

Selected Resource List on Racism and White Privilege

Over the past two weeks, we have witnessed a ground swell of public support for racial justice, particularly as it relates to protecting black people from police brutality, in the form of widespread and repeated peaceful protest marches. A very recent Washington Post/George Mason University poll found that 74 percent of those surveyed nationwide were in support of these protests. If you are an adherent to this movement, or a potential supporter, who would like to understand more about the various manifestations of racism in our country and how they impact people's lives as well as social policy, we hope you will find the following selected resource list on racism and white privilege to be helpful. The selections were made on the basis of our own experience in absorbing these references, with an emphasis on quality and clarity. It represents a very small portion of the rapidly expanding resources currently available in this area. We hope it will make it easier for you to acquire a greater understanding of racism as "America's original sin."

Anti-Racism Group, Western Presbyterian Church
June 2020

1. *The origin and history of racism in the United States:*

Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America, by Ibram X. Kendi, 2017. The National Book Award winning history of how racist ideas were created, spread, and deeply rooted in American society.

2. *How racism affects the lives of black men:*

Between the World and Me, by Ta-Nehesi Coates, 2015. What is it like to inhabit a black body and find a way to live within it? Coates tackles these questions in a frank letter to the author's teenage son about the feelings, symbolism, and realities associated with being black in the United States.

3. *How racism affects the lives of black women:*

Black Women in a White America, by Gerda Lerner, 1992. In this amazing compilation,, African-American women speak of themselves, their lives, ambitions, and struggles from the colonial period to the present day. Theirs are stories of oppression and survival, of family and community self-help, of inspiring heroism and grass-roots organizational continuity in the face of racism, economic hardship, and, far too often, violence. Their vivid accounts, their strong and insistent voices, make for inspiring reading, enriching our understanding of the American past.

4. *Understanding Systemic Racism:*

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Alexander, Michelle. 2010. An excellent and clearly written explanation of how racism permeates all components of the criminal justice system – police, courts, prisons and legislation – to the disproportionate detriment of African American males.

5. *How to combat systemic racism:*

How to be an Anti-Racist, by Ibram X. Kendi, 2019. Kendi's discussion points us toward liberating new ways of thinking about ourselves and each other. Instead of working with the policies and system we have in place, he asks us to think about what an antiracist society might look like, and how we can play an active role in building it.

6. *Understanding White Privilege:*

"White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," by Peggy McIntosh, 1988. The idea of "privilege"—that some people benefit from unearned, and largely unacknowledged, advantages, even when those advantages aren't discriminatory. This idea is explored in the context of racism and includes 46 specific examples. <https://www.raciaequitytools.org/resourcefiles/mcintosh.pdf>

7. *Racism and the Criminal Justice System:*

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption, by Bryan Stephenson, 2015. A powerful true story about the potential for mercy to redeem us, and a clarion call to fix our broken system of justice. Stephenson, the visionary founder and executive director of the Montgomery-based Equal Justice Initiative, presents a searing indictment of American criminal justice and a stirring testament to the salvation that fighting for the vulnerable sometimes yields.

Just Mercy. An award-winning movie of 2019 based on Stephenson's book starring Michael B. Jordan and Jamie Foxx.

8. *Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture in Organizations:*

Jones, Kenneth and Tema Okun. 2001. "The Characteristics Of White Supremacy Culture," in Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups, New York: ChangeWork. <https://www.showingupforracialjustice.org/white-supremacy-culture-characteristics.html>

9. *Why white people have difficulty talking about racism:*

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism, by Robin DiAngelo, 2018. White fragility refers to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially. These reactions are characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. The book also examines how white fragility develops, how it protects racial inequality, and what we can do to engage more constructively.

10. *Thoughtful sources of contemporary comment on racial justice issues:*

Sojourners Magazine. <https://sojo.net/magazine/current>

11. *Racism and the Role of the Christian Church in America:*

The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism, by Jamar Tisby, 2019. This book is both enlightening and compelling, telling a history we either ignore or just don't know. Equal parts painful and inspirational, it details how the American church has helped create and maintain racist ideas and practices over the years.

12. *Racism and Christian faith:*

Letter from a Birmingham Jail, by Martin Luther King, 1963. The text of the famous letter, wherein King defends his strategy of nonviolent resistance. This letter became one of the monumental writings of the Civil Rights Movement .https://swap.stanford.edu/20141218230016/http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/kingweb/popular_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf

Jesus and the Disinherited, by Howard Thurman, 1949. Acclaimed African American theologian and religious leader Howard Thurman (1900-1981) demonstrates how the gospel may be read as a manual of resistance for the poor and disenfranchised.

The Cross and the Lynching Tree, by James H. Cone, 2013. The cross and the lynching tree are the two most emotionally charged symbols in the history of the African American community. In this powerful new work, African American theologian James Cone explores these symbols and their interconnection in the history and souls of black folk.

13. *Discussion of Racism by Presbyterians:*

But I Don't See You as Asian: Curating Conversations about Race, by Bruce Reyes Chow, self-Published, 2013. Available through Amazon.com.

The Belhar Confession. The Belhar Confession was written in 1982 by South Africans as a protest against a heretical theological stance by the white Dutch Reformed Church that used the Bible and the Confessions to justify the harsh and unjust system of Apartheid. It was adopted by the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. into its Book of Confessions at its 222nd General Assembly in 2016. https://oga.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/file_12_confession_of_belhar.pdf

“What about the white folks?” Essay/blog post by Rev. T. Denise Anderson in Unbound: An Interactive Journal on Christian Social Justice. <https://justiceunbound.org/what-about-the-white-folks/>

14. *Racism Themes in Fiction for Teens:*

The Day Tajon Got Shot, by the teen writers of Beacon House. 2017. A story for younger readers about a boy who is shot by police, that is told from the points of view of all the participants including the police officer. It is remarkably even-handed and movingly written.

The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas. 2017. The story is narrated by Starr Carter, a 16-year-old black girl from a poor neighborhood who attends an elite private school in a predominantly white, affluent part of the city. Starr becomes entangled in a national news story after she witnesses a white police

officer shoot and kill her childhood friend. She speaks up about the shooting in increasingly public ways, and social tensions culminate in a riot after a grand jury decides not to indict the police officer for the shooting.

Mississippi Trial 1955, by Chris Crowe. 2003. This gripping read is based on the true events of the murder of Emmett Till, one of the nation's most notorious crimes that helped spark the Civil Rights Movement. At first Hiram is excited to visit his hometown in Mississippi. But soon after he arrives, he crosses paths with Emmett Till, a black teenager from Chicago who is also visiting for the summer. Hiram sees firsthand how the local whites mistreat blacks who refuse to "know their place." When Emmett's tortured dead body is found floating in a river, Hiram is determined to find out who could do such a thing. But what will it cost him to know?

15. *Movies that explore racism:*

Crash. 2004. A tense film that interweaves several connected stories about race, class, family and gender in Los Angeles in the aftermath of 9/11, while examining the racial and class divisions in American society that make every stranger into a potential enemy. Directed by Paul Haggis and starring Sandra Bullock, Don Cheadle, Matt Dillon, Jennifer Esposito, Brendan Fraser, Terrence Dashon Howard, and Thandie Newton. Academy Award for Best Picture.

The Color Purple. 1985. Based on Alice Walker's novel of the same name, this epic tale spans forty years in the life of Celie, an African-American woman living in the South who survives incredible abuse and bigotry. Directed by Steven Spielberg, and starring Danny Glover, Whoopi Goldberg, Desreta Jackson, Margaret Avery, Oprah Winfrey and Rae Dawn Chong.

16. *On-line, self-paced learning about racism:*

"Talking about Race." Website developed by the National Museum of African-American History and Culture. 2020. A mix of articles, podcasts, study guides and other media for parents, students, teachers, and interested adults. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race>

17. *Opportunities for small group discussions of racism with participants of different races:*

"Be the Bridge." An initiative of the National Capital Presbytery. Based on the methodology developed by Latasha Morrison, Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation, 2019. Contact Pat Jackson, email: patjackson@interwovencongregations.org.

18. *Opportunities to get involved in actions and programs supported by Western Church:*

The Poor Peoples' Campaign of 2020:

<https://www.poorpeoplescampaign.org/committee/washington-dc/>

Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop Support black prisoners and former prisoners in DC by commenting on the written works of prisoner-authors. It has a number of opportunities for volunteers. <https://freemindsbookclub.org/get-involved/intern-with-us>

Sanctuary DMV. An all-volunteer organization that supports undocumented immigrants by providing transportation, translation, legal representation, food and other needs.
<http://sanctuarydmv.org/>

19. *Opportunities to get involved nationally:*

Standing Up for Racial Justice. www.surj.org A national network of groups and individuals working to undermine white supremacy and to work toward racial justice. Through community organizing, mobilizing, and education, SURJ moves white people to act as part of a multi-racial majority for justice with passion and accountability.

Black Futures Lab. <https://blackfutureslab.org/> Focuses on expanding black political participation in the democratic process through voter registration, voter mobilization and support of black political candidates.

Center for Policing Equity. <https://policingequity.org/> Conducts research, develops learning resources and generates policy recommendations on issues related to public safety, police performance and racism.

The Movement for Black Lives. <https://m4bl.org/> A network of organizations and individuals who interact to undertake common assessments, develop shared policy positions, and foster black political and cultural organization in order to improve black lives over time.

National Black Justice Coalition. <http://nbjc.org/> A civil rights organization dedicated to the empowerment of Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and same gender loving people, including people living with HIV/AIDS. NBJC's mission is to end racism, homophobia, and LGBTQ/SGL bias. It works mainly through advocacy and the develop of policy alternatives.