

MATERIALS FOR INFORMED, INTENTIONAL  
RACIAL JUSTICE CONVERSATIONS  
John Ratcliff October, 2022

The following is a list of books and videos that I believe to be helpful for informed, intentional conversations about the topics printed in bold type. Let me emphasize that just reading the books or watching the videos is not enough; having subsequent conversations is an essential next step.

In many cases a book or video I have placed under one topic might have been placed under another one. And of course, there are many other helpful books and videos not listed here.

The list is evolving. Thanks to Henry Bernstein for *Allow Me to Retort*, to Dr. LaTienda Pierre for several items which are marked with an asterisk and to Rachel Scott for *Do the Work, An Antiracist Activity Book*. Please forward any suggestions, including critical ones, to me at [johngratcliff@gmail.com](mailto:johngratcliff@gmail.com).<sup>1</sup>

## **DEFINITIONS AND DISTINCTIONS.**

Lerone Bennett, Jr., *The Shaping of Black America* (Chicago: Johnson, 1975).<sup>2</sup> The following is a definition of racism from page 212, in which Black America is thought of as a colony internal to the United States.<sup>3</sup>

“In addition to cultural repression and force, colonialism is inevitably accompanied by racism, which should not be confused with individual prejudice or ethnocentrism. In marked contrast to individual prejudice or the justifiable or nonjustifiable pride in one’s own ethnic group, racism is a political ideology of racial supremacy supported by or even mandated by the focal institutions of a society. In other words, racism is not a personal attitude; it is a group structure. It is not simply personal dislike of physical appearances or cultural differences; it rests basically . . . on the concerted determination of a white ruling class to keep some people and their resources exploitable.”

## **GENERAL AMERICAN HISTORY**

Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States* (1980). Its chapters are available on

---

<sup>1</sup> I was inspired to create this list by facilitating for Dialogue on Race Louisiana ([dialogueonracelouisiana.org](http://dialogueonracelouisiana.org)). However, the list is not sanctioned by DORLA.

<sup>2</sup> Sadly this book, a companion to Bennett’s *Before the Mayflower*, is out of print and is not available on YouTube. However, it can be found in libraries, and used copies are available from time to time. Bennett, who grew up in Clarksdale and Jackson, Mississippi, was senior editor at *Ebony* magazine during the 1960s and 1970s. Much of the book’s content first appeared in the pages of *Ebony*.

<sup>3</sup> For a more recent look at the United States as a country with an internal colony see Chris Hayes, *A Colony In A Nation* (New York: Norton 2017). Hayes is a host on MSNBC.

YouTube.

## **NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY**

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States* (2014). Available on YouTube. There is a children's version of the book as well.

## **AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY**

Lerone Bennett, Jr., *Before the Mayflower: A History of Black America* (1962). Available on YouTube.

\*Ivan Van Sertima, *They Came Before Columbus: The African Presence in Ancient America* (Journal of African Civilizations) (Reprint edition 2003).

## **SLAVERY**

Edward Baptist, *Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (2014). An extraordinary book. Highly recommended. There are several YouTube videos featuring Dr. Baptist which are worth watching.<sup>4</sup>

Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade 1440-1870* (1997).

Vincent Harding, *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (1981). Harding is the author of an article read in the Dialogue on Race Louisiana Original Series.

Eric Foner, *Gateway to Freedom: The Hidden History of the Underground Railroad* (2016).

Stephanie E. Jones-Rogers, *They Were Her Property: White Women as Slave Owners in the American South* (2019).

Zora Neale Hurston, *Baracoon: The Story of the Last "Black Cargo"* (2018).

## **RECONSTRUCTION**

W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (1934). A book of enormous importance and lasting relevance in part because of when it was published, but also because of the content described in its full title.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Georgetown University video may be particularly interesting to Dialogue on Race Louisiana participants since it is part of the conversation which led to various kinds of reparations being made by the university to the descendants, including Dialogue's Maxine Crump, of the 272 enslaved persons who were sold to finance the university.

Justin Behrend, *Reconstructing Democracy: Grassroots Black Politics in the Deep South after the Civil War* (2015). Focuses on the Natchez Territory which included land in Louisiana.

Eric Foner, *Reconstruction : America's Unfinished Revolution 1863-1877* (Updated Edition 2014), and *A Short History of Reconstruction* (Updated Edition 2015).

PBS, "Reconstruction." An important, extremely well done four part documentary aired in 2019. Available on Prime, and parts appear to be available on YouTube.

## **JIM CROW**

Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (2018). Available on YouTube. Also available there are interviews of Rothstein.

Isabel Duncan: *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (2010). Many interviews of Duncan available on YouTube; be sure to see her TED Talk (18 minutes).

Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (2009). There are a number of interviews of Blackmon on YouTube.

Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (2003).

James Silver, *Mississippi: The Closed Society* (1964). Silver provides an accurate look at Mississippi prior to and at the time of the Civil Rights Movement.

Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi: The Classic Autobiography of Growing Up Poor and Black in the Rural South* (1992).

## **THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

Martin Luther King, Jr., *The Radical King* (2015), edited and with comments by Cornel West.

\*Martin Luther King, Jr., *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Reprint edition 2010).

Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (2005). Ella Baker is as important as, but less well known as, Martin and Malcolm.

Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (1964).

Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (1981).

Bloom and Martin, *Black Against Empire: The History and Politics of the Black Panther Party* (2013).

Akinybe Omowale Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (2013). This tells about a side of the civil rights movement that is not widely known. It includes references to Louisiana's Deacons for Defense and Justice.

National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, *The Kerner Report* (1968).

\*Keisha N. Blain, *Until I Am Free: Fannie Lou Hamer's Enduring Message to America* (2022).

## **POST CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2010).

\*Joy a Degruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (Revised edition 2017).

## **UNDERSTANDING THE MEANING OF WHITENESS.**

Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race Volume I: Racial Oppression and Social Control* (1994). Theodore W. Allen, *The Invention of the White Race Volume II: The Origin of Racial Oppression in Anglo-America* (1997).<sup>5</sup>

Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (2020). Looks at race and caste and includes a comparison of India, Nazi Germany, and the United States.

James Q. Whitman, *Hitler's American Model: The United States and the Making of Nazi Race Law* (2017). A professor at Yale Law School, Whitman clearly describes what the Nazis actually learned from U.S. segregation law.

Jeffery Robinson, *Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America*, Netflix 2022.

\*Ruby Hamad, *White Tears / Brown Scars: How White Feminism Betrays Women of Color* (2020).

\*Howard Griffin and Robert Bonazzi, *Black Like Me* (2010).

---

<sup>5</sup> These books are in print, but each is about 400 pages long. As an alternative, consider Theodore W. Allen, (1975) *Class Struggle and the Origin of Racial Slavery: The Invention of the White Race* (PDF). Stony Brook, NY: Center for the Study of Working Class Life, SUNY, Stony Brook (published 2006). It includes an introduction by Jeffrey B. Perry. It is available as a PDF document attached to the Wikipedia article about Mr. Allen, itself worth reading. Originally published in 1975, it predates the important Peggy McIntosh article used in *Dialogue on Race Louisiana Original Series* which was published in 1989.

## **UNDERSTANDING INSTITUTIONAL RACISM.**

Tricia Rose, *How Structural Racism Works* (YouTube, 23:28 minutes).

Elie Mystal, *Allow Me to Retort: A Black Guy's Guide to the Constitution* (2022).

## **STRUGGLE AND TRANSFORMATION.**

Angela Davis on the Black Panther Party and Black Lives Matter (YouTube, 9:24 minutes).

## **AFFIRMATIVE ACTION.**

California Task Force on Reparations at [oag.ca.gov/ab3121/reports](https://oag.ca.gov/ab3121/reports). There are a full report, an executive summary, key findings, and preliminary recommendations.

## **TALK IS ACTION.**

Tricia Rose, *Creating Conversations on Justice* (YouTube, 16:55 minutes).

\*Bobbie Harro, "The Cycle of Socialization," available online, including at <https://www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2021-02/Cycle%20of%20Socialization%20HARRO.pdf>.\*

\*Bobbie Harro, "The Cycle of Liberation," available online, including at <https://geography.washington.edu/sites/geography/files/documents/harro-cycle-of-liberation.pdf>.

\*Catrice M. Jackson, *Antagonist, Advocates and Allies: The Wake-Up Call Guide for White Women Who Want to Become Allies with Black Women* (2015).

W. Kamau Bell and Kate Schatz, *Do the Work, An Antiracist Activity Book* (2022).