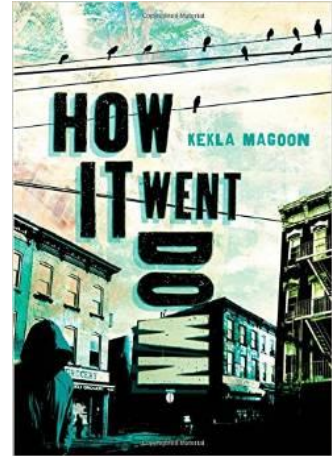


How It Went Down

by Kekla Magoon (2014)



A 16-year-old black male named Tariq is shot and killed in broad daylight after an altercation with a white man on a street corner. There are several witnesses: Jennica, an acquaintance of Tariq's; Noodle, Jennica's boyfriend and member of the gang the 8-5 Kings; Brian Trellis, a white man who swears he heard Rocky, the shopkeeper, yell for someone to stop Tariq from stealing; Sammy, member of the Kings and Tariq's friend; Brick, leader of the Kings; and Tom Arlen, a white man who witnesses his friend, Jack Franklin, shoot Tariq; and Jack Franklin.

Brick thinks Tariq had a gun, but the gun Brian Trellis *thought* Tariq had turned out to be a Snickers bar Tariq was pretending was a gun. When Rocky calls out to Tariq, Brian Trellis thinks he is accusing him of stealing from the store, so he stops him. Tariq gets defensive, the two tussle, and several people on the street crowd around to see what will happen (Rocky was actually calling after him because he forgot his change.). All of a sudden, a car pulls up, a white man gets out, shoots Tariq, gets back in the car, and drives off.

There are three sides to every story: yours, mine, and the truth. This is the theme of the book, and Magoon takes the reader through the minds of the witnesses, people close to Tariq, and others swept up in the melee, including elderly members of the community, Tariq's best friend, Tyrell, and Reverend Alabaster Sloan, an Al Sharpton archetype with a penchant for beautiful young women. While members of the community paint Tariq as a decent young man and a loving family member, others paint him as a troublemaker and recent gang initiate. Released in 2014, two years after the death of Trayvon Martin and months after the shooting death of Michael Brown, the novel is a timely look at the ways a black life and community can be manipulated and misremembered by a narrative-seeking media.

How It Went Down:

Connections to Current Issues

In her June 2013 article on The Root, “Beyond Trayvon: Black and Unarmed” Jenee Desmond-Harris wrote about twenty cases of unarmed black men being shot to death in the United States. “Trayvon” refers to Trayvon Martin, who was shot by an apartment complex security guard in 2012 with a pack of Skittles in his hoodie pocket. An updated version of the article including the shooting of Michael Brown would make 21.

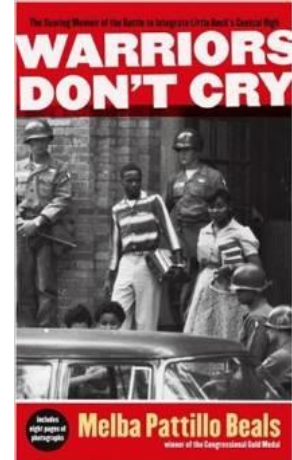
Michael Brown

- **Fatally shot by police officer in Ferguson, MO after resisting arrest. Was unarmed. 18 years old. Conflicting witness and police testimony led to the acquittal of Darren Wilson, a 28-year-old white police officer. (In HIWD, Tariq was also unarmed and a young black male)**
- **Before the shooting, Brown allegedly robbed a convenience store. The police department released store security footage as evidence.**
- **Witnesses disagreed as to whether Brown had his hands up and/or was moving toward the police officer when Wilson shot him 12 times. (In HIWD, witnesses also disagreed as to whether Tariq had a gun and what they saw).**
- **The memories Brown’s family have of him often conflict with the way he was portrayed by the police department (Tariq’s family remembers him as a loving, caring son and brother.)**
- **The community of Ferguson held extended protests in the streets. (The community of Overhill did the same in HIWD).**

Warriors Don't Cry

Melba Pattillo Beals (1994)

After the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs. Board of Education* that segregated schools were unconstitutional in the United States, nine black students were recruited by the Arkansas chapter of the NAACP to test the case by attending Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. On September 4, 1957, Beals and eight other students faced a mob of angry white protestors. They were barred from entering the building on that day, and eventually, President Eisenhower deployed troops from the 101st airborne to protect the students.



Warriors Don't Cry is the memoir of Beals' year at Central High School as she struggles to comprehend how and why so much community hatred could be targeted at her. Although Beals portrays herself as a typical 16-year-old girl in the 1950s—she likes to read magazines, practice hairstyles, listen to music, especially Johnny Mathis, and spend time with Vince, her boyfriend—her role as a “warrior” in the desegregation fight takes its mental, emotional, and physical toll. She is physically and verbally abused by white students on a daily basis but cannot respond in any way. Even the soldiers sent to protect her can do nothing except make sure she is not killed. When one of the black students, Minnijean, retaliates by throwing a bowl of chili on her white male attackers, she is expelled.

Beals find strength in the words and strong character of her mother and grandmother and endures an entire year of horror at Central. When Governor Faubus shuts down all Little Rock high schools rather than allow black students to attend for a second year, the NAACP moves Beals to Santa Clara, California, to live with a Quaker family and eventually attends San Francisco State University. She becomes a journalist.

Warriors Don't Cry: Connections to Current Issues

In May 2014, Nikole Hannah-Jones wrote in *The Atlantic* about how current repeals of the court-ordered desegregation mandates from the 1950s are rapidly returning neighborhoods in the South to either all-black or all-white, with devastating consequences. Central High School in Tuscaloosa, Alabama went from 74 percent to nearly 100 percent:

“Certainly what happened in Tuscaloosa was no accident. Nor was it isolated. Schools in the South, once the most segregated in the country, had by the 1970s become the most integrated, typically as a result of federal court orders. But since 2000, judges have released hundreds of school districts, from Mississippi to Virginia, from court-enforced integration, and many of these districts have followed the same path as Tuscaloosa’s—back toward segregation. Black children across the South now attend majority-black schools at levels not seen in four decades. Nationally, the achievement gap between black and white students, which greatly narrowed during the era in which schools grew more integrated, widened as they became less so.”

“In recent years, a new term, *apartheid schools*—meaning schools whose white population is 1 percent or less, schools like Central—has entered the scholarly lexicon. While most of these schools are in the Northeast and Midwest, some 12 percent of black students in the South now attend such schools—a figure likely to rise as court oversight continues to wane. In 1972, due to strong federal enforcement, only about 25 percent of black students in the South attended schools in which at least nine out of 10 students were racial minorities. In districts released from desegregation orders between

1990 and 2011, 53 percent of black students now attend such schools, according to an analysis by ProPublica.”

(*Segregation Now*, Hannah-Jones, 2014, *The Atlantic*)

One wonders how Melba Patillo Beals would feel about her year of sacrifice in Little Rock, only to find that, as soon as the courts stop forcing whites to integrate, they build new schools in new communities and move away.



(integration protest in North Carolina, 1957)