**Books and Other Resources We Recommend**

*During the past year, we saw injustice everywhere: disparities in health, wealth, education, and employment; the tragic consequences of the criminalization and over-policing of Black and Brown people; the continuing denial that race and racism matter; the dreams still deferred. et we also saw great numbers of people rise up to demand that police be held accountable, that voting rights remain protected, and that America wakes up and recognizes the racism upon which our country was built and which persists to this day. Today as we honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., we also recommit to making his vision a reality, and so we declare with him that “we will never be satisfied until justice rolls down like water.”*

*Dr. King teaches us that education alone will not eradicate racism, violence, and injustice, but without knowledge and self-reflection, we cannot create the beloved community. Every year, the MLK Coalition donates part of the contributions we receive to the Public Library of Cincinnati and Hamilton County. And every year, we include a list of books and other resources available at the library or online at no cost. Thanks to Mary Anne Bressler, Phyliss Flanagan, Louise Lawarre, Vivian Rodgers, and Martha Viehmann for providing descriptions of the resources they have read, listened to, or learned about this year.*

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**Books for Adults**

*Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* by Isabel Wilkerson (2020). Wilkerson opens her new book with the story of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., visiting India in 1959, where he was greeted as a “fellow untouchable” by people in India’s lowest caste. She follows this by describing how much Nazi Germany relied on US methods of racial subjugation to build their own caste system. She then builds her theory that the system of hierarchy that has been at the root of American social and economic structures is deeper than racism. It is a caste system so deep that, in a conversation with author Taylor Branch, they wonder, “if people were given the choice between democracy and whiteness, how many would choose whiteness?” Wilkerson explains her theory with both thorough research and a profoundly human narrative.

*The Skin We’re In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power* by Desmond Cole (2020). Desmond Cole is an Afro-Canadian writer and activist who structures his book around a calendar year of encounters with police, one per month, each a reminder that “Black people are not wanted in Canada, that this is a land stolen from Indigenous peoples and …colonized…by white British settlers” (p. 3). The chapters touch on a wide range of topics in addition to the linked twin sins of racism and colonialism: policing in schools; race, immigration, and policing; racism in the LGBTQ movement despite the courageous activism of people of color; the double weight of disability and blackness; the limits of individual successes when policy remains unchanged; Black joy regardless of constant surveillance. Cole connects the many struggles and joys, showing readers that racism in neighboring countries, and the policy solutions, are related.

*Across the Color Line: Reporting 25 Years in Black Cincinnati* by Mark Curnutte (2019). *Cincinnati Enquirer* reporter Mark Curnutte uncovers African American experiences in the Queen City, delving into issues, personalities, institutions, and local history. His portrait of Cincinnati shows the complexities of any metropolitan area: racism, poverty, crime, politics, and religious diversity. Curnutte also includes some of his reflections on his role as a white man reporting on Black communities. An excellent book.

*Children of the Land* by Marcelo Hernandez Castillo (2020). A memoir that spotlights the impact of immigration policy on one man and his family. Hernandez Castillo entered the US illegally as a child. His father was deported when he was a teen. Eventually, DACA and a green card opened up new doors, but concern for his mother and father continually bring the author back into contact with the immigration system. A poet, Marcelo Hernandez Castillo evokes the complexity of the everyday in this powerful and raw memoir.

*Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* by Joy DeGruy (2005). Dr. DeGruy brings truth to light regarding the United States’ long history of abuse towards the Africans they captured and enslaved, as well as their descendants. Dr. DeGruy uses her expertise in trauma to spell out how these continued abuses and the lack of acknowledgement of these abuses continue to negatively impact African descendants in our country. This book provides foundational knowledge for anyone who is working toward healing and consolidation.

*The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* by Andrés Reséndez (2016). Reséndez lays out the damning facts of the enslavement of Indigenous people that began before stolen Africans were brought to these colonized lands and persisted even when outlawed because of the same kinds of loopholes that were used to re-enslave African Americans in the Jim Crow era. Reséndez argues that even though we are most familiar with the patterns of enslavement in the southern US, it is in fact “the other slavery” that was more long-lasting as the pattern persists today in human trafficking. The book also shows the centrality of enslavement, rather than disease, to the decimating impacts of colonization on Native Americans. A challenging and important book.

*Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves* by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen Edwards (2nd ed. 2020). This book provides a framework for early childhood educators to understand biases and to promote justice and respect in their classrooms. The book offers information and tools so that teachers can reflect and grow as they help their staff and their students embrace diverse identities and promote fairness and full development of all children.

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**Poetry for Adults and Teens**

*Poetry is the language of the heart and of the soul. The poetry of African Americans reveals individual experiences and backgrounds, confronts race, expresses laughter and lamentation and more. In short, poetry is one way to express the full range of human experience, often in a simple, condensed form that enlightens, challenges, and delights. Here are a few unique and powerful voices we recommend.*

*Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude* by Ross Gay (2015) This award winning collection is a celebration of the sensual beauty of the world, a delightful tour of Gay’s observations of everything from seeds to armpits. Similarly, *The Book of Delights,* very short essays begun the year after Gay published catalog of unabashed gratitude, explores the ordinary encounters and objects that bring him joy.

*Citizen: An American Lyric* by Claudia Rankine (2014). Rankine employs poetry, prose and artwork in a mosaic of her reflections and experiences as well as the experiences of other African Americans, the pieces of which expose the frustration and pain of living as an African American in 21st century America. *Just Us: An American Conversation* (2020) also combines poetry, prose and images to further explore race in America.

*Black Box* by Frank X. Walker (2006). Walker, a former poet laureate of Kentucky, is a founding member of the Affrilachian Poets. He coined this term to identify the particular voices of African Americans from Appalachia, and his poetry in *Black Box* is piercing in its emotional intensity. The influence of Appalachia is apparent, woven with the experience of racism in ways that are poignant and sometimes painful.

*Magical Negro* by Morgan Parker (2019). Parker offers the perspective of a millennial in her poetry. *Magical Negro* weaves pop culture and some older cultural references into her interpretations of what it is to be a young Black woman in the United States in the beginning of the 21st century.

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**Books and Other Resources for Teens**

*Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You* by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X.Kendi (2020). These two award-winning authors combine their skills to make Kendi’s history of racist ideas and their present expressions accessible to young people. Reynold’s easy conversational style immerses readers in a gripping “story” that is about the past, yes, but also about the present reality and power of racism. The power of the book is that, once readers learn to identify racist ideas, they can be leaders of building an antiracist future.

*#NotYourPrincess: Voices of Native American Women* edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale (2017). A collection of poems, personal statements, and art that pushes back against stereotypes and reveals the beauty in the history, cultures, and contemporary lives of Indigenous women and girls. The works in this slim volume touch on some difficult topics and offer inspiration that will resonate with anyone who is or has loved a girl or young woman.

*Troublemaker for Justice: The Story of Bayard Rustin, the Man Behind the March on Washington* by Jacqueline Houtman, Walter Naegle, and Michael G. Long (2019). Originally published in 2014 as Bayard Rustin: Invisible Activist, we are pleased to recommend again this informative book. Rustin began his activism as a teen, participating in sit-ins and freedom rides long before the civil rights movement gained national attention. For the rest of his life, Rustin advocated for non-violent direct action, peace, and human rights, including gay rights. Rustin was an “invisible activist” because it was illegal to be gay and sexually active during the height of the civil rights movement. The threat of scandal kept Rustin behind the scenes. This important work shows the centrality of LGBTQ individuals in the struggle for equal rights for all and introduces teens to a remarkable man who inspires us all to be “angelic troublemakers.”

*An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States For Young People*, adapted by Jeanine Mendoza and Debbie Reese (2019). This adaptation of Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz’s 2014 book was written with teens and teachers in mind and includes photos, maps, and a detailed index. It was selected by many organizations and libraries for their “best of” lists in 2019. Dunbar-Ortiz’s book has helped many adults come to terms with some of the history we were never taught; Mendoza and Reese’s book will help young people expand their knowledge while they are still in school.

*Quist*. A free mobile app compatible with IOS, Android, and Windows that delivers a daily fact about LGBTQ history. Quist covers over 900 events from history and is designed for young people.

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**Books for Children**

*A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart* by Zetta Elliott, illus. by Noa Denmon (2020). A beautiful affirmation of the emotions we all feel—joy, sorrow, fear, anger, peace, pride, compassion, and a hunger to be free. The simple and beautiful poetry and illustrations will inspire understanding, self-love, and conversations about inner lives and relationships with others.

*Be a King* by Carole Boston Weatherford, illus. by James Ransome (2018). Weatherford pairs a biography of Dr. King with the reactions of students as they learn about him, giving meaning to the history they are learning. Another beautiful offering from this gifted author.

*Someday Is Now* by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich, illus. by Jade Johnson (2018). In 1958, teacher Clara Luper taught her young students about equal rights. They wanted to do more then just learn. So they staged a sit-in at a lunch counter in Oklahoma City, a year before the Greensboro Boys caught the nation’s attention.

*I Am Perfectly Designed* by Karamo Brown, illus. by Anoosha Syed (2019). This charming picture book celebrates a loving relationship between a father and son and promotes self-acceptance. It portrays a Black family in a city that is exciting and safe and shows that growth and change as well as feelings of all kinds are just part of life.

*Superheroes Are Everywhere* by Kamala Harris, illus. by Mechal Renee Roe (2019). Using specific examples from her own life, Harris offers ordinary super powers that anyone has when we are our best selves. The book also introduces primary students to our new Vice President, who puts all the people who inspired her in the spotlight.

*Turning Pages: My Life Story* by Sonia Sotomayor, illus. by Lulu Delacre (2018). A picture book that introduces youngsters to a Supreme Court Justice whose love of books inspired her and helped her face challenges on her way to the highest court in the land. An inspiring read aloud.

*Migrant* by José Manuel Mateo, illus. by Javier Martînez Pedro (2014). Bilingual, Spanish and English. First all the men leave a farming village to find work that pays better. Then the women and children leave, too. The story of one boy’s journey to Los Angeles on a dangerous train ride. Although this book is catalogued as an Easy Reader, the small print and intricate black and white drawings will appeal to independent readers, ages 7 and up. The book uses the form of the codex, the original books of Mesoamerica, which is explained in the Author and Illustrator’s note at the back of the book.

*Buried Lives: The Enslaved People of George Washington’s Mount Vernon* by Carla Killough McClafferty (2018). Prof. Hasan Kwame Jeffries stresses the importance of teaching students about the diversity of the experiences of enslaved people and about the many forms that resistance took. This book does just that with profiles of five of the hundreds of people who George and Martha Washington kept enslaved. One chapter focuses on Oney Judge, a young woman who successfully escaped from the President’s home in Philadelphia and lived the rest of her life as a free woman. Recommended for middle grade readers, ages 9 to 12.

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**Podcasts**

*Radical Imagination.* Host Angela Glover Blackwell interviews people who have put into practice policy solutions to persistent social problems. These radical ideas prove to be practical and effective. Blackwell’s goal is to expand listeners’ ideas about the kinds of solutions that governments and organizations can successfully use to address problems that seem to resist solutions such as mass incarceration, the widening wealth gap, and gun violence. This podcast stretches our thinking while keeping our feet grounded in the moral obligations Dr. King stressed. It offers hope in troubling times. Two seasons available at press time.

*Floodlines.* To mark the 15th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina in 2020, investigative reporters from The Atlantic magazine export the impact of the storm, the flood, and the inept response of all levels of government on African Americans in New Orleans. *Floodlines* also explores the flaws of the media’s reporting and the role of stereotypes in shaping the news and the response. In eight engrossing and informative episodes, host Vann R. Newkirk II illuminates the stories of ordinary citizens by following a few people who chose different venues of refuge or escape. The limited series podcast covers the hurricane, flooding, exodus, exile, and return. Transcripts are available here: https://www.theatlantic.com/podcasts/floodlines/

*Steep Road to Freedom.* The ACLU of Ohio produced this podcast to inform the public about the cash bail system and how it contributes to mass incarceration. The hosts interview experts and the formerly incarcerated and explore many angles of the bail system and the way it deprives those without wealth from access to justice.

*Veritas: Asian Americans & Affirmative Action.* In November, 2020, the 1st US Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Harvard University’s limited use of race as a factor in admissions is not discriminatory against Asian Americans. The person behind the lawsuit, Edward Blum, vowed to appeal to the US Supreme Court. A group of Asian American students from Amherst College produced this podcast after researching the topic affirmative action, Harvard’s admission process, Edward Blum, and limitations of media representations about “Asian Americans,” a broad group that’s diversity is too often ignored. This podcast lacks the professional polish of other titles on this list but provides a good deal of information with personal connections from the student researchers/producers.

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