



October 2, 2023

We received your Request for Reconsideration regarding the book *All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto* by George M. Johnson. We have owned this title since March 2022, and it has been checked out 17 times. We reviewed it and have decided to retain it in the Young Adult Biography section.

According to our book vendor, this book's intended audience is teens ages 15-18, grades 10-12. The publisher recommends it for ages 14-18 and grades 9-12. It contains content and themes relevant to and written for teenagers. The Author's Note at the beginning of the book does outline the difficult topics discussed, but states:

*But the truth of the matter is, these things happened to me when I was a child, teenager, and young adult. So as heavy as these subjects may be, it is necessary that they are not only told, but also read by teens who may have to navigate many of these same experiences in their own lives.*

The online catalog includes details about the content in this book, and it also received positive reviews from publications like *Publishers Weekly* and *School Library Journal* (excerpts below).

Some individuals may find the content of this book uncomfortable and parts of it objectionable, but the book is a well-reviewed work, popular in our collection, and located where one would expect to find it. The book is about the author's own experiences as a teenager. There are community members who are represented in these pages and others who are interested in learning about the experiences and viewpoints of people different from them.

While this book was removed from one local high school, schools have a different mission, governance, and level of direct parental involvement. The Christian County Library makes every effort to provide a broad selection of materials to meet the needs of diverse audiences, and we rely on parents and guardians to determine what is or is not suitable for their own households.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions or concerns.

Sincerely,  
Renee Brumett, Executive Director  
Christian County Library



### **Review Excerpts:**

Publishers Weekly, April 2020

*Billed as a “memoir-manifesto,” Johnson’s debut is a collection of heartfelt personal essays revolving around themes of identity and family. Growing up black and queer in New Jersey and Virginia, Johnson feels a tension between these two identities, even before he’s fully conceptualized what makes him stand out from others in his close-knit family. The loving Elder/Johnson clan, led by witty matriarch Nanny (whose take on familial loyalty and intimacy is “You might have to wipe my ass one day”), includes Johnson’s cousin Hope, a trans woman who models pride and self-determination. Johnson makes impassioned declarations about the importance of community and inclusive sex education, and the freedom to define oneself outside of society’s conditioning. Though at first glance the book lacks the synthesizing call to action that “manifesto” would imply, its “be yourself” message remains a radical stance for doubly marginalized individuals. Johnson’s writing is a stylistic hodgepodge of anecdotes (“story time,” he periodically declares) and letters to relatives. In a publishing landscape in need of queer black voices, readers who are sorting through similar concepts will be grateful to join him on the journey. 14–up.*

School Library Journal, May 2020

*Gr 9 Up—Journalist and activist Johnson takes readers through his life from childhood through young adulthood, reflecting on how his identity as a queer Black boy was shaped, refracted, and often suppressed for his own safety. Growing up in New Jersey, Johnson recounts becoming aware of his “difference” and how it necessitated choices between who he was and who he felt pressured to be. Part memoir and part manifesto, the text infuses personal reflections with observations about white supremacy, toxic masculinity, homophobia, and how these concepts affected him, whether as a boy forced to choose football over double dutch at recess or as a fraternity pledge struggling to come out on campus. Separated into acts, the book describes different members of his community (family, teenagers, friends)—a stylistic demonstration of his valuable support system that occasionally makes the narrative choppy. Still, the various tangents don’t detract from the book’s power, and the conversational tone will leave readers feeling like they are sitting with an insightful friend. There are a few detailed depictions of sexual situations and an incident of sexual abuse by a family member. Johnson handles the painful, complicated feelings around this experience with an honesty and tone appropriate for the intended audience. VERDICT This young adult memoir is a contemporary hallmark of the blossoming genre. Johnson anchors the text with encouragement and realistic guidance for queer Black youth. Recommended for YA nonfiction collections where autobiographical and social justice titles are popular.*