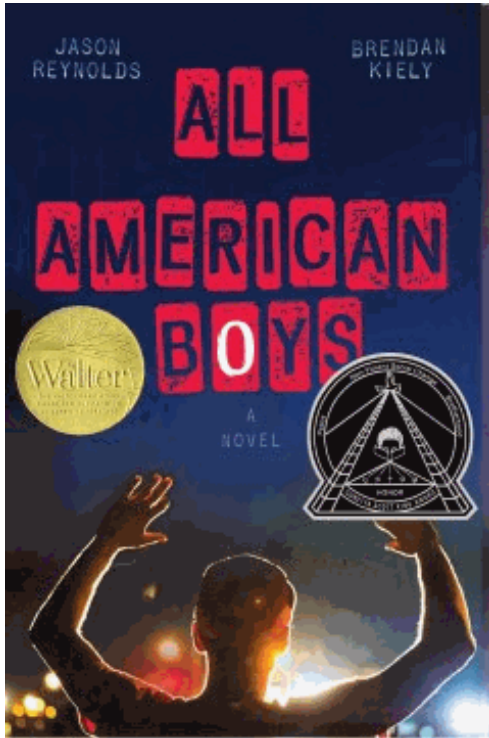


ALL AMERICAN BOYS



Young Adult

By Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely

ISBN: 978-1-4814-6335-5

Book Summary:

A town is put in a state of turmoil after a young African American teenager is wrongly accused and assaulted by a police officer.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains inflammatory racial and social commentary; profanity; alcohol and drug use; and violence.

2/5

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

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7	<p>ZOOM IN. ZOOM IN MORE. A LITTLE MORE. A BOY, GRAINY. FACEDOWN ON THE PAVEMENT. A MAN ABOVE HIM. FISTS RAINING LIKE STONES. HOWLING. LIGHTS AND SIRENS. BLOOD ON THE STREET. THE BOY IS STILL MOVING. AND THEN HE IS NOT.</p>
11	<p>"Two weeks after I graduated from high school, my father came to me and said, 'The only people who are going to live in this house are people I'm making love to.'"</p>
13	<p>"...There's no better opportunity for a black boy in this country than to join the army."</p>
24	<p>He shoved me through the door and slammed me to the ground. Face-first. Hurt so bad the pain was a color—white, a crunching sound in my ear as bones in my nose cracked. After he slapped the cuffs on me, the metal cutting into my wrists, he yanked at my shirt and pants, searching me. I let out a wail, a sound that came from somewhere deep inside.</p> <p>.... I just needed to move to hopefully calm the pain. But moving wasn't a good idea because every time I flipped and flapped on the pavement, with every natural jerk, the cuffs seemed to tighten, and worse, I caught another blow. A fist in the kidney. A knee in the back. A forearm to the back of the neck.</p> <p>"Oh, you wanna resist? You wanna resist?" the cop kept saying, pounding me.</p> <p>...And if I could've, I would've told him that I didn't want to resist. Plus, I was already in cuffs. I was already... stuck. The people on the street watching, their faint murmurs of "Leave him alone" becoming white noise—they knew I didn't want to resist. I really, really didn't. I just wanted him to stop beating me. I just wanted to live. Each blow earthquaked my insides, crushing parts of me I had never seen, parts of me I never knew were there. "Fuckin' thugs can't just do what you're told. Need to learn how to respect authority. And I'm gonna teach you," he taunted, almost whispering in my ear.</p> <p>There was blood pooling in my mouth—tasted like metal. There were tears pooling in my eyes. I could see someone looking at me, quickly fading into a watery blur. Everything was sideways. Wrong. My ears were clogged, plugged by the pressure. All I could make out was the washed-out grunts of the man leaning over me, hurting me, telling me to stop fighting, even though I wasn't fighting, and then the piercing sound of sirens pulling up.</p> <p>My brain exploded into a million thoughts and only one thought at the same time— please don't kill me.</p>
27	<p>But before I could get my buzz on with Guzzo and Dwyer, I had to take care of Willy.</p>
30	<p>I took it to ignite my Friday night buzz. Me, Guzzo, and Dwyer. We got our drink on to get our party on-... ...But I always stole the booze without Willy knowing either, and I got the flask in</p>

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	<p>my jacket pocket while he searched for his shin pads in our room. He couldn't see me taking the booze.</p> <p>...His "All American" looks. All-American? What the hell was that? I hated that shit. What did it even mean?</p>
33	<p>The world was shitty, and I didn't care if that sounded melodramatic.</p> <p>...He died to prove to the wackos of the world who didn't believe in democracy, liberal economy, civil rights, and all that shit, that we were right and they were wrong. But for me, my dad was dead, so the frigging wackos won.</p> <p>...When I was a block away, I took a quick swig of bourbon and stuffed the flask in my ass pocket, so they'd know I had it.</p>
34	<p>I took a swig because I was taking responsibility!</p>
36	<p>"How much are we going to get? I'm shotgunning like ten beers tonight."</p> <p>By "we," Guzzo meant me, because I usually had more cash than either of them, so I almost always bought the beer, which pissed me off, but I knew they felt bad I paid for their fun more than they paid for mine.</p> <p>...And that was the other reason I didn't mind buying Guzzo beer.</p>
37	<p>Basically, we always got started at Jerry's because it was the dirtiest little corner store I knew, and the easiest place for us to get beer. Guzzo had lifted a bottle once.</p>
38	<p>It was the safest plan anyway, and we always seemed to find someone who'd buy the beer for us.</p> <p>The only problem was always this: Whoever we found to buy us the beer would only do it if we paid him extra. There weren't any Good Samaritan beer angels floating around waiting to gift us our weekly Friday buzz. So beer cost double for us, but whatever, we were seventeen.</p>
39	<p>And I was about to hand him my money when the front door to Jerry's whacked open and a cop pushed a younger guy out in front of him. It was only a matter of seconds before the cop had thrown the guy to the sidewalk and pressed him face-first into the concrete. I was barely twenty feet away. The guy on the ground was black and he looked like he was around my age, and I wasn't sure, but I thought he was looking at me. He was vaguely familiar, but I couldn't place him. Did he go to our school? All I could really see was the cop over him, shouting. The cop was white and it took me a second to recognize him, because his face was angled down the whole time, but then, when he raised his head for a second, I realized right away it was Guzzo's older brother, Paul.</p> <p>Holy shit! Paul! Paul was hitting the other guy, again, and again, smashing his face into the sidewalk. The blood kept coming. I wanted to move; my gut wanted me to rush to help Paul. But I knew enough to know that you stayed out of police business, plus Paul didn't need my help because he was pummeling the guy. So I just stood there, sorta frozen, just watching, transfixed. With one knee and a forearm pinning the guy beneath him, Paul bent low and said something into the guy's ear.</p>
51	<p>"...This is that bullshit! I'm so sick of them treating us like animals. Like we America's disobedient dogs!"</p> <p>..."...Do you know the stats? t's something like black people are twice as likely to</p>

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	have no weapons on them when they're killed by cops. Twice as likely! Should I run down the list of the people this has happened to?..."
57	I mean, I had seen this happen so many times. Not personally, but on TV. In the news. People getting beaten, and sometimes killed, by the cops, and then there's all this fuss about it, only to build up to a big heartbreak when nothing happens. The cops get off.
59	NBD, Dwyer wrote in beer on the wooden slats of the back porch with the nozzle from the keg. ...I gave Guzzo my flask at some point and when I eventually got it back it was empty,...
60	Dwyer and Guzzo drank much more than I did, and they stood around the keg shouting out the lyrics of all the hip-hop songs blasting from the living room inside.
65	"Guzzo drank the alcohol. It was Guzzo's idea..." ..."I'm sorry I stole the bourbon. I'm sorry I drank it with Guzzo and Dwyer."
79	Instead some big-ass cop decided to have a fist party on my face
82	I just wondered where God was when I was being mopped by that cop.
101	He took a swig of beer and wiped his mouth on the sleeve of his T-shirt.
118	Because as Jill was telling me about the guy who spent half the night puking in the upstairs bathroom because he'd done a keg stand right before I'd gotten there.
156	"Maybe he was on drugs." "On drugs? What are you? Seventy-five? Since when have you ever gotten off your ass, let alone thrown a punch, when you were stoned, man?" "Meth?" "Only white people do that shit."
157	"Just a puff here and there, man, come on. I don't do drugs." "I've seen you smoking a blunt. Metcalf sold you that shit. Metcalf- a white dude, by the way. Man, that shit could have been laced with crack, or fucking Drano. You don't know what you talkin' 'bout." ..."What do you know, anyway? White boy like you can just walk away whenever you want. Everyone just sees you as Mr. All-American boy, and you can just keep on walking, thinking about other things. Just keep on living, like this shit don't even exist."
160	I was thinking about how, if I wanted to, I could walk away and not think about Rashad, in a way that English or Shannon or Tooms or any of the guys at school who were not white could not.
161	Afraid of people like Paul. Afraid of cops in general. Hell, they were probably afraid of people like me. ...But I didn't have to be because my shield was that I was white. ...I could be all the way across the country in California and I'd still be white, cops and everyone else would still see me as just a "regular kid," an "All-American" boy. "Regular," "All-American." White. Fuck.
163	"I don't know. Unnecessary beating. Uh...shit, police brutality?"

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164	<p>"Paul says he did what he did because he was protecting some white lady in the store," Jill added.</p> <p>"Yeah. That's what my mom says. But, uh,</p> <p>"Seriously."</p> <p>"You think it would have been the same if the lady wasn't white, or if Rashad wasn't black?"</p> <p>"Seriously. "</p> <p>"Seriously, what?"</p> <p>"Why is it taking me five minutes to say the word racism?"</p> <p>"Maybe you're racist?"</p> <p>"Don't joke. This is serious."</p> <p>"I'm not."</p> <p>"I'm not racist!"</p> <p>..."Not like KKK racist," she said. "I don't think most people think they're racist. But every time something like this happens, you could, like you said, say, 'Not my problem.' You could say, 'It's a one-time thing.' Every time it happened."</p> <p>I wanted to say something, but it was like my head just pounded and every word that came to mind just shook and fell back into my throat.</p> <p>"I think it's all racism," Jill said for me.</p> <p>"And if I don't do something," I finally mustered, "if I just stay silent, it's just like saying it's not my problem."</p>
167	<p>"We don 't know what happened in that store, so I'm not gonna sit here and just say this kid is innocent. He might not be. I'm a cabdriver, and 1 work nights, and the truth is, if that kid was trying to hail me down, and it was dark outside, I would keep on going.</p> <p>"And why is that? Because of the way he looks?"</p> <p>"I mean, listen, I've been robbed before. Right around here. And I just... I don't ever want to be robbed again. And he looks like the guy who robbed me. He was dressed just like him..."</p>
177	<p>"Listen, I just don't want them to find a reason to beat more people. To kill people." Mom refocused the conversation, her eyes back on me. "And since apparently they don't trust us, I don't trust them."</p>
178	<p>Shannon and Carlos used to always joke about how Mr. Fisher and Mrs. Tracey were probably dating, probably having gross sex after school on Mrs. Tracey's desk, on top of Shakespeare's Sonnets or something.</p>
179	<p>"Matter fact, how many of y'all been messed with by the cops?"</p>
187	<p>White people were crazy back then, eighty years ago, when the story took place.</p>
206	<p>But to that kid- and now my head was reeling- to that kid, my dad was no different than Officer Galluzzo. Another trigger-happy cop who was quick to assume and even quicker to shoot.</p>
223	<p>In 2012, in the United Kingdom, the number of people (regardless of race) shot and killed by police officers: 1</p> <p>In 2013, in the United Kingdom, the number of times police officers fired guns in the line of duty/the number of people fatally shot: 3/0</p>

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	In the United States, in the seven years period ending in 2012, a white police officer killed a black person nearly two times a week.
244	Oh, so just because Officer Galluzzo's white, everybody's mad now? What about Officer Butler! This kid is the son of a bad cop. Karma is a bitch!
252	"And it isn't just guys who fear the cops, and families with boys. There's a whole movement for the girls too. Hashtag SayHerName. It's big. This is about everyone who fears cops."
253	"Look, if there were people who are scared of the police every day of their lives," Jill said, determined, "I'm going to live in fear of them for at least one day to say that I don't think that's right." ...IF YOU ARE NEUTRAL IN SITUATIONS OF INJUSTICE, YOU HAVE CHOSEN THE SIDE OF THE OPPRESSOR.
255	...because some people had told me racism was a thing of the past, they'd told me not to get involved. But that was nuts. They were nuts. And more to the point— they'd all been white people. Well, guess what? I'm white too—and that's exactly why I was marching. I had to. Because racism was alive and real as shit. It was everywhere and all mixed up in everything, and the only people who said it wasn't, and the only people who said, "Don't talk about it" were white. Well, stop lying. That's what I wanted to tell those people. Stop lying. Stop denying. That's why I was marching. Nothing was going to change unless we did something about it. We! White people! We had to stand up and say something about it too, because otherwise it was just like what one of those posters in the crowd outside school said: OUR SILENCE IS ANOTHER KIND OF VIOLENCE.
256	There were thousands of cops, too, or what might have been cops. They looked more like an army of Robocops- black paramilitary outfits, helmets, automatic rifles. ...With the row of police tanks, like the one I'd seen that morning, and the rank upon rank of infantry, I swear it looked a lot less like Springfield and a lot more like Kabul. ...I could see the black canisters of tear gas in the belt loops of the cops. ...I filmed the tanks, too. I filmed the guys who had their guns raised and aimed toward the marchers.
257	Somebody had a microphone and a PA speaker, and she started reciting the names that I quickly realized were of young, unarmed black men and women who had been killed by the police in the last year. I knew some of the names from the news, but many I didn't. So fucking many.
268	"This is a roll call! Sean Bell!" Then she followed with "Absent again today! Oscar Grant! Absent again today! Rekia Boyd! Absent again today! Ramarley Graham!" She paused, and at that point the rest of us knew exactly what to do. "Absent again today!" "Aiyana Jones!" "Absent again today!" "Freddie Gray!" "Absent again today!"

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	<p>"Michael Brown!" "Absent again today!" "Tamir Rice!" "Absent again today!" "Eric Garner!" "Absent again today!" "Tarika Wilson!" "Absent again today!" And Spoony kept feeding Berry the papers, one after another, as she continued to read down the list of unarmed black people killed by the police.</p>
270	<p>I locked eyes with a kid I didn't know, but felt like I did. A white guy, who I could tell was thinking about those names too. All I wanted to do was see the guy I hadn't seen one week earlier. The guy beneath all the bullshit too many of us see first- especially white guys like me who just haven't worked hard enough to look behind it all.</p>
274	<p>Acknowledgments From Jason Reynolds: First and foremost, I'd like to acknowledge all the men, women, boys, and girls who have lost their lives as a result of police brutality. Your names, though too many for these pages, will always live on in our hearts and minds. Your untimely, unjust deaths will hopefully serve as the cornerstone of change for the growing generation. I'd also like to acknowledge the people of all walks of life, in all professional and social sectors, who have been fighting this fight. The protesters and community activists, the artists, the political allies, the teachers and librarians, the everyday folks who can't quiet the internal screams—we all have a necessary part to play. ALL OF US.</p>
275	<p>From Brendan Kiely: It is one thing to write a novel, but it is another thing to live the life, and I firstly want to acknowledge the families and individuals affected by police brutality. It is my hope that this novel will be a productive voice in the vital public conversation about the many injustices inflicted upon those lived realities. I believe that we need to face honestly the legacy and effects of racism in our country, and that white people like myself— whose privilege is the result of systemic racism— have a particular responsibility to help dismantle it. ...There are many people who have been doing the essential work to foster the conversation about the effects of systemic racism and to deconstruct that system. I'd like to thank in particular the educators and organizers who I've worked with directly and who have inspired me, including the folks involved with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, the Carle Institute, the White Privilege Conference, the Anti-Racist Alliance of Educators, my colleagues at the Calhoun School, and other independent schools and public schools; and teachers, librarians, and friends in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Massachusetts—I love you and thank you and honor the change that you make in the world every day.</p>
285	<p>Firstly, I want to thank all the librarians and educators who support All American Boys and who have championed it and opened conversations about police</p>

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	<p>brutality, race, racism, systemic racism, whiteness, and white privilege in your communities. You all do the tough, frontlines work of engaging young people and nurturing young minds and bodies. Minds matter. Bodies matter. Because there are too many minds and bodies missing. Tamir Rice, Treyvon Martin, Sandra Bland, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray. Some names are familiar, but many are not, because there are many, many, too many, missing today, and they shouldn't be. This is why I say Black Lives Matter, every time I get behind a microphone.</p>
286	<p>As a white, heterosexual, cis-gender, able-bodied man, when I think about the Peace, Brotherhood, and Non-Violent Social Change this award stands for, I try to think about how and when the pieces of my identity stand in the way of those goals.</p> <p>In <i>All American Boys</i>, as in all my work, I especially want to reckon with whiteness, because, as a white person, I can't talk about racism, or the process or desire to dismantle the system that supports it, or eradicate racism itself, without first grappling with whiteness. It is whiteness itself that perpetuates that racism. As Quinn learns in <i>All American Boys</i>, you cannot have an institution that systematically disenfranchises people without also empowering others to systematically benefit from that injustice.</p> <p>...I live in the comfort of the privileged positions of my identity and I want to call people who also live with any of those elements of identity into the space of discomfort, so that together, we might do less harm as white people, as cis-gender heterosexuals, and as able-bodied people. This is my educational mission. This is my artistic, literary mission. To join the revolution against complacency, bigotry, exclusion, and hate; the revolution against injustice.</p> <p>A line of graffiti I saw on a nearly two-thousand-year-old wall in Rome encapsulates it for me: The role of the artist is to make revolution irresistible. Revolution. Action. It does not begin in the street—although it needs to get there. It does not begin in Congress—although it needs to get there. Revolution begins in the heart. And I believe that it is in that beautifully intimate space between a reader and a book, where the spark ignites, the fuse lights, and the flame rises in the heart, where revolution feels irresistible.</p>
287	<p>And so to the organizers of the Black Lives Matter movement that still continues: I am with you in revolution.</p>

Profanity	Count
Ass	42
Bitch	2
Dick	6
Fuck	39
Piss	15
Shit	79