

NEWS & TRENDS

# The Black Boy Book Club Creates a Safe Space for Black Parents and Their Sons to Read

Yasmine Parrish, a Black mom of a 3-year-old boy, was inspired to create a book club that would serve as a safe space and community for Black boys.

By [Maressa Brown](#) | Updated on January 18, 2022



As protests against this country's centuries-old racial injustices reach a fever pitch, Black parents are sharing their pain in a variety of ways, from taking to the streets to [writing and producing powerful videos](#). For Yasmine Parrish, a Los Angeles-based Black mom of a 3-year-old boy named Amir, contributing to the fight against racism meant creating [The Black Boy Book Club](#).

"I was reading to my son on Memorial Day weekend on our balcony," says Parrish. "I was reading [The Word Collector](#) by Peter H. Reynolds, which has a Black boy protagonist, and [Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black Boy](#) by Tony Medina. I put it on my Instagram story and said, 'Maybe I should start a book club for Black boys.'"

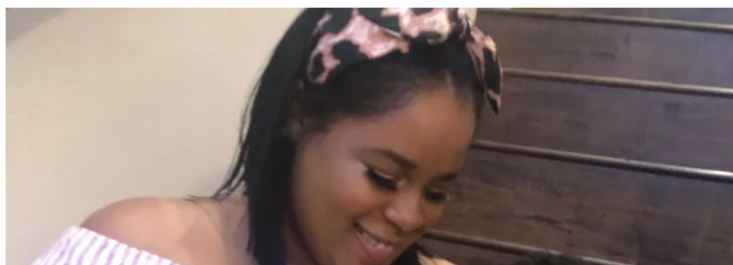




PHOTO: PHOTO COURTESY OF YASMINE PARRISH

Immediately, friends responded with words of encouragement. Then, Parrish remembered that her younger brother, who she notes is currently preparing to take the MCAT, was in a book club for Black boys as a child, which strengthened her resolve.

"I made the Instagram page go live within an hour," explains Parrish. "Like many people, I have a bad habit of sitting on my ideas, but I thought, this is something I can't wait for. This is what our Black boys need, and I need to make it go live."

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Parrish figured she would start with the Instagram page and hope that parents and kids would join her. And a little more than two weeks later, the club has members all over the U.S., aged 2 months to 14 years old—one even lives in the U.K. The Instagram page has already grown to more than 800 followers, and there's a [Facebook page](#) as well.



PHOTO: PHOTO COURTESY YASMINE PARRISH

The club has had two virtual meetings so far, during which children and their parents go around and introduce themselves, talk about current events, and read the story of the week. The first week, Parrish and Amir read *The Word Collector* to the group, and the second week, a member from Atlanta read *Black Boy Joy* by Charlitta Crowder Hatch. Parrish is also sharing weekly features on social media that highlight Black boys reading.

Fostering Black boys' love of reading can lead to learning, growth, and inspiration now and in the future, notes Parrish. "So many times, Black boys specifically get pigeonholed into being athletic or being musical, very physical, entertainment-based activities," she says. "And no matter a child's athletic ability, no matter what his interests are, reading is something that is

available and can inspire everyone."

Parrish is excited about additional developments coming down the pipeline, like doing socially distanced meet-ups in person or inviting authors to guest star at meetings or on an Instagram Live storytime. But for now, she's focused on creating and cultivating a true community for Black parents and their sons.

PHOTO: PHOTO COURTESY OF YASMINE PARRISH

"It has been humbling to see the response we've gotten, and it's also the indicator that people have been wanting something like this, and there's a real appetite to have a community space like this," she notes.

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The need for safe places for Black boys and their parents clearly stems from perpetually having to face racial injustice and white supremacy. "All of the nation is seeing Black men getting murdered in the streets and Black men getting harassed in parks, for simply living and existing, and there seems to be this irrational fear around Black people and Black men specifically," says Parrish. "Since the day Amir was born, there's been all of this attention from people who say how adorable he is. But as a Black mother, I can't help but wonder if these same people will be fearful of him. At what point does my cute little boy become this menacing figure of your imagination?"



[View this post on Instagram](#)

She continues, "The pain and suffering and the trauma we've all had to endure simply by turning on the TV has made us create refuges for ourselves and our community to make sure our kids have safe space."

Given how quickly The Black Boy Book Club has taken off, it's only a matter of time before Parrish's dream of providing Black boys everywhere with a safe space and sense of community through local chapters becomes a reality. As Parrish sees it, "There is revolution in protesting, there is revolution in donating, in speaking out, and posting on social media, but there is also a revolution in reading and literacy and imagination and joy."

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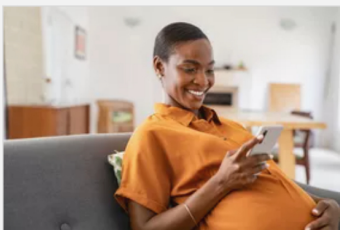


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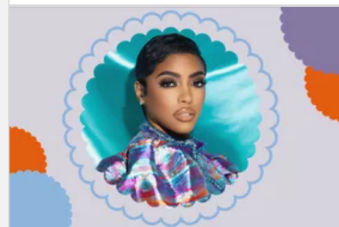
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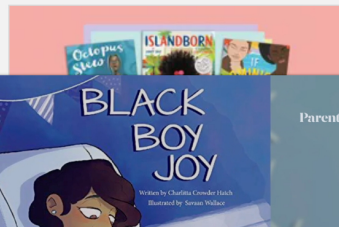
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