



CBF Advocacy

Racial Justice Reading List

America's Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America (Jim Wallis, Brazos Press, 2017): In *America's Original Sin*, Wallis offers a prophetic and deeply personal call to action in overcoming the racism so deeply ingrained in American society. It is faith communities that can lead the way to grassroots change in the face of divided cultures and gridlocked power structures. This book shows people of faith how they can work together to overcome the embedded racism in America.

Anxious to Talk About It: Helping White Christians Talk Faithfully about Racism (Carolyn Helsel, Chalice Press, 2018): If talking about racism makes you anxious, afraid, or even angry, you're not alone. In *Anxious to Talk about It*, pastor and professor Carolyn Helsel draws on her success with white congregations to offer insight and tools to embrace, explore, and work through the anxious feelings that often arise in these hard conversations. Through personal stories, new observations on racial identity development, and spiritual practices to help engage issues of racial justice prayerfully, you'll gain a deeper understanding of race in American and your place in it.

The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice from the Civil Rights Movement to Today (Charles Marsh, Basic Books, 2006): Speaking to his supporters at the end of the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1956, Martin Luther King Jr., declared that their common goal was not simply the end of segregation as an institution. Rather, "the end is reconciliation, the end is redemption, the end is the creation of the beloved community." Standing courageously on the Judeo-Christian foundations of their moral commitments, civil rights leaders sought to transform the social and political realities of 20th Century America. In *The Beloved Community*, Marsh shows that the same spiritual vision that animated the civil rights movement remains a vital source of moral energy today. *The Beloved Community* lays out an exuberant new vision for progressive Christianity and reclaims the centrality of faith in the quest for social justice and authentic community.

Between the World and Me (Ta-Nehisi Coates, Spiegel and Grau, 2015): 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. With his unique blend of experiential narrative, Coates illuminates the past, bravely confronts our present, and offers a transcendent vision for a way forward.

Black Power: The Politics of Liberation (Kwame Ture aka Stokely Carmichael, Vintage, 1992): A revolutionary work since its publication, *Black Power* exposed the depths of systemic racism in this country and provided a radical political framework for reform: true and lasting social change would only be accomplished through unity among African-Americans and their independence from the preexisting order. An eloquent document of the civil rights movement that remains a work of profound social relevance 50 years after it was first published.



Brother to a Dragonfly (Will Campbell, University Press of Mississippi, 2018): This is the memoir of preacher, author, and civil rights activist Will Campbell. Campbell was a Mississippi born, Tennessee based Baptist preacher, activist, author, lecturer, and farmer. *Brother to a Dragonfly* shares two interrelated stories. The first is of Campbell's youth in rural Mississippi and his devotion to his brother whose life ended in seeming tragedy. The other story tells of his ordination at age 17 and gradual realization that civil rights for blacks, women, and the LGBT community was an essential part of a ministry that has not yet ended.

The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism (Jemar Tisby, Zondervan, 2019): *The Color of Compromise* 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. You will be guided in thinking through concrete solutions for improves race relations and a racially inclusive church.

The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America (Richard Rothstein, Liveright, 2017): With exacting precision and fascinating insight, the author argues how segregation in America – the incessant kind that continues to dog our major cities and has contributed to so much recent social strife – is the byproduct of explicit government policies at the local, state, federal levels. One of ten finalists on the National Book Awards' long list for the best nonfiction book of 2017).

The Color of Life: A Journey Toward Love and Racial Justice (Cara Meredith, Zondervan, 2019): A writer and speaker in an interracial marriage and mixed-race family, Meredith finds herself more and more in the middle of discussions about racial justice. In *The Color of Life*, she asks how do we navigate ongoing and desperately needed conversations about race? How do we teach our children a theology of reconciliation and love? And what does it mean to live a life that makes space for seeing the *imago Dei* in everyone? Meredith's illuminating memoir paints a beautiful path from white privilege toward racial healing, from ignorance toward seeing the image of God in everyone she meets.

The Cross and the Lynching Tree (James Cone, Orbis Books, 2013): Both the cross and the lynching tree represent the worst in human beings, and, at the same time, a thirst for life that refuses to let the worst determine our final meaning. While the lynching tree symbolized white power and black death, the cross symbolizes divine power and black life. For African Americans, the image of Jesus, hung on a tree to die, powerfully grounded their faith that God was with them, even in the suffering of the lynching era.

Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation (Jennifer Harvey, Eerdmans, 2014): In this book, Harvey argues for a radical shift in how justice committed white Christians think about race. She calls for moving away from a reconciliation paradigm and instead embracing a reparations paradigm. A deeply constructive, hopeful work, *Dear White Christians* will help readers envision new racial possibilities, including concrete examples of contemporary reparations initiatives.

Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslave the American Soul (Eddie S. Glaude Jr., Broadway Books, 2017): America's great promise of equality has always rung hollow in the ears of African Americans. It is clear that black America faces an emergency. *Democracy in Black* is Glaude's impassioned response. Glaude argues that we live in a country founded on a "value gap" – with white lives valued more than others – that still distorts our politics today. Glaude crystallizes the untenable position of black America and offers thoughts on a better way forward.



Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America (Michael Emerson and Christian Smith, Oxford University Press, 2001): Through a nationwide telephone survey and face to face interviews, Emerson and Smith probed the grassroots of white evangelical America. They found that despite recent efforts by the movement's leaders to address the problem of racial discrimination, evangelicals themselves seem to be preserving America's racial chasm. In fact, most white evangelicals see no systematic discrimination against blacks. Emerson and Smith contend that the evangelical movement's emphasis on individualism, free will, and personal relationships that makes invisible the pervasive injustice that perpetuates racial inequality. In the end, they conclude that despite the best intentions of evangelical leaders and some positive trends, real racial reconciliation remains far over the horizon.

Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture (Karen Cox, University of Florida Press, 2003): Even without the right to vote, members of the United Daughters of the Confederacy proved to have enormous social and political influence throughout the South – all in the name of preserving Confederate culture. Karen Cox's history of the UDC, an organization founded in 1894 to vindicate the Confederate generation and honor the Lost Cause, shows why the myths surrounding the Confederacy continue to endure.

The End of White Christian America (Robert P. Jones, Simon and Schuster, 2017): Jones spells out the profound political and cultural consequences of a new reality – that America is no longer a majority white Christian nation. *The End of White Christian America* explains and analyzes the waning vitality of White Christian America. Jones argues that the visceral nature of today's most heated issues can only be understood against the backdrop of white Christians' anxieties as America's racial and religious topography shifts around them. Looking ahead, Jones forecasts the ways that White Christian America might adjust to find their place in the new America and the consequences for us all if they don't.

The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism (Edward Baptist, Basic Books, 2013): Told through intimate slave narratives, plantation records, newspapers, and the words of politicians, entrepreneurs, and escaped slaves, *The Half Has Never Been Told* offers a radical new interpretation of American history. It forces readers to reckon with the violence at the root of American supremacy, but also with the survival and resistance that brought about slavery's end – and created a culture that sustains America's deepest dreams of freedom.

The Hidden Wound (2nd Edition, Wendell Berry, Counterpoint, 2010): *The Hidden Wound* is an essay about racism and the damage that it has done to the identity of our country. Through Berry's personal experience, he explains how remaining passive in the face of the struggle of racism further corrodes America's potential. In a quiet and observant manner, Berry opens up about how his attempt to discuss racism is rooted in the hope that someday the historical wound will begin to heal.

How to Be an Antiracist (Ibram Kendi, One World, 2019): Antiracism is a transformative concept that reorients and reenergizes the conversation about racism – and, even more fundamentally, points us toward liberating new ways of thinking about ourselves and each other. At its core, racism is a powerful system that creates false hierarchies of human value; its warped logic extends beyond race, from the way we regard people of different ethnicities or skin colors to the way we treat people of different sexes, gender identities, and body types. Racism intersects with class and culture and geography and even changes the way we see and value ourselves. In *How to Be an Antiracist*, Kendi takes readers through a widening circle of antiracist ideas – from the most basic concepts to visionary



possibilities – that will help readers see all forms of racism clearly, understand their poisonous consequences, and work to oppose them in our systems and ourselves.

I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr. (Michael Eric Dyson, Free Press, 2000): Dyson, who contends that Dr. King is arguably “the greatest American who ever lived,” seeks to “rescue King from his admirers and deliver him from his foes.”

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption (Bryan Stevenson, Spiegel and Grau, 2015): A powerful, true story about the potential for mercy to redeem us, and a clarion call to fix our broken system of justice from one of the most brilliant and influential lawyers of our time. *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 who he has defended, and an inspiring argument for compassion in the pursuit of true justice.

Men of Mark: Eminent, Progressive, Rising (William Simmons, Rewell, 1887): A biographical dictionary by the president of the Normal and Theological Institute (now Simmons College) at Louisville, KY, to demonstrate to young men and women that “the Negro races is still alive, and must possess more intellectual vigor than any other section of the human family.” It contains entries for 177 of the most widely known, accomplished, and influential African American men of the 19th century. Politicians, educators, inventors, religious figures, authors, soldiers, and others are presented as examples to be followed by “intelligent, aspiring young people everywhere.”

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness (Michelle Alexander, The New Press, 2010): As Forbes Magazine says, “*The New Jim Crow* offers a devastating account of a legal system doing its job perfectly well. We have simply replaced one caste system (Jim Crow) for another one (imprisonment, parole, detention) that keeps the majority of minorities in a permanent state of disenfranchisement. Alexander looks in detail at what economists usually miss, namely the entire legal structure of the courts, parole, probation, and laws that effectively turn a perpetrator of a crime into a moral outlaw who is unworthy of rehabilitation.”

Race Matters (Cornel West, Beacon Press, 1993): In essays that challenge the nature of racial discourse in America, the director of Princeton’s Afro-American Studies program, professor of Religion, and self-described “intellectual freedom fighter” calls for moral regeneration and profound social change. West is consistently effective at pointing out how the intellectual frameworks used by both whites and blacks as well as by liberals and (neo)conservatives impedes true progress and understanding regardless of what the affirmative action is (black nihilism, Clarence Thomas hearings, etc.).

Reconstructing the Gospel: Finding Freedom from Slaveholder Religion (Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, IVP Books, 2018): Wilson-Hartgrove grew up in the American South as a faithful church-going Christian. But he gradually came to realize that the gospel his Christianity proclaimed was not good news for everybody. The same Christianity that sang, “Amazing grace, how sweet the sound” also perpetuated racial injustice and white supremacy in the name of Jesus. His Christianity, he discovered, was the religion of the slaveholder. Just as Reconstruction after the Civil War worked to repair a desperately broken society, our compromised Christianity requires a spiritual reconstruction that undoes the injustices of the past. Wilson-Hartgrove traces his journey from the religion of the slaveholder to the Christianity of Christ. Reconstructing the gospel requires facing the pain of the past and present, from racial blindness to systemic abuses of power. Grappling seriously with troubling history and theology, Wilson-Hartgrove recovers the subversiveness of the gospel that



sustained the church through centuries of slavery and oppression, from the civil rights era to the Black Lives Matter movement and beyond.

So You Want to Talk About Race (Ijeoma Oluo, Seal Press, 2019): Widespread reporting on aspects of white supremacy – from police brutality to the mass incarceration of Black Americans – has put a media spotlight on racism in our society. Still, it is a difficult subject to talk about. In *So You Want to Talk about Race*, Ijeoma Oluo guides readers of all races through subjects ranging from intersectionality and affirmative action to “model minorities” in an attempt to make the seemingly impossible possible: honest conversations about race and racism, and how they infect almost every aspect of American life.

The Souls of Black Folk (W.E.B. DuBois, 1903): A classic work of American literature, a seminal work in the history of sociology, and a cornerstone of African American literary history. DuBois drew from his own experiences as an African American in the American Society. Outside of its notable relevance in African American history, *The Souls of Black Folk* also holds a prominent place in social science as one of the early works in the field of sociology.

Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America (Ibram X. Kendi, Nation Books, 2016): In this deeply researched and fast moving narrative, Kendi chronicles the entire story of anti-Black racist ideas and their staggering power over the course of American history. *Stamped from the Beginning* uses the life stories of five major American intellectuals to offer a window into the contentious debates between assimilationists and segregationists and between racists and antiracists. Kendi shows how and why some of our leading proslavery and pro-Civil Rights thinkers have challenged or helped cement racist ideas in America.

Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America (Michael Eric Dyson, St. Martin’s Press, 2017): 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. 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.

A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches (Martin Luther King Jr – author and James Washington – editor, HarperOne, 2003): This is the only one volume, major collection of Dr. King’s writings, speeches, interviews, and autobiographical reflections. *A Testament of Hope* contains Dr. King’s essential thoughts on nonviolence, social policy, integration, black nationalism, the ethics of love and hope, and more.

Trouble I’ve Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism (Drew Hart, Herald Press, 2016): In this provocative book, theologian and blogger Drew G.I. Hart places police brutality, mass incarceration, antiblack stereotypes, poverty, and everyday acts of racism within the larger framework of white supremacy. Leading readers toward Jesus, Hart offers concrete practices for churches that seek solidarity with the oppressed and are committed to racial justice.

Trouble the Water: A Christian Resource for the Work of Racial Justice (edited by Michael-Ray Mathews, Marie Claire Onwubariri, and Cody Sanders; Nurturing Faith; 2017): *Trouble the Water* is a resource for individuals and congregations endeavoring to take seriously the ever-increasing necessity of work toward racial justice while attending to the intersections of our identities and the intersecting nature of oppression, injustice, and violence. At a time in our country and in our world when expressions of interpersonal prejudice and structural racism are validated and even



valorized, this is a resource addressing the pressing concerns of our current era. Deeply rooted in the Christian tradition and evidencing the flavors of peace and justice Baptists, this book calls all of us to greater awareness and action in the ministry of racial justice.

The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right (Lisa Sharon Harper, WaterBrook, 2016): Through careful exploration of the biblical text, particularly the first three chapters of Genesis, Lisa Sharon Harper shows us what “very good” can look like today. By deeply exploring the impact of the Hebrew word Shalom, the reader finds that God’s vision remains, wholeness for a broken and fragmented world, peace for a hurting soul.

Waking up White, and Finding Myself in the Story of Race (Debby Irving, Elephant Room Press, 2014): CNN’s Van Jones says, “Debby Irving’s powerful *Waking up White* opens a rare window on how white Americans are socialized. Irving’s focus on the mechanics of racism operating in just one life – her own – may lead white readers to reconsider the roots of their own perspectives – and their role in dismantling old myths. Readers of color will no doubt find the view through Irving’s window fascinating and telling.” *Waking up White* is a terrific examination of racial issues through someone’s own experience.

When Affirmative Action was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth Century America (Ira Katznelson, W.W. Norton and Company, 2006): All of the key programs passed during the New Deal and Fair Deal era of the 1930s and 1940s were created in a deeply discriminatory manner. This was no accident. With the United States still in an era of legal segregation, the powerful southern wing of the Democratic Party provided the framework for Social Security, the GI Bill, and landmark labor laws that helped create the foundations of the modern middle class. Through mechanisms that specifically excluded maids and farmworkers and through laws that kept administration in local hands, the gap between blacks and whites actually widened despite postwar prosperity.

Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community? (Martin Luther King, Jr., 1967): As Vincent Harding writes, “King believed that the next phase in the movement would bring its own challenges, as African Americans continued to make demands for better jobs, higher wages, decent housing, an education equal to that of whites, and a guarantee that the rights won in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 would be enforced by the federal government. He warned that “the persistence of racism in depth and the dawning awareness that Negro demands will necessitate structural changes in society have generated a new phase of white resistance in North and South.”

White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism (Robin DiAngelo and Michael Eric Dyson, Beacon Press, 2018): Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is 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. In this in-depth exploration, DiAngelo examines how white fragility develops, how it protects racial inequality, and what we can do to engage more constructively.

White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son (Tim Wise, Soft Skull Press, 2011): *White Like Me* is a personal examination of the way in which racial privilege shapes the daily lives of white Americans in every realm: employment, education, housing, criminal justice, and elsewhere. Using stories from his own life, Tim Wise demonstrates the ways in which racism not only burdens people of color, but also benefits, in relative terms, those who are “white like him.” He



discusses how racial privilege can harm whites in the long run and make progressive social change less likely. He explores the ways in which whites can challenge their unjust privileges, and explains in clear and convincing language why it is in the best interest of whites themselves to do so. Using anecdotes instead of stale statistics, Wise weaves a narrative that is at once readable and yet scholarly, analytical and yet accessible.

White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide (Carol Anderson, Bloomsbury, 2016): A New York Times bestseller. Since 1865 and the passage of the 13th Amendment, every time African Americans have made advances towards full participation in our democracy, white reaction has fueled 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 the 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, and then the election of America's first black President, led to the expression of white rage that has been as relentless as it has been brutal.

Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: And Other Conversations about Race (Beverly Tatum, Basic Books, 2017): Walk into any racially mixed high school and you will see Black, White, and Latino youth clustered in their own groups. Is this self-segregation a problem to address or a coping strategy? Beverly Tatum argues that straight talk about our racial identities is essential if we are serious about enabling communication across racial and ethnic divides. These topics have only become more urgent as the national conversation about race is increasingly acrimonious.

