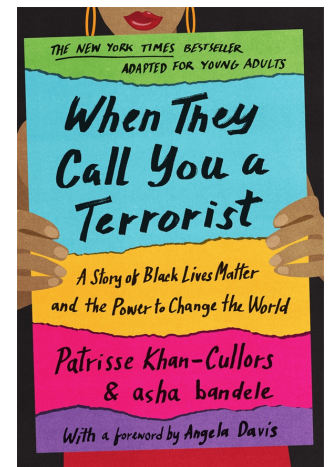


When They Call You a Terrorist A Story of Black Lives Matter and the Power to Change the World

by **Patrisse Khan-Cullors and asha bandele**

Educator's Guide for the Young Adult edition



To the Teacher:

Patrisse Khan-Cullors, with Alicia Garza and Opal Tometi, founded the long simmering, urgently necessary #BlackLivesMatter in response to the astonishing acquittal of Trayvon Martin's murderer. Now a global organization, ever rapidly expanding in size and scope, Black Lives Matter is one of the most powerful and inclusive social movements of the 21st century. WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST: A STORY OF BLACK LIVES MATTER AND THE POWER TO CHANGE THE WORLD charts Patrisse Khan-Cullors's formative years and struggles before Black Lives Matter, illuminating, with her compelling and hauntingly direct but lyrical voice, her experience with the prejudice and persecution that Black Americans endure at the hands of law enforcement, and revealing the forces that inspired her bold and impassioned activism.

This young adult adaptation of Cullors's memoir follows the trajectory of a young American confronted by profound, unapologetic injustice; it displays her ferocious strength and determination, in spite of the odds stacked against her, to mobilize herself and the people around her towards change. With the addition of her eloquent coming-of-age journal entries and personal photos documenting her life, and a foreword by Angela Davis, WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST (the YA edition) chronicles Cullor's childhood in Van Nuys, a neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley of Los Angeles County, California. With her extraordinary vision, sensitivity, and courageous honesty, she expresses her love for her family and friends; for her cherished, mentally ill brother, so tragically misunderstood and mistreated by the brutal system, and the father who set her apart from her siblings—both incarcerated at different points in her life. This book is equally a story about growing up during the drug epidemic of the 1980s and '90s, the ways homophobia divides a family, the joys of working in a beloved community, and the deficiencies of our broken mental health care complex—all of which fueled her passion and pressing call to organize.

A meaningful, empowering account of survival, strength, and resilience, WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST is an inspiration, a wake-up siren, an indispensable clarion call for young people everywhere. It is a modern classic, imperative reading, which captures the evolution of a contemporary leader, whose commitment to civil disobedience to usher in human rights and the unprecedented expectation of justice for Americans of color, is a portrait in heroism and history.

About this Guide:

This teacher's guide is divided into two sections. The first, "Guided Reading Questions," will help students with standard literacy and literary appreciation. These questions can be used as a guide for annotating the text, journal responses, or classroom discussion. The second section, "Writing and Research Prompts," consists of analytical writing and research prompts and is subdivided into genres based on the Common Core Writing standards. Teachers will be able to incorporate the argumentation prompts into Socratic seminars or class debates if they wish to focus on Speaking and Listening standards.

The questions and activities in this teaching guide were written to support standards-based instruction. *When They Call You a Terrorist* meets the standard for Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity for 9th to 12th grade education. This guide is most aligned with the Common Core State Standard (CCSS) at the 11th to 12th grade level, but it can be easily adapted for the 9th to 10th grade CCSS.

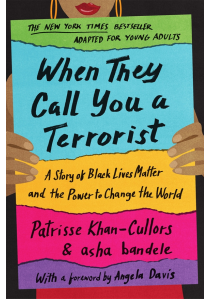
A complete list of the Common Core State Standards can be found at <http://www.corestandards.org/read-the-standards/>

Guided Reading Questions:

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.10)

Chapter 1. Community, interrupted

1. How is the term "terrorist" used against Patrisse Khan-Cullors and the Black Lives Matter movement? What are the effects of using this label and this rhetoric?
2. What was life like for Cullors growing up in Van Nuys? Describe what was joyful, and what was difficult about that life.
3. What happened to Cullors's brothers, Paul and Monte, when they were teenagers? How did these events impact the family? How did bearing witness to these events impact Cullors? Define what "bearing witness" means to you.
4. This chapter opens with a quote from John Ehrlichman, President Richard Nixon's National Domestic Policy Chief. Explain the significance of this quote. How does it relate to this first chapter?



Guided Reading Questions cont.

Chapter 2. Twelve

1. What are the differences between Millikan, the predominately white school Cullors attends, and Cullors's previous schools? What is the significance of these differences?
2. Cullors is twelve years old in this chapter. What is her relationship to the police at this age?
3. What is the significance of Cullors's observation that while Black and white girls "behave in the same or very similar ways, we are almost never punished similarly" (27)?

Chapter 3. Bloodlines

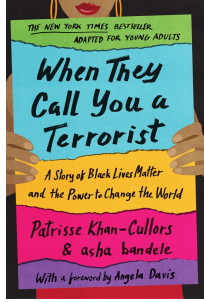
1. From the beginning of the book, Cullors describes herself as an outsider. How does meeting Gabriel change how she understands herself? Does she still feel like an outsider?
2. What is Cullors's response to hearing about Gabriel's incarceration?

Chapter 4. Magnitude and Bond

1. How does Gabriel's incarceration impact Cullors's relationship with her family, both extended and immediate?
2. Cullors identifies several societal reasons for the struggles her family faces. What are those reasons? How is that illustrated by the dinner with Tiffany's family?
3. What is the ACLU? What is a gang injunction? Why does Cullors, and other civil rights activists, see gang injunctions as a problem?
4. At 19, Monte is arrested for attempted robbery. Explain the circumstances of his arrest, including his eventual diagnosis.
5. How does the prison system in the U.S. treat incarcerated people in need of mental health treatment?

Chapter 5. Witness

1. How do the practices of the Jehovah's Witnesses impact Cullors and her family?
2. Discuss the role of religion in Cullors's household. What does Cullors think about her mother's reinstatement?



Guided Reading Questions cont.

Chapter 6. Out in the World

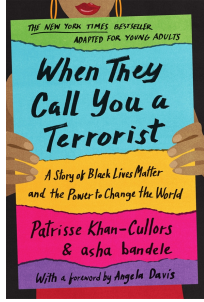
1. Why does Cullors end up leaving home?
2. How does being queer expand Cullors's understanding of family?
3. Choose one of the characters in this chapter and explain the impact of homophobia on their lives.

Chapter 7. All the Bones We Could Find

1. What kind of political activism does Cullors take up after high school?
2. How does Cullors manage her relationship with her father differently as an adult?
3. Using evidence from the text, explain what Cullors means by the assertion that the politics of personal responsibility are "mostly a lie meant to keep us from challenging real-world legislative decisions" (95).
4. What does Cullors mean when she says: "if my father could not be possible in this America, then how is it that such a thing as America can ever be possible?" (107).

Chapter 8. Zero Dark Thirty: The Remix

1. When Monte comes home, "he wanted nothing more than to be a self-sufficient man in the world" (112). Describe what prevents this from happening.
2. What was Cullors's experience at Monte's hearing? How does she use this experience to take action?
3. Using Monte's hearing, incarceration, trial, and release as an example, describe what responsibilities families of incarcerated people have towards their incarcerated loved ones. How does the community support him?



Guided Reading Questions cont.

Chapter 9. No Ordinary Love

1. Explain the significance of the Spike Lee film Bamboozled to Cullors's political development.
2. Using evidence from the text, explain Cullors's assertion that: "Harm to white people, especially resourced white people, and the behaviors they engage in as a result, is framed sympathetically. Harm to us, more widespread, more embedded, more permanent, is framed as our own doing" (140).
3. What do Cullors and Mark Anthony discuss at Tanya's house? What moves her to begin a relationship with him?

Chapter 10. Dignity and Power. Now

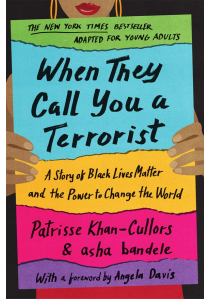
1. What did Cullors learn about the treatment Monte experienced in the LA County Jail by reading the report issued by the ACLU of Southern California?
2. What was Cullors's reaction to the report? Why do you think she chose to make an art piece about it?
3. What motivates Cullors to found Dignity and Power Now?

Chapter 11. Black Lives Matter

1. Using evidence from the text, explain what Cullors means when she says she believes "punishment was the wrong interrupter" (180) for the young Black people she works with.
2. How does Cullors respond when she hears about George Zimmerman's acquittal? How did this serve to inspire #BlackLivesMatter?

Chapter 12. Raid

1. What is St. Elmo's Village?
2. Cullors describes her feelings listening to helicopters above her home in vivid detail. What are her feelings, and using evidence from the text, explain why the helicopters lead her to feel this way.
3. How do the LAPD target Cullors and her community in the early stages of Black Lives Matter?



Guided Reading Questions cont.

Chapter 13. A Call, a Response

1. How was Black Lives Matter founded? What was the original purpose of the movement? What is it fighting against, and what is it advocating for?
2. Why does Black Lives Matter-Los Angeles choose Beverly Hills as the site of the first protest?
3. How does the murder of Mike Brown change the Black Lives Matter movement?
4. What is asset forfeiture? According to Cullors, how does it contribute to systematic racism?

Chapter 14. #sayhername

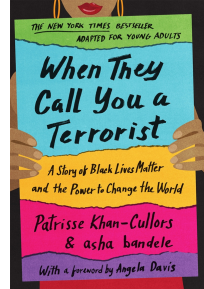
1. What is the impact of Cullors's experience in Ferguson?
2. Why was it important for Black Trans women to be in leadership roles in Black Lives Matter?
3. Why is visibility important for Cullors, Opal Tometi, and Alicia Garza when discussing how they co-founded Black Lives Matter?
4. Describe the significance of holding a healing justice space in Ferguson.
5. Who founded the hashtag #SayHerName and what does it convey?
6. Using evidence from the text, explain why Black Lives Matter organizers chose to shut down the presidential candidates' forum.

Chapter 15. Black Futures

1. How does pregnancy change Cullors's life?
2. What prevents Future from joining Cullors in Los Angeles?

Chapter 16. When They Call You A Terrorist

1. Using evidence from the text, explain why marijuana decriminalization is a racial justice issue.
2. What was Cullors's reaction to the election of Donald Trump? What is her political analysis?
3. How does Cullors and the Black Lives Matter movement as a whole work against the harm caused by the Trump administration?



EXPLANATORY/INFORMATIONAL PROMPTS:

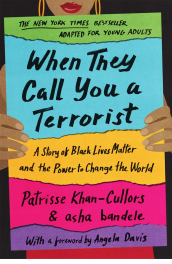
Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2 [a-f])

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4)

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.5.)

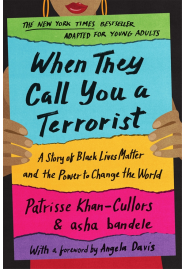
Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9)

1. Using evidence from the text, explain Cullors’s argument that the “only response we have for poor people who are mentally ill is criminalization.” What does the word “criminalization” mean? What are some of the ways Monte experiences criminalization?
2. Consider the most significant relationships in Cullors’s life. What do those relationships have in common?
3. At various points in the memoir, Cullors describes religious oppression at the hands of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Yet, she also describes various religious practices that provide power, comfort, and healing. Compare and contrast these practices—where and how does religious practice limit Cullors, and where and how does religion and religious practice complement Cullors’s political activism?
4. For much of WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST, Cullors fights to keep her brother, Monte Cullors, out of prison. Research California’s Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (the Three Strikes law) and explain the impact of that policy on prison populations, as well as on Monte’s life.



EXPLANATORY/INFORMATIONAL PROMPTS CONT.:

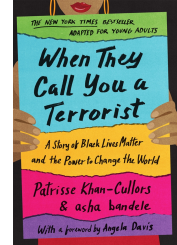
5. As a society, we tend to think of incarceration as something that impacts individual people who have done wrong. Using *WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST*, explain how incarceration impacts the families of incarcerated people, not just the individual person. Does taking that impact into account change how you think about incarceration? If so, how?
6. Policing, surveillance and incarceration are three separate but interrelated systems that impact the lives of Black people. Using one of the stories in *WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST*, explain these three systems and their relationships.
7. Research the work and current campaigns of Dignity and Power Now, the organization Cullors founded. What is the need for this organization, and what are some of its most notable achievements?
8. Cullors names food insecurity as an element of her childhood, and refers to, with gratitude, the Black Panther Party's Free Breakfast Program. Research the Free Breakfast Program and explain the motivations behind it. Why was free breakfast a part of the Black Power movement?
9. How does Cullors's chosen family support her at various points throughout the memoir? What is the relationship between chosen family and birth family in the book?
10. Research the ways accusations of terrorism have been used against Black activists in the United States. In what ways are these accusations similar or different to the accusations levelled against the leaders of Black Lives Matter movement?
11. Cullors notes that birthing her child was difficult, and that she didn't receive enough pain medication during the aftermath. Research Black maternal mortality and its relationship to the medical treatment of Black pain. How does racism impact the medical treatment of Black women?
12. Throughout the book, Cullors voices how treatment for Monte's mental health was nearly impossible to access. Research the US mental health system and note what options are available for someone in Monte's position.
13. Choose one of the people Cullors quotes in the beginning of each chapter. Who is that person, and how does their work relate to the themes of this book?
14. One of the slogans of the feminist movement is that "the personal is political." How does this slogan describe Cullors's journey?



ARGUMENTATION PROMPTS:

Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence. (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 [a-e])

1. Police procedurals are an extremely popular genre for television shows. Choose one popular representation of the police, and analyze how the police are portrayed. What role do police play? Does *WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST* contradict or affirm that portrayal? How so?
2. Cullors was born in 1983 in Los Angeles, when President Ronald Reagan expanded the War on Drugs. What was the War on Drugs, and how did it impact Black communities in the United States? What would have been a more effective drug policy?
3. Throughout the memoir, Cullors relies on and organizes her community to change unfair systems. Identify an issue that you care about, and write a persuasive letter to a friend or family member, convincing them to join you in advocating for this issue.
4. In theory, incarceration is a way to rehabilitate people who have done harm. Choose someone from the book and explain the impact of incarceration on them. Were they rehabilitated? Why or why not? What alternative to incarceration could have helped them?
5. Research the early days of the Civil Rights movement. How is the Black Lives Matter movement different from the Civil Rights movement? How is it a continuation of the Civil Rights movement?
6. In their late teens, Cullors and her friends lived in cars or on people's couches, until they ended up in a former teacher's home. What are the causes of queer youth homelessness? What social changes do you think could create new alternatives and provide additional services for queer youth, especially Black queer youth?
7. The definition of terrorism is one of the major themes of the book. At one point, Cullors says "that Abu Ghraib was first practiced on this soil, in this America" (150). Research Abu Ghraib and its role in the War on Terror. Do you agree with Cullors's assertion? Why or why not?
8. Research the idea of the "hero's journey" as a way to analyze stories. How does Cullors's story fit the "hero's journey," and how does her story contradict that idea?
9. What does the word "intersectionality" mean? How is *WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST* an example of intersectionality?
10. Research a social movement that created change. What makes a social movement effective?



ARGUMENTATION PROMPTS CONT.:

11. Research the economic motivations for keeping our current prison system unchanged, and the role of prison labor in particular. How might we create a different system?
12. As Black Lives Matter developed, many in the media or in counter-protests responded with “All Lives Matter.” Write an open letter responding to the use of “All Lives Matter” in those contexts, using *WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST* as evidence for your assertions.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY:

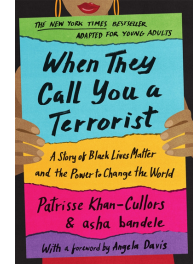
“In our work and in our living, we must recognize that difference is a reason for celebration and growth, rather than a reason for destruction.”—Audre Lorde

Young people are at the forefront of social and political activism, and there is an abundance of ancillary resources available for those with an eagerness to learn and expand their knowledge of the major themes covered in *WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST*. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but one that will hopefully ignite and develop an activist spirit within your student(s).

A simple Google search of Black Lives Matter will bring to light the recent incidents of racially motivated violence against Black people and the protests and civil unrest that continue to impact our society. Teen Vogue’s Kids Incarcerated series gathers stories on youth incarceration in the United States. Rachel Anspach’s specific installment, “Disabled Youth Are More at Risk of Being Incarcerated,” poignantly addresses the criminalization of students with disabilities.

The following books—a provocative combination of required reading and newly published titles—are excellent starting points for students wishing to discuss and/or debate these urgent topics:

THE SUN DOES SHINE by Anthony Ray Hinton and Laura Love; *HOW WE GET FREE* edited by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor; *LOCKING UP OUR OWN*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize, by James Forman Jr.; *WE ARE NOT YET EQUAL* by Carol Anderson with Tonya Bolden; *STAMPED* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi; *HOW I RESIST* edited by Maureen Johnson; *HOPE NATION* edited by Rose Brock; *JUST MERCY* by Bryan Stevenson; *BETWEEN THE WORLD AND ME* by Ta-Nehisi Coates; *THE NEW JIM CROW* by Michelle Alexander; *ANGELA DAVIS: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY* and *ARE PRISONS OBSOLETE?* by Angela Davis; *THE FIRE THIS TIME* edited by Jesmyn Ward; *STRIDE TOWARD FREEDOM* by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; *ZAMI: A NEW SPELLING OF MY NAME* by Audre Lorde; *ELLA BAKER AND THE BLACK FREEDOM MOVEMENT* by Barbara Ransby; *ASSATA* by Assata Shakur; *ON THE OTHER SIDE OF FREEDOM* by DeRay Mckesson; *HOOD FEMINISM* by Mikki Kendall; *THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE REAL ME* by the Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop; and *HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST* by Ibram X. Kendi.



The following links will provide additional resources and help contextualize the themes discussed in WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST. They also include engaging and thought-provoking visual materials for further classroom learning and development:

- Black Lives Matter, <https://blacklivesmatter.com/>
 - Dignity and Power Now, <http://dignityandpowernow.org/>
 - Rise for Youth, <https://www.riseforyouth.org/resources/>
 - Kenneth Paul Rosenberg, M.D. Bedlam: A Documentary, PBS, Independent Lens
 - Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, Opal Tometi, “An interview with the founders of Black Lives Matter,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbicAmaXYtM>
 - Kimberle Crenshaw, “The Urgency of Intersectionality,” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=akOe5-UsQ2o>
 - Vox, “The school-to-prison pipeline, explained.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HoKkasEyDOI>.
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Praise for WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST (Young Adult Edition):

“WHEN THEY CALL YOU A TERRORIST is a hybrid manifesto for youth organizing and an intimate memoir of Cullors’s coming of age in southern California in the 1980s and 1990s.”—

Teen Vogue

“This memoir is a reflection on humanity, lauded as an empowering account of survival, strength, and resilience, and is the kind of call to action we need now more than ever.”—**Kelly Jensen, Book Riot**

“This book is more than the origin story of BLM and more than Khan-Cullors’s revolutionary journey. She creates space for difficult thoughts and conversations to begin.”—**School Library Journal**

About this Guide’s Author:

Tallie Ben Daniel holds a Ph.D. in Cultural Studies from the University of California, Davis and a B.A. in Feminist Studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz. She is currently the Director of Special Projects at Jewish Voice for Peace.