

## **Nonfiction: the African- American Experience and History**

The books on this list attempt to describe the history and experience of being Black in America. These books are all available for checkout in the Grandview Library, as are additional resources such as biographies. Check the Library's [online catalog](#) and [Overdrive](#) for more information, or reference our Fiction booklist for outstanding literature by Black authors.

### **Modern Issues and Experiences**

**The Other Wes Moore: one name, two fates- Moore, Wes.** Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence?

**The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace- Hobbs, Jeff.** Robert's life was rough from the beginning in the crime-ridden streets of Newark in the 1980s, with his father in jail and his mother earning less than \$15,000 a year. But Robert was a brilliant student, and it was supposed to get easier when he was accepted to Yale, where he studied molecular biochemistry and biophysics. But it didn't get easier. Robert carried with him the difficult dual nature of his existence, trying to fit in at Yale, and at home on breaks.

**Just Mercy: a story of justice and redemption- Stevenson, Bryan.** 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.

**Not Guilty: twelve black men speak out on law, justice, and life- Jabari Asim.** An anthology of twelve original essays by some of America's most influential young black male writers and critics dealing with how they see this country and how this country sees them. American society, past and present, has a contentious relationship with black men.

**Nobody : casualties of America's war on the vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and beyond- Hill, Marc Lamont.** Unarmed citizens shot by police. Drinking water turned to poison. Mass incarcerations. We've heard the individual stories. Now a leading public intellectual and acclaimed journalist offers a powerful, paradigm-shifting analysis of America's current state of emergency, finding in these events a larger and more troubling truth about race, class, and what it means to be "*Nobody*."

**The New Jim Crow: mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness- Alexander, Michelle.** This book directly challenges the notion that the election of Barack Obama signals a new era of colorblindness. With dazzling candor, legal scholar Michelle Alexander argues that "we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it." By targeting black men through the War on Drugs 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 colorblindness.

**Burning All Illusions: writings from The Nation on race- Edited by Paula J. Giddings.** The best writing on race and civil rights from the magazine's founding in 1865 to the present. The writers in this anthology have addressed these questions not to embitter but to provoke, educate, arouse, and inspire.

**Ghetto Side: a true story of murder in America - Leovy, Jill.** Here is the kaleidoscopic story of the quintessential, but mostly ignored, American murder—a “ghettoside” killing, one young black man slaying another—and a brilliant and driven cadre of detectives whose creed is to pursue justice for forgotten victims at all costs.

**Killing Rage: ending racism - hooks, bell.** One of our country's premier cultural and social critics, bell hooks has always maintained that eradicating racism and eradicating sexism must go hand in hand. But whereas many women have been recognized for their writing on gender politics, the female voice has been all but locked out of the public discourse on race.

**There Goes the Neighborhood: racial, ethnic, and class tensions in four Chicago neighborhoods and their meaning for America - Wilson, William Julius and Richard P. Taub.** A look at how race, class, and ethnicity influence one of Americans' most personal choices—where we choose to live. The result of a three-year study of four working- and lower-middle class neighborhoods in Chicago, these riveting first-person narratives and the meticulous research which accompanies them reveal honest yet disturbing realities—ones that remind us why the elusive American dream of integrated neighborhoods remains a priority of race relations in our time.

**Between the World and Me- Coates, Ta-Nehisi.** 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.

**From #blacklivesmatter to Black Liberation- Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta.** The eruption of mass protests in the wake of the police murders of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner in New York City have challenged the impunity with which officers of the law carry out violence against Black people and punctured the illusion of a postracial America.

**The Color of Wealth: the story behind the US racial wealth divide- Lui, Meizhu, Robles, Barbara, et. Al.** For every dollar owned by the average white family in the United States, the average family of color has less than a dime. Why do people of color have so little wealth? *The Color of Wealth* lays bare a dirty secret: for centuries, people of color have been barred by laws and by discrimination from participating in government wealth-building programs that benefit white Americans.

**Everyday Racism: a book for all Americans- Barnes, Annie S.** In today's media-driven society, not surprisingly, high-profile racist incidents make headlines. But what about the racism that seeps into our everyday lives—the pernicious, destructive acts that break down the social fabric and carve ever deeper divisions between us? Annie S. Barnes has solicited the stories of 150 black college students from middle-class backgrounds, who tell of their frequent encounters with racism—at school, at work, in their neighborhoods, at restaurants and shopping malls.

## **Historical Perspectives: From Slavery through the Civil Rights Era**

**Race: a history beyond black and white - Aronson, Marc.** Acclaimed young-adult historian Marc Aronson tackles these and other questions in this astounding book, which traces the history of racial prejudice in Western culture back to ancient Sumer and beyond. Aronson's journey of discovery yields many surprising discoveries. For instance, throughout most of human history, slavery had nothing to do with race. In fact, the idea of race itself did not exist in the West before the 1600s. But once the idea was established and backed up by "scientific" theory, its influence grew with devastating consequences, from the appalling lynchings in the American South to the catastrophe known as the Holocaust in Europe.

**One Drop of Blood: the American misadventure of race - Malcomson, Scott L.** To escape the limits of race, Americans have continually attempted to escape from other races- by founding, all-black towns, for example- or to nullify race by confining, eliminating, or absorbing one another. From Puritan enslavement of Indians to the separatism we enact daily in our schools and neighborhoods, Americans have perpetually engaged with and fled from other Americans along racial lines.

**Twelve Years a Slave- Northup, Solomon.** Memoir of a black man who was born free in New York State but kidnapped, sold into slavery and kept in bondage for 12 years in Louisiana before the American Civil War.

**Setting Down the Sacred Past: African-American race stories- Maffley-Kipp, Laurie F.** As early as the 1780s, African Americans told stories that enabled them to survive and even thrive in the midst of unspeakable assault. Tracing previously unexplored narratives from the late eighteenth century to the 1920s, Laurie Maffly-Kipp brings to light an extraordinary trove of sweeping race histories that African Americans wove together out of racial and religious concerns.

**The Slave's Curse: a history of abolition- Sinha, Manisha.** Received historical wisdom casts abolitionists as bourgeois, mostly white reformers burdened by racial paternalism and economic conservatism. Manisha Sinha overturns this image, broadening her scope beyond the antebellum period usually associated with abolitionism and recasting it as a radical social movement in which men and women, black and white, free and enslaved found common ground in causes ranging from feminism and utopian socialism to anti-imperialism and efforts to defend the rights of labor.

**The Long Walk to Freedom: runaway slave narratives - editors Devon Carbado and Donald Weise.** In this groundbreaking compilation of first-person accounts of the runaway slave phenomenon, editors Devon W. Carbado and Donald Weise have recovered twelve narratives spanning eight decades—more than half of which have been long out of print. Told in the voices of the runaway slaves themselves, these narratives reveal the extraordinary and often innovative ways that these men and women sought freedom and demanded citizenship.

**Blood at the Root: a racial cleansing in America- Phillips, Patrick.** A sweeping American tale that spans the Cherokee removals of the 1830s, the hope and promise of Reconstruction, and the crushing injustice of Forsyth's racial cleansing. With bold storytelling and lyrical prose, Phillips breaks a century-long silence and uncovers a history of racial terrorism that continues to shape America in the twenty-first century.

**Red Summer: the summer of 1919 and the awakening of Black America - McWhirter, Cameron.** After World War I, black soldiers believed their participation in the fight to make the world safe for democracy finally earned them rights they had been promised since the close of the Civil War. Instead, an

unprecedented wave of anti-black riots and lynchings swept the country for eight months. From April to November of 1919, the racial unrest rolled across the South into the North and the Midwest, even to the nation's capital. Millions of lives were disrupted, and hundreds of lives were lost. Blacks responded by fighting back with an intensity and determination never seen before.

**The Souls of Black Folk - Du Bois, W.E.B.** Originally published in 1903, this seminal work in the history of sociology, and a cornerstone of African-American literary history. To develop this groundbreaking work, Du Bois 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 an important place in social science as one of the early works in the field of sociology.

**Truevine : two brothers, a kidnapping, and a mother's quest : a true story of the Jim Crow South- Macy, Beth.** The year was 1899 and the place a sweltering tobacco farm in the Jim Crow South town of Truevine, Virginia. George and Willie Muse were two little boys born to a sharecropper family. Captured into the circus, the Muse brothers performed for royalty at Buckingham Palace and headlined over a dozen sold-out shows at New York's Madison Square Garden. They were global superstars in a pre-broadcast era. But the very root of their success was in the color of their skin and in the outrageous caricatures they were forced to assume: supposed cannibals, sheep-headed freaks, even "Ambassadors from Mars." Back home, their mother never accepted that they were "gone" and spent 28 years trying to get them back.

**Our Town: a heartland lynching, a haunted town, and the hidden history of White America- Carr, Cynthia.** The brutal lynching of two young Black men in Marion, Indiana, on August 7, 1930, cast a shadow over the town that still lingers. It is only one event in the long and complicated history of race relations in Marion, a history much ignored and considered by many to be best forgotten. But the lynching cannot be forgotten. It is too much a part of the fabric of Marion, too much ingrained even now in the minds of those who live there. In *Our Town* journalist Cynthia Carr explores the issues of race, loyalty, and memory in America through the lens of a specific hate crime that occurred in Marion but could have happened anywhere.

**Notes of a Native Son - Baldwin, James.** Written during the 1940s and early 1950s, when Baldwin was only in his twenties, the essays collected in *Notes of a Native Son* capture a view of black life and black thought at the dawn of the civil rights movement and as the movement slowly gained strength through the words of one of the most captivating essayists and foremost intellectuals of that era. Writing as an artist, activist, and social critic, Baldwin probes the complex condition of being black in America.

**Simeon's Story : an eyewitness account of the kidnapping of Emmett Till - Wright, Simeon with Herb Boyd.** No modern tragedy has had a greater impact on race relations in America than the kidnapping and murder of Emmett Till. A 14-year-old black boy from Chicago visiting relatives in Mississippi in 1955, Till was taken from his uncle's home by two white men; several days later, his body was found in the Tallahatchie River. This grotesque crime became the catalyst for the civil rights movement.

**Devil in the Grove : Thurgood Marshall, the Groveland boys, and the dawn of a new America- King, Gilbert.** In 1949, Florida's orange industry was booming, and citrus barons got rich on the backs of cheap Jim Crow labor. When a white teen girl cried rape, a violent sheriff was fast on the trail of four young blacks who dared to envision a future for themselves beyond the citrus groves. And so began the

chain of events that would bring Thurgood Marshall, the most important Civil Rights American lawyer of the twentieth century, into the deadly fray.

**The Color of Love: a mother's choice in the Jim Crow south - Cheek, Gene.** A powerful story of love and forgiveness in the context of racial hatred during a tumultuous time in the South.

**To the Mountaintop : my journey through the Civil Rights movement- Hunter-Gault, Charlayne.** A personal history of the civil rights movement from an activist and acclaimed journalist.

**Brown Girl Dreaming- Woodson, Jacqueline.** Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement.

**Turning 15 on the Road to Freedom : my story of the 1965 Selma voting rights march - Lowery, Lynda Blackmon.** As the youngest marcher in the 1965 voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, Lynda Blackmon Lowery proved that young adults can be heroes. Jailed nine times before her fifteenth birthday, Lowery fought alongside Martin Luther King, Jr. for the rights of African-Americans. In this memoir, she shows today's young readers what it means to fight nonviolently (even when the police are using violence, as in the Bloody Sunday protest) and how it felt to be part of changing American history.

**March: Book One, Two and Three - Lewis, John and Andrew Aydin.** Congressman John Lewis is an American icon, one of the key figures of the civil rights movement. Now, to share his remarkable story with new generations, Lewis presents March, a graphic novel trilogy.

**Black Against Empire: the history and politics of the Black Panther Party- Bloom, Joshua and Waldo E. Martin Jr.** In Oakland, California, in 1966, community college students Bobby Seale and Huey Newton armed themselves, began patrolling the police, and promised to prevent police brutality. Unlike the Civil Rights Movement that called for full citizenship rights for blacks within the United States, the Black Panther Party rejected the legitimacy of the U.S. government and positioned itself as part of a global struggle against American imperialism. In the face of intense repression, the Party flourished, becoming the center of a revolutionary movement with offices in sixty-eight U.S. cities and powerful allies around the world.

**Voices of Protest: documents of courage and dissent- Lowenstein, Frank.** Collected here are more than 300 documents—essays, letters, newspaper articles, court decisions, song lyrics, poetry, cartoons, and more—that represent seven main categories of protest: Civil Rights; National Self- Determination; Economic Justice; Environmental Conservation; Religious Freedom and Morality; Peace and War; and International Political Freedoms.