
Re: URGENT: racism reports at festival yesterday/social media discourse

From Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]>
Date Sun 10/4/2026 2:21 PM
To Jeff Steely <[REDACTED]>
Cc Board <[REDACTED]>; Heidi Hill <[REDACTED]>

I have not talked with them.

Rachel did say she went to their exhibitor tent and had a similar experience as the posts.

Bailee Yarbrough, Ph.D.

Executive Director | Decatur Book Festival
[REDACTED]

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From: Jeff Steely <[REDACTED]>
Date: Sunday, October 4, 2026 at 2:18 PM
To: Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Board <[REDACTED]>, Heidi Hill <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: URGENT: racism reports at festival yesterday/social media discourse

Has anyone talked to the bookstore owners? Have we had more than one person say they had an experience like this?

-Jeff

On Oct 4, 2026, at 2:08 PM, Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]> wrote:

The PR contact is Jason Feldman who will help us.

His advice:

1. He is going to monitor our feeds, pages, and news for the next 24 hours
 - a. We're hoping to be able to wait things out – so far, no media is contacting us about this. We do not want to make a statement yet that would ignite anything.
2. Jason is drafting a statement for us to have ready to go if the story gets larger. If we have to make a statement, he recommends turning off comments.

Thanks, Bailee

Bailee Yarbrough, Ph.D.

Executive Director | Decatur Book Festival
[REDACTED]

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From: Jeff Steely <[REDACTED]>
Date: Sunday, October 4, 2026 at 1:51 PM
To: Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Board <[REDACTED]>, Heidi Hill <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: URGENT: racism reports at festival yesterday/social media discourse

Our account also liked the post by silentbookclubdecaturn on Instagram

<image001.png>

<image002.png>

-Jeff

On Oct 4, 2026, at 1:24 PM, Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Hello,

Unfortunately, I have to bring to the board's attention an issue that has arisen and is being discussed widely online. Someone posted about an unfortunate experience with one of the street fair vendors, Kiss and Tale Book Shop, screenshot below. The post said, 'Friends if you are headed to the Decatur book festival. Do not stop at this vendor. Spoke and acknowledged everyone but the black shoppers . @kissandtalebookshop Racism is still alive and well . Smh'.

A volunteer at Visit Decatur showed me this post yesterday as they were monitoring social media. I talked to our social media manager, Rachel, about it and said she had seen it as well. This was at 6:00 PM yesterday.

Additionally, Silent Book Club Decatur was supposed to have a meet-up at Kiss and Tale Book Shop today. They were alerted about the posts and decided to cancel the meet-up at Kiss and Tale. They posted this morning, 'Today's meetup has been canceled. Silent Book Club is a place where everyone is welcomed, safe, and valued. We will not host meetups where that is not the case.'

Without my knowledge, Rachel posted yesterday on behalf of Decatur Book Festival a response, which is also screenshot below. I did not see these comments until about an hour ago. I asked her to remove them and we are working on a canned response, however, there has been over 100K views.

Her comments were not accurate. It had been brought to my attention yesterday, but no official decision had been made as well as it was a city of Decatur volunteer, not actually the city of decatur. I was planning to bring this to the board's attention tomorrow, but wanted to escalate asap.

I have reached out to Atlanta Pride, and they are going to put us in contact with a PR/Crisis team. At this point, we will not be responding to anything else about this except for an official response.

Please let me know if you have any other advice on how to handle.

<image001.jpg>

<image002.png>

Bailee Yarbrough, Ph.D.

Executive Director | Decatur Book Festival

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED].

To unsubscribe from this group and stop receiving emails from it, send an email to

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Re: FW: Kiss and Tale controversy

From James Diedrick <[REDACTED]>
Date Mon 10/5/2026 7:09 AM
To Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]>
Cc Board <[REDACTED]>; Heidi Hill <[REDACTED]>

I can join. Let me know the time.

Meanwhile, how many sources have reported on thos behavior from Kiss and Tale? I assume enough for us to confirm the pattern?

I think we want to emphasize our clearly stated policy against such behavior, and also note this as an exceptional, unfortunate incident in an otherwise inclusive, celebratory event.

Jim

On Sun, Oct 4, 2026, 6:32 PM Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]> wrote:

FYI – The media has picked up the story and is asking for a comment (please see below). I am talking with Jason Feldman tomorrow morning, is there anyone from the Board that can join?

Tomorrow was supposed to be the start of my maternity leave.

Bailee Yarbrough, Ph.D.
Executive Director | Decatur Book Festival
[REDACTED]

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----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Dan Whisenhunt** <[REDACTED]>
Date: Sun, Oct 4, 2026 at 16:35
Subject: Kiss and Tale controversy
To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
CC: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>, Dyana Bagby <[REDACTED]>

Good evening, we're told the Book Festival has cut ties with Kiss and Tale over allegations of racist behavior toward Black attendees. The allegation we heard is they would not acknowledge black shoppers. DBF apparently said in a post it was cutting ties with this group. Can you confirm this happened? Can you tell us what the specific allegations were and how they were brought to your attention? Can you tell us what "breaking ties" means in terms of the book festival event? Thanks in advance.



Decatur book festival...



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2/3

**decaturbookfestival** 11h

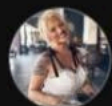
I brought this to our director's attention and the city of Decatur had flagged it as well. I (social media manager) am also a black woman and had a similar experience when I approached them after your post. We are breaking ties with them, so thank you for sharing. We don't play that 🙄 Hope you enjoyed the rest of the day 🤝

❤️ 7K

💬 45

🔄 53

➦ 15

**jens.pens** 18h

Can't recommend [@allthetropesbookstore](#) enough ❤️ I'm sorry you had that experience.



❤️ 163

💬 3



Likes



brownieshay_ 18h **Author**

Thank you definitely will check them



11



tmglSAT

🎵 p (Instrumental) DG

Follow



I will ALWAYS stand against racism even
when it's uncomfortable, inconvenient, or ...



--
Dan Whisenhunt
Executive Editor

Phone: [REDACTED]
Mobile: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

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Outlook

OUT OF OFFICE - maternity leave RE: Kiss and Tale controversy

From Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]>

Date Mon 10/5/2026 1:45 PM

To Shelbia Jackson <[REDACTED]>

Hello,

Thank you for your email. I am currently out of the office on maternity leave.

I will have limited access to email during this time. Please reach out to the Assistant Director, Heidi Hill, [REDACTED] for urgent issues.

Bailee

--

Bailee Yarbrough, Ph.D.

Executive Director | Decatur Book Festival
[REDACTED]

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Re: Kiss and Tale controversy

From James Diedrick <[REDACTED]>
Date Mon 10/5/2026 5:03 PM
To Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]>
Cc Shelbia Jackson <[REDACTED]>; Board <[REDACTED]>; Heidi Hill <[REDACTED]>

Wow. It's good that this article focuses more on the behavior of the K&T bookstore staff than the DBF. "Rache" gave quite a detailed interview! Thanks for handling this so well, Bailee -- especially since it has happened at the start of your parental leave (Thanks as well to you, Heidi.).

Jim

On Mon, Oct 5, 2026, 4:47 PM Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Thanks Shelbia.

Decaturish has posted their story - https://www.decatrish.com/news/decatr/decatr-book-festival-cuts-ties-with-local-bookstore/article_a82437e6-b588-4373-8f3f-70dc8e86dd74.html

Thanks, Bailee

Bailee Yarbrough, Ph.D.
Executive Director | Decatur Book Festival
[REDACTED]

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From: Shelbia Jackson <[REDACTED]>
Date: Monday, October 5, 2026 at 1:45 PM
To: Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]>, James Diedrick <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Board <[REDACTED]>, Heidi Hill <[REDACTED]>
Subject: RE: Kiss and Tale controversy

Good afternoon, Bailee, Jim, and Heidi,

I just want to express my appreciation for how thoughtfully and swiftly you've handled this situation. The interview and social responses reflect a swift yet firm commitment to the values of DBF and its long history of creating a fun, open, and welcoming space for all literary enthusiasts from all backgrounds.

I support continuing to monitor the situation closely, and I also wonder whether it may be helpful to prepare a positive, forward-looking message for our booksellers and vendors. Something that acknowledges the success of this year's festival, thanks them for upholding the welcoming spirit of DBF, and reassures them that 2027 will build on that momentum. It could help refocus on the great festival experience had by so many on Saturday despite this situation and reinforce the trust and partnership we've cultivated with them. Whatever message is sent will probably get shared by the media and may hopefully bring in more donors. Perhaps we also need a process for visitors, vendors, and attendees to notify us of any issues on the day of the event so issues like this can be addressed quickly and professionally.

Thank you again to the "crisis team" for meeting this challenging moment.

Shel

Ms. Shelbia Jackson, Director
DeKalb Entertainment Commission

From: Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, October 5, 2026 1:13 PM
To: James Diedrick <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Board <[REDACTED]>; Heidi Hill <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Kiss and Tale controversy

I want to keep the Board informed of additional items:

- AJC has also reached out for comment on the story. Both AJC and Decaturish asked for additional information following us sending the general statement. Below is DBF's language that we submitted, drafted by Jason Feldman.
 - General Statement: "We are aware of concerns raised by attendees regarding their treatment at one of our street fair exhibitor booths. After reviewing the matter, we will not invite Kiss and Tale Bookshop to participate in future festivals. The Decatur Book Festival is for readers and writers of every background. We expect every exhibitor to make each attendee feel welcome and respected." - *Bailee Yarbrough, Executive Director, Decatur Book Festival*
 - Follow-up Questions/Answers:
 - Decaturish:
 - Questions asked: Can you all please be more specific about what festival officials are responding to and what was reviewed to determine that Kiss and Tale would not participate in future events? How many people raised concerns, for example. Did the festival speak to people directly about the issue? And what is the issue with how patrons were treated that caused the bookstore to be blocked from future festivals.
 - DBF's Response: Out of respect for the attendees who raised concerns, we won't get into the specifics of individual experiences. Festival leadership reviewed the concerns attendees shared publicly, and the festival team makes decisions about street fair exhibitors. The Decatur Book Festival exists to bring readers and writers from every background together, and how people are treated at the festival matters to us as much as who is on our stages. When we hear that attendees didn't feel welcome or respected, we take that seriously, and this decision reflects that.
 - AJC:
 - Questions asked: Was this the festival's first time partnering with Kiss & Tale? Do you have an estimated number of bookstores that participated this year? Also wondering the same for attendees.
 - DBF's Response: Kiss and Tale was not a festival partner. Kiss and Tale has participated as a paid exhibitor in the street fair since 2024; this is the first time concerns of this kind have been raised to the festival against the vendor. This year's street fair included more than 110 exhibitors, 17 of which were bookstores. The full list of exhibitors is on the website and can be sorted by vendor type: <https://www.decaturbokfestival.com/2026-street-fair>. Separately, the festival works with four official bookstore partners who sell books at the author sessions: Brave + Kind Bookshop, Charis Books & More, Eagle Eye Book Shop, and Little Shop of Stories.
- I have talked with Sherry Jackman and Andrea Arnold. Andrea is updating all of the city commissioners on this incident.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Bailee Yarbrough, Ph.D.
Executive Director | Decatur Book Festival
[REDACTED]

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From: Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]>
Date: Monday, October 5, 2026 at 8:48 AM
To: James Diedrick <[REDACTED]>
Cc: Board <[REDACTED]>; Heidi Hill <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: Kiss and Tale controversy

Thank you to Jim, Sara, and Heidi who joined the conversation this morning with Jason. We worked on a response to Decaturish as a team and this is what we approved and is being sent:

"We are aware of concerns raised by attendees about how they were treated at one of our street fair exhibitor booths. After reviewing the matter, we will not invite Kiss and Tale Bookshop to participate in future festivals. The Decatur Book Festival is for readers and writers of every background. We expect every exhibitor to make each attendee feel welcome and respected."

- Bailee Yarbrough, Executive Director, Decatur Book Festival

If you have any questions, please let us know.

Bailee Yarbrough, Ph.D.

Executive Director | Decatur Book Festival
[REDACTED]

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From: Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]>

Date: Monday, October 5, 2026 at 7:20 AM

To: James Diedrick <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Board <[REDACTED]>, Heidi Hill <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Re: Kiss and Tale controversy

7:30 AM – link - <https://meet.google.com/hqe-cuuj-wsg>

So far, online is where the sources are, where there are more people posting about their experiences with them, both on Saturday and in general. I had talked with Charis about this on Saturday, showing them the post, they had said they were not surprised by it.

Authors who have upcoming events at Kiss and Tale are cancelling those as well.

Bailee Yarbrough, Ph.D.

Executive Director | Decatur Book Festival
[REDACTED]

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From: James Diedrick <[REDACTED]>

Date: Monday, October 5, 2026 at 7:08 AM

To: Bailee Yarbrough <[REDACTED]>

Cc: Board <[REDACTED]>, Heidi Hill <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Re: FW: Kiss and Tale controversy

I can join. Let me know the time.

Meanwhile, how many sources have reported on thos behavior from Kiss and Tale? I assume enough for us to confirm the pattern?

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Bailee Yarbrough, Ph.D.

Executive Director | Decatur Book Festival
[REDACTED]

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From: **Dan Whisenhunt** <[REDACTED]>

Date: Sun, Oct 4, 2026 at 16:35

Subject: Kiss and Tale controversy

To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>

CC: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>, Dyana Bagby <[REDACTED]>

Good evening, we're told the Book Festival has cut ties with Kiss and Tale over allegations of racist behavior toward Black attendees. The allegation we heard is they would not acknowledge black shoppers. DBF apparently said in a post it was cutting ties with this group. Can you confirm this happened? Can you tell us what the specific allegations were and how they were brought to your attention? Can you tell us what "breaking ties" means in terms of the book festival event? Thanks in advance.



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**decaturbookfestival** 11h

I brought this to our director's attention and the city of Decatur had flagged it as well. I (social media manager) am also a black woman and had a similar experience when I approached them after your post. We are breaking ties with them, so thank you for sharing. We don't play that 🙄 Hope you enjoyed the rest of the day 🤝

❤️ 7K

💬 45

🔄 53

➦ 15

**jens.pens** 18h

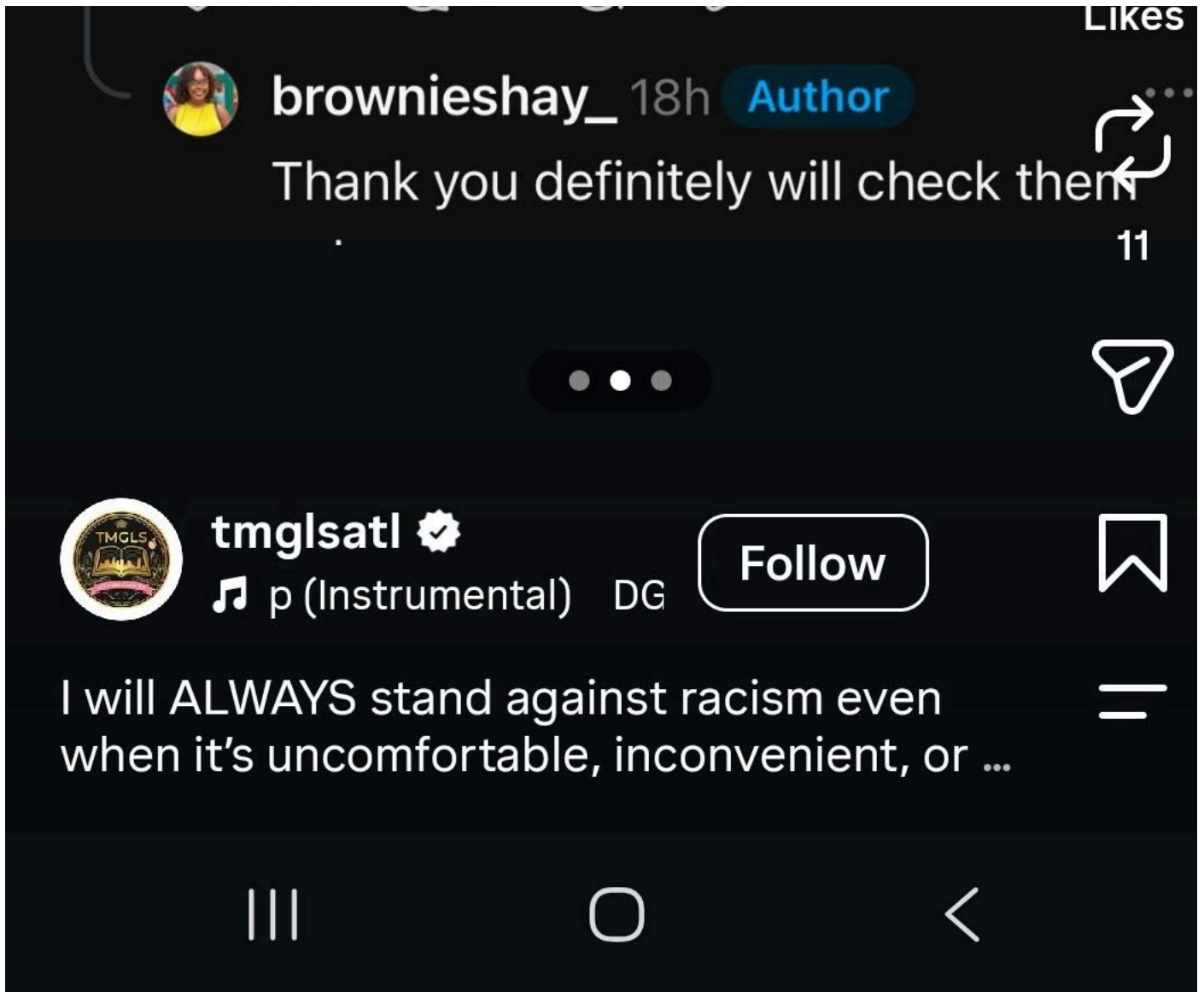
Can't recommend [@allthetropesbookstore](#) enough ❤️ I'm sorry you had that experience.



❤️ 163

💬 3





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Dan Whisenhunt
Executive Editor

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