

## An Antiracist Reading List

Alexander, M. (2010). *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. Civil rights lawyer, advocate, and legal scholar Michelle Alexander directly challenges the idea that the election of Barack Obama signaled a new era of colorblindness. She details how black men have been targeted through the War on Drugs to decimate communities of color and how the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control.

Channing Brown, A. (2018). *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*. An eye-opening story of growing up black, Christian, and female that exposes how white America's love of diversity so often falls short of its ideals.

Coates, T. (2015). *Between the World and Me*. Named one of the most influential books of the decade by CNN, and hailed by Toni Morrison as "required reading," this book is a bold and literary exploration of America's racial history. It is a profound work written in epistolary style that pivots from the biggest questions about American history and ideals to the most intimate concerns of a father and son. A powerful new framework for understanding our nation's history and current crisis.

Davis, A. (2003). *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Political activist, philosopher, and scholar, Angela Davis has written over 10 books on class, feminism, and the U.S. prison system. This book is an unflinching critique of why more than 2 million black Americans are currently imprisoned and explains why many corporations profit from this mass incarceration.

DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*. The author, a University of Washington Professor of Social Work, coined the term white fragility to describe hyper-sensitivity among white people when dealing with their own beliefs and attitudes towards the structural racism that is built into American society. She argues that until whites realize how race has shaped their lives and how they have benefited from someone else's oppression, we will not be able to have a meaningful conversation about what we need to do to reform and transform our beliefs, institutions, and communities.

Kendi, I.X. (2019). *How to be an Antiracist*. "In a combination of memoir and an extension of his *Stamped from the Beginning*, Kendi examines racism through numerous lenses: power, biology, ethnicity, body, and culture. His honesty helps readers both white and people of color, navigate this difficult intellectual territory...Essential." *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

Kendi, I. X. (2016). *Stamped from the Beginning: A Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America*.

This award-winning book details how racist ideas were developed, disseminated, and enshrined in American society. The author states that "being an anti-racist requires persistent self-awareness, constant self-criticism, and regular self-examination." The

Washington Post called *Stamped from the Beginning* “an engrossing and relentless intellectual history of prejudice in America.”

Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister Outsider*.

A collection of 15 essays and speeches by poet and feminist writer Audre Lorde, which take on sexism, racism, ageism, homophobia, and class and propose that social difference be a vehicle for action and change.

Lythcott-Haims, J. (2017). *Real American: A Memoir*.

A powerful reflection on identity, belonging, and community, the author shares her story of growing up bi-racial in predominantly white upper middle-class America. As the only child of an African American father and a British mother, Julie suffered from racial discrimination and countless acts of micro-aggressions, actions that make a person feel lesser. Her memoir is about her journey from “self-loathing to self-love through the healing power of community.”

Malcom X and Haley, Alex. (1965). *The Autobiography of Malcom X*.

This classic autobiography profoundly influenced former President Barack Obama and filmmaker Spike Lee. Time Magazine called it one of the ten most important books of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It offers a fascinating perspective on the lies and limitations of the American Dream, and the inherent racism in a society that denies its nonwhite citizens the opportunity to dream.

Oluo, I. (2018). *So You Want to Talk About Race?*

According to the National Book Review, this book is “an incisive look at race and how we should be talking about it. If you are white, it will make you see the nuances of racism that you were probably unaware of, if you are a person of color, it will give you ways to respond calmly, rationally, and intelligently, even when dealing with the well-meaning “I’m not racist” white friend or co-worker.” Oluo also shares how we can leverage our privilege to take specific actions against racism in our schools, neighborhoods, workplaces, and communities.

Ritchie, A. (2017). *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color*.

A history of violence against indigenous, black, and immigrant women of color in the United States, this is a book about policing examined through the lens of the experiences of women, girls, and gender non-conforming people of color. This book uses stories of the women to articulate what is reported in statistics and in the streets of neighborhoods about racial profiling, police violence, and sexual misconduct and abuse and explores what can be done to advocate for reforming this system of unsafe policing.

Stevenson, B. (2014). *Just Mercy*.

A powerful true story about the potential for justice to redeem us and a call to fix our broken system of criminal justice in the United States. As a young lawyer, author Bryan Stevenson started the Equal Justice Initiative, a nonprofit law firm to defend the poor, incarcerated, and wrongly condemned in Montgomery, Alabama. This book is about his experience in defending one of his first clients, a young black man who was sentenced to die

for the murder of a young white woman. An excellent film adaptation starring Michael B. Jordan and Jamie Foxx is streaming on Netflix for the month of June.

Wilkerson, I. (2010). *The Warmth of Other Suns*.

In order to tell the story of The Great Migration, former Pulitzer winning journalist and director of the Narrative Nonfiction Program at Boston University, Isabel Wilkerson interviewed more than 1200 people who shared their personal stories of their family's journeys from the American South to more northern cities to escape the "lynchings, violence, humiliation, and misery" of the Jim Crow era. She chose three people whose life stories are represented in this history. The title is taken from a passage in *Black Boy* by Richard Wright:

"I was taking a part of the South to transplant in alien soil, to see if it could grow differently, if it could drink of new and cool rains, bend in strange winds, respond to the warmth of other suns, and perhaps, to bloom."