



Play the Game by Charlene Allen

BOOK TALKS

I love speaking at schools, libraries, and community-based organizations! As an author, my goal is to help make books more exciting and accessible to young readers, who can exercise more control over what they read than over most other learning tools.

Presentations are up to an hour long and include interactive activities and a Q and A session. Book talk topics include:

The Story of *Play the Game*, from Inspiration to Finished Book

Play the Game is about young people who take power despite seemingly impossible odds. We'll meet the characters and explore the plot as it escalates toward the ultimate showdown, as well as discuss the themes of the book, which are drawn from the choices the characters make.

Restorative Justice: What Is It and How Can It Help?

We'll discuss the many tools of restorative practices through the characters of *Play the Game*, and ask some tough questions. What if someone has a good reason for hurting someone else? Can you help the person who got hurt and still be fair to the person who caused the hurt? How do you keep the situation from happening again?

About *Play the Game*:

In the game of life, sometimes other people hold all the controls. Or so it seems to VZ. Four months have passed since a white man in a Brooklyn parking lot killed his best friend Ed. When Singer, the man who killed Ed, is found dead in the same spot where Ed was murdered, all signs point to Jack, VZ's other best friend, as the prime suspect. VZ is determined to complete the video game Ed never finished and figure out who actually killed Singer. With help from Diamond, the girl he's crushing on at work, VZ falls into Ed's quirky gameiverse. As the police close in on Jack, the game starts to uncover details that could lead to the truth about the murder. Can VZ honor Ed and help Jack before it's too late?

Charlene Allen works with community organizations to heal trauma and fight injustice, especially the beast called mass incarceration. She received her MFA from The New School, her JD from Northeastern University, and her BA from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. She lives in Brooklyn with her fabulous family and their very silly dog. Charlene is the author of *Play the Game*, a young adult novel that explores restorative justice themes, released by HarperCollins in 2023. Visit Charlene at www.charleneallen.com.