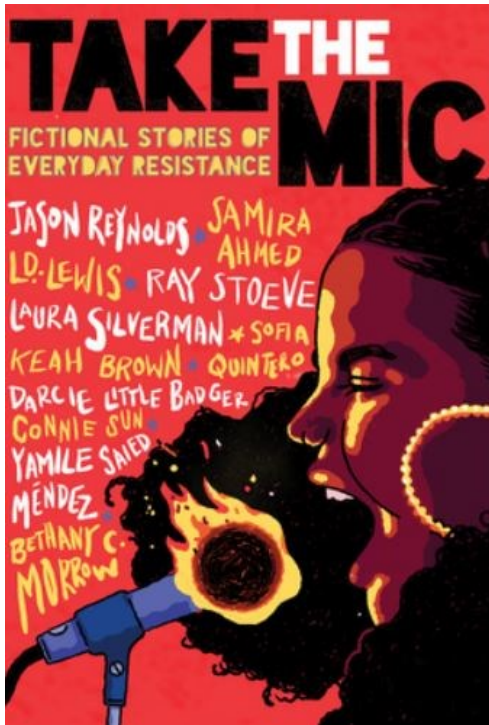


TAKE THE MIC



Young Adult

Edited by Bethany C. Morrow

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Book Summary:

A collection of poems and short stories discussing controversial social and cultural topics.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains controversial racial, religious, cultural, and political commentary; alternate gender ideologies; and profanity.

2 / 5

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

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4	<p>WHEN I WAS FIRST ASKED to write a pitch for an anthology featuring “stories that show the power of resistance against systems of oppression,” I didn’t know what to write. ...But more importantly, as a man with a documented and observable history of bigotry, prejudice, and misogyny was being sworn into the highest office in the land, I felt both hopeless about the unrelenting force of systemic oppression against my people and increasingly convinced that I would not tolerate a single instance more of interpersonal insult. Something about that conviction—and maybe about the fact that I could still feel it—made some part inside me tingle, as if it could potentially come back to life. So I mean it when I say existence, simply continuing to exist in the face of overt, unrelenting oppression, is a form of resistance.</p>
23	<p>White protesters featured so prominently in daytime coverage somehow disappeared from nighttime footage of tear gas deployment, riot gear, the faces of brown strangers contorted in war cries during clashes with police.</p>
35	<p>“Nah, his people came out here and blew all this shit up trying to Make America Great,” said the brown guy. And when his target began frothing at the mouth again, he got louder. “I know it was you! I know it was you ’cause as usual don’t nobody in the neighborhoods that got hit look like y’all.” “See, this is why nobody takes you people seriously,” said the white man, smiling more now and feeling safer. A collective, incredulous “You people?” swept the crowd.</p>
46	<p>Are you the good kind of Muslim? Or the kind that blows stuff up?</p>
47	<p>Are you the good kind of Muslim? This time, the man asking is brown, like you, a trill easily coming to his lips; compliant knees bending effortlessly to bus-stop squat. Not like you, he’s protected by a glass wall, and a badge. And a gun. At the airport, he is the Border. He is the Law. And he can send you to secondary screening. For any reason. For no reason. To be questioned. To be searched. To be handcuffed to the wall.</p>
48	<p>Are you the good kind of Muslim? Or are you the kind that hates us? That we need to ban? We can’t allow you to infest our great nation. ...Not from the orange-faced man on TV debating your right to exist.</p>
53	<p>No one wouldn’t look at Sadie, especially not when she wore her white bikini that covered all it was supposed to cover, but that left nothing for the imagination.</p>
57	<p>Clara’s blue eyes were watery and bloodshot. “They’re disgusting. Looking at us like we’re pieces of ass, like we don’t have feelings. I want to tell the manager or something. In this society, there’s no more room for sexual harassment.”</p>
58	<p>“Nowadays it’s so hard to speak one’s mind without being called out. Everything’s racist! It’s exhausting.”</p>
65	<p>My mom and my sister would be getting posters ready for the pro-immigrant march tomorrow at the Salt Lake City capitol. My mom always said that although we weren’t in danger of deportation, we were still affected by the anti-immigrant sentiment. ...Kids in cages, crying for their parents, was a human rights issue, she said, and until the injustices against them stopped, then no one would be free of blame.</p>

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67	<p>“For your people I guess not,” Tasha said, cutting into the conversation. What did she mean by your people? Immigrants in general? Undocumented immigrants? Latinos? Hispanics like Tasha kept calling anyone who spoke Spanish or had roots south of the Rio Grande?</p>
68	<p>“The thing is,” I said, surprising even myself, “the president’s views against immigrants are offensive—”</p> <p>...Tasha shook her head and said, “No, you’re misinterpreting his words. They’re taken out of context by the fake media. He doesn’t mean immigrants like your mother!” She laughed but the sound chilled me. “He means the illegals. They come to our country and steal our jobs and live off the government. I mean, we need rules, right?”</p> <p>I hated confrontations. I hated having to defend my ideas.</p>
69	<p>Clean Up America meant that the country, with all the undesirable people, was dirty. That even though I passed as white, I too was part of the problem.</p> <p>...Clara laughed and whispered loudly enough for me to hear from outside of the room, “They’re both Mexicans, you know? Their people are attracted to their same kind. I can’t understand how you can have a crush on him, Sadie. I would never ... Besides, he had a rainbow bracelet. I bet he’s gay.”</p>
76	<p>He attaches an article link. Something about an adoption agency in Georgia refusing to let Jewish and Muslim couples adopt children and Congress allowing it. My skin crawls just reading it. What’s wrong with people?</p> <p>...I tweet the article link and caption it: “Congress is trying to ban Jewish and Muslim couples from adopting babies!! #VoteThemOut.”</p>
81	<p>Pepe-Reborn: Can’t get rid of me that easily, K* ke</p> <p>My heart races as I stare at the word, a slur I’ve only heard about in Hebrew School classes.</p>
90	<p>I am alive for now I tried to kill me before they ever could so, now I write like death is sitting on my porch swing and he just invited himself in but I’m not leaving this desk until the story is done</p> <p>I am alive and screaming at the top of my lungs Black Lives Matter nothing about us without us I am a feminist</p>
97	<p>Back on the bus or stealing around the hosting campus or at the top of the stands, behind the lights, in the shadows. I don’t know how spectators and parents aren’t just constantly stumbling onto kids making out. It really wouldn’t be hard.</p>
100	<p>I don’t want to be Ebony, an anonymous Black girl in her mom’s car, joyriding in the middle of a school night; I want to be Ebony, drill down champ, first chair trombone, section leader. I want to be with my bandmates, surrounded. Safe.</p> <p>But Josiah’s here. His hand is squeezing mine, and he’s totally calm.</p> <p>Maybe it’s a good thing.</p> <p>Maybe I won’t be a hashtag.</p> <p>Maybe no one will have to remind people to say my name.</p> <p>Maybe it’s a good thing there’s a white kid in the car with me. I can’t remember a single story of a Black woman or man or kid being shot when they had a white passenger.</p> <p>...My hand’s sweating and Josiah must have noticed by now, but I don’t let go until the officer makes it to my window and motions for me to put it down.</p>
103	<p>And I find myself being grateful for his patience. I’m lucky he hasn’t taken my shakiness for resistance, that he hasn’t taken anything from his holster. I’ve seen videos of people being</p>

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	<p>tased, the way they seize up and convulse. The way they look terrified and the way they go quiet even when they want to scream. I've seen the kind of bruises rubber bullets make, and the way a girl exactly my size is easily body-slammed, or wrestled to the ground when she's dressed for a pool party.</p> <p>He's a good cop, I tell myself so I can open my car door without asking him why. He's one of the good ones.</p>
104	<p>If the officer sees them, he doesn't say anything, and without him asking me to, I get down on my knees because that's what I remember a policeman saying someone should've done to avoid being manhandled or choked.</p> <p>...“Go ahead and lay flat,” the officer tells me, and I hear myself sob while hot tears slide. They slap the pavement next to me when I'm on my stomach.</p> <p>Why is this happening? What did I do wrong? Nothing. Everything's okay.</p> <p>But it can't be, otherwise why am I on the ground?</p>
106	<p>Maybe all I had to do was piss myself to save my life. To turn a grip into a cradle. Maybe all the Black girls I've seen brutalized on camera and then blamed for their own abuse just didn't make themselves pathetic enough.</p>
124	<p>But Deidre replied with several hashtags, #GirlsLikeUs #StickTogether #CISter #ShutHimDown, and already garnered nineteen likes and a string of affirming memes from RuPaul's Drag Race and Pose.</p>
129	<p>One has “Pride” in the name, so it must be gay-related.</p> <p>...Like Big Brothers Big Sisters except I wouldn't have to pick a gender box. That's cool.</p>
130	<p>There's male, female, nonbinary, even a fill in the blank. I've never seen a form with these options before. I check off “nonbinary,” and it feels like letting out a breath I've been holding for years.</p> <p>Ms. Kerry is still smiling at me when I hand back the form, the kind of smile cis people give when they're all excited to witness me being my True Self.</p> <p>...I came out as nonbinary at the beginning of last year, but some people (cough adults cough) still act like it was yesterday, like this is something new and adorable.</p> <p>...My friends don't give a shit; they switched pronouns without a blink.</p> <p>...I'm pretty happy the way I am, but sometimes I think I should do something more. You know, march in a protest, change the way I look. Some people bind, but not me. Not because I don't want to. But binders are too tight, and too warm, and turn my shoulder muscles into what feels like pincushions for invisible, white-hot needles. So yeah. People see my long hair and my chest and think girl.</p>
131	<p>“I bet there's some nonbinary ten-year-old out there who would love a buddy like you.”</p>
134	<p>“He said he'd change the signs by Friday and make them available to students, but he didn't.” She leans over and shows me a photo someone texted her: the single-stall staff bathrooms, still labeled “Men” and “Women.” Under that, “Adults Only.”</p> <p>...As if I'm a representative for all nonbinary people. I don't like using the girls' restroom all the time, but I'm used to it. It's not the worst thing in the world. And most people think I'm a girl anyway. I don't really feel like I have the right to demand an all-gender bathroom. I'm not the kind of person who needs it most.</p> <p>...“Washington State prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender identity. And the school district mandated the availability of alternative restrooms to students. He's breaking the law!”</p>

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	<p>“So call the police.” I’m trying to joke, but she turns her glare on me. “Cops are not our friends,” she says. “I know that. I only suggested it because he’s white,” I say. “Nothing would happen to him.” Soon after their engagement, Mom and David gave me the Talk about police brutality and racism. How my new brothers wouldn’t ever have the same experience I did with cops, and how I needed to think twice anytime I thought police might be helpful to our family. ...“We need all-gender restrooms at this school.”</p>
135	<p>I love when kids say fuck it to gender stereotypes. ...The next line turns my nerves into excitement: You were matched with Xavier because he specifically requested a trans mentor. So he must be trans too. Except, a trans boy, because of the pronouns. Or maybe not. I know a few nonbinary people who use binary pronouns.</p>
137	<p>She looks up at me as we watch him. “I’m just so excited for him. We were hoping that his mentor would be trans, but honestly I’m just happy for him to have anyone in his life from the gay community.” ...Maybe Northwest Pride didn’t tell her. “I’m, uh. I am trans.” ...“Really?!” She looks at me again and does that eye-flick cis people do, where they check out my chest and then my face, like they’re searching for something: evidence, maybe. “I had no idea.” “I’m nonbinary. I was assigned female at birth. My pronouns are they/ them.” ...“They’re nonbinary, sweetie,” Leanne says.</p>
139	<p>There’s even a few girls skating—people I assume are girls, anyway. I know from experience that looks don’t always equal gender. ...“So your mom mentioned you wanted a trans mentor,” I say, because it’s the first thing that comes to mind. He nods. “Can I ask what bathroom you use?” ...“I use the girls’ room,” I say. He wrinkles his nose. “Why?” “Well, I’m nonbinary. The men’s room isn’t comfortable either. And I was socialized as a girl, so I’m just used to it.” He nods.</p>
140	<p>At the door to the girls’, I stop. Usually I’d just push right through the doors, but today I’m angry. Why do I have to choose? Cis people seem to think a sign on a door will keep them safe, but I’m not safer in a gendered bathroom. I’ve seen the looks cis women give me when they think I’m a teenage boy.</p>
141	<p>“You’re such a good ally, Stel, we should make you an Honorary Trans.” ...“So I’m guessing no gender-neutral restrooms yet.” “Nope. So the Queer Alliance is holding a sit-in in the principal’s office next week.” Stella smiles. ...She can hold protests all she wants, but she’ll never understand what it feels like to be trans in a world that wants to erase you.</p>
142	<p>“Mom’s transferring me to a new school next year,” he says. “This one has trans kids like me.” ...“My friends are trying to get gender-neutral restrooms at our school right now,” I say. ...“That’s cool. I don’t want to use a gender-neutral restroom, though. I want to use the boys’ bathroom.” “It’s a good start, though. And then I won’t have to pick.”</p>

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143	I won't be just Parker, that nonbinary kid who no one remembers is nonbinary. I'll be Parker, that nonbinary kid who was at the protest. Who wants gender-neutral restrooms.
144	"How hard is it to change some signs?" another boy pipes up from the back wall. "Here, we printed some up." Stella waves a stack of papers with the All-Gender Restroom logo on them. "The custodian said he could take down the other signs and put these up as soon as you say the word." ..."It is that simple." Stella's on her soapbox. I want to tell Mr. Carter to give in now, while he still has his dignity. "By refusing to change the signs, you are landing on the wrong side of history. Seattle mandated all-gender restroom signage on public single-stall restrooms almost three years ago. And you're breaking our state's anti-discrimination law, which protects transgender students and their bathroom access. There are students at this school who every day feel the consequences of that decision. Kids who don't feel safe in gendered restrooms. Kids who have to choose between one or the other."
146	"You used me as an example. Like I'm just some stand-in for all the poor, oppressed trans kids at school. You pointed me out by name. Carter looked right at me. You never asked me if I wanted to be put on the spot. You just did it. Like you just do everything. Did you ever ask Tristan if he wanted to speak instead of you? Or Lexie?"
147	I've used the gender-neutral restrooms every day since the protest, and every time I feel lighter. ...How even if people are shitty to him about the boys' bathroom, he'll still have an option. Thinking about it makes me feel like I'm part of history, like I made a difference in some way, pushed back against the bullshit. I understand why Stella is so passionate about social change.
159	"Those protesters are assholes," Naomi said. "But what are they protesting?" "The school mascot used to be an Indian brave," she said. ..."Crying about a racist mascot?" Naomi just turned bright red; she seemed to be on the verge of tears. "Are you serious?" the guy asked. "My great-grandmother was Cherokee. The brave isn't racist. It's an honor."
167	"Never question your importance," she said. "Never. You want resistance? Be proud of our people and love yourself. That is the most powerful way to fight the evil of colonialism."

Profanity	Count
Ass	7
Fuck	7
Piss	3
Shit	3