football, baseball, and basketball are 99.9 percent heterosexual.

...Dominant culture's inability to integrate his queerness into a masculine- centered sport like football stole the opportunity of a lifetime from him.

Page 83

Despite my school consisting of mostly Black students, there were only a few Black faces on the walls of our hallways...each alternating with white historical figures.

...However much we focused on the older white faces in American history, there was always one time of the year that was dedicated to us Black students. I recall that the few white students we had always seemed a bit out of place on February 1. It was like the tables had turned for a change, and we got to be the center of attention.

Page 84

My K-12 education mirrored my other systems that oppress the Black community- with Black children being taught by predominantly white staff. From the principal down to the guidance counselor, we were surrounded by white authority figures in my elementary school. We had a minimal number of Black teachers, but Black folks were always the janitors, lunch ladies, and secretaries, which wouldn't be a problem if they also held positions of power.

...Our being the "center of attention" meant we got to learn about people that looked like us for a change.

Page 85

But white teachers were all I knew. Every single teacher I had for my years in elementary school was white. The only Black teachers, Ms. Chiles and Mr. Robinson, had a reputation for having the "bad students." Funny how those classes had only Black students in them.

Page 86

There are levels to the oppression.

...White history didn't need a month; we were always learning about it. And because we had one teacher teaching various

subjects, we learned history every day, but mainly centered about how much the white forefathers did to create the United States.

Page 87

What it doesn't show is that the Pilgrims stole the American Indians' food when they first arrived on the Mayflower, because they weren't prepared for winter. And many American Indians died from the diseases brought by white settlers. "Peace" was often a survival tactic.

Page 88

American History is truly the greatest fable ever written.

Page 90

I wrote all the lyrics to the rap and taught them how to flow. There were two white boys in our group and I remember them struggling, but me and another Black kid got them up to par.

...Again, it was easy to pay homage back then to white historical figures because we learned about them through the lens that they were concerned about us all. The interesting thing about studying history is how much it starts to change based on the school setting and who is teaching it. And it's not always about how those teachers view history, but how they view you. And your place in history.

The history I learned in elementary school began to unravel once I hit junior high. Here, all my teachers were Black, and the population of students was overwhelmingly Black. We began learning history that was inclusive to slavery, as well as those historical figures like Washington and Jefferson and how they had some not-so-great history to them. We had teachers who wanted to make sure we really knew what it meant to be Black in America.

Page 91

It's important that I say this, because the white community has long prevented Black progress in every arena. Even today, institutions are still having "the first Black person to..."

Page 95

A Black identity that was making me more radical in my thoughts as a teenager and more willing to push back against the whitewashing of Black history.

Page 96

Leaving junior high, I had a whole new outlook on Black history and race in this country. Even though I was only fourteen, I was well aware of what it meant to be a Black "man" in the eyes of society. It wasn't lost on me how racist the Rodney King beating was. Or how divided the world was shown to be with the O.J. Simpson verdict- which many in the Black community saw as a win against a justice system that rarely, if ever, would let a Black man get off. Especially one accused of killing a white woman.

Page 97

Though my dad was a cop, he knew that being his child wouldn't protect me from how police interacted with Black boys. So my parents taught me early about how you behave so that you don't end up a statistic. "The Talk" is what we call it in Black families.

...about the dangers of interacting with non-Black people, because they will assume the worst of you as a Black boy. ..."...You just can't be so trusting of white people with your history."



...These sentiments were echoed by my father, who worked on a predominantly white police force.

Page 98

I was one of the token Black kids at the Bishop George Ahr High School in Edison, New Jersey, a Catholic school that was primarily white and Filipino.

...Racism was common at my high school, but mainly covert. I was never called a nigger, but I did deal with weird, racially charged questions...

Page 99

Microaggression is the academic term for what I was experiencing. Simply put, it's when a person insults or diminishes you based solely on the marginalized group you are in. It's called "micro" because that person isn't outright calling you a n\*\*\*\* or a fa\* or both. Instead, they're calling attention to your differences in a low-key way. At times it can seem almost innocent or naïve, but make no mistake, these small things become big over time. These little assumptions grow to create an entire stereotype. This kind of microaggressive behavior often leads to overt racism or homophobia, eventually. Sometimes it's intentional, like non-Black kids asking questions with a negative, condescending type of vibe to rattle you. But other times, a person doesn't even know that they've insulted you or your culture.

...If someone asks you a question and you have to squint your eyes and twist your face a little to make sure heard them correctly, you've probably just dealt with a microaggression.

Page 100

You'll find that people often use the excuse "it was the norm" when discussing racism, homophobia, and anything else in our history they are trying to absolve themselves of. Saying that something was "a norm" of the past is a way not to have to deal with its ripple effects in the present. It removes the fact that hate doesn't just stop because a law or the time changed. Folks use this excuse because they are often unwilling to accept how full of phobias and -isms they are themselves- or at least how they benefit from social structures that privilege them.

Page 101

Why didn't he see that white people, had made a choice to enslave another race? There were abolitionists who were able to see it was wrong, and Quakers who were able to see it was wrong, so why couldn't all white people see it was wrong?

Page 103

No wonder so many kids of color and queer kids don't feel they have the opportunity to speak for themselves.

...Black kids are given harsher penalties for the same offenses as white kids. Back then, it was business as usual. Suffice it to say, when white kids spoke up, it was taken as nonthreatening, but when Black kids spoke up, it was clearly different.

...When we hear the media use the term alt-history, it is in direct correlation to what America has always been.

All that I knew about white history as a child had been disproved by the time I became a young adult.

...Honest Abe lied to you.

I won't.

Page 115

...in the Guardian on post-segregation public swimming pools, she explains how Black kids drown at roughly three times the same rate of white kids due to a lack of resources, both tangible and cultural, as well as racism. It's interesting how many things in this country white kids do as a given but Black kids continue to struggle with for generations. Black folks have always had a complicated connection to water, and even a fear of it dating back to our enslavement.

Page 118

Too many watch in silence while others in the community suppress Black queer people.

Page 125

You are living proof that it really isn't as hard as most think to get along with and enjoy the company of people from different sexual identities.

Page 126

...to brothers playing ball together, \*whispers\* smoking weed together,... ...Black babies are born into oppression despite any additional marginalizations.

Page 127

My queer identity is a part of my Blackness...

Page 132

Although division of people through intelligence isn't exclusive to the Black community, it has much different connotations when you know that white folks, regardless of where they fall in school, can achieve. ...There will always be a different set of standards for us.

Page 140

...around the world who fight for little Black boys and girls and gender nonconforming people who are considered different.

Page 148

"...White people taught y'all to be afraid of ghosts. That's why they used to dress up in sheets like them..."

Page 158

I watch Black men criticize Black queer boys every day. And that's not to say my community is more homophobic than others or that I don't see where Black straight men affirm me, but by and large, it's not enough.

Page 159

My father taught me that as much as I feel that straight Black men are often my oppressors...  
...That the social conditioning that told us to hate our own because of sex and gender...

Page 160

I'm going to write this in the only language I knew at the time- in my adolescent years before I had a full understanding of transphobia and the actions that fed into it. Knowing what I know now, there would've never been the misgendering, or the switching between your birth name, Jermaine, and your chosen name Hope.

Page 164

...the world still isn't a safe and accepting place for trans people. Some days I fear it may never be.

Page 165

I was unsure if I was a boy or a girl or a science project...

Page 168 I was proud of how strong you were to make that decision to transition, knowing that society is no safe space to live in that existence.

Page 169

I also knew by this point in my early teens that I wasn't going to be a transgender. ...As a young boy I was effeminate and figured that I was supposed to be a girl- because I liked girl things and had girl mannerisms. That was all I could process from the age of five until I was about twelve, because I didn't have a full vocabulary for gender and sexuality. My daydreams didn't feature me as a boy, but as a girl named Dominique-...

Page 170

My belief that I was supposed to be a girl also correlated with my attraction to other boys. Girls liked boys. I didn't know that boys could like boys. At that time, the only representation I had of what happened when a boy liked a boy was watching my cousin transitioning.

Which then led me to think that I might possibly be transgender. I thought that meant "a boy who wanted to be a girl" and you were the physical representation of what that looked like. For many of my younger years, I did have the mind-set that one day I would likely transition to a girl.

Page 172

Growing up with transgender people in our family was a norm for us...

Page 175

You taught me a lot about myself and that an LGBTQIAP+ community did exist. ...A Blackness that can't tolerate and protect queerness. A white society wanting to destroy us all.

Page 177

I know it was likely even harder raising a Black queer kid in a society that already makes it difficult to raise a Black child without the additional marginalization. ...Making my godmother Aunt Audrey, who just happened to be a lesbian,...

Page 182

This is likely the hardest chapter I'll ever write. And frankly, I'm not even sure if it fits with the themes of Blackness or queerness or critical race theory in this book—nor do I really care.

Page 184

We would sneak and drink liquor from the liquor cart and refill the bottle with water.

Page 201

"Yeah." But I laughed and said, "Get your hand off my butt."

You giggled. "That's not my hand."

"You're lying," I said. You then placed both hands on my hips, as we lay side by side. There was still something poking me.

You were fully erect at this point. I was nervous. "We gonna get in trouble."

"You can't tell anybody, okay?" you said. "You promise that you not gonna tell anyone?"

I promised. You then grabbed my hand and made me touch it. It was the first time I had ever touched a penis that wasn't my own. I knew what was happening wasn't supposed to happen. Cousins weren't supposed to do these things with cousins. But my body didn't react that way. My body on the inside was doing something, too.

Page 202

By now we were both touching each other. I tried my best not to enjoy it, because you were my cousin. We were crossing a line that family should never cross. But it felt so right for a boy who always felt that he was wrong. To know someone else was having those same feelings validated everything going on inside of me. I knew it wasn't fake. But the fact that we were doing it in secret also told me this wasn't something anyone would accept. Especially your girlfriend.

Page 203

I had never done anything sexual with anyone up until that point, despite my friends in school all talking about losing their virginity.

We sat there for about ten minutes before you finally stood up. You then had me stand up with you. At this time, you were much taller than me, probably by a good foot. You told me to take-off my pajama pants, which I did. You then took off your shorts, followed by your boxers. There you stood in front of me fully erect and said, "Taste it." At first, I laughed and refused. But then you said, "Come on, Matt, taste it. This is what other boys like us do when we like each other." I finally listened to you.

The whole time I knew it was wrong, not because I was having sexual intercourse with a guy, but that you were my family. I only did that for about forty-five seconds before you had me stop. Then you got down on your knees and told me to close my eyes. That's when you began oral sex on me as well. It was the strangest feeling in the world. Unfortunately, I didn't have a handbook to learn sexuality as a queer boy. My crash course was happening right in front of me, and despite the guilt I was feeling, there was also euphoria. Things were happening to me that I couldn't explain. Feelings and emotions I had not known existed.

After a minute or so, you stopped. You then laid me on the ground and got on top of me. You began humping me— back and forth back and forth—never penetrating me, though. It was just our bodies on top of each other going back and forth for several minutes while the music on the TV played in the background. Aretha Franklin was singing "A Rose Is Still a Rose." The irony of a song playing in the background about the deflowering of a young girl being used by a man. The irony of me lying on the basement floor.

You eventually got up off me and told me to come to the bathroom, that you wanted to show me one more thing. You turned on the light and closed the door. You began stroking yourself in front of me. I just stood there nervous because I didn't know what to expect next. You said, "Just keep watching, Matt." So I stood there and watched you for several minutes.

Then you began to moan slightly. I took a step back because I didn't know what was about to happen, and then it did. You ejaculated into the toilet in front of me. I was very unaware of what sex involved at the time— primarily because I stayed away from it. I knew I didn't like girls that way, and the first thing folks would ask you if you inquired about sex was whether "you were fucking or not." And I wasn't. We also had the bare minimum of sex education in school, so I was unaware of a lot of things.

Watching you ejaculate was shocking. I remember you telling me, "It's semen. One day when nobody is around, you should do this until you get this feeling you never felt before and bust."

Watching you ejaculate was shocking. I remember you telling me, "It's semen. One day when nobody is around, you should do this until you get this feeling you never felt before and bust."

I looked at you and said, "I can't do that, I'm not old enough yet."

You laughed. "Matt, you are old enough. Go ahead and try it."

By this point, fear had overcome me and so many lines had been crossed that I finally said, "I don't want to do it."  
"That's cool. Come on, let's go to bed."

We went back upstairs and both went to bed. You rolled over to face the wall, and I sat there. For hours. I sat there until the sun came up, not knowing what to do or say or how I would face my parents. I finally fell asleep in the early morning. I woke up a while later, after you. You were still in bed behind me but watching TV. I rolled over and looked at you, and you said,

"Remember our promise, Matt? "

Page 207

Two weeks after that night, I masturbated for the first time, and you were right. I was old enough to experience that feeling of what I would later learn is called an orgasm. Despite knowing that what happened with you was wrong, I now knew that I was definitely attracted to boys.

...I was soon a high school freshman, with sexually active teens all around me.

Page 208

I unzipped my pants and began to pee in the stand-up urinal in the corner. I was there for about ten seconds before I felt someone come up behind me. At first, I froze because I didn't know what was happening. He put both his hands around me and then moved down to touch my genitals. I could feel every nerve in my body start to tingle. I didn't know who was behind me, but I knew that I was being violated.

I immediately stopped peeing, turned around, and pushed him off me. It was a boy I will refer to as Evan. Although we weren't friends, I knew who he was. We were in the same grade and had taken classes together before.

I zipped up my pants and yelled, "What the fuck are you doing? " "Yo, I'm just playing. Chill out," Evan yelled back.

Page 209

"I don't play like that," I said. "Don't tell anybody, okay?"  
"I won't. Just get out of here."

Further more, I realized that there were more people like me hiding in plain sight.

Page 210

"...Did anyone explore things with you sexually before you were ready? Who taught you about sex in a way that you weren't ready to understand- in a way that made you think I needed to get it firsthand from you, so I would know who not to trust?"

Page 225

It was the same microaggression, the same "I wanna be down" type of stuff we often saw from white kids who wanted to participate in our culture. Today, we call them "culture vultures."

All the white students erupted in praise and excitement, while most of the Black students just sighed. It was the last moment of anti-Blackness I wanted to ever deal with at that school. My culture was a joke to them the entire time I was in high school- something that they could play with while never suffering the oppression that those who created it did.

Page 228

It's one thing to deal with just Black kids and worry about sexual identity. It's entirely different to struggle with white kids because I was Black, and Black kids because I was gay. That double marginalization was a tiresome burden.

Page 233

I had been in a sea of whiteness for four of the most important years of my life and my integration back into Blackness wasn't clicking for me.

Page 237

Every new person you meet, you are likely having to explain your identity.

Page 244

When I would get home, I would meet up with Baron and our friend Syd, and we would go smoke weed and play basketball. I was smoking up to three blunts a day, working, partying, drinking, and not going to class. I was what one would call "smoked out" and it showed.

Page 245

I got back to school that next semester more motivated than ever to correct the wrongs of the one prior. The first was my weed habit, which had grown out of control. Purple haze, as it's called, was my favorite vice. The weed made everything less real. All the depression, the anger I was feeling. The weed also allowed me to be in the room with others who didn't care that I was hiding my sexuality. It was my masculinity coping mechanism. All the hood boys smoked, and so did I.

Page 247

During campus parties in the Square, the brick walls would literally "sweat" as the liquor came out of our pores while we were dancing.

Page 257

"I heard you were gay. We don't allow that f\*\*\*\*\* shit in our chapter."

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I never daydreamed about sex with another boy. When I did think about sex, I was a girl having sex with a boy. I created an alter ego in my mind named Dominique that looked how I would look if I were a girl, and she would have sex with any of the boys I daydreamed about. That was the only thing that ever made sense to me, until I finally didn't. College opened my eyes to some things.

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We learned the basics about sex. What an erection was, what sperm did and how it traveled to 'an egg to create a baby. We learned about STIs like chlamydia, gonorrhea, and HIV. But again, surface-level information. Nothing about how these infections harm one community more than the other—especially HIV in the Black community.

We also didn't learn about sex between two men. I focused on masturbation instead of sex, primarily because I still could not imagine myself having sex with anyone else. The feelings I had were for boys, but 'the only encounters I'd had with boys—Thomas and Evan—weren't the same as what I had seen in love stories or pornography. Those were mostly between men and women, and they were excited and confident with each other. The porn stories were so romanticized, but the passion was there. Even the corny storylines were better than my lived experience—which consisted of no romantic love at all. So, sex with myself was going to have to suffice until I had the ability to trust myself with someone else.

That moment for me didn't come until my junior year of college. I remained a virgin until I was almost twenty-one years old, something unheard of in my family. It had been a daunting task to lie about having sex (and with a girl) to all of my heterosexual cousins. I had never seen a vagina other than in the movies, and had no desire to.

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As we kissed, he began unzipping my pants. It was clear to me in this moment that he wasn't new to this. He reached his hand down and pulled out my dick. He quickly went to giving me head. I just sat back and enjoyed it as I could tell he was, too. He was also definitely experienced in what he was doing, because he went to work quite confidently. He then came up and asked me if I wanted to try on him. I said sure. I began and he said, "Watch your teeth." I didn't want to let him know I was inexperienced. So, I slowed down and took my time and luckily got into a good rhythm. He didn't know I was a virgin, and I did my best to act dominant like my favorite porn star. I was an actor, and this was my movie.

There was so much excitement running through my body: This was much more than losing my virginity. For once, I was consenting to the sexual satisfaction of my body. This moment also confirmed that sex could look how I wanted it to look. And that it could be passionate and kind, but most importantly, fun and satisfying. His body felt great in my mouth.

I came up after a while and kissed him again. We both got up and went into his bedroom, where we got completely naked. He took off his clothes and immediately lay on his stomach. I then took off my shirt, and then my boxer briefs. I got behind him. There was moonlight coming through the shades of the dark room. Two Black boys under the glow of blue moonlight. How poetic, dare I say ironic?

Now, I was scared as hell. One, because I didn't know what I was doing and clearly, he did. Two, because it was still college, and my fear of word getting out that I was inexperienced or bad in bed would have been too big of a campus rumor. Let alone that I was having sex with men and a friend of someone in my chapter.

For the first few minutes, we dry humped and grinded. I was behind him, with my stomach on his back as we kissed. After a few minutes of fun and games, he got up and went to his nightstand, where he pulled out a condom and some lube. He then lay down on his stomach. I knew what I had to do even if I had never done it before. I had one point of reference, though, and that was seven-plus years of watching pornography. Although the porn was heterosexual, it was enough of a reference point for me to get the job done.

I remember the condom was blue and flavored like cotton candy. I put some lube on and got him up on his knees, and I began to slide into him from behind. I tried not to force it because I imagined that it would be painful; I didn't want this moment to be painful. So I eased in, slowly, until I heard him moan.

As we moved, I could tell he was excited and I was, too, but the pride in me told me not to show it. I felt like I was in control and proud of myself for getting it right on the first try—all the while still being nervous. I wanted to stay dominant in that moment. We went at it for about fifteen minutes before I started to get that feeling. Weakness in the legs, numbness in the waist. I finally came and let out a loud moan—to the point where he asked me to quiet down for the neighbors. I pulled out of him and kissed him while he masturbated. Then, he also came. That night was glorious. I had conquered a fear and had sex with a man on my own terms.

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For me, I was finally on my journey of sexual exploration and couldn't wait to do it again. He and I had sex a second time two weeks later, before school let out for summer. ...I had several sexual encounters that involved mutual masturbation and kissing and fooling around, but I just couldn't bring myself to have penetrative sex again. I was hesitant because I still had a lot of questions. As much as I enjoyed being on top, I wasn't sure if I always wanted to be the dominant person in the bedroom. I was still a novice at sex, and even more at gay culture and sexual positions. I wasn't sure if because I "topped" him, that meant I always had to be the top. I also wanted to try the bottom position, which I associated with being the more submissive person.

...I just needed time to reflect, and figure out if sex for me was going to be the casual hookup thing or if I was ready to now seek something more.

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By that time, I was using a dating app online called Black Gay Chat.

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I got to his apartment and we both began drinking while watching TV. This lasted all of ten minutes before we started kissing and undressing each other.

He then stood up and grabbed me by the hands and led me into his bedroom. We took each other's clothes off, fast but deliberate. After, he told me to lie down on the bed. He asked me to "turn over" while he slipped a condom on himself.

My heart immediately started to race. Nervously, I asked him what he was doing, and he said, "You." I laughed at first but then told him that I had never been the bottom. He looked at me and said, "Well, that's about to change tonight."

I was extremely nervous. There is a fear, as with most things that you are doing for the first time. But this was my ass, and I was struggling to imagine someone inside me. And he was . . . large. But, I was gonna try.

I had previously topped someone who clearly enjoyed it, but he had been enjoying anal sex before I ever came along. He knew what to expect. I didn't. As an avid porn watcher, the only thing I knew about anal sex previously was that it was painful, or at least played up as such on the cameras.

Nervous and drunk, I listened and got on my stomach. He got on top and slowly inserted himself into me. It was the worst pain I think I had ever felt in my life. He then added more lube and tried again, which felt better but not by much. He began his stroking motion. Eventually, I felt a mix of pleasure with the pain.

I can't say that I didn't enjoy it, because I did. But it was painful for sure. In those few minutes though, I can say that he was gentle. His aim wasn't to hurt me, and my aim was for him to be pleased, too. He didn't last long inside of me, thankfully. He gave me a kiss before he pulled out. I didn't stay long, nor did I masturbate after. I was in a state of shock. I just wanted to get back home.

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I was in pain for nearly three weeks following that encounter and too afraid to go to the doctor for help because I would have had to tell them I had been having anal sex. So, like most other trauma in my life, I sucked it up and dealt with the pain until my body healed. I didn't have sex for several months following that encounter.

But after a while, I got the courage to try it again, but this time I went into it much more prepared. With each time, I learned more about my body...

...Sex should be pleasurable.

...Like they say, Practice makes perfect, and I eventually got a lot of practice.

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Time waits for no one, and for Black queer people, there are too many trying to steal the little bit of time we have.

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When I say I'm not blue, I'm referring to the blue on the police uniform my father wore. How I've watched too many in that same blue harm Black and brown people. I know for myself that although I respect my father with all my heart, it is my duty to fight against how that institution has harmed us.

**Profanity Count**



Ass 2  
Faggot/Fag 13  
Fuck 2  
Nigga/Nigger/Negro 16  
Piss 1  
Shit 11