



>>> IN THE NEWS

Post Hill Press goes on with book by officer in Breonna Taylor raid

The publisher of memoir by a Louisville police officer who fired at Breonna Taylor after being shot during the deadly raid on Taylor's apartment says it will release the book even though its distributor, Simon & Schuster, announced it would "not be involved".

Post Hill Press, based outside of Nashville, Tennessee, has scheduled a fall release for Sgt Jonathan Mattingly's *The Fight For Truth: The Inside Story Behind the Breonna Taylor Tragedy*.

"Post Hill Press continues to move forward with plans to publish Sgt Mattingly's book," according to a statement from the publisher. "His story is important and it deserves to be heard by the public at large. We feel strongly that an open dialogue is essential to shining a light on the challenging issues our country is facing."

A Post Hill press spokesperson declined comment on whether the publisher would seek a new distributor or distribute the book itself, a far more challenging undertaking without the resources of Simon & Schuster, one of the world's biggest book publishers.

Reports of the book deal were met with widespread anger on social media, with Simon & Schuster authors Jennifer Weiner and Saeed Jones among those condemning it. Kentucky state Rep Attica Scott, a Democrat, wrote on *Twitter*: "People love to profit off of black pain and tragedy. It sells."

Mattingly and another officer fired shots that hit Taylor during the March 13, 2020, narcotics raid. Mattingly was shot in the leg by Taylor's boyfriend. Taylor, a 26-year-old black emergency medical worker, died at the scene, but no drugs were found in the apartment.

The 48-year-old Mattingly

was shot in the leg by Taylor's boyfriend, Kenneth Walker, who said he fired a single shot after fearing an intruder was breaking into the apartment. Mattingly was recently reprimanded by Louisville's police chief for a September email critical of department leadership and protesters. He remains in the department. Two other officers who fired their guns during the raid have been dismissed.

The response to Mattingly's book deal highlighted a little known part of the publishing industry — distribution deals. In a companywide memo, Simon & Schuster CEO Jonathan Karp called them an "important part of our overall business portfolio" and cited "the unsustainable precedent of rendering our judgment on the thousands of titles from independent publishers whose books we distribute to our accounts, but whose acquisitions we do not control".

"You have our commitment to always be open to the exchange of opinions and points of view with our employees and authors," Karp wrote. "At times, that commitment will be in conflict with the editorial choices of our distribution partners, which we must also respect. As a publisher, we seek a broad range of views for our lists. As a distributor, we have a limited and more detached role."

In recent years, Simon & Schuster has faced outrage over titles the company itself planned to publish. It dropped a memoir by far-right commentator Milo Yiannopoulos, a prominent supporter of the January 6 march in Washington that led to the overrunning of the US Capitol by Donald Trump supporters seeking to halt the certification of Joe Biden's presidential win.

>>> SPOTLIGHT

Self-acceptance targeted in new children's book

Bushyhead, by Peta-Gaye Nash

Rock-born Peta-Gaye Nash, who has been living in Canada for the past 20 years, has recently written a book on a subject matter she feels passionate about: *Hair*; specifically, *Black hair pride*. She spoke to *Bookends* about her latest project, a children's book called *Bushyhead*. Nash is the author of six other children's books, as well as a collection of short fiction for adults.

Peta-Gaye, why this book? I know each of your books focuses on an important message, what's the message of this particular book?

I started writing children's books only because I had children and there were all these lessons that I wanted to share with the world, lessons that were relatable and valuable for other parents. When my son Liam was 2, he ran out into the road and I had no idea how to teach him not to do that and make the lesson stick. I was so scared and ended up showing fear through anger. I wrote *Essie Wants an Education* where the squirrel learns something life-changing in school — how to cross the road. That came out of living in Canada and seeing a lot of squashed squirrels. Children learn through stories. It's a fun, easy way to teach lessons about having manners, being kind, caring about your family and so on. Each book focuses on something important. *Bushyhead* is about embracing your natural hair, no matter what society says.

Bushyhead was written for my daughter and nieces who were teased about their hair, told they couldn't be princesses. My daughter was told her hair was doo-doo, a bird's nest, and so on. When she got braids, the bullying got so bad that the principal and teachers had to intervene. Two of them grew their hair and donated it to make curly hair wigs for children with no hair. This is what the character in the book does.

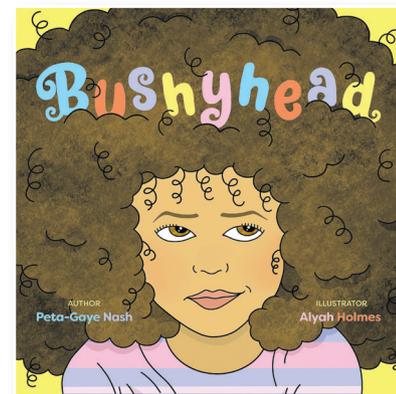
What age group is targeted here?

The book is written for ages 3-7. I want to change the narrative we have around hair, that straight hair is better, normal, the ideal. *Bushyhead's* father, who is bald, says, "Be grateful you have hair." The book's aim is to send the message to curly-, coily-, kinky-haired girls that their hair is beautiful.

When I was a child, there were all these societal and cultural messages that straight hair was better, in Jamaica and in the United States where I lived for five years. I wanted my daughter to have a different



Peta-Gaye Nash



experience — to be proud and confident in her ethnicity. Society teaches us to look down on certain hair textures and hairstyles, even dreadlocks.

But there's a message there for adults too, isn't there?

Oh, yes, definitely! I also want adults to get the message to stop trying to tame and change their children's hair. I had a black woman come up to me and tell me she could help me find products to tame my daughter's hair (when she was in daycare). I left it wild on purpose. I left it wild to encourage her to love it as it was (even though I'm sure other women thought I didn't know how to comb my child's hair). Then I had an Indian hairdresser ask me three times if I wanted to put a relaxer through her hair. I said no three times. It made me realise how so many people think about black hair — that it's bad or lesser than white hair. I

mean, I knew this, of course. But the wrongness and ridiculousness of it didn't hit me until I had my own child. I know it's all tied up in race. One of my older daughters with very loosely curly hair, more wavy actually, was told in high school, "Too bad you have monkey blood." She almost doesn't even look mixed until people see me, then they realise she is not one of them. So she straightened her hair all through high school.

Then with all the racial inequalities coming to light during COVID, she changed. She embraced her natural hair too. It's been so long since I've lived in Jamaica that I don't know how people feel about hair there. I don't have all the answers to this. But this is my way of trying to change the narrative, my way of saying: you and your hair are valuable, beautiful, worthy. As for myself, there were no curly hair products or models when I was growing up. We only saw white women with straight or wavy hair. Naturally I wanted that. And of course, we were told we had either good hair or bad hair. This is nonsense. Hair is just hair. But the emotion attached to it! My daughter was on the beach up north (very white country) and a little boy passing by, exclaimed, "Did you see her hair, Dad?" The father pulled him away in embarrassment, and my daughter shrank. I said, "He's just a little boy, honey. He's never seen your type of hair before."

I wanted to help her to be proud, to know that she is valuable. I want every kid to know this. This I think, is my ultimate goal, to step into each child's home and help them in some way, through words.

Bushyhead is available on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

>>> BOOK NEWS

NEW YORK (AP) — The multimillion-selling Chicken Soup for the Soul franchise is reaching for a younger demographic.

Chicken Soup for the Soul has reached a partnership with the children's publisher Charlesbridge for two new series of books, the two publishers announced last

Chicken Soup for the Soul will soon be served to kids

week. *Chicken Soup for the Soul Babies* will be for babies and toddlers, up to age 3, and *Chicken Soup for the Soul Kids* will be for ages 4-7.

The new project launches Sept 21 with four books: the board books *Everyone Shares (Except Cat)* and *Everyone Says Please (Except Cat)* and the picture books *The Sunshine Squad: Discovering*

What Makes You Special and *Sophie and the Tiny Dognapping: A Book About Doing the Right Thing*.

"When we decided it was time to work with a children's publisher, Charlesbridge was my first choice. I'm thrilled with the first books in the *Chicken Soup for the Soul Kids* and *Babies* series," Amy Newmark,

editor-in-chief and publisher of *Chicken Soup for the Soul*, said in a statement. "They impart values in such a delightful way. How great is it that kids will be amused and entertained while they absorb the life lessons their parents and grandparents want to share with them!"

Charlesbridge publisher Yolanda Scott said the two companies

share common goals.

"Our mission to create lifelong readers and learners dovetails perfectly with the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* vision of making the world a better place one story at a time," she said in a statement. "Today's parents grew up with the original series, and we look forward to bringing *Chicken Soup for the Soul's* positive and inclusive storytelling to the next generation."