



Episode 118: Read Black Authors, Not
Wheel of Time

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(theme song by Glynna MacKenzie plays)

Emily: I wonder if I'll -- I might take out the disclaimer and just do the theme song, since it's --

Sally: I think that's good.

Emily: Not really applicable.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Hello, everyone. Uh, this is Everybody Hates Rand. It's a Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: And, uh, due to recent events surrounding the murders of, um, George Floyd, uh, Breonna Taylor --

Sally: Mm-hmm, Breonna Taylor.

Emily: Uh, and others, we are choosing to forgo our usual Wheel of Time-related content this week. It feels, uh, pretty disrespectful considering that the Wheel of Time is not a racially sensitive text in the slightest.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, we've talked about this before, but the Black characters represented in Wheel of Time are limited to a single main character who is, in fact, the leader of a fascist government that, uh, endorses human slavery --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, and a few other, mostly unnamed characters, like the Sea Folk, who don't have any large bearing on the story and are also largely victims of cultural misunderstandings and, uh, annoyance by the main characters.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: So, it doesn't really feel appropriate, uh, to talk about that, although perhaps in later weeks, it will feel appropriate to talk about that more at length.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And how, uh, bad that is and what a failing that is for, uh, Black readers as well as every reader --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who deserves to see Black people represented. Instead, we thought we'd talk about some of our favorite Black-written texts. We want to challenge you to read one of them this week --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Instead of engaging with your usual Wheel of Time content. Uh, any particular order?

Sally: Uh, I just have two comments that I want to make.

Emily: Please, yes.

Sally: The first is that, um, not only is Wheel of Time, uh, a racially insensitive text, it is also pretty strongly an anti-Black text for the way that it --

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Others the Black characters in ways that are often presented as comical or, quote unquote, uncivilized. Um, and yeah, they're just not given any sort of cultural sensitivity or, in Tuon's case, she is complicit in a fascist regime, so there's a lot of sort of presenting Black bodies as brutal and uncivilized, um, which is -- goes further than just being racially insensitive, but it is particularly anti-Black, which is a conversation that our country is avoiding, um, that there is particular forms of anti-Black racism rather than just sort of blanket forms of racism. So. That's

my comment about Wheel of Time. Second, not only do we want to challenge you to read a text written by a Black author, but it would be great to buy that text from a Black-owned bookstore.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Um, which we posted, um, a list of them up on the EHR Twitter. I will find a way to post that on our website so that you can get it no matter -- or, in fact, I think we can just link it in this episode, which is something we have not taken advantage of, is dropping links in our episode descriptions, so I will do that. Um, as a way to try and make it as easy for you as possible. But there is, um, a lot of power, unfortunately, because we live in a capitalist society, around, quote unquote, voting with your wallet. Um, so by buying texts written by Black authors, you are proving to publishers that there is a market for those texts, which is unfortunate that we have to do that at all because publishing is its own very racist industry, and there's a lot of people talking about that on Twitter right now, so I recommend taking a look at what book Twitter is getting into, since they are more experienced with publishing than I am. Um, and also by buying from Black bookstores, you are doing your own small part in paying reparations to Black people for being enslaved in this country for, what, 400 years?

Emily: Many.

Sally: Many. Um, so yeah, those are my two caveats to the statement, so.

Emily: Yeah, if you can, avoid buying from Amazon, which is also complicit in human rights violations --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, in this world.

Sally: Yeah -- yeah, just sort of across the board.

Emily: And, uh -- yeah. Also on EHR Twitter as well as, I believe both our personal Twitters, are links to libraries of Black revolutionary texts --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Those are really helpful. Uh, most of those are essays. There are, I believe, some full-length books there, but --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, do your best to buy those books, um, and check out the essays there. But we're mostly going to be talking about fiction, I believe.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because fiction is a gateway to understanding these issues.

Sally: Yeah, and also, like, there's a common -- it's common for all various minority groups, whether you are female, disabled, queer, Black, all of the above -- please don't forget that identities intersect and overlap -- but there is the belief that by inhabiting one of those identities, it is your duty to educate the world about what it is like to occupy that identity, which is not true. You have every right, and it is a basic human right to simply walk through the world in your own beauty as an individual human being. But it's often Black bodies in particular and Black female bodies in particular are called upon to educate people about racial issues instead of people in privileged situations, in privileged identities, stepping up and educating themselves, and so, um, it is kind of a radical act for people of marginalized identities to write fiction, um, even if it's, um -- even if it happens to be about the, um --

Emily: Black experience.

Sally: Black experience, like, it is radical for them to not write about their own experience and basically just sort of serve themselves up for your consumption. So.

Emily: Right. (pause) We can alternate, I guess? (laugh)

Sally: Sure.

Emily: I have a list written down.

Sally: Yeah, Emily is good and has a list.

Emily: Um, I first want to talk about an author named Jesmyn Ward.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: She's won several book awards, very well-deserved. I've read, um, three of her books. One is her memoir, called "Men We Reaped." It is about five men that she knew personally, uh, was related to, in some cases, who died all within the span of, um, very few years. Um, and that's a really good one. She also has two fiction novels that I've read, called "Salvage the Bones" and "Sing, Unburied, Sing." Both of those are extraordinary texts set, actually, in the same, I believe, fictional town in, like, Louisiana. Um, and I think the characters see each other, which is kind of a fun callback.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But one, "Salvage the Bones," is about a hurricane sweeping in and affecting this family. The other one is, um, a ghost story and, uh, talks a lot about the prison system that unjustly, um, imprisoned and, in many cases, lynched Black men for centuries.

Sally: Yeah, and the prison industrial complex in America is just a different form of slavery, so.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um.

Emily: Ooh.

Sally: Do some reading about that. The school-to-prison pipeline is disgusting. Um, I'm sure she is on your list --

Emily: Oh, that's fine.

Sally: But Angie Thomas has written two really astounding young adult novels about young Black women, um, and their experiences in America. They're both very beautiful and very charming. The first one is called "The Hate U Give," um, which was made into a movie, a very good movie, very good adaptation, I would say. Um, and it is about, um, a young woman who is with her friend as he is, uh, murdered by the police for pulling out a hairbrush, which they believe is a gun. Um, and so it dives into, um, uh, just kind of -- and it's -- also takes place in, like, a low -- low-income Black neighborhood of ... Mississippi?

Emily: I don't even remember the state being --

Sally: OK, maybe I'm confusing that with -- 'cause Angie Thomas is from Mississippi, so I'm doing the same thing, where I'm putting her personal experiences onto her fiction. But it's a, uh, city that is plagued by gang activity, and so it does a lot to talk about your experience as a Black person and the way that, um, society is set up against you in every conceivable way. Um, because this is, um, a town riddled with, um, drug activity and gang activity, and the young man who gets killed, um, had brief involvement as a drug dealer to try and pay for his grandmother to survive, and so it, um, really gets into it in a really beautiful way. And then "On the Come Up" is about a young, uh, Black rapper, who I believe lives in -- it's kind of the same thing. I believe they live in similar -- similar geographical -- like, I don't know if they're necessarily in the same town, but I think there's some sort of callbacks between the two texts. And it's about her experience trying to, um, become a rapper.

Emily: "The Hate U Give" also has a really good movie adaptation that I believe is available on Hulu right now.

Sally: I think that's right.

Emily: Um, so if you want to look into that, that's a good one. Um, I recently read "Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky" by Kwame Mbalia. Uh, that's one of the Rick Riordan Presents books, so it's all about mythology, and it handled, um, it in a really interesting way in talking about the way that, um, African mythology has had to adapt to become African American mythology --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And how, um, a young African American man would interact with that.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It's really incredible. It made me cry. (laugh)

Sally: Awww.

Emily: Uh, and it's also, like all of those, uh, kid lit books about mythology, hilarious --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And fun and just a really good time.

Sally: Yeah. Um, I know we said we were going to talk about mostly fiction, but I do want to bring in my favorite essayist at the moment, Samantha Irby --

Emily: Hell yeah.

Sally: Who is probably the funniest person I have ever read. She is --

Emily: Literally, cry laughing.

Sally: Yeah. I -- every -- like, every single essay. Or cry out of emotional distress, 'cause she moves very wonderfully through the both of those. But, um, Sam Irby is Black, queer, disabled, chronically ill woman, um, who just writes about basically whatever the fuck she wants, and I really -- (laugh) appreciate her for that --

Emily: (laugh) She's so funny.

Sally: Yeah. She has just, like, hilarious essays about her cat and how her cat was the worst, and she has -- (laugh) One essay that I remember very vividly is her, um, eating, like, day-old McDonalds when she was in college --

Emily: (wheeze)

Sally: 'Cause she was like, "Ah, whatever, I don't care, I'm in college," but then, um, she gets violent diarrhea and has to make these two frat boys that she's hanging out with pull over on the side of the road. Um, anyway, I love her. She's very funny. She's a very cute wife.

Emily: Yeah, she's hilarious.

Sally: Very funny Instagram. Yeah, I would rec -- she has three books out right now: um, "Meaty," "We Are Never Meeting in Real Life," and "Wow, No Thank You," which are all very funny titles. Um, I have read the first two, and I have the third, but I have not read it yet, so.

Emily: Um, I've also recently read a book called "She Would Be King," called -- uh, by Wayetu Moore. She is a Liberian-American author, and the text is a lot about Liberia, a country which I did not know anything about but which has a really fascinating origin story, um, in that abolitionists prior to the Civil War and perhaps after the Civil War thought that the way to solve the, quote unquote, "problem" of Black people in America would be to put them back in Africa. So they, uh, purchased some land, which would become Liberia. But the text is also sort of X-Men-ish. It deals with three, uh, young people who discover that they have superpowers, kind of.

Sally: Ooh. Fun.

Emily: There's a woman who can't die -- that's her super power.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: Fascinating.

Sally: Excellent.

Emily: Um, a guy who can turn invisible, and a guy who has super strength, and it's really interesting.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So highly recommend that one too.

Sally: (laugh) Um, uh, and kind of going -- staying in Africa, um, someone I'm sure you're all very familiar with is Nnedi Okorafor, who wrote -- who's written a ton of very popular novels. Um, uh, her "Binti" series, I think, is particularly popular and is being adapted. Um. But also "Who Fears Death" is being adapted by HBO, I believe.

Emily: Is it? Oh, yeah, yeah, I've heard about that.

Sally: Yeah. But "Who Fears Death" is one of my favorite novels of all time. Um, it's very challenging -- the subject matter is very challenging because it, uh, is -- like, the sort of seed of the idea is, um, that rape is used as a weapon of war, particularly in, um, tribal warfare. And I mean "tribal" not just in Africa but any sort of sense as a tribe, as, like, a larger identity-based group fighting another identity-based group, um, and using, uh, rape to impregnate the women in your enemy group, um, as a way to attack the, um, societal structure. We talked about this in the episode on the Aiel, so I won't talk about it anymore than that, but "Who Fears Death" is a very interesting book all about, um, being a child of rape and, like, also discovering you have magical shape-shifting powers and --

Emily: Yeah, dude.

Sally: Um, finding your rapist father and killing him, so.

Emily: It's really good.

Sally: But it's very interesting, very -- and it's set in this, like, weird, post-apocalyptic, kind of, world.

Emily: Africa, I think.

Sally: Yeah, it has a companion novel that talks about how the world got to be this way, and that's called, um --

Emily: "The Book of Phoenix."

Sally: Yes, thank you. I wanted to say "Phoenix Rising" 'cause X-Men was in my brain.

Emily: Dun dun.

Sally: That's not right. (laugh)

Emily: "The Book of PHoenix" is also a really good one that is a little more contemporary-based.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, that talks about -- I dunno, it's also a little bit challenging, because it seems like, at the end of the book, the main character kind of decides to destroy the world because there is no other way to move forward.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is a fascinating look at sort of, um, some of the despair that comes with activism --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And what that feels like. Nnedi Okorafor also wrote -- um, has -- is writing, I believe, a series that starts with "Akata Witch" --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is all about a young woman who is born in America but moves to Nigeria, um, and finds out she can do magic powers.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: People have described it as the "Nigerian Harry Potter," which is reductive, I believe --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it is in that vein, about young kids -- they're, I think, 13 or 14 when the series --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Starts -- learning to harness their magical powers.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And that one's really cool.

Sally: Yeah, that one's fun. Um, this is -- it's another non-fiction text, but, um -- kind of. Um, but, um, adrienne marie brown wrote a book -- wrote and compiled a book called "Pleasure Activism," which has been probably the most influential book I have read in my twenties, just for the way that it kind of helped me digest and wrap my head around, um, very contemporary issues about activism and sexuality and being a woman and a queer woman. I think the essay in particular, which I can't remember it -- the actual writer of the essay, unfortunately, but, um, it's all about sex work, and it's sort of the best ex -- explication of sex work and its role in feminism that I have ever come across. So. That one's cool. It also basically turned me into an ethical non-monogamist, so, thanks, adrienne.

Emily: Yeah. Uh, Roxane Gay is well-known.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: If you're not following her on Twitter, what are you doing?

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: She's hilarious.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, she's also just incredibly smart, doing so many amazing things. She's written a lot of nonfiction, including, um, "Bad Feminist" and Hunger," both of which we'd recommend --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, but she's also written a fiction book called "An Untamed State," uh, which is a retelling of a fairy tale. I won't tell you which one because I think it's interesting to get there. Um, content warning on that one for very graphic depictions of rape --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: But it's a life-changing book about a Haitian woman who gets kidnapped, and the trauma and also the recovery process following that. Really incredibly written.

Sally: Yeah. Um. Um, she's kind of the OG, um, if you read, uh, speculative fiction, but Octavia Butler is extremely fabulous. I have only read, um, one of her novels, and then, like, I think, a

couple of her, like, short fiction pieces, um, or essays, in other, um, settings, but she's got a really -- the one novel that I have read of hers completely changed my life. She's got an incredible mind and was extremely ahead of her, um, time, I think, in predicting some of the ways that technology would work with the world, so. Um, love her. She's amazing, and I, um, have a copy of "Parable of the Sower," I think, on my Kindle; I just, again, haven't read it, because I'm ... bad at not reading.

Emily: (laugh) Um, another non-fiction text that I read in college is called "Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl." It is an autobiography written by Harriet Jacobs, who was born into slavery. Uh, she was later -- escaped to freedom. Uh, she also lived through the Civil War. She lived from 1813 to 1897.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: The book was published in 1861, which was at a time when, uh, Black people were not being published.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Black women in particular. Um, and that's a really interesting and educational look at what slavery was like, which, I think, we would prefer to watch in our movie adaptations because it's over so quickly and so poetically and so beautifully --

Sally: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Emily: But, uh, it is really prolonged because it's people's lives.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: So that's one I recommend.

Sally: Yeah. Um, another author who you guys are probably familiar with is, um, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, who wrote "Americanah," which is a very famous text about what it is like to immigrate to America.

Emily: Or to Britain, right?

Sally: Yeah, or to Britain. That's right. Um, the male character goes to Britain. And what's, um, kind of understanding America's, uh, race relations when you do not come from a country that has America's particular insidious breed of anti-Black racism. Um, but, um, Adichie -- I think "Americanah" is great, but it's not my favorite of her books. Um, the other one that I've read is "Purple Hibiscus," which is particularly about life in Nigeria. Um, and I thought that one was just really lovely. I mean, "Americanah" is also really lovely. I don't -- saying I don't like it.

Emily: Sure.

Sally: I just like “Purple Hibiscus” better, and I think it’s a lot, um, not as well known. So. Love that one.

Emily: Um, I’ve read another fairy tale retelling --

Sally: (laugh) Emily’s favorite.

Emily: My favorite. I love that and ghosts, so you’ll find --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) A lot of those there. Uh, but “Boy, Snow, Bird” by Helen Oyeyemi.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: Um, she’s a British author. She’s written a lot of really gothic texts, which I think is interesting --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it means that they’re also sort of disturbing and terrible to read --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But they’re also really cool.

Sally: Uh-huh.

Emily: “Boy, Snow, Bird” is particularly interesting for being about, um -- it’s a retelling of the story of “Snow White” but within the realm of a Black family and what it means to have children who are Black but white-presenting, um, and kind of the sort of politics of that and the family dynamics that that leads to. It’s really interesting.

Sally: Yeah. I’ve been meaning -- that one’s also on my to-read list.

Emily: It’s really good.

Sally; Um, switching to poetry for a second, um, Warsan Shire is a really amazing poet --

Emily: Rrrrggghhh.

Sally: Um, you might be, uh, familiar with her work without knowing it because she wrote, um, the poetry that Beyonce reads in the, um ... film video of “Lemonade.” I don’t -- I’m trying to think of a specific word, but it’s gone.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: In the “Lemonade” film, she wrote all of the poetry that Beyonce reads. Um, and her book, “Teaching --” I think it’s “Teaching My Mother How to Give Birth,” I think, is the one that we have.

Emily: Yes. I just reread it a little while ago.

Sally: Um, is a very lovely book of poetry.

Emily: Another poet is Claudia Rankine, who wrote a book called “Citizen,” which is particularly, um, relevant right now because it focuses a lot on police brutality and what it means to be a Black citizen --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, in America, where you are not considered a citizen in many ways.

Sally: Yeah. It also, um, just has a lot to do with what it means to be a citizen even if you are reading it as a white person --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: There’s also a lot to glean from that.

Emily: I got to see Claudia Rankine do a reading --

Sally: (whisper) I know, you’re so cool.

Emily: Of poetry in New York, and it was, like, transcendent.

Sally: Yeah, we also saw Jesmyn Ward in New York.

Emily: Yeah, that was less transcendent because someone in the audience did faint during the -- (laugh)

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: Because of the -- the book shop was overheated.

Sally: Also, I had my big boot on.

Emily: Oh, yeah, that was sad.

Sally: It was --

Emily: But she was also transcendent. I mean, she was beautiful.

Sally: Yeah. Jesmyn Ward was really cool.

Emily: Ahh.

Sally: Um, who else is on your list?

Emily: You could talk about “The Dark Fantastic.”

Sally: Ah! Ahh! I love “The Dark Fantastic.” It’s Ebony Elizabeth Thomas?

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: ‘Kay. I always want to say Ebony Elizabeth Smith, and I have literally no idea why. Um, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas wrote this book called “The Dark Fantastic,” which, um, is an academic text, um, that, um, explores, uh, the role of “darkness” in fantasy and how it affects Black bodies, because darkness is such a prevalent trope in fantasy, um, and what that means when it’s, like, applied to bodies. And she does really interesting, um, uh, case analyses of, like, popular, um, media, like BBC’s “Merlin.”

Emily: “True Blood.”

Sally: And “True Blood” and “The Vampire Diaries” and things like that.

Emily: Hermione.

Sally: Yeah, and Hermione, um. It’s a very interesting look at popular culture, and she’s’ awesome. I saw her present -- she came to the University of Utah when I was going to school there, which is fascinating to me because I do not think that people come to the University of Utah, so every time someone does, I’m like, “What?”

Emily: “What the hell?”

Sally: But then I remember that it’s a Pac-12 university, and that apparently means something.

Emily: To men.

Sally: To -- that’s true.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Anyway, she’s really awesome. She’s really cool. She’s a wonderful speaker, um, and just, yeah, really kick-ass, so.

Emily: Um, if you haven’t already, you should read some Toni Morrison.

Sally: (whisper) Ah, yes.

Emily: I’ve read “Sula,” which is a really strange book.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And I read it for my queer theory class. But then later, for a different class, I read “Beloved,” which I liked a little better. Again, not saying “Sula” is bad; it’s an incredible work of literature --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But “Beloved” stuck with me more because it’s a ghost story.

Sally: Classic.

Emily: And all about what it is like to escape from slavery and then have to live with the trauma of having escaped from slavery and lived, um, in a state of enslavement.

Sally: Yeah. Tybalt has decided to join the conversation. He has taken a third chair.

Emily: Classy.

Sally: Um, so just so you know. Um, another one, kind of going into the, quote unquote, literary canon, is “Their Eyes Were Watching God” by Zora Neale Hurston. Um, and Hurston is a fascinating character who did a lot of, um, early study of language and cultures, particularly Black language and Black cultures. I know she has a book all about, um, Haitian culture, I think mysticism in particular? Anyway, “Their Eyes Were Watching God” is a very lovely book, um, uh, that I haven’t read in a while, so I probably would mess up the plot, because you guys know I don’t have a good brain for plot. But, um, it’s about a young woman in the South, um, and how she is basically married off, first to one man and then choosing her second husband and sort of her experiences. It’s a very interesting book.

Emily: I need to read that one.

Sally: I really like it. It’s one of my favorites.

Emily: Uh, a book that was published fairly recently is called “Homegoing” by Yaa Gyasi.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: She’s a Ghanaian-American author, um, who writes about, uh, generational -- it’s a generational story, so it goes from --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, through the ancestral line, I believe, of two -- well -- or, it starts with one family, and then it branches --

Sally: Yeah, and then the two -- there’s, like, two sisters or brothers that --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um, and then their family lines branch.

Emily: Yeah, and one, uh, stays in Africa, and one is taken via the slave trade to America --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And eventually, sort of, the reuniting of those lines.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's really interesting both as historical fiction and just, like, as a really incredibly written work of fiction.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. I'm trying to think if I know of any Black comic book writers off the top of my head.

Emily: Uh, "Check, Please," the webcomic --

Sally: That's right!

Emily: I'm sorry, I don't know her name off the top of my head.

Sally: No, that comic is so cute. I haven't thought about "Check, Please" in so long.

Emily: I just went back to it 'cause I was like, "I think it's finished now." Um, and it is, and it's, like, fucking adorable. It's --

Sally: Yeah, it's the cutest.

Emily: Simply the most adorable, um, webcomic that exists.

Sally: Yeah, we walked past the author at Flame-Con.

Emily: Oh, yeah, we did, and I was just like -- (gasp)

Sally: And she was -- and I was like, "I'm too afraid, I like her too much."

Emily: Her name's Ngozi Ukazu. I'm sorry if I mispronounced that; I did not get a chance to look up the pronunciation. But yeah, "Check, Please." You can just Google it and --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The archive's there. I re-read it in a couple of nights, and it's just so cute. It's about hockey?

Sally: Yeah. It's about hockey and a little boy -- not a little boy, he's a college boy --

Emily: I mean, he's a --

Sally: He's physically slight.

Emily: His nickname is literally "Bitty." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. He's physically very small, um, who just loves to bake and loves his hockey captain.

Emily: Yeah. That's adorable.

Sally: It's so cute! Oh my God, I haven't thought about "Check, Please" in so long. So cute. But those are -- that's just a sampling of many, many amazing Black writers who are producing content either through the traditional publishing industry -- which, as we've mentioned, has its own, um, extreme faults -- or in the various other platforms that the internet has provided. So.

Emily: Yeah, I know we like to pretend that we're the end-all, be-all of literary knowledge --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: But we are also two white ladies who --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, are, by that, limited in our experience and our understanding of the world, and so now is the time to look for Black voices to listen to.

Sally: Yeah. Um. Also, just one comment. This is totally random, but, um, one interesting idea, um, in "Citizen," which I -- I read "Citizen" in, like, three classes in college 'cause it was, like, right when it came out --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um, but an interesting idea of "Citizen" is a lot of people are having the conversation like, "Oh, I'm white, and therefore I will never know what it's like to be a Black person." And while that is objectively true --

Emily: Sure.

Sally: Um, it's also a statement that, um, continues to separate you from the Black community, um, and just saying that's like, "I'm continuing to create that division," and so one really, I think, extremely easy way to, um, kind of bridge that gap of understanding is by, like Emily said, listening to Black voices and looking at what Black people are creating. Their music, their film, their TV, their novels, their podcasts. All of that is a really easy way to just be, like -- instead of just being like, "I'll never get it," like, you need to do the work to try and get it.

Emily: Yeah, we're all capable of empathy.

Sally: Exactly.

Emily: Just don't let empathy be the end of your activism.

Sally: Yes! That is one of my least favorite things in the entire world. And I know we're all guilty of it because life is hard, y'know? But, um -- like, I posted about this on my Instagram, but, um, in my studies, uh, I came across the idea that -- there's this sort of idea that people have an empathy response when they see a trauma, and then they remember that, "Oh, because I feel bad about this bad thing, I am a good person," and then they feel that they have done something by feeling bad about it. That is not true at all. That is not activism. Um, and social media makes that a lot easier and a lot worse, depending on how you're looking at it, because you can post something on your Instagram story and be like, "Woohoo! Activism."

Emily: "Activism done for the day."

Sally: Yeah. But, I -- I read something today that's like, "Your racist family isn't looking at your Instagram stories." And that's probably true. Um, so there are -- you -- you can post on your Instagram story; I do it all the time. It's just some -- like, Instagram story is one way where I can be like, "I'm -- need to get thoughts out of my head." But you also have to do more than that, and everyone has a sphere of influence. Some are big, some are small. But you all have friends and family that you can talk to -- mm -- I'm assuming if you're listening to this, most of you have smartphones, which enables you to sign petitions online. If you have a spare five or 10 dollars to donate to any bail fund or any Black Lives Matter movement. Um, not any. Like, there is a Black Lives Matter organization, but there are, like, chapters. Um, any individual Black person's Venmo or Cashapp. Again, you can do your individual part to pay the reparations that Black Americans are entitled to. Um, and speaking of that, um, as a way to try and encourage you to donate, even just five dollars, um, if you DM us a receipt of your donation to a bail fund -- but I have been reading that bail funds are pretty well funded right now, so if you want to direct your support elsewhere, um, to any sort of other organization that is supporting the protestors, um, helping to defund the police, helping to end police brutality, helping Black communities in some way, if you want to DM us a receipt of that, um, we will send you an EHR sticker of your choice. As long as supplies last, but we have quite a few, so.

Emily: Yeah. We're also going to be, uh, donating our Patreon funds for this month to, I believe, Black Lives Matter. Um, we're grateful for your support that allows us to direct that money --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To charities that we choose. Um, but, y'know, that's basic human decency. We have the funds, so we are going to put them -- gonna put our money where our mouth is.

Sally: Yeah, um, we have the funds, and we are lucky enough that, uh, Patreon is supplemental income for us.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Emily and I both have jobs and are, uh, financially stable. Um, and so we are able to do that. Um, and again, it's all about doing what you are capable of doing.

Emily: So. You've got your assignment for this week. Go out, make the world a little bit better. We will talk to you next week, probably with our regularly scheduled content, but who knows?

Sally: See where the world's at next week.

Emily: We'll watch the world. We'll see you all on Twitter and various other places.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Have a good week.

Sally: Take care.

Emily: Bye.