

# BURBANK --- READS

# Reading List



October 2020

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The theme of the 2020 edition of Burbank Reads is racial equity, one of the most pressing issues in our society today. Over the past 400 years, since the first enslaved Africans were brought to the shores what is now the United States, this country has struggled with the legacy of slavery and subsequent decisions that have perpetuated inequities that disproportionately affect people of color. But Black life in America is not just about struggle. Through the titles selected by Burbank Public Library staff, you can find an introduction to – or a new perspective on – Black history, Black stories and the Black experience. Reading, listening and watching fiction or nonfiction can be one of the most powerful ways to understand that we’re all human. We’re all trying to get through our days, help our families thrive and live with dignity. Maybe you’ll find a bit of yourself in one of these stories. Maybe you’ll learn to see things from another perspective. Maybe you’ll find food for thought or be inspired. Whatever the result, we invite you to join in the conversation.

**“Sometimes you can do everything right and things will still go wrong. The key is to never stop doing right.”**

- Angie Thomas  
author, *The Hate U Give*

## Documentary Films

### **The Black Panthers: Vanguard of the Revolution\*\***

Director: Stanley Nelson

This documentary tells the rise and fall of the Black Panther Party, one of the 20th century’s most alluring and controversial organizations that captivated the world’s attention for nearly 50 years.

### **Central Park Five\*\***

Director: Ken & Sarah Burns

A documentary that examines the 1989 case of five Black and Latino teenagers who were wrongfully convicted of raping a white woman in Central Park. After having spent up to 13 years each in prison, a serial rapist confessed to the crime.

### **Good Hair\*\***

Director: Jeff Stilson

Producer Chris Rock focuses on the issue of how African-American women have perceived their hair and historically styled it. The film explores the current styling industry for Black women, images of what is considered acceptable and desirable for Black women’s hair in the United States, and its relation to African-American culture.

### **I Am Not Your Negro\*\***

Director: Raoul Peck

Prominent writer and activist James Baldwin tells the story of race in modern America with his unfinished novel, *Remember This House*.

### **Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am\*\***

Director: Timothy Greenfield-Sanders

This documentary offers an artful and intimate meditation on the legendary African-American storyteller examines her life, her works and the powerful themes she has confronted throughout her literary career.



## Feature Films

- **Black KKKlansman** (2018)
- **Get Out** (2017)
- **Love & Basketball** (2000)
- **Queen & Slim** (2019)
- **42** (2013)



## “Rise up and say, I am somebody”

- *Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*  
*minister and civil rights leader*

During a time of racial divide, this moment offers us the opportunity to take a deep look within ourselves and ask, what do we want for this country? How did we get here and how do we move forward? We need to learn why things are the way they are and we also need to unlearn things if we want to make our communities better.

This booklist contains a selected list of films, novels, essays, biographies, memoirs, and other nonfiction works about the Black experience in American history that will provide perspective, history and analysis of race in America.

## Adult Fiction

### **Go Tell It to the Mountain**

by James Baldwin

Baldwin's semi-autobiographical story of John Grimes, an intelligent teenager in 1930s Harlem, and his relationship to his family and his church. The novel also reveals the back stories of John's mother, his biological father, and his violent, religious fanatic stepfather, Gabriel Grimes. The story focuses on the role of the Pentecostal Church in the lives of African-Americans, as a negative source of repression and moral hypocrisy and also as a positive source of inspiration and community.

### **The Vanishing Half\***

by Brit Bennett

Twin girls grow up in the 1960s in a Louisiana town settled by light-skinned former enslaved people who have their own prejudices about skin color. Able to pass as white, the sisters choose different life paths that have multi-generational repercussions in this novel that highlights the reality of race being a social construct rather than a true genetic expression of difference.

### **The Gone Dead\***

by Chanelle Benz

A young woman returns to her childhood home in the American South after 30 years and uncovers secrets about her father, a renowned black poet who died unexpectedly when she was four years old.

### **Homegoing**

by Yaa Gyasi

This novel follows eight generations of a family, from life at the onset of colonialism in Ghana through the centuries as some descendants are enslaved and taken to the United States while others remain in Africa. The legacies of slavery—for those captured and those living in its shadows—are explored as successive generations live through major events from the Civil War to the Jazz Age.

### **Deacon King Kong\***

by James McBride

In September 1969, a fumbling, cranky old church deacon known as Sportcoat shuffles into the courtyard of the Cause Houses housing project in south Brooklyn, pulls a .38 from his pocket, and in front of everybody shoots the project's drug dealer at point-blank range. McBride focuses on the people affected by the shooting: the victim, the African-American and Latinx residents who witnessed it, the white neighbors, the local cops assigned to investigate, the members of the Five Ends Baptist Church where Sportcoat was deacon, the neighborhood's Italian mobsters, and Sportcoat himself.

### **The Bluest Eye**

by Toni Morrison

Pecola Breedlove, a young black girl, prays every day for beauty. Mocked by other children for the dark skin, curly hair, and brown eyes that set her apart, she yearns for normalcy, for the blond hair and blue eyes that she believes will allow her to finally fit in.

### **We Cast a Shadow**

by Maurice Carlos Ruffin

Ruffin offers a satire of surviving racism in America and a profoundly moving family story about a father who just wants his biracial son, Nigel, to thrive in a broken world plagued by fenced-in ghettos and police violence.

# Adult Nonfiction

## Across That Bridge: Life Lessons and a Vision for Change

by John Lewis

Congressman John Lewis draws from his experience as a prominent leader of the Civil Rights Movement to offer timeless wisdom, poignant recollections, and powerful principles for anyone interested in challenging injustices and inspiring real change toward a freer, more peaceful society. Lewis passed away in 2020.

## Between The World and Me

by Ta-Nehisi Coates

The renowned journalist and writer pens a profound letter to his son about what it means to be Black in 21st century America—a place in which you struggle to overcome the historical trauma of your people while trying to find your own purpose in the world.

## A Black Women's History of the United States

by Daina Ramey Berry

Historians Daina Ramey Berry and Kali Nicole Gross offer an examination and celebration of Black womanhood, beginning with the first African women who arrived in what became the United States to African American women of today. The result is a starting point for exploring Black women's history and a testament to the beauty, richness, rhythm, tragedy, heartbreak, rage, and enduring love that abounds in the spirit of Black women in communities throughout the nation.

## Conversations in Black: On Power, Politics, and Leadership

by Ed Gordon

Veteran Journalist Ed Gordon brings together some of the most prominent voices in Black America today, including Stacey Abrams, Harry Belafonte, Charlamagne tha God, Michael Eric Dyson, Alicia Garza, Jemele Hill, Iyanla VanZant, Eric Holder, Killer Mike, Angela Rye, Al Sharpton, T.I., and Maxine Waters, and so many more to answer questions about vital topics affecting our nation today. He sets out to clarify what black power and excellence really look like—and shows everyone the way forward into a new age of prosperity and pride.

## Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul

by Eddie Glaude Jr.

Part manifesto, part history, part memoir, this book argues that we live in a country founded on a “value gap”—with white lives valued more than others—that still distorts our politics today. Whether discussing why all Americans have racial habits that reinforce inequality, why Black politics based on the Civil Rights era have reached a dead end, or why only remaking democracy from the ground up can bring real change, Glaude crystallizes the untenable position of Black America—and offers thoughts on a better way forward.

## Podcasts - available on all podcast streaming platforms



### Silence Is Not An Option with Don Lemon

America is in crisis right now. A lot of people want to help, but have no idea where to start. This podcast digs deep into the reality of being Black and Brown in America, and explore what you can do to help to find a path forward.

Produced by CNN



### Somebody

When Shapearl Wells' son Courtney Copeland is found outside a Chicago police station with a fatal bullet wound, she immediately distrusts the official narrative. Wells launches her own investigation to confront the police and find the truth about Courtney's death.

Produced by  
iHeart Radio & The Intercept



### 1619

*New York Times* investigative reporter Nikole Hannah-Jones examines the long shadow of American slavery, connecting past and present through the oldest form of storytelling.

Produced by  
*The New York Times*

## **The Fire Next Time**

by James Baldwin

A powerful evocation of writer James Baldwin's early life in Harlem and a disturbing examination of the consequences of racial injustice. The book is an intensely personal and provocative document written on the occasion of the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation that exhorts Americans, both Black and White, to attack the terrible legacy of racism.

## **From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation**

by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

Activist and scholar Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor surveys the historical and contemporary ravages of racism and persistence of structural inequality such as mass incarceration and Black unemployment. Taylor argues that this new struggle against police violence holds the potential to reignite a broader push for Black liberation.

## **Here for it: Or How to Save Your Soul in America\***

by R. Eric Thomas

In essays by turns hysterical and heartfelt, Thomas reexamines what it means to be an “other” through the lens of his own life experience. *Here for It* will resonate deeply and joyfully with everyone who has ever felt pushed to the margins, struggled with self-acceptance, or wished to shine more brightly in a dark world.

## **Hollywood Black: The Stars, the Films, the Filmmakers**

by Donald Bogle

A sweeping overview of African Americans in film from the silent era through Black Panther, with striking photos and an engrossing history by award-winning author Donald Bogle.

## **The New Jim Crow\*\***

by Michelle Alexander

Alexander explains how the mass incarceration of Black people in the United States is today's version of the Jim Crow era.

## **So You Want to Talk About Race\***

by Ijeoma Oluo

In this practical, conversational book, Oluo—an award-winning writer and speaker on race—provides concrete explanations of terms from microaggression to intersectionality. She offers stories and statistics to support the urgency of all Americans engaging in conversations about race, no matter how difficult they may be. Oluo makes this hard work accessible.

## **The Undiscovered Paul Robeson: Artist's Journey, 1898-1939**

by Paul Robeson Jr.

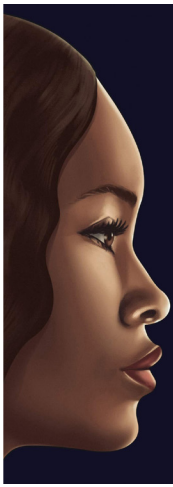
The story of the rise of the legendary actor, singer, scholar, and activist. This biography reveals the depth of Robeson's cultural scholarship, explores the contradictions he bridged in his personal and political life, and describes his emergence as a symbol of the anticolonial and antifascist struggles.

## **Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement**

by John Lewis

Congressman John Lewis traces his role in the pivotal Selma marches, Bloody Sunday, and the Freedom Rides. Inspired by his mentor, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Lewis's vision and perseverance altered history. Lewis passed away in 2020.





**“The way to  
right wrongs  
is to turn  
the light of truth  
upon them.”**

*- Ida B. Wells  
civil rights activist  
and journalist*

## Teen Fiction

### **All American Boys\***

by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely

Two teens—one Black, one white—grapple with the repercussions of a single violent act that leaves their school, their community, and the country bitterly divided by racial tension.

### **Black Enough:**

### **Stories of Being Young & Black in America\***

Edited by Ibi Zoboi

Black Enough is an essential collection of stories about what it's like to be young and Black in America.

### **The Black Flamingo**

by Dean Atta

Michael is a mixed-race gay teen growing up in London, not sure where he belongs until he discovers the Drag Society—and the Black Flamingo is born.

### **Dear Martin\***

by Nic Stone

Despite leaving his rough neighborhood behind, Justyce can't escape the scorn of his former peers or the ridicule of his new classmates. He looks to the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for answers.

### **How It Went Down\***

by Kekla Magoon

One death. Two bullets. Seven eyewitnesses—with seven different stories.

### **Let Me Hear a Rhyme\***

by Tiffany D. Jackson

The story of three Brooklyn teens who plot to turn their murdered friend into a major rap star by pretending he's still alive.

### **The Poet X\***

by Elizabeth Acevedo

Dominican-American Xiomara Batista finds her voice in her school's slam poetry club.

### **This Side of Home**

by Renée Watson

As their Portland neighborhood changes, Maya feels her connection to her twin sister Nikki and their gentrifying community slipping away. Does growing up have to mean growing apart?

### **Slay**

by Brittany Morris

Kiera Johnson fights to save the secret multiplayer online game for Black players she created, the only place she feels she can be herself.

### **A Song Below Water\***

by Bethany C. Morrow

A captivating modern fantasy about Black sirens, friendship, and self-discovery set against the challenges of today's racism and sexism.

## Teen Graphic Novels

### **March\*\***

By John Lewis

March is a vivid first-hand account of John Lewis' lifelong struggle for civil and human rights, meditating in the modern age on the distance traveled since the days of Jim Crow and segregation.

### **The Silence of Our Friends**

by Mark Long

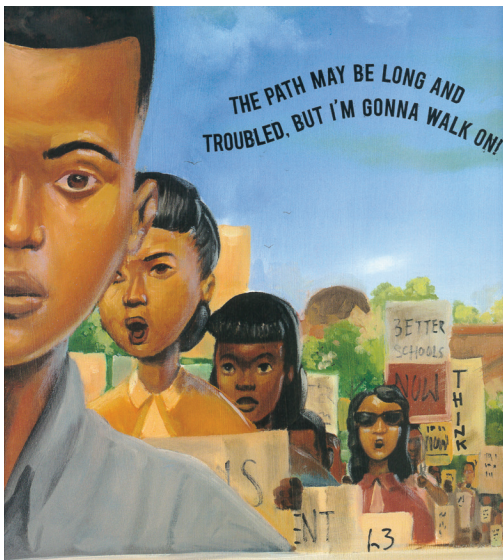
A white family from a notoriously racist neighborhood in the suburbs and a black family from Houston's poorest ward overcome humiliation, degradation, and violence to win the freedom of five black college students unjustly charged with the murder of a policeman.

## Teen Nonfiction

### **Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You\***

by Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi

This reimagining of Dr. Ibram X. Kendi's *Stamped from the Beginning* reveals the history of racist ideas in America, and inspires hope for an antiracist future.



**“Anyone can change the world, no matter how small you are.”**

- Mari Copeny  
child activist

## Picture Books & Easy Readers

**Crown: An Ode to the Fresh Cut\*\***

by Derrick D. Barnes

**I, Too, Am America**

by Langston Hughes

**Let the Children March\*\***

by Monica Clark-Robinson

**A Day at the Museum\*\***

by Christine Platt  
(easy reader)

**Sulwe\***

by Lupita Nyong'o

**Hair Love\***

by Matthew Cherry

**The Undeclared\***

by Kwame Alexander

**Hands Up!**

by Breanna J. McDaniel

**We Came to America**

by Faith Ringgold

**Hey Black Child**

by Useni Eugene Perkins

**We March**

by Shane Evans

**I Am Enough\*\***

by Grace Byers



## Children's Nonfiction

**Can I Touch Your Hair? Poems of Race, Mistakes, and Friendship\*\***

by Irene Latham and Charles Waters

**Not My Idea: A Book About Whiteness\*\***

by Anastasia Higginbotham

**Let's Talk About Race**

by Julius Lester

**Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down**

by Andrea Davis Pinkney

**Little Readers: Bold Women in Black History\***

by Vashti Harrison

**Someday Is Now**

by Olugbemisola Rhuday-Perkovich

**Malcolm Little: The Boy Who Grew Up to Become Malcolm X**

by Ilyasah Shabazz

**28 Days: Moments in Black History That Changed the World**

by Charles R. Smith, Jr.



# Children's Fiction & Graphic Novels

**Armstrong & Charlie\*\***  
by Steven Frank

**Black Brother, Black Brother**  
by Jewell Parker Rhodes

**Blended\***  
by Sharon M. Draper

**The Blossoming Universe  
of Violet Diamond**  
by Brenda Woods

**Clean Getaway**  
by Nic Stone

**Finding Langston\*\***  
by Lesa Cline-Ransome

**From the Desk  
of Zoe Washington\*\***  
by Janae Marks

**Genesis Begins Again\***  
by Alicia Williams

**Ghost Boys\***  
by Jewell Parker Rhodes

**A Good Kind of Trouble\*\***  
by Karen English

**It All Comes Down to This\*\***  
by Lisa Moore Ramée

**New Kid\***  
by Jerry Craft

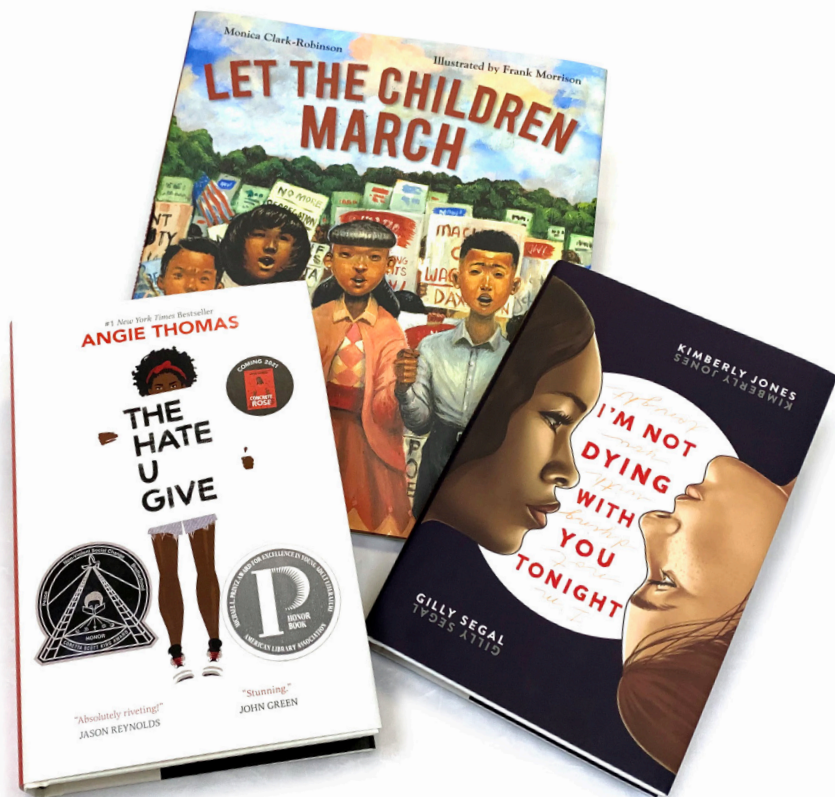
**One Crazy Summer\***  
by Rita Williams-Garcia

**The Only Black Girls  
in Town**  
by Brandy Colbert

**Some Places  
More Than Others\***  
by Renée Watson

**Unbound\*\***  
by Ann E. Burg

Available on: \* Libby app (OverDrive) \*\* hoopla app \* Both



Book discussions,  
workshops, and  
special programs  
are scheduled  
throughout the  
month of October.



**BURBANK  
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