

# PESCOSOLIDO LIBRARY READING LIST

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

## NON-FICTION

### *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson

Pulitzer Prize winner Wilkerson (*The Warmth of Other Suns*) delivers again with a timely look at white supremacy in the United States through the comparative lens of the Indian caste system and Nazi Germany. Her skill at combining personal anecdotes, history, research, scholarly texts, and quotations makes this academic work very readable.

### *Uncomfortable Conversations With a Black Man* by Emmanuel Acho

Ex-NFL linebacker, Emmanuel Acho, brings the humor and conversational feel of his same-named podcast to the written word. Each chapter begins with a question he has been asked about social justice and race, and he divides his answer into parts including historical context and how to act on his advice. An excellent introductory text into anti-racist work.

### *Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America, 1619-2019* edited by Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain

With *Four Hundred Souls*, Kendi and Blain have set the standard for a historical survey of Blacks in America by taking the 400 years from 1619 to 2019 and separating them into five-year spans; each segment was then given to a writer to do as they please in two to five pages. There are personal essays, biographies, fiction, as well as straight historical writings from famous and not-so-famous voices of color.

### *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson

Civil Rights attorney Stevenson's 2014 book is a must-read for anyone trying to understand how white supremacy dominates our justice system. Stevenson weaves together historical episodes of injustices and his personal narrative with the story of convicted murderer, Walter McMillian, as he attempts to get him a new trial in Alabama.

## FICTION

### *Deacon King Kong* by James McBride

National Book Award winner (*The Good Lord Bird*) McBride brings a little bit of everything to the table—slapstick humor, social commentary, a mystery, historical references, romance, religion, and the mafia that eventually coalesces into something pretty magical. It's 1969 in New York, and at the heart of the novel is Sportcoat, an elderly drunk just getting by working odd jobs and talking to his dead wife. When he shoots the neighborhood drug dealer in a drunken haze, he sets off a series of events that affect the entire community.

### *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett

Bennett's new novel picks up many of the threads she successfully wove through her first novel, *The Mothers*: family, loss, regret, race, and history. The book traces Stella and Desiree Vignes, identical twins from a strange, small town in Louisiana, who end up living anything but identical lives as one chooses to pass and leaves her life and history behind. A multi-generational novel, the story flows gently through time from the 1950s through the 1980s and from Louisiana to California and New York.

### *Black Buck* by Mateo Askaripour

*Black Buck* exemplifies the idea of laughing instead of crying at the absurdities of life. In this case, the absurdities occur in the racist world of corporate America, as Darren, aka Buck, attempts to break into the white-dominated realm of the nebulous company, Sumwun. Almost documentarian in style as the narrative regularly breaks the fourth wall to speak directly to the reader, *Black Buck* is immensely readable while distilling a strong message about our racist society.

### *Homegoing* by Yaa Gyasi

Gyasi's 2016 bestseller traces the history of two half-sisters in 18th century Ghana—one enslaved and taken to America and one who remains in Africa. Threads follow the descendants of both women to modern-day exploring themes of race, family, and memory.

## YOUNG ADULT

### *Punching the Air* by Ibi Zoboi and Yusef Salaam

Acclaimed YA author Zoboi and Exonerated Five member Salaam collaborated to write this beautiful novel-in-verse that tells the story of Amal, a Muslim teen accused of attempted murder during a street fight. The authors push the boundaries of free verse and storytelling in the best way, and the results are an emotional and painful exploration of our white supremacist judicial system.

### *Dear Justyce* by Nic Stone

Stone has written an excellent follow-up to the crazy popular, *Dear Martin*. Similar to the first book, she uses letters to frame the narrative, but this time they are between Justyce and Quan—Manny's cousin who went to prison. Stone gives readers just enough of the old characters while telling the story of new ones, and masterfully manages the social justice lessons.

### *We Are Not Yet Equal* by Tonya Bolden and Carol Anderson

A young adult version of Anderson's 2017 *White Rage*, *We Are Not Yet Equal* traces the roots of systematic racism in the United States. Bolden does a nice job of simplifying the original text without losing the point, and the addition of photographs and some clarifying documents adds to the context.

### *The Field Guide to the North American Teen* by Ben Philippe

Philippe's debut novel hits all the right buttons for a lot of YA readers: funny, romantic, quirky friends, and topical social issues. Norris Kaplan finds himself unhappily moving from Montreal to Austin, Texas for his mother's new job where he hates everything about his new life—the heat, the people, and the lack of hockey to name a few.