

Book List

Books with Powerful Messages of Social Change Narrative Nonfiction, Fiction, and Social Analysis

Narrative Nonfiction

Memoirs, ethnographies, investigative journalism
The journeys of people who navigate social barriers

American Prison: A Reporter's Undercover Journey into the Business of Punishment, by Shane Bauer (Penguin Press, 2018).

Behind the Walls: A Guide for Family and Friends of Texas Inmates, by Jorge Antonio Renaud (University of North Texas Press, 2002).

The Best Little Boy in the World, by Andrew Tobias, as John Reid (Random House, 1998).

Compassionate Confinement: A Year in the Life of Unit C, by Laura S. Abrams and Ben Anderson-Nathe (Rutgers University Press, 2013).

Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen Hardcover, by Jose Antonio Vargas (Dey Street Books, 2018)

The Devil's Highway: A True Story, by Luis Alberto Urrea (Back Bay Books, 2008).

Dirty River: A Queer Femme of Color Dreaming Her Way Home, by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2015).

Elegy for a Disease: A Personal and Cultural History of Polio, by Anne Finger (St. Martin's Press, 2006).

Enrique's Journey: The Story of a Boy's Dangerous Odyssey to Reunite with His Mother, by Sonia Nazario (Random House, 2007).

Everyday Desistance: The Transition to Adulthood Among Formerly Incarcerated Youth, by Laura S. Abrams Diane J. Terry (Rutgers University Press, 2017).

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City, by Matthew Desmond (NY: Penguin: 2121).

Forgotten Citizens: Deportation, Children, and the Making of American Exiles and Orphans, by Luis H. Zayas (Oxford University Press, 2015).

Fragile Families: Foster Care, Immigration, and Citizenship, by Naomi Glenn-Levin Rodriguez (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017).

Fresh Fruit, Broken Bodies: Migrant Farmworkers in the United States, by Seth Holmes and Philippe Bourgois (University of California Press, 2013).

From the Eye of the Storm: The Experiences of a Child Welfare Worker, by Cynthia Crosson-Tower (Waveland Press, 2015).

Hillbilly Elegy: A Memoir of a Family and Culture in Crisis, by J. D. Vance (London: William Collins, 2016.)

In the Country We Love: My Family Divided, by Diane Guerrero (Henry Holt and Co., 2016).

Laughing in the Dark: From Colored Girl to Woman of Color – A Journey From Prison to Power, by Patrice Gaines (Crown, 1994).

The Line Becomes a River: Dispatches from the Border, by Francisco Cantú (Riverhead Books, 2018).

My (Underground) American Dream: My True Story as an Undocumented Immigrant Who Became a Wall Street Executive, by Julissa Arce (Center Street, 2017).

Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America, by Barbara Ehrenreich (Metropolitan Books, 2010).

No House to Call My Home: Love, Family, and Other Transgressions, by Ryan Berg (Nation Books, 2015).

Notes from a Young Black Chef: A Memoir, by Kwame Onwuachi and Joshua David Stein (Knopf, 2019)

The Other Wes Moore: One Name, Two Fates, by Wes Moore (Spiegel & Grau, 2010).

Queer Rock Love : A Family Memoir, by Paige Schilt (Transgress Press, 2015).

Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood, Identity, Love & So Much More, by Janet Mock (Atria Books, 2014).

Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools, by Jonathan Kozol (Crown Pub, 1991).

The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace: A Brilliant Young Man Who Left Newark for the Ivy League, by Jeff Hobbs (Scribner, 2014).

Unequal City: Race, Schools, and Perceptions of Injustice, by Carla Shedd (Russell Sage Foundation, 2015)

Warriors Don't Cry: The Searing Memoir of the Battle to Integrate Little Rock's Central High, by Melba Pattillo Beals (Simon and Schuster, 1995).

What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance, and Hope in an American City, by Monna Hanna Attisha (One World, 2018).

The Yellow House, by Sarah M. Broom (Grove Press, 2019). Release: July 2019

Graphic Non-fiction

*To read graphic novels see the pictures first, and then read what's on the page.
Graphic novels share elements of prose, screenwriting, and visual arts.*

A.D.: New Orleans After the Deluge, by Josh Neufeld (Pantheon Graphic Library, 2010).

Good Talk: A Memoir in Conversations, by Mira Jacob (One World, 2019).

Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood, by Marjane Satrapi, translated from the French (Pantheon Graphic Library, 2004).

Poppies of Iraq, by Brigitte Findakly and Lewis Trondheim, translated from the French by Helge Dascher (Drawn and Quarterly, 2017).

Safe Area Gorazde: The War in Eastern Bosnia 1992-1995, by Joe Sacco (Fantagraphics Books, 2018).

Fiction

Contemporary & a hint of contemporary classic novels¹, science fiction/fantasy, graphic novels
A deepening understanding of the complexity of the human experience

America is Not the Heart: A Novel, by Elaine Castillo (Viking, 2018).

An American Marriage: A Novel, by Tayari Jones (Algonquin Books, 2018).

Americanah: A Novel, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Alfred A. Knopf, 2013).

Behold the Dreamers: A Novel, by Imbolo Mbue (New York: Random House, 2016).

¹ [What Is a Modern Classic?](#)

The Boat People: A Novel, by Sharon Bala (New York: Doubleday, 2018).

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time, by Mark Haddon (National Geographic Books, 2007).

Exit West: A Novel, by Mohsin Hamid (Penguin, 2018).

The Hate U Give, by Angie Thomas (Balzer + Bray, 2017).

Homegoing: A Novel, by Yaa Gyasi (Vintage, 2017). YA

House of Stone: A Novel, by Novuyo Rosa Tshuma (W. W. Norton & Company, 2019).

Housegirl: A Novel, by Michael Donkor (Picador, 2018).

The Invention of Wings: A Novel, by Sue Monk Kidd (Tinder Press, 2014).

Japanese Roses: A Novel of the Japanese American Internment, by Theresa Lorella (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013).

A Kind of Freedom: A Novel, by Margaret Wilkerson Sexton (Counterpoint, 2017).

The Kinship of Secrets, by Eugenia Kim (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

Long Live the Tribe of Fatherless Girls: A Memoir, by T Kira Madden (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2019).

The Map of Salt and Stars: A Novel, by Jennifer Zeynab Joukhadar (Touchstone, 2018).

Patsy: A Novel, by Nicole Dennis-Benn (Liveright, 2019). Release: June 2019

The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales, by Virginia Hamilton (Knopf Books for Young Readers, 1993).²

Piecing Me Together, by Renée Watson (Bloomsbury, 2018). YA

A Place for Us: A Novel, by Fatima Farheen Mirza (SJP for Hogarth, 2018).

Push: A Novel, by Sapphire (Random House, 1996).

Pushing the Bear, by Diane Glancy (Mariner Books, 1998).

² This book is a retelling of 24 black American folk tales originating in slavery. I am including it although it is not a full-length book, because the stories of these communities were related through oral tradition.

Small Country: A Novel, by Gaël Faye (Hogarth, 2018).

Their Eyes Were Watching God: A Novel, by Zora Neale Hurston (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2006; originally published in 1937).

There There: A novel, by Tommy Orange (Knopf; 2018).

The Underground Railroad: A Novel, by Colson Whitehead (Doubleday, 2016).

The Unpassing: A Novel, by Chia-Chia Lin (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

The Wall: A Novel, by John Lanchester (W. W. Norton & Company, 2019)

They Could Have Named Her Anything: A Novel, by Stephanie Jimenez (Little A, 2019).
Release: August 2019

We Need New Names: A Novel, by NoViolet Bulawayo (Hachette UK, 2013).

When the Emperor Was Divine: A Novel, by Julie Otsuka (Anchor, 2003).

Sci-Fi, Cli-Fi* & Fantasy

*Cli-Fi: Climate Fiction (takes on what might happen to our planet due to global warming)

American War: A Novel by Omar El Akkad (Vintage, 2018). [Cli-Fi]

Ancillary Justice, by Ann Leckie (New York: Orbit, 2013).

Children of Blood and Bone (Legacy of Orisha), by Tomi Adeyemi (Square Fish, 2019).

Clade, by James Bradley (Titan Books, 2017). [Cli-Fi]

Dealing in Dreams, by Lilliam Rivera (Simon & Schuster Books, 2019). Release: March 2019

The Dispossessed, by Ursula K. LeGuin (New York: Perennial Classics, 2003).

Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars: A Dangerous Trans Girl's Confabulous Memoir, by Kai Cheng Thom (Metonymy Press, 2016). YA

The Fifth Season: Every Age Must Come to an End, by N.K. Jemisin (Orbit, 2015).

Iron Council, by China Miéville (Del Rey/Ballantine Books, 2004).

Kindred, by Octavia Butler (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).

Lunar Braceros, by Rosaura Sanchez and Beatrice Pita (Calaca Press, 2009).

The Memory Police: A Novel, by Yoko Ogawa, translated from the Japanese by Stephen Snyder (Pantheon, 2019). Release: August 2019

Midnight Robber, by Nalo Hopkinson (Warner Books, 2000).

The Necessary Beggar, by Susan Palwick (Tor, 2005).

Parable of the Sower, by Octavia E. Butler (Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993).

Trail of Lightning (The Sixth World), by Rebecca Roanhorse (Saga Press, 2018). [Cli-Fi]

An Unkindness of Ghosts, by Rivers Solomon (Akashic Books, 2017).

We Cast a Shadow: A Novel, by Maurice Carlos Ruffin (One World, 2019).

Who Fears Death, by Nnedi Okorafor (Daw Books, Inc., 2010).

Wild Seed, by Octavia Butler (Doubleday, 1980).

Graphic Novels

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Aya: Love in Yop City (Volume 2), by Marguerite Abouet and Clément Oubrerie, translated from the French by Helge Dascher (Drawn and Quarterly, 2013).

Kindred: A Graphic Novel Adaptation, by Damian Duffy, John Jennings, Nnedi Okorafor, and Octavia E. Butler (Abrams ComicArts, 2017).

Notes for a War Story, by Gipi and translated from the Italian by Spectrum (First Second, 2007).

Pride of Baghdad, by Brian K. Vaughan and Niko Henrichon (Vertigo, 2008).

7 Generations: A Plains Cree Saga, by David A. Robertson, author, and Scott Henderson, illustrator (HighWater Press, 2012).

On a Sunbeam, by Tillie Walden (First Second, 2018). YA

The Strange, by Jérôme Ruillier and translated from the French by Helge Dascher (Drawn and Quarterly, 2018).

I Am Alfonso Jones, by Tony Medina, author, Stacey Robinson, illustrator, and John Jennings, illustrator (Tu Books, 2017). YA

Zahra's Paradise by Khalil, author, and Amir, illustrator, both anonymous (First Second, 2011).

Social Analysis

Historical, research, policy, and community-based analyses

Issues, activism, and visions for social change

Alice Walker: A Woman for Our Times, by Deborah G. Plant (ABC-CLIO, 2017).

Arctic Dreams, by Barry Lopez (Vintage, 2014).

Barbara Jordan: Speaking the Truth with Eloquent Thunder, by Barbara Jordan (University of Texas Press, 2007).

Becoming Ms. Burton: From Prison to Recovery to Leading the Fight for Incarcerated Women, by Cari Lynn and Susan Burton (The New Press, 2017).

Beyoncé in Formation: Remixing Black Feminism, by Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley (University of Texas Press, 2018).

The Body Is Not an Apology: The Power of Radical Self-Love, by Sonya Renee Taylor (Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018).

Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice, by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2018).

The Class Ceiling: Why It Pays To Be Privileged, by Sam Friedman and Daniel Laurison (Policy Press, 2019).

A Disability History of the United States (ReVisioning American History), by Kim E. Nielsen (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012).

Dispossession and the Environment: Rhetoric and Inequality in Papua New Guinea, by Paige West (Columbia University Press, 2016).

Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds, by Adrienne M. Brown (Ak Press, 2017).

Erotic Islands: Art and Activism in the Queer Caribbean, by Lyndon K. Gill (Duke University Press Books, 2018).

Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation, by Eli Clare (Duke University Press, 2015).

Extraordinary Bodies: Figuring Physical Disability in American Culture and Literature, by Rosemarie Garland Thomson (Columbia University Press, 2017).

For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood... and the Rest of Y'all too: Reality Pedagogy and Urban Education, by Christopher Emdin (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016).

A Hard Rain: America in the 1960s, Our Decade of Hope, Possibility, and Innocence Lost, by Frye Gaillard (NewSouth Books, 2018). [704 pages]

The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present, by David Treuer (Riverhead Books, 2019).

Horizon, by Barry Lopez (Knopf, March, 2019).

I Put a Spell on You: The Autobiography of Nina Simone, by Nina Simone (Philips, 2006).

Incarceration Nations: A Journey to Justice in Prisons Around the World, by Baz Dreisinger (Other Press, 2017).

Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption, by Bryan Stevenson (Spiegel & Grau, 2014).

Kids at Work: Lewis Hine and the Crusade Against Child Labor, by Russell Freedman (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1994).

Lakota Woman, by Mary Crow Dog (Grove Press, 1990).

The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail, by Jason De Leon (University of California Press, 2015).

The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State, by Nadia Murad (Tim Duggan Books, 2017)

Leadership in Turbulent Times, by Doris Kearns Goodwin (Simon & Schuster, 2018).

Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present, by Harriet A. Washington (Doubleday Books, 2006).

Mountains Beyond Mountains: A Quest of Dr. Paul Farmer, A Man Who Would Cure the World, by Tracy Kidder (Random House, 2003).

No More Culturally Irrelevant Teaching (Not This but That), by Mariana Souto-Manning, Carmen I. Lugo Llerena, Jessica Martell, Abigail Salas Maguire, and Alicia Arce-Boardman (Heinemann, 2018).

Normal Life: Administrative Violence, Critical Trans Politics, and the Limits of Law, by Dean Spade (Duke University Press, 2015).

Notorious RBG: The Life and Times of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, by Carmon Irin, Shana Knizhnik, and Kathleen Krull (Dey Street Books, 2015).

On the Other Side of Freedom: The Case for Hope, by DeRay Mckesson (Viking, 2018).

Refugees in Extended Exile: Living on the Edge, by Jennifer Hyndman and Wenona Giles (Routledge, 2016).

Small Pox: The Death of a Disease (Vol. 237), by D.A. Henderson. (Prometheus Books, 2009).

Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis, by Vandana Shiva (South End Press, 2008).

Spoken Soul: The Story of Black English, by John Russell Rickford (Wiley, 2000).

Under the Sea-Wind, by Rachel Carson (Penguin Classics, 2007; originally published in 1941).

Until We Are Free: My Fight for Human Rights in Iran, by Shirin Ebadi (Random House, 2016).

We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: Inner Light in a Time of Darkness by Alice Walker (The New Press: 2007).

Weapons of Math Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threatens Democracy, by Cathy O'Neil (Broadway Books, 2017).

When They Call You a Terrorist. A Black Lives Matter Memoir by Patrisse Khan-Cullors (St. Martin's Press, 2018).

Working: Researching, Interviewing, Writing, by Robert A. Caro (Knopf (2019).