



SOUTH ORANGE | MAPLEWOOD
COMMUNITY COALITION ON RACE

A Diverse Reading List

Updated: March 20, 2018

General reading list:

- Ada, Alma Flor. **I Love Saturday y domingos**. New York: Atheneum, 2002
- Birdseye, D. H., et. al., **Under our Skin: Kids Talk about Race**. Holiday House, 1997. 30 p.
- Burnett, Karen. **If the World Were Blind: A Book about Judgment and Prejudice**. Felton, CA: GR, 2001
- Tatum, Beverly Daniel. **Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in The Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race**. BasicBooks, 1997
- Fox, Mem. **Whoever You Are**. New York: Sandpiper, 2006
- Gainer, Cindy. **I'm Like You, You're Like Me: A Child's Book About Understanding and Celebrating Each Other**. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit, 1998.
- Hamanaka, Sheila. **All the Colors of the Earth**. New York: Mulberry, 1994.
- Hoffman, Mary. **Amazing Grace**. London: Magi, 1994.
- Lester, Julius. **Let's Talk About Race**. New York: Amistad, 2005.
- Machado, Ana Maria. **Nina bonita**. San Diego: Kane-Miller, 1996.
- Miller, J. Philip and Sheppard M. Greene. **We All Sing with the Same Voice**. New York: Harper Collins, 2005.
- Payne, Lauren Murphy. **We Can Get Along: A Child's Book of Choices**. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit, 1997.
- Senker, Cath. **Why are People Prejudiced**. Raintree Steck-Vaughn, 2002.
- Shaughnessy, Diane. **Let's Talk About Racism**. New York: PowerKids, 1997.
- Simon, Norma. **All Kinds of Children**. Park Ridge, IL: Albert Whitman, 1999.
- Vander Zee, Ruth. **Mississippi Morning**. Eerdermans Books, 2004.

PICTURE BOOKS: AGES 3 - 8

The Snowy Day, by Ezra Jack Keats. This timeless 1962 Caldecott Medal winner – a simple, elegant celebration of a small child's first experience of snowfall – was the first full color picture book with an African-American child at its center.

A Poem for Peter, by Andrea Davis Pinkney, illustrated by Lou Fancher. This book tells the story of how Keats came up with the idea for "The Snowy Day" after seeing striking photographs of an African-American boy in Life magazine years earlier.

All the Colors We Are Todos Los Colores de Nuestra Piel, by Katie Kissinger, *The Story of How We Get Our Skin Color* by

Last Stop on Market Street, by **Matt de la Pena**, illustrated by **Christian Robinson**. This emotional and thought-provoking picture book won the Newbery Award last year – only the second time a picture book has won that prestigious prize for the best overall children’s book. It’s the story of an African–American boy named CJ who rides the bus every week with his grandmother, who makes him turn his complaints into gratitude and positivity.

This Is the Rope: A Story from the Great Migration, by **Jacqueline Woodson**. This beautifully written and illustrated book uses the image of a rope passed from generation to generation to convey the experiences and connections of African-Americans through the generations.

Let’s Talk About Race, by **Julius Lester**. This stunning picture book introduces **race** as just one of many chapters in a person's story" (School Library Journal). "Lester's poignant picture book helps children learn, grow, discuss, and begin to create a future that resolves differences" (Children's Literature). **Julius Lester** says, "I write because our lives are stories.

A Color of His Own, by **Leo Lionni**. The story is about being accepted, and learning to accept yourself. He first explains that chameleons change colors with whichever object they are near, and continues on with his sad story of not being accepted.

Freedom Over Me, by **Ashley Bryan**. This heart-rending book is the answer to the question of whether and how the subject of slavery can be presented to young children. Bryan tells the personal stories of 11 real-life enslaved people who were about to be sold, each in the form of a simple and direct poem accompanied by a portrait.

Thunder Boy Junior, by **Sherman Alexie**. Alexie, the much-heralded author of adult and children’s books about Native American life, wrote this book because he couldn’t find picture books about Native children that were set in the present. It’s the story of a boy who doesn’t like sharing his name with his father, so in the Native American tradition, he sets out picking a new one for himself based on his accomplishments and passions. The Mexican illustrator, Yuyi Morales, adds lively, captivating illustrations that reveal more about Thunder Boy’s family.

Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote, by **Duncan Tonatiuh**. A riveting modern fable by the talented young Mexican artist Tonatiuh, this book won the Pura Belpre award in 2013. It tells the story of a rabbit family who face hardships when they try to migrate to the north after their lettuce fields dry up.

A Piece of Home, by **Jeri Watts**, illustrated by **Hyewon Yum**. Published this year, this is an elegant, sweet example of a contemporary immigration story. It’s about a boy named Hee Jun who faces

daunting challenges when has to move with his family from Korea to West Virginia, becoming suddenly a “different” kid instead of just one of the crowd.

EARLY READERS:

Amazing Grace, Mary Hoffman. The classic picture book about the little girl who loves stories and shows us that we can be anything we want to be.

Dear Juno, by Soyung Pak. The first day of school can be lonely and scary, especially when you don't speak the same language as everyone else. Sumi only knows one phrase in English, "Hello, my name is Sumi." This doesn't seem nearly enough to prepare her for a big school with wide stairs, noisy children, and a mean classmate. From the author of the Ezra Jack Keats Award winner *Dear Juno* comes this thoughtful picture book about a young Korean girl on her first day of school. Beautiful, expressive illustrations show how a considerate teacher and even a new friend help Sumi discover that school might not be so lonely after all.

The Milo & Jazz Mystery Series, by Lewis B. Montgomery. **Milo** and **Jazz**, detectives in training, track down clues, stake out suspects, and become topnotch super sleuths! Young readers will enjoy these clever and fast-paced **mysteries**. Humorous illustrations add to the fun, as do the extra challenges at the back of each book.

Ramadan Moon, Na’ima B. Robert. The festival of Ramadan and its celebration across the world is explored in this thoughtful book which looks at the role faith plays in many children's lives.

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Ahimsa, by Supriya Kelkar. In 1942, after Mahatma Gandhi asks Indians to give one family member to the freedom movement, ten-year-old Anjali is devastated to think of her father risking his life for the freedom struggle. But it turns out he isn't the one joining. Anjali's mother is. And with this change comes many more adjustments designed to improve their country and use “ahimsa” —non-violent resistance—to stand up to the British government.

Baby Flo: Florence Mills Lights Up the Stage, by Alan Schroeder. Pint-sized dynamo “Baby Florence” Mills was singing and dancing just about as soon as she could talk and walk. She warbled a tune while her mama did laundry. Everywhere Flo went, she strutted through the streets of Washington, D.C. with a high-steppin’ cakewalk. Flo’s mama and daddy knew they had a budding entertainer in the family, so they entered Florence in a talent contest. Baby Flo went on to become an international superstar during the Harlem Renaissance—but first she had to overcome a case of stage fright and discover that winning wasn’t everything. Here is the spirited story of that spunky young girl learning to chase her dreams with confidence. A sensation in her time, Baby Flo is back, dancing and singing her way into hearts and history.

MIDDLE GRADE: AGES 8 TO 12

Serafina’s Promise, by Ann Burg. Living in abject poverty in Haiti, 11 year old Serafina makes a secret promise to her deceased little brother Pierre that she will someday go to school and become a healer so that she can save little babies like him. She wants to be just like her hero Antoinette Solaine, the healer who tried to save Pierre.

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon, by Grace Linn. An adventurous girl from a poor village, buys a magical goldfish and then joins a dragon on a quest to find the Old Man of the Moon in hopes of discovering how to change her family's fortune.

The Birchbark House series, by Louise Erdrich. Among the many amazements of the brilliant Louise Erdrich’s body of work is this series of novels for middle graders – set in the 1800s among the Ojibwe people of Minnesota. We follow a girl named Omakayas as she and her community must adapt their traditional ways of living after the arrival of white people onto their lands.

The Crossover, by Kwame Alexander. This 2015 Newbery Medal winner is a novel in verse about two African-American, basketball-playing twin brothers who face a year of changes when they begin to drift apart. Among its many charms is Alexander’s smooth infusion of hip-hop energy and love of language into a story about sports, family and racial identity.

American Born Chinese, by Gene Luen Yang. The first graphic novel to be a finalist for the National Book Award for Young People’s Literature, this 2006 book is really three cleverly interwoven tales: a classic Chinese folk tale of the Monkey King, the story of a Chinese-American boy named Danny, growing up in San Francisco, and a white boy who tries to disavow his embarrassing Chinese cousin, but turns out to be the alter-ego of Danny himself as he struggles to accept his identity.

One Crazy Summer, by Rita Williams-Garcia. This witty and original 2010 novel won many awards including a Newbery Honor. Set in 1968, it's the story of three sisters from Brooklyn who travel to Oakland, California to visit their estranged mother, who has joined the Black Panthers.

The Year of the Dog and The Year of the Rat, by Grace Lin. These gentle, affecting books are about the everyday life of a Taiwanese-American girl named Pacy, who must navigate her Asian family's traditions and expectations with the complications and demands of an American childhood. Lin's own lovely drawings are scattered throughout the books.

Ghost, by Jason Reynolds. This just-published book about a troubled boy called Ghost who joins a track team and discovers his inner strength was recently named to the shortlist for this year's National Book Awards. Reynolds tells a story of about African-American life in a struggling neighborhood with grace, humor and an addictively readable voice. It's the start of a series that will feature other members of Ghost's track team.

The Thing About Luck, by Cynthia Kadohata. This National Book Award winner is about a 12-year old Japanese-American girl who's forced to live with her old-fashioned, demanding grandparents for a long, hot summer of wheat harvesting in the Midwest. As generations and cultures clash, it's funny and touching in equal measure.

Brown Girl Dreaming, by Jacqueline Woodson. This hypnotic memoir in free verse renders Woodson's childhood and family history as a gorgeous hybrid of migration tale, coming of age story, and meditation on African-American history. Winner of the 2014 Newbery and other awards, this is a book that readers of any age, from elementary school to adult, will relate to and treasure.

Ambassador, by William Alexander. This book artfully blends a realistic take on the life of an undocumented family with a fantasy story set in outer space. It hinges on the multiple meanings of the loaded word "alien," which many authors have played around with, none better than the Cuban-American Alexander.