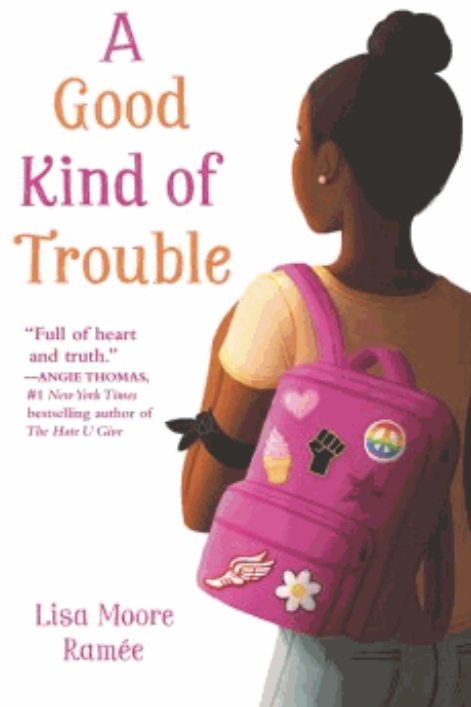


A GOOD KIND OF TROUBLE



Book Summary:

A twelve-year-old girl learns about herself and activism.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains controversial racial and social commentary.

Juvenile

By Lisa Moore Ramee

ISBN: 978-0-06-283670-0

1
/5

Child Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

Page	Content
2	My sister, Hana, would say I'm being just like those people who take one look at a Black person and think they need to clutch their purse tight or lock their car doors.
14	Momma says it's totally normal for a Black girl to start earlier with stuff like developing and getting her period and having "grown-up bumps." That's what she calls them, instead of pimples or acne, like that's supposed to make me glad to get them.
22	I hate when a teacher assumes that just because I'm Black, I'll know all about slavery and civil rights and stuff like that. I'm the only Black student in the class, so I know everyone's staring at me, trying to see if I have bat wings or hairy armpits. Like being Black is a whole different species.
23	When no one answers her, Ms. Jacobs says, "If you don't have anything to write about, watch the news. There have been a lot of stories lately that are important. Race factoring into police activity is something you should pay attention to." ...Momma and Daddy were talking last night about how a police officer is going to go on trial because she shot a Black man when he was walking to his car. The video of him getting shot got played over and over online.
29	Daddy talks a lot about what he calls white privilege, but if you ask me, getting so red that everyone can tell when you're embarrassed is no kind of privilege.
40	"I don't know, sugar. I try to keep an open mind, but all these trials seem to end the same way. Doesn't seem like Black folks can get any justice." "Is it Black Lives Matter doing the protest?" "No," Momma says. "But people are squawking on the news anyway how it's Black Lives Matter causing the problem." ..."Do the police hate us? Hate Black people?" "Oh, no, honey, don't start thinking that." Momma gives my knee a little squeeze. "It's like . . ." She taps her nails on the steering wheel, thinking. "Okay, like if you eat unhealthy food a long time, you're going to be unhealthy, right? Well, for too long people have been fed a diet about Black folks. About folks with brown skin. Making them think we're scary. And that's how the police have been trained to act. It's going to take a long time to change people's minds." "Maybe after the trial is over, people will know we're not scary. They'll know we matter."
45	"Bernard's that big kid, right?" "Yes! He's huge!" "And Black, right?" "I don't think he's scary because he's Black, Hana. I think he's scary because he acts mean all the time." Hana taps the black armband she's wearing and smirks at me. Hana and all her friends wear black armbands to show their support for the Black people who've died when dealing with the police.
49	"They're teaching the dead white men a lot earlier these days, huh?" he says. ..."There's nothing wrong with learning about Emerson." She throws a look at Daddy. No one can toss a look like Momma. "Your father just means a lot—" "Most," Daddy interjects. "A lot," Momma repeats, "of the things you'll be taught at school are from . . . a certain perspective."

Page	Content
	<p>“Dead white men’s perspective?” I ask. “Bingo!” Hana says, grinning like she won something.</p>
51	<p>“Hey, I never said I didn’t like what the cat had to say. But they sure do need to expand what you all are exposed to. There’s a whole lot of great thinkers who are people of color.” “I know, Daddy,” I say. Sometimes my family acts like I don’t know a thing about being Black.</p>
60	<p>Ms. Jacobs nods. “It’s hard, but you can’t always worry about what everyone else thinks. It’s important to decide what you believe in and stick with it. Emerson thought that was important, and he wasn’t afraid to have unpopular opinions. I believe, if he were alive now, he would be a strong supporter of the Black Lives Matter movement.” ...“Emerson was Black?” Jay Landis shouts, and Ms. Jacobs narrows her eyes at him. “No, Jay, he was not.” “Then why would he say only Black lives mattered?” “What do you think, Shayla?” Ms. Jacobs asks me. ...Ms. Jacobs should really stop acting like just because I’m Black, I’m the only one in class who has an opinion about Black stuff. I don’t know how to answer her. I mean, I know Black Lives Matter is about reminding people our lives count too, but some people take it wrong and think it means we are saying our lives matter more than theirs. Or that only our lives matter.</p>
62	<p>A boy in the back calls out, “My dad says saying Black lives matter is racist.” I want to tell him his dad is an idiot, but I pinch my lips together and don’t say anything. ...“Martin, if I tell you your life matters, do you think I’m saying nobody else’s life in this class matters?” Ms. Jacobs’s voice is calm and quiet. Martin shakes his head, but I can tell he still doesn’t get it. I wonder if I should tell him Momma’s bone story. “So when African Americans say Black lives matter, can you see how they aren’t saying that other people’s lives don’t matter?”</p>
63	<p>“You’d be angry too if people who looked like you were getting shot for no reason,” I say, sort of under my breath and sort of not, and then snap my mouth back closed. ...“Injustice usually makes people angry,” she says. “Some people are confused about why businesses get vandalized in protests. That can seem wrong. But I’m not sure what is the right way to act if people in your community seem to be unfairly targeted by the police.” Momma and Daddy don’t want me watching the videos of Black people getting shot or choked or beat up by police. But there’s been so many of them, I can’t help but see some. And I’ve seen videos of protests too, and sometimes they do get really loud and scary.</p>
65	<p>I can’t wait to tell Daddy that Ms. Jacobs taught us something that wasn’t from a dead white man’s perspective. But I wish she’d stop acting like I’m the only one in class who would understand a Black perspective. If I can understand a dead white man, then everyone else should be able to understand what someone Black has to say. I also don’t get why some people would think Black people are against them when we’re the ones getting shot.</p>
81	<p>I notice Momma and Daddy don’t talk about that trial at all while we eat. I think they don’t want to worry me, and they probably don’t want to get Hana started. She gets so mad about the police shootings, it’s almost like she knew the people who got shot. Like they were her best friends or something. I’m bothered about it too, but I guess it makes me more scared than angry.</p>

Page	Content
	<p>I decide to ask Momma a question that’s bugged me about her broken-bone story. “Momma, when you were telling me about Black Lives Matter being like a bone, were you saying that Black people are broken?” ...“No, sugar, we’re not broken. We’re just the ones who need attention right now.” “Because people keep trying to break us,” Hana says. She claps after each word.</p>
83	<p>“It’s a school night,” Momma says. “But we need to make Black Lives Matter posters.” ...They are serious about school nights, but they are more serious about Black Lives Matter. ...I wonder if Ms. Jacobs is right. Would Emerson really support Black Lives Matter even though he’s a (dead) white man?</p>
87	<p>“Next thing you know, you’ll be protesting with me. You want me to get you an armband?” Hana told me she wears her armband to make sure people don’t forget about us mattering. To remember those who died. The armbands might make people remember, but it also seems like it might make people angry, and that’s sure to be trouble, so I tell Hana, “No thanks.” Hana grips my arm hard. “Black Lives Matter is important, Shayla.” “I know!” Hana thinks I don’t care about being Black sometimes since I’m not like her, but she’s wrong. “I want people to know we matter too. I just don’t want to wear an armband.” If I started wearing an armband, everyone would ask me about it and make a big deal.</p>
88	<p>Family is the most important thing ever, so when you think of Black people as a big family, it’s easier to get why we say Black lives matter. I know Black Lives Matter is important—obviously.</p>
91	<p>Maybe Momma could guess what I was struggling with, because she says, “The officer claims she feared for her life, so they’ll talk about that.” ...“I don’t get it. He was walking away from her. How could that be scary?”</p>
92	<p>“Our country has so many great things, but it also has a long history of intolerance. Sometimes trials like this one are . . . benchmarks. They can show how far we’ve come, or how far we’ve yet to go.” Alex raises his hand. “Why do people get upset just because someone’s different from them?”</p>
118	<p>“I mean, all your best friends are Black. And so are Hana’s.” I feel dumb talking about this. “Is it weird that none of my friends are?” Momma closes her book and stretches her arms high above her head. “My girls and I have known each other for a long time, Shayla. I guess you could say we speak the same language.” “A Black language?” She shakes her head. “No, sugar.” Then she pauses. “Well, maybe. I mean, not really, you understand, but there’s something about those women, my sisters, that makes me comfortable. You have to remember, back when I was in school, kids stuck with their own.” “Things haven’t changed.” I sigh and flip the pork chops.</p>
121	<p>“Trust me. You’re going to change in all sorts of ways. That doesn’t mean there’s something wrong with you, Shayla. Or with the friends you have. Just make sure you’re open to all sorts of people. Now, I will tell you this. You may find as you get older that there’s something . . . comfortable, or I don’t know, comforting, in having friends who can</p>

Page	Content
	relate to things you might be going through. Little things like knowing what type of product to put on your hair, and big stuff like knowing how it feels when we hear about the police hassling someone just because they're Black. Or worse than hassling. That hurts. Those are things Julia and Isabella might not relate to. Although I bet they have their own things."
122	I don't know what this has to do with anything, but then Momma says, "Janice isn't Black. She's white." Hana walks in just then and throws her hand against her chest like she's having a heart attack. "Daddy, come quick! Momma is starting to fraternize with white folk!" ...A wise man once said (okay, it was Michael Jackson): "It don't matter if you're Black or white." But obviously, MJ didn't go to Emerson or have the police stop him for a busted taillight. Race shouldn't matter, but it does. For real.
124	When I get home after school, I ask Hana if it's cool to wear a costume in junior high, and she says I should if I want to, like that is the important thing. She shows me the big afro wig and gold hoop earrings and Black Panther T-shirt she is going to wear. Most people hear Black Panther and they think of the movie, but Hana is quick to remind everyone the activists came first.
126	I feel bad I'm wearing something that makes her sad, but when we pull up in front of Emerson, before I get out of the car, Momma says in a big voice, "What do we want?" Even though she's sort of shouting, she's smiling. So I smile back. "Justice!" "When do we want it?" "Now!" I shout back at her, giggling.
140	"But—" I want to say how the Black Panthers weren't about violence, but my mouth won't cooperate.
175	Before I can say anything, Tyler kisses me. I'm not talking a peck on the cheek; his mouth is smothering mine.
202	When we get outside, there's a large group of people chanting and holding up signs, blocking our way. A woman with a megaphone is yelling about justice. I've never seen so many angry faces. ..."No justice, no peace!" a bunch of people shout. ...Police officers are arguing with the protesters and a tall man with dreads has his hands handcuffed behind him. "He's getting arrested?" I've never seen someone in handcuffs except on television. "I guess they think he's the one who broke that window."
205	Hana nods. "Yeah, me and Regina were talking about how bad things are getting. There was almost a riot at the last Black Lives Matter rally when a bunch of people started shouting against us. But stuff like that can make it seem like our movement is just about spreading violence." ..."No," she finally says. "But it can be hard to stay calm when sometimes it feels like . . . like people don't care about us. Or act like they have to be afraid of us. Or maybe want to control us." She adjusts her ponytail and looks like she's thinking hard. "When a Black person gets shot and nothing happens, it's like we don't matter. And that makes me angry, and yeah, it makes me want to do something violent. Make some noise. Get attention. I want a scholarship to play ball next year. It's not fair that I have to take

Page	Content
	some schools off my list because I would be afraid to live there. I don't know if a lot of white students have to worry about that."
208	There are posters of Trayvon Martin and Philando Castile and Alton Sterling and Michael Brown and Tamir Rice and Stephon Clark, and a bunch more people who lost their lives. Too many. I get an awful lump in my throat, seeing those faces. Most of them look really young. ...Some people shout, "All lives matter!" and I know they're against us. For real.
212	"Oh, I went to a march for Black Lives Matter."
216	"Shayla went to a rally for Black Lives Matter," he says.
250	"You know what? I think it's time this Oreo found out she's not as cute as she thinks she is," Natalie says. Oreo? Seriously? I'm not white on the inside, Black on the outside. ..."Who's 'you all'?" Angie asks, making little quotation marks in the air. I didn't know Angie could sound so mean. "Are you talking about A-fri-can A-mer-i-cans?"
253	"Okay," Angie says, "if you're so down, how come you don't hang out with anybody?" (Translation: anybody = Black kids.)
260	"She shot that man." "The jury must've believed she thought her life was in jeopardy." "But he was walking away." As much as I hated seeing that video, I've watched a bunch of times. All I saw was a man walking slowly to his truck. And then a police officer start shooting. Shooting until the man fell down in the street. ...On the drive home, we pass a big group of people standing at an intersection, waving signs and shouting. They're shouting so loud, I can hear them even though my window is rolled up. They're shouting about how we matter. How we need justice. How the verdict was racist.
265	"But Momma, this is about reminding people that Black lives matter. I'm Black too. I should be supporting us."
266	Police officers get into a long line, facing off against the protesters, but the officers have shields in front of them like they're worried that the protesters might hurt them. ...The smoke thickens, like a blanket of fog is creeping over the freeway, and Daddy says it looks like the police are using tear gas to get the protesters to move. ...I think the police are going to start arresting people, but then the protesters file off the freeway, waving their Black Lives Matter signs, and my heart drops out of my throat and back to where it's supposed to be.
268	"I'm fine. Just tired. A bunch of people got arrested, though. They set a car on fire and broke some windows. The police went off." ...Hana's room is decorated with a big poster from Love & Basketball (her favorite movie) and a campaign poster from back when Barack Obama was president. Right next to that is a picture of Colin Kaepernick with his afro shaped into the Black-power fist. I stare at Hana's poster of two track runners from the Olympics, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, with their fists raised on the winners' platform. They got their medals taken away for protesting.
269	"I mean, I don't want to actually get arrested, you know? But I guess I was more angry than scared. Everybody said that police officer was going to get off just like they always do. I

Page	Content
	<p>didn't want to believe it, but that's just what happened, and . . . it's like our lives don't matter at all. We have to make noise. Wake folks up."</p>
271	<p>In science, Bernard notices my armband right off, and he asks me about it super loud. "For BLM," I say. "You know, Black Lives Matter?"</p>
273	<p>"It's to remind people that Black lives matter because sometimes it seems like that's not what everyone thinks." ... "You don't even act Black," Julia says, like she knows all about it.</p>
274	<p>"Try being Latinx." Isabella's eyes go wide, like she startled herself. Then she shakes her head. "Seriously, guys. People think we're all Mexican. And that we're probably here illegally. I've never even been to Mexico."</p>
276	<p>A friend who knows being Black means all sorts of things. A friend who shares this awful thing, this feeling like maybe the world sort of hates you because of the color of your skin.</p>
279	<p>"Maybe you could bring me an armband," Isabella says, like she knows I'm feeling kind of sad. "It's for Black lives mattering," Julia says. Isabella shrugs. "Well, I'm brown. Seems like that's close enough. And technically, Shayla's brown." "You don't have to be Black to support Black Lives Matter," I say.</p>
281	<p>This isn't something I want to whisper, so I say in a regular voice, "For all the people who've been shot. And for the jury getting it wrong." Tyler looks over at us, and he's so light-skinned, I can see the blush covering his face. I think he's going to pretend he wasn't listening, so I won't yell at him for butting in, but then he says, "Black lives matter." ... "Blue lives matter," a boy at a workbench behind us says. His name is Alvin. Some people think Black people are against the police because of Black Lives Matter. They think we are saying all police are bad and we hate them. Police wear blue, so saying blue lives matter is like saying blue versus Black. Momma says it's just trying to stir up a mess of trouble. I agree. I don't hate the police. Even Hana doesn't hate the police. Uncle Shelly is a cop, and he's the coolest. So I say, "Of course blue lives matter, stupid."</p>
282	<p>So many people wear them at Black Lives Matter rallies and protests, I'm sure she knows what it's for. ... Angie runs past me, but then she slows down so I can catch up with her. She smiles at me and points at my armband. "Black lives, right?" A warm scoop of peach cobbler floats around in my stomach. In my head, I say, "Yes, sister." In my head, I say, "Power to the people."</p>
285	<p>"You believe that Black lives matter, right?" I ask Julia, still holding out the armband I brought for her. "You know that verdict wasn't fair?" The protests are worse now that the verdict came out. More and more people are shouting for change and shouting for justice. "Don't you think things need to change?" I want her to say that change is important and we're willing to fight for it, even if the fight is just wearing an armband. "But it's not like wearing it is going to change anything." Julia looks down at the ground, but I can still see her face getting red. "And maybe it's something only the Black kids should do?"</p>
299	<p>"Why do I get pulled over just because I drive a nice car? Why does Mr. McDonnell keep a closer eye on Black folks when they come into his store? Why is it, every time we—"</p>

Page	Content
	<p>...“Look, Shayla, life isn’t fair. You’re old enough to understand that. And I don’t mean just for Black folks. Lots of people aren’t treated the way they should be.” Daddy pauses and looks around my room like he’s trying to find what he wants to say hidden somewhere. “It’s just sometimes, it sure seems like Black folks get way too big of a helping of that unfair pie.”</p>
314	<p>“A Black woman was selling incense in front of a store,” Daddy said. He speaks real quiet and slow. “Someone called the police even though according to the store owner, there weren’t any problems. And when the police got there—” Daddy’s voice breaks and he runs a hand over his head.</p> <p>...He lets out a long slow breath. “Two officers shot her,” he says. “They’ve been talking about it on the news.”</p> <p>“Why did they shoot her?” I ask. “What was she doing wrong?”</p> <p>“Not a damn thing,” Daddy says.</p>
317	<p>On the way to school, Momma has the car radio turned to a news station, and they’re talking about a big Black Lives Matter protest happening in front of the Wilshire Community police station.</p>
322	<p>For the rest of lunch, I wait for Principal Trask to come over to the overhang lunch area and cut off armbands from everyone who’s still wearing them, but she doesn’t. It sort of makes me feel sick that she only went over to the basketball courts, like she thinks Black students are the problem.</p>
326	<p>Since it’s early, only a few kids stand around in front of the school. They’ll be my first targets.</p> <p>“Black Lives Matter!” I shout to get their attention.</p> <p>...I keep hollering, “Black Lives Matter,” and some other people join in. I wish I’d made signs.</p> <p>...Sometimes it’s like the world is telling us that being Black is the worst thing you can be, but right now it feels like people are not only saying that Black lives matter, but that being Black is the best.</p>