

Diversity in Architecture: Resource List

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American Organizations:

Minnesota Freedom Fund

The Minnesota Freedom Fund pays criminal bail and immigration bond for those who cannot afford to as we seek to end discriminatory, coercive, and oppressive jailing.

Campaign Zero

Organization that utilizes research-based policy solutions to end police brutality in the U.S.

Reclaim the Block

“We believe health, safety, and resiliency exist without police of any kind. We organize around policies that strengthen community-led safety initiatives and reduce reliance on police departments.”

Across Boundaries

"Across Boundaries provides a dynamic range of mental health support and services and works within Anti-Racism/Anti-Black racism and Anti-Oppression frameworks. These frameworks address the negative impact of racism and discrimination on mental health and well-being."

Canadian organizations

Black Lives Matter Canada

An organization committed "To forge critical connections and to work in solidarity with black communities, black-centric networks, solidarity movements, and allies in order to to dismantle all forms of state-sanctioned oppression, violence, and brutality committed against African, Caribbean, and Black cis, queer, trans, and disabled populations in Toronto."

Toronto Protestor Bail Fund

Ontario Black Legal Action Centre

"A non-profit community legal clinic that provides free legal services for low or no income Black residents of Ontario."

Ontario Black Legal Action Centre

The Black Health Alliance is a community-led registered charity working to improve the health and well-being of Black communities in Canada. Building on our track record as an effective mobilizer and champion, we continue to grow our movement for change. Driven by groundbreaking research, strong partnerships, and people, this movement continues to build innovative solutions to improve Black health and well-being, and mobilize people and financial resources to create lasting change in the lives of Black children, families and communities.

Federation of Black Canadians

The Federation of Black Canadians is a national, non-profit organization, driven by organizations across the country that advances the social, economic, political and cultural interests of Canadians of African descent.

- Community Building - Strengthening collaboration by building local hubs, regional coalitions, and national advocacy platforms
- Higher Education - Promoting excellence and eliminating systemic barriers to success in schools and classrooms
- Total Health - Developing a national action plan to improve the health and well being of Black Canadians
- Economic Security - Increasing economic security needed to improve standards of living now and in the foreseeable future
- Reduce Racism - Reducing anti-black racism to build a stronger foundation for our youth, families and communities

- Criminal Justice Reform -Addressing the impact of anti- black racism in the criminal justice system

Black Women In Motion

“Black Women in Motion is a Toronto-based, youth-led organization that empowers and supports the advancement of black womxn and survivors of sexual violence. We work within an anti-racist, intersectional feminist, trauma-informed and survivor-centred framework to create culturally-relevant content, educational tools, healing spaces and economic opportunities for black womxn.”

Black Youth Helpline (TO)

416-285-9944 / 1-833-294-8650

Theory:

Aggregate – Black Lives Matter

A collection of short essays that put Black lives at the center of our thinking about architecture and its history.

Black Skin, White Masks

By Frantz Fanon

Personal accounts and historical precedents describing insidious colonial exploitation using a psychiatric perspective.

Dark Space: Architecture, Representation, Black Identity

This collection of essays by architect Mario Gooden investigates the construction of African American identity and representation through the medium of architecture. These five texts move between history, theory, and criticism to explore a discourse of critical spatial practice engaged in the constant reshaping of the African Diaspora. African American cultural institutions designed and constructed in recent years often rely on cultural stereotypes, metaphors, and clichés to communicate significance, demonstrating "Africanisms" through form and symbolism—but there is a far richer and more complex heritage to be explored.

Designs for the Pluriverse:

Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds

By Arturo Escobar

In *Designs for the Pluriverse* Arturo Escobar presents a new vision of design theory and practice aimed at channeling design's world-making capacity toward ways of being and doing that are deeply attuned to justice and the Earth. Noting that most design—from consumer goods and digital technologies to built environments—currently serves capitalist ends, Escobar argues for the development of an "autonomous design" that eschews commercial and modernizing aims in favor of more collaborative and place-based approaches. Such design attends to questions of environment, experience, and politics while focusing on the production of human experience based on the radical interdependence of all beings. Mapping autonomous design's principles to the history of decolonial efforts of indigenous and Afro-descended people in Latin America, Escobar shows how refiguring current design practices could lead to the creation of more just and sustainable social orders.

Decolonization is not a metaphor

By: Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang

This article discusses the colonization of indigenous peoples in North America. It argues that when decolonization is used as a metaphor used in educational advocacy and scholarship, it actually furthers settler colonialism. This is largely in part because it reconciles settler guilt and complicity. In reality, settler colonialism is built upon an entangled triad structure of settler-native-slave. This article explores settler moves towards innocence and discusses ways to create more meaningful alliances.

Discourse on Colonialism

By Aimé Césaire

Essay analyzing colonialism from the perspective of Césaire, a Martiniquais poet and politician

In the Wake: on Blackness and Being

By Christina Sharpe

"In this original and trenchant work, Christina Sharpe interrogates literary, visual, cinematic, and quotidian representations of Black life that comprise what she calls the 'orthography of the wake.'"

Map to the Door of No Return

By Dionne Brand

An exploration of identity in a hyper-diverse world that is constantly altering.

Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums

Mabel O. Wilson

In this book, she asks "what does it mean for black Americans to claim a physical space in the nation's symbolic cultural landscape and a symbolic space in the nation's historical consciousness, two spheres in which their presence and contributions have been calculatingly rendered invisible and abject for over two centuries?" Focusing on black Americans' participation in world's fairs, Emancipation expositions, and early black grassroots museums, Negro Building traces the evolution of black public history from the Civil War through the civil rights movement of the 1960s.

Sister Outsider

By Audre Lorde

Collection of essays relating to Lorde's identity as a queer black woman.

Sites of memory: Perspectives on Architecture and Race

These essays explore the historic and contemporary effects of race upon the development of the built environment, and examine the myths and realities of America's racial landscapes. Its multi-disciplinary approach identifies and interprets the black cultural landscape, examining its visual, spatial, and ideological dimensions. (Part of 3A modernism class readings)

Subdivided: City-building in an Age of Hyper-diversity

Edited by Jay Pitter & John Lorinc

Collection of essays: "Greater Toronto is now home to a larger proportion of foreign-born residents than any other major global metropolis. Not surprisingly, city officials rarely miss an opportunity to tout the region's ethno-cultural neighbourhoods. Yet there's strong evidence that the GTA is experiencing widening socio-economic disparities that have produced worrisome divisions. We say that 'diversity is our strength,' but has a feel-good catchphrase prevented us from confronting the forces that seem to be separating and isolating urban communities?"

The Cultural Politics of Emotion

By Sara Ahmed (non-Black)

An analysis of the relationships between three elements: emotions, language, and bodies.

The Color of Law

By Richard Rothstein

Richard Rothstein argues with exacting precision and fascinating insight how segregation in America—the incessant kind that continues to dog our major cities and has contributed to so much recent social strife—is the byproduct of explicit government policies at the local, state, and federal levels.

The Intimacy of Four Continents

By Lisa Lowell

Analysis of relations between Afro-Eurasia and the Americas that touches on the interrelated nature of colonialism, slavery, and trade during the 18th-19th centuries.

The Undercommons

By Fred Moten

A celebration of black radical traditions and all of their subsequent influence.

The Wretched of the Earth

By Frantz Fanon

Psychiatric analysis of colonial exploits and their subsequent dehumanization.

Women, Race and Class

By Angela Y. Davis

Study of the exclusionary character in the women's liberation movement, largely due to biases related to race and class.

General Non-Fiction:

Freedom is a Constant Struggle

By Angela Y. Davis

"Activist, teacher, author and icon of the Black Power movement Angela Davis talks Ferguson, Palestine, and prison abolition."

Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present

By Robyn Maynard

A detailed overview of the violent policing that racialized communities in Canada face.

The Black Prairie Archives

By Karina Vernon

"The Black Prairie Archives: An Anthology recovers a new regional archive of "black prairie" literature, and includes writing that ranges from work by nineteenth-century black fur traders and pioneers"

There's Something in the Water

By Ingrid Waldron

A case study of Nova Scotia that reveals the insidious slow violence of environmental racism in black and indigenous communities in North America.

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard For White People To Talk About Racism

by Robin DiAngelo

Anti-racist educator Robin DiAngelo discusses the phenomenon of white fragility and the defenses that white people put up when faced with issues of race. She talks about how anger, fear and guilt often turn into silence, breaking down any beneficial cross-racial dialogue.

Memoirs + Biographies:

Between the World and Me

By Ta-Nehisi Coates

Coates' powerful letter to his teenage son following the killing of Michael Brown in 2014. The memoir touches on his childhood in Baltimore, his college years at Howard University, and reflections on fathering his child in New York.

No Name in the Street

By James Baldwin

Autobiographical narration of historical events and personal experience in both France and America.

The Autobiography of Malcolm X

As told to Alex Haley

Autobiography co-written based on Haley's interviews with Malcolm X, a leading black activist in 1960's America who was assassinated.

The Beautiful Struggle

By Ta-Nehisi Coates

Coates reminisces the intricacies of growing up in Baltimore.

The Hanging of Angelique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal

by Afua Cooper

Marie-Joseph Angélique was a 29-year-old enslaved Black Portugal-born woman. She maintained her innocence but was found guilty of starting a fire that burned down 46 buildings in Montreal in 1734. This book is also a detailed account of slavery in Canada. Cooper places Canada in the larger context of transatlantic slavery and disproves the myth that Canada has no history of slavery.

The Skin We're In: A Year of Black Resistance and Power

By Desmond Cole

A key text for activists and policy influencers regarding racial perspectives. Desmond Cole first gained popularity due to his cover story for Toronto Life in 2015 about his own experiences with the Toronto police force's racist practice of carding. Cole divides the book into chapters dealing with different issues such as immigration and Toronto Pride, often referring to the links between Black and Indigenous struggles. I can't describe better than the blurb what this book does: "Punctur[e] the bubble of Canadian smugness and naive assumptions of a post-racial nation."

Zami: A New Spelling of my Name

A biomythography by Audre Lorde

An ode to powerful women of colour in Lorde's life combining elements of biographical prose, historical analysis, and mythology.

Novels:

“After Empire: Chinua Achebe and the great African novel”

From The New Yorker

Achebe recounts this anecdote in “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s ‘Heart of Darkness’ ” (1977). Examining Conrad’s descriptions of the “savages,” Achebe shows that the novel, far from subverting imperialist constructions, falls victim to them. Marlow, the story’s narrator, describes the Africans as “not inhuman,” and continues, “Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman.” And yet the blacks in the novel are nameless and faceless, their language barely more than grunts; they are assumed to be cannibals. The only explanation for this, Achebe concludes, is “obvious racism.” In contrast to European modernism, with its embrace of “art for art’s sake” (a concept that Achebe, with characteristic bluntness, once called “just another piece of deodorized dog shit”), Achebe has always advocated a socially and politically motivated literature. Since literature was complicit in colonialism, he says, let it also work to exorcise the ghosts of colonialism. “Literature is not a luxury for us. It is a life and death affair because we are fashioning a new man,” he declared in a 1980 interview.

Binti

By Nnedi Okorafor

Afrofuturist novel that follows Binti, the first woman of Himba ethnicity on Earth.

Black Writers Matter

Collection Ed. Whitney French

Anthology of African-Canadian writings.

Frying Plantain

By Zalika Reid-Benta

“Kara Davis is a girl caught in the middle — of her Canadian nationality and her desire to be a ‘true’ Jamaican, of her mother and grandmother’s rages and life lessons, of having to avoid being thought of as too ‘faas’ or too ‘quiet’ or too ‘bold’ or too “soft.” Set in “Little Jamaica,” Toronto’s Eglinton West neighbourhood...”

Go Tell It on the Mountain

By James Baldwin

Semi-autobiographical novel based in 1930’s Harlem.

Kindred

Octavia E. Butler

Slave narratives through the lens of a woman in 1970’s LA with the capacity to time travel.

Invisible Man

By Ralph Ellison

Novella outlining the challenges of the African-American community in the early 20th century.

Monoceros

By Suzette Mayr

A teenage boy hangs himself.

NW

By Zadie Smith

A celebration and reflection of North-West London through fictional narratives.

Our Lady of Perpetual Realness

By Cason Sharpe

LGBTQIA narratives set in Montreal and Toronto dealing with race.

Things Fall Apart

By Chinua Achebe

Its story chronicles pre-colonial life in the southeastern part of Nigeria and the arrival of Europeans during the late 19th century. It is seen as the archetypal modern African novel in English, and one of the first to receive global critical acclaim.

The Bluest Eye

By Toni Morrison

The story of a young dark-skinned woman overtaken by the desire to achieve eurocentric standards of beauty.

The Book of Negroes

By Lawrence Hill

Historical novel that follows the life of Aminata Diallo. The narrative follows her childhood in West Africa, her life on a slave plantation, and her eventual escape from Manhattan to Nova Scotia during the Revolutionary War. It also touches on her relocation to Freetown, Sierra Leone, and her elderly years working with abolitionists in London.

The Inheritance Trilogy

By N.K. Jemisin

Series of fantasy novels that focus on racial tensions.

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Its story chronicles pre-colonial life in the southeastern part of Nigeria and the arrival of Europeans during the late 19th century. It is seen as the archetypal modern African novel in English, and one of the first to receive global critical acclaim.

White Teeth

By Zadie Smith

Novel depicting the friendship between two veterans and their multi-racial families in London.

Journalism / Blogs:

20+ Allyship Actions for Asians to Show Up for the Black Community Right Now

By Michelle Kim

Michelle Kim discusses the oppression against the Black community that not only White people contribute to, but Asians too. She writes about how Asians have assimilated to White culture, their desire to fit in and therefore “have adopted the language and beliefs of White Supremacy and anti-Blackness”. Pushing us to take action, she gives a list of 20 actions we can take towards allyship with links to other resources.

6 Ways Asian Americans Can Tackle Anti-Black Racism in Their Families

By Kim Tran

Starting the conversation particularly in asian-american families

Cole's Notes (Blog)

By Desmond Cole

“Desmond Cole is an activist, freelance journalist, and author of the new bestselling book ‘The Skin We’re In: A year of Black Resistance and Power’.”

Don't Call the Police, Call Your Neighbors!

by GLORIA OLADIPO

This article gives the hard truth that the police do not keep communities safe. It gives a detailed account of stories and stats proving this and shares steps encouraging people to contact members of your local community before contacting the police.

Death and the Final Girl

By Faith Paré

Reflection on watching John Carpenter's 1978 masterpiece Halloween.

“My mother made it clear: who would listen for a Black girl's scream?”

Sk8 or Die: Careful Recklessness as Resistance

By Trynne Delaney

Personal account of skating as a means of empowerment in queer communities of colour.

We Were Eight Years in Power

By Ta-Nehisi Coates

A collection of articles written by Coates for the Atlantic during the Obama presidency.

Workbooks

Me and White Supremacy Workbook

By Layla F. Saad

Poetry:

Black Movie

Danez Smith

"These harrowing poems make montage, make mirrors, make elegiac biopic, make 'dope ass trailer with a hundred black children / smiling into the camera & the last shot is the wide mouth of a pistol.' That's no spoiler alert, but rather, Smith's way-saying & laying it beautifully bare. A way of desensitizing the reader from his own defenses each time this long, *Black Movie* repeats."

Family Affair

Faith Arkorful

Emerging black Canadian poet.

Homie

Danez Smith

"Homie is Danez Smith's magnificent anthem about the saving grace of friendship. Rooted in the loss of one of Smith's close friends, this book comes out of the search for joy and intimacy within a nation where both can seem scarce and getting scarcer. In poems of rare power and generosity, Smith acknowledges that in a country overrun by violence, xenophobia, and disparity, and in a body defined by race, queerness, and diagnosis, it can be hard to survive, even harder to remember reasons for living..."

Live from the Afrikan Resistance!

El Jones

Black spoken word poet and activist based in Nova Scotia.

Magical Negro

Morgan Parker

On the experiences of black women in America.

No Language is Neutral

By Dionne Brand

Intersectional explorations by a queer black woman.

Surface Area

Terese Mason Pierre

Emerging black Canadian poet.

Women Do This Every Day

Lillian Allen

Tributes to women of colour.

Your Silence Will Not Protect You

Audre Lorde

Posthumous collection of Lorde's work.

Zong

By M. Nourbese Philip

“In November, 1781, the captain of the slave ship Zong ordered that some 150 Africans be murdered by drowning so that the ship’s owners could collect insurance monies.”

Graphic Novels / Comic Series:

Black Panther: A Nation Under our Feet

By Ta-Nehisi Coates

Basquiat: A Graphic Novel

Illustrated by Paolo Parisi

Documentaries:

13th

Directed by Ava DuVernay

A deep dive into America's system of mass incarceration.

There's Something in the Water

Directed by Ellen Page and Ian Daniel

Documentary inspired by Ingrid Waldron's book exploring environmental racism in Nova Scotia.

The Pruitt-Igoe Myth

The documentary argues that the violent social collapse within the Pruitt-Igoe complex was not due to the demographic composition of its residents,[2] but was a result of wider, external social forces, namely the declining economic fortunes of St. Louis, the resulting impact upon employment opportunities, and the project's failure to meet occupancy projections from the start and therefore to meet monthly income projected to cover maintenance costs. The film illustrates how conclusions are dangerously and erroneously drawn when powerful interests control debate.

The Skin We're In

Directed by Desmond Cole

Film based on the acclaimed black activist book by the same name.

Unchained Memories: Readings from the Slave Narratives

Directed by Ed Bell and Thomas Lennon

Oral retelling of interviews with former American slaves in the 1930's.

Movies:

Atlantics

Directed by Mati Diop
Afrofuturist drama based in Dakar.

Black Panther

Directed by Ryan Coogler
Afrofuturist blockbuster superhero movie based in Wakanda, a fictional African country with significant accumulated wealth and advanced technology due to protected reserves of vibranium.

Boyz in the Hood

John Singleton
A cautionary tale of boyhood in an LA ghetto.

Daughters of the Dust

Directed by Julie Dash
“Three generations of Gullah women belonging to the Peazant family who live on St. Helena Island in South Carolina decide to migrate to the North.”

Do the Right Thing

Directed by Spike Lee
Racial tensions flare in Bedford-Stuyvesant due to a controversial photo in a local pizzeria.

Get Out

Directed by Jordan Peele
Horror movie following an interracial couple visiting the white family of the girlfriend.

Rafiki

Directed by Wanuri Kahiu
Romance based in Nairobi.

Us

Directed by Jordan Peele

Podcasts:

Black Power Hour

prod. CKDU

Exactly what the title suggests <3

Ear Hustle

prod. Earlonne Woods

Firsthand accounts of incarcerated men at San Quentin State Penitentiary

Diaspora Babes

Diaspora Babes

“...a podcast for queers of color on maintaining your creative practice and engaging art, community, and liberation.”

The Nod

prod. Gimlet Media

All things black culture.