

Racial Equity & Justice Suggested Reading List

The Warmth of Other Suns

-By Isabel Wilkerson

In this epic, beautifully written masterwork, Pulitzer Prize–winning author Isabel Wilkerson chronicles one of the great untold stories of American history: the decades-long migration of black citizens who fled the South for northern and western cities in search of a better life. From 1915 to 1970, this exodus of almost six million people changed the face of America. Wilkerson interviewed more than a thousand people, and gained access to previously untapped data and official records, to write this definitive and vividly dramatic account of how these American journeys unfolded, altering our cities, our country, and ourselves.

Why Are All of the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria

-By Beverly Daniel Tatum

Walk into any racially mixed high school and you will see black, white, and Latino youth clustered in their own groups. Is this self-segregation a problem to address or a coping strategy? Beverly Daniel Tatum, a renowned authority on the psychology of racism, argues that straight talk about our racial identities is essential if we are serious about enabling communication across racial and ethnic divides. These topics have only become more urgent as the national conversation about race is increasingly acrimonious. This fully revised edition is essential listening for anyone seeking to understand the dynamics of race in America.

Under Our Skin

-By Benjamin Watson

Can it ever get better? This is the question Benjamin Watson is asking. In a country aflame with the fallout from the racial divide - in which Ferguson, Charleston, and the Confederate flag dominate the national news, daily seeming to rip the wounds open ever wider - is there hope for honest and healing conversation? For finally coming to understand each other on issues that are ultimately about so much more than black and white?

An NFL tight end for the New Orleans Saints and a widely read and followed commentator on social media, Watson has taken the Internet by storm with his remarkable insights about some of the most sensitive and charged topics of our day. Now, in *Under Our Skin*, Watson draws from his own life, his family legacy, and his role as a father to sensitively and honestly examine both sides of the race debate and appeal to the power and possibility of faith as a step toward healing.

Tears We Cannot Stop

-By Michael Eric Dyson

In the wake of yet another set of police killings of black men, Michael Eric Dyson wrote a tell-it-straight, no-holds-barred piece for the *NYT* on Sunday, July 7: "Death in Black and White" (it was updated within a day to acknowledge the killing of police officers in Dallas). The response has been overwhelming. Beyoncé and Isabel Wilkerson tweeted it; JJ Abrams, among many other prominent people, wrote him a long fan letter. The *NYT* closed the comments section after 2,500 responses, and Dyson has been on NPR, BBC, and CNN nonstop since then.

Fifty years ago Malcolm X told a white woman who asked what she could do for the cause, "Nothing." Dyson believes he was wrong. In *Tears We Cannot Stop*, he responds to that question. If we are to make real racial progress, we must face difficult truths, including being honest about how black grievance has been ignored, dismissed, or discounted. As Dyson writes, "At birth you are given a pair of binoculars that see black life from a distance, never with the texture of intimacy. Those binoculars are privilege; they are status, regardless of your class. In fact the greatest privilege that exists is for white folk to get stopped by a cop and not end up dead.... The problem is you do not want to know anything different from what you think you know.... You think we have been handed everything because we fought your selfish insistence that the world, all of it - all its resources, all its riches, all its bounty, all its grace - should be yours first and foremost, and if there's anything left, why then we can have some, but only if we ask politely and behave gratefully."

In the tradition of *The Fire Next Time* (Baldwin), short, emotional, literary, powerful, this is the book that all Americans who care about the current and long-burning crisis in race relations need to hear.

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Just Mercy

-By Bryan Stevenson

Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was that of Walter McMillian, a young man who was sentenced to die for a notorious murder he insisted he didn't commit. The case drew Bryan into a tangle of conspiracy, political machination, and legal brinkmanship - and transformed his understanding of mercy and justice forever.

Just Mercy is at once an unforgettable account of an idealistic, gifted young lawyer's coming of age, a moving window into the lives of those he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice.

Other People's Children

-By Lisa Delpit

Winner of an American Educational Studies Association Critics' Choice Award and *Choice Magazine's* Outstanding Academic Book Award, and voted one of *Teacher Magazine's* "great books", *Other People's Children* has sold over 150,000 copies since its original hardcover publication. This edition features a new introduction by Delpit, as well as new framing essays by Herbert Kohl and Charles Payne.

In a radical analysis of contemporary classrooms, MacArthur Award-winning author Lisa Delpit develops ideas about ways teachers can be better "cultural transmitters" in the classroom, where prejudice, stereotypes, and cultural assumptions breed ineffective education. Delpit suggests that many academic problems attributed to children of color are actually the result of miscommunication, as primarily white teachers and "other people's children" struggle with the imbalance of power and the dynamics plaguing our system.

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America's Original Sin

-By Jim Wallis

America's problem with race has deep roots, with the country's foundation tied to the near extermination of one race of people and the enslavement of another. Racism is truly our nation's original sin.

"It's time we right this unacceptable wrong", says best-selling author and leading Christian activist Jim Wallis. Fifty years ago, Wallis was driven away from his faith by a white church that considered dealing with racism to be taboo. His participation in the civil rights movement brought him back when he discovered a faith that commands racial justice. Yet as recent tragedies confirm, we continue to suffer from the legacy of racism. The old patterns of white privilege are colliding with the changing demographics of a diverse nation. The church has been slow to respond, and Sunday morning is still the most segregated hour of the week.

In *America's Original Sin*, Wallis offers a prophetic and deeply personal call to action in overcoming the racism so ingrained in American society. He speaks candidly to Christians - particularly white Christians - urging them to cross a new bridge toward racial justice and healing.

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Dear White America

-By Tim Wise

White Americans have long been comfortable in the assumption that they are the cultural norm. Now that notion is being challenged, as white people wrestle with what it means to be part of a fast-changing, truly multicultural nation. Facing chronic economic insecurity, a popular culture that reflects the nation's diverse cultural reality, and a future in which they will no longer constitute the majority of the population, and with a black president in the White House, whites are growing anxious.

This anxiety has helped to create the Tea Party movement, with its call to "take our country back". By means of a racialized nostalgia for a mythological past, the Right is enlisting fearful whites into its campaign for reactionary social and economic policies.

In urgent response, Tim Wise has penned his most pointed and provocative work to date. Employing the form of direct personal address, he points a finger at whites' race-based self-delusion, explaining how such an agenda will only do harm to the nation's people, including most whites. In no uncertain terms, he argues that the hope for survival of American democracy lies in the embrace of our multicultural past, present, and future.

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Between the World and Me

-By Ta-Nehisi Coates

In a profound work that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father for his son, Ta-Nehisi Coates offers a powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis. Americans have built an empire on the idea of "race", a falsehood that damages us all but falls most heavily on the bodies of black women and men - bodies exploited through slavery and segregation and, today, threatened, locked up, and murdered out of all proportion. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? And how can we all honestly reckon with this fraught history and free ourselves from its burden?

Between the World and Me is Ta-Nehisi Coates' attempt to answer these questions in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son - and listeners - the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences, from Howard University to Civil War battlefields, from the South Side of Chicago to Paris, from his childhood home to the living rooms of mothers whose children's lives were taken as American plunder. Beautifully woven from personal narrative, reimagined history, and fresh, emotionally charged reportage, *Between the World and Me* clearly illuminates the past, bravely confronts our present, and offers a transcendent vision for a way forward.

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The New Jim Crow

-By Michelle Alexander

Seldom does a book have the impact of Michelle Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*. Since it was first published in 2010, it has been cited in judicial decisions and has been adopted in campus-wide and community-wide reads; it helped inspire the creation of the Marshall Project and the new \$100 million Art for Justice Fund; it has been the winner of numerous prizes, including the prestigious NAACP Image Award; and it has spent nearly 250 weeks on the *New York Times* best seller list.

Most important of all, it has spawned a whole generation of criminal justice reform activists and organizations motivated by Michelle Alexander's unforgettable argument that "we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it". As the *Birmingham News* proclaimed, it is "undoubtedly the most important book published in this century about the U.S."

Now, 10 years after it was first published, The New Press is proud to issue a 10th-anniversary edition with a new preface by Michelle Alexander that discusses the impact the book has had and the state of the criminal justice reform movement today.

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The Water Dancer

-By Ta-Nehisi Coates

Young Hiram Walker was born into bondage. When his mother was sold away, Hiram was robbed of all memory of her - but was gifted with a mysterious power. Years later, when Hiram almost drowns in a river, that same power saves his life. This brush with death births an urgency in Hiram and a daring scheme: to escape from the only home he's ever known.

So begins an unexpected journey that takes Hiram from the corrupt grandeur of Virginia's proud plantations to desperate guerrilla cells in the wilderness, from the coffin of the Deep South to dangerously idealistic movements in the North. Even as he's enlisted in the underground war between slavers and the enslaved, Hiram's resolve to rescue the family he left behind endures.

This is the dramatic story of an atrocity inflicted on generations of women, men, and children - the violent and capricious separation of families - and the war they waged to simply make lives with the people they loved. Written by one of today's most exciting thinkers and writers, *The Water Dancer* is a propulsive, transcendent work that restores the humanity of those from whom everything was stolen.

Other Suggested Novels:

- *Confession* by John Grisham
- *The Secret of Bees* By Sue Monk Kidd
- *The Invention of Wings* by Sue Monk Kidd