

You're listening to Imaginary Worlds. I'm Eric Molinsky.

Four years ago, I did a mini-series about how the Harry Potter books had impacted millennials. The last episode in that mini-series was called Dumbledore's Army, and it looked at how young progressive activists were not only inspired by the Harry Potter books, but by JK Rowling herself.

In that episode, I interviewed Jackson Bird. At the time, he was the spokesperson for The Harry Potter Alliance, which is a social justice organization. Jackson is also trans. As you probably know, JK Rowling has recently alienated a lot of her fans, people who run her website, people who worked with her publishing, and the stars of the Harry Potter movies with her anti-transgender views, although she does not see herself as anti-transgender.

So, I want to play the original episode. Then I'm going to catch up with Jackson Bird, who wrote an op-ed in The New York Times responding to JK Rowling. We'll also talk about how he and other fans are trying to balance their love of the books with their disappointment in the author of those books.

Now, in the episode from 2016, I also interviewed Andrew Slack, who created The Harry Potter Alliance. At one point, Andrew read from an essay he wrote about his friendship with Jackson, and in that essay, Andrew mentioned the name Jackson was assigned at birth. I mentioned it too in setting up the essay. We checked with Jackson before the episode went out and he gave us permission. But in the years since, I've learned that as a general practice, it's not appropriate to mention a trans person's old name – or their “dead name” as they're sometimes called. And I was going to cut that section, but in the new interview I did with Jackson, we had a good conversation in addressing that issue, so I decided to leave it in because I think it can be a teachable moment on how to be a better ally.

But first, let's hear the original episode from 2016, which is already a time capsule on so many ways:

In 2008, JK Rowling was invited to speak at Harvard's graduation. She was self-deprecating, as usual.

CLIP: Nervous, lose weight.

The more videos I watch of JK Rowling, the more I'm impressed with how humble she is. We all know her backstory. She was a single mother on welfare before she became the most successful writer in the world. But that day, she talked about a humbling experience she had in her 20s -- working at Amnesty International in London.

This was right before she had conceived of Harry Potter, and working there influenced her thinking about Voldemort and his minions, and what kind of system they wanted to implement.

CLIP: AMNESTY STORY

I believe that whatever influence an author goes into the fiction, and comes out the other side. If we're open to it, and we're absorbed in the narrative, we might not be able to say, "I think JK Rowling at Amnesty International," but we feel the kinds of hopes and fears that she felt -- even just for a moment.

Jack Gierzynski teaches political science at the University of Vermont. He studies the very thing -- how politics gets embedded into fiction, and whether readers are influenced by those ideas.

AG: There is a theory called narrative transportation theory that argues that when we really get immersed in a story, we're not counter arguing things we come across. Our defenses are down and we walk away, as the research from psychology has demonstrated through experiments, that we walk away with some of the lessons and values and perspectives that are in those stories.

It's an interesting field because politics is so toxic today. People are distrustful of the mainstream media. But politics in fiction can pass through those psychological firewalls.

He was interested in Harry Potter because it wasn't one-off book. It was a series, and a phenomenon. And as I've been talking about in the last few episodes, a generation of people aged in real time with the characters.

So he wanted to test whether Harry Potter readers are more tolerant of diversity, and more sensitive to human rights issues.

He devised a survey. And he had the perfect group to test his hypothesis on – his own students.

AG: We came up with different ways to measure fandom and exposure to the HP series, we borrowed survey questions that were tested and used in political science to measure political values like tolerance, authoritarianism.

In your survey can't say are you a bigot, how do you test for that kind of thing?

AG: No, you don't ask people directly, what you do is, for example on your acceptance of diversity, what we did is we identified groups that had been discriminated against and target of animosity in society and then we asked people on a feeling thermometer say how warm or cold they felt towards those groups.

The big thing he has to prove is "causality." In other words, were these people already predisposed to having tolerant views?

AG: I ran sophisticated statistical analysis to control to other factors might lead to tolerance or anti-authoritarianism in our study such as whether someone was reader in first place.

Two other academic papers confirmed his findings. There was a study at the University of Pennsylvania that tested whether Harry Potter readers reacted more negatively to Donald Trump. They did, although some Trump supporters were offended because they like Harry Potter too.

There was another study in the UK and Italy, which took a different approach. They didn't quiz adults who read Harry Potter as kids. They measured how Harry Potter affects kids reading the books in real time.

AG: One group was read passages that showed the value of tolerance and acceptance of diversity and another passage that didn't have that, and they found that those passages caused greater tolerance among children and acceptance of diversity.

Now the Harry Potter books have been criticized for not featuring enough minority characters in prominent roles. But Jack says the book's lessons on diversity are mostly told through metaphor.

AG: I was fascinated by Professor Lupin that he was in the closet as being a werewolf, there were parallels tied into research of tolerance of homosexuality that really followed Lupin, if gets out he's a werewolf won't be able to teach, same in the past, having to stay in closet if they were teachers or so on.

In the end, he did follow up interviews to ask the subjects if they agreed with his findings. Most of them did.

AG: A student who was from a high school in Texas, told a story about her high school banned HP there was this resistance to that authority by the fans of series so much, they formed their own DA.

Dumbledore's Army was the name of a make-shift class that Harry Potter taught his fellow students in their down time, because their defense of the dark arts teacher was, well, evil, and not teaching them anything.

Elisabeth Gumnior teaches literature including Harry Potter at James Madison University. You might remember her from my episode on the Sorting Hat. She thinks Dumbledore's Army is a very important part of the series.

EG: Dumbledore's Army is a symbol for empowerment and action and I think we see a lot of that in the students attitudes towards volunteering, towards alternative Spring break, and I think DA is a symbol for the students can be teachers.

But does this play out in the real life? Are Harry Potter readers actually organizing and putting their time and energy towards making the world a better place?

EM: So first I love your job title tell me what your job title is?

JB: My job title is the director of wizard Muggle relations for the HPA.

EM: How's that going these days?

JB: Oh you know, it's good, could be tighter, maybe a little more trust – no!
(laughs)

Unlike the Minister for Magic, Jackson Bird does not have to tumble through a fireplace to communicate Muggles. He uses the Internet for most of his work with the Harry Potter Alliance, or HPA. They organize fans

towards causes like preserving net neutrality, and community service like donating books to libraries.

Jackson first discovered the organization in 2010, after the earthquake in Haiti.

JB: They did a big campaign Helping Haiti Heal, and thing that caught my attention was that they brought together YouTubers, YA authors, fansite personality, all these people following separately, and I didn't know they knew each other, and I got to see these people I looked up to coming together for a really good cause and whole community coming together for a really good cause.

The person making that happen behind the scenes was Andrew Slack. He founded the HPA in 2005. He had just graduated college. And his younger friends were urging him to read Harry Potter.

AS: The kids got me – they just wore me down, picked up the book and read first chapter first book, shot through me, changed my life.

And since he'd been an activist, he recognized the signs that Rowling worked at Amnesty International.

AS: Because you see Sirius Black, discussion about how he was denied habeas corpus, huge issue with Amnesty, prison torture at Azkaban, huge issue at Amnesty, prison torture. And I began mapping these parallels out. And then when I looked at HP fan community disbelief no one was doing anything about parallels, music wizard rock, sports through Quiddich, podcasts, remixing HP and it was incredible but asked fan community if HP were in our world, wouldn't he do more than talk about how awesome it is to be HP?

But he was creating a non-profit based on characters that he didn't own the rights to. And he kept wondering, would JK Rowling be okay with this?

A few years later, she was asked about the group during an interview.

AS: I was with my then-girlfriend, we were at a mall, can you watch my things? She said sure, she ran through the parking lot screaming Expecto Patronum, it was the nerviest thing but JK had mentioned us in Time Magazine and on her website and telling us we're awesome and felt amazing. With time I became more afraid what if we upset her?

That was put to the test as well. When Andrew found out that Harry Potter chocolate were being made with unpaid child labor, the Harry Potter Alliance partnered with another organization called Walk Free to pressure Warner Brothers to change the labor production. And they rallied the fans by referencing Hermione's campaign to end the slavery of house elves.

AS: So we went on this crazy path six years we ended up winning, and that did involve some help in background by JK Rowling.

For a long time, Andrew was the face and voice of the organization. He liked it that way. Then he met Jackson Bird.

AS: You know normally I'm used to young people imitate me speak about HPA, Jack never, ever tired to imitate me, the idea was ridiculous to him. He would say, you don't know anything about Tumblr, how do you know about fandom? He's right, I don't. Here you got Jack staying to 2 or 3 on morning, falling asleep on Tumblr.

So they put Jackson to work posting videos for the organization on YouTube. They were a big hit.

JB: And through that, that was the first time a little bit of a gaining following and realizing there are people who listen to what I have to say and support goofy things online.

But they had no idea Jackson's personal story would become a major part of the organization and its identity. This is one of the early videos.

>> EARLY VIDEO

EM: Now you came out as trans on YouTube. Is there connection to work on HPA and the way you came out publically with lots of community engagement, back and forth for you?

JB: Oh yeah definitely, if I weren't working for HPA it's possible I could be more stealth in my transition coming out, I was in an unusual place, lot of trans people – less and less these days -- when they come out they might move, get a new job, leave old life behind that's easiest because of all the discrimination and

dysphonia that you'd face, but me with extended professional network and with a lot of my life out there online, that really wasn't an option.

This is his coming out video from 2015.

>> COMING OUT VIDEO

JB: I already had been making videos to sooth the fact that I wasn't coming out, lot of LGBTQ videos, and had been getting messages on how those videos helped them, both that response how much I could've used more trans role models when I was growing up, I knew worth it to help more people, and I think what I've learned from HPA in becoming an activist and realizing the importance of sharing personal narrative and the power of story that helped me grow confidence and strength to be able to go forth and be so open and personal part of life.

There's one video where Jackson reads a word from a poem, every day, during his first year taking testosterone. In the last stanza, he recaps the year with a condensed timeline.

>> 365 days

Before he went public, Jackson had come out to his boss, Andrew Slack. This moment was such a big deal for Andrew, he's writing essay about it. He read some of it to me.

To set the context, Andrew always considered himself progressive on gay rights, but he had a blind spot on transgender issues. He thought transgender people had some kind of a personality disorder.

So he would get into arguments about transgender issues with Jackson – who was called Lauren at the time. Andrew thought these arguments were purely intellectual. At one point, he confronted “Lauren” and said, how can you speak for trans people when you're not even trans yourself?

AS: Lauren looked at me, and said, I'm trans. Thought joking, I smiled, I almost fell out of my chair, known her for three years, went to conferences, cried after father had stroke, how could I not know Lauren was trans, suddenly make sense. Are you being serious? Yes. You're trans? Yes. Seriously? Yes. Suddenly any transphobic thing I ever said or felt went out the window. I asked how long have you known? Long time. What keeps you from coming out? Terrified, I wanted to

hug him so deeply and held his hand. What can I do to make you feel safe? What you're doing now.

When Jackson finally uploaded the coming out video, Andrew was so impressed, he began to wonder if it was time for him to step away from the organization and pass the baton to the next generation.

AS: Yeah, watching that video, that sealed the deal more than anything else, this is going to be fine, they're going to be great.

Meanwhile, Jackson learned that Eddie Redmayne was talking Jackson's video when he was promoting, The Danish Girl, where Redmayne played a trans woman. Of course, Redmayne is also starring in the new Harry Potter prequel, Fantastic Beasts and Where To Find Them. So here he is on the press tour for The Danish Girl.

> EDDIE R VIDEO

JB: (Laughs) It was very surreal. You know, there's a lot of controversy about Cis men playing Trans women, so it was nice to see even though he was a Cis guy and that's not ideal at least counseled by trans women and going out there and doing research on YouTube find out more information and it was cool for HP community to see that he was diving so deep into that community which is not even relevant as Newt so that's cool to see what those conventions was like and do them justice.

There's actually a large overlap between those communities. Jackson says 40% of their members don't identify as straight. 14% identify as trans.

JB: It could have a little to do with me, not just me being visibly as trans myself and co-workers early work in making sure we were always using inclusive language.

They came out early for marriage equality. – which was controversial, some of their members were not on board yet. And they also set up a Protego campaign to create safe spaces for LGBTQ members. Protego is the name of the protection spell in the Harry Potter series.

I find it interesting that Jackson and Andrew poured their energy into the Harry Potter Alliance because they wanted to make the world a better

place. But that work changed them and challenged to them in ways they never expected. That makes sense since stories about magic are often about change and transformation.

AS: Mrs. Wealsey teaches Harry at first magical session platform 9 and 3/4, there is no such thing as wall as being wall, every wall carries within it secret doorway, allow yourself to find it, go through it, runs through and comes out to Hogwarts express, magical adventure throughout entire story, proficiency of magic, being expressed in notion of finding the doorway in the wall, the doorway to get to sorcerer's stone, the doorway through chamber of secrets, the doorway to get to ministry of magic dept. of mystery, cave and then finally the doorway between life and death. And when Harry crosses that one he ends up back at King's Cross Station.

I have to admit, when I first came across the HPA, I was a little skeptical. They just seemed like such earnest do-gooders. But after talking with them, I came away humbled and impressed.

But then I remembered I was part of an organization like this. After high school, I worked for City Year, an urban peace in Boston. How did I forget that? I felt like Robin Williams at the end of Hook remembering, oh yeah, I was Peter Pan.

City Year is still going strong, and I'm sure 20 from now years, the Harry Potter Alliance will be thriving as well. But no matter what, the words of J.K. Rowling will continue to resonate because there will always be kids who haven't discovered Harry Potter -- yet.

CLIP: ROWLING ON YOUR DUTY TO THE WORLD

A lot has changed in the four years since this episode aired. I will catch up with Jackson Bird after the break.

BREAK

Let's get to my interview with Jackson Bird from this year.

Well, thank you. It's good to see you again.

JACKSON: Yeah. Thank you for having me it's I don't think I've ever done a four years later update on a podcast episode.

No, I don't. I don't think I've done one either. So, before we started recording, we were discussing something, which is that in that episode from 2016, Andrew Slack used your old name, and to set up his essay I said it too. And, uh, I think we did, we checked with you before it aired if it was okay?

JACKSON: Yeah. You, you both absolutely checked with me. Yeah. And I gave my consent. Cause you know, at the time I, I was sort of in a different place with how I personally felt about it. But I think also the, you know, society writ large, you know, trans issues have become much more mainstream, many more people know more about trans allyship and these days. And so I thought I just wanted to bring it up really quick that that's not usually the best practice when you're talking about trans people to talk about their old names. But certainly some of us as individuals are cool with it. It's just a, usually don't default to that. **Yeah, no, I agree. In fact, it was something that I didn't understand until at least a year after the episode came out when I started reading more about how inappropriate it is to mention a trans person's old name, or their quote "dead name" and it's interesting that four years ago, I didn't get anyone calling me out on that but I'm sure if I were to do that now in a new episode, I would get a lot of people telling me it was inappropriate.**

JACKSON: Yeah. I think you absolutely would. Which is why I thought maybe we should address it.

Yeah. Absolutely. In terms of allyship, it's been a learning curve for a lot of us.

JACKSON: Absolutely. Yeah. Totally is.

Well, speaking of allyship...

JACKSON: (LAUGH)

Let's talk about JK Rowling

JACKSON: Yeah.

When did you first learn that she had these sort of anti transgender views? I guess we should just bluntly call them that.

JACKSON: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, you know, there were sort of bubbling to the surface for a couple of years. Um, you know, she would like some tweets that either had transphobic sentiments or whereby well known transphobic public figures and usually her PR team would, I think they literally called it like a middle aged moment. You know, she actually accidentally hit the like button on Twitter, which I was like the first time kind of willing to give the benefit of the doubt. Um, you know, there's been such a massive Harry Potter fan as I am. I really wanted to kind of be generous with, hopefully she doesn't really think these things. Um, this past December, December, 2019, she tweeted in support of, uh, a sort of known anti-trans activist. And even then, you know, that was really

heartbreaking. But even then I was like, well, maybe, you know, she's just been misled. Maybe we can have a conversation, but she turned down any offers of conversations, even from folks like glad who, you know, this is kind of what they do is they help celebrities become better allies. And then most recently when she just went on a tirade and I was like, okay, this is definitely how she feels. She's made it very crystal clear now. I mean, I say crystal clear, I think if you're unfamiliar with the topic, it actually is kind of confusing what she's saying. There's a lot of doublespeak going on.

Yeah. Well, why don't you explain for people that maybe know there's something going on, but they don't really know exactly what exactly are her views as she's expressed them through what you can piece together through all of her sort of comments and tweets?

JACKSON: Right. Well, pretty much she has aligned herself with a movement that has been around for decades, but has grown in, in very organized ways sort of across like over the past five years in the United Kingdom specifically, which is, uh, ostensible feminists who are very anti-trans mostly anti-trans women. Um, but all anti, all trans people in, in basically just denying the realities of trans people's experiences, um, what it kind of comes down to is they tend to see trans women as actually just men in costumes who are sexual predators and trying to take advantage of women. And they usually think that trans men are just, you know, lesbians who got confused and need saving. Um, so it's very belittling and concerning on both sides. Um, I'm sure they just don't think that nonbinary people exist at all. And the thing is that, you know, they couch it in a lot of language about how they support women, how it's primarily women, a lot of straight women who are involved in this, um, you know, how they are concerned. They talk a lot about their past experiences with men, you know, being abused by men and, you know, lots of very valid and real experiences that they've had, but they're sort of in some ways, blaming it on trans people. I just personally don't think that that's how we should be conducting ourselves as a society. And that's certainly not the way that I would have ever thought someone like JK Rowling would be thinking, you know, we all read, well not we all that you and I, and lots of people out there read her books, which were filled with values about, uh, you know, defending the underdogs and standing with people and inclusivity. I mean, I, in the original episode that folks just listened to, you played some of her clips from her Harvard commencement speech. She literally talks about people in power and how we can't just listen to them of how we need to stick up for people who are not in power. And it's, it's, it's very, almost like a cognitive dissonance to hear that back now, knowing how she feels specifically about trans people and potentially about other vulnerable communities.

Once you realized that this was not a slip of the thumb, that these were really her views. I mean, given how much you were inspired by the Harry Potter books and dedicated to the Harry Potter Alliance, I mean, how did you make sense of your own sort of personal relationship with JK Rowling as a fan?

JACKSON: It's been tough. Um, I think for me personally, while I had always thought that she was a pretty decent role model and a pretty great person who, you know, gives millions and millions of pounds to charity, I had never like idolized her, put her up on a pedestal or anything like that. So I don't feel like there's some type of personal relationship that is broken right now, but I will say that through all the years, you know, like the, the fan community and the original series have been what have mattered the most to me, the movies, the theme parks, you know, official merchandise, that's always kind of been second or third or fourth, my list. It's never been a huge priority. Um, it's the things that people have brought to the series that readers have created in the communities that we've all built together that have always meant so much to me and the sort of magic and power of those original seven books. What I have lost in this, I think is my ability to enjoy those seven books, at least for now. Um, I would love to be able to go back to them someday, but like right now I just can't. I just, I hear her in my head. I know that I'll be reading it with S with sort of her bias that I'm imagining she had throughout all of it, way more than just being a trans Harry Potter fan. And it being very disappointed and painful. The thing that really gets me is the level of influence she has, and this is what she is choosing to promote and how many people are going to kind of come to her side, have been coming to her side. You know, people are going to use her stance on this as a reason why they can have this stance to have maybe they had some bubbles of prejudice or discrimination or misunderstanding about this issue. And now they're like, well, JK, Rowling said this. Um, there was literally a Congressman in the U S who cited JK Rowling when he was trying to pass some anti-trans ledger legislation. So it's already happening in their real world effects of what she is putting out there. Uh, and that is really what gets me more fired up and more upset about this. Then the fact that, you know, the person who created Harry Potter turns out to hate people like me. That sucks too.

What do you think of, I mean, she has said that she's been misunderstood. She's said, let me explain myself, I've been taken out of context – I mean, how would you characterize that level of her response?

JACKSON: Yeah, I think that this is sort of part of the echo chamber of misinformation among the gender critical or trans exclusionary crowd that she is a part of, um, is some of them, not all of them, some of them will say things like I have trans friends. I love trans people. I support trans people. Most of them will

just send like absolutely viral and harassing tweets to trans people. They won't even pretend that they support trans rights, but JK Rowling is on the side where she will say, I support trans rights. If you look at her 3,600 word essay with zero citations in it, um, that the citations, she slightly references are mostly led to, uh, studies that have been debunked. But anyways, in her essay, she does say a few things. Like I stand with trans people, like I would stand with them at a protest if they were ever being discriminated against. And it's like, yeah, we are being discriminated against. But also you can't say that you support trans people in the same breath where you are denying the realities of our existence in multiple ways. You know, she has a line in there about how, like we welcome trans men into our women's spaces because they are biologically women. Okay, well that is denying the reality of trans men. Like we are men. We don't want to be in your women's spaces. Um, you know, the whole essay in some ways more explicit than others is talking about how trans women are men who are acting as sexual predators, you do not support trans people. If that is your belief, I don't care that you say I support trans people. Everything else you're saying is in contradiction to that.

Well, what is your advice to Harry Potter fans who are having trouble figuring out how to separate the work from the author and having trouble -- suddenly they're rereading the books in a new light that they're not comfortable with.

JACKSON: Yeah, it's a tough question. I mean, you know, I think there are a lot of people out there who just they're done with Harry Potter they have to be it's, it's too painful and that's a absolutely understandable stance to have. I think there are a lot of us who it's been such a huge part of our lives that even if it hurts where we want to find a way to still enjoy it and to any of those people, you know, I would say a lot of people are throwing around the phrase, the death of the author, you know, the idea that, uh, books belong to their readers, that the author's intent doesn't matter. It's what you take from the book. That's really important. Um, and an interesting thing about the death of the authors, that phrase comes from an essay by Roland Bart, a literary critic from the 20th century. And in that essay, the death of the author, he ends it by talking about the birth of the reader. And I think that that's something that people don't bring to the conversation about death of the author often enough, because I think that's a really wonderful thing to think about is okay, death of the author, we're going to try to separate these texts from JK Rowling, but let's focus on what they mean to us and what our interpretations are, even if she doesn't agree with them. And let's talk about the magic that we have all created, been inspired by these books over the years. And I think that's the thing to try to really focus on. Maybe you won't ever get back to reading the original text, you know, maybe I might even

suggest you don't want to give your money to the franchise anymore, but let's focus on the good that they did bring to all of our lives over the years. Um, what we have learned together, or even just as individuals engaging with the text. And that's a lot easier, lot easier said than done. You know, I, I can talk forever about how much we should separate texts from the authors when I'm talking about, you know, just a random book. That didn't mean so much. To me, Harry Potter has been an inextricable part of my life for more than two thirds of my life. So it's much harder to say about Harry Potter, but I think that's the kind of thing to sort of strive for and, and focus on it.

So this episode is going to come after an episode about writers of color, especially I talked to several black creators who are taking the world of HP Lovecraft – who was notoriously racist -- and writing re re-imagining his world from the point of view of black protagonists. Would you ever want to read like some kind of Harry Potter – I'm sure it may exist already as fan fiction, but some kind of Harry Potter or Harry Potter-esque world that is in direct conversation with JK Rowling using the tools of fiction?

JACKSON: Yeah. I mean, the fan fiction out there definitely exists. I will say there's even a, there's a, a novel called out of Salem by Hal Shreve that I recently found out because I was tweeting with the author that they literally wrote it in response to, uh, what, how saw as JK, Rowling sort of sloppy metaphor of remiss Lubin, uh, being an HIV positive gay man, uh, which, you know, uh, fan fiction loves remiss as a gay or BI individual. Um, but yeah, this, this novel, which uses a lot of like, sort of similar themes to Harry Potter was kind of written in a, in a direct critique. So that is happening, like even beyond fan fiction, which I think is really cool. I would love to see more of it. I don't know that we would ever get it officially sanctioned. How many years til Harry Potter is in the public domain is I should wait shit. I know it's going to be like, Steamboat Willie, like just gonna keep reopening.

Yeah, exactly! But you can do this sort of, you know, with the serial numbers filed off version, you know, that's very doable, I think.

JACKSON: Yeah. And I, you know, given that the Potter generation, we're all, you know, in our thirties now, uh, I think we're just going to keep seeing more and more of that, whether the authors, you know, maybe say it outright or not, I think there's certainly a lot of literature that we're going to keep seeing that is kind of in response to this.

Yeah. It reminds me of Jon Stewart once said, we've gotten really good at telling everyone racism is bad. We're really bad at explaining what racism is. And I think the same thing can be true here with transphobia.

JACKSON: Yeah. And, and I will say, um, it is, it's not a complex topic. If you have the perspective of, if you are not a trans person, here's a marginalized

community telling me their experience and I'm going to trust their experience and lift up their voices and believe them, not a complex topic. If you fall in line with that, which is what most people are doing. But if you are trying to dissect what she's saying and be like, wait, why are people upset about that? It is a little bit of a complex thing and tough to understand. Um, so I would say, uh, there are a number of trans people who have written articles and made videos that really break down line by line with lots of citations. Um, Jamie and Shabba, which is a YouTube channel, uh, they are doctoral researchers and they made an hour long video going line by line, breaking this down and explaining it in, I think a very fair way that in my opinion, maybe gave a little too much credit to JK Rowling so that if you are like, that's, you know, if you're skeptical, I think you should watch their video. It's very fair. Um, and also Kacen Callender, who is a black, white author wrote a really wonderful, heartbreaking piece on them. Um, so there's a lot of people out there who are explaining this much better than I can in this moment. And please go, go seek out content.

I'll put those links to those links in the show notes.

JACKSON: I'll send those to you.

All right. Well, thanks. Thanks for coming on. And, uh, you know, as you said, when we're communicating, you said there's a lot of, there are a lot of fans out there are feeling hurt or confused, and it felt like this was an important conversation to have. Before we go, do you have any more advice for them? You know, if people are still feeling just kind of sad about this whole situation?

JACKSON: Yeah. I mean, I think I would say specifically to any, you know, trans nonbinary or gender nonconforming fans of Harry Potter if you are hurting, because JK, Rowling specifically is saying these things and because the series has meant so much to you, what I would say is she has clearly proven that she is not someone that we need to listen to, and that she doesn't have authority on our lives. And so don't as painful as it is. Try not to let her words affect you or have power over you, you matter, and you are valued in the society, no matter what JK Rowling is saying. And even if maybe we aren't going to identify ourselves as a Harry Potter fan community forever, there are lots of wonderful people that have been affected by this book. And we are all here to welcome you home and love you for who you are.

The links he mentioned are in the show notes, along with a link to Jackson's op-ep in The Times.

By the way, Jackson also wrote a memoir called, "Sorted: Growing up, Coming Out and Finding my Place," which just came out in paperback.

That's it for this week, thank you for listening. Special thanks to Jackson Bird, and everyone who took part in the original episode.

My assistant producer is Stephanie Billman. You can like the show on Facebook. I tweet at emolinsky and imagine worlds pod. The show's website is imaginary worlds podcast dot org.