

## **Annotated Racial Justice Book List**

### ***Waking Up White; and Finding Myself in the Story of Race* by Debby Irving**

Irving spent the first 25 years of her adult life trying to befriend people of color but not really getting there. She felt tension in her personal and professional life. As an arts administrator and teacher, she had a hard time connecting to students and parents of color. She finally had an 'aha' experience and began to peel back the layers of her life of white privilege. Her journey is informative (eg. the reality of the GI bill) and humbling, helping white readers to start their own discovery process. A good first step in the process of becoming an ally to people of color. --Katie Haney

### ***The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by James H. Cone**

The cross and the lynching tree are the two most emotionally charged symbols in the history of the African American community. Theologian James H. Cone explores these symbols and their interconnection in the history and souls of black folk. 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 - God overcoming the power of sin and death. 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. Part theology, part history, this book exposes the incredible horror of lynchings from which most Northern white people have been protected. It will sear your soul. --Katie Haney

### ***How to Be an Anti-Racist* by Ibram X. Kendi**

Kendi makes a strong case that you are either racist or anti-racist. You either believe one race is superior to another or that they're equal. You can't be neutral. 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 in ourselves. Kendi weaves an electrifying combination of ethics, history, law, and science with his own personal story of awakening to antiracism. He admits to moments of his own racism, even though he is a black man. This is an essential work for anyone who wants to go beyond the awareness of racism to the next step: contributing to the formation of a just and equitable society. View his podcast for more. --Katie Haney

### ***Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* by Ibram X. Kendi**

Some Americans insist that we're living in a post-racial society. But racist thought is not just alive and well in America--it is more sophisticated and more insidious than ever. And as award-winning historian Ibram X. Kendi argues, racist ideas have a long and lingering history, one in which nearly every great American thinker is complicit. 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. He uses the life stories of five major American intellectuals to drive this history: Puritan minister Cotton Mather, Thomas Jefferson,

abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, W.E.B. Du Bois, and legendary activist Angela Davis. As Kendi shows, racist ideas did not arise from ignorance or hatred. They were created to justify and rationalize deeply entrenched discriminatory policies and the nation's racial inequities. In shedding light on this history, *Stamped from the Beginning* offers us the tools we need to expose racist thinking. In the process, Kendi gives us reason to hope. --Roland Madany

### ***So You Want to Talk About Race* by Ijeoma Oluo**

Oluo comes to the issue of interracial conversation from the standpoint of her growing up in a mixed-race family. It's written for those who want to be aware but aren't sure what will be offensive. How do you tell your roommate her jokes are racist? Why did your sister-in-law take umbrage when you asked to touch her hair -- and how do you make it right? How do you explain white privilege to your white, privileged friend? What is a micro-aggression? 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. Easy to read and helpful in beginning respectful and open dialogue between white people and people of color. --Katie Haney

This book was recommended to me as a good place to start in my quest to understand the roots of racial inequality. The National Book Review states, "Ijeoma Oluo gives us - both white people and people of color - that language to engage in clear, constructive, and confident dialogue with each other about how to deal with racial prejudices and biases." I strongly concur. --Dianne Molsberry

### ***Me and White Supremacy* by Layla F. Saad**

This book challenges individuals to do the essential work of unpacking their biases, and helps white people take action and dismantle the privilege within themselves so they can stop (often unconsciously) inflicting damage on people of color, and in turn, help other white people do better, too. Based on the viral Instagram challenge that captivated participants worldwide, *Me and White Supremacy* is a workbook that takes readers on a 28-day journey, complete with journal prompts, to do the necessary and vital work that can ultimately lead to improving race relations. Included are historical and cultural contexts, moving stories and anecdotes, and definitions, examples, and further resources, giving you the language to understand racism, and to dismantle your own biases, whether you are using the book on your own, with a book club, or looking to start family activism in your own home. More about individual work on race than societal issues. --Katie Haney

### ***White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity* by Robert P. Jones**

As the nation grapples with demographic changes and the legacy of racism in America, Christianity's role as a cornerstone of white supremacy has been largely overlooked. But white Christians—from evangelicals in the South to mainline Protestants in the Midwest and Catholics in the Northeast—have not just been complacent or complicit; rather, as the dominant cultural power, they have constructed and sustained a project of protecting white supremacy and opposing black equality that has framed the entire American story. With his family's 1815 Bible in one hand and contemporary public opinion surveys by Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) in the other, Robert P. Jones delivers a groundbreaking analysis of the repressed history of the symbiotic relationship between Christianity and white supremacy. *White Too Long* demonstrates how deeply racist attitudes have become embedded in the DNA of white Christian identity over time and calls for an honest reckoning with a complicated, painful, and even shameful past. Jones challenges white Christians to acknowledge that public apologies

are not enough—accepting responsibility for the past requires work toward repair in the present. *White Too Long* is not an appeal to altruism. Drawing on lessons gleaned from case studies of communities beginning to face these challenges, Jones argues that contemporary white Christians must confront these unsettling truths because this is the only way to salvage the integrity of their faith and their own identities. More broadly, it is no exaggeration to say that not just the future of white Christianity but the outcome of the American experiment is at stake.

***Becoming Brave: Finding the Courage to Pursue Racial Justice Now* by Brenda Salter McNeil**

Reconciliation is not true reconciliation without justice! Brenda Salter McNeil has come to this conviction as she has led the church in pursuing reconciliation efforts over the past three decades. McNeil calls the church to repair the old reconciliation paradigm by moving beyond individual racism to address systemic injustice, both historical and present. It's time for the church to go beyond individual reconciliation and "heart change" and to boldly mature in its response to racial division. Looking through the lens of the biblical narrative of Esther, McNeil challenges Christian reconcilers to recognize the particular pain in our world so they can work together to repair what is broken while maintaining a deep hope in God's ongoing work for justice. *Becoming Brave* offers a distinctly Christian framework for addressing systemic injustice. It challenges Christians to be everyday activists who become brave enough to break the silence and work with others to dismantle systems of injustice and inequality.

***I Am Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness* by Austin Channing Brown**

Austin Channing Brown's first encounter with a racialized America came at age seven, when she discovered her parents named her Austin to deceive future employers into thinking she was a white man. Growing up in majority-white schools and churches, Austin writes, "I had to learn what it means to love blackness," a journey that led to a lifetime spent navigating America's racial divide as a writer, speaker, and expert helping organizations practice genuine inclusion. In a time when nearly every institution (schools, churches, universities, businesses) claims to value diversity in its mission statement, Austin writes in breathtaking detail about her journey to self-worth and the pitfalls that kill our attempts at racial justice. Her stories bear witness to the complexity of America's social fabric—from Black Cleveland neighborhoods to private schools in the middle-class suburbs, from prison walls to the boardrooms at majority-white organizations. *I'm Still Here* is an illuminating look at how white, middle-class, Evangelicalism has participated in an era of rising racial hostility, inviting the reader to confront apathy, recognize God's ongoing work in the world, and discover how blackness—if we let it—can save us all. View her podcast for more.

***How to Be Less Stupid About Race: On Racism, White Supremacy and the Racial Divide* by Crystal Marie Fleming**

This book is your essential guide to breaking through the half-truths and ridiculous misconceptions that have thoroughly corrupted the way race is represented in the classroom, pop culture, media, and politics. Centuries after our nation was founded on genocide, settler colonialism, and slavery, many Americans are kinda-sorta-maybe waking up to the reality that our racial politics are (still) garbage. But in the midst of this reckoning, widespread denial and misunderstandings about race persist, even as white supremacy and racial injustice are more visible than ever before. Combining no-holds-barred social critique, humorous personal anecdotes, and analysis of the latest interdisciplinary scholarship on systemic racism, sociologist Crystal M. Fleming provides a fresh, accessible, and irreverent take on everything that's wrong with our "national conversation about race." Drawing upon critical race theory, as well as her own experiences as a queer black millennial college professor and researcher, Fleming unveils how systemic racism exposes us all to racial ignorance—and provides a road

map for transforming our knowledge into concrete social change. Searing, sobering, and urgently needed, *How to Be Less Stupid About Race* is a truth bomb for your racist relative, friend, or boss, and a call to action for everyone who wants to challenge white supremacy and intersectional oppression.

***Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation* by Latasha Morrison**

In an era where we seem to be increasingly divided along racial lines, many are hesitant to step into the gap, fearful of saying or doing the wrong thing. At times the silence, particularly within the church, seems deafening. But change begins with an honest conversation among a group of Christians willing to give a voice to unspoken hurts, hidden fears, and mounting tensions. These ongoing dialogues have formed the foundation of a global movement called Be the Bridge—a nonprofit organization whose goal is to equip the church to have a distinctive and transformative response to racism and racial division. With conviction and grace, Morrison examines the historical complexities of racism. She expertly applies biblical principles, such as lamentation, confession, and forgiveness, to lay the framework for restoration. Along with prayers, discussion questions, and other resources to enhance group engagement, *Be the Bridge* presents a compelling vision of what it means for every follower of Jesus to become a bridge builder—committed to pursuing justice and racial unity in light of the gospel.

***My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* by Resmaa Menakem**

In this groundbreaking book, therapist Resmaa Menakem examines the damage caused by racism in America from the perspective of trauma and body-centered psychology. The body is where our instincts reside and where we fight, flee, or freeze, and it endures the trauma inflicted by the ills that plague society. Menakem argues this destruction will continue until Americans learn to heal the generational anguish of white supremacy, which is deeply embedded in all our bodies. Our collective agony doesn't just affect African Americans. White Americans suffer their own secondary trauma as well. So do blue Americans—our police. *My Grandmother's Hands* is a call to action for all of us to recognize that racism is not only about the head, but about the body, and introduces an alternative view of what we can do to grow beyond our entrenched racialized divide.

- Paves the way for a new, body-centered understanding of white supremacy—how it is literally in our blood and our nervous system.
- Offers a step-by-step healing process based on the latest neuroscience and somatic healing methods, in addition to incisive social commentary. View his podcast for more.