



# African American Racial Justice Booklist

Jones College Prep School Library '18-'19

All summaries  
adapted from  
Goodreads



# ***All American Boys* (2015)**

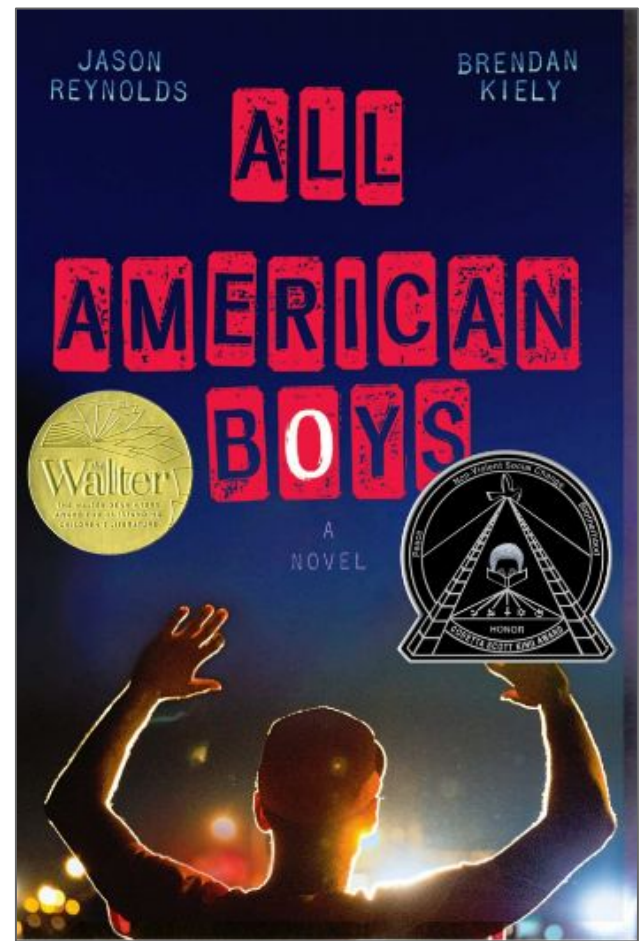
## **Jason Reynolds & Brendan Kiely**

When sixteen-year-old Rashad is mistakenly accused of stealing, classmate Quinn witnesses his brutal beating at the hands of a police officer who happens to be the older brother of his best friend. In this Coretta Scott King Honor Award winning novel, two teens – one black, one white – grapple with the repercussions of a single violent act that leaves their school, their community, and, ultimately, the country bitterly divided by racial tension. Rashad and Quinn confront the unspeakable truth that racism and prejudice didn't die after the civil rights movement.

[JCP Link](#)

[CPL Link](#)

FIC REY



Realistic Fiction

# *The Hate U Give* (2017) Angie Thomas

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed.

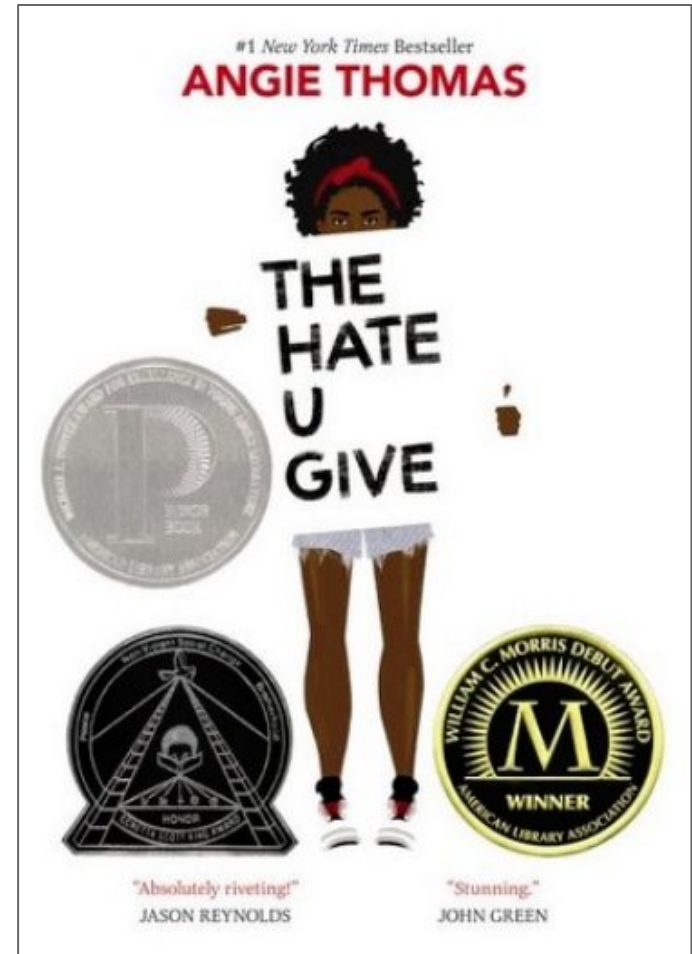
Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr.

But what Starr does or does not say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life.

[JCP Link](#)

[CPL link](#)

FIC THO



Realistic Fiction

# *How It Went Down* (2014)

## Kekla Magoon

When sixteen-year-old Tariq Johnson dies from two gunshot wounds, his community is thrown into an uproar. Tariq was black. The shooter, Jack Franklin, is white.

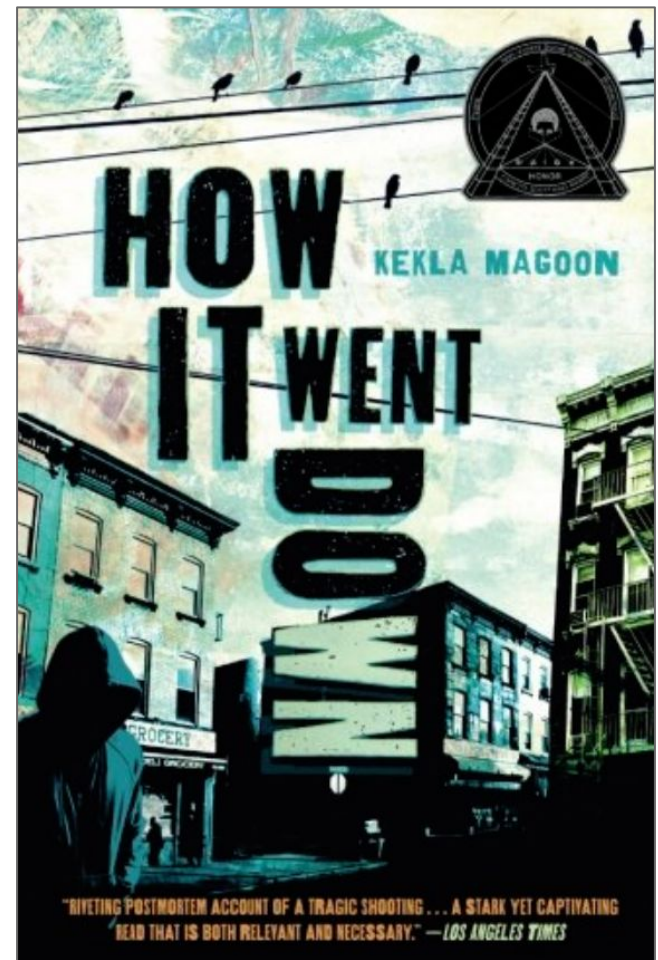
In the aftermath of Tariq's death, everyone has something to say, but no two accounts of the events line up. Day by day, new twists further obscure the truth.

Tariq's friends, family, and community struggle to make sense of the tragedy, and to cope with the hole left behind when a life is cut short. In their own words, they grapple for a way to say with certainty: This is how it went down.

[JCP Link](#)

[CPL Link](#)

FIC MAG



Realistic Fiction



# *Piecing Me Together* (2017)

## Renée Watson

Jade believes she must get out of her neighborhood if she's ever going to succeed. Her mother says she has to take every opportunity. She has. She accepted a scholarship to a mostly-white private school and even Saturday morning test prep opportunities. But some opportunities feel more demeaning than helpful. Like an invitation to join Women to Women, a mentorship program for "at-risk" girls. Except really, it's for black girls. From "bad" neighborhoods.

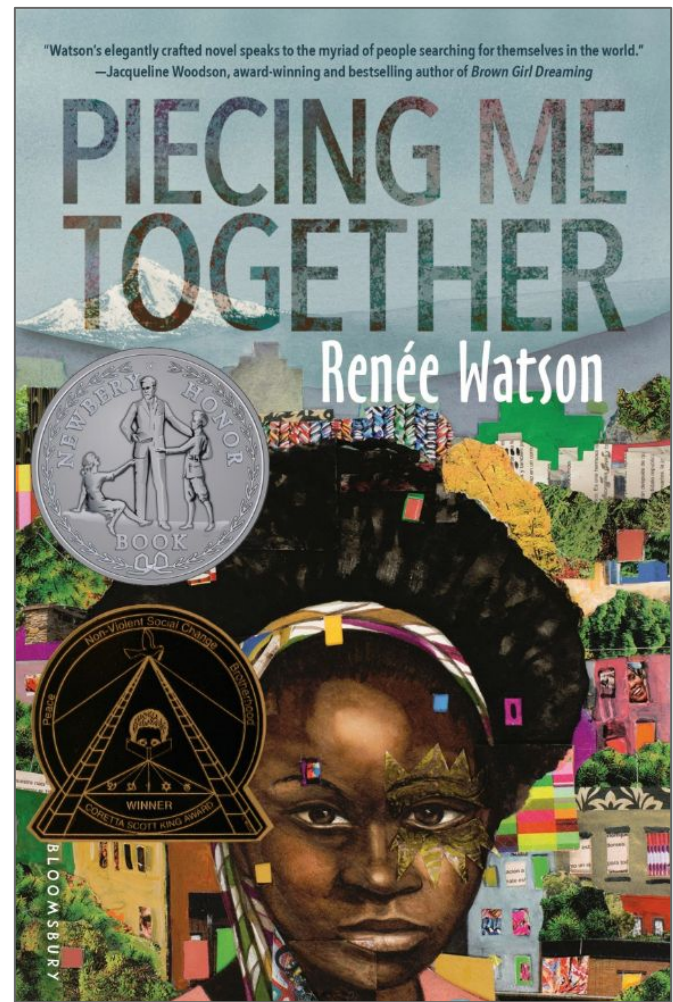
But Jade doesn't need support. And just because her mentor is black doesn't mean she understands Jade. And maybe there are some things Jade could show these successful women about the real world and finding ways to make a real difference.

Friendships, race, privilege, identity—this compelling and thoughtful story explores the issues young women face.

[JCP Link](#)

[CPL Link](#)

FIC WAT



Realistic Fiction

# *Between the World and Me* (2015)

## 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?

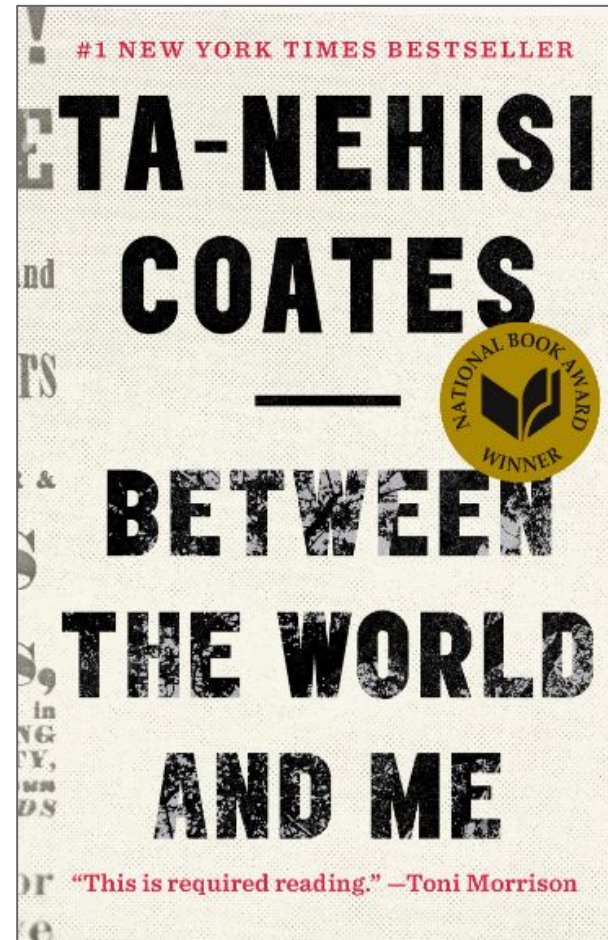
*Between the World and Me* is Ta-Nehisi Coates's attempt to answer these questions in a letter to his adolescent son. Coates shares with his son—and readers—the story of his awakening to the truth about his place in the world through a series of revelatory experiences, from Howard University to Civil 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, this work clearly illuminates the past, bracingly confronts our present, and offers a transcendent vision for a way forward.

[JCP Link](#)

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Nonfiction



# *I Can't Breathe: A Killing on Bay Street*

## Matt Taibbi (2017)

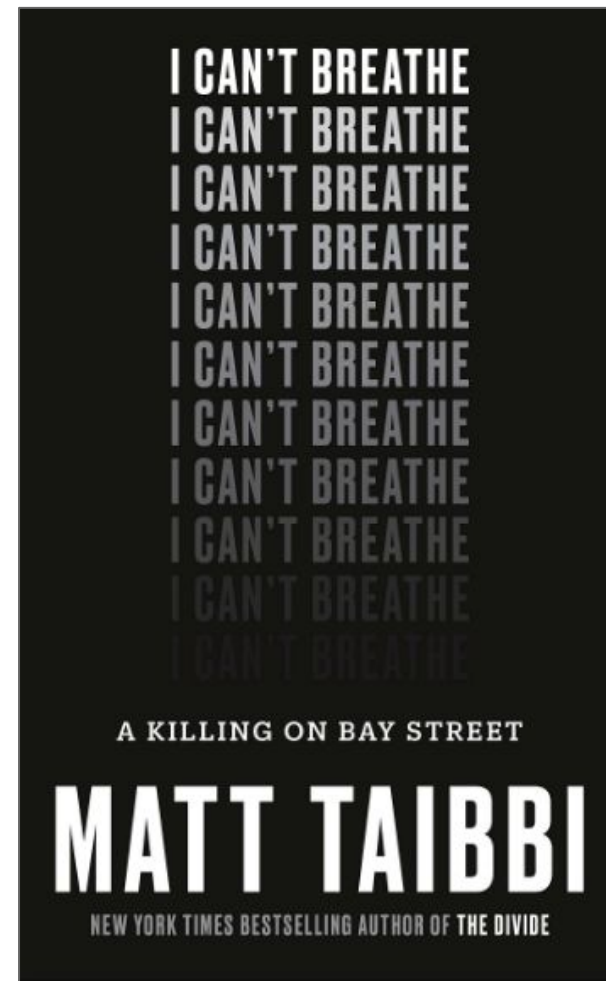
On July 17, 2014, a forty-three-year-old black man named Eric Garner died on a Staten Island sidewalk after a police officer put him in what has been described as an illegal chokehold during an arrest for selling bootleg cigarettes. The final moments of Garner's life were captured on video and seen by millions. His agonized last words, "I can't breathe," became a rallying cry for the nascent Black Lives Matter protest movement. A grand jury ultimately declined to indict the officer who wrestled Garner to the pavement.

Matt Taibbi's deeply reported retelling of these events liberates Eric Garner from the abstractions of newspaper accounts and lets us see the man in full—with all his flaws and contradictions intact. In America, no miscarriage of justice exists in isolation. Taibbi examines the conditions that made this tragedy possible. Featuring vivid vignettes of life on the street and inside our Kafkaesque court system, Taibbi's kaleidoscopic account illuminates issues around policing, mass incarceration, the underground economy, and racial disparity in law enforcement.

[JCP Link](#)

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363.2 TAI



General Nonfiction



# ***The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks***

## **Rebecca Skloot (2010)**

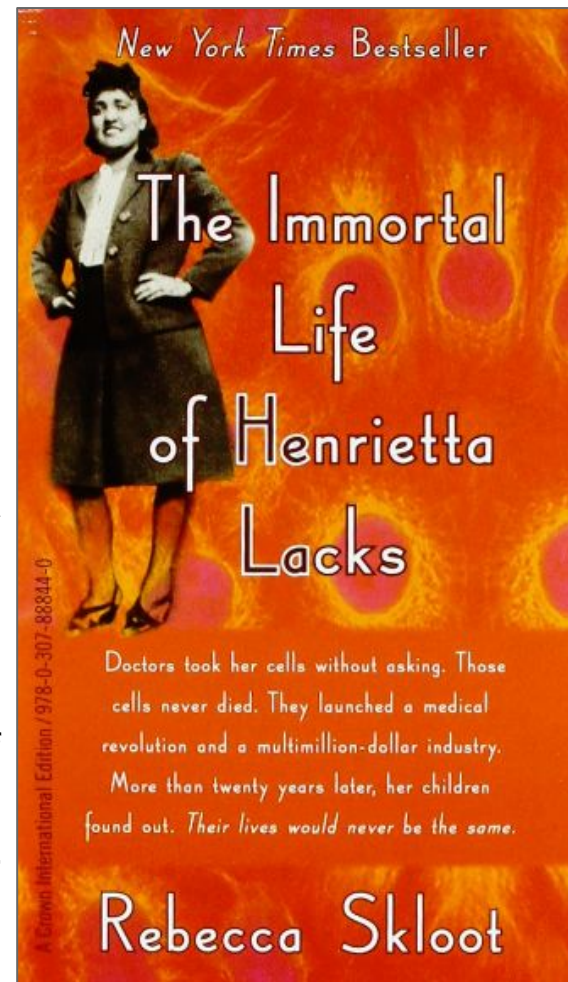
Scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor Southern tobacco farmer who worked the same land as her slave ancestors, yet her cells—taken without her knowledge—became one of the most important tools in medicine. The first “immortal” human cells grown in culture, they are still alive today, though she has been dead for more than sixty years. If you could pile all HeLa cells ever grown onto a scale, they’d weigh more than 50 million metric tons—as much as a hundred Empire State Buildings. HeLa cells were vital for developing the polio vaccine; uncovered secrets of cancer, viruses, and the atom bomb’s effects; helped lead to important advances like in vitro fertilization, cloning, and gene mapping; and have been bought and sold by the billions. Yet Henrietta Lacks remains virtually unknown, buried in an unmarked grave. And her family - who gained none of the profits - did not learn of her “immortality” until more than twenty years after her death, when scientists investigating HeLa began using her husband and children in research without informed consent.

Author Rebecca Skloot takes us on an extraordinary journey, from the “colored” ward of Johns Hopkins Hospital in the 1950s to stark white laboratories with freezers full of HeLa cells; from Henrietta’s small, dying hometown of Clover, Virginia — a land of wooden slave quarters, faith healings, and voodoo — to East Baltimore today, where her children and grandchildren live and struggle with the legacy of her cells.

[JCP Link](#)

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616.02 SKL



**General Nonfiction**



# ***Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* Bryan Stevenson (2014)**

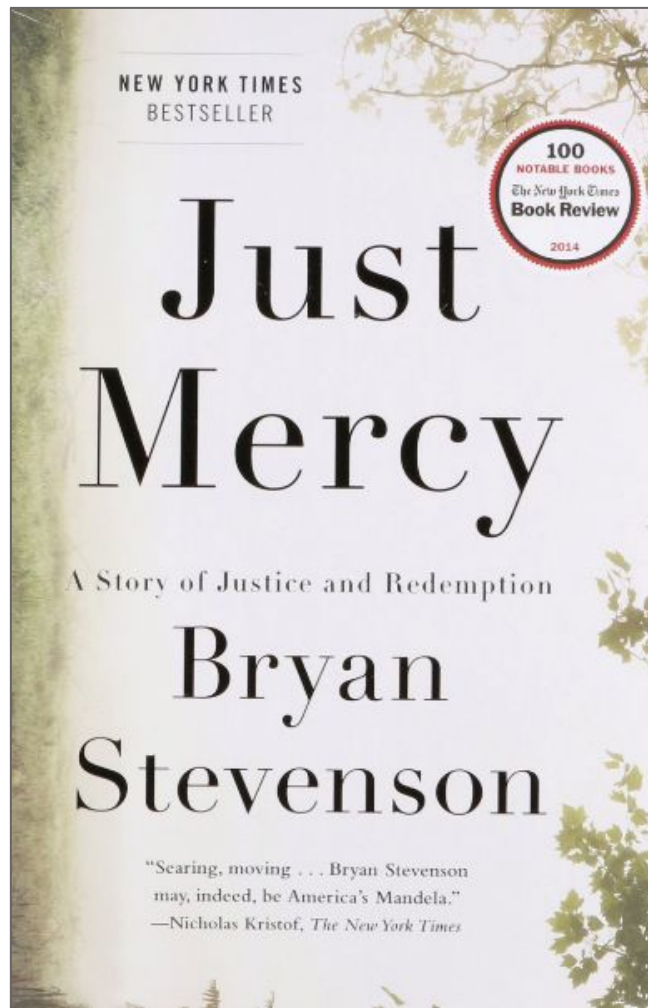
Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system. One of his first cases was 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 brinksmanship—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.

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921 STE



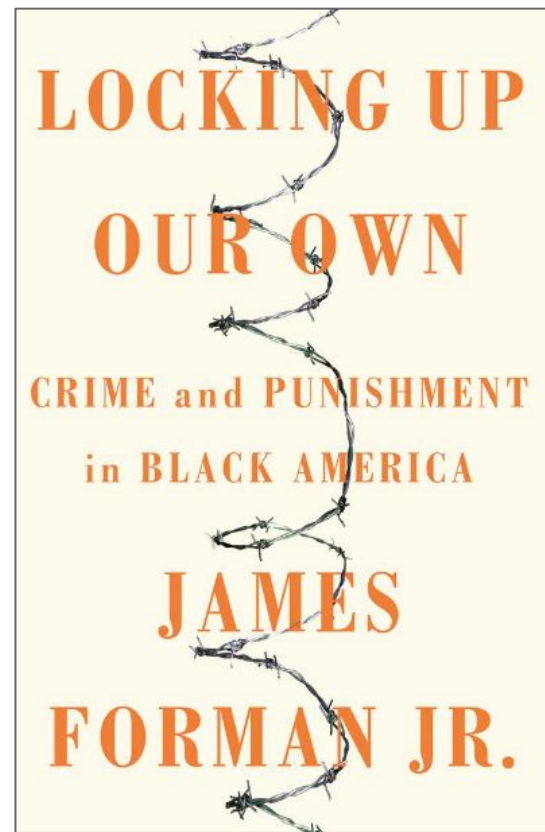
**Nonfiction**

# ***Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America***

## **James Forman (2017)**

America's criminal justice system has become the subject of an increasingly urgent debate. Critics have assailed the rise of mass incarceration, emphasizing its disproportionate impact on people of color. As James Forman, Jr., points out, however, the war on crime that began in the 1970s was supported by many African American leaders in the nation's urban centers. In *Locking Up Our Own*, he seeks to understand why.

Forman shows us that the first substantial cohort of black mayors, judges, and police chiefs took office amid a surge in crime and drug addiction. Many prominent black officials, including Washington, D.C. mayor Marion Barry and federal prosecutor Eric Holder, feared that the gains of the civil rights movement were being undermined by lawlessness—and thus embraced tough-on-crime measures, including longer sentences and aggressive police tactics. In the face of skyrocketing murder rates and the proliferation of open-air drug markets, they believed they had no choice. But the policies they adopted would have devastating consequences for residents of poor black neighborhoods. *Locking Up Our Own* enriches our understanding of why our society became so punitive and offers important lessons to anyone concerned about the future of race and the criminal justice system in this country.



[JCP Link](#)

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**2018 Pulitzer Prize Winner in  
General Nonfiction**

# ***The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* Michelle Alexander (2010)**

"Jarvious Cotton's great-great-grandfather could not vote as a slave. His great-grandfather was beaten to death by the Klu Klux Klan for attempting to vote. His grandfather was prevented from voting by Klan intimidation; his father was barred by poll taxes and literacy tests. Today, Cotton cannot vote because he, like many black men in the United States, has been labeled a felon and is currently on parole."

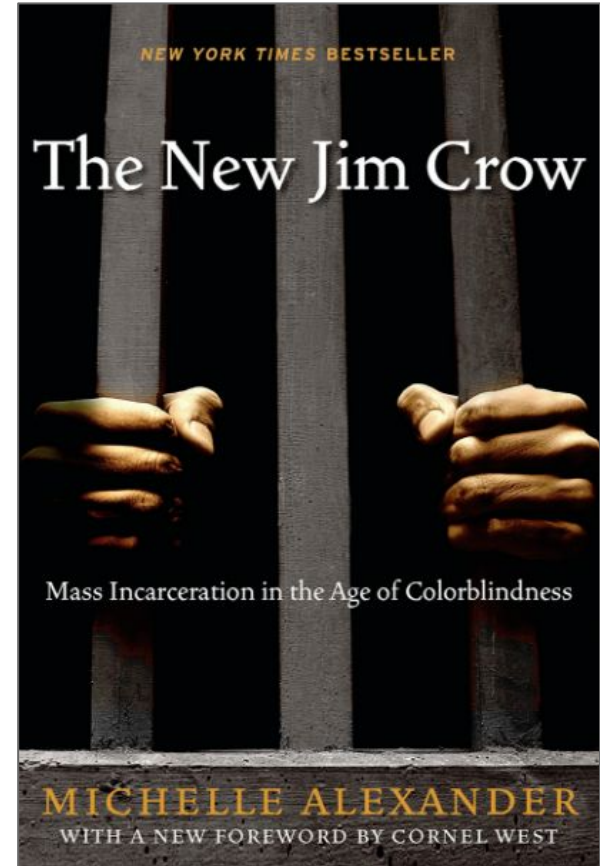
As the United States celebrates the nation's "triumph over race" with the election of Barack Obama, the majority of young black men in major American cities are locked behind bars or have been labeled felons for life. Although Jim Crow laws have been wiped off the books, an astounding percentage of the African American community remains trapped in a subordinate status--much like their grandparents before them.

In this incisive critique, former litigator-turned-legal-scholar Michelle Alexander provocatively argues that we have not ended racial caste in America: we have simply redesigned it. Alexander shows that, by targeting black men and decimating communities of color, the U.S. criminal justice system functions as a contemporary system of racial control, even as it formally adheres to the principle of color blindness. *The New Jim Crow* challenges the civil rights community--and all of us--to place mass incarceration at the forefront of a new movement for racial justice in America.

[JCP Link](#)

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364.97 ALE



**Nonfiction**



# ***Policing the Black Man: Arrest, Prosecution, and Imprisonment*** Angela J. Davis, Ed. (2017)

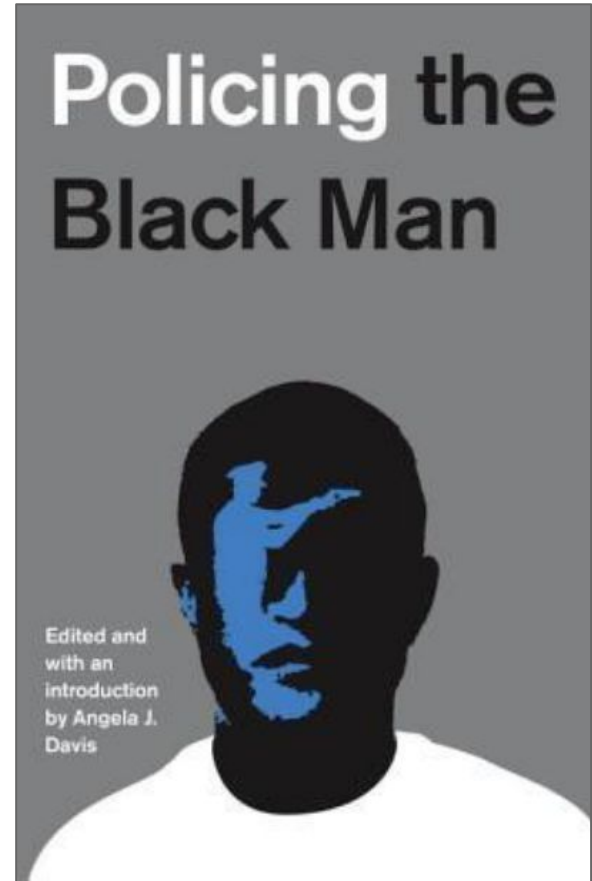
A comprehensive, readable analysis of the key issues of the BlackLivesMatter movement, this thought-provoking and compelling anthology features essays by some of the nation's most influential and respected criminal justice experts and legal scholars.

*Policing the Black Man* explores and critiques the many ways the criminal justice system impacts the lives of African American boys and men at every stage of the criminal process from arrest through sentencing. Essays range from an explication of the historical roots of racism in the criminal justice system to an examination of modern-day police killings of unarmed black men. The co-authors discuss and explain racial profiling, the power and discretion of police and prosecutors, the role of implicit bias, the racial impact of police and prosecutorial decisions, the disproportionate imprisonment of black men, the collateral consequences of mass incarceration, and the Supreme Court's failure to provide meaningful remedies for the injustices in the criminal justice system.

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364.3 POL



**Nonfiction**

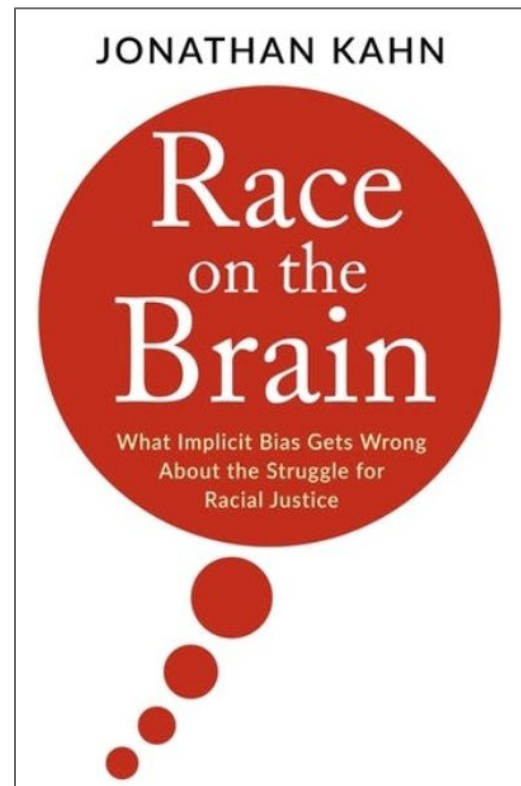
# ***Race on the Brain: What Implicit Bias Gets Wrong About the Struggle for Racial Justice* Jonathan Kahn (2017)**

In *Race on the Brain*, Jonathan Kahn argues that implicit bias has grown into a master narrative of race relations—one with profound if unintended negative consequences for law, science, and society. He emphasizes its limitations, arguing that while useful as a tool to understand particular types of behavior, it is only one among the various tools available to policymakers. An uncritical embrace of implicit bias, to the exclusion of power relations and structural racism, undermines civic responsibility for addressing the problem by turning it over to experts. Technological interventions, including many tests for implicit bias, are premised on a color-blind ideal and run the risk of erasing history, denying present reality, and obscuring accountability. Kahn recognizes the significance of implicit social cognition but cautions us against seeing it as a panacea for addressing America's longstanding racial problems. A bracing corrective to what has become a common-sense understanding of the power of prejudice, *Race on the Brain* challenges us all to engage more thoughtfully and more democratically in the difficult task of promoting racial justice.

[JCP Link](#)

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364.3 KAH



Nonfiction

# ***Race to Incarcerate: A Graphic Retelling***

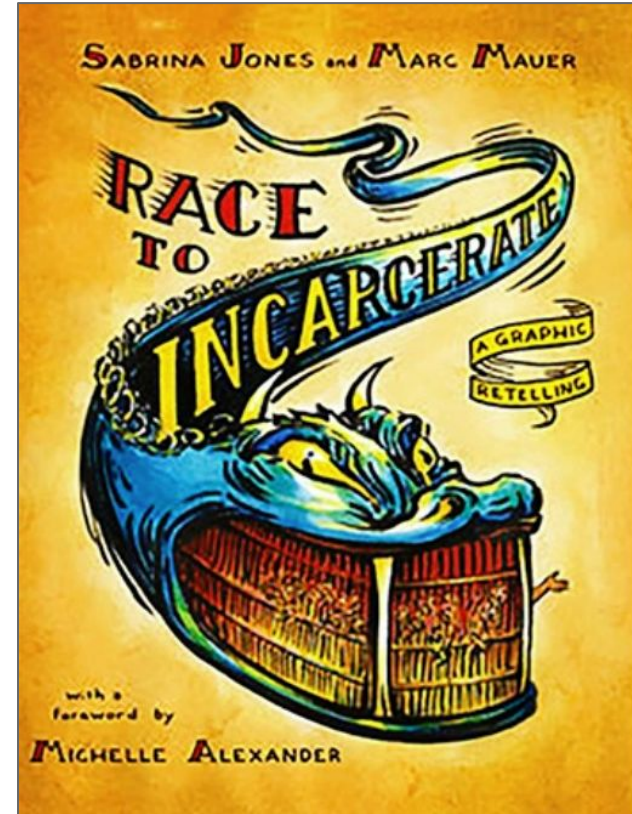
**Marc Mauer (author) Sabrina Jones (illustrator) (2012)**

More than 2 million people are now imprisoned in the United States, producing the highest rate of incarceration in the world. How did this happen? As the director of The Sentencing Project, Marc Mauer has long been one of the country's foremost experts on sentencing policy, race, and the criminal justice system. His book *Race to Incarcerate* has become the essential text for understanding the exponential growth of the U.S. prison system; Michelle Alexander, author of the bestselling *The New Jim Crow*, calls it "utterly indispensable." Now, Sabrina Jones, a member of the *World War 3 Illustrated* collective and an acclaimed author of politically engaged comics, has collaborated with Mauer to adapt and update the original book into a vivid and compelling comics narrative. Jones's dramatic artwork adds passion and compassion to the complex story of the penal system's shift from rehabilitation to punishment and the ensuing four decades of prison expansion, its interplay with the devastating "War on Drugs," and its corrosive effect on generations of Americans.

[JCP Link](#)

[CPL Link](#)

364.6 JON



**Nonfiction/Graphic Format**



# *Racial profiling: everyday inequality*

## Alison Marie Behnke (2017)

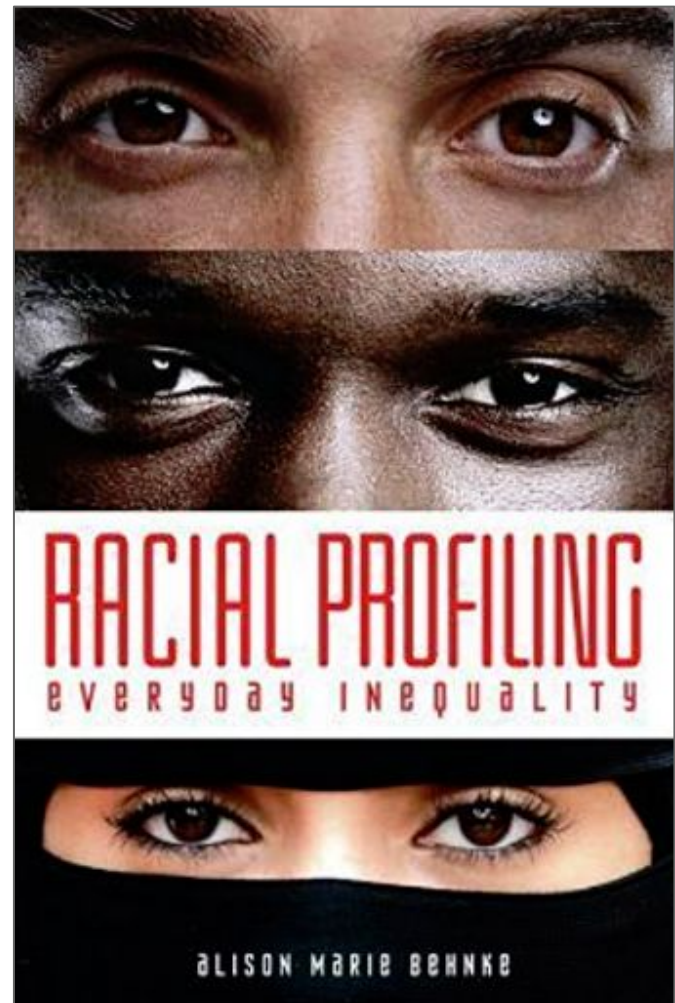
In the United States, racial profiling affects thousands of Americans every day. Both individuals and institutions—such as law enforcement agencies, government bodies, and schools—routinely use race or ethnicity as grounds for suspecting someone of an offense.

The high-profile deaths of unarmed people of color at the hands of police officers have brought renewed national attention to racial profiling and have inspired grassroots activism from groups such as Black Lives Matter. Combining rigorous research with powerful personal stories, this insightful title explores the history, the many manifestations, and the consequences of this form of social injustice.

[JCP Link](#)

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363.2 BEH



Nonfiction

## ***Rising Out of Hatred: The Awakening of a Former White Nationalist* Eli Saslow (2018)**

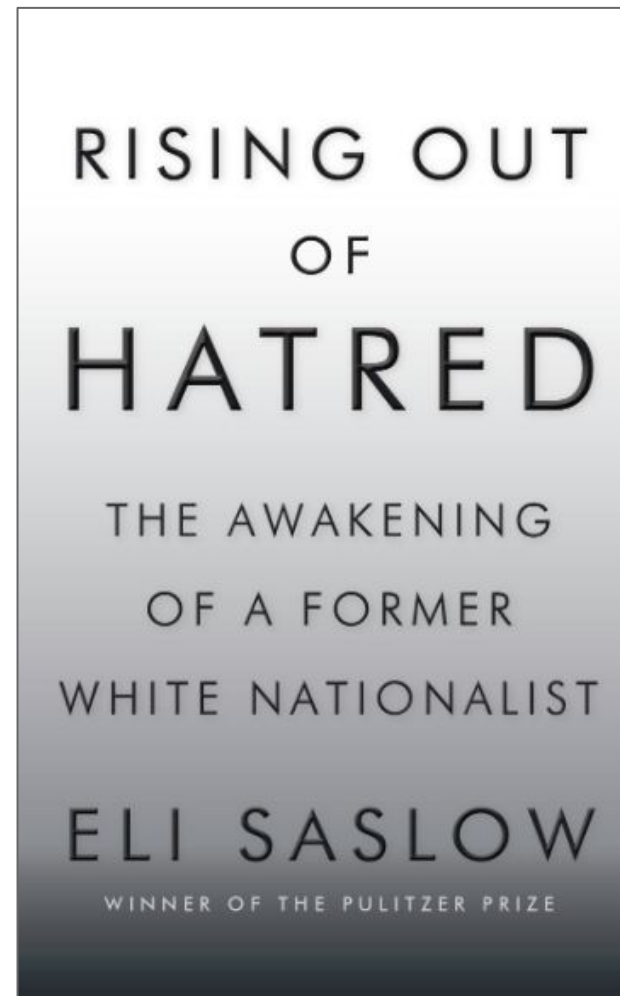
Derek Black grew up at the epicenter of white nationalism. His father founded Stormfront, the largest racist community on the Internet. His godfather, David Duke, was a KKK Grand Wizard. By the time Derek turned nineteen, he had become an elected politician with his own daily radio show – already regarded as the “the leading light” of the burgeoning white nationalist movement. At New College of Florida, he continued to broadcast his radio show in secret each morning, living a double life until a classmate uncovered his identity and sent an email to the entire school. “Derek Black...white supremacist, radio host...New College student???” The ensuing uproar overtook one of the most liberal colleges in the country. Students protested and some found the courage to reach out to him, including an Orthodox Jew who invited Derek to attend weekly Shabbat dinners. It was because of those dinners – and the wide-ranging relationships formed at that table – that Derek started to question his worldview and decided to confront the damage he had done.

This book tells the story of how white-supremacist ideas migrated from the far-right fringe to the White House through the intensely personal saga of one man who eventually disavowed everything he was taught to believe, at tremendous personal cost. With great empathy and narrative verve, Eli Saslow asks what Derek’s story can tell us about America’s increasingly divided nature. This is a book to help us understand the American moment and to help us better understand one another.

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921 BLA



Nonfiction

# *The Silence of Our Friends* (2012)

Mark Long Jim Demonakos Nate Powell (Ilust)

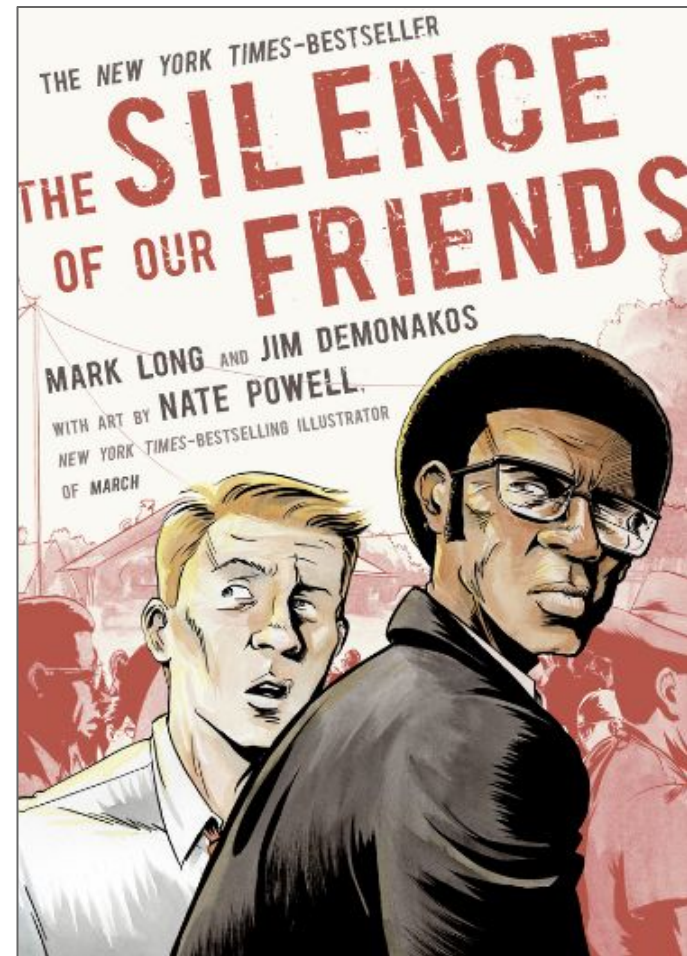
In 1960s Texas, a white family from a notoriously racist neighborhood and a black family from its poorest ward cross Houston's color line, overcoming humiliation, degradation, and violence to win the freedom of five black college students unjustly charged with the murder of a policeman.

*The Silence of Our Friends* draws from the childhood of Mark Long, who, with co-author Jim Demonakos, has created a powerful portrait of a volatile moment in US history. With art from the brilliant Nate Powell (*Swallow Me Whole*) bringing the tale to heart-wrenching life, *The Silence of Our Friends* is a new and important entry in the body of civil rights literature.

[JCP Link](#)

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741.59 LON



Semi-autobiographical  
graphic novel



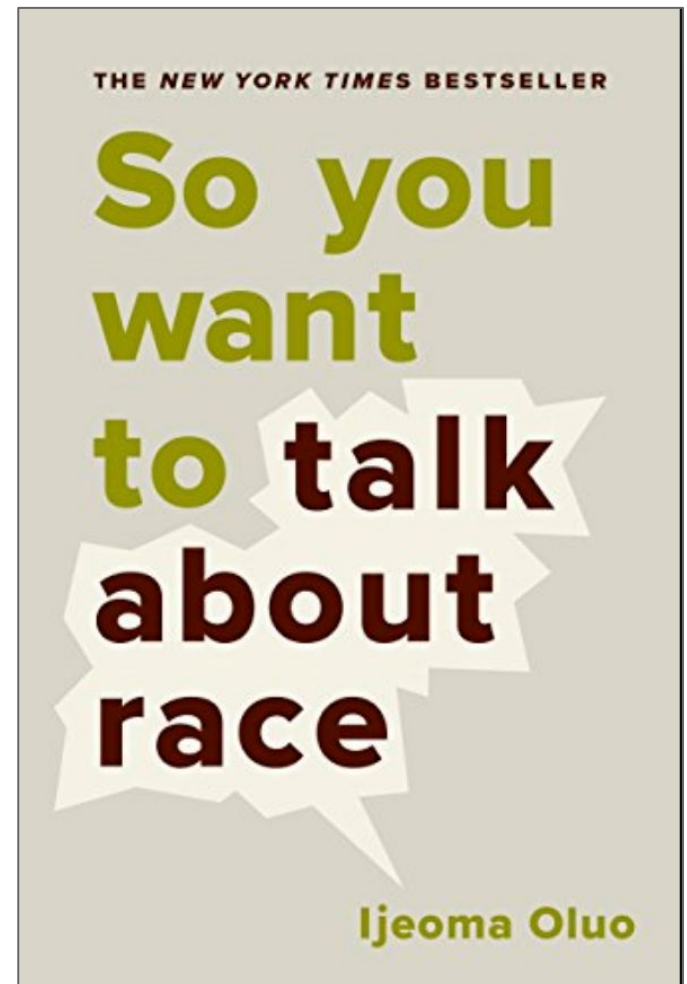
# ***So You Want to Talk About Race***

## **Ijeoma Oluo (2018)**

In *So You Want to Talk About Race*, Editor at Large of The Establishment Ijeoma Oluo offers a contemporary, accessible take on the racial landscape in America, addressing head-on such issues as privilege, police brutality, intersectionality, micro-aggressions, the Black Lives Matter movement, and the "N" word. Perfectly positioned to bridge the gap between people of color and white Americans struggling with race complexities, Oluo answers the questions readers don't dare ask, and explains the concepts that continue to elude everyday Americans.

Oluo is an exceptional writer with a rare ability to be straightforward, funny, and effective in her coverage of sensitive, hyper-charged issues in America. Her messages are passionate but finely tuned, and crystalize ideas that would otherwise be vague by empowering them with aha-moment clarity.

[JCP Link](#) [CPL Link](#) 305.8 OLU



**Nonfiction**

# *The South Side: A Portrait of Chicago and American Segregation* Natalie Y. Moore (2016)

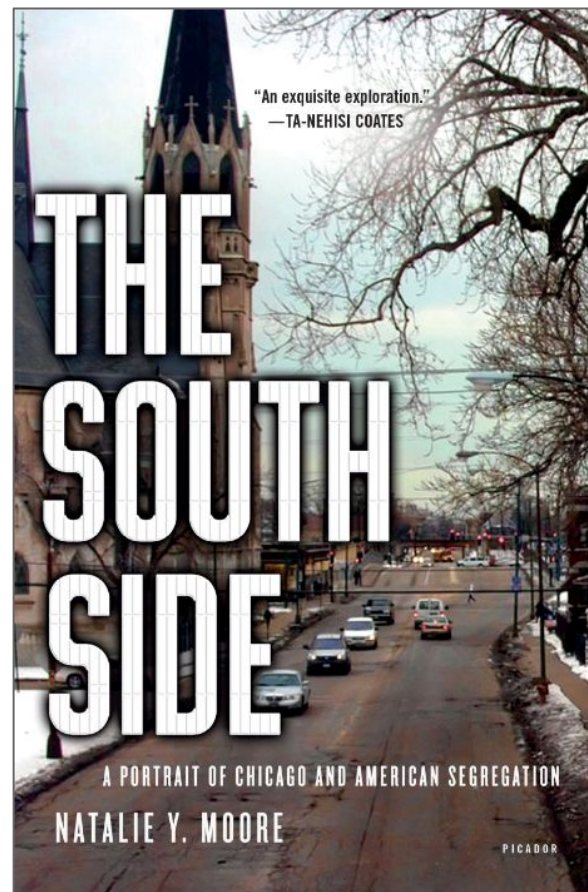
Mayors Richard M. Daley and Rahm Emanuel have touted and promoted Chicago as a "world class city." The skyscrapers kissing the clouds, the billion-dollar Millennium Park, Michelin-rated restaurants, pristine lake views, fabulous shopping, vibrant theater scene, downtown flower beds and stellar architecture tell one story. Yet, swept under the rug is the stench of segregation that compromises Chicago. The Manhattan Institute dubs Chicago as one of the most segregated big cities in the country. Though other cities - including Cleveland, Los Angeles, and Baltimore - can fight over that mantle, it's clear that segregation defines Chicago. And unlike many other major U.S. cities, no one race dominates. Chicago is divided equally into black, white, and Latino, each group clustered in their various turfs.

In this intelligent and highly important narrative, Chicago-native Natalie Moore shines a light on contemporary segregation on the South Side of Chicago through reported essays, showing the life of these communities through the stories of people who live in them. The South Side shows the important impact of Chicago's historic segregation - and the ongoing policies that keep it that way.

[JCP Link](#)

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305.8 MOO

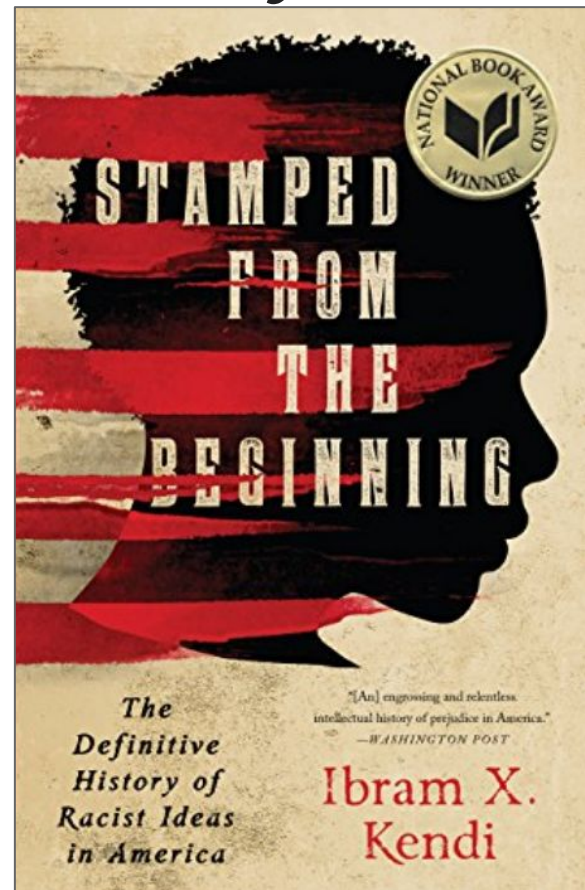


Nonfiction

# *Stamped From the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* Ibram X. Kendi (2016)

Americans like to insist that we are living in a postracial, color-blind society. In fact, racist thought is alive and well; it has simply become more sophisticated and more insidious. Kendi chronicles the entire story of anti-Black racist ideas and their staggering power over the course of American history. Kendi uses the lives of five major American intellectuals to offer a window into the contentious debates between assimilationists and segregationists and between racists and antiracists. From Puritan minister Cotton Mather to Thomas Jefferson, from fiery abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison to brilliant scholar W. E. B. Du Bois to legendary anti-prison activist Angela Davis, Kendi shows how and why some of our leading proslavery and pro-civil rights thinkers have challenged or helped cement racist ideas in America.

Kendi provocatively illustrates that racist thinking did not arise from ignorance or hatred. Racist ideas were created and popularized in an effort to defend deeply entrenched discriminatory policies and to rationalize the nation's racial inequities in everything from wealth to health. While racist ideas are easily produced and easily consumed, they can also be exposed and discredited. [JCP Link](#) [CPL Link](#) 305.8 KEN



Nonfiction

# ***Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America* Michael Eric Dyson (2017)**

Short, emotional, literary, powerful—*Tears We Cannot Stop* is the book that all Americans who care about the current and long-burning crisis in race relations will want to read.

As the country grapples with racist division at a level not seen since the 1960s, one man's voice soars above the rest with conviction and compassion. In his 2016 *New York Times* op-ed piece "Death in Black and White," Michael Eric Dyson moved a nation. Now he continues to speak out in *Tears We Cannot Stop*—a provocative and deeply personal call for change. Dyson argues that 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.

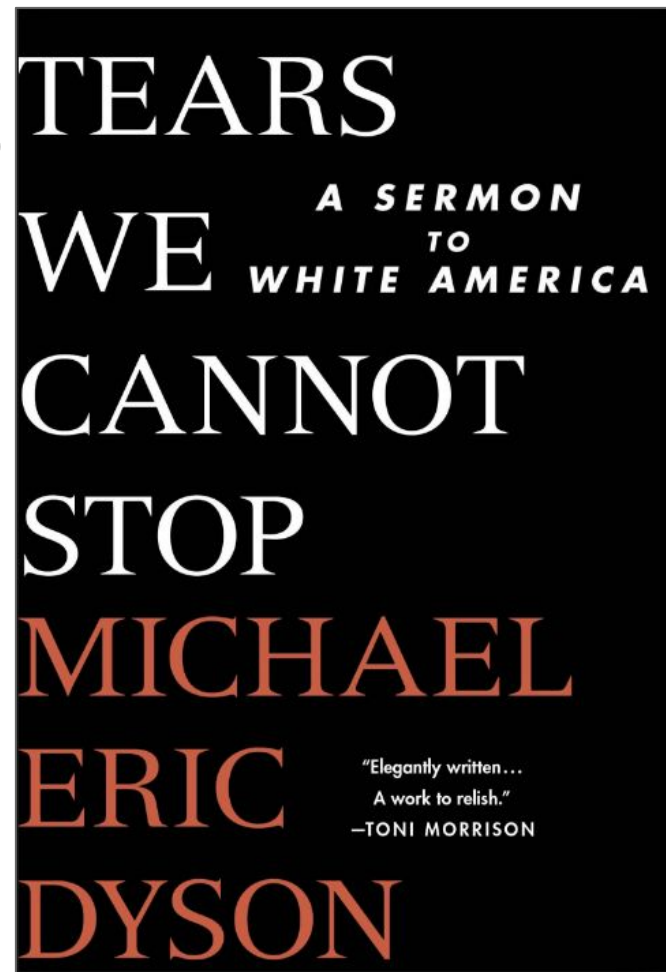
The time is at hand for reckoning with the past, recognizing the truth of the present, and moving together to redeem the nation for our future. If we don't act now, if you don't address race immediately, there very well may be no future.

[JCP Link](#)

[CPL Link](#)

305.8 DYS

Nonfiction





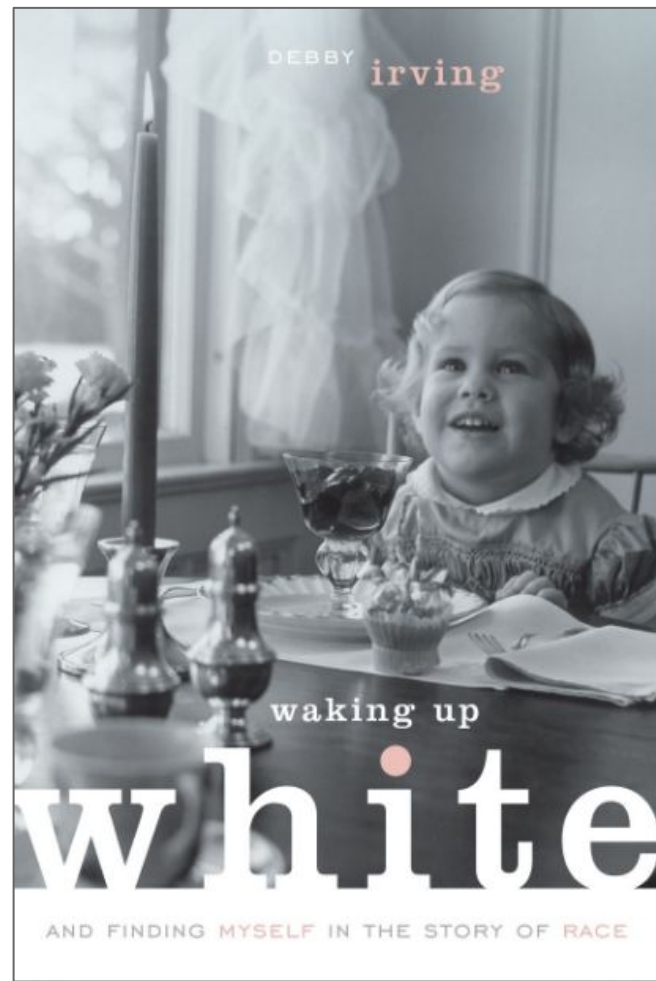
# ***Waking Up White: And Finding Myself in the Story of Race* Debby Irving (2014)**

*Waking Up White* is the book Irving wishes someone had handed her decades ago. By sharing her sometimes cringe-worthy struggle to understand racism and racial tensions, she offers a fresh perspective on bias, stereotypes, manners, and tolerance. As Irving unpacks her own long-held beliefs about colorblindness, being a good person, and wanting to help people of color, she reveals how each of these well-intentioned mindsets actually perpetuated her ill-conceived ideas about race. She also explains why and how she's changed the way she talks about racism, works in racially mixed groups, and understands the antiracism movement as a whole. Exercises at the end of each chapter prompt readers to explore their own racialized ideas. *Waking Up White*'s personal narrative is designed to work well as a rapid read, a book group book, or support reading for courses exploring racial and cultural issues.

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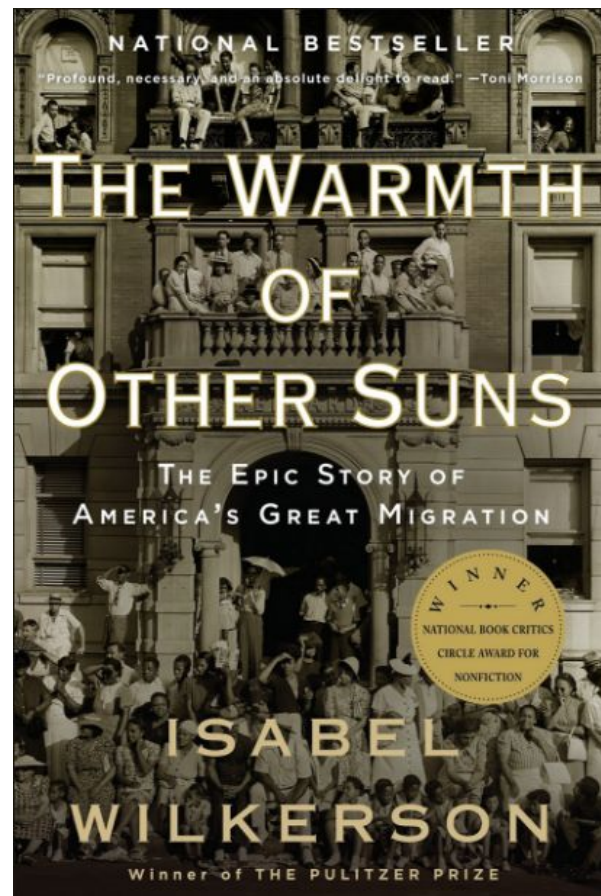
**Nonfiction**

# *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* Isabel Wilkerson (2010)

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 new 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.

Wilkerson tells this story through the lives of three unique individuals: Ida Mae Gladney, who in 1937 left sharecropping and prejudice in Mississippi for Chicago, where she achieved quiet blue-collar success and, in old age, voted for Barack Obama when he ran for an Illinois Senate seat; sharp and quick-tempered George Starling, who in 1945 fled Florida for Harlem, where he endangered his job fighting for civil rights, saw his family fall, and finally found peace in God; and Robert Foster, who left Louisiana in 1953 to pursue a medical career, the personal physician to Ray Charles as part of a glitteringly successful medical career, which allowed him to purchase a grand home where he often threw exuberant parties.

Wilkerson brilliantly captures their first treacherous and exhausting cross-country trips by car and train and their new lives in colonies that grew into ghettos, as well as how they changed these cities with southern food, faith, and culture and improved them with discipline, drive, and hard work. [JCP link](#) [CPL Link](#) 304.8 WIL



Nonfiction

# ***White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of our Racial Divide*** Carol Anderson (2016)

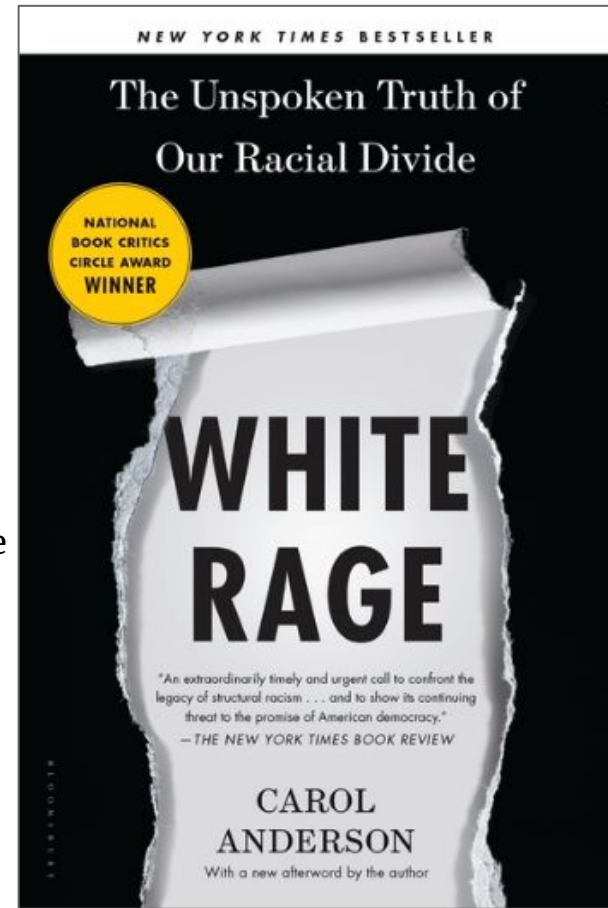
As Ferguson, Missouri, erupted in August 2014, and media commentators across the ideological spectrum referred to the angry response of African Americans as “black rage,” historian Carol Anderson wrote a remarkable op-ed in the *Washington Post* showing that this was, instead, “white rage at work. With so much attention on the flames,” she writes, “everyone had ignored the kindling.”

Since 1865 and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, every time African Americans have made advances towards full participation in our democracy, white reaction has fueled a deliberate and relentless rollback of their gains. The end of the Civil War and Reconstruction was greeted with the Black Codes and Jim Crow; the Supreme Court’s landmark 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision was met with the shutting down of public schools throughout the South while taxpayer dollars financed segregated white private schools; the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 triggered a coded but powerful response, the so-called Southern Strategy and the War on Drugs that disenfranchised millions of African Americans while propelling presidents Nixon and Reagan into the White House. From the Civil War to our combustible present, Carol Anderson reframes our continuing conversation about race, chronicling the powerful forces opposed to black progress in America.

[JCP Link](#)

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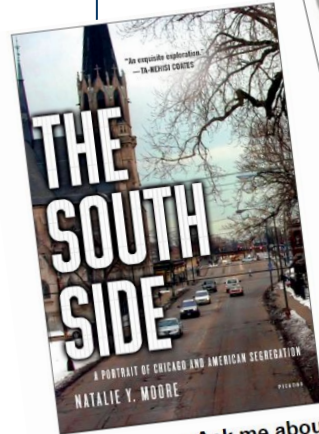
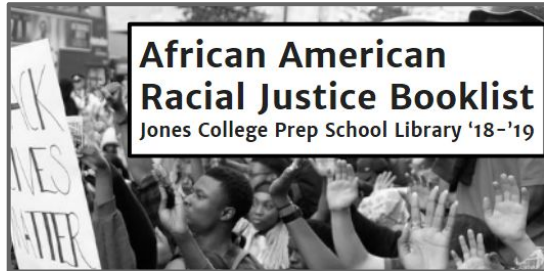




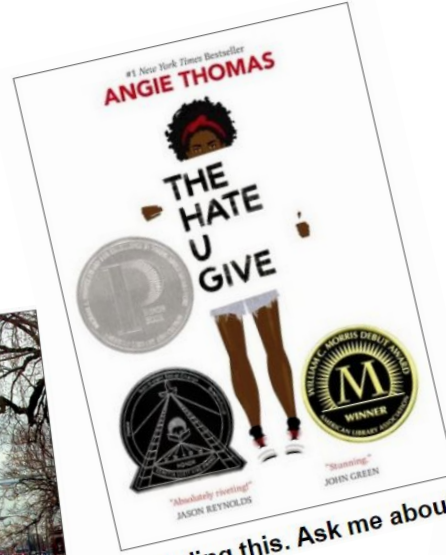
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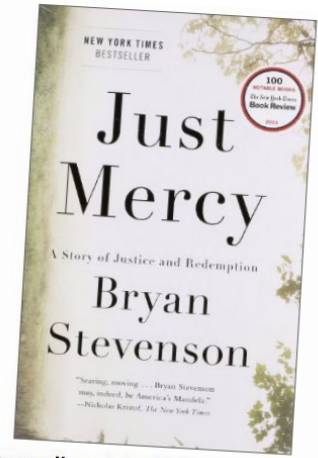
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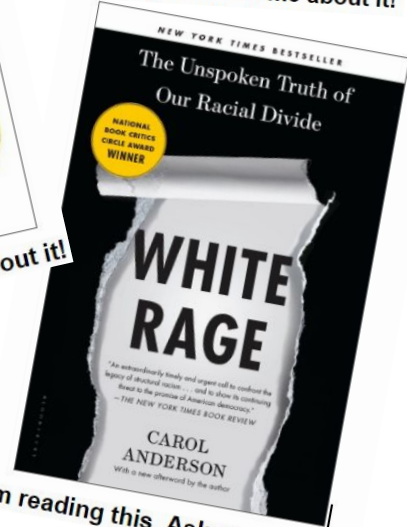
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