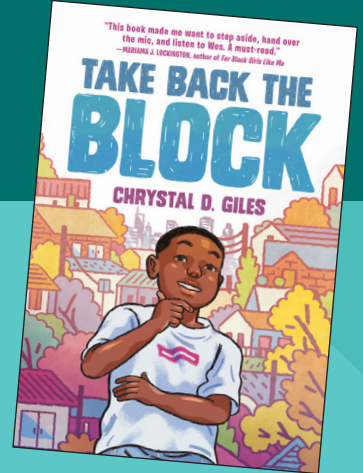


# READING BANNED & CHALLENGED BOOKS

## TAKE BACK THE BLOCK BY CHRYSTAL D. GILES

Chrystal D. Giles's timely debut explores community, social justice, family, and friendship, and asks what it means to belong—to a place and a movement—and to fight for a cause that you believe in.



- Discuss the difference between a neighborhood and a community. How is Kensington Oaks both a neighborhood and a community? Explain the following simile: "Entering Kensington Oaks is like being hugged by a grove of oak trees and sunshine." (p. 6) How does this describe Wes's feelings toward his community?
- Describe Wes's parents' role in preserving the community? What is the role of the Community Board of Organizers? Chart their concerns and solutions for Kensington Oaks.
- Define *activism*. Wes's mother is an activist. What are some of the causes she supports? Explain why she involves Wes in some of the marches and protests. What does Wes learn from these experiences?
- Describe the friendship between Wes, Brent, Alyssa, Jas, and Kari. Explain why Wes calls the friends his crew. Why doesn't Wes invite Kari to his birthday party? Does Wes feel guilty for excluding him? What is his explanation to Kari? Discuss Kari's response.
- Explain what Wes means when he says, "I don't know how to be [Kari's] friend anymore." (p. 20) How do Wes's parents help him understand why his friendship is important to Kari? Wes and his father take Kari home and discover that Kari's family lives in a hotel. Why do you think Wes's father tells him, "What you saw tonight stays between us. It's no one else's business"? (p. 30)
- At one time Mya was a member of the crew. Explain why she no longer fits in. What is Mya's new life like? Some members of the crew are envious of her life. Debate whether she enjoys their envy.
- What is black pride? At what point does Wes gain a full understanding of the term? How does he model black pride by the end of the novel?



- Discuss the threat from big business to Kensington Oaks. How does this threat give Wes an idea for his social studies project? What is the premise of Byron Baker’s article “Is Gentrification the New Segregation?”? Who is Ms. Monica Greene? What is her role in Wes’s fight for his community?
- Wes and Kari are helping the community clean up after an event when a white policeman stops them. Why does the cop let Wes go but takes Kari to the station? How is the policeman wrong? Wes and his father go to the station to get Kari. Explain the advice that Wes’s father gives to Kari regarding his rights. How does Kari find his voice and speak up for himself?
- Kari doesn’t feel he belongs anywhere. How does Wes help him understand where he really belongs?
- What does *social justice* mean? Describe the issues related to social justice in this novel. Many politicians are opposed to discussions of social justice topics in books for children and teens. What are these political leaders afraid of?
- Some people want this book removed from libraries because they don’t want children to read about any negative actions of police officers. Consider recent acts of police brutality in this nation. Why is it important for young readers to be aware of such actions? How might this book give the young courage to speak about police brutality and other social justice issues?

**Guide written by Pat Scales, children’s literature consultant**

