



This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight for School Equality

Jo Ann Allen Boyce , Debbie Levy

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight for School Equality

Jo Ann Allen Boyce , Debbie Levy

This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight for School Equality Jo Ann Allen Boyce , Debbie Levy

In 1956, one year before federal troops escorted the Little Rock 9 into Central High School, fourteen year old Jo Ann Allen was one of twelve African-American students who broke the color barrier and integrated Clinton High School in Tennessee. At first things went smoothly for the Clinton 12, but then outside agitators interfered, pitting the townspeople against one another. Uneasiness turned into anger, and even the Clinton Twelve themselves wondered if the easier thing to do would be to go back to their old school. Jo Ann--clear-eyed, practical, tolerant, and popular among both black and white students---found herself called on as the spokesperson of the group. But what about just being a regular teen? This is the heartbreaking and relatable story of her four months thrust into the national spotlight and as a trailblazer in history. Based on original research and interviews and featuring backmatter with archival materials and notes from the authors on the co-writing process.

This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight for School Equality Details

Date : Published January 8th 2019 by Bloomsbury Children's Books

ISBN : 9781681198521

Author : Jo Ann Allen Boyce , Debbie Levy

Format : Hardcover 320 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Autobiography, Memoir, Childrens, Middle Grade, Poetry

 [Download This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fig ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight for School Equality Jo Ann Allen Boyce , Debbie Levy

From Reader Review This Promise of Change: One Girl's Story in the Fight for School Equality for online ebook

Michele Knott says

I wish more classrooms had books like this at the ready for when discussing the time periods the books cover in class. When you learn something out of a textbook, the history feels disjointed. Books like this makes history come to life and become more meaningful for readers.

Tasha says

This nonfiction novel in verse tells the story of Jo Ann Allen, one of the twelve African-American students who were among the first in the nation to integrate a segregated high school in the South. The small town of Clinton, Tennessee became one of the first communities to attempt desegregation after the Supreme Court ruling made segregation illegal. A year before the Little Rock 9, this lesser-known group of brave students at first attended their new school without incident but then outside agitators, the KKK and other white supremacists got involved. As the issue grew, simply attending school became too dangerous for the African-American students. When they were escorted by a local white pastor to school, he ended up beaten and almost killed. Jo Ann became a spokesperson for the group of students and for integrating schools in general. Her story is one of resilience and tolerance.

Levy very successfully uses various forms of poetic verse to tell Jo Ann's story in this book. In her author's note, she speaks about why verse was the logical choice as it captured the musicality of Jo Ann's speech. Her skill is evident on the page, capturing both the quiet parts of Jo Ann's life and the dramatic moments of desegregation including acts of hatred against the students. Jo Ann's story is told in a way that allows young readers to understand this moment in United States history in a more complete way. The images at the end of the book and additional details shared there add to this as well.

Perhaps most surprising is the fact that these moments have been lost to history and this group of twelve students is not as well-known as the Little Rock 9. At the same time, that is what makes this book all the more compelling to read as their story is more nuanced since the mayor and governor did not defy the Supreme Court's ruling.

Beautifully written, this heartbreaking and dramatic story of courage in the face of hatred belongs in every library. Appropriate for ages 12-15.

Kelly Hager says

Schools being desegregated feels like centuries ago, at least to me. It's not that far, though. My mom was in high school when her school was integrated (in Delaware), and while she doesn't remember any problems, I'd be very curious what her new classmates felt and if they would agree.

This is an astonishing book full of incredibly brave people. Jo Ann Allen was one of twelve people in her Tennessee high school to go to the formerly all white school. There were protesters outside and there were mean people inside, but some were nice. I can't even imagine the courage it took to walk to school every day,

with people yelling (on good days) and throwing things (on bad ones). But they kept going. Sometimes they were accompanied by police and once by a white preacher, but they kept going. If school was open, they were there.

There are also snippets of newspaper articles and pictures of Jo Ann and the others, and there are pictures of some of the protesters. I sometimes wonder how they feel about the fact that they're on record as being racist. Does that bother them? I hope so.

This is an amazing story, and I hope I would have even a tenth of Jo Ann's bravery in her situation.

Highly recommended.

Beth Anderson says

History has a lot to offer. And when books allow us to empathize and connect with people of the past, we have an opportunity to understand times and events on a human level. This is one of those books that touches the heart and will resonate as kids view the world today.

A first-person telling from one who experienced the events is priceless. Debbie Levy's free verse doesn't crowd the page with description, but rather leaves plenty of white space for thought and reflection on the part of the reader. I think this format requires greater investment by the reader and results in a stronger personal connection. The combining of Jo Ann Allen Boyce's story and Levy's writing is powerful.

Especially interesting are the primary archival materials that are woven into the narrative: statistics, signs, bits from the Tennessee Constitution, newspaper headlines and article excerpts, editorials, picket signs and so much more. We can see what these students were immersed in day after day, the words they read and heard, what it's like to BE the news. Backmatter includes photos, a civil rights timeline, and information about the authors.

This Promise of Change offers a multitude of opportunities for the classroom. Don't pass this one by!

Kari says

Wiping away tears as I finish. What a book!

Wayne McCoy says

'This Promise of Change' by Jo Ann Allen Boyce and Debbie Levy tells the heartbreaking story of one girl's fight to integrate with 11 others into a white high school in the 1950s.

In 1956, schools were ordered to fall under the ruling of Brown VS. The Board of Education and integrate their schools. One of the very earliest was in Clinton, Tennessee. Jo Ann Allen was in high school and travelling to another town over to an all black school. She was chosen along with 11 others to be the first black student to attend Clinton's all white school. Things did not go well, but throughout, Jo Ann remains poised and determined. Things go from bad to worse as the town finds itself being influenced by outside

white supremacists.

This book is really good. It's told in a variety of forms of poetry which I was afraid might detract from the story, but actually make it even more readable and interesting. The book includes timelines, photos, and clips from newspaper interviews. The story of this era is heartbreaking, but Jo Ann Allen's courage is a shiny example of faith and courage.

I received a review copy of this ebook from Bloomsbury USA Children's Books and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to review this ebook.

Laura Gardner says

Thanks to @bloomsburypublishing for this free book (that I LOVED) to share w @kidlitexchange . ❤️?

.

??

??

????????/5 for sure! Put this #civilrights memoir on your purchase list for all middle schools and high schools—it comes out 1/8/19.

.

??

??

This is one of the very best nonfiction books in verse I have ever read. The combination of Jo Ann Allen Boyce's searing first person account of her experience integrating Clinton High School in TN with @debbielevybooks skill as a poet is just phenomenal. Interspersed in the text are quotes from news articles and TV reports from the time period (1956). End notes explain the many different types of poems included in the text—I can definitely see this book as a mentor text in a poetry unit. I will also be purchasing and recommending this book for use by our 8th grade SS teachers during their civil rights unit. Students read Warriors Don't Cry; this will be an excellent accompanying text. .

??

??

The Clinton 12 integrated a year before the Little Rock 9, but their story has faded from the collective memory. Levy explains that is likely because the Clinton 12 event was more nuanced with a principal and mayor who were following the law (Brown v Board), albeit reluctantly. An extensive bibliography, sources for quotes and extensive notes about each of the Clinton 12 are included at the end. This is a first-rate nonfiction book about an important event in American history that shouldn't be forgotten! I'm so glad I got a chance to read it. Jo Ann's story is inspirational and important. Her courage in the face of outright racism and injustice is incredible. .

??

??

#bookstagram #book #reading #bibliophile #bookworm #bookaholic #booknerd #bookgram #librarian #librariansfollowlibrarians #librariansofinstagram #booklove #booktography #bookstagramfeature #bookish #bookaddict #booknerdigans #booknerd #ilovereadings #instabook #futurereadylibs #ISTELibs #TLChat #mgbooks

Hebah says

Powerful first-hand account of early school integration.

With its verse format, I had to keep reminding myself that it wasn't fiction; Jo Ann's voice, though optimistic, doesn't flinch away from the racism she faced, both overt threats like the KKK and outside agitators and the quieter racism of people who went along with integration because it was law even if they found it personally distasteful. The poetry is interspersed with real news headlines as the Clinton school was under national spotlight. The verse ranges from free verse to classical forms, complete with a guide in the supplemental material to what forms were what. Supplemental material in the back includes photographs and a timeline of Civil Rights developments, helping contextualize the story and illustrating just how painfully not that long ago this all was.

Not always an easy read, but a necessary one.

Bethany M. Edwards says

This non-fiction novel in verse is the story of the 12 students at Central High School in the small town of Clinton, Tennessee who caught the nation's attention. This never been told, first-hand account will enrapture readers, young and old, of what happened when Clinton High School was integrated after the Supreme Court passed *Brown v. Board of Education*.

The Promise of Change was done in part by one of the 12 students, Jo Ann Allen. I have been a long time fan of author and historian Debbie Levy, so I feel strongly this collaboration is a beautiful gift to all of us.

Jo Ann was just 14 years old when she was pushed into the national spotlight as the spokesperson to discuss the struggles Black children faced at newly integrated high schools. From local newspapers, all the way to interviews with the Attorney General, Jo Ann exudes poise and inner strength clearly visible through the white space on the page.

Also within each chapter are copies of the news articles and headlines chronicling the story in real time. Chilling details of the wrath and vitriol spewed each time Jo Ann and the 11 other classmates attempted to go to school each day gives new perspective to civil rights history.

The account Jo Ann gives of one particular teacher that showed kindness while her own neighbors who borrowed sugar turned their backs shows young readers how closely hypocrisy and decency go hand in hand. Much like today's generation with child activists such as Mari Copeny or Emma Gonzalez, the brave voice of a child insisting the adults and lawmakers give them their basic human rights of an education and protection from harm is extremely powerful.

This incredibly moving and well written story of the Clinton 12 shines a necessary light on a dark place and worthy of its place in our history books.

Disclaimer: I was given a copy of by the publisher to facilitate the review. As always, all opinions are my own

Kathy Martin says

This is the story of a little known (now) part of the Civil Rights Movement. In the fall of 1956, twelve black students entered Clinton (Tennessee) High School as the first desegregated high school in the South. Jo Ann Allen Boyce was fifteen and one of those students.

She lasted through an eventful semester with riots, Ku Klux Klan cross burnings, and national attention. She also personally dealt with harassment from other students and a strong sense of isolation and fear as she went to school.

Finally, her family gave up and moved to California both for a better education for their children and for better job opportunities for the parents too. Jo Ann was interviewed a number of times during the months she was attending school in Tennessee and after she moved to California too. She continued, and continues, to visit schools and speak about her time as one of the Clinton 12.

Her story is told in verse in quite a number of formats including forms from free verse to haiku to a variety of rhyme schemes. The use of poetry really highlighted the intense emotions of the time and the trials Jo Ann and the other Clinton 12 faced. Through it all, Jo Ann's faith and optimism shine through despite all the obstacles she faced.

The timeline of the Civil Rights Movement at the end marks the milestone of desegregation but ends with the depressing note that segregation still exists in many parts of the United States.

Paige (Illegal in 3 Countries) says

See more of my reviews on The YA Kitten! My copy was an ARC I got from the publisher.

School integration and the Deep South have quite the history that's far too recent for my tastes. When Georgia's resistance to integration dragged on into the 1970s and forced the federal government to get involved, my own *mother* had to fight to stay in public school with her friends; my great-grandparents tried to put her in a private school that had been set up solely so the most racist of white parents wouldn't have to let their children be taught alongside black kids.

But we ain't here to talk about my mom's experience. We're here for brave, brilliant people like Jo Ann Allen Boyce and her perspective on a problem that's never really gone away. It's equal parts historical memoir and an incitement to work hard *right now* for change.

Teenage Jo Ann Allen wasn't that happy about segregation, as you might gather from just the first few pages. But she tried to look on the bright side of things like her dad and found peace with the way things were in Clinton, Tennessee. Not satisfaction, merely peace. Then *Brown v. Board's* ruling comes down and a local judge reversing his ruling on a previous case means Jo Ann and eleven other teens will be integrating Clinton High School. If you know your history, you know what follows: riots over Labor Day, a bombing in 1958, and just two of the Clinton Twelve staying at the school until graduation.

What you don't know until you read *This Promise of Change* was how it firsthand felt to be a black girl charged to be one of twelve integrating a public high school in the Deep South—making Allen and her peers the second group to do so after the tiny town of Charleston, Arkansas did the same in 1954. This was before Little Rock and Ruby Bridges as well as at the tail end of the Montgomery Bus Boycott. And here we have Jo Ann, a teenage girl who wants to become a nurse and loves to sing.

Exquisitely detailed notes and appendices at the end of the book both highlight the musical nature of the book's free verse and outline those choices. Some chapters are traditional poetry with rhyme schemes you'll remember from English class and others are closer to freeform verse. Both ways, readers will get wrapped up in the notes. There will be some serious temptation to read some of the chapters out loud to fully enjoy the rhythm and rhyme!

If you're white like me, you might be in danger of looking at the white people in Jo Ann's life and thinking "oh yay, there's a decent human being!" DON'T FALL FOR IT. Most of those same white people, like Clinton High's principal and one of the teachers, don't want black children in their school at all but are going with it because that's the new law of the land. They want to be law-abiding citizens, but they'd prefer to stay segregated. Their part in enrolling and keeping the kids in Clinton High School deserves no praise whatsoever. Heck, it makes me furious on the students' behalf!

Look. If someone is only advocating for a human being's rights because the law says they should, that person is not an ally. For instance, someone who's pro-gay rights because it's the law but privately thinks gay people shouldn't be allowed to get married or have job security nationwide? That's not a good citizen, that's a phony.

The integration of Clinton High School was a moment in a movement that's still not over. Thanks to redlining and gentrification, plenty of public schools are still segregated in addition to entire towns! Mom's hometown is still so segregated by so-called "tradition" that there are two different funeral homes and which one you end up in when you die depends on what color your skin is.

This *Promise of Change* hosts decades of experience and centuries of pain in the four-month period Jo Ann spent as a Clinton High School student. It's both a reflection and a call to action beautifully composed in verse and it's the kind of book that deserves pairing with any history of the civil rights movement. (That also requires teachers who actually teach about the civil rights movement, which most of mine did not because they were too busy whitewashing things and only giving us secondhand/thirdhand sources about the experiences of POC in the US. Schools: still racist!)

Akoss says

@Kidlitexchange #partner - I received a copy of this book from the Kidlitexchange network in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own.

Releasing 1/8/19

Change is slow to come. The privilege I am benefiting from today as a Black woman was earned by those who came before me and fought against segregation.

Jo Ann Allen Boyce personal account of what it was like being part of the 12 Black students sent to an all-white high school in Clinton Tennessee was terrifying and humbling.

The book starts out with the big picture and as you read on, the authors expertly narrow your focus down to the neighbors inside Clinton. You are placed right on the streets and discover the many facets segregation takes depending on the town or the city. It's the same everywhere but not quite. Then the narration dives deeper, taking you to levels of "how do you feel when you can't tell if a smile from a white person truly reaches their heart or not?" for example.

This is a crucial non fiction that everyone should read and I hope there are more books like this on their way to publication because people need to "see" what had been.

If anyone is interested in a middle grade book that matches this one, I recommend "With the Might of Angels: The Diary of Dawnie Rae Johnson, Hadley, Virginia, 1954". It's a historical fiction based on the author's own experience as a first black student in an all-white school.

Amanda Sanders says

I've only read one other account of a school desegregation from the point of view of a black student. I cried reading that book and this one. The stories are a painful reminder that ending slavery did not end the racism and problems for African Americans. In "This Promise of Change" Jo Ann tells her story in verse. I love stories done this way because every word matters in poetry. The images she evoked were vivid. I also liked the primary source newspaper clips throughout the book. The town of Clinton, TN made the decision to desegregate because it was the law--not because it was the right thing to do. People came from out of town to help protesters and even to lead the protesting of 12 black students being integrated into the Clinton all white high school. Before 1956 black students were bused over 20 miles to Knoxville to attend the all black Austin High School. This is the painful story of what Jo Ann and her class mates went through the first year of desegregation in Clinton.

Charlotte says

powerful and moving, memorable as all get out, and such an important story. I would have given it a fifth star except that, although I liked the free verse sections, I found the more formal poetic verse sections awkward to read (a preference, more than a criticism)

Leonard Kim says

Written with lightning
