

P2PU Facilitator Guide: The 1619 Project

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Course Description: Created by Pulitzer-prize winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones and The New York Times magazine, the 1619 Project was launched as a special issue in August 2019, marking the 400th anniversary of when the first African slaves arrived in North America. This project reframes U.S. history through the lens of slavery, segregation, the Civil Rights movement and how the many contributions of Black Americans through our nation's history have influenced our lives today from popular culture to city infrastructure and more. In this learning circle, learners will have an opportunity to read and discuss many of the essays from the 1619 Project, as well as participate in a variety of activities which will challenge their perceptions of how they think about American History. To be able to participate in the class discussions and activities, readings of the essays (as assigned) will be required outside of class.

Format: In-person

Recommended Participant Capacity: 10-15

Course Duration: 5 Weeks

Meeting Length: 90 minutes

Structure: 2 readings per week for homework, In-class discussion of readings plus watch supplemental videos in class that relate to the topic(s) being discussed.

After each class session, the facilitator emails learners with assigned readings for next class, list of discussion questions for the readings, biographical information on the two essay writers of the articles they will be discussing, plus list of further reading relating to topics that were discussed during previous class.



To edit this guide, click "File" and select "Make a Copy". Our Knowledge Base has a number of resources to help you adapt the guide for your learning circle, including [an activity library](#), [standard group expectations](#), and [peer learning tips](#).

[Course Website](#)

[P2PU Resource Page](#)

[P2PU Knowledge Base](#)

Week 1

Set-Up (5 minutes)

- Introduce Facilitator and Learning Circle Structure
- Go over class expectations:
 - o Class will last about 90 minutes (class will start at 6:00, but if you arrive a little late, that's okay)
 - o Remember, I am a facilitator, not a teacher. I do not claim expertise in this subject, nor am I speaking for the lived experiences of BIPOC individuals. Although I am leading the discussion, I am learning with you.
 - o There will be 2 assigned readings between each class session. I will email these to you the beginning of each week so that you have the entire week to read them. Please try to read these before the next class so that you can follow the discussion.
 - o Please be respectful. You may not agree with others' opinions, or even the content of the readings, and that is okay. However, mean behavior will not be tolerated.
- Go over agenda for class session

Introductions (10 minutes)

- Participant Introductions/Icebreaker
 - o What do you hope to learn in this course?
 - o Tell us one thing about yourself that may surprise others

Listen & Discuss (65 minutes)

- Introduction to the 1619 Project
 - o Video: Nikole Hannah-Jones: Reframing the Legacy of Slavery with the 1619 Project – Daily Show with Trevor Noah

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cMOHvXHLNeM>

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- Go over conversation guidelines (used with permission from Stacy Turner, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library)
 - What you share within the context of the group is confidential, honored and respected.
 - Use “I” statements; no one speaks for another or for an entire group of people.
 - Avoid critiquing others’ experiences; focus on your own experiences.
 - Be honest and willing to share.
 - Listen with curiosity and the willingness to learn and change. Resist the desire to interrupt.
 - Be brief and share time equally.
 - Suspend judgment. Be open to the truth in each person’s story.
- Listen to Episode 1 of The 1619 Project Podcast
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBPtD_KtPdQ&t=1s
- Discussion Questions:
 - What reasons do you think Nikole's father continued to show pride in his country despite some of the barriers he faced through his life because of his race?
 - How do you think the founding fathers reconciled with the hypocrisy of establishing a new country based on the principles of individual freedom and liberty while maintaining the institution of slavery? Why do you think any mention of slavery was left out of the wording in the constitution?
 - Was there anything in this episode that contradicts what you were taught about this part of American history? How does this make you feel?
 - What impact of the 14th Amendment and the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s&60s do you still see today?

For Next Week (5 minutes)

- Assign readings for Week 2
 - “Capitalism” by Matthew Desmond
 - “Sugar” by Khalil Gibran Muhammad
- Facilitator emails link to 1619 Project PDF to participants from
<https://1619education.org/>

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- Alternatively, participants are welcome to pick up a copy of “The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story” by Nikole Hannah-Jones (2021). If library has a book set of this, it could also be made available for participants to check out for the class.

Reflection (5 minutes)

- What is something you learned today or something you enjoyed?
- What did you find challenging or difficult?

Additional Resources (emailed after class)

1619 Project Podcast:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/23/podcasts/1619-podcast.html>.

Matthew Desmond: <https://sociology.princeton.edu/people/matthew-desmond>

Khalil Gibran Muhammad: <https://www.hks.harvard.edu/faculty/khalil-muhammad>

Week 2

Meeting Agenda

- Discuss “Capitalism” by Matthew Desmond
- Watch supplemental videos by Learning for Justice
- Discuss “Sugar” by Khalil Gibran Muhammad
- Watch video interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad
- Assigned readings for next week
- Reflection

Welcome (5 minutes)

- Facilitator introduction and Learning Circle intro if there are new learners
- New Learner introductions
- Review of class expectations

Discuss Readings/Watch (75 minutes)

- Review conversation guidelines
- Discussion Questions: “Capitalism” by Matthew Desmond

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- o In the author's argument, what historical evidence do they present to show that the birth of capitalism in this country was rooted in slavery?
- o There is debate among some historians about the origins of modern American business practices originating from railroad companies of the 19th century versus slave plantations of the previous centuries. Do you agree with either assessment? Both? Neither? Could there be other explanations?
- o How did slavery impact the wages and lives of poor white workers and/or indentured servants? How may these inequities still be relevant to today?
- o What is the historical connection to the modern financial industry (particularly mortgages) and slavery? What does this history tell you about the legacy of capitalism today?
- o In the article, the author talks about the beginnings of the global markets in Europe and how many European investors were buying bank bonds that originated in the buying and selling of slaves, often without the investors' knowledge. How has this legacy continued with modern global trade practices?
- o What was the significance of The Panic of 1837? Why do some historians compare it to the financial crisis of 2008?
- Video: Historian Daina Ramey Berry talks about how enslaved people were commodified (Learning for Justice)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n58wc8lzR_k
- Video: Historian Adam Rothman talks about slavery and the colonial economy (Learning for Justice)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pm5jtTl4is>
- Discussion Questions: "Sugar" by Khalil Gibran Muhammad
 - o How does the sugar industry continue to negatively impact Black Americans in the present? What may be some reasons for this?
 - o How did life for enslaved persons differ on sugar plantations compared to the cotton and tobacco plantations further north?
 - o How does the romanticized version of the Antebellum South compare to the reality? How does sugar tie into the view of what many today view as "southern" culture?

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- o How is the Whitney Plantation Museum different from other plantation tourist places in the south? Why might some residents near this plantation claim they are "misrepresenting the past?"
- o What is significant about the Louisiana State Penitentiary? How is this connected to slavery?
- o How are racial inequities in present-day Louisiana sugar cane farms still reinforcing practices of the past? How is this reflective of other inequities occurring across the country?
- Video: Interview with Khalil Gibran Muhammad (PBS News Hour)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLzgD11RwEc>

For Next Week (5 minutes)

- Assign readings for week 3
 - o "Traffic" by Kevin M. Kruse
 - o "American Popular Music" by Wesley Morris

Reflection (5 minutes)

- What is something you learned today or something you enjoyed?
- What did you find challenging or difficult?

Additional Resources (emailed after class)

Further Reading

"Accounting for Slavery: Masters and Management" by Caitlin Rosenthal (pub. 2019)

"The Cooking Gene: A Journey Through African American Culinary History in the Old South" by Michael W. Twitty (pub. 2017)

"Empire of Cotton: A Global History" by Sven Beckert (pub. 2015)

"The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism" by Edward E. Baptist (pub. 2014)

"The Ledger and the Chain: How Domestic Slave Traders Shaped America" by Joshua D. Rothman (pub. 2021)

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"The Sugar Barons: Family, Corruption, Empire and War in the West Indies"
by Matthew Parker (pub. 2011)

"The Sugar Masters: Planters and Slaves in Louisiana's Cane World,
1820-1860" by Richard Follett (pub. 2007)

"The Thibodaux Massacre: Racial Violence and the 1887 Sugar Cane Labor
Strike" by John DeSantis (pub. 2016)

"Twelve Years a Slave" by Solomon Northup (pub. 1853)

Kevin M. Kruse: <https://history.princeton.edu/people/kevin-m-kruse>

Wesley Morris: <https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/wesley-morris-new-york-times>

Wesley Morris' Podcast "Still Processing"
<https://www.nytimes.com/column/still-processing-podcast>

Week 3

Meeting Agenda

- Video: Can a highway be racist?
- Discuss "Traffic" by Kevin M. Kruse
- Video: Blackface: A Cultural History of a Racist Art Form
- Discuss "American Popular Music" by Wesley Morris
- Assigned readings for next week
- Reflection

Welcome (5 minutes)

- Facilitator introduction and Learning Circle intro if there are new learners
- New Learner introductions
- Review of class expectations

Discuss Readings/Watch (75 minutes)

- Review conversation guidelines
- Video: Can a Highway Be Racist? (Byron Tang)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTuYj4Z6g28>

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- Discussion Questions: “Traffic” by Kevin M. Kruse
 - How have efforts to keep African Americans “in their place” manifested both socially and politically since the beginning of slavery in this country? How has it evolved over time and what are some examples that this is still going on?
 - What is “redlining?” How did it start? Although now outlawed, what are some examples of more subtle redlining practices that may still be occurring today? What are the possible consequences of this (particularly for black Americans)?
 - How were post-WWII urban renewal programs harmful to black Americans?
 - How is the interstate highway system tied to racial inequality? How does this continue to impact Americans today?
 - What does the author mean by “White Flight?” How does this compare to the “Great Migration?” (The Great Migration was not mentioned in the article, but there is more information [here](#)).
 - The article references that opposition to expanding the mass transit (MARTA) system in Atlanta from suburban whites was on racial grounds – thinking about mass transit in other major cities (or even in your own town/city), and the placement of routes, can you think of how mass transit can further impact racial inequality?
 - A recent buzzword in the conversation around structural inequality is gentrification. What is gentrification and how does it widen class/race divides? (This was also not mentioned in the article but is an adjacent topic – if you are unfamiliar with the term, [this article](#) is a nice overview)
- Video: Blackface: A Cultural History of a Racist Art Form (CBS Sunday Morning) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqID-eZm1ck>
- Discussion Questions: “American Popular Music” by Wesley Morris
 - Unlike other areas of life where there have often been intentional attempts at keeping things racially separated, how has music and other forms of popular culture become intertwined? Can you think of examples in music, film, dance, etc. where these lines are not so distinct? (For example, white musical artists that have been influenced by black artists and vice versa)

- o Why is improvisation such an important part of black popular music? What is the significance of this, both historically and the present, to the black American experience? How does this approach to music differ from how music has traditionally been approached by white Western musicians? What does this difference say about their experience?
- o What does the author mean by the “gentrification of black music?” Can you think of any examples of this? How might this be harmful, not just to black artists, but also to society as a whole?
- o What is the history behind minstrel shows? Where were they initially performed and by whom, and what was the appeal of these shows? How is this an example of an early melding of European and African musical styles that would later influence other styles of music?
- o How was slavery “sentimentalized” in some minstrel shows? Why do you think the white creators of these shows did this? How did the legacy of these shows possibly alter how Americans (white Americans in particular) perceived slavery and how enslaved people were treated?
- o Aside from the overt racism of minstrel shows, how were these shows harmful to black minstrel performers and black performers in general? How did this precedent affect black performers/entertainers going forward even to today? What happens when a black performer doesn’t fit the image that white audiences expect? What are some examples even today of what kind of image black entertainers are expected to present?
- o How was the rise of Motown Records an example of black performers fighting back against the legacy of the minstrel show and its portrayal of black people?
- o The author of the article mentions how popular the music and entertainment created by black people has been largely embraced by white people and has influenced many white artists and entertainers as well. In your opinion, how does this connect to the history of black and white relations in this country? Do you think this is a positive change?
- o What is the irony of the song “Old Town Road” by Lil Nas X (a black musical performer) being banned from some country music stations in

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the south? How does this song relate to the history of minstrel music?
(Link to the video [here](#)).

For Next Week (5 minutes)

- Assign readings for week 4
 - o "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie
 - o "Mass Incarceration" by Bryan Stevenson

Reflection (5 minutes)

- What is something you learned today or something you enjoyed?
- What did you find challenging or difficult?

Additional Resources (emailed after class)

Further Reading

"The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America" by Richard Rothstein (pub. 2018)

"Darkest America: Black Minstrelsy from Slavery to Hip-Hop" by Yuval Taylor and Jake Austen (pub. 2012)

"The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City" by Eric Avila (pub. 2014)

"How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality and the Fight for the Neighborhood" by Peter Moskowitz (pub. 2018)

"Lift Every Voice: The History of African American Music" by Burton W. Peretti (pub. 2009)

"A Little Devil in America: Notes in Praise of Black Performance" by Hanif Abdurraqib (pub. 2021)

"Paved a Way: Infrastructure, Policy and Racism in an American City" by Collin Yarbrough (pub. 2021)

"Shine Bright: A Very Personal History of Black Women in Pop" by Danyel Smith (pub. 2022)

"Souled American: How Black Music Transformed White Culture" by Kevin Phinney (pub. 2005)

"The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration" by Isabel Wilkerson (pub. 2011)

Jamelle Bouie: <https://www.nytimes.com/column/jamelle-bouie>

Bryan Stevenson: <https://eji.org/bryan-stevenson/>

Bryan Stevenson's NYU Law School Faculty Bio:

<https://its.law.nyu.edu/facultyprofiles/index.cfm?fuseaction=profile.biography&personid=20315>

Bryan Stevenson's Previous Ted Talks:

https://www.ted.com/speakers/bryan_stevenson

Week 4

Meeting Agenda

- Video: The Man Who Rigged America's Election Maps
- Discuss "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie
- Video: The Racist Origins of U.S. Law
- Discuss "Mass Incarceration" by Bryan Stevenson
- Assigned readings for next week
- Reflection

Welcome (5 minutes)

- Facilitator introduction and Learning Circle intro if there are new learners
- New Learner introductions
- Review of class expectations

Discuss Readings/Watch (75 minutes)

- Video: The Man Who Rigged America's Election Maps (Vox)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KpamjltXqFI>
- Discussion Questions: "Undemocratic Democracy" by Jamelle Bouie
 - What was unique about the Republican party during Barack Obama's presidency and how did this differ from traditional partisan attacks? How do you think this has affected partisan divides and the culture wars of today?

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- o Who belonged to the political class of Antebellum South Carolina? How was this an example of an undemocratic government? How are practices like these still reflected in the politics of today?
 - o Who was John C. Calhoun? How did he envision what a government should be? How were his views like those of the modern Republican party? How does his legacy live on in politics, particularly those of the American south?
 - o What was the turning point that led to the Republican party “flipping” from a progressive political party to a conservative one?
 - o What is gerrymandering? Who is most negatively affected by it and how?
 - o How does the modern political landscape tie into slavery and race? Do you think there is a connection? Why or why not?
- Video: The Racist Origins of U.S. Law (PBS Digital Studios)
<https://www.pbs.org/video/the-racist-origins-of-us-law-cn1fni/>
- Discussion Questions: “Mass Incarceration” by Bryan Stevenson
 - o How is the legacy of slavery continued today within the criminal justice system? How is the Louisiana State Penitentiary (“Angola”) a particularly brutal example of this?
 - o What were “black codes” and “convict leasing” during the Reconstruction era? What was the intent behind these laws? What are some examples today of laws that disproportionately target black people (or other people of color)?
 - o What is lynching and what was the motivation behind these crimes? Why were the victims the ones punished instead of the perpetrators?
 - o How is punishment, both within and outside the criminal justice system different for people of color versus white people? Particularly with youth, in both educational settings and through the juvenile justice system, how can these differences impact their future and what are the consequences of this (both on an individual level and as a society)?
 - o How do the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and countless others echo the legacy of slavery and lynching in this country?
 - o How does the media portrayal of organizations committed to black justice like Black Lives Matter (and in the past, the Black Panthers) differ from white supremacist organizations like The Proud Boys and

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the KKK? How do these differences impact how clashes between different groups of people are handled?

For Next Week (5 minutes)

- Assign readings for week 5
 - o "A Broken Health Care System" by Jeneen Interlandi
 - o "Medical Inequality" by Linda Villarosa

Reflection (5 minutes)

- What is something you learned today or something you enjoyed?
- What did you find challenging or difficult?

Additional Resources (emailed after class)

Further Reading

"Against Civility: Our Hidden Racism in Our Obsession with Civility" by Alex Zamalin

"America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s" by Elizabeth Hinton (publ. 2021)

"Chokehold: Policing Black Men" by Paul Butler (pub. 2017)

"The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump" by Alan Abramowitz (pub. 2018)

"The Ground Breaking: An American City and its Search for Justice" by Scott Ellsworth (pub. 2021)

"How America's Political Parties Change (And How They Don't)" by Michael Barone (pub. 2019)

"The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness" by Michelle Alexander (10th anniversary ed. Pub. 2020)

"Nobody: Casualties of America's War on the Vulnerable, From Ferguson to Flint and Beyond" by Marc Lamont Hill (pub. 2016)

"Profit and Punishment: How America Criminalizes the Poor in the Name of Justice" by Tony Messenger (pub. 2021)

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“The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together” by Heather McGhee (pub. 2021)

“White Evangelical Racism: The Politics of Morality in America” by Anthea D. Butler (pub. 2021)

“White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide” by Carol Anderson (pub. 2016)

Jeneen Interlandi: <https://pulitzercenter.org/people/jeneen-interlandi>

Linda Villarosa: <https://pulitzercenter.org/people/linda-villarosa>

Interviews with Linda Villarosa:

[Linda Villarosa on Race and Infant Mortality](#)

[Under the Skin: Racism as a Public Health Threat with Linda Villarosa](#) (this is about an hour long)

Additional Videos:

[Whitney Plantation museum confronts painful history of slavery](#)

[Why Americans are so divided over teaching critical race theory](#)

[How America's Legacy Of Racial Terror Still Affects Black Wealth](#)

[From white supremacy to Barack Obama: The history of the Democratic Party](#)

[How the Republican Party went from Lincoln to Trump](#)

Week 5

Meeting Agenda

- Video: Minority Health Disparities – Michelle's Story
- Discuss “A Broken Health Care System” by Jeneen Interlandi
- Video: The U.S. Medical System is Still Haunted by Slavery

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- Video: The Tuskegee Study
- Discuss “Medical Inequality by Linda Villarosa
- Final Reflection

Welcome (5 minutes)

- Facilitator introduction and Learning Circle intro if there are new learners
- New Learner introductions
- Review of class expectations

Discuss Readings/Watch (75 minutes)

- Video: Minority Health Disparities – Michelle's Story (Johns Hopkins Medicine)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlVZKZNXYBA>
- Discussion Questions: “A Broken Health Care System” by Jeneen Interlandi
 - o What were some of the reasons for the ambivalence on the part of white leaders doing anything about the health disparity between the white communities and the newly freed black communities following the end of the Civil War?
 - o As epidemics tore through black communities in the post-civil war years, what theory did the white leaders claim was the reason for the high death tolls among black people? Why was the federal government resistant to providing free assistance to them?
 - o Who was Rebecca Lee Crumpler? Why was she significant? Why do you think her name is not well-known in history texts?
 - o How did Southern Democrats in the post-reconstruction years manage to legally exclude black people from benefitting from federal programs such as many of the programs included in the New Deal such as Social Security and the G.I. Bill?
 - o What did black communities do in response to many of the medical inequities they experienced due to segregation policies that barred them from accessing quality health care? What were some of the organizations that were born out of these efforts and what did they do?
 - o Following the 1964 Civil Rights Act which outlawed segregation and discrimination of public places, including hospitals, how were black people still often unable to access health care?

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- o How did the Affordable Care Act of 2010 shrink some of these racial health care disparities and how have some state laws in more recent years impeded this progress?
- Video: The U.S. Medical System Is Still Haunted by Slavery (Vox)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lfYRzxeMdGs>
- Video: The Tuskegee Study (Black History in Two Minutes or So)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=afwK2CVpc9E>
- Discussion Questions: “Medical Inequality” by Linda Villarosa
 - o What were some of the false beliefs white doctors held about the physiological differences in black bodies and how were these beliefs used to support racist ideologies and discriminatory public policies?
 - o How did the widely believed misconception that black people had a higher tolerance for pain compared to white people impact how black people were treated by medical professionals? How does it continue to affect them today when seeking out medical care?
 - o Who was J. Marion Sims? What misconception led him to believe that it was appropriate to conduct his experiments on otherwise healthy women?
 - o Who was Samuel Cartwright? What condition did he believe caused slaves to attempt to flee enslavement and what was his recommended “treatment”?
 - o What is the spirometer? How is this an example of how racist beliefs about black bodies are still present in the medical community?
 - o What do racial disparities in health care, particularly pain management say about what myths about physiological differences based on race continue to be used to diagnose and treat black people? How is this harmful?

Final Reflection (5 minutes)

- What did you enjoy most about the class?
- Has your perception of the 1619 Project (and the controversy surrounding it) changed since starting this class? If yes, how so?

Additional Resources (emailed after class)

Further Reading

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“Black and Blue: The Origins and Consequences of Medical Racism” by John Hoberman (pub. 2012)

“Black Man in a White Coat: A Doctor’s Reflections on Race and Medicine” by Damon Tweedy (pub. 2015)

“Blood Sugar: Racial Pharmacology and Food Justice in Black America” Anthony Ryan Hatch (pub. 2016)

“The Death Gap: How Inequality Kills” by David Ansell

“The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks” by Rebecca Skloot (pub. 2010)

“Just Medicine: A Cure for Racial Inequality in American Health Care” by Dayna Bowen Matthew (pub. 2018)

“Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction and the Meaning of Liberty” by Dorothy Roberts (pub. 1998)

“Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present” by Harriet Washington (pub. 2008)

“Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology” by Deirdre Cooper Owens (pub. 2018)

“The Organ Thieves : the shocking story of the first heart transplant in the segregated South” by Chip Jones (pub. 2020)

“Reproductive Injustice: Racism, Pregnancy, and Premature Birth” by Dána-Ain Davis (pub. 2019)

“Sickening: Anti-Black Racism and Health Disparities in the United States” by Ann Pollock (pub. 2021)

Documentary: [Black Health Disparities Go Back To Slavery | Discovered Truth: Full Documentary](#)

Anti-Racist Reading List from Ibram X. Kendi

<https://chipublib.bibliocommons.com/list/share/204842963/1357692923>