

Danielle: [00:02](#) Welcome to the YA Cafe where we share conversations about books for teachers, readers, and caffeine addicts everywhere. On today's episode, we'll be talking about "How I Resist: Activism And Hope For A New Generation" edited by Maureen Johnson. Grab a mug of your favorite beverage, friends, and let's talk books.

Ad: [00:18](#) Find even more book reviews, teaching ideas and Secondary ELA resources at Teachnouvelle.com

Danielle: [00:24](#) Welcome, welcome, welcome! So usually we split the episode into Spoiler Free and Spoiler sections, but today we are shaking things up as we talk about an anthology that aims to shake things up. Our first segment will be more for a general audience, and the second segment will be geared towards teachers and librarians. I'm Danielle Hall an 8th and 9th grade English teacher and I blog at Teachnouvelle.com and I'm joined today by Chris Peck, a teacher, activist and poet. He's on Instagram as "_hipsterteacher_" and he starting a book club for educators. "How I Resist" is his first book pick, so he seemed like the perfect choice to discuss the new collection with me. Hi Chris!

Chris: [00:24](#) Hey

Danielle: [01:06](#) So let's jump right in with this book club. What is it, and can we still join?

Chris: [01:10](#) Yes you can. It is a club that's geared towards educators, or soon to be educators, or even people that were educators and really all I want to do is talk about books that help us be better at, you know, teaching and what we do. So it's exciting.

Danielle: [01:26](#) That is so cool! And so "How I Resist" is your first book. So when will you start your discussions and how can somebody find you to talk about this book?

Chris: [01:40](#) It's an Instagram under the name "@edureadingclub" and you can just request to join, I pretty much let everyone join. And I actually posted our first discussion topic today based on the second entry in this book. So really what I do is I kind of just introduce the section and some of the questions that I had while reading it geared more towards educators and how we can become better educators, and then just let people comment and create their own discussions and I'll kind of comment back as well, so ...

Danielle: [02:08](#) Well that's awesome and we wish you the best of luck, and we're actually recording the on Sunday for a Thursday publication, so by Thursday

Chris: [02:16](#) Hopefully it'll be more activity and it'll have taken off quite a bit. It's exciting.

Danielle: [02:21](#) It's basically combining like two of my favorite things, right? Reading and Instagram. And so Chris, the way that I first found you was in February when The SuperHERO Teacher and Ms. Bertles started the #armewith campaign, and I know that you were involved with that and you marched against gun violence. Can you talk a little bit about that and the place that resistance and activism have in your life?

Chris: [02:46](#) Yeah, it was kind of a surreal moment. I think, uh, me and a lot of educators after everything that happened in Parkland were pretty fed up and we wanted to do something. I didn't really know what to do and I got contacted by, uh, The SuperHERO Teacher. So, um, I tried to get the word out and tried to do as much as I could for that, and since then it's, it's kind of been interesting, like I feel like I'm a part of something that I want to keep fighting for. So I, I marched with actually a lot of my students who wanted to get really involved, so it was mostly them that did all the work, really, and I kind of just showed up and marched with them and showed, um, my support for that. But it really kind of made me change at least some aspects of the way I teach, and also my Instagram account and what I focus on. Maybe not completely, but in part, like, continually posting about gun violence and wanting to see change in that and hoping that we can have, uh, leaders that want to invoke more change to make schools safer.

Danielle: [03:49](#) That's really cool. And I'm so glad you said that, you know, your students were involved in that and that they ended up taking the lead and that you supported them and that you brought resistance and activism into your classroom because that is kind of the goal of "How I Resist". "How I Resist" is an anthology of essays, poems, art, interviews, short fiction, it's kind of got it all, and they're all centered around the idea of activism. Editor Maureen Johnson calls it "a resistance book for teens". The contributor list is absolutely amazing and each contributor finds their own way and means to answer the question, "How do you resist?" So Chris, I'm gonna throw it to you first here, when you saw this book, when it first came onto your radar, what were you expecting to get out of it?

- Chris: [04:33](#) You know, I wasn't sure. I just thought that seems to be in line with everything that I'm trying to do and everything that has really started to read about in more detail. I guess almost a year ago I started really diving into understanding a lot of these issues more and reading from a greater variety of authors, and this just with the list of people that were contributing to it and I guess what it looked like it was going to be just seemed like something I'd be interested to read and something I thought my students might be interested to read if I had it in my classroom.
- Danielle: [05:04](#) Yeah, me too. I got a review copy of this I think in like December or January, and I saw that the contributors would include Jacqueline Woodson, Jason Reynolds, Libba Bray, and Jennifer Weiner, Rosie O'Donnell, and I just knew that my students would really connect with this book, and, like, it's cool and it's totally ready for the classroom library because on the front it has these, like, sketches of all of the contributors so students will be able to see that it's a diverse collection of people, maybe authors of other books that they've read, you know, like Melinda Low and Shaina Taub. So, I think that students are going to be ready and willing to pick up this book.
- Chris: [05:44](#) Yeah, I think so too, also, I, uh, have been reading a lot of Jason Reynolds lately.
- Danielle: [05:44](#) Me too.
- Chris: [05:49](#) And when I saw that he contributed that, that made me want to read even more because I, I love everything he's writing right now and I've been with my students and recommending his books with my students. So it's been exciting, I was glad that he was a part of it as well.
- Danielle: [06:02](#) Yeah, me too. And so do you want to like jump in and we can talk about some of the stuff that we really loved on a, on a general reader level?
- Chris: [06:10](#) Yeah, definitely! So a lot of things that I read seemed to have kind of a reoccurring themes, one in particular that have community and how within a community and especially when you are "resisting" as they put it, when you're trying to become an activist or let your voice known, you as an individual are not going to be able to do nearly as much as you could if you're in a community of like-minded people. So that community aspect I found really powerful throughout the entire book.

Danielle: [06:42](#) Yeah, I agree. I found the community aspect and also I feel that contributors to this anthology weren't afraid to say that resistance and activism are hard and sometimes we need to protect ourselves from burning out from activism fatigue. And I, I think we saw that throughout the book as well.

Chris: [06:42](#) Yeah.

Danielle: [07:03](#) I also loved the sense of humor. I wasn't expecting a book about activism to be funny, but there was a lot of humor in this book.

Chris: [07:11](#) Yeah, I think so too. A one that kind of stuck out to me was Libba Bray's

Danielle: [07:11](#) Yeah!

Chris: [07:11](#) her ... I guess it's a letter? That she wrote, um

Danielle: [07:11](#) Like a fictitious letter.

Chris: [07:11](#) Yeah.

Danielle: [07:21](#) Now have you read Libby Bray before?

Chris: [07:23](#) Only a little bit.

Danielle: [07:27](#) Libba Bray is the author of "Going Bovine", which is about a narrator who has mad cow disease. She also wrote "Beauty Queens", which is kind of like an all-girl retelling of "Lord of the Flies" with beauty pageant contestants. Anyway, she's very funny. So okay, what did you think of Libba Bray's letter?

Chris: [07:43](#) I thought it was really clever. It's a letter to a Sorority resistance committee and it just starts out really hilarious and it really draws you in, but then she talks about really important and real things in a way that I feel people can easily relate to, especially teenagers because it's relatable and because you can tell that it's written for them.

Danielle: [08:06](#) That's true. This is an announcement from Muffy Higginbottom, president of the Delta Sigma Tau Sorority Resistance Committee. "Good morning Resisters! Thank you for coming downstairs before noon. Geewan and Oksana, I know you were up way late making sure that Ruth Bader Ginsburg's Delta Sigma Tau designed oxygen chamber didn't spring a leak, so big ups to y'all. It is our mission to keep the RBG alive for the next four years. I don't think I have to impress upon you the importance

of this." Like, this character of Muffy i is just very relatable and funny and, like, communicates something that teenagers need to hear, for sure. I loved Maya Rupert's "I Wonder", imagining a Black Wonder Woman.

- Chris: [08:47](#) Yeah, that was great. I really enjoyed that.
- Danielle: [08:49](#) This is an essay about Wonder Woman and she starts off saying, "Growing up I was told that my favorite comic book heroine was White and yet her struggles always seemed uniquely similar to my own" and she talks about Wonder Woman and compares Wonder Woman's struggles to Maya's upbringing as a Black woman.
- Chris: [09:11](#) She says, "She doesn't have to look like you. You can still want to be her." And I thought that was important. This encouragement of diversity, even if the characters that we are watching, or reading about, or viewing are not like us, right? Because I think we miss out on a lot of that and it should be more encouraged. It was heartbreaking as part of the story, she talks about how one of her teachers called her out because she was coloring Wonder Woman Black, and it was kind of heartbreaking to think as an educator that another educator would be angry about that.
- Danielle: [09:41](#) You know, I love anytime an adult reflects on their interactions with a teacher from when they were a child because it helps me learn a lot about myself as an educator. I also love the parallels that she draws between Wonder Woman and herself. Okay, so I'm totally nerding out here, but that's okay. *laughter* So she talks about the Lasso of Truth storyline, where Wonder Woman has to kill someone and then that moment is kind of broadcast without any context, and all of a sudden the world is seeing this angry, overpowered, woman and they're judging her on that without kind of knowing her.
- Chris: [09:41](#) Mhmm
- Chris: [10:24](#) And Maya Rupert was comparing that to the stereotype of the angry Black woman, and how hurtful that is to her existence.
- Chris: [10:33](#) A piece that I really connected with and enjoyed was Daniel Watt's "The Clap Back", which is a poem. And reading it, it sounded like it would be something that you should read out loud, uh, slam poem, spoken word type of poem. But there is a lot in it that I really connected with, I guess as a teacher but also just in my own reading, what I've come to find and feel is really

important for people to understand. So he says "The doors are open now, the light has been shed" and it made me think of this realization that I had at some point - I'm sure everyone who is trying to understand these social issues more understands at some point, I know my students did - where him saying "The doors are opened now, the light has been shed" is this realization that what is happening has always been happening. We look at issues of racism and how visceral that can be and how damaging it can be and how we didn't really, perhaps, know as much as we should about it until the advent of social media and how it was made aware to a lot more people than those that are being directly affected by it or those who happened to see it. Now the world is able to view what has been going on for centuries. I think of my students who are in high school and them being exposed to things, like the death of Philando Castile. Because of social media the doors *are* open now, the light has been shed, and they're able to understand these things and cope with them, and deal with them, and then hopefully resist against them.

Danielle:

[12:06](#)

Yeah, I mean, these are the things that can't be unseen, or unheard, or unknown. So yeah, I think that that idea of throwing the door wide open, that resonates with me for sure as well. I also loved Javier Munoz's interview. So, I'm a big Hamilton fan and we don't have to go down the rabbit hole, but it's very different to listen to it now than it was on November 7th of 2016. One of the things that I've always, always wondered about was what it was like to be backstage of Hamilton when they knew that Mike Pence was in the audience. And Javier Munoz played the role of Hamilton, he kind of shared that role with Lin Manuel-Miranda, and Javier Munoz was there the night Mike Pence was in the audience, and so he shares in his interview what that energy was like and how the cast decided to give their best show ever and make the speech at the end, and you know, kind of like - I'm getting chills just thinking about it - but kind of like seize their moment to talk to a very powerful person, through their art, and from their hearts. I loved that so much.

Chris:

[13:13](#)

I did too. And there was something and he said also, and this kinda goes back to this theme that came about through this book, so in his same entry, he says, "Momentum towards compassion, understanding, supporting one another, realizing that a person's struggle, though it's not mine is important and I need to defend them and they're going to defend me. This is how we go forward." And just next to that, I have several different page numbers from different authors who touched on this same idea of compassion, and empathy, and community,

and resisting, not alone but with a broad group of people, and trying to focus on what they're going through, not just what you're going through. I think that's how resistance really takes off. Just like in the Parkland shooting, I was not a part of that, but it affected me and I could empathize with those that are directly affected, which made me want to resist, further. So I think that's an important message that the book brings about, I guess continually through different authors. Going back to Daniel Watts' poem, he says the same thing where he says "We got your kids dying to be a part of a culture that has always been inclusive, as long as you're down for the cause." And he's showing how because of social media, which is something he talks about in his poem quite a bit, how the world is shrinking because we're exposed to it more, which is going to help us want to resist more.

Danielle: [14:45](#) Absolutely, and it also, you know, shares the burden that people feel. Like, you talked about how after the shootings you didn't what your role was, but you were able to begin to find a community and then even in your classroom I can imagine a community formed itself as your kids started to become motivated to resist as well.

Chris: [15:05](#) Yeah, definitely. My students are really took up the charge. A lot of them started to get together and to meet, and want to do more. One of my students actually became one of the student leaders of the March For Our Lives movement in Salt Lake City, which was pretty exciting because she was able to come back and talk with me and with the other students that were trying to put all this together to resist.

Danielle: [15:28](#) That's really cool, and that kind of reminds me of this other thing that's brought up in one of the essays by Hebh Jamal. She writes, "While building a grassroots effort, we can't become submissive to a capitalist mentality that encourages focusing on individual leaders. If one starts an organization, or has a following, it is important not to succumb to the constant use of the word 'I'. Although I understand the importance of individual narratives, movements are more powerful when understood as collaborative efforts." And with that, friends, we'll take our first break. When we come back we'll share about Things We Like A Latte, then we'll return to our discussion of "How I Resist" and dig a little deeper.

Ad: [16:26](#) Support for this podcast comes from Audible. Audible is offering listeners of the YA Cafe a free 30 day trial and a free audio book to get you started. Y'all, I love audio books. I listen to them all the time, whether I'm grocery shopping, or in the car, or on a

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- Danielle: [16:56](#) Welcome back y'all, it's time for Things We Like A Latte. Chris, what's your brew of choice this week?
- Chris: [17:07](#) So what I Like A Latte is this YouTube channel called, uh, Nerdwriter. So this channel, he does a lot of reviews of music, and movies, and different things like that ,and really does a lot of critical analysis of movies or music or sometimes it's random, sometimes it's like art or random books that he just happened to find. I don't think there's any like big, like, key thing he focuses on, he just likes analyzing things. Which is something that I really liked doing
- Danielle: [17:07](#) Me too!
- Chris: [17:33](#) So I can appreciate. I, *laughter*, it's a weird hobby of mine, but if I can like, dive into something and really understand it a lot better and get stuff out of it I just feel so happy, and that's what he does. So I've been watching a lot of them, my students kind of have to suffer through them because anytime I find something cool I'm like "We're just going to stop whatever we're doing and we're going to watch this because I want to watch it." So that's fun.
- Danielle: [17:53](#) Awesome. So we're gonna link to your three favorite Nerdwriter episodes in the show notes.
- Chris: [17:58](#) Danielle, what's your thing that you Like A Latte?
- Danielle: [18:01](#) Well Chris, let me tell you. I love Jessica Spotswood and she has a new book coming out this week and it's called "The Last Summer of the Garrett Girls". She wrote "Cahill Witch Chronicles", and "Wild Swans", and we already talked about her anthology "The Radical Element" on the show, and I just love her stuff. And so she's got this new book, it's really cool, and on her Instagram she did book aesthetics. So it's a nine-grid of things related to each of the four Garrett girls, to kind of give you a vibe of each of the main characters, and I just love it so much! So her book is out, "The Last Summer of the Garrett Girls" and you should look up the book aesthetics on her Instagram. We're going to take a quick break and when we come back we'll return to our discussion on "How I Resist".
- New Speaker: [18:01](#) *musical interlude*

Danielle: [19:09](#) Welcome back to the YA Cafe, we're continuing our discussion on "How I Resist". This segment of the show will be more or less aimed at teachers and librarians wanting to kind of learn from "How I Resist" and use it in their classrooms. So Chris, take us away. You read this while you were still in school, right? So did you have a chance to use any of these contributions in your classroom?

Chris: [19:31](#) I didn't, unfortunately. I have a lot of plans to use them next year, but this year, I mean, we just winding down and I first started reading this and when I first got my copy. So nothing in the classroom yet, but I do have a lot of plans.

Danielle: [19:31](#) Awesome! So let's here them, tell us all your plans.

Chris: [19:47](#) So the biggest one came from Jonny Sun's entry that he did

Danielle: [19:47](#) Yes!

Chris: [19:47](#) "Media Consciousness As Part of a Resistance"

Danielle: [19:56](#) I have post it notes all over this one too. He does an introduction and then he does a "listicle"

Chris: [20:04](#) Yeah, he does a list of, let's see, it's called "10 Things To Think About When Consuming Media", and he tackles mostly social media and how we respond to it and how we understand it, but really it can be applied to any type of media. And I'm reading through this and all I can think the whole time is "I have to share this with my class. I have to get them to read this". The whole time I was so excited about it. Just with everything that he is saying on how we consume media, how we consume certain types of media, the bias that exists within certain media outlets (or really all of them, I guess).

Danielle: [20:41](#) Yeah. #5 is, "Does the piece of media to tell a truth, or sell it truth?", that is, "Is the work authentic and honest? Are the authors of the work able to make the work honest or are they qualified to create this piece? Is the work telling a truth about the world, or does it manipulate you into buying a lie? What is the truth anyway? What is your truth?" And yeah, I feel like we could spend a day of class time on each of these things, right? Like, there's so much.

Chris: [21:08](#) Oh we really could. Yeah. These are things that I want my students to understand and I feel like I'm doing everything I can to give them examples and to talk about it with them, but the

way that he writes it is so engaging and just straightforward that I feel like my students are going to benefit immensely just from reading this. Uh, for instance, uh, #3 of this list, "What assumptions do you and the author have to agree on to understand this piece of media?" and he goes through kind of a list within this, he says, "And when do you identify it? Is the message constructive? Is it toxic? Does it normalize bias or toxic worldviews? If it's funny, why is it funny and do you have to agree with the joke for it to be funny to you? Do you agree with it? Why or why not?" And he goes on and on, like that, saying these are questions that as you consume media you should be asking yourself and really trying to think about. And I loved that.

- Danielle: [22:03](#) Right. And his writing style is really Socratic, right? Like, he asks a lot of questions without necessarily answering them so that students can then pause, and think, and build their own understanding.
- Chris: [22:15](#) Yes, definitely. And a lot of what he says helps us understand our role as educators, but also our students role as being critical thinkers, and really looking at what we're exposed to and considering why were exposed to it, right? Why is it that I'm only reading about certain things? Um, one of the other people who are helping me with this reading club on Instagram, Mikayla Poole who is @slothfulteacher, had a conversation with me about this and how if we are always feeling comfortable with the media that we consume than perhaps we're consuming the wrong of media, at least on a regular basis
- Danielle: [22:58](#) Or not enough diversity in our media.
- Chris: [22:58](#) Exactly.
- Danielle: [23:01](#) And I also liked how Jonny Sun talks about stereotypes. "Does this piece of media confirm existing stereotypes? Does it upend them? Does it upend them without relying on other stereotypes?" He says that "stereotypes are shortcuts to bigotry and oppression and they say that we didn't want to, or weren't able to put in the time and effort to understand a whole group of people, so instead here are some sweeping generalizations" and I think that students know what stereotypes are, but they're not always able to question all of their stereotypes as such. And sometimes, you know, they need to realize, like Maya Rupert said, that the angry Black woman trope/stereotype is hurtful, it's not real, and it's a shortcut that allows for continued oppression. And like, you know, our students are totally capable of understanding that, but someone's gotta point it out to you

the first time. And I think Jonny Sun does a really good job of that.

- Chris: [23:56](#) I think so too, and I think our students get into this trap of thinking stereotypes are really obvious and blatant things that you're always going to be like, "Yes, that's definitely a stereotype". Like, when we are teaching about, I don't know, WWII and we talk about propaganda and you show pictures of propaganda that were made back in the time, and the stereotypes are really obvious (at least to us now), but the subtler ones, the ones that they probably don't pick up on and probably exist within their speech or speech that they hear from friends, they don't see as stereotypes.
- Danielle: [23:56](#) Right.
- Chris: [24:32](#) So I think Jonny Sun really helps illustrate that and helps them understand that they're not always obvious, they're not always just these in your face thing, sometimes ...
- Danielle: [24:41](#) And they're not always things that seem bad, right? Like you can have, there's this idea of benevolent chauvinism, well there's also quote unquote "benevolent stereotypes" like the stereotypes that say "all of this people group are good at this", like that's still a stereotype
- Chris: [24:41](#) Yeah
- Danielle: [24:59](#) and we need to question all of those within ourselves.
- Chris: [25:03](#) Yes, definitely, perfect. His work, just, that one really shined. I mean all of the entries in this book were absolutely wonderful (but) this one I felt I could actually, you know, maybe not rip out, but get a copy of and have my students read through it and it definitely informs a lot of the other stuff that you're reading in this book.
- Danielle: [25:22](#) I agree. I also loved the comics in this book. There are two or three, you know, four-panel comics in this book and I loved that that showed, or has the capacity to show students that activism isn't always marching with a poster, but can also be woven into your everyday creations and self expression. Like you don't stop being an activist because your hanging out at home or whatever.
- Chris: [25:50](#) Definitely. Yeah. So in one of the comics by Jeffrey Roland, there's just a line, it's a conversation between an individual and

Abraham Lincoln and just this line right at the end, I think this is something important. they say "Sometimes all you can do is try to be a decent person. That's what I did, mostly". And I think that's important for our students to understand, is, being a decent person and trying to be kind is extremely important and something that they can do right away.

- Danielle: [26:18](#) Yes, I agree with that, you know, as long as we also empower them to not stop there.
- Chris: [26:18](#) Definitely.
- Danielle: [26:25](#) It's definitely an important baseline and in this comic with Abraham Lincoln, they also talk about the fatigue of, like, social media and having every problem in your world at your fingertips at the same time.
- Chris: [26:25](#) Yeah
- Danielle: [26:38](#) And Abraham Lincoln's like, "I didn't have that", you know,
- Chris: [26:43](#) Well, and it goes through of this at the very beginning, November 9th, 2016, "I'll always be mad about this" and then kind of goes through these phases, you know, weeks and months just staring at his phone and this exposure to social media and how, how much of a weight that it can place on you if you're doing that. I feel like it's kinda the same with anything that happens in the media that's really large scale, or even sometimes small scale. But with Parkland, after that happened it was just reading everything I could about it and my students were the same way and you just get kind of bogged down, and maybe it's the lack of doing something and it's only intaking things that might contribute to that. But I think it's good that we have this comic or really the rest of the book to help us understand, like, you're going to get bogged down if you're just consuming, consuming, consuming, and you have to also give yourself a break and also act.
- Danielle: [27:31](#) Right. And so when I teach my dystopian unit, one of the forms of control that we discuss is bureaucratic control. And that would be like, the government making something so impossible in terms of like the number of pieces of paper that you have to fill out to get whatever done, like, that's a form of control. I think that information overload is also a form of control, you know? You just make people tired so that they don't do anything.

Chris: [27:31](#) Yeah.

Danielle: [28:02](#) Kind of on that note of fatigue, this last contribution by Karuna Riazi about 'refilling the well' really spoke to me because she talks about, you know, the well of the world, and the well of life, and the well of well-being. And she writes, "My strength is not bottomless. My grief, my defeat, my days of deep darkness, the days in which we all cannot help but to be tethered to the headlines, helpless and hindered by all that we want to do and should do and yet cannot begin to fix, do not define me. But they are also not meant to be struggled through with a dry mouth and eyes, and an empty well. This is how I do better and dig deeper. This is how I continue to live and brace myself for the occasional ball I cannot help but catch, and have enough left to give in the best ways I can possibly give. I keep the bucket in my hands and I refill the well", and I just love that, like, call to personal well-being and self-care.

Chris: [29:05](#) Definitely, I think that's important. I think anyone who wants to resist or stand up for anything that was going on that they see, it's important to understand the role of self-care and like she says, kind of refilling that well and helping yourself so that you can continue to resist and you can continue to help other people as well.

Danielle: [29:24](#) Yeah, I think that's definitely something we can teach our students. That's our show for today, friends. Thank you so much for coming on the show, Chris.

Speaker 3: [29:32](#) Thank you. I loved being on the show. It's absolutely wonderful to talk about this book, "How I Resist".

Danielle: [29:38](#) You can find Chris on Instagram @hipsterteacher_ and Teachers Pay Teachers as the Hipster Teacher, and don't forget to sign up for the book club for educators, that's the @edureadingclub on Instagram, and we have a link in our show notes. You can find us on Instagram and Twitter @yacafepodcast, we'd love to hear from you. If you're enjoying the show we are in episode 16 and it is time for you to leave us a review. Please, please, please, thank you, thank you, thank you. Happy reading!