

Lead a book study on race and/or issues of racial justice

Books are an important tool for exploring topics of race and racial justice, as well as highlighting the voices of those most impacted. Particularly in predominantly white rural areas, where minority voices may be unheard, or non existent, it is especially important to bring these voices and experiences into the room. Here are some suggestions to get started.

Books that highlight the voice and experience of racial minorities in America

***Black Americans**

Just Mercy by Bryan Stevenson

This book explores the ongoing racism and injustice that affects black americans in the united states - particularly in the legal system. Stevenson tells his own personal story of founding the Equal Justice Initiative in Alabama and his journey to represent African American's who have been wrongly convicted or wrongly sentenced. *This book deals with the death penalty

Between the World and Me by T. Coates

This book is a letter from a black father to his black son. It provides a clear and powerful narrative of one black man's experience growing up in America. While this book provides an accurate portrayal of racism in America, we would not recommend this book as a starting place for conversations on race as it deals with complex topics and experiences.

***Mexican Americans**

Just Like Us: The True Story of Four Mexican Girls Coming of Age in America by Helen Thorpe

This book chronicles the journey of four Mexican teenage girls in Denver CO, two of which have legal status and two of which do not. This book explores the obstacles these girls face not only legally, but personally, as their immigration status shapes the outcomes of their futures.

*Refugees

Human Cargo: A Journey Among Refugees by Caroline Moorehead

This book provides a journalist's perspective of the conditions and situations from which refugees flee and tells the stories of various refugees throughout the world.

*Islam

Burqas, Baseball, and Apple Pie: Being Muslim in America by Ranya Tabari Idliby

This book tells the story of a Muslim American family and their struggle to be seen as both fully Muslim and fully American. This book explores and explains basic tenets of Islam, common misconceptions, and struggles within the religion itself. This book is a great text for beginning a conversation about Islam and the experience of Muslim in America, as well as naming the complexity and tensions this identity faces in our current context.

Books on Whiteness and White Privilege

Whiteness and white privilege can be difficult topics to discuss. These books provide frameworks for such discussions from both a personal, theological and scholarly perspective.

Waking up White: Finding myself in the story of race by Debby Irving

This book is a wonderful entry point into the conversation of what it means to be white in America. Told from her own perspective, this book gently guides white individuals into deeper awareness of their own race and towards a better understanding of the experiences and challenges non-white persons face Simply due to the color of their skin. We recommend this book as one of the first books white people should read when “waking up” to their racial privilege. It is a really good starting point for having these conversations.

America's Original Sin by Jim Wallis

This is a powerful book for Christian Americans. Grounded in a well formulated Christian theology, this book provides a distinctly Christian perspective on race relations in the United States. In this book Wallis does not shy away from naming the “sins” of racism, nor does he leave much room to question these statements. Because of this, we would recommend this book as a follow up book to either Walking Up White or Just Mercy.

