



Ferguson Friends Against Racism Reading/Resource List

The following resource for personal learning and reflection on racism and related issues was compiled by Ferguson Friends Against Racism, an ad hoc committee of the Board of the Friends of The Ferguson Library, Stamford, CT, in November 2020. It is a result of the Friends pledge to support the “Call to Action” issued by Stamford Stands Against Racism, a collaboration of nearly 100 organizations.

The list aims to provide thoughtful experiences through books, articles, documentaries, films, podcasts and other media representing varied points of view and periods in time. It will be updated periodically.

Feel free to share this resource, with attribution to the Friends of The Ferguson Library. Direct questions and suggestions for additional content to Susan DiMattia, sdimattia@optonline.com.

FICTION

Alexie, Sherman: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*. (pub 2007). A National Book Award Winner, called a “first-person narrative novel.” The story follows a 14-year-old Native American as he decides to leave his reservation to attend an all-white high school, and the ramifications of that decision for his future. The author is a poet and filmmaker. His other books are *Reservation Blues* and *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fist-fight in Heaven*, as well as a memoir, *You Don’t Have to Say You Love Me*.

Bennett, Brit. *Vanishing Half*. Barnes & Noble “Best of 2020” and a *New York Times* bestseller. An incredible tale of identity. Twin sisters and their daughters choose to live vastly different lives. The book questions who we are and where we are headed as a society.

Morrison, Toni (Cloe Ardelia Wofford). Some of the most essential Morrison titles include *The Bluest Eye*, *Son of Solomon*, and Pulitzer Prize winner *Beloved*. In addition, she wrote seven nonfiction titles, ten other novels, two plays, and three children’s books. An essential author.

Orange, Tommy. *There There*. A first novel, by a self-styled “urban Indian.” The book tells the backstories of a group of young Indians in urban California and the challenges they were forced to endure. One reader said the book made her mad and sad, but every American should read it. A critic called it a meditation on identity, in a multifaceted landscape.

Ward, Jesmyn. *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. A southern gothic novel about legacies of systemic racism pitted against family bonds.

NONFICTION

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. The author is a Black civil rights litigator and legal scholar. Her position is that discrimination faced by African American males is prevalent among other minorities and socio-economically disadvantaged populations.

Anderson, Carol. *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*. (pub. 2016) “Courts, legislatures and *government* bureaucracies have undermined democracy, warped the Constitution, weakened the U.S.’s ability to compete economically” Critics comment the book is based on secondary literature and Internet research, with uneven results, but it has gotten a lot of attention.

Baldwin, James. *The Fire Next Time*. (orig. pub. 1963). A two-part book: “My Dungeon Shook”—letter to my 14-year-old nephew on the 100th anniversary of Emancipation, and “Down at The Cross”—letter from a region of my mind. A critic said, “it gave passionate voice to the emerging civil rights movement.”

Chugh, Dolly. *The Person You Mean to Be: How Good People Fight Bias*. Chugh is a social psychologist in the NYU Stern School of Business. She writes on confronting difficult issues, inequality, and injustice and urges for standing up for diversity and equity and rejecting inequality in a turbulent world.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. *Between the World and Me*. A 2015 publication of a letter to his teenage son about growing up in inner-city Baltimore and the wounds of racism, schools, police and the streets. Coates is a national correspondent for *The Atlantic*. The book received the National Book Award in 2015 and Coates received a MacArthur Fellowship.

Diangelo, Robin. *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. (pub 2018). *NY Times* bestseller, but got mixed reviews, although some readers called it “vital, necessary, a beautiful book.”

Grann, David. *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*. In the 1920s, the richest people per capita in the world were members of the Osage Indian Nation in Oklahoma, after oil was discovered under their land. A series of federal government rules to control them, and dishonest dealers who wanted their land, led to a series of suspicious deaths. Investigating the deaths was one of the first jobs of the newly formed FBI.

Harris, Alexandra and Mark Hersch. *Why We Serve: Native Americans in the U.S. Armed Forces*. Published by the Smithsonian as a companion to a 2020 exhibit and documentary by the same name.

Isenberg, Nancy. *White Trash: The 400-Year Untold History of Class in America*. (pub 2016). A history of the class system in America, extending from colonial times to the present.

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be an Anti-racist*. This Black author maintains that racism and capitalism emerged at the same time, with the slave trade. Race can’t be separated from wealth. Racism is a social construct invented by those in power to maintain power.

Meacham, Jon. *His Truth is Marching On: John Lewis and the Power of Hope*. Called “intimate and timely,” it links Lewis’ life to “the painful quest for justice . . . from the 1950s to the present.”

Moskos, Charles and John Sibley Butler. *All That We Can Be: Black Leadership and Racial Integration the Army Way*. (1996). How the U.S. Army became the most integrated institution in America, where Blacks routinely boss whites.

Oluo, Ijeoma. *So You Want to Talk About Race*. Oluo, named one of the 50 most influential women in Seattle and referred to as an “Internet Yeller,” explores the complex reality of today’s racial landscape of white privilege, police brutality, systemic discrimination, and the Black Lives Matter movement.

O’Reilly, Bill and Martin Dugard. *Killing Crazy Horse*. The ninth book in the conservative commentator’s “killing” series focuses on conflicts with Native Americans. A *NY Times* bestselling title in 2020.

Owens, Candace. *Blackout: How Black America Can Make Its Second Escape from the Democrat Plantation*. This is the first book by political activist and social media “star” Owens who says Black Americans should leave the Democratic Party because the party’s policies hurt, not help them.

Payne, Les and Tamara Payne. *The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X*. (pub. 2020) More than 30 years of research, interviewing, and writing preceded the publication of the book. The text focuses on the key moments of his life. A family history of America’s racial terror. “Defiance of white supremacy was his essence.” Major review in *NY Times* Book Review, 11/15/20. *NY Times* bestseller and in Barnes and Noble’s “Best of 2020”.

Perry, Andre. *Know Your Price: Valuing Black Lives and Property in America’s Black Cities*. (pub. 2020) Perry, a Fellow of the Brookings Institute, using personal narrative and other resources, analyzes the historical and contemporary barriers that maintain the racial wealth divide.

Rankine, Claudia. *Just Us: An American Conversation*. This Yale professor reviews assumptions, privileges and benefits that accompany being white, through essays, narratives, poems, pictures and “musings.” This title was shortlisted for the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Nonfiction, 2020.

Reynolds, Jason and Ibram X. Kendi. *Stamped: Racism, Anti-racism, and You*. Barnes & Noble calls this compelling, conversational and extremely engaging, making it a book every American should read and re-read.

Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. Anti-Black government policies, not de facto segregation, led to racially divided cities and suburbs, from Reconstruction through today, according to Rothstein.

Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. *From #Black Lives Matter to Black Liberation*. Used for a racism training, community book discussion for students and faculty at Brandeis University. The author is professor of African American Studies at Princeton. He also wrote *Race for Profit: How Banks and the Real Estate Industry Undermined Black Homeownership*.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*. (pub 2020) A Pulitzer Prize winning journalist examines caste systems across civilizations and reveals a rigid hierarchy in America today. It is a *New York Times* bestseller and has been labeled an “instant American classic.” It is an Oprah pick and is on the Barnes and Noble “Best of 2020” list. Wilkerson also wrote *The Warmth of Other Suns: Epic Story of Americas Great Migration*, in 2015.

MEMOIRS/POEMS/MISC.

Alexander, Kwame. *Light for the World to See*. Three poems inspired by impactful moments in the ongoing fight for anti-racism in America

Bennett, Juda. *Toni Morrison Book Club*. A collection of essays on identity, gender and race by one gay white man and three Black women, reflecting on their personal stories dealing with race, as related to Toni Morrison stories and characters.

Gallon, Kim and Daniel Fisher. *Black Voices Matter*. Through a series of quotes from thought leaders in the African American community, from the late 1780s to John Lewis in 2020, the text demonstrates the universal hopes for freedom, equality and justice. *AARP The Magazine*, November, 2020, pgs. 40-44.

Jones, Nikole Hannah. *What is Owed?* An article in the *NY Times magazine*, Sunday, 6/25/20, on reparations and the economic impact of racism.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*. This is King's memoir of the bus boycott and nonviolence. Among other things, he wrote *The Trumpet of Conscience*, *Why We Can't Wait*, and *Where Do We Go from Here*.

Lewis, John. *Across the Bridge* (2012) and *Walking with the Wind* are just some of Lewis' memoirs of his experiences with the civil rights movement. The *March* books, numbers 1,2, and 3 are actually graphic novels, from 2013, 2015 and 2016, prepared to help young people understand the history of the civil rights struggle.

Noah, Trevor. *Born a Crime: Stories from a South African Childhood* (pub. 2016) is an autobiographical comedy book written by South African comedian Trevor Noah.

Ross, Alex. *Master Pieces: Scholars Confront White Supremacy in the World of Classical Music*. A "Critic at Large" column in the *New Yorker*, 9/21/20, pp. 69-73.

MEDIA

Look for repeat airings as well as new titles.

PBS, "And Still I Rise: Black America Since MLK." Henry Louis Gates, Jr. narrates. A book by the same title is a companion to the video

PBS "African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross." Also with Gates narration.

PBS "Driving While Black: Race, Space and Mobility." Gretchen Sorin looks at the constraints on the rights of Blacks, the entrapment, policies of exclusion and loss of human dignity, and the allure of the pathway to middle class life. Powerful food for thought.

60 Minutes, "The Last Slave Ship," November 29, 2020, features interviews with descendants of the 110 slaves on the *Clotilda*, an illegal ship with slave cargo, sunk by the captain in 1860, near Mobile, Ala, to hide the crime. The discussion focuses on current day residents of Africatown and efforts to maintain their heritage.

Washington Post Live, "Future Reset: Inclusive Capitalism," December 1, 2020. Interview with Paul Romer, 2018 Nobel Prize in Economics, and Andre Perry of the Brookings Institute, author of "Know Your Price." (see entry in Non Fiction section of this list). The panelists discuss investments in education, child care, minimum wage, tax code revision and other economic actions that can lift Black and Brown communities, while at the same time expanding the overall economy.

Film, *13th*, a documentary by Ava Duvernay, available on Netflix and free on YouTube. Powerful and informative history of mass incarceration of Blacks since the end of the Civil War.

Film, "Do the Right Thing," Spike Lee's first film which he wrote, directed and starred in, in 1989. More relevant than ever, as noted by *The Guardian* in 2019, calling it a "tour de force." Available for rent on YouTube, Google Play, iTunes and also on Amazon Prime, Hulu, Showtime.

Podcasts, among many:

"Long Division", studies race, resources, and our public school problem, created by Sarah Larson, reviewed in the Podcast Department column of *The New Yorker*, September 7, 2020, p. 78 & 79.

"Nice White Parents" podcast examines separate and unequal education at a public school in Brooklyn, and the role of white parents in perpetuating an unjust system that benefits their kids.

"Fiasco: The Battle for Boston," examines the situation in 1974, and the impact of forced bussing in Boston schools. Presents some of the stories behind the civil unrest and other results.

Racism Training and Awareness

"Breathing Lessons." Seven days of topics, offering videos, articles, interviews with authors, perceived notions, questions, to show us our misconceptions. Link to come.

"21-day Racial Equity Building Challenge." Created by a unit of the American Bar Association. Goal is to help everyone become more aware, compassionate, constructive in the quest for racial equity. Outlines 21 assignments requiring 15-30 minutes to complete, on Black history, identity and culture, and racism in America, using articles, podcasts, TED Talks and other sources.

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/labor_law/membership/equal_opportunity.

National Museum of African American History and Culture, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>. Includes definitions of terminology, videos, workshop guides, discussion starters, etc.