



St. Matt's Racial Equity Group Recommends Christmas Book List

Sharyl Corrado

***There Are No Children Here* By Alex Kotlowitz (1992)**

This is an eye-opening account two Black boys, Pharoah and Lafayette, growing up in a Chicago public housing complex in the 1980s. Among other things, it shows how difficult it is for children raised in these circumstances to get out. This is one of the books that jump-started my own journey toward social justice and racial equity.

***Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* By James Loewen (2005)**

Did you ever wonder why some towns have so little racial diversity, while other places are so diverse? They may have once been “sundown towns” with official or unofficial policies prevent people of color from staying after dark. Sometimes these were official city ordinances, but often they were enforced by realtors or employers or hotels. I learned that my lily-white hometown in Wisconsin was a sundown town. So were parts of the San Fernando Valley until the 1960s, including Burbank.

Sandy Henry

***YOU SHOULD SEE ME IN A CROWN* By Lea Johnson**

I wanted to read this story as soon as I heard it was a first- person account of what it was like to be a black, gay, teenage girl in love for the first time in a small mid-western town. With her sites set on college and her heart set on the Mack, the exciting new girl in town, Liz Lighty does the unthinkable-joins the ranks of the royal court in hopes of winning the title of prom queen, which comes with a scholarship. Trying to be accepted was never the goal, Pennington College was. She achieved what no one thought possible.

***Becoming* By Michelle Obama**

From growing up on the south side of Chicago and sharing a bedroom with her brother to becoming the First Lady, Mrs. Obama humorously and thoughtfully brings us along on her journey of who she was to who she became, both as the wife of the President of the United States and as a mother, a graduate of Princeton, and a powerful force in the education of black women and girls. And yet she is just like you and me; a mother concerned for her children and the obstacles they will face, her compassion and humanity driving her always forward. Hers is a unique perspective, and she's one of my heroes.

Peter Iversen

***How to Be an Antiracist* By Ibram X. Kendi**

Ibram X. Kendi's concept of antiracism reenergizes the conversation about racial justice in America; moving through a combination of ethics, history, law, and science tied together with Kendi's personal narrative of his own awakening to antiracism. This book invites the reader to think about what an antiracist society might look like, and how we can play an active role in building it.

***Dear Church* By Lenny Duncan**

Part manifesto, part confession, and all love letter, *Dear Church* offers a bold new vision for the future of Lutheran ELCA church and the broader mainline Christian community of faith. *Dear Church* rejects the narrative of church decline and calls everyone—leaders and laity alike—to the front lines of the church's renewal through racial equality and justice.

Stephen Jaeger

***The Quest of the Silver Fleece* By W. E. B Dubois**

Du Bois, famous black sociologist, wrote two novels. This is the better of the two. It is set during the period of Reconstruction after the civil war, and is a great way to follow the history of the US and the rise of black people after slavery during the period. Great characters, a good story. Zora and John. Zora is a wild child, brought up in the jungle near a swamp; John son of freed slaves. He makes his way to running for office in Washington D.C., but runs into a glass ceiling. In the meantime, we see the rise of organized education for blacks, opportunities for work (Pullman porters). Zora also turns into an educated lady, makes her way in black and white society in the north. The various political movements and strains of ideology: assimilate with whites (Du Bois's position), or give it up in the US and return to Africa (Marcus Garvey). Both return to the south and plant a particularly high-quality cotton (the silver fleece of the title), and make themselves rich and independent

***The Sixteenth Round: From Number One contender to Number 45472* By Rubin "Hurricane" Carter**

A great boxer, contender for the middle weight championship, he got arrested, charged with the murder of three men and sentenced to life in prison. Never admitted guilt. The testimony against him was false. It's a case where any black man near the scene

of a crime can get arrested and convicted, guilty or not. Life in prison, his growing fame outside the prison (Angela Davis and Muhammed Ali spoke up for him). He had previous convictions and that sunk him, made him a mark for the police who needed a perpetrator. Terrible prison life. Long struggle to assert his innocence.

There's a good movie, starring, who else, Denzel Washington, directed. b Norman Jewison.

Stephanie Jaeger

Go Tell It on the Mountain

By James Baldwin

James Baldwin, in my view, ranks as one of the finest, most poetic, most insightful, most revelatory American authors of all time. If you want to enter even a little bit into Black experience in America in the first half of the 20th century, then read Baldwin's first novel *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. It is a semi-autobiographical coming-of-age story of the teenager, John Grimes, raised in a blended family headed by his step-father, a severe Pentecostal pastor. The story weaves together nuanced explorations of race, religion, gender and sexual identity.

So You Want to Talk about Race

By Ijeoma Oluo

Not quite sure where to start in your work dismantling racism and unpacking white privilege? Oluo's 2018 book, *So You Want to Talk about Race*, is a great entry point. Oluo offers language and definitions about racism, microaggressions, model minority myth and more that gives readers a foundation on which to build their own reflections and further work. She also offers good advice to White people hesitant to do the work of anti-racism like: "You have to get over the fear of facing the worst in yourself. You should instead fear unexamined racism. Fear the thought that right now, you could be contributing to the oppression of others and you don't know it. But do not fear those who bring that oppression to light. Do not fear the opportunity to do better."

Cathy Krager

Black Like Me

By John Howard Griffin

I read this book in, I think, Jr. High back in the 70's. It stayed with me over the years. It's a true story about a white man, the author, who decided to see what it's like being a black man in the Deep South in 1959. He saw how as a white man when he needed a place to eat and sleep, he was allowed in all restaurants and given a nice room to sleep in. He hitchhiked several times as a black man, there was a curfew at times and he didn't always get very far. One time he walked to a gas station where he was allowed to get some cheap food. He walked to a hillside area where a young black man saw

him and offered to take him to his shanty to stay with his family where his house was falling apart, no heat (cold nights) and few beds but plenty of blankets. The author said the places he stayed in as a white man were nice but he was alone. While he ate well in the white restaurants, he didn't really feel like he was a part of that society. While he was a black man, he saw how he was accepted by the black community around him, such as this family, and told what to expect, especially when out at night. The author left his family in Texas to write his journals which turned into this book. As far as I know, he's still alive and has become an racial equality activist. For him, this was a life changing challenge that he took to heart. This book is fascinating to see and feel the dichotomy of the 2 societies. I would love to see if the 2 societies have changed much since 1959.

I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings

By Maya Angelo

The Black Friend

By Frederick Joseph

Lis Miller

The Bluest Eye

By Toni Morrison

The Color Purple

By Alice Walker

Denice Stradling

Stamped from The Beginning;

The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America

By Ibram X. Kendi

"SOME AMERICANS cling desperately to the myth that we are living in a post-racial society, that the election of the first Black president spelled the doom of racism. In fact, racist thought is alive and well in America - more sophisticated and more insidious than ever. And as award-winning historian Ibram X. Kendi argues in *Stamped from the Beginning*, if we have any hope of grappling with this stark reality, we must first understand how racist ideas were developed, disseminated, and enshrined in American society." --- From Ibram X. Kendi's website

I have not finished this book, but I find it persuasive, informational, and eye-opening. It has really changed my perception of the beginnings of this country. I haven't stopped loving it, but I see this book as a catalyst for change that needs to happen. As an aside, it is really easy and compelling reading!

The Audacity of Hope

By Barack Obama

