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### [Angela Davis - Are Prisons Obsolete?](#)

With her characteristic brilliance, grace and radical audacity, Angela Y. Davis has put the case for the latest abolition movement in American life: the abolition of the prison. As she quite correctly notes, American life is replete with abolition movements, and when they were engaged in these struggles, their chances of success seemed almost unthinkable. For generations of Americans, the abolition of slavery was sheerest illusion. Similarly, the entrenched system of racial segregation seemed to last forever, and generations lived in the midst of the practice, with few predicting its passage from custom. The brutal, exploitative (dare one say lucrative?) convict-lease system that succeeded formal slavery reaped millions to southern jurisdictions (and untold miseries for tens of thousands of men, and women). Few predicted its passing from the American penal landscape. Davis expertly argues how social movements transformed these social, political and cultural institutions, and made such practices untenable. In *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, Professor Davis seeks to illustrate that the time for the prison is approaching an end. She argues forthrightly for "decarceration", and argues for the transformation of the society as a whole.

### [Frantz Fanon - The Wretched of the Earth](#)

*The Wretched of the Earth* is a brilliant analysis of the psychology of the colonized and their path to liberation. Bearing singular insight into the rage and frustration of colonized peoples, and the role of violence in effecting historical change, the book incisively attacks the twin perils of post-independence colonial politics: the disenfranchisement of the masses by the elites on the one hand, and intertribal and interfaith animosities on the other. Fanon's analysis, a veritable handbook of social reorganization for leaders of emerging nations, has been reflected all too clearly in the corruption and violence that has plagued present-day Africa. *The Wretched of the Earth* has had a major impact on civil rights, anticolonialism, and black consciousness movements around the world, and this bold new translation by Richard Philcox reaffirms it as a landmark.

### [Stefano Harney & Fred Moten - The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study](#)

In this series of essays Fred Moten and Stefano Harney draw on the theory and practice of the black radical tradition as it supports, inspires, and extends contemporary social and political thought and aesthetic critique. Today the general wealth of social life finds itself confronted by mutations in the mechanisms of control, from the proliferation of capitalist logistics through governance by credit and management of pedagogy. Working from and within the social poesis of life in the undercommons Moten and Harney develop and expand an array of concepts: study, debt, surround, planning, and the shipped. On the fugitive path of an historical and global blackness, the essays in this volume unsettle and invite the reader to the self-organised ensembles of social life that are launched every day and every night amid the general antagonism of the undercommons.

### [Adrienne Maree Brown - Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds](#)

Inspired by Octavia Butler's explorations of our human relationship to change, *Emergent Strategy* is radical self-help, society-help, and planet-help designed to shape the futures we want to live. Change is constant. The world is in a continual state of flux. It is a stream of ever-mutating, emergent patterns. Rather than steel ourselves against such change, this book invites us to feel, map, assess, and learn from the swirling patterns around us in order to better understand and influence them as they happen. This is a resolutely materialist "spirituality" based equally on science and science fiction, a visionary incantation to transform that which ultimately transforms us.

### [Toni Morrison - Beloved](#)

Winner of the Pulitzer Prize, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* is a spellbinding and dazzlingly innovative portrait of a woman haunted by the past.

Sethe was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free. She has borne the unthinkable and not gone mad, yet she is still held captive by memories of Sweet Home, the beautiful farm where so many hideous things happened. Meanwhile Sethe's house has long been troubled by the angry, destructive ghost of her baby, who died nameless and whose tombstone is engraved with a single word: *Beloved*.

Sethe works at beating back the past, but it makes itself heard and felt incessantly in her memory and in the lives of those around her. When a mysterious teenage girl arrives, calling herself *Beloved*, Sethe's terrible secret explodes into the present.

Combining the visionary power of legend with the unassailable truth of history, Morrison's unforgettable novel is one of the great and enduring works of American literature.

### [Audre Lorde - Zami, Sister Outsider & Undersong](#)

'*Zami*' combines biography, mythology, and history as it records Lorde's experiences as a West Indian in America and the growth of her emotional and sexual resonance with women. *Zami* grows up, goes to high school and college in New York City, and looks for women like herself. Ultimately she discovers *Afrekete*, a kindred spirit whose passion and will match her own. She must learn to deal with racism, sexism, and opposition to her lesbian identity, but she has the spirit to retain her individuality.

Lorde tackles the complexities of her multiple identities in '*Sister Outsider*' (1984). It includes essays such as "Poetry Is Not a Luxury," in which she declares that poetry is "a vital necessity of our existence."

Published just months before her death, '*Undersong: Chosen Poems Old and New*' (1992) covers 30 years of Lorde's poetry. Here, Lorde demonstrates her mastery of the love poem, but she writes with equal passion and eloquence about everything from a conversation to her identity as a black woman.

### [Patricia Hill Collins - Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment](#)

In spite of the double burden of racial and gender discrimination, African-American women have developed a rich intellectual tradition that is not widely known. In *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Hill Collins explores the words and ideas of Black feminist intellectuals as well as those African-American women outside academe. She provides an interpretive framework for the work of such prominent Black feminist thinkers as Angela Davis, bell hooks, Alice Walker, and Audre Lorde. The result is a superbly crafted book that provides the first synthetic overview of Black feminist thought.

### [James Baldwin - The Fire Next Time](#)

A national bestseller when it first appeared in 1963, *The Fire Next Time* galvanized the nation and gave passionate voice to the emerging civil rights movement. At once a powerful evocation of 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. It consists of two "letters," written on the occasion of the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, that exhort Americans, both black and white, to attack the terrible legacy of racism. Described by *The New York Times Book Review* as "sermon, ultimatum, confession, deposition, testament, and chronicle...all presented in searing, brilliant prose," *The Fire Next Time* stands as a classic of our literature.

### [Paulo Freire - Pedagogy of the Oppressed](#)

First published in Portuguese in 1968, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was translated and published in English in 1970. The methodology of the late Paulo Freire has helped to empower countless impoverished and illiterate people throughout the world. Freire's work has taken on especial urgency in the United States and Western Europe, where the creation of a permanent underclass among the underprivileged and minorities in cities and urban centers is increasingly accepted as the norm. With a substantive new introduction on Freire's life and the remarkable impact of this book by writer and Freire confidant and authority Donald Macedo, this anniversary edition of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* will inspire a new generation of educators, students, and general readers for years to come.

### [Octavia Butler - Parable of the Sower](#)

In 2025, with the world descending into madness and anarchy, one woman begins a fateful journey toward a better future.

Lauren Olamina and her family live in one of the only safe neighborhoods remaining on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Behind the walls of their defended enclave, Lauren's father, a preacher, and a handful of other citizens try to salvage what remains of a culture that has been destroyed by drugs, disease, war, and chronic water shortages. While her father tries to lead people on the righteous path, Lauren struggles with hyperempathy, a condition that makes her extraordinarily sensitive to the pain of others.

When fire destroys their compound, Lauren's family is killed and she is forced out into a world that is fraught with danger. With a handful of other refugees, Lauren must make her way north to safety, along the way conceiving a revolutionary idea that may mean salvation for all mankind.

### [Ruth Wilson Gilmore - Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California](#)

Since 1980, the number of people in U.S. prisons has increased more than 450%. Despite a crime rate that has been falling steadily for decades, California has led the way in this explosion, with what a state analyst called "the biggest prison building project in the history of the world." *Golden Gulag* provides the first detailed explanation for that buildup by looking at how political and economic forces, ranging from global to local, conjoined to produce the prison boom.

In an informed and impassioned account, Ruth Wilson Gilmore examines this issue through statewide, rural, and urban perspectives to explain how the expansion developed from surpluses of finance capital, labor, land, and state capacity. Detailing crises that hit California's economy with particular ferocity, she argues that defeats of radical struggles, weakening of labor, and shifting patterns of capital investment have been key conditions for prison growth. The results—a vast and expensive prison system, a huge number of incarcerated young people of color, and the increase in punitive justice such as the "three strikes" law—pose profound and troubling questions for the future of California, the United States, and the world. *Golden Gulag* provides a rich context for this complex dilemma, and at the same time challenges many cherished assumptions about who benefits and who suffers from the state's commitment to prison expansion.

### [Aimé Césaire, Joan Pinkham, Robin D.G. Kelley - Discourse on Colonialism. A Poetics of Anticolonialism.](#)

This classic work, first published in France in 1955, profoundly influenced the generation of scholars and activists at the forefront of liberation struggles in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Nearly twenty years later, when published for the first time in English, *Discourse on Colonialism* inspired a new generation engaged in the Civil Rights, Black Power, and anti-war movements and has sold more than 75,000 copies to date.

Aimé Césaire eloquently describes the brutal impact of capitalism and colonialism on both the colonizer and colonized, exposing the contradictions and hypocrisy implicit in western notions of "progress" and "civilization" upon encountering the "savage," "uncultured," or "primitive." Here, Césaire reaffirms African values, identity, and culture, and their relevance, reminding us that "the relationship between consciousness and reality are extremely complex. . . . It is equally necessary to decolonize our minds, our inner life, at the same time that we decolonize society"

### [Frantz Fanon - Black Skin, White Masks](#)

A major influence on civil rights, anti-colonial, and black consciousness movements around the world, *Black Skin, White Masks* is the unsurpassed study of the black psyche in a white world. Hailed for its scientific analysis and poetic grace when it was first published in 1952, the book remains a vital force today.

### [Assata \(Shakur\), An Autobiography](#)

On May 2, 1973, Black Panther Assata Shakur (aka JoAnne Chesimard) lay in a hospital, close to death, handcuffed to her bed, while local, state, and federal police attempted to question her about the shootout on the New Jersey Turnpike that had claimed the life of a white state trooper. Long a target of J. Edgar Hoover's campaign to defame, infiltrate, and criminalize Black nationalist organizations and their leaders, Shakur was incarcerated for four years prior to her conviction on flimsy evidence in 1977 as an accomplice to murder.

This intensely personal and political autobiography belies the fearsome image of JoAnne Chesimard long projected by the media and the state. With wit and candor, Assata Shakur recounts the experiences that led her to a life of activism and portrays the strengths, weaknesses, and eventual demise of Black and White revolutionary groups at the hand of government officials. The result is a signal contribution to the literature about growing up Black in America that has already taken its place alongside *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* and the works of Maya Angelou.

Two years after her conviction, Assata Shakur escaped from prison. She was given political asylum by Cuba, where she now resides.

### [Sylvia Wynter - Unsettling the Coloniality of Being / Power / Truth / Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation--An Argument](#)

aWynter explains that the West uses race to attempt to answer the questions of who and what we are—particularly after the enlightenment period that unveils religion as incapable of answering those questions.

### [Toni Morrison - Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination](#)

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Beloved* and *Jazz* now gives us a learned, stylish, and immensely persuasive work of literary criticism that promises to change the way we read American literature even as it opens a new chapter in the American dialogue on race.

Toni Morrison's brilliant discussions of the "Africanist" presence in the fiction of Poe, Melville, Cather, and Hemingway leads to a dramatic reappraisal of the essential characteristics of our literary tradition. She shows how much the themes of freedom and individualism, manhood and innocence, depended on the existence of a black population that was manifestly unfree--and that came to serve white authors as embodiments of their own fears and desires.

Written with the artistic vision that has earned Toni Morrison a pre-eminent place in modern letters, *Playing in the Dark* will be avidly read by Morrison admirers as well as by students, critics, and scholars of American literature.