

MC Africa & Diaspora Heritage Committee

2020 Reading List

“Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America” by Ibram X. Kendi (2016) is a non-fiction book about race in the United States that won the National Book Award for Nonfiction.

“They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America”, by Ivan Van Sertima (1976) reveals a compelling, dramatic, and superbly detailed documentation of the presence and legacy of Africans in ancient America. Ivan Van Sertima builds a pyramid of evidence to support his claim of an African presence in the New World centuries before Columbus.

“Things Fall Apart” by Chinua Achebe, (1958). London, UK: William Heinemann Lt. (original printing)

This Achebe's classic story of the erosion of the traditional Igbo economy and cultural authority in the face of British colonialism.

“Pan-Africanism: A History” by Hakim Adi, (2018). The first survey of the Pan-African movement this century, this book provides a history of the individuals and organizations that have sought the unity of all those of African origin as the basis for advancement and liberation.

“Between the World and Me” by Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015), 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?

“King Peggy: An American Secretary, Her Royal Destiny, and the Inspiring Story of How She Changed an African Village” by Peggien Bartels (2013), chronicles the astonishing journey of American secretary, Peggien Bartels, who suddenly finds herself king to a town of 7,000 people on Ghana's central coast, half a world away.

“Freedom Is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement” by Angela Y. Davis, (2015). In these newly collected essays, interviews, and speeches, world-renowned activist and scholar Angela Y. Davis illuminates the connections between struggles against state violence and oppression throughout history and around the world.

“The Counter Revolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the origins of America” by Dr. Gerald Horne, (2014). The so-called Revolutionary War, Horne writes, was in part a counter-revolution, a conservative movement that the founding fathers fought in order to preserve their right to enslave others. *The Counter-Revolution of 1776* brings us to a radical new understanding of the traditional heroic creation myth of the United States.

***“The Meaning of Freedom: And Other Difficult Dialogues”* by Angela Y. Davis, (2012).** In this collection of twelve searing, previously unpublished speeches, Davis confronts the interconnected issues of power, race, gender, class, incarceration, conservatism, and the ongoing need for social change in the United States.

***“A Taste of Power: A Black Woman's Story”* by Elaine Brown,(1992).** Elaine Brown assumed her role as the first and only female leader of the Black Panther Party with these words: “I have all the guns and all the money. How Brown came to a position of power over this paramilitary, male-dominated organization, and what she did with that power, is a riveting, unsparring account of self-discovery.

***“Lies My Teacher Told Me”* by James Loewen (1995).** Americans have lost touch with their history, and in *Lies My Teacher Told Me* Professor James Loewen shows why. After surveying eighteen leading high school American history texts, he has concluded that not one does a decent job of making history interesting or memorable. Marred by an embarrassing combination of blind patriotism, mindless optimism, sheer misinformation, and outright lies, these books omit almost all the ambiguity, passion, conflict, and drama from our past.

***“White Fragility: Why Its So hard For White People to talk About Racism”* by Robin DiAngelo, (2018).** Antiracist educator Robin DiAngelo deftly illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility and “allows us to understand racism as a practice not restricted to ‘bad people’ (Claudia Rankine). 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.

***“The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness”* by Michelle Alexander (2010).** 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—relegating millions to a permanent second-class status—even as it formally adheres to the principle of colorblindness.

***“Book of Night Women”* by Marlon James, (2010). New York: NY: Riverhead**

Written largely in Jamaican Creole, this is the story of the revolt of a group of powerful, mystical women enslaved as domestics on a plantation in the Caribbean.

***“Notes from the Hyena’s Belly “* by Nega, Mezlekia. (2001). New York, NY: Picador**

This is Mezlekia’s account of his coming of age under the 20th-century socialist Derg regime in Ethiopia. He writes of the clash of traditional culture with strict socialist doctrine and his experiences with these events. The book won Canada’s Governor General’s Award, analogous to a U.S. Pulitzer prize.

“The 1619 Project”:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html>