

2021 Black Power Month “Reading” List!

Dear 826 Boston community,

February 1st began the month-long celebration and recognition of Black peoples’ history in this country and beyond. Throughout the decades, Black people have suffered at the hands of oppressors and despite it being 2021, there is still no justice.

As we attempt to eradicate our contribution to these oppressive systems in our professional world, it is important to also increase our knowledge and support for the Black community through resources, such as books, podcasts, films, and tv shows. These texts illuminate the powerful roles Black people have held throughout this oppressive history, as well as celebrate Black joy. We hope you’re staying well, and that these “readings” will increase your knowledge and encourage your own anti-racist work within and beyond Black History Month.

Warmly,

The Cultural and Community Learning Committee

Patti, Charlene, Genie, Catherine, Miranda, Kristin

Table of Contents

Read

Non-Fiction

[*The Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation*](#) by Anna Malaika Tubbs..... 4

[*Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul*](#) (w/ podcast) by Dr. Tanisha C. Ford..... 5

[*Heads of the Colored People: Stories*](#) by Nafissa Thompson-Spires..... 6

[*Unashamed: Musings of a Fat, Black, Muslim*](#) by Leah Vernon 7

[*The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*](#) by Isabel Wilkerson..... 8

[*Overlooked No More: Bessie Coleman, Pioneering African-American Aviatrix*](#) by Daniel E. Slotnik 9

[*Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women that a Movement Forgot*](#) by Mikki Kendall 10

[*Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia*](#) by Sabrina Strings 11

[*Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement*](#) by Angela Y. Davis ...12

[*Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice*](#) by Phillip Hoose 13

Fiction

[*Black Leopard, Red Wolf*](#) by Marlon James 14

[*Queen of the Conquered*](#) by Kacen Callender 15

Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora edited by Sheree R. Thomas 16

YA/Children’s Fiction

Your Corner Dark by Desmond Hall 17

Every Body Looking by Candace Iloh 18

Raybearer by Jordan Ifueko 19

Follow Chester!: A College Football Team Fights Racism and Makes History by Gloria Respress-Churchwell, illustrated by Laura Freeman 20

Watch

Self-Made: Inspired by the life of Madame CJ Walker (Netflix)..... 21

[“12 Lies Netflix Told in ‘Self Made’: Madam CJ Walker” by The Blackest Truth](#)..... 21

[“Madam CJ Walker’s Great-Great-Granddaughter Shares Little Told Story of Activism” by The](#)

[Root](#) 21

Black Earth Rising (Netflix) 22

MAJOR! 23

One Night in Miami (Amazon Prime) 24

Small Axe (Amazon Prime) 25

History of Africa with Zeinab Badawi (BBC Africa) 26

Motherlands RPG (Twitch) 27

Paris is Burning..... 28

Listen

[“Queen Njinja’s Cleverness”](#) (Noble Blood Podcast) 29

[“Raquel Willis Believes in Black Trans Power”](#) (UNDISTRACTED with Brittany Packnett Cunningham)..... 30

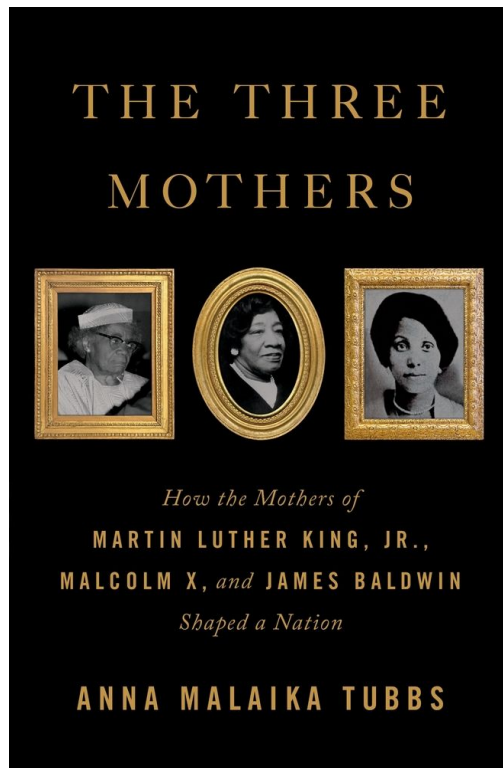
[“Civil Conversations and Social Healing” w/ transcripts](#) (*On Being Podcast*) 31

[“Living the Questions: A Civil Rights Elder on Exhaustion and Rest, Spiritual Practice, and the Necessity of Loving Community”](#) (*On Being Podcast*) 32

[“Wild Western Women: Ladies on the American Frontier”](#) (*The Exploress Podcast*) 33

Special Mentions 34

The Three Mothers: How the Mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin Shaped a Nation by Anna Malaika Tubbs

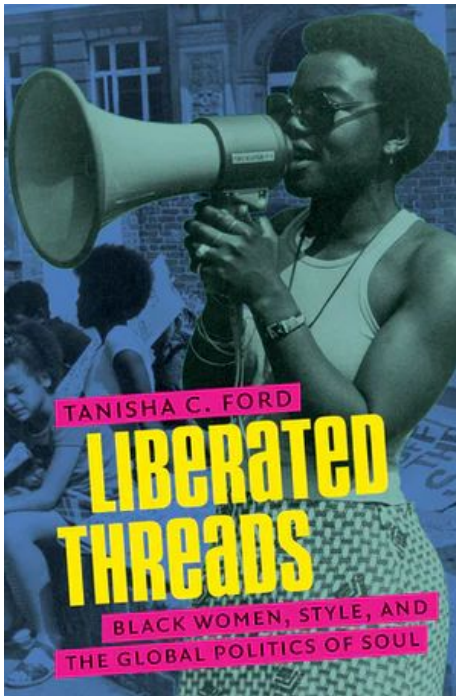


Berdis Baldwin, Alberta King, and Louise Little were all born at the beginning of the 20th century and forced to contend with the prejudices of Jim Crow as Black women. These three extraordinary women passed their knowledge to their children with the hope of helping them to survive in a society that would deny their humanity from the very beginning--from Louise teaching her children about their activist roots, to Berdis encouraging James to express himself through writing, to Alberta basing all of her lessons in faith and social justice. These women used their strength and motherhood to push their children toward greatness, all with a conviction that every human being deserves dignity and respect despite the rampant discrimination they faced.

These three mothers taught resistance and a fundamental belief in the worth of Black people to their sons, even when these beliefs flew in the face of America's racist practices and led to ramifications for all three families' safety. The fight for equal justice and dignity came above all else for the three mothers.

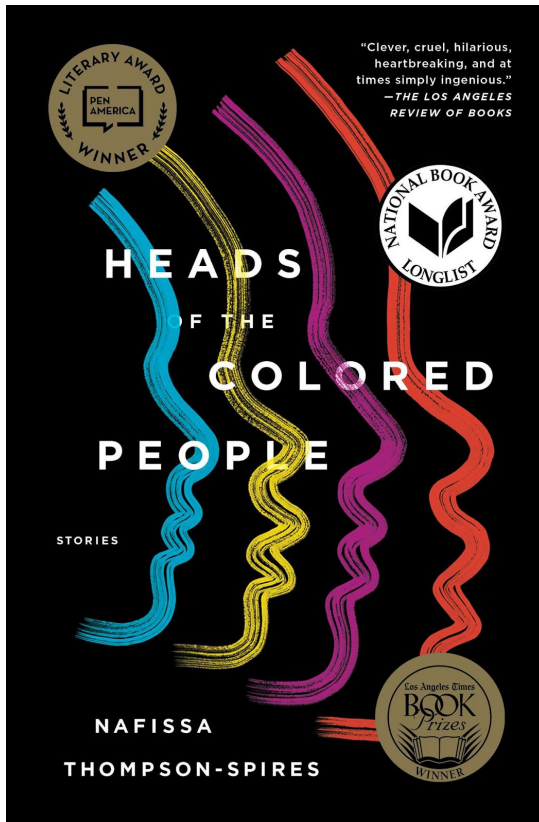
These women, their similarities and differences, as individuals and as mothers, represent a piece of history left untold and a celebration of Black motherhood long overdue.

Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul (w/ podcast) by Dr. Tanisha C. Ford



In this thought-provoking book, Tanisha C. Ford explores how and why black women in places as far-flung as New York City, Atlanta, London, and Johannesburg incorporated style and beauty culture into their activism. Focusing on the emergence of the soul style movement--represented in clothing, jewelry, hairstyles, and more--Liberated Threads shows that black women's fashion choices became galvanizing symbols of gender and political liberation. Drawing from an eclectic archive, Ford offers a new way of studying how black style and Soul Power moved beyond national boundaries, sparking a global fashion phenomenon. Following celebrities, models, college students, and everyday women as they moved through fashion boutiques, beauty salons, and record stores, Ford narrates the fascinating intertwining histories of Black Freedom and fashion.

Heads of the Colored People: Stories by Nafissa Thompson-Spires



Nafissa Thompson-Spires grapples with race, identity politics, and the contemporary middle class in this "vivid, fast, funny, way-smart, and verbally inventive" (George Saunders, author of *Lincoln in the Bardo*) collection.

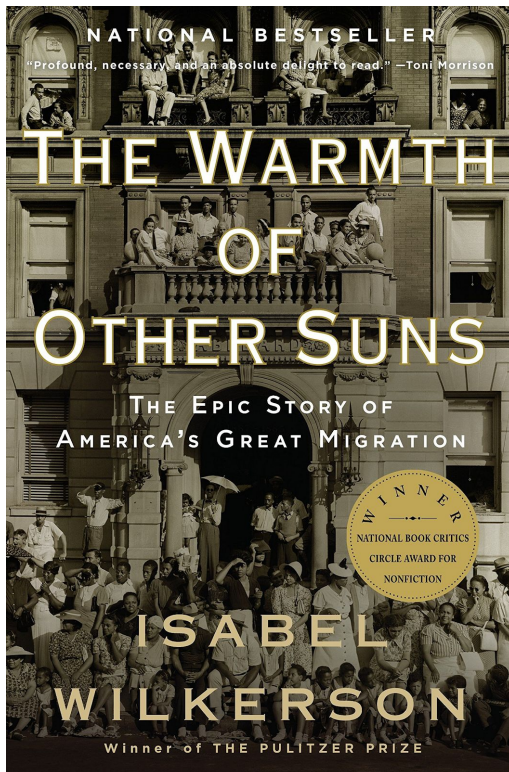
Each captivating story plunges headfirst into the lives of utterly original characters. Some are darkly humorous--two mothers exchanging snide remarks through notes in their kids' backpacks--while others are devastatingly poignant. In the title story, when a cosplayer, dressed as his favorite anime character, is mistaken for a violent threat the consequences are dire; in another story, a teen struggles between her upper middle class upbringing and her desire to fully connect with so-called black culture.

Unashamed: Musings of a Fat, Black, Muslim by Leah Vernon



Ever since she was little, Leah Vernon was told what to believe and how to act. There wasn't any room for imperfection. Good Muslim girls listened more than they spoke. They didn't have a missing father or a mother with mental illness. They didn't have fat bodies or grow up wishing they could be like the white characters they saw on TV. They didn't have husbands who abused and cheated on them. They certainly didn't have secret abortions. In *Unashamed*, Vernon takes to task the myth of the perfect Muslim woman with frank dispatches on her love-hate relationship with her hijab and her faith, race, weight, mental illness, domestic violence, sexuality, the millennial world of dating, and the process of finding her voice.

The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration by Isabel Wilkerson



From 1915 to 1970, this exodus of almost six million people changed the face of America. Wilkerson compares this epic migration to the migrations of other peoples in history. She interviewed more than a thousand people, and gained access to new data and official records, to write this definitive and vividly dramatic account of how these American journeys unfolded, altering our cities, our country, and ourselves.

With stunning historical detail, Wilkerson tells this story through the lives of three unique individuals: Ida Mae Gladney, who in 1937 left sharecropping and prejudice in Mississippi for Chicago, where she achieved quiet blue-collar success and, in old age, voted for Barack Obama when he ran for an Illinois Senate seat; sharp and quick-tempered George Starling, who in 1945 fled Florida for Harlem, where he endangered his job fighting for civil rights, saw his family fall, and finally found peace in God; and Robert Foster, who left Louisiana in 1953 to pursue a medical career, the personal physician to Ray Charles as part of a glitteringly successful medical career, which allowed him to purchase a grand home where he often threw exuberant parties.

Overlooked No More: Bessie Coleman, Pioneering African-American Aviatix by Daniel E. Slotnik

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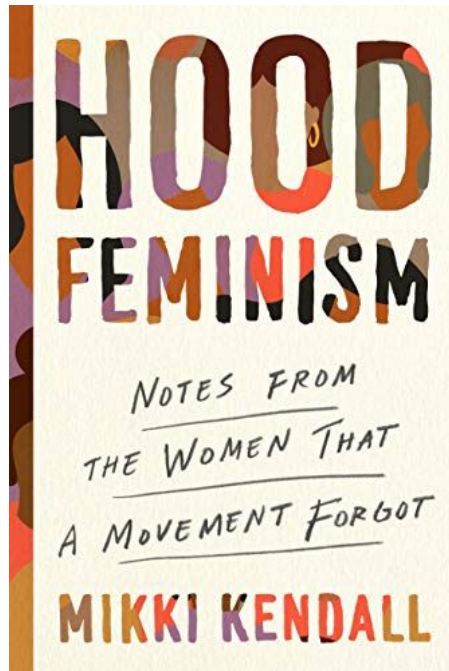
Overlooked No More: Bessie Coleman, Pioneering African-American Aviatix

In 1921 Coleman became the first black woman in the United States to earn a pilot's license, then barnstormed around the country thrilling audiences and inspiring later generations.



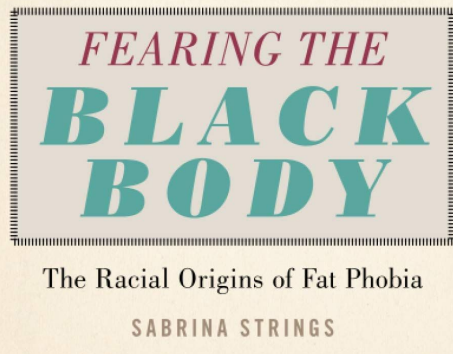
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Hood Feminism: Notes from the Women that a Movement Forgot by Mikki Kendall



Today's feminist movement has a glaring blind spot, and paradoxically, it is women. Mainstream feminists rarely talk about meeting basic needs as a feminist issue, argues Mikki Kendall, but food insecurity, access to quality education, safe neighborhoods, a living wage, and medical care are all feminist issues. All too often, however, the focus is not on basic survival for the many, but on increasing privilege for the few. That feminists refuse to prioritize these issues has only exacerbated the age-old problem of both internecine discord, and women who rebuff at carrying the title. Moreover, prominent white feminists broadly suffer from their own myopia with regard to how things like race, class, sexual orientation, and ability intersect with gender. How can we stand in solidarity as a movement, Kendall asks, when there is the distinct likelihood that some women are oppressing others?

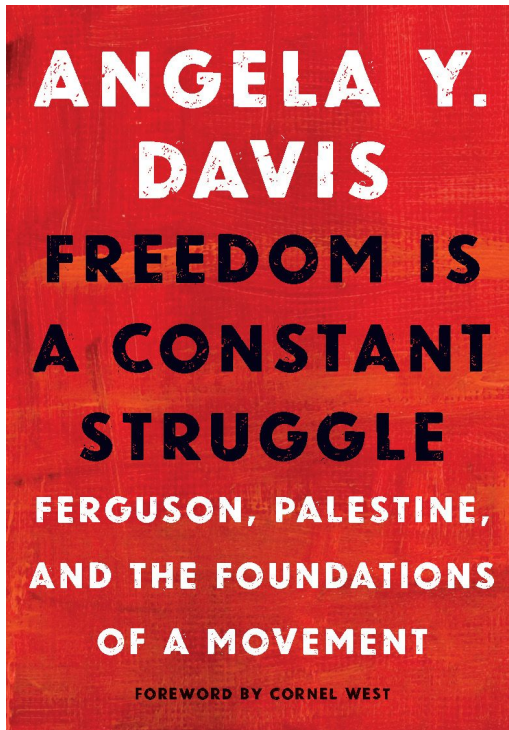
Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia by Sabrina Strings



Strings weaves together an eye-opening historical narrative ranging from the Renaissance to the current moment, analyzing important works of art, newspaper and magazine articles, and scientific literature and medical journals--where fat bodies were once praised--showing that fat phobia, as it relates to black women, did not originate with medical findings, but with the Enlightenment era belief that fatness was evidence of "savagery" and racial inferiority.

The author argues that the contemporary ideal of slenderness is, at its very core, racialized and racist. Indeed, it was not until the early twentieth century, when racialized attitudes against fatness were already entrenched in the culture, that the medical establishment began its crusade against obesity. An important and original work, *Fearing the Black Body* argues convincingly that fat phobia isn't about health at all, but rather a means of using the body to validate race, class, and gender prejudice.

Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Ferguson, Palestine, and the Foundations of a Movement by
Angela Y. Davis

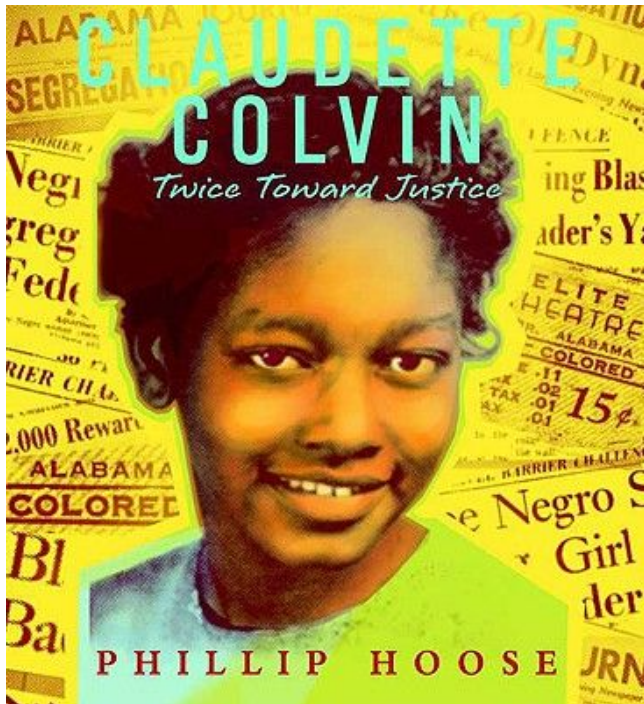


In these newly collected essays, interviews, and speeches, world-renowned activist and scholar Angela Y. Davis illuminates the connections between struggles against state violence and oppression throughout history and around the world.

Reflecting on the importance of black feminism, intersectionality, and prison abolitionism for today's struggles, Davis discusses the legacies of previous liberation struggles, from the Black Freedom Movement to the South African anti-Apartheid movement. She highlights connections and analyzes today's struggles against state terror, from Ferguson to Palestine.

Facing a world of outrageous injustice, Davis challenges us to imagine and build the movement for human liberation. And in doing so, she reminds us that "Freedom is a constant struggle."

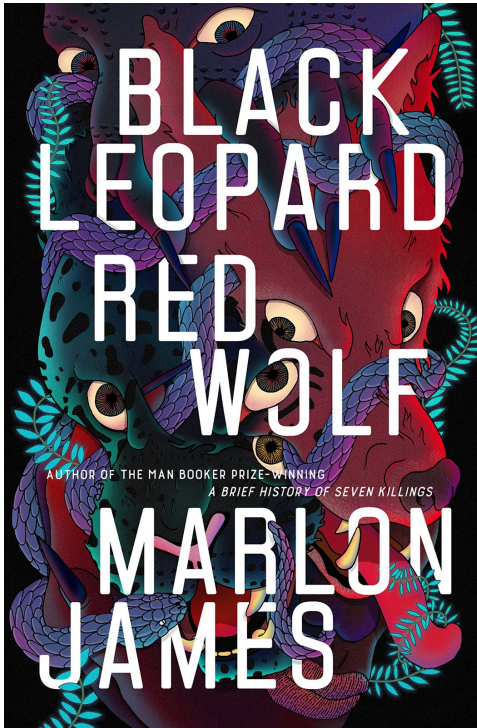
Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice by Phillip Hoose



On March 2, 1955, an impassioned teenager, fed up with the daily injustices of Jim Crow segregation, refused to give her seat to a white woman on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Instead of being celebrated as Rosa Parks would be just nine months later, fifteen-year-old Claudette Colvin found herself shunned by her classmates and dismissed by community leaders. Undaunted, a year later she dared to challenge segregation again as a key plaintiff in "Browder v. Gayle," the landmark case that struck down the segregation laws of Montgomery and swept away the legal underpinnings of the Jim Crow South.

Based on extensive interviews with Claudette Colvin and many others, Phillip Hoose presents the first in-depth account of an important yet largely unknown civil rights figure, skillfully weaving her dramatic story into the fabric of the historic Montgomery bus boycott and court case that would change the course of American history.

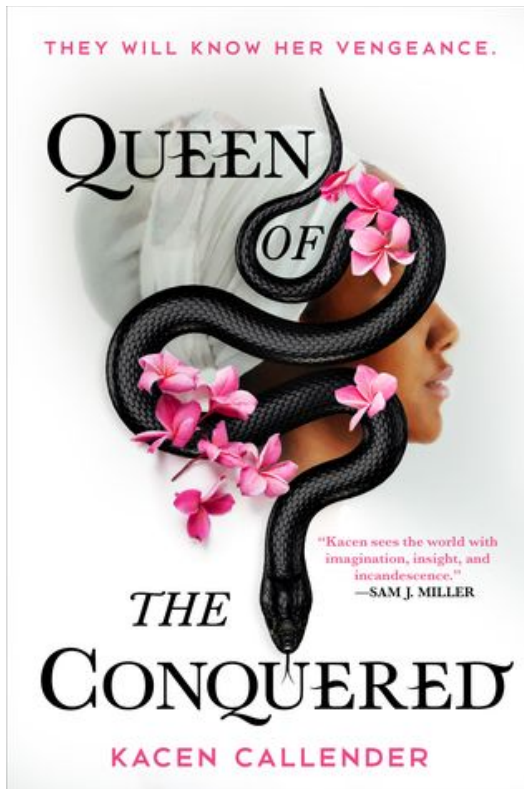
Black Leopard, Red Wolf by Marlon James



Tracker is known far and wide for his skills as a hunter: He has a nose, people say. Engaged to track down a mysterious boy who disappeared three years earlier, Tracker breaks his own rule of always working alone when he finds himself part of a group that comes together to search for the boy. The band is a hodgepodge, full of unusual characters with secrets of their own, including a shape-shifting man-animal known as Leopard.

As Tracker follows the boy's scent--from one ancient city to another; into dense forests and across deep rivers--he and the band are set upon by creatures intent on destroying them. As he struggles to survive, Tracker starts to wonder: Who, really, is this boy? Why has he been missing for so long? Why do so many people want to keep Tracker from finding him? And perhaps the most important questions of all: Who is telling the truth, and who is lying?

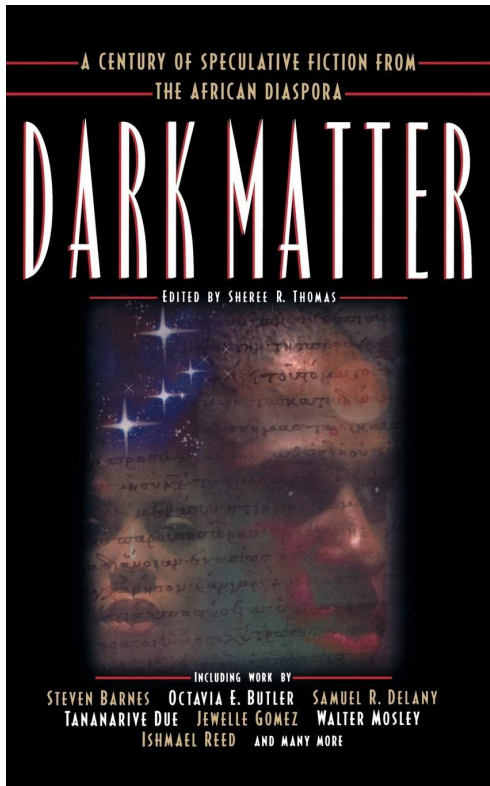
Queen of the Conquered by Kacen Callender



On the islands of Hans Lollik, Sigourney Rose was the only survivor when her family was massacred by the colonizers. When the childless king of the islands declares he will choose his successor from amongst eligible noble families, Sigourney is ready to exact her revenge.

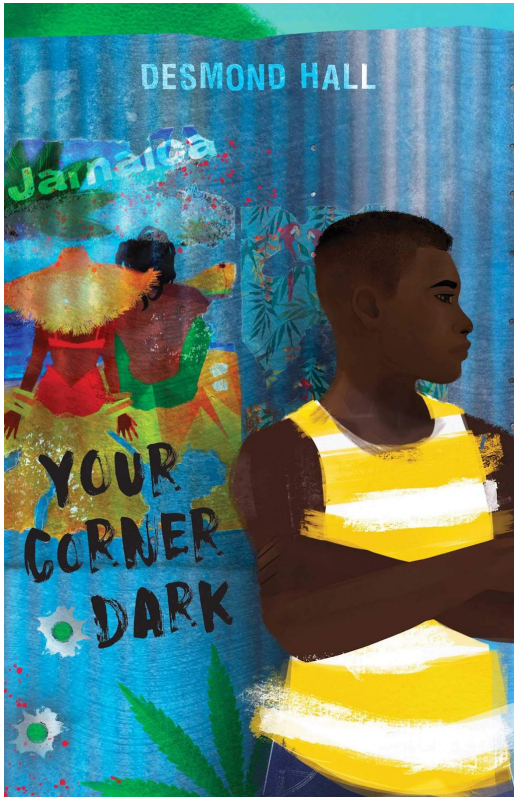
But someone is killing off the ruling families to clear a path to the throne. And as the bodies pile up and all eyes regard her with suspicion, Sigourney must find allies among her prey and the murderer among her peers... lest she become the next victim.

Dark Matter: A Century of Speculative Fiction from the African Diaspora edited by Sheree R. Thomas



This volume introduces black science fiction, fantasy, and speculative fiction writers to the generations of readers who have not had the chance to explore the scope and diversity among African-American writers.

Your Corner Dark by Desmond Hall



Things can change in a second:

The second Frankie Green gets that scholarship letter, he has his ticket out of Jamaica.

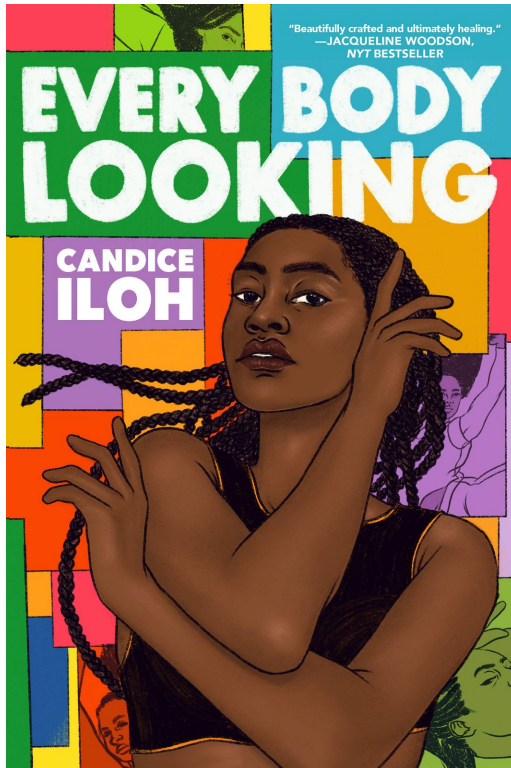
The second his longtime crush, Leah, asks him on a date, he's in trouble.

The second his father gets shot, suddenly nothing else matters.

And the second Frankie joins his uncle's gang in exchange for paying for his father's medical bills, there's no going back...or is there?

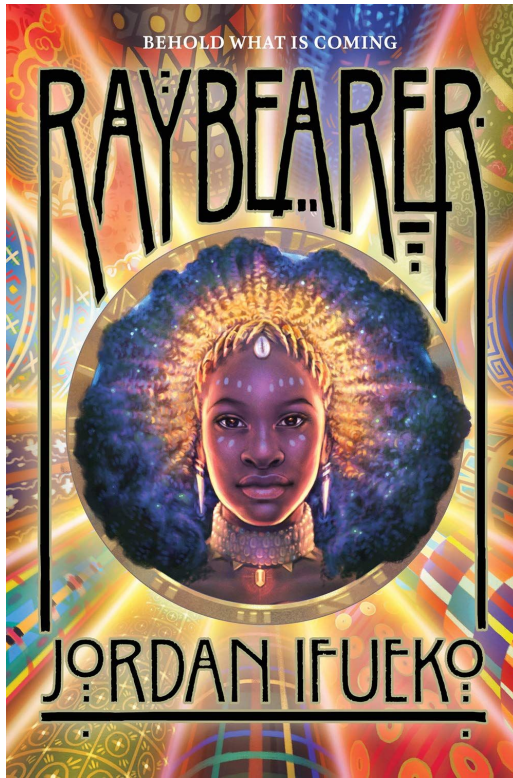
As Frankie does things he never thought he'd be capable of, he's forced to confront the truth of the family and future he was born into—and the ones he wants to build for himself.

Every Body Looking by Candace Iloh



When Ada leaves home for her freshman year at a Historically Black College, it's the first time she's ever been so far from her family—and the first time that she's been able to make her own choices and to seek her place in this new world. As she stumbles deeper into the world of dance and explores her sexuality, she also begins to wrestle with her past—her mother's struggle with addiction, her Nigerian father's attempts to make a home for her. Ultimately, Ada discovers she needs to brush off the destiny others have chosen for her and claim full ownership of her body and her future.

Raybearer by Jordan Ifueko



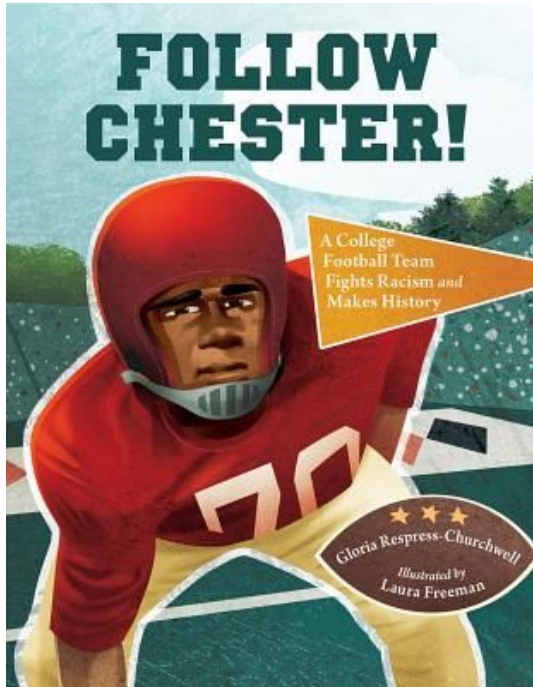
The epic and phenomenal West-African inspired New York Times bestselling YA fantasy from an incredible new talent.

'Only one thing is more powerful than a wish, and that is a purpose.'

Tarisai has always longed for the warmth of a family. She was raised in isolation by a mysterious, often absent mother known only as The Lady. The Lady sends her to the capital of the global empire of Aritsar to compete with other children to be chosen as one of the Crown Prince's Council of Eleven. If she's picked, she'll be joined with the other Council members through the Ray, a bond deeper than blood. That closeness is irresistible to Tarisai, who has always wanted to belong somewhere. But The Lady has other ideas, including a magical wish that Tarisai is compelled to obey: kill the Crown Prince once she gains his trust.

Tarisai won't stand by and become someone's pawn - but is she strong enough to choose a different path for herself?

Follow Chester!: A College Football Team Fights Racism and Makes History by Gloria Respress-Churchwell, illustrated by Laura Freeman



In 1947, no African American player can play at a southern school; in return, the opposing team benches a player of "equal talent." This historical fiction picture book frames a turbulent time in the civil rights era with the clever use of a football play to show race relations and teamwork. Inspired by a true story, capturing a historic defense against the Jim Crow laws of the South.

Self-Made: Inspired by the life of Madame CJ Walker (Netflix)



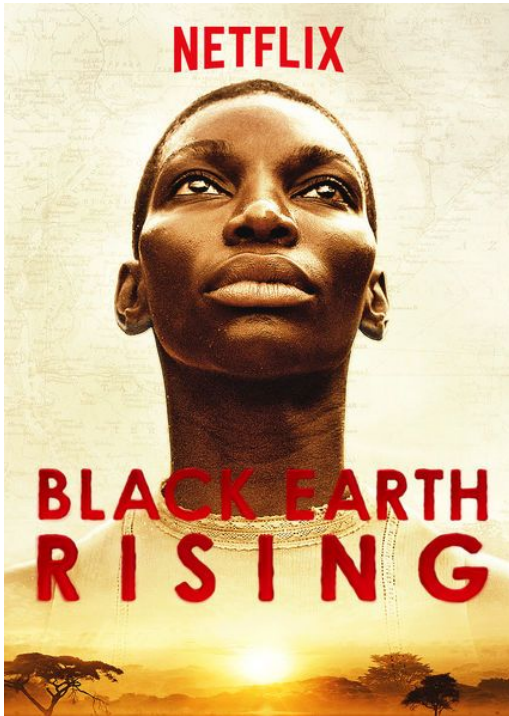
An African American washerwoman rises from poverty to build a beauty empire and become the first female self-made millionaire. Based on a true story.

We recommend that you also engage with these videos that comment on some historical inaccuracies in the tv show:

[12 Lies Netflix Told in 'Self Made': Madam CJ Walker](#)

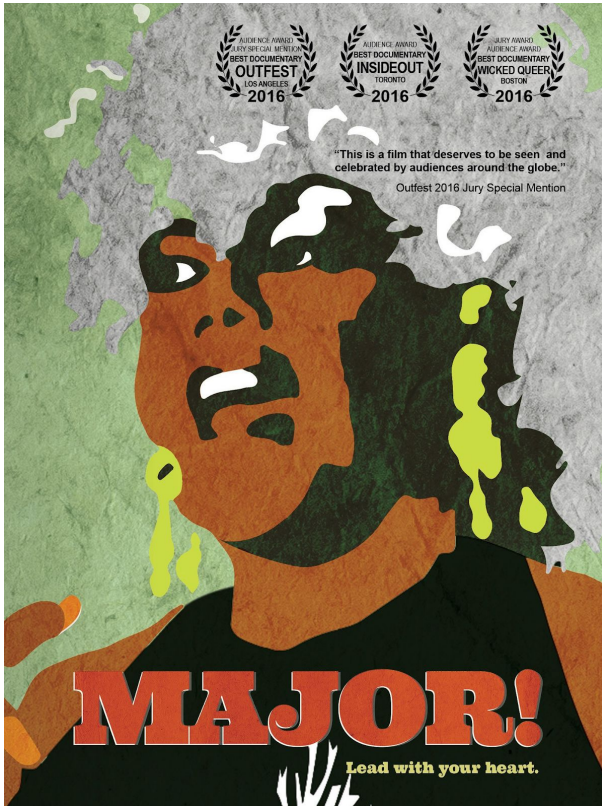
[Madam CJ Walker's Great-Great-Granddaughter Shares Little Told Story of Activism](#)

Black Earth Rising (Netflix)



Adopted by a human rights attorney after the Rwandan genocide, legal investigator Kate Ashby confronts her past when she takes on war crimes cases.

MAJOR!



MAJOR! explores the life and campaigns of Miss Major Griffin-Gracy, a formerly incarcerated Black transgender elder and activist who has been fighting for the rights of trans women of color for over 40 years.

Miss Major is a veteran of the Stonewall Rebellion and a survivor of Attica State Prison, a former sex worker, an elder, and a community leader and human rights activist. She is simply “Mama” to many in her community. Her personal story and activism for transgender civil rights intersects LGBT struggles for justice and equality from the 1960s to today. At the center of her activism is her fierce advocacy for her girls, trans women of color who have survived police brutality and incarceration in men’s jails and prisons.

One Night in Miami (Amazon Prime)



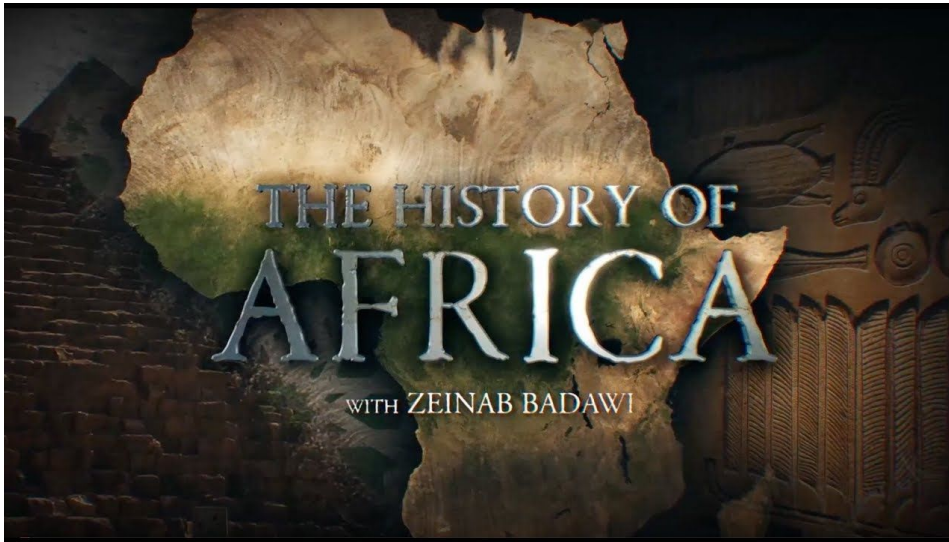
One Night in Miami is a fictional account of one incredible night where icons Muhammad Ali, Malcolm X, Sam Cooke, and Jim Brown gathered discussing their roles in the civil rights movement and cultural upheaval of the 60s.

Small Axe (Amazon Prime)



Small Axe is a collection of five original films by Steve McQueen set from the late 1960s to the mid 1980s that tell personal stories from London's West Indian community, whose lives have been shaped by their own force of will despite rampant racism and discrimination. New film every Friday from Nov 20-Dec 18.

History of Africa with Zeinab Badawi (BBC Africa)



This series of 20 programmes is based on a unique project, overseen by UNESCO known as the GHA: the General History of Africa - Africa's history, culture and heritage written and told by Africans themselves. Zeinab Badawi travels across more than thirty countries in west, east, central and southern Africa and explores the continent's history from the beginning of time to the modern era with the goal to 'set history straight'. She captures key moments in Africa's history in her conversations

with Africans from all walks of life including leading historians from across Africa and she brings alive some of the lesser known heroes and heroines of the continent's past. This is a search for truth and identity - uncovering hidden chapters and perspectives of Africa's history and revising distorted interpretations.

Motherlands RPG (Twitch)

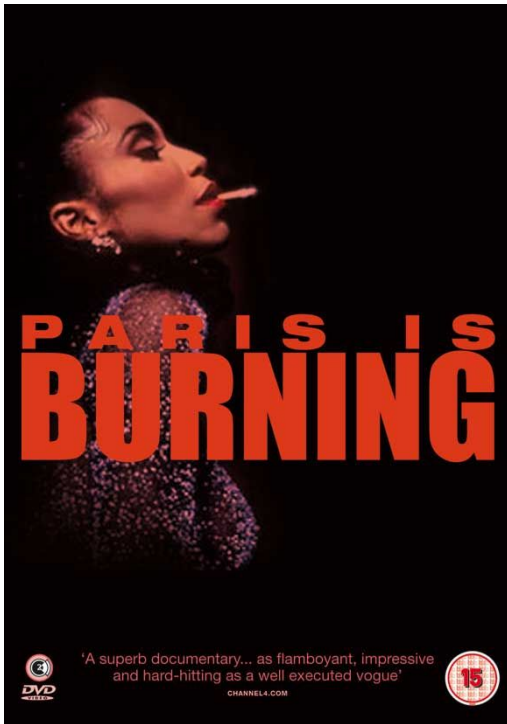


Into the Mother Lands

Into the Mother Lands is a new sci-fi odyssey funded & supported by Twitch, developed by a fantastic team of POC RPG designers, with amazing POC talent both on screen and working hard behind the scenes to bring you a tale of misguided travels, adventurers led astray many

generations past. Join us on October 4th, 2020 and every Sunday; to learn how the descendants of a to be revealed ancestor are faring on a world that was once alien to them; but is now home. Learn about their cultures, see what their enemies are plotting, and if they can continue to survive on their adopted home world. Our crew is in for interesting times.

Paris is Burning



Paris Is Burning offers a vibrant glimpse into the New York drag and ball subculture during the 1980s, along with the African-American, Latino, gay, and transgender communities involved in it. It examines the system of 'houses', which serve as a means of shelter and solace for those who have been kicked out of their homes due to being LGBT. These houses represent a community of friends led by a 'mother', typically an older member of the drag scene, and enables members to feel a sense of belonging after being estranged from their biological families.

During the documentary, drag queens talk about how they feel shunned living in New York. They discuss how they would be stared at when they walked down the street or when they would enter a store to perform simple errands. They also discuss issues of racism as well as poverty due to the lack of jobs for drag queens during this time. Some of the drag queens interviewed include Dorian Corey and Willi Ninja, each person with their own take on how they

handle comments made toward them and how they learned to adapt to a new way of life.

“Queen Njinga’s Cleverness” (*Noble Blood Podcast*)



Queen Njinga ruled the united kingdoms of Ndongo and Matamba while facing off against the constant threat of Portuguese colonization. All it took was the cunning to know who to trust and when.

“Raquel Willis Believes in Black Trans Power” (*UNDISTRACTED with Brittany Packnett Cunningham*)



President Biden signed new protections for LGBTQ people on Day One of his presidency—but new anti-trans legislation is cropping up everywhere, and violence against gender-nonconforming folks, especially Black trans women, remains high. How can we fix this? Host Brittany Packnett Cunningham sits down with activist and writer Raquel Willis to talk about everything from the new administration to the trans ancestors you never heard about. Plus, Brittany brings you the latest Untrending news.

“Civil Conversations and Social Healing” w/ transcripts (On Being Podcast)



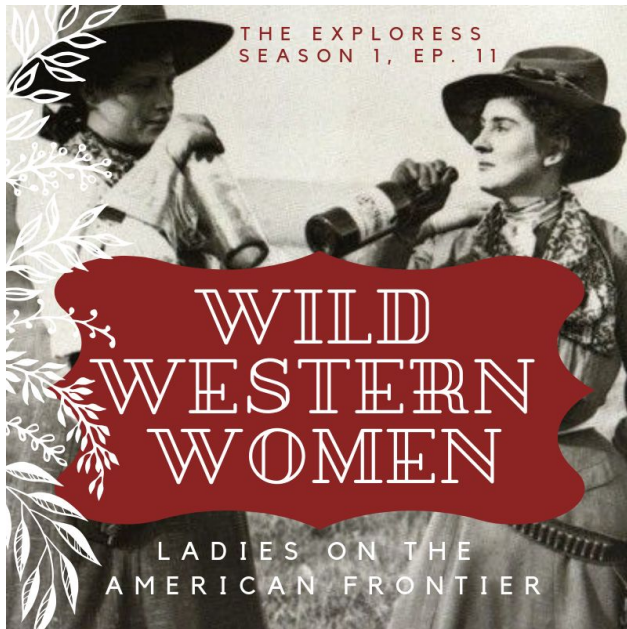
The Civil Conversations and Social Healing team represents The On Being Project’s presence in the world as we nourish, embolden and accompany the work of social healing. Our organizational capacities to produce audio and digital resources are strengthened by programs and convenings that stitch relationships across rupture and equip for resilience and repair.

“Living the Questions: A Civil Rights Elder on Exhaustion and Rest, Spiritual Practice, and the Necessity of Loving Community” (*On Being Podcast*)



Our colleague Lucas Johnson catches up with one of his mentors, Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons. Now a member of the National Council of Elders, she was a teenager when she joined the Mississippi Freedom Summer. She shares what she has learned about exhaustion and self-care, spiritual practice and community, while engaging in civil rights organizing and deep social healing. Dr. Simmons was raised Christian and later converted to the Sufi tradition of Islam.

“Wild Western Women: Ladies on the American Frontier” (*The Exploress Podcast*)



Americans were obsessed with the West then, and they still are. But when we think of frontier legends, we tend to picture grizzled cowboys pointing shiny guns. If we see a woman at all, it's a pretty, helpless schoolteacher or that fast-talking dancer at the local brothel.

But what was life REALLY like for women on the rugged frontier?

What prompted Victorian-era ladies to journey into such wild, unknown lands? And what kind of lives did they find once they got there? What about the women who were ALREADY there—say, Native American women, or Mexican ones?

And the ultimate question: did these women find freedom and equality in the West, or did their era's strict rules about a woman's place still bind them?

Special Mentions

[“Michaela Coel on the 2020 TIME 100 List”](#)

[“Amanda Gorman interviewed by Michelle Obama”](#)

[FIYAH: Literary Magazine of Black Speculative Fiction](#)

[“Chadwick Boseman: Long Live the King”](#)