

Anti-Racism Resources

Trinity Church in the City of Boston

(Summer 2020)

How do our faith and baptismal covenant call to us in a tumultuous moment when systemic racism has been made brutally clear to us – both as Americans and as believers? In the weeks following the murder of George Floyd and in the midst of an urgent national conversation about race, Trinity’s Anti-Racism Team has prepared this curated resource list for those seeking to learn more. While not intended to be exhaustive, it shares resources which have helped many of us

- think theologically about race and racism
- develop a deeper understanding of white privilege and its pervasive impact on all of us
- understand and analyze racial inequities and injustice
- listen more deeply and speak more clearly about race with others
- reflect in deeper and more personal ways about our own racial identity, citizenship and discipleship

We have selected a variety of media (books, films, articles, and online talks) in the hope of meeting your preferred learning style. You may remember some of the authors mentioned below – Nikki Giovanni, bell hooks, Amy-Jill Levine, Kelly Brown Douglas and William Barber – from visits with us at Trinity in recent years.

First, a prayer adapted from *The Book of Common Prayer*, “For the Human Family” (p. 815) –

O God, you made us in your own image and redeemed us through Jesus your Son: Look with compassion on the whole human family; take away the arrogance and hatred which infect our hearts; break down the walls that separate us; unite us in bonds of love; and work through our struggle and confusion to accomplish your purposes on earth; that, in your good time, all may serve you in harmony around your heavenly throne; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Books

A Good Cry: What We Learn from Tears & Laughter

by Nikki Giovanni

In this collection of poems, short stories, and essays, celebrated poet Nikki Giovanni writes about her life, family, and friends, including Maya Angelou and Ruby Dee, and speaks eloquently about sensitive issues. In a talk at Trinity many years ago, Giovanni captivated her audience in the filled sanctuary.

The Cross and the Lynching Tree

by James H. Cone

Published in 2011, Cone’s extended theological reflection on racism and systemic anti-Black violence begins with a passage from Acts: “They put him to death by hanging him on a tree” (10:39). Cone, who died in 2019, moves smoothly between history, theology and cultural analysis as he illumines the true meaning of the Christ’s cross *over* the lynching tree: divine power, Black life, the subversion of sin and death. One of the best Lenten reads available, and an unforgettable exploration of our faith’s central symbol.

God Is Red: A Native View of Religion (30th Anniversary Edition)

by Vine Deloria, Jr.

In 1974, one year after *God is Red* was published, *Time* named author Vine Deloria, Jr. one of the twelve most important religious thinkers of our time. He rose to acclaim after his first book *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* was published in 1969. For almost 50 years *God Is Red* has remained relevant by linking spirituality and the environment.

The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present

by David Treuer

The author uses history and personal stories to dispel narratives about Native American victimization that were highlighted in the book *Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee* (Dee Brown, 1971). This book, a finalist for the 2019 National Book Award, highlights the resiliency and positive movements current within Native communities, such as restoration and teaching of native languages and the Standing Rock actions and leadership.

How to Be an Anti-Racist

by Ibram X. Kendi

In this bestseller Kendi maintains that everyone of all races has racist thinking and beliefs because of our racialized culture. He explains that racist thinking hurts all people and makes it more difficult to create a society where people of all races and cultures are seen as equals. Kendi uses his own story to highlight the journey to becoming 'anti-racist' -- to challenge and change racist power structures and cultures, policies and ideas. One of Kendi's earlier works, *Stamped from the Beginning*, won the National Book Award. Starting this July, Kendi will become Professor of History and Founding Director of the Boston University Center for Antiracist Research.

Killing Rage - Ending Racism

by bell hooks

As a Black feminist, hooks addresses the painful impact of racism and the rage and psychological trauma it causes in those it victimizes. hooks calls to people to turn their rage into demands for justice; an analysis of power dynamics in race that is second to none.

Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present

by Harriet A. Washington

The author documents the exploitation of African Americans by the medical establishment from the time of slavery to the present. She describes many other examples besides the famous Tuskegee syphilis study and tells of Black people being enrolled in studies without their knowledge. She explains why many Blacks view the medical profession with great suspicion due to this history of unjust and prejudicial health care.

My Grandmother's Hands

by Resmaa Menakem

The author explores transgenerational trauma in Black people and also in those whose white forebears immigrated from a violent Europe and became perpetrators. Central to today's tumult, he examines secondary trauma and police racism. He also offers detail on the mind-body connection (how racism and

white supremacy have an effect on our blood and nervous systems) and offers a healing process for us all.

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

by Michelle Alexander

Jim Crow was fiction, a minstrel show character created by a white song and dance man. Jim Crow laws, passed between 1876 and 1965 to establish and maintain racial segregation, are anything but fiction. Michelle Alexander, author, litigator, and scholar, proposes in her book, first published in 2010 (and in a new edition in 2020) that mass incarceration is, "metaphorically the **new** Jim Crow." A landmark revelation of systemic racism in our criminal justice system.

The Night Watchmen

by Louise Erdrich

A new novel based on the experience of the author's grandfather, who led a successful action against US government efforts to dis-enroll, or "terminate" his tribe's status. Termination was a movement in the mid- 20th century to eliminate the legal status and rights of Indian Nations. Erdrich won the National Book Award (fiction) in 2012 for *The Roundhouse*. Both are very satisfying reads.

Short Stories by Jesus

by Amy-Jill Levine

Jesus' parables are "mysterious," says Amy-Jill Levine, in part because they challenge us to look into the hidden or unexamined elements of our lives and value systems. "It's much more comforting to hear that God is a loving father who welcomes us home no matter how much we stray," she suggests, "than it is to hear an exhortation to reconcile with the brother, sister, or fellow congregant with whom we have not spoken in twenty years." While many of us have been encouraged to extract comfort or even vindication from Jesus' parables, we may be missing in them deeper challenges about radical inclusion and God's inbreaking kingdom. With wit and precision, Levine sheds new light on some of the oldest stories we know. "When church becomes a club," she submits, "parables become pedestrian."

Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God

by Kelly Brown Douglas

Written as a mother's lament and theological reflection on the murder of Trayvon Martin, *Stand Your Ground* weaves history, anthropology, theology and memoir. "Where was God when Trayvon was slain?" asks Douglas. She illumines historical European Anglo-Saxon "exceptionalism" as the root of American white supremacy and offers powerful interpretations of the Samaritan woman and of Jesus' crucifixion in a work that has more urgency now than when it was published in 2015.

This Land is Their Land:

The Wampanoag Indians, Plymouth Colony, and the Troubled History of Thanksgiving

by Daniel J. Silverman

Silverman writes the history that has been erased from the Thanksgiving narrative. Timely and relevant not only because it focuses on Eastern Massachusetts and the Wampanoag, or because Thanksgiving, 2020 is the 400th, but because Silverman invites us to reckon with the history and myths we have been taught as well as to imagine a national day of thanks for both native and white European Americans "without mourning."

The Warmth of Other Suns

by Isabel Wilkerson

A history of the 'great migration', the relocation of millions of African Americans from the 'Jim Crow South' to the north during the 1930's, 40's and 50's. The history is told via the stories of three people and their families. The great migration reshaped the north and led to systemic policies and laws to exclude African Americans from full participation in all aspects of life. These continue to impair full equity and prevent flourishing to this day.

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism

by Robin DiAngelo

DiAngelo speaks directly to fellow white people in this text, asking them to face racism and white supremacy and explore how these two forces work to their advantage. She pushes readers to examine themselves closely – why is it that they feel so uncomfortable facing and talking about racial issues, and what specifically do they need to do to become anti-racist?

Films

Central Park Five, a 4 part Netflix series, and ***When They See Us***, by Ava DuVernay. These films are documentaries on the Central Park Five and how their lives were shattered when they were wrongfully accused of a brutal crime against a white woman in Central Park.

The Hate U Give, a film based on a novel by Angie Thomas, is the story of a 16-year-old Black girl who witnesses a white police officer shooting her best friend. The film addresses police brutality and the psychological toll it takes on those related to the victims. Parental talks with children about not aggravating police conflict with this young person's black pride and her activism to achieve racial justice.

I Am Not Your Negro, a docufilm based on unfinished work of James Baldwin, is Baldwin's lament for the murders of his friends Malcolm X, Medgar Evers, and Martin Luther King and also a personal reflection on the depravity of a culture that created and maintains anti-Black white supremacy. We also recommend Baldwin's book, *The Fire Next Time*.

If Beale Street Could Talk, based on James Baldwin's novel. "Every black person born in America," according to James Baldwin, "was born on Beale Street. Whether in Jackson, Mississippi or Harlem New York, Beale Street is our legacy." The story, told by 19-year-old Tish Rivers is about her lover, Fonny, and herself. He's in jail on a rape charge, and she's pregnant. Character by character -- Joseph, Mrs. Hunt, Sheila, Adrienne, Mrs. Rogers -- the story unfolds piece by piece until in the end one has the whole picture. Two families. One story-a very familiar story. However, the viewpoints of Tish (Baldwin) and the director (Barry Jenkins) are a rare glimpse into lived life.

Malcolm X, Spike Lee's film with Denzel Washington, is a dramatization of Malcolm X's early life, prison time and transformation, rise to prominence and leadership in the Nation of Islam, pilgrimage to Mecca, and further transformation away from his more radical ideology. It reveals his analysis of racism and his singular influence toward positive identity for African Americans. The film follows the narrative of ***The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley***, by Alex Haley and Malcolm X.

Website

Talking About Race, The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture

This new website helps individuals, families, and communities talk about racism and racial identity and their effects on all parts of society. The *Talking About Race* topics include Bias, Being Antiracist, Community Building, Race and Racial Identity, Whiteness, and the Historical Foundations of Race.

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race>

Articles

The Top U.S. Coronavirus Hot Spots Are All Indian Lands, by Nicholas Kristof, *New York Times* (May 30, 2020). Kristof reported that more people per capita were infected on the Navajo Nation with the coronavirus than in any state in the country. In this vivid and wrenching description of the Navajo Nation's vulnerability for such a pandemic -- poverty, crowded homes, lack of running water for almost half the population, and a substantial lack of funding for the Indian Health Service -- he reports that similar critical situations are occurring on other reservations too.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/30/opinion/sunday/coronavirus-native-americans.html>

The 1619 Project, is produced by the New York Times. It is an ongoing initiative to cover the range and depth of impact that the forced immigration of Native Africans for chattel slavery, beginning in 1619, had on the developing American settlements, the formation of the country, and every aspect of cultural, civic and governmental life. The project began in the August 18, 2019 issue of the New York Times Magazine and is deeply illuminating. A free curriculum is available at NYTimes.com, as is a pamphlet for \$5.00. Some parts are available via podcast.

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

Talks

"Sunday Sermon"

by the Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, (June 14, 2020, Washington National Cathedral)

"Accepting death is not an option anymore," declares William Barber, co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign and founder of the Moral Monday Movement. In this extended meditation on the prophet Amos, Barber also offers a concise history of "the compounded weight of historic death" in American culture, death allowed by political compromise and borne disproportionately but not exclusively by Americans of color. "Our choices are killing us," Barber concludes. "This doesn't have to be."

<https://cathedral.org/sermons/sermon-the-rev-dr-william-j-barber-ii-2/>

TED Talk: How Racism Makes Us Sick

David R. Williams

https://www.ted.com/talks/david_r_williams_how_racism_makes_us_sick

Williams has developed a scale to measure the impact of discrimination on well-being -- going beyond traditional measures like income and education to reveal how factors like implicit bias, residential segregation and negative stereotypes create and sustain inequality.

https://www.ted.com/talks/david_r_williams_how_racism_makes_us_sick

One Step Further

Both **Trinity Boston Connects** and the **Greater Boston Interfaith Organization** (GBIO) are actively involved in dismantling systemic racism. To learn more about them, follow the links below:

Trinity Boston Connects people, programs and practices to unlock opportunities and change the odds for youth of color in Boston: <https://trinityconnects.org/>

The **Greater Boston Interfaith Organization** (GBIO) works to improve housing and healthcare, reform our criminal justice system, address racial disparities in our city and rebuild schools and neighborhoods. To learn more, Contact Trinity's parish representative Julie Mathisen, jhmat123@aol.com.