

[Brown Girl Bookshelf](#)

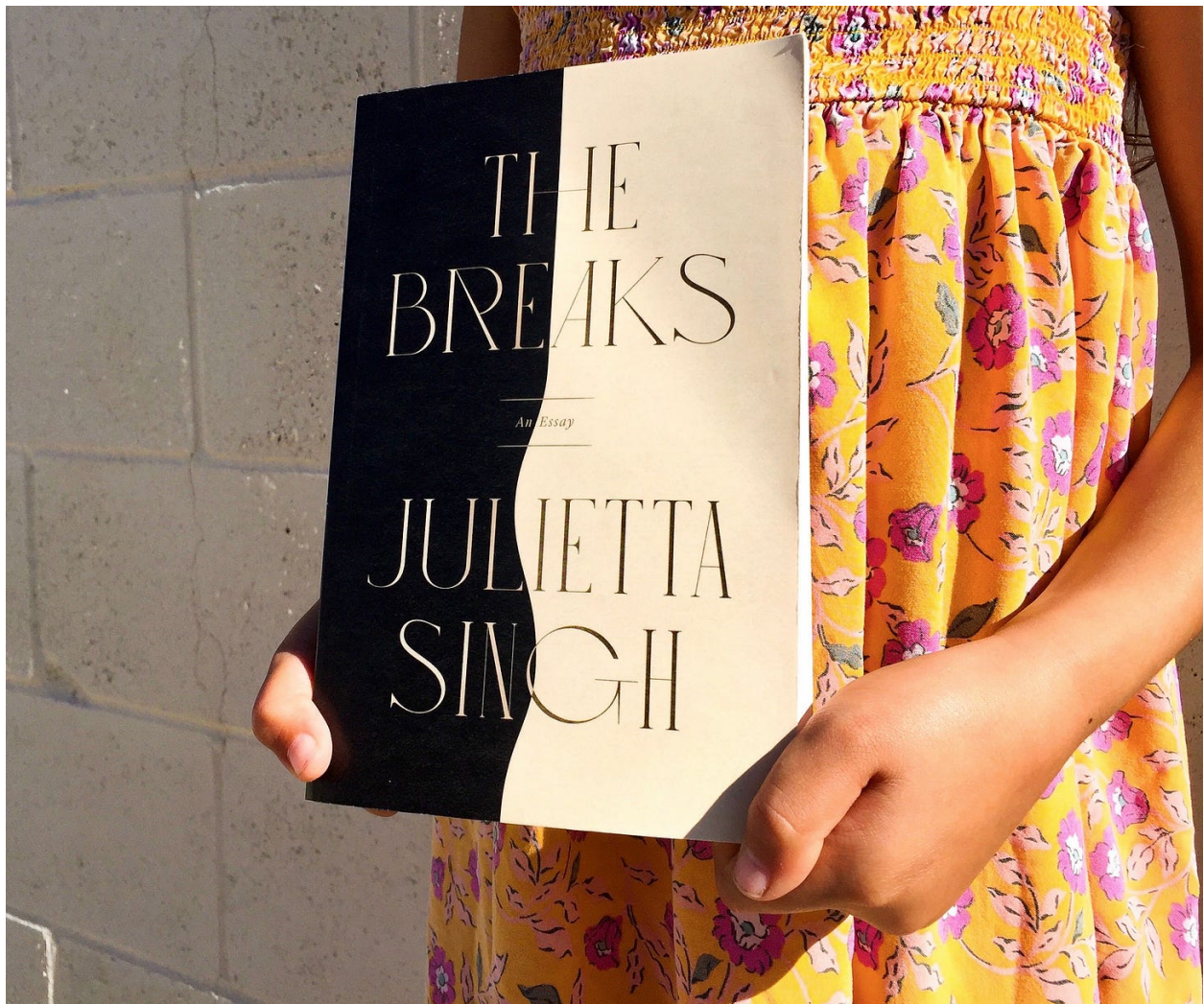
Our Nonfiction November roundup

On Our Bookshelf | November 2021

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The Breaks by Julietta Singh

Reviewed by Julie Mehta



"Written as a letter to her young daughter, Julietta Singh's 'The Breaks' is part memoir, part treatise on the devastating impacts of institutional racism and climate change," recaps guest

reviewer Julie Mehta. Singh examines how injustices of the past continue to haunt families and communities in the present.

Reading like a cross between an incisive academic piece and an unfiltered journal, "The Breaks" ricochets through time and between personal and political reflections, not always connecting the dots. This, plus Singh's dense, scholarly prose, makes "The Breaks" a challenging read. Yet the passion behind the author's fears and hopes for her daughter and the rest of humanity shines through. She doesn't offer pat answers but suggests that the survival of our species depends on the next generation "breaking" with old beliefs, habits, and social constructs.

The essay is most compelling when Singh explores her own experiences, such as her slow recovery from a childhood horseback riding accident and its continuing repercussions, her unconventional relationship and living arrangement with her asexual male partner and co-parent, and her efforts to understand her own parents despite a family history of anger and neglect. In revealing these intimate narratives, Singh speaks directly to her daughter. She shares, "I hope to become for you a map of broken things, a recyclable archive that will spur you to fashion other ways of being alive."

I connected with the author's tender descriptions of her bond with her child and her winsome daughter's questions about and endearing solutions to homelessness, hunger, and racism. And while Singh's personal accounts of racism are sometimes shocking, most fellow brown readers will recognize echoes of these microaggressions in their own lives.

In the end, Singh reveals that the book's publication was delayed as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and briefly touches on the protests in response to the murder of George Floyd and the subsequent demolition of Confederate monuments. In these final anecdotes, she offers some hints that the remaking of the world she so longs for has perhaps already begun.

Get your copy of "[The Breaks](#)."