

Annotated Resource List from the Racial Justice Team at First Church, Hopkinton

BOOKS

Caste, Isabel Wilkerson. If your congregation reads nothing else about racial justice this year, they should read *Caste*. Through an immersive, deeply researched narrative, Isabel Wilkerson explores how America has been shaped by a hidden caste system, a rigid hierarchy of human rankings. Linking the caste systems of America, India, and Nazi Germany, Wilkerson shows the ways people experience the insidious undertow of caste every day.

The Cross and the Lynching Tree, James H. Cone. In this powerful book, James Cone uses the symbols of the cross and the lynching tree to help us look at the worst in human beings while recognizing the resilience and the thirst for life that refuses to let horror define us. For African Americans, the image of Jesus hung on a tree to die powerfully grounds their faith that God is with them in their suffering. Cone explores the message of spirituals and the power of the blues, the passion of Emmet Till, the vision of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the contributions of Billie Holliday, Langston Hughes, Lannie Lou Hamer, and Ida B. Wells. Through their witness he contemplates how life can be made meaningful in the face of death and injustice.

The New Jim Crow, Michelle Alexander. In this widely cited book, which has been credited with spawning a whole generation of criminal justice reform activists and organizations, Michelle Alexander argues that “we have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it.” She explores the way our criminal justice system has used the war on drugs to put millions of African Americans behind bars, where they are relegated to a permanent second-class status, denied the very rights supposedly won in the Civil Rights Movement.

The Sum of Us, Heather McGhee. In this powerful and influential book, Heather McGhee creates a compelling argument that racism is the primary reason that the American economy so often fails the public. While the most obvious indignities of racism fall to people of color, racism has profound costs for white people also. Heather McGhee explores the way racism lies at the core of our democracy’s dysfunction and at the core of American’s spiritual and moral crises. Devastating in its insight and clarify, the book nevertheless leaves us with a heartfelt vision of a future in which we can finally realize that life can be more than a zero-sum game.

White Fragility, Robin Diangelo. In this book, Diangelo illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility, the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially. Characterized by anger, fear, guilt, argumentation, and silence, these feelings and behaviors function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and to prevent meaningful cross-racial dialogue. This is an important book to read if you are going to engage a majority white congregation on issues of racial justice.

White Too Long, Robert P. Jones. In this book, Robert Jones examines the unholy relationship between American Christianity and white supremacy. White Christians have not just been complacent or complicit; as the dominant cultural power they have constructed and maintained a project of protecting white supremacy that has framed the entire American story. Jones argues that white Christians must confront these unsettling truths because this is the only way to salvage the integrity of their faith and their own identities.

Waking Up White, Debby Irving. In this book, Irving describes her awakening to the realities of white privilege and the way race functions in America. A well-meaning and enthusiastic advocate for the rights of the oppressed, Irving could not understand why her diversity efforts lacked traction until an “aha” moment in 2009 opened her eyes. What followed upended not only her worldview but also her sense of herself and her life plan. This book is a gentle introduction to the idea that white people, even well-intentioned white people, reinforce the power of racism. This book led several of our racial justice team members to begin their journey.

FILMS

Freedom Riders, directed by Stanley Nelson for Firelight Media. This feature-length documentary film tells the story of the courageous band of civil rights activists who challenged segregation in the American South in 1961.

The film is free to watch on PBS, and the link includes to several short supplementary films.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/american-experience-freedom-riders/>

13th, Ava DuVernay. This film, available on Netflix, paints a devastating picture of the unsightly and horrific practices that kept hundreds of thousands of Black Americans enslaved for many decades, and the more stealthy form of racial bias, in the form of the racially-coded rhetoric of “law and order” and the “war on crime,” that has put more Black men in prison today than were enslaved in 1850. The film challenges viewers to move beyond simple calls for reform to understand incarceration as a profound crisis of ethics.

<https://www.netflix.com/browse> and search for 13th

Suppressed: The Fight to Vote, Robert Greenwald, Brave New Films. This 38-minute film documents how voter suppression worked to sway the results of the 2018 gubernatorial race in Georgia. Using tactics ranging from poll closures to purges of voter rolls, Brian Kemp suppressed hundreds of thousands of votes in majority African American communities to defeat Stacey Abrams.

The film is free on YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03DGjnIkTdl>

Race, the Power of an Illusion, California Newsreel. This 3-part film series is a good introduction to the idea of race and the meaning we make of race. Beginning with the concept of race as a social construct rather than a biological reality, the series shows how race as a powerful determinant of life chances and opportunities in America.

Part 1: “The Difference Between Us” uses contemporary science to challenge the idea of race as innately biological.

Part 2: “The Story We Tell” presents the history of race in America, showing how race has served to rationalize, and even justify, social inequalities.

Part 3: “The House We Live In” digs deeper into the political, economic, and cultural roots of our concept of race. It reveals how our social institutions “create” race by channeling resources, power, status, and wealth to white people.

It is possible for individuals to rent the film series from Vimeo On Demand for \$4.95, <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/race/103372104>, but that rental does not give you the right to broadcast to your congregation. Individuals will have to set up their own accounts on Vimeo On Demand and rent the film themselves. To make the film available to your whole congregation, you can buy the dvd from California Newsreel, for \$49.95. <https://newsreel.org/video/race-the-power-of-an-illusion> Click the purchase option for a community organization discounted option. This option allows you to broadcast the films to a group, but technically it does not give you streaming rights. We were able to set up a streaming platform for just our congregation, and negotiated permission from California Newsreel to stream the films from there, without having to pay the \$295 for a streaming license, because of the limitations of the pandemic.

The Color of Fear (Part 1), Stirfry Productions. This film documents a weekend workshop in which eight men of different races gather to discuss the meaning of race and the impact of racism in their lives. The completely unscripted dialogue brings to life themes of implicit bias, white privilege, and white fragility.

Order the dvd for \$50 from Stirfry Seminars and Consulting. <https://stirfryseminars.com/products/the-color-of-fear-part-one/>

Last Chance for Eden, Stirfry Productions. Like *The Color of Fear*, this film documents an unscripted conversation that took place over a weekend, with nine people of different races talking about racism in the workplace. This film includes women as well as men, and includes Indigenous people.

This film is also available on dvd from Stirfry Seminars and Consulting.

<https://stirfryseminars.com/products/last-chance-for-eden/>

OTHER MEDIA

UCC Requiem for Ahmaud Arbery. This webinar features four respected thought leaders, racial justice advocates, and UCC pastors discussing the impact of historical and present-day acts of racism and violence toward African Americans. They also discussed how the Christian church can be actively involved in dismantling racism.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vkJIT00onrA>

Without Sanctuary, James Allen. Over 25 years, James Allen collected photographs and postcards of the lynching era in America, 1882-1968, when nearly 5,000 people were lynched. His images put us face to face with the reality of racial violence; it is a graphic and powerful portrayal. The website, which we viewed, presents the pictures as still images or as a movie; the content is also available as a book, which incorporates essays by Hilton Als, Leon Litwack, the late Congressman John Lewis, and James Allen.

<https://withoutsanctuary.org>

On Being, Krista Tippett interviews Resmaa Menakem. In this podcast, Resmaa Menekem, a therapist and trauma specialist talks about activating the wisdom of elders and incorporating new science to understand how all of us carry in our bodies the history and traumas behind everything we collapse into the word *race*.

<https://onbeing.org/programs/resmaa-menakem-notice-the-rage-notice-the-silence/>

Seeing White, John Biewen and Chenjerai Kumanyika. In this 14-episode podcast series, John Biewen and his co-host, Chenjeri Kumanyika, turn the lens around, from its usual focus on people of color, to look straight at white America, and at the notion of whiteness itself. From the idea that slave traders commissioned the invention of the idea of race to discussions of what it means to be white in America today, the series develops the idea of race as a construct developed to uplift white people. It's all about power. These podcasts are well worth the time.

<https://www.sceneonradio.org/seeing-white/>

Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man, Emmanuel Acho. In this series of short videos, Acho educates white Americans about racism, systemic racism, social injustice, rioting, and the pain that Black people are feeling today. The format is a series of questions about topics white Americans tend not to understand, like “Emmanuel, why are y’all rioting?”

The videos are free on YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h8jUA7JBkF4>