

## Racial Justice Book List as displayed in the Narthex (beginning Mar, 2022)

### RECOMMENDED READING FOR ADULTS:

**All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake**, by Tiya Miles.

*Recommended by Maureen McKane:* "Through an actual family heirloom in a museum, we follow the lives of 3 generations of one family's mothers. Ashley's mother sent her off with a sack full of love and mementos when Ashley was 9 and sold off the plantation. The sack and the mother's parting words stayed alive for generations. Following their story, using available sources, we learn the heartwarming details of family life and love in survival mode."

**Between The World and Me**, by Ta-Nehisi Coates. *Recommended by Laura Pittman:* "In this letter written to his adolescent son, Ta-Nehisi Coates reflects on his personal experiences as a Black man in the United States, sharing his hopes and fears for his son as he matures into manhood. Reading this book was powerful to me as I gained insight into what it is like to be Black in our society and how that influences the way you parent your children, with a shared hope that our children will live in a supportive and just community."

**Caste: The Origin of Our Discontents**, by Isabel Wilkerson. *Recommended by Ellen Bonewitz:*

"Wilkerson gives a masterful portrait of an unseen phenomenon in America as she explores through a deeply researched narrative and stories about real people how America today and throughout history has been shaped by a hidden caste system." Time magazine chose this as the best nonfiction book of 2020."

**Homegoing**, by Yaa Gyasi. *Recommended by Laura Pittman:* "This fictional story spans a family's history across 300 years, starting with two half-sisters in 18th century Ghana. One sister is sold into the slave trade and we learn of her family's history in America, from the plantations of the South to 20th century Harlem. The other sister remains in Ghana, where her family navigates the conflict between the tribes over the generations. Reading this book expanded my knowledge about the history and culture of Ghana as well as increased my understanding of how societal forces impacted African American experiences even well after slavery had ended."

**Nobody**, by Marc Lamont Hill. *Recommended by Chuck Adams:* "In this 'thought-provoking and important' (Library Journal) analysis of state-sanctioned violence, Marc Lamont Hill carefully considers a string of high profile deaths in America —Sandra Bland, Freddie Gray, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, and others—and incidents of gross negligence by government, such as the water crisis in Flint, Michigan."

**The Black West**, by William Loren Katz. *Recommended by Maureen McKane:* "From cowboys to settlers to cavalymen, gold miners and all the other intrepid people of the west, this book uncovers the forgotten African Americans in their numbers. At least 25% of cowhands were black. Many tales give this book a fun and eye-opening look at our country's frontier days."

**The Cross and the Lynching Tree**, by James H Cone – *Recommended by Brandon Perrine:* "Pioneering theologian James H. Cone interprets the Christian symbol of the cross in light of the African American experience of lynching in America. Masterfully weaving the text of jazz and spiritual songs throughout, Cone casts new light on an ancient symbol and a painfully modern reality."

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**The Fire Next Time, by James Baldwin.** *Recommended by Ellen Bonewitz:* “The book consists of two autobiographical essays. One is in the form of a letter to his fourteen-year-old nephew. The other is to a broader audience with a tone reminiscent of a preacher’s sermon. It’s been described as a classic of our literature. James Baldwin was a leading voice of the twentieth century on race relations and the American experience.”

**The Matter of Black Lives: Writing From the New Yorker, ed. by Jelani Cob and David Remnick.** *Recommended by Chuck Adams:* “This anthology from the pages of The New Yorker provides a bold and complex portrait of Black life in America, told through stories of private triumphs & national tragedies, political vision and artistic inspiration.” Includes ground-breaking writings from James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Hilton Als, Zadie Smith and more.”

**The Warmth of Other Suns - by Pulitzer Prize Winner, Isabelle Wilkerson.** *Recommended by Val Flechtner:* “Chronicling ‘the Great Migration’ (from 1915 to 1970) when millions of African Americans left the South for the Northern & Western cities seeking a better life. A humanizing history following three migrants on their individual journeys from Mississippi, Florida and Louisiana to their new homes. Using lyrical writing and attention to detail, she immerses the reader in the lives of the people she describes to produce a narrative that provides historical fact in the context of human experience. A powerful book!”

**Through These Doors, by Gary McCann.** *The Committee recommends pp. 5-9 and 16-17,* to learn more about New England’s Abolitionist heritage and history with the Underground Railroad. The book also tells how First Congregational Church (NECC’s “mother” or predecessor church) hosted a speech from Frederick Douglas himself in the early 1840’s.

**To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee.** *Recommended by Mavis Bates:* “The story of a six-year-old girl, Scout Finch, her older brother, Gem, and their life in a small southern community during the depression. Scout's father, Atticus, an attorney, is called upon to defend a black man falsely accused of rape by a white woman. This trial exposes the racial divide in their town and in our society today, and shows the courage and integrity required to stand up against racial injustice.”

### RECOMMENDED READING FOR YOUNG ADULTS (also great for adults!):

**All American Boys, By Brendan Kiely & Jason Reynolds.** *Recommended by Jon Koepke:* “A short [Young Adult] novel about a week in the lives of two high school boys surrounding police brutality, racism, and social protest,” which the authors called “an important, unique, and honest work to give young people and the people who educate them a tool for talking about these difficult but absolutely vital conversations.”

**Jefferson’s Sons, by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley.** *Recommended by Rick Guzman:* “A fascinating, heartwarming—and heart-breaking—work of carefully researched historical fiction. This YA novel is for all ages and provides powerful insights into the lives of the enslaved and enslavers of Monticello—and the incredible, enduring legacy of slavery. While set in late 18th & early 19th century Charlottesville, the questions posed by this book’s characters (whose very existence was doubted & denied all the way into this century) somehow manage to feel more relevant than ever.”

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### RECOMMENDED READING FOR MIDDLE GRADE (ages 8 – 12):

**Last in a Long Line of Rebels, (a novel) by Lisa Lewis Tyre.** *Recommended by Desiree Guzman:* “When twelve-year-old Lou tries to save the Civil War era house that has been in her family for generations from demolition, she ends up discovering family history she doesn’t quite know what to do with. What will she do with the secrets she learns? Especially when history seems to be repeating itself. A great read for families with children 3rd - 6th grade.”

**Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History, (a collection of short bios) By Vashti Harrison.** *Recommended by Marie Wendt:* “This beautifully illustrated New York Times Bestseller shares brief stories of black women who took a stand against a world that didn't always accept them. Intended for ages 8 – 12, but all ages could learn a lot from these short biographies.”

**Little Legends: Exceptional Men in Black History, (a collection of short bios) by Vashti Harrison & Kwesi Johnson.** *Recommended by Marie Wendt:* “These authors shine a bold, joyous light on black men through history who were trailblazers, in this New York Times Bestseller. Intended for ages 8 – 12, but I know I learned a lot from these short biographies.”

**The Parker Inheritance, by Varian Johnson.** *Recommended by Desiree Guzman:* “Two friends follow clues to solve a mystery about an injustice (and past prejudice) in their town that has been covered up for too long. If they can solve the puzzle, maybe they can make things right. A great read for families with children 3rd - 6th grade.”

### RECOMMENDED READING FOR CHILDREN:

The following books were gifted by the Committee to all NECC families with children Pre-K – 6th grade:

#### Pre-K – 4th Grade:

**Our Skin: A first Conversation about Race by Megan Madison, Jessica Ralli, and Isabel Roxas.** A Discussion Guide and website for further activities are included at the end of the book.

#### 5th – 6th Grade:

**Let’s Talk About Race by Julius Lester and Karen Barbour.** A discussion guide was provided – please ask the office to contact Desiree Guzman if you would like a copy emailed to you.

### ADULT DIG-DEEPER BOOKS

The following books are sometimes controversial. They are by highly respected thinkers, researchers. If you are ready to consider the challenge to address some discomfort, the committee recommends these for a start.

**How To Be An Antiracist, by Ibram X. Kendi.** *Recommended by Val Flechtner:* “This book helped me to a new way of thinking about racism and its causes.” And NPR calls it “not only an essential instruction manual, but also a memoir of the author’s own path from anti-black racism to anti-white racism & finally, to antiracism.”

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**The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, by Michelle Alexander.**

*Recommended by Chuck Adams:* "An examination of how the war on drugs has created a new racial caste system, disproportionately punishing black people. "Carefully researched, deeply engaging, and thoroughly readable," (Publisher's Weekly)

**White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism, by Robin Diangelo.**

*Recommended by Mavis Bates & Maureen McKane:* "Robin is said to have a chip on her shoulder, but she opens our eyes. What do nice white people actually look like, when the subject is race and the eyes watching are black eyes? Go ahead and be uncomfortable."

**The Sum of Us, by Heather McGhee.** *Recommended by Rick Guzman & Val Flechtner.* Jon Favreau, host of *Pod Save America* writes: "No one writes about the intersection of race, class, and politics more brilliantly, honestly, and hopefully than Heather McGhee. The Sum of Us is a powerful and timely argument for the collective value of multiracial solidarity, told with a humanity and empathy that comes from McGhee's own journey."

**The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story: by Nikole Hannah-Jones.** *Recommended by Chuck Adams:*

"Bringing multiple scholars together to provide this award-winning reframing of American history that places slavery and its continuing legacy at the center of our national narrative... to help explain not only the persistence of anti-Black racism and inequality in American life today, but also what makes the country unique."