

Racial Justice Ministry

Mission

The Racial Justice Ministry is seeking to create safe opportunities at Plymouth to talk about race, racism, discrimination and oppression. These are urgent issues in our local community and our national life, as well as our Christian faith. We are seeking to confront them in a spirit of love and honesty, and with open minds and hearts.

This reading list is the first step. We are seeking to educate ourselves about the long history of racial injustice in the United States, and we hope to learn how others (of different races and religions) have approached the challenge of ending it. We encourage you to engage as deeply and broadly as possible with these resources, then join us in discussion and action. We hope you'll join us in this important Christian work.

Title	Pages	Author	"Staff" Review
Trouble the Water	201	Michael-Ray Mathews	Trouble the Water is a thoughtful field guide for churches who are dedicated to the work of racial justice and healing in public life. Such work requires a deep, wide imagination with theological and ethical roots. These essays, tools, stories, and questions for reflection stretch the Church's imagination about how to be relevant and responsive to the wound-inflicting racism that surrounds us all. CY
Dear White Christians	272	Jennifer Harvey	What does it look like for Christians to be committed to Racial Justice? Jennifer Harvey takes a challenging look at the history of white Christians' participation in this work, and the very concept of racial reconciliation. Harvey's paradigm for reparations over reconciliation "insists we must understand race in ways that center around history, the degree to which racial identities emerge from that history, and the structural dimensions of our relationships across lines of difference". This book is challenging on many levels, but worth it - even if you only get partway through! RY
The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness	336	Michelle Alexander	Beautifully written and readable, eye-opening and important, this book changed my views. After tracing race relations through slavery, Reconstruction, and the segregation laws of the 'Jim Crow' era, Alexander shows how the mass incarceration of the War on Drugs continues to leave millions of black men in a permanent state of social and economic exclusion. Grossly unequal enforcement of laws, courts that have closed off avenues for redress, and continuing penalties after release combine to disenfranchise a substantial portion of urban blacks. It's a reality Christians can't afford to ignore. WR
The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America	368	Richard Rothstein	Through meticulous research and human stories, Rothstein shows the surprising extent to which residential racial segregation resulted not from private decisions by private individuals, but from explicit government policies at city, state and federal levels. This is critical though forgotten history that demands response. WR

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Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II	496	Douglas Blackmon	Douglas Blackmon is white and the Atlanta Bureau Chief of the Wall Street Journal. He goes for walks in the surrounding hills and his curiosity leads him from one discovery to another. He follows the life of Green Cottonham, a black youth born in the 1880s, and incidentally redefines the meaning of slavery and its sweep and duration into the 1930s. "Urgent, definitive, powerful." This is a challenging and difficult book, but if you read it, it will change your life. It is fundamental to any understanding of "social justice" and helps illuminate current relations between blacks and police, stop and frisk. And that's just the Introduction! CH
Ten Hills Farm: The Forgotten History of Slavery in the North	344	C.S. Manegold	We think of slavery as a Southern phenomenon, but Manegold recounts its beginnings in the 1630's among our Puritan fore-bears in colonial New England. The book follows five generations of slave owners on a farm outside Boston, first of who was John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, and famed for envisioning a "City on a Hill." WR
Between the World and Me	176	Ta-Nehisi Coates	Ta-Nehisi Coates writes a letter to his 15 year-old son about race and racism in our country. It is by turns discouraging and hopeful about acknowledging and addressing racism in the U.S., but is always excruciatingly candid about the experience of being black in America. This book illuminates the concept of structural and institutional racism in plain terms, rooted in Coates' lived experience. Coates is a national correspondent for The Atlantic and received the George Polk Award for his Atlantic cover story "The Case for Reparations." RY
Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? and Other Conversations About Race	358	Beverly Daniel Tatum	Tatum is a psychologist, scholar and president emerita of Spelman College. In highly readable language, she describes the development of racial identity that, along with awareness of racism, often creates a need for immersion in one's own culture. Though frank about realities, she is empathetic and encouraging to readers who seek racial awareness and justice. WR
Waking Up White and Finding Myself in the Story of Race	273	Debby Irving	One critic wrote: "A wake-up call for white people who want to consciously contribute to racial justice rather than unconsciously perpetuate patterns of racism. With honesty and humility, Irving shares her own story of learning about the realities of racism and the unintended impacts of white privilege." Engaging and authentic, the author includes discussion questions at the end of each chapter. WR
A More Beautiful and Terrible History: The Uses and Misuses of Civil Rights History	211	Jeanne Theoharis	This book challenges the myths of the civil rights movement. Rosa Parks was a lifelong activist, not an accidental heroine. Rev. Martin Luther King challenged not just the Southern sheriffs but also the Northern liberals. It reveals the diversity of individuals who led the movement, especially women and youth, the role of the media in maintaining injustice, the barriers and repression the activists faced, and the long history of injustice and struggle before the Montgomery bus boycott. It is easy to forget that the majority of Americans opposed the struggle while it was going on. MLW

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White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism	169	Robin DiAngelo	Robin DiAngelo distills lessons from years as an anti-racism educator in this book. Rejecting the "Good-Bad" dichotomy that finds racism exclusively as a set of acts perpetrated by "bad people", DiAngelo unpacks the ways that white people respond to challenges to their privilege with anger, fear, guilt, argumentation, and silence. She urges her white readers to reject our own fragility as the only way that we can engage more constructively in dismantling systemic racism. EH
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