

TIP OF THE ICEBERG BOOKLIST

There is too much to include here, including the infinite constellation of things that I don't know and haven't read. Truly, truly, this is just the tip of the iceberg. If I've written about these books, I've included links.

Here is a very small group of writers/thinkers and groups active on social media, and from whom I learn a lot: Clint Smith III, Well-Read Black Girl [Glory Edim], Kiese Laymon, Very Smart Bros [Damon Young], Ava DuVernay [film director], Color of Change, The Root. Again, these are just the tip of the iceberg.

Thank you so much and I always welcome book suggestions,

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ON SLAVERY [There are thousands of books here, of course. I've included Baptist's book, because it changed my thinking forever]

The Half Has Never Been Told

Edward E. Baptist (the connection between slavery and the birth of European capitalism)

ON THE HISTORY OF WHITENESS [whiteness as a slippery social construct, designed to uphold slavery and oppression]

The History of White People
Stamped from the Beginning

Nell Irvin Painter
Ibrahim X. Kendi

ON THE GREAT MIGRATION

The Warmth of Other Suns

Isabelle Wilkerson

MASS INCARCERATION

The New Jim Crow

Michelle Alexander

FICTION:

Toni Morrison, James Baldwin, Richard Wright and too many others are not here, because I think you know them.

CLASSICS THAT MAY NOT HAVE MADE YOUR RADAR

The Street

Ann Petry was a bestselling author in the early decades of the Twentieth Century. In my opinion she's comparable to Theodore Dreiser or Upton Sinclair. I can't help thinking that if she were white she would be required reading. *The Street* is a story of a single mother in New York, trying to keep her kid off the streets, and ultimately fighting the juvenile justice system. I haven't read her other books, but there are others.

The Man Who Cried I Am

John A. Williams. Published in 1967 and set partly in the Netherlands and elsewhere in Europe, and partly in the US, this novel is the story of an African American journalist who tries to make it on both sides of the pond. In my opinion the comparable writers would be Bernard Malamud or Phillip Roth. Williams captures the spirit of the times in fascinating detail, with a lens on racial prejudice that is completely current. I can't help thinking that if he were white, this book would still be in print.

Maud Martha

Gwendolyn Brooks, published in 1953. Linked stories. Beautiful.

Corregidora

Gayl Jones. I found this in Toni Morrison's engaging essay collection—*What Moves at the Margins*—I found *Corregidora* by Gayl Jones, which Morrison brought to publication in 1975. Written when Jones was in her mid twenties, *Corregidora* is a searing tale of the fallout from slavery, set in the modern day south told in raw and compelling prose.

Passing

Nella Larsen. Terrific novel published in 1929 about passing.

Praisesong for the Widow

Paule Marshall. Published in 1983, a Caribbean cruise connects these characters to their African heritage.

Our Nig

Harriet E. Wilson Possibly the first fiction published by an African American woman in the US in 1859. The story of a young black girl indentured to a cruel New Hampshire family.

Octavia Butler – anything she ever wrote

Butler is an incredibly important writer of science/speculative fiction writer, but not in the way you might think of science fiction. The narrative of a person being abducted by aliens and brought to a horrifying, strange place where is no escape, is the narrative of enslaved people. I have not yet read **Samuel Delany**, but his works are also classic. See also, Long Division by **Kiese Laymon** and **NK Jemisin**

MORE RECENT FICTION: [there's SO much more here that I haven't read and don't know about]
This is not in any particular order.

Well Read Black Girl (<https://themillions.com/2018/12/discovering-ourselves-the-millions-interviews-well-read-black-girl-glory-edim.html>)

Glory Edim. A fabulous resource. A compendium of essays by black women writers (most, if not all, fiction writers), what inspired them, and what they care about.

Anything by **Jesmyn Ward** [you can start with *Salvage the Bones*, searing post Katrina novel] and **Paul Beatty, Jacqueline Woodson** [disregard Woodson's YA designation]

An American Marriage

Tayari Jones. How the prison system infects a couple rising up the economic ladder in Atlanta.

We Love You Charlie Freeman

Kate Greenidge. Scathing satire on whiteness and liberalness. Would be funny if it weren't so true.

Friday Black

Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah. Short stories that through satire show the indignities faced by black boys/men every day.

A Kind of Freedom

Margaret Wilkerson Sexton (novel that shows the decline of a black family in New Orleans, giving a full picture of how this happens through structural racism). Sexton has a new book coming out in autumn 2019 I think.

Long Way Down

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Jason Reynolds (very short Young Adult Book, that captures the mind of a young man whose brother has just been killed by gun violence.

Delicious Foods

James Hannaham. This 2015 novel is brilliantly written, telling the story of modern day drug addiction, enslavement on a southern farm, narrated, in part, by a crack cocaine pipe. There's a lot of humor even with all of this, and it's a fabulous, searingly painful book.

The Twelve Tribes of Hattie

Ayana Mathis. Linked short stories about a Black family in Philadelphia. Beautifully written Great Migration story.

The Turner House

Angela Flournoy. Story of a family in Detroit, haunted by a ghost/haint. Great writing.

Homecoming

Yaa Gyasi. Two sweeping stories – one of an African woman whose descendants stay in Africa and the other, her half sister, sold into slavery in America—stories followed up to the present.

What We Lose

Zinzi Clemons. Mixed race young woman coming of age, grappling with her mother's death, and outsidership and a lot of other things.

Washington Black (<https://themillions.com/2018/10/across-geography-and-history-on-esi-edugyans-washington-black.html>)

Esi Edugyan. A sweeping novel about a young boy who escapes slavery in Barbados, but without quite gaining his freedom, taken in hand by a relative of his "master" and his adventures across the world.

The Wide Circumference of Love <https://themillions.com/2017/08/mind-dementia-search-lost-words.html>

Marita Golden. Acclaimed DC based novelist writes about a black family dealing with Alzheimer's.

The Mothers <https://themillions.com/2017/03/role-god-religion-vs-reproductive-rights.html>

Brit Bennett. Young black woman dealing with the consequences of abortion.

Starside of Bird Hill

Naomi Jackson. Brooklyn girls find their heritage when their mother dies and they relocate to Barbados.

Ruby

Cynthia Bond. A woman tries to escape the violence in her town. Gorgeous writing.

ESSAYS

We Were Eight Years In Power

Tanehesi Coates (collection of some of his best known essays)

Eloquent Rage

Brittney Cooper (essays on the topic, powerful and short)

White Rage

Carol Anderson (short powerful history of white rage)

Michael Eric Dyson anything he's written

Decarcerating America <https://www.npr.org/2018/02/20/585781235/decarcerating-america-is-a-powerful-call-for-reform>

Edited by Ernest Drucker (essays on this topic, a lot on racism)

When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir

Patrisse Kahn-Cullors, founder of #BLM, wonderful autobiography, also a quick read

American Hate, Survivors Speak Out (<https://www.npr.org/2018/08/08/636635641/american-hate-profiles-survivors-but-also-brings-hope>)

Edited by Arjun Singh Sethi (Hate, but its antidote too—communities fighting it)

Thick

Tressa McMillan Cottom. Brilliant book of essays, clearly written, on black women in contemporary America, and structural racism.

When you Learn the Alphabet <https://therumpus.net/2019/05/the-rumpus-interview-with-kendra-allen/>

Kendra Allen. Super creative young essayist, and her take on writing and blackness and police brutality and a lot more.

A Mouth is Always Muzzled

Natalie Hopkinson. Super interesting set of essays weaving together sugar plantations, slavery and British colonization by a professor at Howard University.

This Will be My Undoing

Morgan Jerkins. Very young essayist writing very thoughtful essays about coming of age as a black and nerdy millennial.

Roxane Gay, anything she writes.

NONFICTION AND MEMOIR

Barracoon

Zora Neale Hurston (recently published short anthropological study of a man born in African and captured and brought to America, his memory of his own expectations and what happened to him in slavery is incredibly thought provoking)

Just Mercy

Bryan Stevenson (coming out as a commercial film in 2020)

Heavy: An American Memoir <https://www.npr.org/2018/10/17/657824190/heavy-brilliantly-renders-the-struggle-to-become-fully-realized>

Kiese Laymon. Fabulous memoir about growing up black and bookish and the deep south and the complexities of family and race.

The Light of the World

Elizabeth Alexander. The poet at President' Obama's first inauguration, and now head of the Mellon Foundation in Pittsburgh writes a memoir of the tragic loss of her Ethiopian artist/chef husband

Never Caught

Erica Armstrong Dunbar . George and Martha Washington's endless pursuit of a slave who made it to freedom.

Between the World and Me

When I finished it, I went back and read Coates' memoir which I liked even better—*The Beautiful Struggle*—the story of Coates' growing up in Baltimore.

Negroland

Margo Jefferson. Jefferson, former cultural critic of *The New York Times*, recounts in spare and poignant prose, the stress of growing up as an African American in privilege in mid-century America.

What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Blacker

Damon Young, of Very Smart Bros. A laugh out loud memoir in essays, about growing up in Pittsburgh, and of course, with amazing insights into race.

Trace: Memory, History Race

Lauret Savoy. Gorgeous memoir about her connection with the land in parks in the US, a perspective we don't read enough of.

The Home Place: Memories of a Colored Man's Love of Nature

Drew Lanham. See above; similar themes, also gorgeous.

Men We Reaped

Jesmyn Ward. Very powerful nonfiction about 5 boys she grew up with who are all dead from different types of violence

White Fragility

Robin DiAngelo

Decolonizing Wealth

Edgar Villanueva [racism, capitalism and philanthropy]