

Temple Sinai Circle - “Journey of Self-Awareness and Discovery in Relation to Race” Resource List



Our Circle’s title is a mouthful! But we keep using it because it so aptly describes the process as one learns about the pervasive racism that has existed in our country since the first African captives were brought to Virginia in 1619.

For whites, the process involves recognizing and examining one’s own views and automatic responses to persons with black skin. A white teacher expects less of her black students. A white policeman wonders if the black driver of a car with a broken taillight is really the physician he says he is. A white pedestrian crosses the street to avoid teenage black boys who are approaching him. These examples of automatic stereotyping, doubting and fearing are common among white people. They serve to maintain negative, racist ideas and responses that present obstacles to truly knowing who the individual black person is.

If whites can become aware and open their minds to new and different perspectives, there is a great deal to learn. The purpose of our Circle’s Resource List is self-reflection and building understanding. We hope the materials on this bibliography will help guide readers and viewers on their journeys of self-awareness and discovery in relation to race.

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

1. QUOTES.....	page 2
2. BOOKS.....	page 2
3. ARTICLES	page 8
4. MOVIES	page 9
5. VIDEOS	page 9
6. ORGANIZATIONS.....	page 10

QUOTES:

“The voyage of discovery is not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”

~ Marcel Proust

“Not everything that is faced can be changed; but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”

~ James Baldwin

“One doesn’t have to operate with great malice to do great harm. The absence of empathy and understanding are sufficient.

~ Charles M. Blow

“Since 1619, the people of African descent arriving or born in these colonies and then the United States have comprised a community self-actualizing and sometimes self-identifying as African America or Black America. *African* speaks to a people of African descent. *Black* speaks to a people racialized as *Black*” “Change does not occur without backlash - at least, any change worth having - and that backlash is an indicator that the change is so powerful that the opposing forces resist that change with everything they have... Will the backlash become a force powerful enough to prevail? Or will our organizing become stronger and sharper in the face of such backlash, assured that its presence alone has already declared our victory? Only time - and strategic organizing - will tell the next four hundred years of African America.”

~ Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain

BOOKS:

1. *Between the World and Me Ta-Nehisi* (pronounced Ta-Nehasi), Coates, 2015
This was seminal for me. Conceived as a letter to his teenage son, Coates weaves in history as he speaks of his experiences, feelings and fears in regard to being a black man. The book is short, rich and powerful.
2. *The Fire Next Time*, James Baldwin, 1963
I read this recently and it made quite an impact. Too little has changed in almost 60 years!
3. *Waking Up White*, Debby Irving, 2014
The author recounts her own journey from ignorance to awareness.
4. *White Fragility*, Robin DiAngelo, 2018
The author is white and writes about the reactions of white people as they learn more about the history and continued existence of discrimination against black people. Her ideas about how whites can move forward in “seeing with new eyes” and in communicating with blacks have become the foundation of much anti-racism training.

5. *Tears We Cannot Stop*, Michael Eric Dyson, 2017
Can feel the author's emotion about what it is like to be black. Dyson's prose allows you to walk in his shoes, seeing what he sees, experiencing what he experiences. He clearly depicts how different America is for Black Americans.
6. *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson, 2014
This book, like the movie upon which it is based, is the author's account of his legal work which led to the founding of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), an organization which is dedicated to defending the poor, the wrongly condemned, and those who may have been denied a fair trial. I have enormous respect for the author and for EJI.
7. *Caste*, Isabel Wilkerson, 2020
A masterful and very well researched discussion of caste systems. The author writes about caste in India and relates/comparates that to the Nazi regime and to the way blacks are viewed and treated in America. The sections on the psychological underpinnings of white privilege and white supremacy offer the most thorough explanations I have yet heard for these attitudes and behaviors.
8. *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison, 1970
This novel, the author's first, is set in 1941. It tells the story of an 11-year-old black girl who prays for her eyes to turn blue. The novel won praise for "its vivid evocation of the fear and loneliness at the heart of a child's yearning and the tragedy of its fulfillment".
9. *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*, Beverly Daniel Tatum, 2017
This is the most academic of the books I have read. Originally published in 1997, it was updated by the author in 2017; the update is titled Prologue. I found the subsequent sections of the book more informative (because I was familiar with many of the events described in the Prologue), and I especially valued learning about child and adolescent development and white and black identity development. The Contents contains brief, useful descriptions of what is addressed in each chapter.
10. *Beloved*, Toni Morrison, 1987
This Pulitzer Prize winning novel, set after the Civil War, "tells the story of a family of former slaves whose Cincinnati home is haunted by a malevolent spirit." Wikipedia lists the genres as Magical Realism and Historical Fiction.
11. *How to Be an Antiracist*, Ibram X Kendi, 2019
This is an account of the author's journey and accumulating realizations re: racist ideas and behaviors. He explains what anti-racism is and why it is necessary for the shift towards genuine equality for all people of color. I found this book very helpful to my understanding of thought patterns that contribute to racism.
12. *Let My People Vote*, Desmond Meade, 2020
This memoir is an accessible and compelling story. The author, a black man with a history of drug addiction, homelessness, and time served for a felony conviction, takes a leadership role in the struggle to win the right to vote for returning citizens (aka ex-felons, note the impact of nomenclature) in the state of Florida. Though race is not the focus, it is a major factor in every step of his journey.
13. *Punching the Air*, Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam, 2020

This fiction book in a verse format is a beautiful rendering of the difficult situation of a creative, non-conforming black teenage boy who is incarcerated. It reads like a true story. One of the authors, Yusef Salaam, is a member of the Exonerated Five, the group of boys who were wrongly accused and convicted in the 1989 assault of the Central Park jogger.

14. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, Isabel Wilkerson, 2011
This book tells the history of the migration of blacks from southern to northern states from approximately 1915 to 1970. Focusing on three families, it is a very readable, expansive and well researched account of the lives of so many blacks who moved north in an effort to escape racial indignities and to preserve and better their lives.
15. *We Were Eight Years in Power*, Ta-Nehisi Coates, 2017
This is a collection of essays by the author. It was published in 2017, but the essays were written, one for each year of Obama's presidency, during the Obama administration. For each essay Coates has written what he calls "a kind of extended blog post, one that captures why I was writing and where I was in my life at the time". One of the essays "The Case for Reparations" is widely disseminated independently and is seminal reading about the issue of reparations.
16. *The Sun Does Shine*, Anthony Ray Hinton, 2018
This is an amazing and inspiring memoir of a man who spent almost 30 years in prison, most of them on death row, for a crime he did not commit. With the help of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI) and Bryan Stevenson, Anthony Ray Hinton was released in 2015. He has become an activist and an educator for EJI.
17. *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide*, Carol Anderson, 2016
From this book I learned much about the history of our country from the end of the Civil War up to 2016, the year of the book's publication. The author believes that a major trigger for white rage is black advancement. She elaborates thoroughly with a historical perspective, addressing migration, housing, education, health, civil rights, politics, and criminal justice. She has conducted a great deal of research and has provided copious documentation. *White Rage* is a rich, readable and important book.
18. *My Grandmother's Hands*, Resmaa Menakem, 2016
The author addresses racism from a trauma perspective and body centered psychology. He gives an excellent historical perspective of racism in America and how it got focused on blackness. It also mentions the waves of immigrants who were not considered white as they arrived in waves from Europe such as Irish, Italian and Jewish bodies. It discusses how the lizard brain can result in physical manifestations which can cause others to feel unnamed fears as they react to your physical reaction. A section of the book is devoted to understanding and working with the police to effect much needed change in law enforcement systems and individuals.
19. *The Devil You Know, A Black Power Manifesto*, Charles M. Blow, 2021
Using history to make his case to consider a radical strategy for Black Americans to achieve power today, Blow presents an impassioned vision and a (seemingly) quick read, albeit powerful & stirring.
20. *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, Heather McGhee, 2021

This is a wonderful book! It is extremely readable and well-researched non-fiction. The author covers just about all areas of life (education, real estate, employment/unions, etc.) showing with examples and details how racism has operated and how it has affected whites (and other races) as well as Blacks. In the last two chapters she offers valuable psychological ideas and understanding, and she gives examples of people of different races and classes working together to create change. She is realistic and also hopeful. I heartily recommend this book!

21. *Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African American, 1619-2019*, Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain, 2021

Told in 5-year time frames by ninety Black writers, this is a linear compendium of the past four hundred years, starting with the landing of the first enslaved African people up to The Trump years. Although the themes are recognizable, this is compelling reading that presents the personal experiences enmeshed and entrapped in the economic, political and systemic policies and practices of White America. Perhaps a “companion” piece to Isabel Wilkerson’s *Caste*.

22. *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man*, Emmanuel Acho, 2020

This is a very accessible and useful book. Written in a conversational style, it can be particularly helpful for people who are early in their journeys. It also offers opportunities for people who are in the midst of their journeys to consolidate their knowledge and to glean new information and understanding. The author tackles common, even thorny, issues from various points of view, and he appreciates complexity and nuance as he voices his opinions. Acho has conducted interviews and posted YouTube videos in a series with the same title as the book.

23. *The Hidden Wound*, Wendell Berry, 1970

A reference to this short, unique book appears in Notes in Heather McGhee’s *The Sum of Us*. The book includes an Afterward added by the author in 1988. Wendell Berry, the grandson of a well-to-do white farmer and the descendent of slave-holders, grew up on his grandfather’s farm in Kentucky where the culture was racist. The two adults with whom he was closest were Negroes. In his young adult years he questions and reflects upon his own racism. He writes from a philosophical, historical, psychological and even spiritual perspective about the culture and the racist values with which he is surrounded and which he deems hurtful to blacks and to whites. The chapters about his relationships from childhood with his two black adult friends are very engaging, and his discussion about the psychology of white entitlement and white supremacy is enlightening.

24. *Black Radical: The Life and Times of William Monroe Trotter*, Kerri K. Greenidge, 2019

William Monroe Trotter, Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois knew each other, and each worked for Civil Rights in the early 20th Century. Their goal was the same, their approaches differed. Trotter believed the issue was systemic and could be changed only by Black people. His vision and resolute focus drove him and his work to create change through Black Nationalism.

25. *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Racial Justice*, 4th Revised and Updated Edition,

Paul Kivel, 2017

This is a very comprehensive book! Although the author concentrates on racism against Blacks, he also discusses racism against Native Americans, Muslims, Jews and, occasionally, other cultural and religious groups. Different parts of the book may be more or less useful depending upon where you are in your journey towards and education about racial justice. The Contents section is extremely helpful for making choices in this regard and for reviewing subjects after an initial read. The questions posed at the end of each chapter are useful on an individual level and in working with groups. If you are action focused, you may find Part V, Fighting Institutional Racism, and the sections that follow, the most informative and compelling.

26. *The Color of Law: The Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, Richard Rothstein, 2017

This is an important and impactful book! It is a telling of how, since the Civil War, local, municipal, state and federal government laws, policies and practices have mandated, fostered and otherwise contributed to racial segregation in all parts of the United States. Such officially sanctioned segregation is called de jure and is distinguished from de facto segregation, which is segregation that exists but is not officially sanctioned. The author illustrates over and over that de jure segregation has harmed the safety, security, development and advancement of blacks in all areas of life. Residential segregation has been a primary value reinforced by governmental policies and decisions, many of which have included the explicit and/or implicit sanctioning of violence. The author, through extensive research indicated by copious notes at the end of the book, convincingly makes the point that segregation in our country is not primarily de facto, as many insist, but is largely de jure. The clarity of this argument can open the way for action.

27. *Hell of a Book: A Novel*, Jason Mott, 2021

This novel is unique! Written by a black man, it focuses on events in the life of a black author who is on a book tour publicizing his novel, "Hell of a Book". Two other major characters, Soot and The Kid are both extremely dark-skinned children. The stories of all three are mixed and interwoven. There is repeated merging and separating of reality, imagination and fantasy. This can cause some confusion for the reader. However, identity formation, a theme of the book, is complicated. The author skillfully evokes intense feelings through his characters and storytelling. This novel enhanced my awareness, understanding and empathy re: the stress and trauma of being black and a male in our country.

28. *Punishment Without Crime: How Our Massive Misdemeanor System Traps the Innocent and Makes America More Unequal*, Alexandra Natapoff, 2018

This book is an accessible, thorough, and very well documented examination of the misdemeanor system portion of the United States criminal legal system. Racism and discrimination against the poor and under-resourced are an inherent part of the disorganized and often unjust state, county and local court systems that are responsible for the application of state and local laws. Many of the offenses classified as misdemeanors are minor, petty and without victims, but the often lifelong repercussions of arrest and frequent incarceration for inability to pay fines can be brutal and disastrous for those, innocent or guilty, who are arrested. In addition, the system has resulted in plea bargains which require pleas of guilty when that is not the case. This not only affects the future of the accused, but also undermines the concepts of guilt and innocence. The misdemeanor system is, tragically, not a system that reliably delivers justice. Thankfully, the author has suggestions for change.

29. *Nice Racism*, Robin DiAngelo, 2021

The first three chapters of this book review the major ideas put forth in *White Fragility*. After that, DiAngelo elaborates upon those ideas and offers new concepts and specific guidelines related to whites understanding and interacting with Blacks. In her work as an equality, diversity and anti-racism trainer and consultant, DiAngelo speaks to large groups of employees of corporations where such training has been mandated. She has thus encountered a wide variety of attitudes. Her central thesis is that nice behavior of whites is no substitute for or indication of a genuine in-depth awareness and appreciation of Black lives.

30. *The Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation*, Anna Malaika Tubbs, 2021.

The author gives voice and recognition to Mothers, Black Mothers. Tubbs gives tribute to and describes these three mothers, each faced with the triple ordeals of being Black, being a Black female, and being a Black mother. She describes the impact Alberta, Berdis and Louise had on the development of their sons; Martin Luther King, Jr., James Baldwin, and Malcolm X. She describes how these women, despite living in the context of systemic and stereotypic responses to Black women, had the strength, courage and resolve to raise 3 pivotal Black men who, each in his own way, brought about change in our country. She references the mothers of the mens' mothers and how their values and behavior played out and were carried forward as their daughters raised their sons.

31. *RUN, Book One*, John Lewis, Andrew Aydin, Nate Powell, 2021.

This nonfiction graphic narrative style book is the follow up to "March" which is the first and only comic style book to win the National Book Award. John Lewis recounts his memories and experiences of the reactionary racist violence that took place in the period just past the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. In the struggle to advance systemic change to promote civil rights, he and other young black and white activists worked together to advocate for equality for the Black Community. Many of these activists were in their post high school decade-some were still in school. All his narrative takes place within Lewis' involvement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) - from the time of his chairmanship to his leaving - as he said, "They left me. They took a different direction

32. *Black Designers in American Fashion*, Elizabeth Way, Editor, 2021.

The essayists take the reader and connect the threads from the "anonymous histories" of West African and enslaved African American sewers, weavers and their fabrics to the 19th, and 20th century Black designers, most of whom were not acknowledged. A number of Black American designers in the post Civil Rights era of the late 1960s-1980s are highlighted as they seized the fashion industry's attention and set local, national and international fashion. Some of the designers during that time frame were more than annoyed at being labeled "Black designers" as white designers were referenced as "designers". In the background of the book is an example of systemic racism within one industry, and its effects on the people who work in it. A common background theme for each of the designers is that they learned their skills at very early ages watching their mothers, grandmothers or aunts as they sewed at home.

ARTICLES (magazine, newspaper, etc.) and Poetry

1619 Project, Nikole Hannah-Jones, 2019

On August 18, 2019, The entire *New York Times Magazine* presented and was devoted to The 1619 Project. The Project's name and date of publication were in commemoration of the landing of a ship near a coastal port of the colony of Virginia; the ship carried the first 20 enslaved Africans who were, in turn, sold to the colonists. The 1619 Project is comprised of articles, essays, poems, artwork, and photographs by many prominent, mainly black, writers and artists. It includes significant historical information. There have been some criticisms (NY Times Magazine 12/29/19 "The Thread" and NY Times Sunday Review 10/11/20 "The 1619 Chronicles" by Bret Stephens) which are interesting also. Click [here](#) for the link to this article.

158 Resources to Understand Racism in America

These articles, videos, podcasts and websites from the Smithsonian chronicle the history of anti-black violence and inequality in the United States. https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/158-resources-understanding-systemic-racism-america-180975029/?utm_source=smithsoniandaily&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20210412-aily-responsive&spMailingID=44787059&spUserID=MTEzNzU2NjE4ODg3NgS2&spJobID=1982656079&spReportId=MTk4MjY1NjA3OQS2

"Kamala Harris, Mass Incarceration and Me" by Reginald Dwayne Betts

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/20/magazine/kamala-harris-crime-prison.html>

The Case for Reparations by Ta-Nehisi Coates

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/06/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

Let America Be America Again by Langston Hughes

<https://poets.org/poem/let-america-be-america-again>

Just Walk on By: Black Men and Public Spaces

<https://www.ohlone.edu/sites/default/files/documents/imported/justwalkonbyblackmenandpublicspace.pdf>

MOVIES:

Just Mercy (2019), Michael B. Jordan, Jamie Foxx, Brie Larson

Based on Bryan Stevenson's book "Just Mercy" (2014). Powerfully showing the imbalance and absence of justice in our justice system for Black members of our country, and Stevenson's commitment to address these wrongs.

Between the World and Me (2020), Multiple well-known actors

Based on Ta-Nehisi Coates book (2015). The sense of universality of racial inequality is created as many voices of well-known stage and screen actors speak Coates' words/experiences.

Small Axe, directed by Steve McQueen (2020)

Five-part series on Prime about life in London's West Indian neighborhoods from 1968 to 1985. Each episode reveals daily oppressions of institutional racism and the struggles against it.

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom (2020)

Vivid portrayal of racism and internalized racism as shown in a blues singer and her group recording an album in the 1920's.

VIDEOS:

Finding Myself in the Story of Race

This is a video by Debby Irving, author of *Waking up White*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oD5Ox5XNEpg>

Brown Eyes and Blue Eyes Racism Experiment Children Session

This video was filmed in 1964 in the teacher's third grade classroom.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oGvoXeXCoUY>

The Assaulted Sense of Self

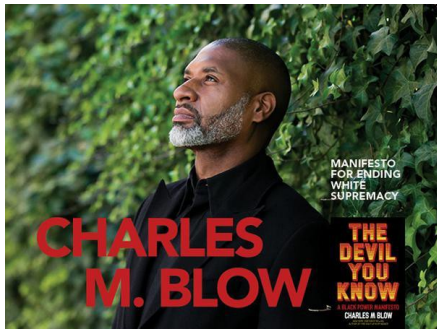
This video is by black psychologist, Dr. Ken Hardy, who has worked for many years as a family therapist and as an interpreter to people of all colors about the psychological ramifications and effects of being black in America. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i26A5oe>

4+ minutes on the power of two words, *White and Black*: [Click here for Mohammed Ali Video](#)

Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man

This is the first of eight (as of 4/2021) videos in which Emmanuel Acho talks to and with whites about being black in America. Acho is comfortable addressing challenging topics and eager for there to be conversation even if there are differences. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8jUA7JBkF4>

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ORGANIZATIONS and INSTITUTIONS

1. Ferguson Library
2. Domus
3. Interfaith Council of Southwestern Connecticut
4. Temple Emanu-El Streiker Center
5. AJC Westchester/Fairfield

