

# Follow Chester!: A College Football Team Fights Racism and Makes History

## A RIF GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

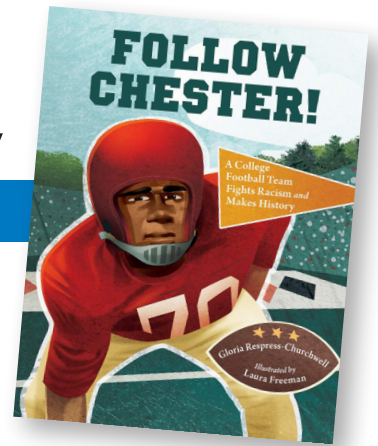
**Themes:** Acceptance, Changemakers, Racism, Teamwork

**Grade Level:** 1st to 3rd grade

**Book Brief:** In 1947, Chester Pierce was the only Black player on the Harvard football team. With the support of his coaches and teammates and a play called “Follow Chester,” he became the first Black player to compete in an intercollegiate football game south of the Mason-Dixon Line.

**Author:**  
Gloria Respress-Churchwell

**Illustrator:**  
Laura Freeman



## TIME TO READ!



**Before reading, build background:** Talk with your child about the unwritten rules in society that can dictate how people behave. Discuss segregation and the unequal treatment based on race that is a part of our history.

**While reading, make predictions:** At each step of the way, Chester is faced with a new challenge. Stop and acknowledge the challenge and ask your child to predict how Chester will handle it.

**After reading, ask questions:**

- Why was it unusual that Chester traveled to Virginia with his team?
- How did Chester’s teammates support him on the trip?
- Why was the game historic?
- How was the event a victory, even though Chester’s team didn’t actually win the game.

## RELATED ACTIVITIES

### ADVERSITY ADVICE

Reread the part of the story where Chester calls his mother because he is uneasy before the trip. His mother tells him something that she hopes will help him overcome his discomfort. Take some time to consider the many challenges your child has faced or may face and create some custom advice for your child/family.



### FIRSTS IN YOUR FAMILY

Chester Pierce was the first Black collegiate football player to play south of the Mason-Dixon Line. With that as a model, discuss firsts in your family. Think about first to move to a certain area of the country, first to achieve an educational goal, etc. If you don’t know or can’t think of any firsts to mark, encourage your child to dream about what they’d like to be the first in the family to do. Then, make a pennant, like the ones that are represented throughout the book, for the firsts you’ve identified.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



### OTHER BOOKS ABOUT HOME:

- [A Picture Book of Jesse Owens \(1992\)](#)
- [Queen of the Track \(2012\)](#)
- [Girl on a Motorcycle \(2020\)](#)