

Talking to Kids About Racism and Justice: a list for parents, caregivers & educators

“Awake youth of the land and accept this noble challenge of salvaging the strong ship of civilization by the anchors of right, justice and love...” — Ella Baker



BOOKS

Babies & Toddlers

- ❖ **A is for Activist** by Innosanto Nagara (local author). Board book. Also available in Spanish.

K-2nd

- ❖ **Let's Talk About Race** by Julius Lester. Introduces concept of race as part of a person's story; Introduces the idea of prejudice based on skin color. Picture book for K-2.
- ❖ **Henry's Freedom Box** by Ellen Levine. Excellent book about a child's resistance to slavery.
- ❖ **Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down** by Andrea Davis Pinkney. Describes the sit-in by four college students at a Woolworth's counter in 1960. Picture book for K-2.
- ❖ **We March** by Shane Evans. Picture book about 1963 March on Washington. Preschool-Grade 2.
- ❖ **A Sweet Smell of Roses** by Angela Johnson; illus. by Eric Velasquez. A stirring yet jubilant glimpse of the invaluable contributions of youth in the Civil Rights movement. Ages 5-8.
- ❖ **Yours for justice, Ida B. Wells : the daring life of a crusading journalist** by Philip Dray
- ❖ **Dolores Huerta : a hero to migrant workers** by Sarah E. Warren ; illustrated by Robert Casilla

3rd-6th

- ❖ **Brown Girl Dreaming** by Jacqueline Woodson. Through poetry, Woodson shares her experience growing up African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Grade 4 & up.
- ❖ **Through My Eyes** by Ruby Bridges. Autobiography about the harrowing story of how Bridges integrated a public school in New Orleans when she was 6 years old. Grades 2-4.
- ❖ **One Crazy Summer** by Rita Williams-Garcia. Three sisters visit their mother, a Black Panther Party member, during a memorable summer in Oakland. Sequel *P.S. Be Eleven*. Grades 3 & up.

- ❖ **Freedom over me : eleven slaves, their lives and dreams brought to life** by Ashley Bryan. Uses primary sources (and poetry) to contrast the monetary value of a slave with the priceless value of life, dreams and dignity. Grades 4 & up. ***NEW**
- ❖ **Turning 15 on the road to freedom: my story of the 1965 Selma voting rights march** by Lynda Blackmon Lowery. The youngest person to complete the Selma to Montgomery March shares her involvement in historic Civil Rights events. Grades 4 & up. ***NEW**
- ❖ **Little Rock Nine** by Marshall Poe; illustrated by Ellen Lindner. Two boys in Little Rock get caught up in the struggle over public school integration. Grades 4 & up.
- ❖ **Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children and Don't You Grow Weary** by Elizabeth Partridge (local author). A photo essay focusing on the critical role that children and teens played in the success of the civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery. Grades 4 & up.
- ❖ **The Watsons Go to Birmingham** by Christopher Paul Curtis. The Watsons' lives are drastically changed after they visit Grandma in Birmingham in the summer of 1963. Grades 4 & up.
- ❖ **Revolution** by Deborah Wiles. Twelve-year-old Sunny evolves a growing sense of justice and empathy after "the invaders" arrive in her Mississippi town to integrate public facilities and register voters during "Freedom Summer." Grades 4 & up.
- ❖ **The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny and the Fight for Civil Rights** by Steve Sheinkin. The riveting local account of African American sailors who were charged with mutiny for refusing to work in unsafe conditions after a deadly explosion during World War II. Grades 4 & up.
- ❖ **The kid's guide to social action: how to solve the social problems you choose -- and turn creative thinking into positive action** by Barbara A. Lewis
- ❖ **Claudette Colvin: twice toward justice**. An excellent book parents and teachers can use to raise the question: Who gets to be a leader? Which Black lives matter, and who gets left out when we look for just one kind of hero? Grades 6 & up.
- ❖ **Black lives matter** by Sue Bradford Edwards and Duchess Harris. Grades 6 & up.
- ❖ **In the shadow of liberty: the hidden history of slavery, four presidents, and five black lives** by Kenneth C. Davis. Grades 6 & up. ***NEW**

7th & Up

- ❖ **From #BlackLivesMatter to Black liberation** by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor
- ❖ **All-American Boys** by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely
- ❖ **How it Went Down** by Kekla Magoon
- ❖ **March: books 1, 2 and 3** by John Lewis ; with Andrew Aydin; art by Nate Powell ***NEW**
- ❖ **A young people's history of the United States** by Howard Zinn
- ❖ **Police Brutality (opposing viewpoints series)** by Sheila Fitzgerald.
- ❖ **A Letter to My Nephew** by James Baldwin (1962). See also *The Fire Next Time*. Grades 9 & up.
- ❖ **Are Prisons Obsolete?** by Angela Davis. Grades 9 & up.

See also:

- ❖ **Canerow Book List**, titles featuring children of color as central characters in their own stories, curated by Bay Area mom, activist and author Mia Birdsong for children of color to see themselves and their histories reflected in literature.

- ❖ **#RaiseUpJustice Diverse Books Starter Kit** from Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)
- ❖ **The Zinn Education Project** teaching materials on racism, civil rights and other social issues.
- ❖ **Teaching for Change**. Resources by theme, including Racial Identity and Fairness and Activism.
- ❖ **Putting the Movement Back into Civil Rights Teaching**. Sample lesson plans and resources.
- ❖ **#WeNeedDiverseBooks** envisions a world where all children can see themselves in the pages of a book. Get involved with the #WeNeedDiverseBooks campaign by tweeting and contacting publishers. <http://diversebooks.org>

ARTICLES

- ❖ **Confederate Flag 2 - How to Talk to Small Children About Racism; Celebrating Bree Newsome**, a model for educational, age-appropriate storytelling by Aya de Leon.
- ❖ **Straight Talk on Race: Challenging the Stereotypes in Children's Books** by Mitali Perkins in *School Library Journal*
- ❖ **How To Teach Kids About Ferguson** by Marcia Chatelain in *The Atlantic* (contains resource list)
- ❖ **A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement** by Alicia Garza on *FeministWire.com*. Article for discussion with grades 7 & up.
- ❖ **Contemporary Police Brutality and Misconduct: A Continuation of the Legacy of Racial Violence** from the Black Radical Congress. Article for discussion with grades 7 & up.
- ❖ **Black Youth 100 - Agenda to Build Black Futures** includes numerous resources, solutions and reports for discussion with grades 7 & up.
- ❖ **How the Children of Birmingham Changed the Civil Rights Movement** in *The Daily Beast*.
- ❖ **These Teens and 20-Somethings are Organizing the Civil Rights Movement That Will Change Our Country** on *MTV.com*

PARENT and TEACHER PERSPECTIVES

- ❖ **Rest in power: the enduring life of Trayvon Martin** by Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin ***NEW**
- ❖ **The Rules: Making sense of race and privilege** by Lawrence Otis Graham in *Princeton Alumni Weekly*. A Black father shares the lessons and rules he hoped would protect his upper-class Black children, and how they failed.
- ❖ **A Mother's White Privilege** by Elizabeth Broadbent in the *Huffington Post*
- ❖ **Talk to Your Kids About Ferguson** by Bruce Reyes-Chow in the *Huffington Post*
- ❖ **Telling My Son About Ferguson** by Michelle Alexander, author of *The New Jim Crow*
- ❖ **What White Children Need to Know About Race** by Ali Michael and Eleonora Bartoli in *Independent School Magazine*.
- ❖ **Your Child and the Juvenile Justice System** by Lenore Anderson. For parents.

VIDEOS & MULTIMEDIA

- ❖ **Black Lives Matter Co-Creator on the New Civil Rights Movement**. Alicia Garza, co-founder of [#BlackLivesMatter](#), tells *AJ+* about the young Black activists leading a movement for change and what it is they are asking for (03:51 minutes). Grades 7 & up.
- ❖ **Cracking the Codes** dir. by Shakti Butler (film and discussion guide)
- ❖ **Teaching Ferguson in the Classroom** from PBS. Various videos for discussion.
- ❖ **Michelle Alexander: A System of Racial and Social Control** on PBS *Frontline*. Grades 7 & up.
- ❖ **Letter to the Local Police** by June Jordan. Use this poem as a conversation starter: Remove key identity words from the poem and ask students to fill in the blanks. Discuss how the poem could actually be about racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, or sexism.
- ❖ **The Knotted Line** by Evan Bissell. An interactive media project exploring the historical relationship between freedom and confinement in the United States. With miniature paintings of over 50 historical moments from 1495-2025. Includes [resources for educators](#).
- ❖ **For Teens: "Is Ferguson Like Mockingjay?"** from MTV Braless. (03:15 minutes, clip continues until 04:09 - Strong language in the unrelated segment starting at 03:16 mins). Grades 8 & up.

USEFUL WEBSITES & OTHER RESOURCES

- ❖ **Resources for Families** from SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice)
- ❖ **Raising Race Conscious Children** (blog)
- ❖ **Embrace Race** (newsletter), also on [facebook](#).
- ❖ **YWCA Stand Against Racism**
- ❖ **Teaching #BlackLivesMatters**, a guide from San Francisco Unified School District Guide
- ❖ **St. Louis School Librarian Offers LibGuide on Ferguson** from *School Library Journal*
- ❖ **The Children's Peace Education and Anti-Bias Library**
- ❖ **Teaching African American Literature and History** from the National Humanities Center
- ❖ **Teaching About Ferguson: Race and Racism in the United States** from *Teaching Tolerance*
- ❖ **Books to Increase Awareness of the Cycles of Poverty, Race and Incarceration** from *Reaching Reluctant Readers*, a blog by Amy Cheney.
- ❖ **The Other America, speech by Martin Luther King Jr.** Read what MLK actually said about riots, protest and racism in the weeks before he was assassinated in 1968.
- ❖ **In the Margins** booklists for youth in custody
- ❖ **Gale Opposing Viewpoints: Racial Profiling • Community Policing • Racism • Activism**

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