



## Media Review Committee Report May 16, 2024

The CCS Media Review Committee met on Wednesday, April 10, 2024 to review:

***All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by: George M Johnson**

Review Requested by: Ms. Cindy Clark

### **Committee Representatives:**

- District Level Administrator - 1
- Building Level Administrators - 2
- School Librarian - 2
- Teacher - 2
- School Employee within the Boundaries of CCS - 1

### **Process:**

Each member of the committee read *All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by: George M Johnson, in its entirety. Prior to the meeting, the committee members were provided with copies of School Board Policy 5522, and Administrative Guidelines, 5522.

Committee members were asked to pay close attention to the definitions of *Obscene matter or performance and Matter or performance harmful to minors*, as outlined in Indiana Code 20-26-5.5, 35-49-2-1 and 35-49-2-2.

The committee members received a copy of the completed Request for Review Form so that they could consider the portions of the book that were defined in the request from the community patron..

The following information was provided:

- **Title:** *All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by: George M Johnson
- **Location within CCS:** (1) Copy within Carmel Clay High School Library
- **Date of Publication:** 2020
- **Date Book was Acquired by CCS:** 2023
- **Last Student Check-out Date:** No Student Check-outs as of April 10, 2024
- **Intended Grade level Span:** 16 years + or Grades 10-12
- **Summary of Text:** In a series of personal essays, prominent journalist and LGBTQIA+ activist George M. Johnson's *All Boys Aren't Blue* explores his childhood, adolescence, and college years in New Jersey and Virginia.

## **Professional review:**

A critical, captivating, merciful mirror for growing up Black and queer today. (Memoir. 14-adult)

Centers the experiences, desires, and agency of a queer Black boy navigating his evolving selfhood and the challenges of society's conditional love for his truthful existence. Queer Black existence has been here forever, and yet rarely has that experience been spotlighted within literature aimed at Black boyhood. This is the context in which this "memoir-manifesto" begins, as Johnson, a still relatively young 33-year-old journalist and activist, debuts his unfolding life story within a vacuum of representation. These stories wrestle with "joy and pain...triumph and tragedy" across many heavy topics—gender policing, sexual abuse, institutional violence—but with a view to freedom on the horizon.

Through the witnessing of Johnson's intimate accounts, beginning with his middle-class New Jersey childhood and continuing through his attendance at a historically Black university in Virginia, readers are invited on their own paths to healing, self-care, and living one's truth. Those who see themselves outside the standpoint of being Black and queer are called in toward accountability, clarifying an understanding of the history, language, and actions needed to transform the world—not in pity for the oppressed but in the liberation of themselves. This title opens new doors, as the author insists that we don't have to anchor stories such as his to tragic ends: "Many of us are still here. Still living and waiting for our stories to be told—to tell them ourselves." ~**Kirkus Reviews**

*"All Boys Aren't Blue". Kirkus Reviews. 2020-01-23. Archived from the original on 2020-01-23. Retrieved 2024-04-11.*

## **Awards:**

- A *New York Times* Bestseller
- ALA's Rainbow List
- YALSA's Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults
- Goodreads Choice Award for Memoir & Autobiography
- Outstanding Books for the College Bound: Literature and Language Arts
- 2021 Texas Topaz Nonfiction Reading List
- Good Morning America, NBC Nightly News, Today Show, and MSNBC feature stories

## **Summary of Review Meeting:**

Participants were asked to provide feedback on how the book did or did not meet any criteria for the definitions listed below. Additionally, members were asked to discuss the book as a whole. Committee members were then asked to fill out an anonymous review form that asked the following information:

**In your professional opinion, does this book meet the definition of:**

**35-49-2-1 Obscene matter or performance**

**A matter or performance is obscene for purposes of this article if:**

- the average person, applying contemporary community standards, finds that the dominant theme of the matter or performance, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest in sex;
- the matter or performance depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct; *and*

- the matter or performance, taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

### **35-49-2-2 Matter or performance harmful to minors**

#### **A matter or performance is harmful to minors for purposes of this article if:**

- it describes or represents, in any form, nudity, sexual conduct, sexual excitement, or sado-masochistic abuse;
- considered as a whole, it appeals to the prurient interest in sex of minors;
- it is patently offensive to prevailing standards in the adult community as a whole with respect to what is suitable matter for or performance before minors; *and*
- considered as a whole, it lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value for minors.

After considering the definitions of ***Obscene matter or performance*** and **Matter or performance harmful to minors**, this reviewed title should:

1. remain on the shelf, in its current location.
2. be moved to a media center within a different grade level span.
3. be moved to a different location within the school. (i.e. the counseling department)
4. be considered for removal from the K-12 school library.

If this book were to be considered for removal, please list reasons for such consideration:

#### **Feedback Summary:**

**Overarching Recommendation:** Remain on the shelf, in its current location.

#### **Committee Discussion Comments:**

- **Title has both literary and political value**
- **Literary value is presented throughout the book, specifically within the author's notes**
- **Has the potential to save lives**
- **Book tells a life story - a memoir**
- **Story of trauma, survival, forgiveness**
- **Represents a marginalized group**

#### **Committee Report Narrative:**

"This memoir weaves together stories with authenticity, vulnerability, and hope as the author describes important moments in identity construction from childhood to adulthood. Among many other characteristics and identifiers explored in the memoir, Johnson has shared his personal experiences as a teen who is African American, the son of a police officer, and someone who

identifies as queer. He also discusses his feelings of loneliness in a loving family, and what it feels like to be a victim.”

“We acknowledge that there are some very difficult sexual scenes in the book, but do not feel that it meets the definition of obscene or harmful to minors listed under Indiana Code 20-26-5.5, 35-49-2-1 and 35-49-2-2. These scenes are not gratuitous or prurient in nature. Although there is sexual activity and sexual abuse, it does not detract from the affirming themes and messages in the book that you are not alone and you should not assume guilt as a victim of abuse. When taken as a whole, this memoir offers readers positive messages in the face of the difficulties of life that stem from identifying as Black and queer, as well as a victim of sexual abuse.”