

## **Black Girl Unlimited**

**Echo Brown**

**Reviewed by: Elisabeth Suarez, 15**

**Star Teen Book Reviewer of the Be the Star You Are! Charity**

[www.bethestaryouare.com](http://www.bethestaryouare.com)

Echo Brown is a wizard from the East Side of Cleveland in the 90s. While growing up, she learned the rules and lesson of the power she held. Echo also experienced many heart-wrenching tragedies. She was sexually assaulted, her parents are addicted to the white rock and alcohol, and she lived in poverty, often times running low on food. Yet, she had her friends at school, especially Jessie, the first boy she has feelings for, and Elena, an ambitious Muslim girl. Eventually, she transfers to the rich, mainly white school on the West Side, and a caring teacher becomes an important mentor. Echo realizes there is pain and struggling for everyone around her, as they are surrounded by a black veil of depression. One day, she is enveloped by her own veil. As she fights to return to the light, she uncovers meaningful truths about her powers and herself.

Echo's situation is similar to the many other young black women, but her journey is separate and compelling. She's not the type of wizard with a wand that chants spells. Her powers are allegorical. Echo, her mother, and her female friends are all magical. The influential black women in her life are wizards, surviving the pain and struggles of their circumstances yet still retaining their inner light. As Echo grows up and matures, she realizes she wants to use her gift to help girls like her. She wants to guide them to overcome their poor circumstances and rise up into the light. This coming-of-age story reveals the raw reality of many black women's lives.

I absolutely loved this book. *Black Girl Unlimited* is devastatingly real and talks about issues such as sexual abuse, drug addiction, colorism, racism, and more. There is such diversity in the characters and Brown really brings them to life. I was a little put off by Elena taking off her hijab at times because I feel that there needs to be more representation in the media of Muslim girls not taking off their religious veils. In this novel, there is also time and scene switches frequently that can confuse some readers. I believe Brown did this to show how a wizard has the ability to affect time and I actually understood everything, yet I can see how it can be disorientating. Lastly, Mrs. Delaney was annoyingly positive throughout the book and I feel she should have had more personality to her character. Other than those few criticisms, I was astounded by how much emotion and inspiration is included in this book!

Brown's writing is super poetic and beautiful. It's also written in an extremely unique way that helps readers connect to the main characters. Echo's magical powers are metaphors that have a greater meaning which gives depth to each scene. I adored the friendships and the romantic aspects, especially with Echo and Davante. Like I mentioned before, there is a lot of mature discussions about racism, white supremacy, discrimination, sexual abuse, and drug/alcohol abuse. Yet, I believe this book could empower young black girls and educate many people on the issues of the black community. I recommend this book for those ages fourteen and up.

### **Recommended Titles:**

All American Boys by Jason Reynolds

Witches Steeped in Gold by Ciannon Smart

The Poet X by Elizabeth Acevedo

Grown by Tiffany D. Jackson

Piecing Me Together by Renee Watson