



DETROIT
PUBLIC
LIBRARY

2021

AFRICAN AMERICAN BOOKLIST



AFRICAN AMERICAN THEATRE:
An Historical Review

2021 AFRICAN AMERICAN BOOKLIST

The Detroit Public Library has published its African American Booklist for more than 50 years. This bibliography provides a selected list of books by and/or about African Americans. The works of fiction and nonfiction for adults, children and young adults were reviewed and recommended by librarians of the Detroit Public Library.

The African American Booklist began as a way to commemorate Black History Month and since that time has continued to feature the accomplishments of African Americans in the literary world. Our booklist has become an annual tradition in the community and beyond, and continues to be a highly anticipated publication for book lovers all across the nation.

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BLACK NATIONAL ANTHEM

LIFT EV'RY VOICE AND SING

Lyrics by: James Weldon Johnson
(1871-1938)

Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us,
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chastening rod,
Felt in the days when hope unborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has been watered,
We have come, treading our path through the blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past,
Till now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand.
True to our God,
True to our native land.

FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



PHOTO CREDIT:
KATHRYN DOWGIEWICZ

It is our pleasure to provide you with the Detroit Public Library's 2021 African American Booklist, "African American Theatre: An Historical Review." Dr. Anthony D. Hill's essay provides an historical overview of African American theatre. Dr. Hill is professor emeritus of drama in the Department of Theatre at The Ohio State University. His academic work has been in the areas of African American and American theatre history, and also in performance theory and criticism.

Of course, we cannot share the history of African American theatre without mentioning the impact of people with ties to Detroit. From Cliff Frazier, Woodie King, Jr., and Dr. David Rambeau, who established Concept East Theatre in 1962, to the many actors, playwrights and directors also with strong connections to our community, the legacy is a rich one. For example, there is the genius of playwright and poet Bill Harris, a 2011 Kresge Eminent Artist. And, Detroit theatre lovers enjoyed the tremendous talents of the late actor Council Cargle, described as "an actor's actor," known for his powerful performances.

Contemporary theatre has been enriched by the work of Dominique Morisseau, a Tony-nominated playwright, who embraces her solid connections to Detroit and the Detroit Public Library. We are pleased to share with you a personal reflection about her by Marilyn G. McCormick, her drama teacher and director at Cass Technical High School. In 2016, Ms. McCormick was the recipient of the Tony Award for Excellence in Theatre Arts Education. Several of her former students have gone on to successful theatre careers.

The Detroit Public Library's E. Azalia Hackley Collection of African Americans in the Performing Arts is an outstanding resource for materials on music, drama and dance. The collection was a source for several colorful play/theater posters that we have included in this year's publication. Make an online visit to the Hackley's digital collections at www.detroitpubliclibrary.org/research/e-azalia-hackley-collection, to explore fascinating historical images of Black performers, directors and playwrights.

DPL's librarians have provided a listing of the best 2020 fiction and non-fiction for adults and children. In spite of the limitations of working during the COVID-19 pandemic, our librarians worked to identify titles that educate, entertain and enlighten. To our editing and design team, thank you for a job well done.

A scholar recently described our Booklists as a "hidden treasure: an exquisite example of documenting Black print culture in such a thoroughgoing way." I agree. We are proud of this work and its ongoing contribution to help every reader find the perfect book!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jo Anne G. Mondowney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Jo Anne G. Mondowney
Executive Director



DOMINIQUE MORISSEAU:

REPRESENTING THE “D”

WITH CREATIVITY AND EXCELLENCE

By Marilyn G. McCormick

An actor, writer, teaching artist and Tony-nominated book writer of “Ain’t Too Proud,” Dominique Morisseau is a Detroiter who early in life found an outlet for her voice and the voiceless. As a young 5-year-old girl she began dance lessons with her aunt. From there she entered the world of literature because her flame for theatre and writing was fanned by her parents who simultaneously read to and with her. Her father was a true activist and revolutionary way before there was a revolution. He literally struck the arts spark which Dominique embraced early on, even though most of her young friends did not. A self-declared “nerd,” her love for Black literature grew. Going to the Detroit Public Library was a welcomed routine for her throughout her youth. She would spend all day in the shelves – often drifting away from the children’s section and into the adult section, reading books where she discovered and further explored other worlds that existed. Worlds where magic could be conjured, she could touch it and become a part of it.

Dominique went on to fuse her hunger for reading and writing with her love for performing. By doing so, she became able to facilitate her own life journeys and enter the world of Performance Art. In the 8th grade her teacher, Willie Mae Gibson, gave her the Maya Angelou poem, “Still I Rise,” which Dominique eagerly performed repeatedly for various school events. She found even more fulfillment by doing so and by the 9th grade she came upon one of her favorite poems to this day, “The Tropics in New York” by Claude McKay. Black literature did something to her. She got it! With her teachers’ and parents’ guidance not only did she delve happily into dissecting works and finding various metaphors in them all, Dominique’s teachers affirmed her preordained dreams of being a performing artist. As a result, this served as an entry point for her into the world of playwriting and understanding

“The Detroit Public Library is a Mecca of Black culture.”
- Marilyn G. McCormick

MORISSEAU (con't)



self. During her years at Cass Technical High School, she actively participated in my acting classes and productions. She was introduced to writers like Alice Childress, George C. Wolfe, Ntozake Shange and others from her own cultural canon. Here she found out more about herself and value in the human experience. She came to truly appreciate the power of arts in education and declares to this day that she does not know where she would be now without them.

Detroit is her family. The Detroit Public Library is a Mecca of Black culture. Dominique was further shaped as a

Black woman, deep thinker and activist artist because she was given the opportunity to explore literary institutions for fun. Her university experience put somewhat of a damper on things and forced her to take steps that led to her writing “Blackness Blues,” a choreopoem. Reactions to this work solidified her belief in theatre as a means for social change. She had developed as a performer because of her literary connection to Cafe Mahogany and the poets there who taught her further about Detroit and the power of the arts. To this day Dominique shows her faith in the city by investing in community development. Keeping Detroit artists here and thriving, she has planted seeds and is bent on bringing art resources back and growing because “Detroit’s institutions and educators shaped my literary imagination.”



The cast of Purlie, Wayne State University Theatre Department, April 24, 1975. Credit: Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University.



Marilyn G. McCormick is a tireless advocate of theatre as a means of social change. Her 40-year career as a teacher and director in the Performing Arts Department at Cass Technical High School has allowed her to influence many performers and playwrights. She has received numerous awards including the Sankofa Award and the Michigan Educator Trailblazer Award. In 2016, Ms. McCormick was the recipient of the Tony Award for Excellence in Theatre Arts Education. Chosen from 1,100 nominees nationally, she is the second teacher to earn this award. Upon receiving this honor, she said, "I hope that what I teach kids is that you are enough. And if you are enough, no matter who enters the room or where you are, it's all right because you're enough."

Acclaimed playwright Dominique Morisseau has strong ties to the City of Detroit. She often notes that the Detroit Public Library was a place for her to explore the world and all of its possibilities. Her work "The Detroit Project," is a three-play cycle which includes *The Skeleton Crew*, *Paradise Blue* and *Detroit '67*. In 2019, she earned two Tony nominations for Best Musical and Best Book of a Musical for *Ain't Too Proud*. She is a 2018 MacArthur Fellow, frequently referred to as a "Genius Award Grant" that recognizes those who exhibit exceptional creativity and genius in their field. Ms. Morisseau is committed to working to ensure justice and equity in American Theatre. In 2020, she was named Executive Artistic Producer for the Detroit Public Theatre.

AFRICAN AMERICAN THEATRE:

An Historical Review

by Anthony D. Hill, PhD

INTRODUCTION

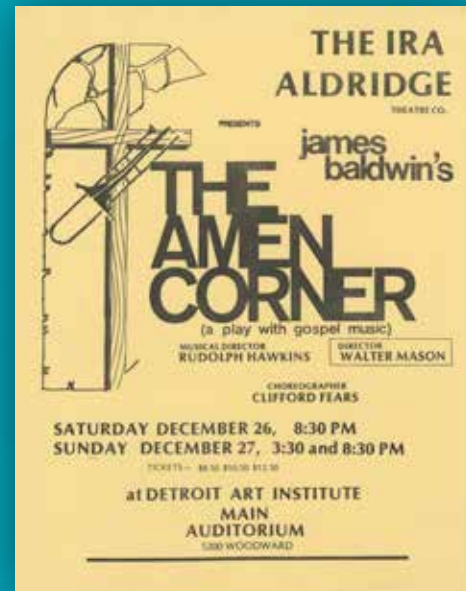
The history of African American theater is vibrant and unique, enriched by ancient Egyptian rituals, West African folklore and European theatrical practice that combine storytelling, mythology, rituals, music, song and dance with ancestor worship from prehistoric times to the present.

The Historical Dictionary of African American Theater, Second Edition (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), is a 699-page volume, highlighting aspects of Black theater. This essay condenses the book and focuses on three aspects of theater from the 1700s to the 21st century: general theater history in the United States, cities, communities, professional and amateur; on and off-Broadway (off-Broadway is New York City theater, not quite as prestigious as Broadway, mostly in Greenwich Village); and at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).

1700-1799

Theater in the U.S.

Blacks were brought to the United States and forced into involuntary servitude. From the motherland, they brought their own music, song, dance, native poetry, comedy, and even skits. During the Revolutionary War (1779-83), 10,000 Blacks, aided by abolitionists and freed slaves, fled from the South to New York seeking refuge after the British promised them freedom for fighting in the war. By 1799, Blacks were depicted in white melodramas, farces and minstrels as “fools,” “coons,” and “darkies.”



The Amen Corner

1800-1899

Theater in the U.S.

The advancement of Black theater during the 1800s took a few centuries to find its place in popular entertainment, yet is inextricably linked to the advancement of American theater. As attempts by Blacks to integrate were denied, they started their own theatrical traditions reflecting the pride they had in their own history and culture.

The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 freed 50,000 slaves; the House of Representatives passed the 13th Amendment to the Constitution abolishing slavery that gave Blacks the right to vote; and the Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves ended the slave trade. People were not only legally free, they were free to create in the areas of theater and other arts.

In the South after the Civil War (1860–65), Jim Crow laws were enforced mandating public schools, spaces, and transportation to have separate facilities for Blacks and whites.

Theater On/Off Broadway

In 1816, William Alexander Brown, at his home on the Lower West Side of Manhattan, offered guests from the five boroughs a mix of entertainment by local artists. Brown assembled a Black theater troupe in 1821 and founded the African Grove Theatre—the first Black theatre off Broadway. He mounted white classics ranging from Shakespeare to pantomime to farce, as well as wrote and staged *The Drama of King Shotaway* (1823), an historical drama based on the Black Carib War in St. Vincent in 1796 between both English and French settlers—a novelty for its time. The principal actors were James Hewlett (1778–1836), the first acknowledged Black Shakespearean actor, and a young teenager, Ira Aldridge (1807–65), who was later praised internationally.

In the late 1800s, traveling Black acts blackened their faces with burnt cork and joined minstrelsy, mostly propagated by whites, portraying demeaning images of Blacks. Minstrel shows became America's most popular form of entertainment. In a multipronged attack, Black theatrical pioneers, who set out to destroy this pattern, became Broadway performers. Composer Will Marion Cook and revered poet librettist Paul Laurence Dunbar's *Clorindy, or The Origin of the Cakewalk* (1898), a one-act musical, was the first all-Black musical. Jeff Shipp's *In Dahomey* (1903), a full-length all-Black musical comedy, showcased the superstar team of Bert Williams and George Walker in a love story—unheard of at that time.

THEATER (con't)

In Boston, Sam T. Jacks' *The Creole Show* featured Black women performers and singers in a musical revue.

Theater at HBCUs

Black colleges founded in the 1800s were Cheyney University in Pennsylvania, Lincoln University in Missouri, and Wilberforce University in Ohio. After Emancipation, Shaw University in North Carolina, Howard University in Washington D. C., and Xavier University in Louisiana (founded by the Catholics) followed. Mostly Protestant groups ran the Black colleges for nearly 100 years such as Knoxville (Tennessee) College by the Presbyterians and Livingstone College in North Carolina by the AME Church. The mostly white institutions who had all the power and control, did not advocate drama. Yet as Blacks learned more than reading and writing, theatrical productions were on the horizon.

1900-1919

Theater in the U.S.

In 1911, S. H. Dudley, a Black actor and financier, organized the S. H. Dudley Theatrical Enterprise in Washington, D.C. and Virginia. The organization consisted of a chain of nine Black theaters, of which Dudley owned six. By 1916, the number of theaters tripled to 28 with locations in the Midwest, East, and South, known as the Chitlin' Circuit—a string of small Black nightclubs, music venues, juke joints, eating establishments, and theaters catering to Blacks. Not every Black patronized the Chitlin' Circuit, but every Black knew about them. They lasted for many decades. They were not places your prim and proper grandmothers wanted you to support.

The Industrial Revolution set into motion the Great Migration. Blacks in waves fled the terror of the South to cities like Cleveland, Chicago, New York City, and of course Detroit. They were looking for jobs and a better life, but it didn't come easy. Some northern Blacks, settled usually by previous generations, thought they were better than the new migrants. In Detroit, the Urban League printed a pamphlet "Dress Well Club," informing recent Southerners how to behave: "Don't be rude or ugly to people on the streets. Be courteous and polite and thereby keep out of trouble." Yet, when migrants strove to forget the South and disguise their poverty, their compatriots accused them of trying to be white. (Hill and Hatch, *A History of African American Theatre*, pp. 214-15.) The advice was not taken easily. They had their own ideas and ideals, their own music, literature, poetry, and stories about their lives.

As former vaudeville, burlesque, and minstrel houses gave way to dramas, Robert T. Motts, in 1906 formed the Pekin Stock Company in Chicago, and staged William Edgar Easton's *Dessalines* about the Haitian revolution. The Lincoln Theatre in Harlem opened Henry Cramer's *The Odd Man's Boy* in 1915; Anita Bush started the Lafayette Players (1919–32); and Russell and Rowena Jelliffe (white) launched the Karamu Theater in Cleveland, Ohio.

Black female writers such as Angelina Weld Grimké, Mary Burrill, Georgia Douglass Johnson, Marita Bonner, Ruth Gaines Shelton, and Alice Dunbar Nelson, asserted their right to be heard. For churches, lodges, and local schools, they wrote plays unlike their Black male counterparts and explored issues impacting the lives of Black folk.

Theater On/Off Broadway

On Broadway in 1917, playwright Ridgely Torrence (white) used Black life as subject matter in three dramas that caught the interest of critics and audiences, *Three Plays for the Negro Theater: Simon the Cyrenian, The Rider of Dreams, and Granny Maumee*.

Theater at HBCUs

In the 1900s, dramatic readings of Shakespeare and other classics were popular in colleges in plays familiar to teachers. Richard B. Harrison performed a one-man version of *Macbeth* and *Julius Caesar* at several colleges. Tuskegee Institute hired Shakespearean actor Charles Winter Wood to teach drama, public speaking and English, and to direct plays. At North Carolina A & T College, Susan B. Dudley, an instructor and wife of the president, taught Expression and Dramatic Art. All were Black.

During the Art Theatre Movement, Black colleges produced folk dramas depicting the lives of great Black leaders, and elaborate pageants illustrating uplifting stories of Black progress. A great debate arose over the use of slave dialect. "It was improper for students to use," said J. Stanley Durkee, president of Howard. Yet, noted Black poet Paul Laurence Dunbar, who wrote poems in correct grammar as well as dialect, was widely accepted, and his poems in dialect were more popular as recital pieces than poems written in the King's English. Soon, Charles Winter Wood established a drama club at Tuskegee Institute, and Ernest Just founded the Howard Players. Both clubs toured the U.S. and abroad receiving wide praise, but still there was no drama in the curriculum.



Seasons Reasons

THEATER (con't)

1920-1939

Theater in the U.S.

After World War I, the Harlem Renaissance (1920–29) ushered in a period of a cultural rebirth of Black creativity and art, aided by the consciousness of The New Negro, which heralded the roaring 20s. It was not only in Harlem, but also anywhere artists gathered to express themselves. It was a time of ragtime and jazz, the Black Bottom and the Charleston, and bootleg whiskey. The names of show business folk became bywords in the history of Black entertainment: Charles Gilpin, Ethel Waters, Bessie Smith, Ma Rainey, Paul Robeson, and Josephine Baker.

The conflict between the recently migrated Southern Blacks with newly mingled Northern Blacks was the subject of self-hatred in dramas. In *Rachel* (1920), playwright Angelina Weld Grimké, a young “black” Southern student is harassed by a “light skinned” Black student. The erudite Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois touted it: “*Rachel* is the first attempt to use the stage for race to enlighten the American people relating to the lamentable condition of ten million...Colored citizens in this free republic.” (*Art For Equality: The NAACP’s Cultural Campaign For Civil Rights*. University of Kentucky Press, p. 102.) Later, *Rachel* was considered the precursor to the Harlem Renaissance.

The little theater movement gained momentum with the arrival of amateur theater groups such as the Krigwa Players, the Acme Players, the National Ethiopian Art Theatre, Players’ Guild, and the Sekondi Players. Some adapted Dr. Du Bois’ manifesto set for the Krigwa Theatre—Black theater should be by, for, about, and near the Black community.

In the 1930s Great Depression, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt installed the Works Progress Administration Federal Theatre Project (WPA) as part of the New Deal, an economic recovery program. Negro Theatre Projects were set up in 23 cities in the U. S. The most noted was The Harlem Unit’s production of *Voodoo Macbeth*. This short-lived (1935–39) project was a major boost for Black theater during a depressed economy.

Theater On/Off Broadway

On Broadway, Black firsts prevailed with Charles S. Gilpin as Brutus Jones in Eugene O’Neill’s (white) drama *The Emperor Jones* (1920), the first lead actor



Macbeth

in a serious drama; *Shuffle Along* (1921), Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle's musical comedy hit, the first major show produced, written and acted by Blacks, opened the doors for Black musicals of the 1920s; Willis Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune* (1923), was the first one-act folk drama; and Garland Anderson's *Appearances* (1925), was the first full-length drama. Also, Langston Hughes' *Mulatto* (1935), with a run of 373 days, addressed race-mixing in the Deep South—a most volatile subject.

Theater at HBCUs

In the 1930s, Black colleges began to recognize and accept legitimate theater. Sheppard Randolph Edmonds, who studied amateur dramatic groups in Great Britain, joined the faculty of Morgan College (now Morgan State University) in Baltimore, and formed The Negro Intercollegiate Dramatic Association (NIDA) with delegate reps from Howard, Hampton, Virginia Union and Virginia State College. Ten colleges joined with the goal to foster interest in intercollegiate drama. NIDA held a drama tournament of one-act plays at one of the four sites each year for a limited period of time, and formed the first dramatic lab at Morgan with aspects of theater production—playwriting, acting, directing, and technical skills.

Edmonds moved to Dillard University (Louisiana) in 1936. Since travel and interaction made it hard to connect with the colleges in Maryland and Virginia, he formed the Southern and Dramatic and Speech Arts (SADSA), of which 19 colleges joined. The goal was to inspire playwrights to write about middle class Black life. As travel became a problem, they broke SADSA into three regions where the winner of a competition from each region competed at the central conference.

Lillian W. Voorhees (white) produced ten full-length plays and 41 short plays at Talladega College (Alabama) with Black students from 1934-61, and more later at Fisk University. She renamed SADSA to National Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts (NADSA) and was elected its president (1957-59).

Dr. Anne Cooke Reid at Spelman College in Atlanta wrote, directed and offered summer pageants that told the history of Spelman through various arts—dialogue, music, dance, and tableaux with artists and students from Spelman and Morehouse.

1940-1959

Theater in the U.S.

From the Great Depression to World War II, Black theaters existed peripherally in the 1940s in the psyche of Black America. Splintered as these theaters were, they laid the groundwork for a Black cultural aesthetic.

THEATER (con't)

Theater On/Off Broadway

In 1940, Abram Hill, Frederick O'Neal, and others founded the American Negro Theatre (ANT) in Harlem. This community-based company was an outgrowth of the Negro Unit of the WPA. The cast included Alice Childress, Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, Alvin Childress, Earle Hyman, Isabel Sanford, Roger Furman, and Rosetta LeNoire. ANT staged at least 20 plays; Hill's *On Striver's Row* was the most successful. Additionally, ANT adapted Philip Yordan's (white) *Anna Lucasta* before moving it to Broadway in 1949 where it ran for 957 days.

There were many notable accomplishments on Broadway: *Othello* (1943) opened starring Paul Robeson, Juanita Hill was the first Black actress to win a Tony for Best Supporting Actress (*South Pacific*) in 1950, and Louis Peterson's *Take a Giant Step* (1953) opened.

Lorraine Hansberry's groundbreaking modern classic, *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), opened to critical acclaim under the direction of Lloyd Richards, who grew up in Detroit. The first play written by a Black woman, directed by a Black man on Broadway and, addressed racism a crucial issue then and now, is still one of the most frequently produced. An adaptable play to fit all times, whether 1959, 1999, or 2019, it works in amateur or professional theaters and in little or major theaters. There has never been a bad production of *Raisin*, even if actors are not skilled, as long as they get the words out—the play works.



Raisin in the Sun

Off Broadway, the Greenwich Mews Theatre (GMT) premiered three socially relevant Black plays. William Branch's *In Splendid Error* (1954) won an Obie Award for best play (the Obie is comparable to Broadway's Tony); also performed at GMT were Lofton Mitchell's *A Land beyond the River* (1957) and Alice Childress' *Trouble in Mind* (1955).

Theater at HBCUs

In the 1940s and 50s, Black colleges formed touring drama clubs in lieu of theater. Howard hired theater experts James Butcher, Owen Dodson and Anne Cooke to produce four Black plays and 14 European classics which toured. Additionally, Tuskegee (Ala), Tennessee State Players and Florida A&M Playmakers, also toured plays.

1960-1979

Theater in the U.S.

Langston Hughes's *Black Nativity*, a passion play which opened off-Broadway in 1961, capitalized on the popularity of gospels, depicting the life of Christ from the cradle to the cross. It became a perennial Christmas pageant and financial windfall for Black theaters all over the U.S.

In the early 60s, three young actors had a vision for a Black theater. Woodie King, Jr., Cliff Frazier and David Rambeau rented an empty tavern at 401 East Adams Street in the heart of Detroit's Black community, and opened Detroit's Concept East in 1962—the city's first of several theaters presenting Black plays with Black actors for Black audiences. On the bill were Dr. Charles Wright's *Were You There?* (namesake of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History of Detroit), Ron Milner's *Life Agony*, and others.

In 1964, King and Frazier relocated to New York City, but Rambeau remained as artistic director until 1969. King, as founder/director of the New Federal Theatre, produced over 200 plays and received an honorary doctorate from Wayne State University in theater. As a teenager he spent countless hours in the Detroit Public Library reading about Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes, Fred O'Neil and others. "I worked, read, slept in the library, woke up and read more. I discovered theater there." Other theatres and companies also called Detroit home, including the Ira Aldridge Players and African American Studio Theatre (King, Angela G., "The Rise, Decline and Potential of Black Theater in Detroit," *BLAC Magazine*, June 30, 2011). Since the 1960s, it is estimated that 18 local Black theater companies have closed (Hatch and Hill, *A History of African American Theatre*, p. 470).

Regional theaters, run by whites, seldom hired Blacks or produced Black plays. When the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned racial discrimination, 600 regional theaters were founded, such as the New Heritage and New Lafayette in Harlem, Dashiki Project in New Orleans, Kuumba in Chicago, Crossroads in Brunswick, N.J., Black Arts/West in Seattle, and Plowshares in Detroit. Few were funded until the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awarded millions of dollars to regional theaters. By the 1970s, as other regional theaters changed hiring practices, over 60 were given a financial boost. Still, after 14 years of marches, sit-ins, freedom rides, beatings and assassinations, all themes for plays, the activist phase of the Civil Rights movement ended, funding ended, and many theaters died.



Study in Color

"I worked, read, slept in the library, woke up and read more. I discovered theater there."

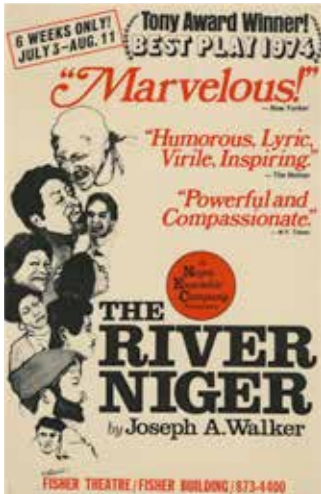
- Woodie King, Jr., Director

THEATER (con't)

Theater On/Off Broadway

The 1960s-1970s Black Arts Movement (BAM), began with the acerbic 1964 Obie-winning play *Dutchman* by LeRoi Jones (Amiri Baraka).

The apogee of BAM was the formation of the Negro Ensemble Company (NEC) in 1967 by Douglas Turner Ward and others. Funded by the Ford Foundation, NEC, for more than 25 years made major contributions to American theater, offering a full training program that produced 150 dramatic works like Derek Walcott's Nobel Prize winning *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. It sparkled with a sheen seldom seen on any stage, played by a world-class group of actors until Ford cut the funding and NEC shifted its focus on training.



The River Niger

Prominent dramas invaded Broadway such as Charles Gordone's *No Place to Be Somebody* (1967), the first Black Pulitzer Prize winner in drama, and Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (1971), which won a Nobel Prize in Drama. Other dramas include Melvin Van Peebles's *Don't Play Us Cheap*, Phillip Hayes Dean's *Paul Robeson*, Samm-Art Williams's *Home*, A. Marcus Hemphill's *Inacent Black*, Richard Wesley's *The Mighty Gents*, Joseph Walker's *The River Niger*, and N. R. Davidson's *El Hajj Malik* (1971) about Malcolm X.

The 1970s was a decade rife with the success of Black musicals on Broadway: Ossie Davis' *Purlie*, *The Wiz*, Lofton Mitchell's *Bubbling Brown Sugar*, Fats Waller's *Ain't Misbehavin'*, Eubie Blake's *Eubie*, Melvin Van Peebles' *Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death*, and Vinnette Carroll's *Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope*. Carroll was the first known Black woman to direct a Broadway musical.

In 1973, Vivian Robinson started the Audience Development Committee (Audelco) that awards excellence for off-Broadway Black theater.

On Broadway, Gloria Foster in 1979 played Clytemnestra opposite Morgan Freeman in the Greek tragedy *Agamemnon* in Joseph Papp's (white) New York Shakespeare production in Central Park. Papp was known for introducing the concept of nontraditional or color-blind casting in classics he produced.

Theater at HBCUs

Dr. Winona Lee Fletcher, as president of the University and College Theatre Association from 1979-1980, wanted to take student productions to mostly all-white theatre festivals. Later, Dr. Fletcher took shows to the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C.

In 1968, Thomas Pawley, Juanita Oubre and Joan Lewis obtained a grant for a summer theater at the Lincoln University campus (MO). It had 32 students on scholarship who participated in workshops and two plays—Tom Pawley's original biographical dramas *The Tumult and the Shouting*, and Ted Shine's *Come Back After the Fire*. It continued for a third summer.

As white institutions integrated, Black colleges did also. After the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Black colleges, now called Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), were underfunded and ill-equipped to compete with white universities who began hiring Black faculty to satisfy diversity demands. But, the 1990s brought budget cuts that affected both.

1980-1999

Theater in the U.S.

In Detroit in 1980, Maggie Porter, a Black theatre producer, started The Harmonie Park Playhouse. It survived for 12 years before giving way to urban renewal.

Plowshares Theatre Company did survive. Founded in 1986 by two Wayne State University graduates, Gary Anderson and Michael Garza, within five years, it was Michigan's only professional Black theatre owing to its mission to affirm, exhibit, and inspire Black life. For the next 25 years, it mounted productions in and around the Detroit area.

Another theatre with longevity, the Detroit Repertory Theatre, a white managed regional theatre founded by Bruce Millan, is still located in the Black community on Woodrow Wilson Avenue. Known for color blind casting, much of its audience is Black and the theater runs at least one Black themed play a year. Founded in 1957, it is Michigan's longest running, non-profit, and only fully neighborhood professional (union) theatre in Detroit.

The Wayne State University graduate theater program is one of the oldest graduate repertory companies in the country. The Hilberry Theatre hosted the first season of the graduate repertory company in 1964.

THEATER (con't)

Many Detroit actors who became successful are still recognized in theater, such as stage and television actors S. Epatha Merkerson and Ernie Hudson, and Lloyd Richards, a renowned Broadway director of plays by Lorraine Hansberry and August Wilson. Other notable actors from Detroit include: Courtney Vance, David Alan Grier, Denise Nicholas, Vondie Curtis Hall, Lonette McKee, Roz Ryan, and Tim Meadows.

I grew up in the Detroit Public Library. My mother, Mrs. Leslie A. Vance, worked at the Main Library and Hubbard Branch for 30 years. My sister, Cecilia A. Vance-Penchion, and I grew up in the libraries and our love of learning blossomed because we spent so much time there.

- Courtney B. Vance, Actor

In 1989, the late Larry Leon Hamlin started the National Black Theater Festival (NBTF) in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. It was conceived to unite Black theaters and to ensure survival into the 21st century. The festival grew from a five-day event that drew some 10,000 people to one that now draws 60,000 people over a six-day span. It attracted people nationwide to convene every odd year to see new plays, meet their fellow actors and technicians, and to study new trends in the theater industry.

Theater On/Off Broadway

August Wilson has come and gone, but not before he was well-known as the foremost playwright of his era. Since 1984, Wilson's plays were produced more than any other playwright, and provided work for a new generation of Black theatre artists as well as the often-overlooked middle-aged actors. He is the recipient of two Pulitzer Prizes in drama for *Fences* (1987) and *The Piano Lesson* (1991), placing him among the literary elite such as Eugene O'Neill, Robert Sherwood, Tennessee Williams, and Edward Albee as multiple Pulitzer winners.

The formation of new regional theaters helped Wilson to fine tune plays prior to Broadway openings, while providing at least five months of continued work for acting companies. He breathed new life into theaters that crossed racial lines and put a human face on Black America. Regional theaters now reach out to Black writers like Lynn Nottage, Carlyle Brown, Tanya Barfield, Ifa Bayeza, and Charles Randolph Wright. Black regional theaters also grew exponentially during this time: the Providence Black Repertory Theatre in Rhode Island and the African Continuum Theatre Coalition in Washington, D.C. Later as the Robey (1994) in Los Angeles and the African American Shakespeare Company (1994) in San Francisco bookended the U. S., the Congo Square Theatre Company (1999) in Chicago and the Shadow Theatre (1997) in Denver, gave middle America a chance to witness Black theater.

Building on the previous record of the legendary Joseph Papp, the charismatic, multi-talented George C. Wolfe was appointed producing director of the New York Public Theater in 1993. Earlier, he had great success with his play *The Colored Museum*, satirizing the Black experience. After a rocky beginning, Wolfe proved himself as a director of the first rank and the theatre as one of the most ingenious and vital producing entities in the country.

2000-2020

Theater in the U.S.

On October 8, 2005, theater folk were devastated when the inimitable August Wilson succumbed to liver cancer at the age of 60. He was a giant among humankind, whose prodigious talents had dominated the theatrical landscape for almost two decades. In 2007, many theater artists and luminaries attended the NBTF held in Winston-Salem, N.C. Though festival founder, Larry Leon Hamlin, died a few months earlier, the planners decided the festival would go forward as a tribute to Hamlin and his boundless enthusiasm, and to pay homage to the late August Wilson.

Theater On/Off Broadway

Broadway also enjoyed a resurgence of Black actors cast in non-traditional roles originally written for whites. Some examples of notable casting include Audra McDonald as the wife in the drama revival of *Henry IV* (2003), James Earl Jones as Norman and Leslie Uggams as Ethel in *On Golden Pond* (2004) in Ernest Thompson's revival, Phylicia Rashad as the Queen in Shakespeare's tragic comedic fairytale *Cymbeline* (2007), S. Epatha Merkerson as Lola in *Come Back Little Sheba* (2008) in William Inge's revival, Morgan Freeman as Frank Elgin in Clifford Odett's drama revival *The Country Girl* (2008), and James Earl Jones as a two-term former president in *The Best Man* (2012), Gore Vidal's drama.



Cicely Tyson
1924-2021

Cicely Tyson starred in Horton Foote's revival of *A Trip to Bountiful* (2012) and won a Tony for Best Performance by an Actress as Carrie, as well as a Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in D. L. Coburn's *The Gin Game* (2014). Norm Lewis was the first Black to play the lead in *Phantom of the Opera* (2014), the long-running musical. Kyle Jean-Baptiste, a 21-year-old actor, was the youngest and first Black to play Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables* (2015). Sophie Okonedo was John Proctor's wife Elizabeth in *The Crucible* (2016) in Arthur Miller's revival.

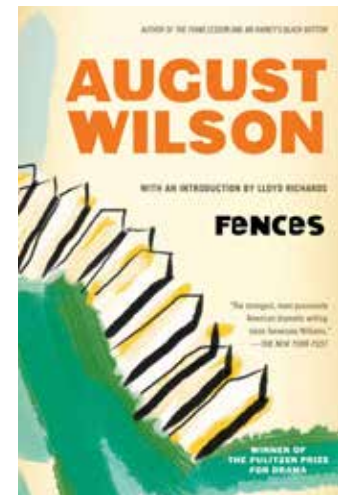
THEATER (con't)

While August Wilson was not a fan of non-traditional casting, three of his four plays opened on Broadway with a Black cast and director: *King Hedley II* (2000), *Gem of the Ocean* (2003), and *Radio Golf* (2007). The fourth, Joe Turner's *Come and Gone* (2009), which Bartlett Sher (white) directed caused a stir due to Wilson's radical manifesto, "The Ground on Which I Stand" speech, at the Theatre Communications Group (TCG) national conference in 1996. He stated Black plays should be cast with Black actors and directors, and be funded equitably to white theaters. However, Lin-Manuel Miranda's breakout musical *Hamilton* (2014), achieved a balance by infusing rap, hip-hop & R&B with an original cast of essentially black and brown, but primarily Blacks playing America's Founding Fathers. Four of the actors won Tony Awards: Leslie Odom, Jr. as Aaron Burr, Daveed Diggs as Thomas Jefferson/Marquis de Lafayette, Renee Elise Goldsberry as Angelica Schuyler, and Okieriete Onaodowan as James Madison. One can contemplate how Wilson might have critiqued it—would it have caused a new respect or understanding?

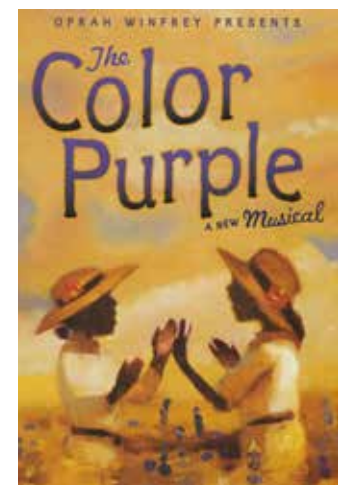
Broadway reaped a diverse cross section of Black Tony Award winners. Playwright Suzan-Lori Parks has won a Tony and a Drama Desk award, as well as a Pulitzer Prize for *Topdog/Underdog* (2002), the first Black woman to win the prize since its inception in 1917, and the fourth Black playwright since 1975 to win the honor, joining Charles Gordone, Charles Fuller, and August Wilson. In addition, LaChanze won Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Musical in *The Color Purple* (2005), and Stew's *Passing Strange* (2008), a rock comedy-drama, received the award for Best Book of a Musical.

Audra McDonald earned a fifth and sixth Tony in the same decade for Best Performance by a Leading Actress in a Musical as Bess in the musical revival of *Porgy and Bess* (2012), and Best Performance as an Actress in the bi-play musical as Billie Holiday in *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill* (2014), respectively. And, Billy Porter won Best Actor in a Musical for *Kinky Boots* (2013) as Lola, a fantabulous drag queen. James Monroe Iglehart, a Black genie, won Best Actor in a Featured Role in a Musical for Chad Bequelin's musical *Aladdin* (2014).

Detroit's historical contributions to the world of African American theatre have been significant. A contemporary source of pride is Dominique Morisseau, a native Detroiter, whose work "The Detroit Project," is a three-play cycle which includes *The Skeleton Crew* (2016), *Paradise Blue* (2015) and *Detroit '67* (2013). In 2019, Morisseau also earned two Tony nominations for Best Musical and Best Book of a Musical. She was a 2018 MacArthur Fellow,



Fences



The Color Purple

frequently referred to as a “Genius Award” that recognizes those who exhibit exceptional creativity and originality in their field.

Theaters at HBCUs

In 2001, there were 116 HBCUs, by 2018 that number was reduced to 100, still fighting for accreditation and against closure due to funding. College theatres remain underfunded.

HBCUs have been a source of incredibly talented actors and directors including: from Howard University, Debbie Allen, Phylicia Rashad, Ossie Davis, Anthony Anderson, Taraji P. Henson, Roxie Roker, Isaiah Washington, Marlon Wayans, Lynn Whitfield, Richard Wesley, and Owen Dodson; from Spelman College, Kathleen McGhee Anderson, Pearl Cleage, LaTanya Richardson, Alice Walker, and Keisha Knight Pulliam; from Morehouse College, Samuel L. Jackson, Spike Lee, Louis Peterson, Bill Nunn, Ray McIver, and Ekundayo Bandle.

Conclusion

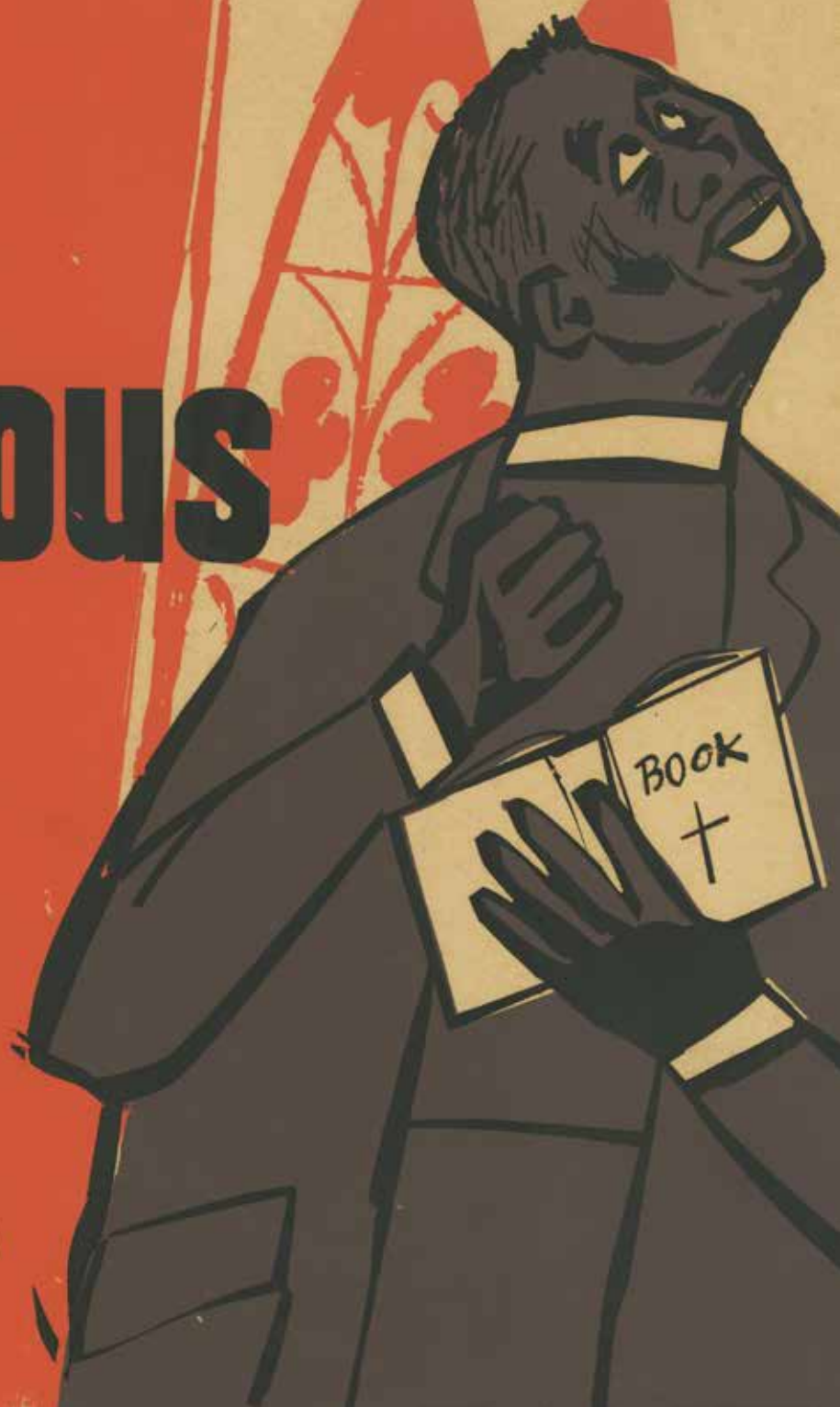
Black theater now in the 21st century has gone from a sporadic, hit-and-run affair operating from whatever venue Blacks could find to producing plays on a regular basis at permanent facilities. There is greater communication among theater artists realizing that what benefits one benefits all. The COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 caused all theaters to go dark, some temporarily and some permanently. It severely affected the livelihood of the actors and behind the scene professionals. Because African American theaters were already in a financial crisis, this worsened their plight. Many were forced to close. Yet, amidst all the uncertainty, the best is yet to come.



Dr. Anthony D. Hill is professor emeritus of drama in the Department of Theatre at The Ohio State University. He is the author of two editions of *Historical Dictionary of African American Theater*, *The A to Z of African American Theatre* (paperback), *Pages from the Harlem Renaissance: a Chronicle of Performance*, and numerous articles. His academic work has been in the areas of African American and American theatre history, and performance theory and criticism.

Purlie victorious

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THE HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN THEATER:

Reading List of Books and Plays

Recommended by Dr. Anthony Hill

BEST OF 2020

Biography.com Editors, *James Baldwin: Biography* (1924-1987).

A&E Television Network, 2020.

Baldwin, a Harlem native, was one of the 20th Century's greatest writers. He broke new literary ground with the exploration of racial and social issues and essays on the Black experience in America.

Dorsett, Kate. *Radical Black Theatre in the New Deal*.

University of North Carolina Press, 2020.

Between 1935 and 1939, the U. S. government paid out-of-work artists to write, act, and stage theatre as part of the Federal Theatre Project (FTP), a New Deal job relief program. Segregated "Negro Units" set up under the FTP, staged Black versions of "white" classics such as Orson Well's *Voodoo Macbeth* in Harlem.

Available as an eBook

Hoffman, Warren. *The Great White Way: Race and the Broadway Musical*.

Rutgers University Press, 2020.

A revised edition with a new introduction, conclusion and updated chapters, reveal racial politics, content, and subtexts that haunted musicals from *Show Boat* (1927) to *The Book of Mormon* to the groundbreaking *Hamilton* (2015).

Available at the Library

Locke, Alain. *Voices of the Harlem Renaissance*.

Old Saybrook, CT: Konecky & Konecky, 2019.

Originally published as *The New Negro an Interpretation*. An introduction to Black writers and poets of the Harlem Renaissance. Among the luminaries are Alain Locke, W. E. B. DuBois, Zora Neale Hurston, James Weldon Johnson, Jessie Fauset, and Langston Hughes.

Original version available at the Library



LIST (con't)

Mahar, William J. *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture*. University of Illinois Press. Revised edition, 2020.

The songs, dances, jokes, parodies, spoofs, and skits of blackface groups became wildly popular in antebellum America. It explores the racist practices of these entertainers as representations of ethnicity, class, gender, and culture in the 19th century.

Available at the Library

Smethurst, James. *Brick City Vanguard: Amiri Baraka, Black Music, Black Modernity*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2020.

Amiri Baraka, the leader of the Black Arts Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, is a key literary and cultural figure of the postwar U.S.

ANTHOLOGIES OF PLAYS

Bullins, Ed, and Mike Sell. *Ed Bullins: Twelve Plays & Selected Writings*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006

An exploration of significant and provocative plays, playwrights; and Bullins' signature plays: *Clara's Ole Man*, *In the Wine Time*, *The Fabulous Miss Marie*, and *Harlem Diva*.

Available at the Library

King, Woodie, Jr., ed. *The National Black Drama Anthology: Eleven Plays from America's Leading African-American Theaters*. Revised edition, New York: Applause Books, 2000. Among the plays included are: Robert Johnson's *Trick the Devil*; Marsha Jackson's *Sister*; Rob Penny's *Good Crack Don't Crack*; Shauneille Perry's *In Dahomey*; and Jeff Stetson's *The Meeting*.

Available at the Library

Kolin, Philip C. *Contemporary African American Women Playwrights: A Casebook*. London: Routledge, 2007.

Essays from Lorraine Hansberry, Zora Neale Hurston, Marita Bonner and Georgia Douglas Johnson; to chapters devoted to Alice Childress, Sonia Sanchez, Adrienne Kennedy, Ntozake Shange, Pearl Cleage, Aishah Rahman, Glenda Dickerson, Anna Deavere Smith, Suzan-Lori Parks; also, a Lynn Nottage interview.

Milner, Ron. *What the Wine-Sellers Buy: Four Plays*.

Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001.

Milner's plays, *Checkmates*, *What the Wine-Sellers Buy*, *Jaz-Set*, and *Urban Transition*, taught and engaged audiences with stories of the Black experience.

Available at the Library





Elam, Harry J, and Robert Alexander. *The Fire This Time: African-American Plays for the 21st Century.* New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2002.

Among the plays included are: Suzan-Lori Parks' *In the Blood*; August Wilson's *Jitney*; Lynn Nottage's *Crumbs from the Table of Joy*.

Available at the Library

AUGUST WILSON

Bryer, Jackson R., and Mary C. Hartig. *Conversations with August Wilson.*

Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2006.

Interviews from 1984 to 2004 cover his plays and background; differences between Black and white characters; call for more Black theater companies; Black integration; his "four B's;" painter Romare Bearden, writing process, and alliance with director Lloyd Richards.

Available at the Library

Elam, Jr. Harry J. *The Past as Present in the Drama of August Wilson.*

Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2006.

An examination of Wilson's published plays within the context of contemporary African American literature in relation to concepts of memory and history, culture and resistance, race and representation.

Available at the Library

Shannon, Sandra G. and D. Williams *August Wilson and Black Aesthetics.*

Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

New essays and interviews in Wilson's "The Ground on Which I Stand" speech, from examinations of the presence of Wilson's politics in his plays, to the limitations of these politics on contemporary interpretations of Blacks.

Available at the Library

_____. *August Wilson's Pittsburgh Cycle: Critical Perspectives on the Plays.*

Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2015.

New essays explore Wilson's ethos across his 25-year creative career; his disconnection with his biological father; his efforts to discover and reconnect with the blues, with Africa and with poet/activist Amiri Baraka; and his love for Pittsburgh.



LIST (con't)

BIOGRAPHIES AND AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

Armand, Glenda, and Floyd Cooper. *Ira's Shakespeare Dream.*

New York: Lee & Low Publishers, 2015.

This book for ages 7-12, shows how Ira Aldridge dreamed of being on stage one day performing the great works of William Shakespeare. Through perseverance and determination, Ira became one of the most celebrated Shakespearean actors throughout Europe.

Available at the Library

Forbes, Camille F. *Introducing Bert Williams: Burnt Cork, Broadway, and the Story of America's First Black Star.* New York: Basic Civitas, 2008.

The life and work of Bert Williams, a Black vaudevillian who grew famous by performing in blackface and cakewalk revues.

Available at the Library

George-Graves, Nadine. *The Royalty of Negro Vaudeville: The Whitman Sisters and the Negotiation of Race, Gender and Class in African American Theater 1900-1940.*

New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000.

This group was the highest paid act on the Negro Vaudeville Circuit, Theater Owner Booking Association (TOBA); the longest surviving touring company (1899-1942); and the greatest incubator of dancing talent for Black shows on the circuit.

Available at the Library

Hughes, Langston, and Arnold Rampersad. *The Selected Letters of Langston Hughes.*

New York: Knopf, 2015.

Hughes personal anecdotes of life and work.

Available at the Library

Leon, Kenny. *Take You Wherever You Go.* Grand Central Publishing, 2018.

The author shares how his Grandma Mamie instilled life lessons of perseverance and reverence through a difficult, but soul-nurturing childhood.

Available at the Library and as an audiobook online

Morgan, Debbi. *The Monkey on My Back: A Memoir.* Infinite Words, 2015.

A candid look at the domestic abuse cycle endured by three generations of women and the steps the actress took to break the chain.

Available at the Library

Perry, Imani. *Looking for Lorraine: The Radiant and Radical Life of Lorraine Hansberry*, Boston: Beacon Press, 2018.

A probing look at the acclaimed playwright who was also known for her unapologetic commitment to social justice.

Available at the Library and as an Ebook

Robeson, Paul, and Paul Robeson, Jr. *The Undiscovered Paul Robeson: Quest for Freedom, 1939-1976*. Hoboken, N.J: Wiley, 2010.

Robeson's son tells the story of the great scholar-athlete-performer and compelling figure of the 20th century; his life from WW II until his death, fight against racism, and defiance of persecution by the government.

Taylor, Yuval, and Jake Auston. *Darkest America: Black Minstrelsy from Slavery to Hip-Hop*, New York: W.W. Horton & Company, 2012.

An exploration of the origins of the complex history of the grinning, cackling "buffoon," its heyday in the mid-19th century, and present-day manifestations.

Turan, Kenneth. *Free for All: Joe Papp, The Public, and the Greatest Theater Story Ever Told*, New York: Anchor Books, 2010.

A behind-the-scenes look at one of America's most beloved and important cultural institutions from free Shakespeare in the Park to the launching of such landmark productions as *Hair* and *A Chorus Line*.

Available at the Library

Wright, Richard. *Black Boy*. New York: HarperCollins, 1993.

A response to the experiences Wright had growing up, this memoir details his upbringing in the South, Mississippi, Arkansas and Tennessee, and his eventual move to Chicago where he established his writing career and involvement with the Communist Party.

Available at the Library and as an audiobook and Ebook

HISTORICAL STUDIES

Andrews, Bert, and Paul Carter Harrison. *In the Shadow of the Great White Way: Images from the Black Theatre*. New York: Thunder Mouth Press, 1989.

For over 30 years, Bert Andrews' photos captured the power, passion, and promise of Black theatre. Nearly 200 images are grouped in one landmark book that visually chronicles the Black Theatre Renaissance in New York from 1960 to 1985 with a text by Carter Harrison.

Available at the Library



LIST (con't)

Fearn-Banks, Kathleen, and Anne Burford-Johnson. *Historical Dictionary of African American Television, Second Edition.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.
With more than 2000 entries, the dictionary covers the period spanning from the beginning of national television in 1951 through early 2014.

First edition available at the Library

Gates, Henry L., and Kevin M. Burke. *And Still I Rise: Black America Since MLK.* New York: Ecco Press, 2015.

This illustrated chronology details salient events of the last half century in Black history, from the climactic moments of the civil rights movement, slayings of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.; passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965; and the two-term presidency of Barack H. Obama.

Available at the Library and as an Ebook

Hatch, James V., and Errol G. Hill. *A History of African American Theatre.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

A definitive history encompassing the breadth and vitality of Black theatre history, plays, performers, playwrights, productions, nationalism and integration; and minstrel, vaudeville, cabaret acts, musicals, and opera performances.

Available at the Library

_____. and Leo Hamalian. *The Roots of African American Drama: An Anthology of Early Plays, 1858-1938.* Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991.

The early plays are: Abram Hill's *On Striver's Row*, Willis Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune*; four are full length, eight one-acts, and one skit. Subjects include slavery, share cropping, WW I, vaudeville, religion, legend and mythology, representing a variety of styles-allegory, naturalism, realism, melodrama, musical comedy, and opera.

Available at the Library

Hay, Samuel A. *African American Theatre: An Historical and Critical Analysis.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

This landmark work in the study of Black theater and drama offers a comprehensive history of a major cultural phenomenon. Hay seeks out the origins of Black theater in social protest, as envisioned by W. E. B Du Bois.

Available at the Library



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Pulitzer Prize
by Charles Fuller
Produced by Gregory J.

The Fisher
May 22-June



Hill, Anthony D., and Douglas Q. Barnett. *Historical Dictionary of African American Theater, Second Edition.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018.

An extensive, valuable and rare collection of data in its first edition—this edition is overflowing in a greatly expanded and enriched second edition with nearly 1,000 selected entries on African American theater.

First edition available at the Library

_____. *The A to Z of African American Theater.* Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009.

A paperback edition of *Historical Dictionary of African American Theater.*

Available at the Library

_____. *Pages from the Harlem Renaissance: A Chronicle of Performance.*

New York: P. Lang, 2002.

This book centers on James Albert Jackson, a Black journalist who was hired to write a page in the entertainment industry magazine *Billboard* between 1920-1925. He not only covered the entertainment industry, but fought through his writings to right wrongs Black entertainers endured during the Harlem Renaissance, a seminal period of American performance history.

Hill, Errol. *Shakespeare in Sable: A History of Black Shakespearean Actors.*

Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984.

A scholarly look at the history of Black Shakespearean actors illustrated by period photographs and drawings. Hill outlines the early work of James Hewlett and Ira Aldridge in the early 19th century, to the late triumph of Orson Welles' *Voodoo Macbeth* in 1936.

Available at the Library

_____. *The Theatre of Black Americans: A Collection of Critical Essays, Vol 1 & II.* Revised edition. Applause, 2000.

From Negro spiritual to the birth of the Harlem Renaissance to the national Black Theatre Movement, the book offers a penetrating look at Black art forms.

Earlier editions available at the Library

Huggins, Nathan I. *Harlem Renaissance.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.

This classic history of black life and culture is being reissued with a new foreword by acclaimed biographer Arnold Rampersad.

Available at the Library



LIST (con't)

Hughes, Langston, Dolan Hubbard, Arnold Rampersad, and Leslie C. Sanders. *Gospel Plays, Operas, and Later Dramatic Works*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2018. A poet, playwright, writer of short stories, Hughes was one of the most influential and prolific writers of the 20th century.

Available at the Library

Krasner, David. *A Beautiful Pageant: African American Theatre, Drama and Performance in the Harlem Renaissance*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

The Harlem Renaissance, an unprecedented period of vitality in the American arts, was a time when Harlem came alive with theater, drama, sports, dance and politics.

Available at the Library

Lane, Stewart F. *Blacks on Broadway: African Americans on the Great White Way*.

Garden City Park, N.Y.: Square One Publisher, 2015.

A celebration of nearly 200 years of Black theater history in the U.S., illustrating its contributions to American art, culture, and its struggles & triumphs on the Broadway theatrical stage.

Available at the Library

Miller, Britt Ekland, and Jeffery Bradley. *Positive African American Plays for Children: Book 1*. Dallas: NetNia Communications, 2006.

This book shows children from ages 8-13 how to stage a successful play any place. Easy to read text, wonderful tips and five great plays.

Available at the Library

Mitchell, Koritha. *Living with Lynching: African American Lynching Plays, Performance, and Citizenship, 1890–1930*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012.

This critical study of lynching plays in American culture, demonstrates how Black communities survived mob violence. They were often read aloud or acted out in community settings by Black church members, school children, and families.

Available at the Library

Molette, Carlton W., and Barbara J. Molette. *Afrocentric Theatre*.

Bloomington, IN.: Xlibris Corp, 2013.

This book is a framework for interpreting, analyzing and evaluating theatre arts based in Afrocentric culture and values. It updates and expands Molette's ground-breaking book, *Black Theatre: Premise and Presentation*, defined as an Afrocentric play when it embraces and disseminates Afrocentric culture and values.

Morisseau, Dominique. *Detroit Project: Three Plays*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, Inc., 2018.

Three plays, *Paradise Blue*, *Detroit '67* and *Skeleton Crew*, depict Detroit's economic and social woes from the 1967 riot to the 2008 financial collapse.

Available as an Ebook, individual Morisseau plays available at the Library

Perkins, Kathy A., and Judith L. Stephens. *Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

A diverse offering of plays from Angelina Weld Grimke's *Rachel* (1916); to three works by Georgia Douglas Johnson; to Lillian Smith's full-length play *Strange Fruit* (1945); to contemporary playwrights such as Endesha Ida Mae Holland's *From The Mississippi Delta*. These lynching dramas are grounded in the truth of white racism's toxic effect on Black national existence.

Stodghill, Ron. *Where Everybody Looks Like Me: At the Crossroads of America's Black Colleges and Culture*. New York: Amistad, an imprint of HarperCollins, 2015.

A richly reported account of forces threatening America's historic Black colleges and universities such as lack of funding, and struggles to keep HBCUs and Black culture alive for future generations.

Available at the Library and as an eBook

Thomas, Lundeana Marie. *Barbara Ann Teer and the National Black Theatre: Transformational Forces in Harlem*. London; New York: Routledge, 2016.

A historical overview of Teer, her early experiences at American theaters; the evolution of her theories, practices and aspirations; and, embracing spirituals truth in the hearts, minds and souls of Black folk, rather than militancy.

Available at the Library

Woll, Allen. *Black Musical Theatre: From Coontown to Dreamgirls*.

Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.

A look at Black performers, composers, lyricists, choreographers, and directors, that traces the development of the Black theater from the turn of the century to the present.

Available at the Library



LIST (con't)

PLAYWRIGHTS

Abramson, Doris. *Negro Playwrights in the American Theatre, 1925 –1959.*

New York: Columbia University Press, 1969.

An examination of plays produced in New York professional theater between 1925 and 1959 focusing on their portrayal of Black life in America.

Available at the Library

Asante, Molefi K. *The Dramatic Genius of Charles Fuller; An African American Playwright.*

Universal Write Publications LLC, 2015.

An introduction to the mind of the pre-eminent Black dramatist and his Pulitzer Prize winning play, *A Soldiers Play*.

Hughes, Langston, Carl Van Vechten, and Emily Bernard. *Remember Me to Harlem: The Letters of Langston Hughes and Carl Van Vechten, 1925-1964.* New York: Knopf, 2001.

Widely acclaimed for its comprehensive and sensitive picture of some of America's most renowned writers, this edition contains a new preface, updated data, and bibliographic essays.

Available at the Library

Neal, Lester A. *Ntozake Shange: A Critical Study of the Plays.* New York: Garland, 1995.

A critical analysis of five plays by Shange identifying her as a writer enraged by, and committed to, writing about the injustices suffered by oppressed peoples of color, women and children.

Available at the Library

Parks, Suzan-Lori. *The America Play, and Other Works.*

New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1995.

Parks has burst through every known convention to invent a new theatrical language to explore American cultural myths and stereotypes.

Available at the Library

Sell, Mike, Brenda Murphy, and Julia Listengarten. *Decades of Modern American Drama: Playwriting from the 1930s to 2009: Voices, Documents, New Interpretations. Playwriting in the 1960s.* London: Bloomsbury, 2018.

This revised edition provides a thorough survey and study of theatre produced in each decade from the 1930s to 2009 in eight volumes.





Williams, Dana A. *Contemporary African American Female Playwrights: An Annotated Bibliography*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1998.

A comprehensive research tool, this annotated bibliography sheds light on the often-neglected works of current African American female playwrights.

Available at the Library

Sollors, Werner. *Amiri Baraka/LeRoi Jones: The Quest for a "Populist Modernism."*

New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

This critical introduction to Baraka's work offers a detailed overview written in straightforward prose of the intellectual and cultural milieu from which Baraka's writing emerged.

Available at the Library

AUGUST WILSON PLAYS

Fences, New York: Plume, 1986.

This winner of both the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, and Tony Award for Best Play, is set in 1957 during the Civil Rights Movement. It centers on Troy Maxson, a father and husband who builds emotional "fences" between himself and his family. His actions force them to examine their lives and feelings about relationships, self-respect, power, commitment, birth, and death.

Available at the Library

Gem of the Ocean. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2006.

Set in 1904 in Pittsburgh's Hill District, Aunt Ester, the 285-year-old fiery matriarch, welcomes into her home Solly Two Kings, a Union Army scout, and Citizen Barlow, a young man from Alabama searching for redemption. Aunt Ester guides Barlow on a soaring, lyrical journey of spiritual awakening to the City of Bones.

Available at the Library

Jitney. New York: Abrams, 1982.

Regular taxi cabs did not take Blacks to the Pittsburgh Hill District of the 1970s; thus, the residents turn to jitneys, unofficial, unlicensed taxi cabs, that operate in the community. Set in a gypsy cab station in 1977, jitney drivers work for Jim Becker whose son returns from prison for an unimaginable crime.

Available at the Library



LIST (con't)

Joe Turner's Come and Gone, New York: Samuel French, 1990.

Set in a Pittsburgh boarding house in 1911, owners Seth and Bertha Holly host makeshift tenants who come to stay during the Great Migration seeking jobs and new lives. Among them, Herald Loomis, a man recently released from prison, who is haunted by the past, has lost his "song," arrives with his young daughter, Zonia, looking for her mother, Martha. With the help of Bertha and others they help him "find his song--of life."

Available at the Library

King Hedley II, New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2007.

Set in Pittsburgh in 1985 during the Reagan era, Wilson's darkest play is the story of Hedley who returns from prison to restore his life. He saves \$10,000 by selling stolen refrigerators to buy a video store.

Available at the Library

Ma Rainey's Black Bottom, London: Penguin Books, 2020.

Set in Chicago in the 1920s, this is the only play in Wilson's 10-play cycle not set in Pittsburgh. It deals with issues of race, art, religion, and the historic exploitation of Black recording artists by white producers.

Available at the Library

Radio Golf. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2007.

Harmond Wilks, his wife Mame, and best friend Roosevelt want to revive the devastated Hill District. Wilks wants to become the first Black mayor of Pittsburgh; however, he has doubts after two friends from the past remind him that demolishing the remnants of the past will hurt the district's rich history.

Available at the Library

Seven Guitars. New York: French, 1996.

The play focuses on seven Blacks in 1948. It begins and ends after the funeral of one of the main characters, showing events leading to the funeral in flashbacks.

Available at the Library

The Piano Lesson, New York: Plume, 1990.

Set in 1936 Pittsburgh during the Great Depression, the Charles family is challenged, with what to do with the family piano, an heirloom which is decorated with designs carved by their enslaved ancestors who worked the land. Boy Willie wants to sell the piano to buy the land, while his sister Berniece insists on keeping it.

Available at the Library

Two Trains Running. New York: Plume, 1990.

Set in the Hill District of Pittsburgh in 1969, the play explores the social and psychological manifestations of changing attitudes toward race from the perspective of urban Blacks.

Available at the Library

OTHER POPULAR PLAYS

Baraka, Amiri. *Dutchman*. New York: HarperCollins Books, Inc, 1964.

Played out on a subway, this shocking allegory of Black and white conflict in America challenges the notion of hegemony, manhood, and the American dream.

Available at the Library

Beaty, Daniel. *Emergency*. New York: Samuel French, 2011.

For his tour de force solo performance piece, Beaty plays 40 characters. Among them, a homeless man, a scientist, a Republican business executive, a street vendor, and an 11-year old boy from the projects, all respond to an unexpected phenomenon in New York City.

Brown, William Wells. *The Escape; or, A Leap for Freedom* (1858).

Published in James Hatch and Ted Shine, *Black Theatre USA: Plays by African Americans from 1847 to Today*, New York: Free Press, 2011.

This is the earliest extant anti-slavery play written by a Black abolitionist.

Available at the Library

Breuer, Lee, Bob Telson, and Sophocle. *The Gospel at Colonus*.

New York, NY: Theatre Communications Group, 1989.

In this adaptation of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, Breuer and Bob Telson (white), the Greek myth was translated into a Christian parable within the framework of a gospel musical in a Black church service. The storytelling duties were handed to a Black Pentecostal preacher and his church choir, who in turn, enact the story of Oedipus' torment and redemption as a modern parable.

Available at the Library and as an eBook

Davis, Ossie. *Purlie Victorious: A Comedy in Three Acts*. New York: Samuel French, 1961.

A Black preacher returns home to rural Georgia to claim an inheritance and bring down Ol' Cap'n Stonewall Jackson Cotchipee, the ruthless plantation owner whom he once served.

Available at the Library



LIST (con't)

Elder, Lonne. *Ceremonies in Dark Old Men: A Play in Two Acts.*

New York: Samuel French, 1993.

Set in the 1950s, this runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize in drama is about an embittered Black widower and his two sons who sell bootleg whiskey out of his barber shop—without the consent of his daughter, until things go awry.

Available at the Library and as an audiobook

Fuller, Charles. *A Soldier's Play: A Drama.* New York: Samuel French, 1981.

This Pulitzer Prize winning drama uses a murder mystery to explore the complicated feelings of anger and resentment some Blacks have towards each other, and how many Blacks have absorbed white racist attitudes.

Available at the Library

_____. *Zooman and the Sign,* New York: Samuel French, 1980.

Set in Philadelphia in 1979, the play focuses on the murder of a local 12-year-old Black girl by a Black “gang-banger,” and the response by the Black community who refuse to reveal the killer despite the family’s attempts for justice. Fuller received an Obie Award for playwriting.

Available at the Library

Gordone, Charles. *No Place to Be Somebody: A Black Comedy in Acts.*

Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969.

Gordone is the first African American to win the Pulitzer Prize in drama, and his play is the first to win the award. A Black country bartender migrates to New York City seeking the urban myth of success only to find disappointment, despair, and death.

Available at the Library

Grimké, Angelina Weld. *Rachel.* Oxford University Press, 1920.

The 1916 program note states: “It was the first time a theater in the U.S. presented a play by a Black author with a Black cast before an integrated audience.” This three-act play comments on “honorable motherhood.” It depicts an educated, sensitive, young, Black female educator whose greatest wish is to marry and raise beautiful Black children. When faced with the realities of racism, she decides not to bring a Black child into this hostile environment.

Available at the Library

Hansberry, Lorraine. *A Raisin in the Sun.* New York: Random House, 1959.

Set in south-side Chicago, this timeless American classic follows the plight of a Black family that faces a dilemma when the matriarch, following the death of her husband, buys a house in an all-white neighborhood with an insurance payout.

Available at the Library and as an audiobook and Ebook

HIGAN
PROGRAM

for 1966

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Ba

A MOVING
FIVE DRAMA
by
CHILDRESS

THEATRE •

Hughes, Langston. *Mulatto*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.

A tragedy set in the deep South after the Civil War about a mixed-race son who rebels after being rejected by his white father. First performed in 1935, it is one of the earliest Broadway plays to combine the father-son conflict with racial issues.

Available at the Library

Johnson, James Weldon. *God's Trombones*. Self-published, 1927.

A collection of seven poems set to verse from the King James version of the Bible adapted to a play format, this is the most produced African American performance piece to the present.

Available at the Library

Miranda, Lin-Manuel, and Jeremy McCarter. *Hamilton: The Revolution*.

New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2016.

A complete libretto of the groundbreaking Broadway musical.

Available at the Library

Norman, Marsha. *The Color Purple: A New Musical*. New York: Playbill Inc., 2016.

A musical revival based on Alice Walker's novel follows the family of Celie, a Black woman in the South, from childhood to the early mid-20th century, through joy, despair, anguish and hope to discover the power of love and life. It won two Tony Awards for Best Revival of a Musical, and Best Actress in a Musical for Cynthia Erivo as Celie.

Shange, Ntozake. *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide/When the Rainbow Is Enuf: A Choreopoem*. Reprint Edition, Simon and Schuster, 2010.

Defined as a "choreopoem," this Obie Award-winner that excited and inspired audiences since first performed in 1976, is a discourse on being colored and female in the 20th century--and transformation.

Available at the Library

Smith, Anna Deavere. *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights, Brooklyn, and Other Identities*.

New York: Anchor Books/Doubleday, 1993.

This is a script written by Smith, an actress, playwright and professor, for her solo performance piece, whereby she plays 25 diverse, racially-polarized Black and Jewish residents whom she interviewed after the 1991 Crown Heights, Brooklyn riot.

Available at the Library

directed by
MARCELL

Y DEE

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nd

with
Abbey Linco
Katherine Sc
Moses Gunn
Marcie Hube
Clarice Taylo
Minnie Gent
John Leighto

and
John Harki

ANN ARB

LIST (con't)

Walcott, Derek. *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. Oxford University Press, 1970.

A Nobel Prize-winning play by the St. Lucian poet and playwright, set on a Caribbean Island. It centers on Makak who is ashamed of being Black. While in jail, he dreams of a white goddess who urges him to return to Africa to be a great warrior and convince others to join him. Ultimately, he beheads the white goddess of his dreams and wakes up free from his obsession with whiteness. Received an Obie Award in 1971.

Available at the Library

Ward, Theodore. *The Big White Fog*, 1937. First published in Hatch and Shine's *Black Theatre USA*, Simon & Schuster, 1996.

Set in Chicago, the play looks at a fictional Mason family that spans three generations from the Harlem Renaissance of 1922 to the Great Depression of 1933. Some family members support a return to Africa and Garveyism, some Communism, and others the American Dream.

Wolfe, George C. *The Colored Museum*. New York: Grove Press, 1987.

The play simultaneously celebrates, satirizes and subverts the African American legacy. Wolfe says it is both an exorcism and a party that explores contemporary Black cultural identity, while at the same time revisits and reexamines the Black theatrical and cultural past.

Available at the Library

Small, Charles, and William F. Brown. *The Wiz: A Musical Fantasy* (Revival). New York: Samuel French, 1984.

Winner of seven Tony awards, this beloved Broadway musical thrusts Dorothy's adventures in the Land of Oz into a dazzling, lively mixture of rock, gospel, and soul music.

Available at the Library as a video, sound recording and musical score

Wright, Richard. *Native Son*. New York: Random House, 1940.

Wright's novel, adapted into a play, is set in the rat-infested poverty stricken south side of Chicago in the 1930s. A 20-year-old Bigger Thomas struggles to find a place for himself in an unjust world. After taking a job in a wealthy white man's house, Bigger unwittingly unleashes a series of events that violently and irrevocably seal his fate.

Available at the Library and as an audiobook and eBook

THEATER COMPANIES

Dent, Thomas C., Richard Schechner, and Gilbert Moses. *The Free Southern Theater*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Co, 1969.

The Free Southern Theater, based in Madison County, Mississippi, was part of the emerging Black Theatre Movement of the 1960s and closely allied with the Civil Rights Movement.

Available at the Library

Fraden, Rena. *Blueprints for a Black Federal Theatre, 1935–1939*.

Revised edition, Cambridge University Press, 2007.

During the 1930s, the Work Progress Administration funded the Federal Theater Project to sustain unemployed theatrical workers in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Seattle and other major urban centers, employing over 12,000 people and presenting countless productions.

Available at the Library

McMillan, Felecia P. *The North Carolina Black Repertory Company: 25 Marvtastic Years*.

Greensboro, N.C: Open Hand Pub, 2005.

Larry Leon Hamlin, Founder, Executive & Artistic Director of both the Company and the National Black Theatre Festival, wrote the introduction to the book. It highlights performers and celebrities who lent their talents to entertain and expand awareness of Black theatre actors, playwrights, and directors.

THEATER PERIODICAL

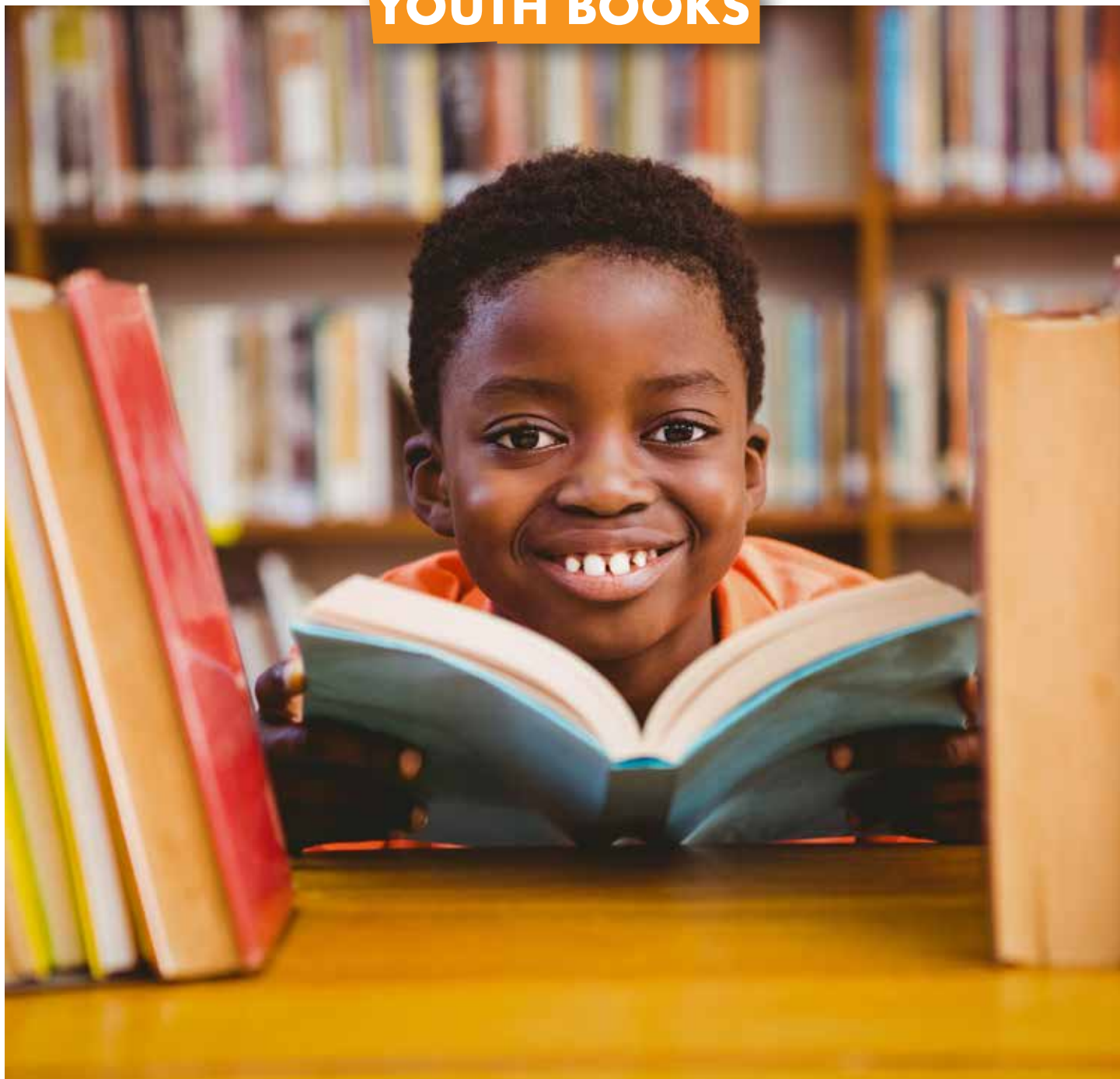


Black Masks Magazine (1984 - present).

Bronx, NY: Beth Turner.

Available at the library

YOUTH BOOKS



PICTURE AND BOARD BOOKS

Barnes, Derrick

I Am Every Good Thing

Nancy Paulsen Books 2020
A jamboree highlighting Black boys and all the things that makes them great!
(e-book, audiobook available)

Berry, James

A Story About Afiya

Lantana Publishing, 2020
A story about a girl and her magical white dress and their adventures.
(e-book available)

Boston-Weatherford, Carol
Respect: Aretha Franklin, the Queen of Soul

Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2020
A lyrical look into the life of a musical icon and social activist.
(e-book available)

Brantley-Newton, Vanessa
Just Like Me

Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2020
A collection of poems celebrating the uniqueness of girls.
(e-book available)

Bryant, Megan E. and Daniel Prosterman

Citizen Baby: My Vote

Penguin Workshop, 2020
A baby learns about the importance of participating in democracy.
(e-book available)



Kelly Baptist
Isaiah Dunn Is My Hero

Charles, Tami

All Because You Matter

Orchard Books 2020
A poetic expression emphasizing to children their importance in the world.
(e-book, audiobook available)

Cornwall, Gaia

Jabari Tries

Candlewick, 2020
A young boy challenges himself to independently build a flying machine, but when he encounters difficulties, dad steps in.

Eboch, M.M.

Women in Science and Technology: Annie Easley

Discovery Library, 2019
The exploration of one woman and her role in sending rockets into space.
(e-book available)

English, Karen

Red Shoes

Scholastic Inc., 2020
Two girls, globes apart, are connected by a spectacular pair of shoes.
(e-book available)

Goss, Alex

We All Belong: A Children's Book About Diversity, Race and Empathy

Goss Castle, 2020
A poem about the importance of caring for each other, while embracing multiculturalism.

Hardy, S.F. Hardy

Dancing Monkeys in My Soup!

Shenomenal Ink, 2020
While on vacation in Peru, Jabbar discovers playful pygmy marmosets performing in his dinner.

Harris, Meena

Kamala and Maya's Big Idea

Balzer + Bray, 2020
The young Harris sisters unite their community in their advocacy for a neighborhood playground.
(e-book, audiobook available)

Hubbard, Rita L.

The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read

Schwartz & Wade 2020
Born into slavery, a woman accomplishes her dream at 116 years old.
(e-book available)

YOUTH BOOKS (con't)

Joy, Angela

Black Is a Rainbow Color

Roaring Brook Press, 2020

A child ponders where Black fits into the rainbow, life and the world.

(e-book available)

Kendi, Ibram X.

Antiracist Baby

Kokila, 2020

A nine-step read aloud on how to talk about race with children.

Lyons, Kelly

Dream Builder

Lee and Low Books, 2020

The story of architect Philip Freelon, who intentionally set out to construct a better world with his contributions of schools, libraries and museums. (e-book available)

Pippins, Andrea

Hey, Baby!: A Baby's Day in Doodles

Schwartz & Wade, 2020

A day in the life of a baby is explored.

(e-book available)

Pippins, Andrea

Who Will You Be?

Schwartz & Wade, 2020

A mother ponders the impact the world will have on her baby.

(e-book available)

Roe, Mechal Renee

Cool Cuts

Doubleday Books for Young Readers, 2020

A celebration of African American boy's hair and hairstyles.

(e-book available)

Thompkins-Bigelow, Jamilah

Your Name is a Song

The Innovation Press, 2020

When her teacher struggles to say her name, little Kora Jalimuso, encourages the celebration of differences through music.

(e-book available)

Verde, Susan

I Am One: A Book of Action

Harry N. Abrams, 2020

People's actions, can and do change, the world.

(e-book available)

JUVENILE FICTION

Baptist, Kelly

Isaiah Dunn Is My Hero

Crown Pub. 2020

A 10-year-old boy is forced to take on the role of the bread winner when his mother becomes depressed following the death of his father.

(e-book, audiobook available)

Cline-Ransome, Lesa

Finding Langston

Holiday House, 2020

A grieving boy finds solace in poetry when he visits the local library.

(e-book available)

Craft, Jerry

Class Act

Quill Tree Books, 2020

Aspiring artist, Jason Banks, faces many challenges as he begins eighth grade.

(e-book, audiobook available)

Giles, Lamar

The Last Mirror on the Left

Versify, 2020

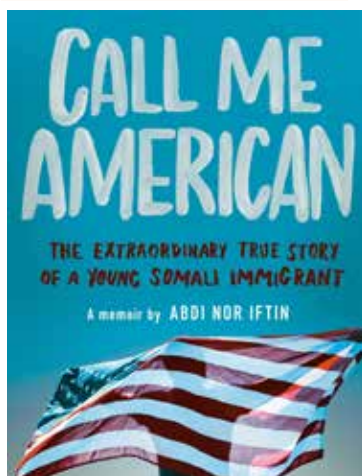
Alston Boys are blackmailed into helping track down fugitives they accidentally freed from the mirror prison.

(e-book available)



Meena Harris

Kamala and Maya's Big Idea



Abdi Nor Iftin
Call Me American: Adapted for Young Adults

Okorafar, Nnedi
Ikenga

Viking Children's Books, 2020
 A young boy receives supernatural powers from his deceased father, granting him the ability to fight crime and avenge his murder.
 (e-book, audiobook available)

Patterson, James
Becoming Muhammad Ali
 Jimmy Patterson, 2020
 In this fictional account, the early life of legendary boxer Cassius Clay is explored.
 (e-book, audiobook available)

Pinkney, Andrea Davis
Loretta Little Looks Back: Three Voices Go Tell It: A Monologue
 Little Brown & Co, 2020
 Three generations of an African American family share their experiences with racism growing up in Mississippi during the height of the Jim Crow era.
 (e-book available)

Ramee, Lisa Moore
Something to Say
 Balzer & Bray, 2020
 An introverted Jenae steps out of her comfort zone to join the debate team with the help of a friend she meets at her new school.
 (e-book, audiobook available)

Watson, Renee
Ways to Make Sunshine
 Bloombury Children's Books, 2020
 A little girl tackles challenges in her life with bravery, common sense and humor.
 (e-book available)

Woodson, Jacqueline
Before the Ever After
 Nancy Paulsen Books, 2020
 ZJ's charmed life turns tragic when his father, a former football star, is diagnosed with a degenerative brain disease.
 (e-book, audiobook available)

JUVENILE BIOGRAPHIES

Chambers, Veronica
Shirley Chisholm is a Verb
 Dial Books, 2020
 The first African American woman elected to Congress leaving behind a legacy that continues to inspire and uplift.
 (e-book available)

Harrington, Janice
Buzzing with Questions: The Inquisitive Mind of Charles Henry Turner
 Calkins Creek, 2019
 The first Black entomologist who pursued his love for plants, bugs, and animals despite racial prejudices.
 (e-book available)

Slade, Suzanne
Swish!: The Slam-Dunking, Alley-Ooping, High-Flying Harlem Globetrotters
 Little Brown Books, 2020
 The team that changed the world with a basketball—combining athleticism, theater, and comedy in their performance.

TEEN FICTION

Colbert, Brandy
The Voting Booth
 Dreamscape Media LLC, 2020
 First-time voters encounter obstacles at the polls during their first election.
 (e-book, audiobook available)

Emezi, Akwaeke
Pet
 Make Me a World, 2019
 In this award-winning book, Jam summons a mysterious creature through her mother's painting.

Jackson, Tiffany D.
Grown
 Katherine Tegen Books, 2020
 A talented 17-year-old singer enters a singing competition, and later finds herself in precarious situations when she goes on tour with a 28-year-old superstar.
 (e-book, audiobook available)

Johnson, Leah
You Should See Me in My Crown
 Scholastic Press, 2020
 College-bound Liz Lightly finds her financial plans derailed, but shifts gears and decides to run for prom queen in order to win the scholarship.

YOUTH BOOKS (con't)

Jones, Kimberly and Gilly Segal

I'm Not Dying with You Tonight

Sourcebooks Fire, 2019

Trauma forges a bond between two students following a racially-charged incident at a high school football game.

(e-book, audiobook available)

McQueen, Daven

The Invincible Summer of Juniper Jones

Wattpad Books, 2020

In 1955, biracial 10th grader Ethan Harper is sent to live in a hostile Alabama town with relatives after fighting a white classmate. He's befriended by fearless Juniper Jones and their summer exploration of friendship takes flight.

(e-book available)

Morrow, Bethany C.

A Song Below Water

Tor Teen, 2020

A story of friendship, identity and community is challenged when a female siren is murdered.

(e-book, audiobook available)

Stone, Nic

Dear Justyce

Crown Pub, 2020

The powerful sequel to *Dear Martin*, told through the lens of a young man entrapped by our broken criminal justice system.

(e-book, audiobook available)

Zoboi, Ibi, and Yusef Salaam
Punching the Air

Balzer & Bray, 2020

Questions regarding the justice system are raised when a sixteen-year-old artist and poet is sentenced to juvenile detention after being wrongfully accused of assaulting a white boy.

(e-book, audiobook available)

TEEN NONFICTION

Adero, Malaika

A Black Woman Did That

Downtown Bookworks, 2020

A mixture of pictures, storytelling, and words that praise the many works of inspiring African American women.

Brimner, Larry Dane

Accused! The Trials of the Scottsboro Boys: Lies, Prejudice, and the Fourteenth Amendment

Calkin & Creek, 2019

In 1931, nine teenage African American males find themselves fighting for their lives after being falsely accused of rape.

(e-book available)

Elliott, Zetta

Say Her Name

Little Brown Books, 2020

Paying tribute through poetry, Ms. Elliott brings together a chorus of voices that celebrates Black women and girls.

(e-book, audiobook available)



Tiffany D. Jackson
Grown

Goldstone, Lawrence

Stolen Justice: The Struggle for African American Voting Rights

Scholastic, 2020

This story explores challenges in suppression of suffrage among the disenfranchised.

(e-book available)

Khan-Cullors, P., Bennee

Knauer, et. al.

When They Call You a Terrorist (YA Edition): A Story of Black Lives Matter and the Power to Change

Wednesday Books, 2020

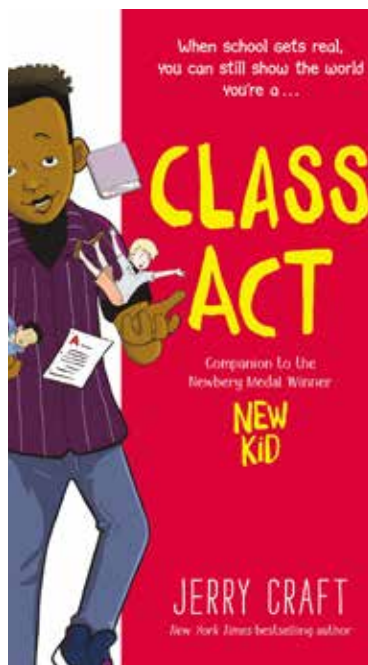
A movement that was sparked through a hashtag to protest the unjustified violence against African American people.

(e-book available)

Leon, Amyra
Concrete Kids

Penguin Workshop, 2020
A poetic journey that explores love, loss, self-love and resilience of Amyra's childhood years in Harlem. (e-book, audiobook available)

Reynolds, Jason
Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You: A Remix of the National Book Award-Winning "Stamped from the Beginning"
Little Brown Book, 2020
Inspires hope for antiracism, while contributing dialogue from a historical lens of racism in America; offering suggestions on how to move forward in our daily lives. (e-book, audiobook available)



Jerry Craft
Class Act

Thakur, Sophia
Somebody Give This Heart a Pen

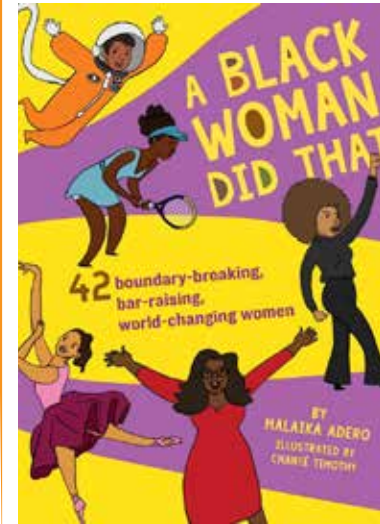
Candlewick, 2020
Spoken-word poetry that brings together a collection of words that explore issues of identity, love, relationships, fear and loss, drawing from the author's experiences. (e-book available)

TEEN BIOGRAPHIES

Bolden, Tonya
Changing the Equation: 50+ US Black Women in STEM
Abram Books, 2020
Celebrates the life of women who have conquered the world of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. (e-book available)

Harris, Kamala
The Truths We Hold: An American Journey
Penguin books, 2020
Vice-President
Kamala Harris shares the values that inspired and guided her political career. (e-book, audiobook available)

Iftin, Abdi Nor
Call Me American: Adapted for Young Adults
Penguin Random House, 2020
A heartfelt saga that follows the life of a young boy who migrates to America after fighting to be free from civil unrest in Somalia. (e-book available)



Malaika Adero
A Black Woman Did That

Johnson, George M.
All Boys Aren't Blue: A Memoir-Manifesto
Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2020
Looking back on his life, a prominent journalist and LGBTQ activist shares his childhood, adolescence, and college years as he experiences trials and triumphs as a Black queer male. (e-book, audiobook available)

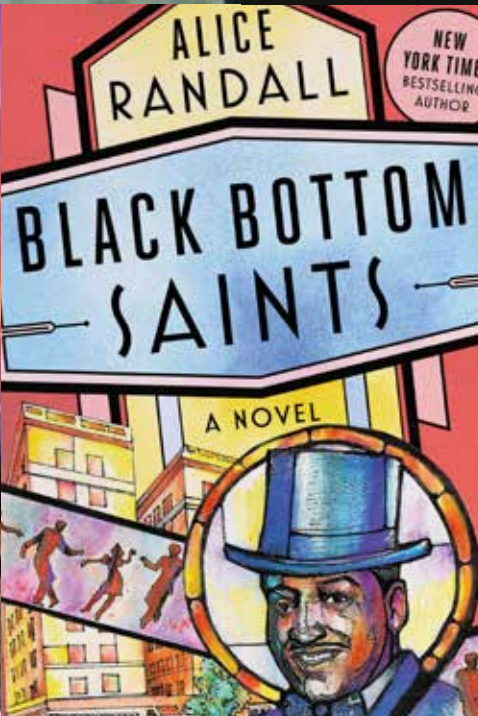
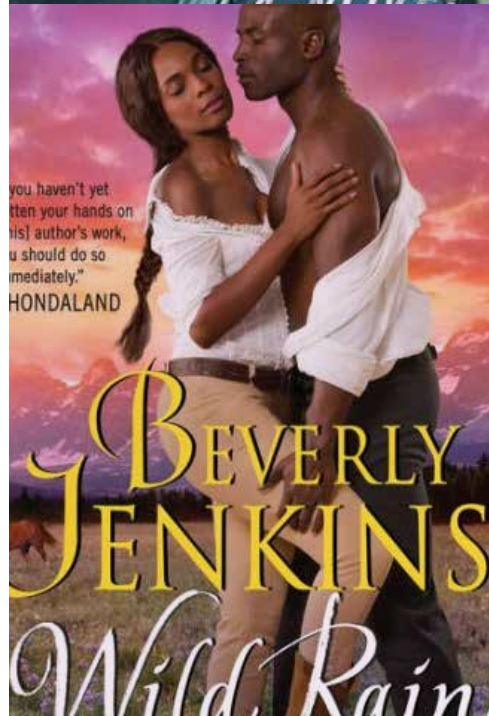
Wilkins, Ebony Joy
Claudette Colvin Refuses to Move: Courageous Kid of the Civil Rights Movement
(graphic novel)
Capstone, 2020
A young woman's decision to remain seated on a segregated bus inspires Civil Rights leaders to boycott resulting in liberties for African Americans. (e-book available)

BEST OF FICTION

BLACKTOP WASTELAND



TRANSCENDENT KINGDOM



Cosby, S.A.

Blacktop Wasteland

Flatiron Books, 2020

In an attempt to save his auto repair business “Bug” agrees to be the driver in one last heist.
(e-book, audio available)

Gyasi, Yaa

Transcendent Kingdom

Knopf Publishing Group, 2020

Dr. Gifty searches for the answers to her deceased brother’s opioid addiction while balancing a relationship with her estranged suicidal mother.

Jenkins, Beverly

Wild Rain

Avon, 2021

Spring is happy with her independent life as a rancher in Wyoming, will a reporter from back East be the man to change her mind?

Randall, Alice

Black Bottom Saints: A Novel

Amistad, 2020

Joseph “Ziggy” Johnson reflects on his life experiences that intersect with the history and culture of Detroit’s Black Bottom community.

Rochon, Farrah

The Boyfriend Project

Forever, 2020

After being “catfished” live on social media, Samiah decides to focus on her career, but has she finally found a love she can trust?
(e-book, audio available)

Addison, Esme

A Spell For Trouble

Random House, 2020

Alex, long estranged from her mother’s family, accepts an invitation to visit them in a small town with many secrets.
(e-book, audio available)

Alers, Rochelle

The Seaside Cafe

Dafina, 2020

Three women bond over good food and books on a resort island.
(e-book, audio available)

Alers, Rochelle

A Winning Season

Harlequin, 2020

Retired baseball player returns to his hometown and finds love and a new career.
(e-book available)

Antionette, Ashley

Butterfly 3

St. Martin’s Griffin, 2020

Caught in another love triangle, will Morgan finally choose her own fate?
(e-book, audio available)

Ashley & JaQuavis

Money Devils 1: A Cartel Novel

St. Martin’s Griffin, 2020

The LaCroix sisters continue the family legacy; chasing money.
(e-book, audio available)

Askaripour, Mateo

Black Buck

Houghton Mifflin, 2021

Darren’s new job at a tech startup leads to a chain of events that change the game forever.
(e-book available)

Bates, Lorisa

Benita Renee Jenkins: Diva Secret Agent

Urban Renaissance, 2020

Benita must leave her perfect life behind to take down one bad guy at a time.
(e-book, audio available)

Bennett, Brit

The Vanishing Half

Riverhead Books, 2020

Inseparable twins Desiree and Stella run away from their small town in Louisiana, only for one sister to disappear into a different world.
(e-book, audio available)

Billingsley, ReShonda Tate

A Little Bit of Karma

Gallery Books, 2020

Shannon and Jay’s divorce proceedings are already messy but take a turn for the worse when Jay’s mistress turns up dead.
(e-book, audio available)

Black, Anna

Now You Wanna Come Back 2

Urban Books, 2020

After reconciling with her husband, Lelia finds herself seeking comfort from her ex when her business starts to fail.
(e-book available)

Black, Imani

Friend or Foe

Urban Books, 2020

Detective Brice Simpson returns to the neighborhood he grew up in to solve the murder of a former drug kingpin’s wife.
(e-book, audio available)

FICTION (con't)

Card, Maisy

These Ghosts are Family

Simon & Schuster, 2020

Family secrets are revealed and old hurts begin to heal.

(e-book, audio available)

Chambers, Christopher

Scavenger: A Mystery

Three Rooms Press, 2020

Dickie encounters an ex-homeland security secretary who will stop at nothing to get what he wants.

(audio available)

Clark, P Djèli

Ring Shout

Tordotcom, 2020

A dark fantastical tale of resistance fighters who use the supernatural to combat the Klan in the 1920s.

(e-book, audio available)

Clark, Tracy

What You Don't See

Kensington, 2020

(e-book, audio available)

Private Investigator Cass Raines reluctantly assists her ex-partner with his new job as a bodyguard to a flashy media mogul who has a deadly stalker.

Cole, Alyssa

How to Catch a Queen

Avon, 2020

An arranged royal marriage turns into an unexpected romance.

(e-book, audio available)

Cole, Alyssa

When No One is Watching

Harper Collins, 2020

Gentrification of a Brooklyn neighborhood brings about mysterious changes.

(e-book, audio available)

Collette, Abby

A Deadly Inside Scoop: An Ice Cream Parlor Mystery

Berkley, 2020

Bronwyn Crewse has just taken over the family business when her father is accused of murder.

(e-book, audio available)

Cosby, S.A.

Blacktop Wasteland

Flatiron Books, 2020

In an attempt to save his auto repair business "Bug" agrees to be the driver in one last heist.

(e-book, audio available)

Crown, Zaire

The Game Never Ends

Dafina Books, 2020

Tuesday's enemies thought her new life made her soft. When her family is threatened, she shows them how a true boss fights back.

(e-book, audio available)

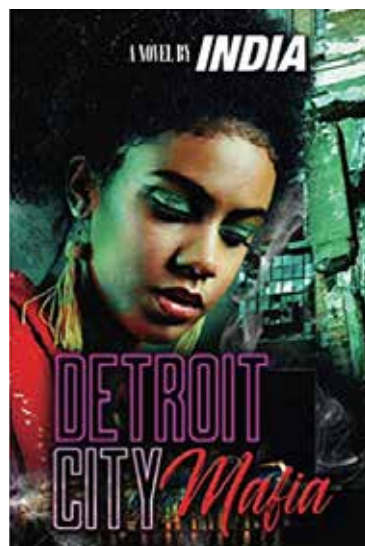
De Leon, Aya

A Spy in the Struggle: A Riveting Must-Read Novel of Suspense

Dafina Books, 2020

FBI agent Yolanda Vance finds herself in a tug-o-war between her career and a new lover she meets while working undercover.

(e-book available)



India Johnson-Williams

Detroit City Mafia

Duke, C.

Malediction

Urban Books, 2020

Laurence's dark and traumatic past threatens to destroy his relationship with Damien.

Giddings, Megan

Lakewood

Amistad, 2020

A college student takes a job that requires her participation in a secret government program.

(e-book, audio available)

Gordon, Alexia

Execution in E

Henery Press, 2020

A Social Media influencer's presence creates chaos in a small Irish town especially when members of her bridal party begin turning up dead.

(e-book, audio available)

Gyasi, Yaa

Transcendent Kingdom

Knopf Publishing Group, 2020

Dr. Gifty searches for the answers to her deceased brother's opioid addiction while balancing a relationship with her estranged suicidal mother.

(e-book, audio available)

Guillory, Jasmine

Party of Two

Berkley, 2020

A lawyer returns home to start a new law firm and discovers love in a chance meeting.

(e-book, audio available)

Hall, Rachel Howzell

And Now She's Gone

Forge, 2020

The search for a missing woman is complicated when all that is uncovered is not as it seems.

(e-book, audio available)

Hill, Donna

Confessions in B-Flat

Sideways Books, 2020

Jason and Anita struggle to find love between two different political and social ideologies.

(audio available)

Hunt, LaJill

Imitation of Wife

Urban Books, 2020

Janelle is at a crossroad between family and her new man when karma comes to visit.

(e-book, audio available)

Jackson, Brenda

The Bennetts' Wedding

Madarias Publishing Company, 2020

Cousins Kennedy and Victoria unexpectedly fall in love at the same time, leading to double nuptials.

(audio available)

Jenkins, Beverly

Wild Rain

Avon, 2021

Spring is happy with her independent life as a rancher in Wyoming, will a reporter from back East be the man to change her mind?

Johnson, Marvis

Gods of Egypt 2

Kingston Imperial, 2020

Assassins Asia, Persia and Egypt will stop at nothing to get the job done, even if the hit is a member of their triffecta.

(e-book available)

Johnson-Williams, India

Detroit City Mafia

Urban Books, 2020

In a desperate attempt to escape a lifetime of poverty, Murdonna does the unthinkable.

(e-book, audio available)

Johnson, Sadeqa

Yellow Wife

Simon & Schuster, 2021

Instead of the idyllic life she imagined with her true love, Pheby must outwit her cruel jailer to survive.

(e-book available)

Jones Jr., Robert

The Prophets

G.P. Putnam Sons 2021

Isaiah and Samuel attempt to find refuge sharing a life together on a southern plantation. What little peace they have is destroyed by the machinations of others.

(e-book available)

Leilani, Raven

Luster

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2020

A confused and lonely young artist becomes entangled in the marriage of an older couple.

(e-book, audio available)

Livesay, Tracey

Like Lovers Do

Avon, 2020

An ambitious young doctor discovers that her cute landlord is worth taking a chance on love.

(e-book, audio available)

McFarland, Jeni

The House of Deep Water

G.P. Putnam's Son, 2020

Three women return to their Michigan home to face the pain of their family's past.

(e-book, audio available)

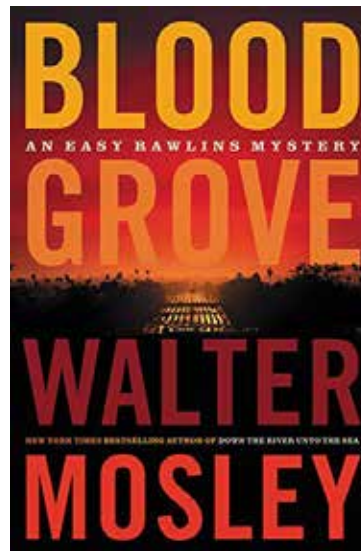
McKenzie, Alecia

A Million Aunties

Akashic Books, 2020

The merging of love, loss and artistry brings a family divided closer together.

(e-book available)



Walter Mosley
Blood Grove

FICTION (con't)

Makumbi, Jennifer Nansubuga
A Girl is a Body of Water

Tin House Books, 2020
 Set in the 1970s, a Ugandan girl is in search of her estranged mother.

(e-book available)

Martin, Alexa
Snapped

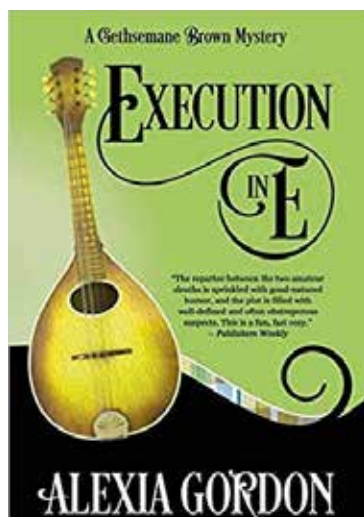
Berkley, 2020
 A biracial woman discovers she has been living her life avoiding addressing racism.

(e-book, audio available)

Momplaisir, Francesca
My Mother's House

Alfred A. Knopf, 2020
 Supernatural forces intervene to put an end to the evil lurking in an immigrant's home.

(e-book, audio available)



Alexia Gordon
Execution in E

Monroe, Mary
Across the Way

Kensington Publishing, 2020
 A married couple becomes too involved in their neighbors' secret lives.

(e-book, audio available)

Moore, Michel
Married to the Shooter

Urban Books, 2020
 Kapri grows up in a life of comfort but is drawn to the excitement of the streets.

(e-book, audio available)

Mosley, Walter
Blood Grove

Mulholland Press, 2021
 Private investigator Easy Rawlins takes on a racially charged case that leads him down a dark and twisted path.

(e-book, audio available)

Murray, Victoria Christopher
Wrath: A Novel (The Seven Deadly Sins Book 4)

Gallery Books, 2021
 Family trauma destroys a romantic relationship.

Philyaw, Deesha
Secret Lives of Church Ladies

West Virginia University Press, 2020
 Nine stories and four generations unveil the complexities surrounding Black womens' experiences with religion, sexuality and family.

(audio available)



Jasmine Guillory
Party of Two

Randall, Alice
Black Bottom Saints: A Novel

Amistad, 2020
 Joseph "Ziggy" Johnson reflects on his life experiences that intersect with the history and culture of Detroit's Black Bottom community.

(e-book, audio available)

Riley, Vanessa
A Duke, the Lady and a Baby

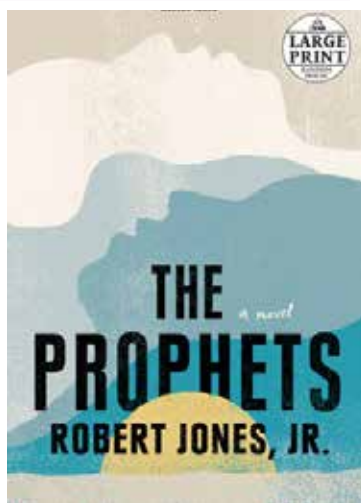
Zebra Books, 2020
 A young widow becomes a nanny to her own son to save him from his devious guardian.

(e-book, audio available)

Ryan, Kennedy
Queen Move

Blue Box Press, 2020
 Childhood sweethearts fight to reclaim their love.

(e-book available)



Robert Jones Jr.
The Prophets

Rochon, Farrah
The Boyfriend Project
Forever, 2020

After being “catfished” live on social media, Samiah decides to focus on her career, but has she finally found a love she can trust?

(e-book, audio available)

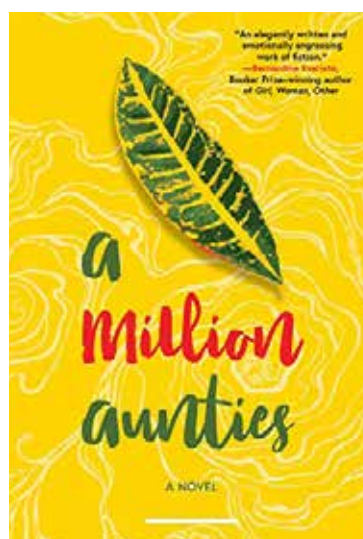
Simmons, Pat
Here for You: Family is Forever
Sourcebooks Casablanca, 2020
Nicholas provides the spiritual and emotional support that Rachel needs while she cares for her aunt.
(e-book available)

Smith, Ian K.
The Unspoken
Thomas & Mercer, 2020
Former police detective is determined to continue his fight for racial justice by working as a private investigator.

Swinson, Kiki and Julian Seay
My Time to Shine
KS Publications, 2020
Samantha is confronted with a new set of problems after relocating to a new home outside of Richmond.

Washington, Bryan
Memorial
Riverhead, 2020
Mike and Benson struggle with the challenges of aging parents and problems in their relationship.
(e-book, audio available)

Weatherspoon, Rebekah
If the Boot Fits
Dafina, 2020
Oscar-winning actor is enamored with a struggling personal assistant.
(e-book available)



Alecia McKenzie
A Million Aunties

Weber, Carl
Influence: Death on the Beach
Urban Books, 2020
The Hudson and Hudson law firm is retained to defend a famous actress accused of murdering her music producer husband.
(e-book, audio available)

Wesley, Valerie W.
A Glimmer of Death
Kensington, 2021
Odessa Jones must use her psychic gift to discover who really murdered the very unlikeable Charles Risko.
(e-book, audio available)

Whitaker, Tu-Shonda
Role Play
Dafina, 2020
The governor and his wife look so happy together. But their lovers, given the chance would tell a different story.
(e-book available)

Wright, Elle
The Way You Hold Me (Pure Talent #2)
Dafina Books, 2020
In the midst of containing a disaster for a shared celebrity client, Skye and Garrett find themselves unleashing deep desires.
(e-book available)

BEST OF NONFICTION

UNCOMFORTABLE

SAY IT
LOUDER!

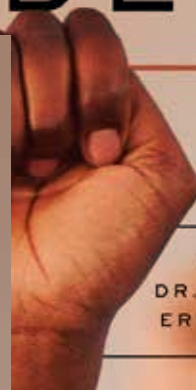
CONVER

A PROMISED LAND

WITH A B

Ca

The Origins
of Our
Discontents



Foreword by
DR. MICHAEL
ERIC DYSON



Than
This

Acho, Emmanuel
Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man
 Flatiron Books: An Oprah Book, 2020
 Ex-Football player and Fox Sports analyst recounts his experiences with racial unrest and being Black in a white privileged America.
(e-book, audio available)

Cross, Tiffany
Say It Louder!: Black Voters, White Narratives, and Saving Our Democracy
Amistad, 2020
 Explosive examination of the crucial role African Americans play in the voting process in spite of continuous subversive and suppression tactics.
(e-book, audio available)

Cummings, Elijah
We're Better Than This: My Fight for the Future of Our Democracy
 Harper Collins, 2020
 Eye-opening chronicle of the late Congressman and how seminal moments prepared him for a life spent fighting for justice and progress.
(e-book, audio available)

Obama, Barack
A Promised Land
 Crown Publishing Group (NY), 2020
 An introspective look at the development of Obama's political identity, leading him to become America's first Black president.
(e-book, audio available)

Wilkerson, Isabelle
Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents
 Random House, 2020
 Pulitzer Prize winning author discusses the caste system existing beyond race and class that secretly influences our lives and behavior.
(e-book, audio available)

ART, MUSIC AND POETRY

Alexander, Kwame
Light for the World to See
 Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020
 Collection of poetry highlights Black America's response to racism.
(e-book available)

Bethencourt, Kahran and Amanda Seals
Glory: Magical Visions of Black Beauty
 St. Martin's Press, 2020
 One hundred breathtaking photographs showcasing the many forms of Black beauty.
(e-book available)

Drew, Kimberly, and Jenna Wortham
Black Futures
 One World, 2020
 Art, recipes, essays and tweets are used to positively represent the creative spirit of Black creators today.

Duster, Michelle
Ida B. the Queen: The Extraordinary Life and Legacy of Ida B. Wells
 Atria/One Signal Publishers, 2021
 A unique, visual tribute to the inspirational and often overlooked leader.
(e-book available)

George, Lynell
A Handful of Earth, A Handful of Sky: The World of Octavia Butler
 Angel City Press, 2020
 A guide suggesting the best ways to develop a creative life by delving into the processes and ideas of the award winning writer.

Giovanni, Nikki
Make Me Rain
 William Morrow & Co., 2020
 Vibrant and provocative poetry calls out the injustices of racism and segregation while revealing a deeply personal side of the celebrated poet.
(e-book, audio available)

Madgett, Naomi Long
You Are My Joy and Pain: Love Poems (Made in Michigan Writers Series)
 Wayne State University Press, 2020
 Beautiful collection by the late Poet Laureate of Detroit, written at the peak of her career.
(e-book available)

Mahon, Maureen
Black Diamond Queens: African American Women and Rock and Roll
 Duke University Press, 2020
 From Big Mama Thornton to Tina Turner, the challenges and the triumphs in the music industry are revealed.

Major, Clarence
The Essential Clarence Major
 University of North Carolina Press, 2020
 An illuminating overview of a masterful poet, novelist and playwright includes excerpts from Major's most celebrated works.
(e-book available)

NON-FICTION (con't)

Marley, Ziggy

Bob Marley: Portrait of the Legend

Rizzoli International Publications, 2020

Portraits honoring what would have been the music icon's 75th birthday.

Mason, Clifford

Macbeth in Harlem: Black Theater in America from the Beginning to Raisin in the Sun

Rutgers University Press, 2020

Details the struggles African American performers, writers and playwrights fought to make a respectable space in the American theater.

Norman, Phillip

Wild Thing: The Short, Spellbinding Life of Jimi Hendrix

Liveright, 2020

Wealth of new information reveals the vivid life and tragic ending of the acclaimed rock guitarist who influenced a nation.

(e-book available)

Quattro, Ken

Invisible Men: The Trailblazing Black Artists of Comic Books

Yoe Books, 2020

Exhaustive research reveals the stories of several artists who were pioneers in the comic book industry.

Rae, Linda Brown

The Heart of a Woman: The Life and Music of Florence B. Price

University of Illinois, 2020

Biography of the first black female composer to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra, who also created over three hundred works including symphonies and choral music.

Shange, Ntozake

Dance We Do: A Poet Explores Black Dance

Beacon Press, 2020

The author shares her story, highlighting the impact of movement on creativity and the teachings of unrecognized dance pioneers.

(e-book available)

Young, Kevin

African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle & Song

Library of America, 2020

Landmark anthology covers poets from the colonial period to the present including the Black Arts Movement and many out-of-print or hard-to-find poems.

BIOGRAPHY/MEMOIRS

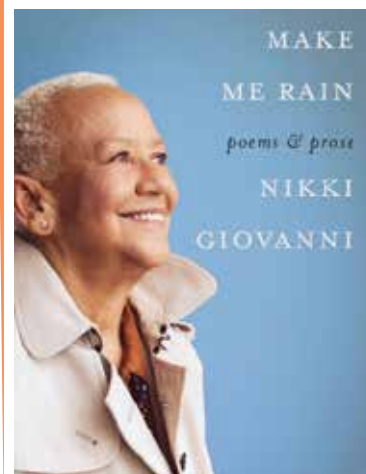
Ali, Rahaman & Fiaz Rafiq

My Brother, Muhammad Ali: The Definitive Biography

Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020

Boxing legend Muhammed Ali's life is revealed through the lens of his beloved brother.

(e-book, audio available)



Nikki Giovanni

Make Me Rain

Andrews-Dyer, Helena and R. Eric Thomas

Reclaiming Her Time: The Power of Maxine Waters

Dey Street Books, 2020

Illustrated biography pays tribute to the iconic Congresswoman and her forty years of public service.

(e-book, audio available)

Barnett, Brittany K.

A Knock at Midnight: A Story of Hope, Justice, and Freedom

Crown Publishing Group (NY), 2020

A powerful and moving story about the criminal justice system and how to rise above the negative impacts on the African American community.

(e-book available)

Brackett, Donald

Tumult!: The Incredible Life and Music of Tina Turner

Backbeat Books, 2020

Captivating tale examines the life of a remarkable talent and her ultimate triumph over adversity, selling more concert tickets than any other solo artist.

(e-book available)

Carey, Mariah

Meaning of Mariah Carey

Andy Cohen, 2020

Award-winning vocalist and songwriter chronicles her triumphs and trials in this unfiltered story of her life.

(e-book available)

Hostin, Sunny, and Charisse Jones

I Am These Truths: A Memoir of Identity, Justice and Living Between Worlds

HarperOne, 2020

A mixed-raced African American television host shares her experiences with prejudice and racism throughout her education and career.

(e-book, audio available)

Gifford, Justin

Revolution or Death: The Life of Eldridge Cleaver

Lawrence Hill Books, 2020

Illuminating biography answers long held questions about the compelling and notorious activist.

(e-book available)

Kravitz, Lenny, and David Ritz
Let Love Rule

Henry Holt & Company, 2020

A recollection of the many events that lead singer and songwriter Lenny Kravitz to stardom.

(e-book, audio available)

Meade, Desmond

Let My People Vote: My Battle to Restore the Civil Rights of Returning Citizens

Beacon Press, 2020

After battling drugs, alcoholism and several run-ins with the law, Meade shares his journey to becoming the president of the Florida Rights Restoration Coalition.

(e-book, audio available)

Moore, Marcus J.

The Butterfly Effect: How Kendrick Lamar Ignited the Soul of Black America

Atria Books, 2020

First biography of the Pulitzer Prize winning artist explores his impact on music and society.

(e-book, audio available)

Obama, Barack

A Promised Land

Crown Publishing Group, 2020

An introspective look at the development of Obama's political identity, leading him to become America's first Black president.

(e-book, audio available)

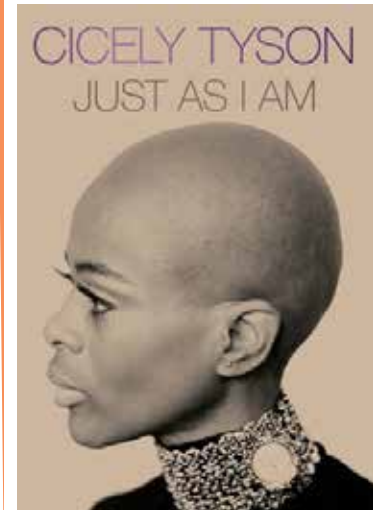
Paterson, David

Black, Blind, & In Charge: A Story of Visionary Leadership and Overcoming Adversity

Skyhorse Pub Co Inc., 2020

Biography describes the rise of the 1st African American to serve as governor of the state of New York, who is also legally blind.

(e-book available)



Cicely Tyson

Just As I Am: A Memoir

Payne, Les

The Dead Are Arising: The Life of Malcolm X

Liveright Pub Corp, 2020

Exhaustive research reveals a corrected portrait of one of the twentieth century's most politically relevant icons.

(e-book, audio available)

Ribowsky, Mark

The Big Life of Little Richard

Diversion Books, 2020

Entertaining biography of the legendary artist known as the architect of several genres of music.

(e-book available)

Smith, Bevy

Bevelations: Lessons from a Mutha, Auntie, Bestie

Andy Cohen Books, 2021

Popular radio host recounts how she was able to change direction and gain more meaning and purpose in her life.

(e-book, audio available)

NON-FICTION (con't)

Trethewey, Natasha
Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir

Ecco Press, 2020
 Pulitzer Prize-winning poet shares her compelling and deeply personal story of loss and the ways it has shaped her life and her art.
(e-book, audio available)

Tyson, Cicely
Just As I Am: A Memoir

HarperCollins, 2021
 Award-winning actress shares an unvarnished look at her life and her work over six decades on stage and screen.
(e-book, audio available)

Walker, Jerald
How to Make a Slave and Other Essays

Mad Creek Books, 2020
 A collection of essays blending the author's experiences as a Black man breaking away from societal stereotypes.
(e-book available)

BUSINESS, FINANCE AND CAREER

Sokunbi, Bola
Clever Girl Finance: Learn How Investing Works, Grow Your Money

John Wiley & Sons, 2020
 Media personality instructs readers on how to build a nest egg and create wealth even with a modest income.
(e-book, audio available)

Young, Andre
7 Ways to Lead: Evolve Professionally and Personally; Enhancing Your Leadership and Work/Life Harmony

Morgan James Publishing, 2020
 The author introduces different skills that can lead to career advancement.
(e-book available)

COOKING/ENTERTAINING

Hussain, Nadiya
Time to Eat: Delicious Meals for Busy Lives

Random House, 2020
 Quick and easy menus with tips and tricks to make meal time less challenging.
(e-book available)

Mayes, Rosie
I Heart Soul Food: 100 Southern Comfort Food Favorites

Sasquatch Books, 2020
 Easy-to-follow soulful recipes that will transform any home cook into a culinary master.
(e-book available)

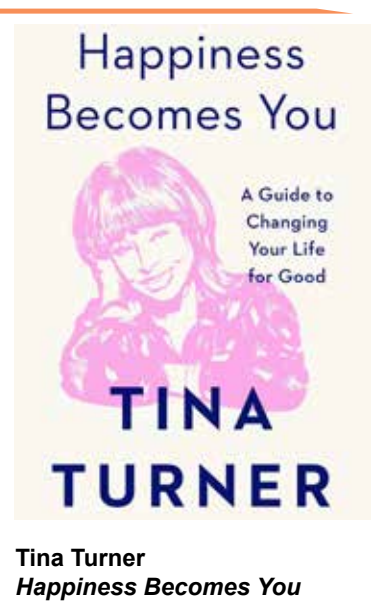
Samuelsson, Marcus, Osayi Endolyn, Yewande Komolafe, and Tamie Cook

The Rise: Black Cooks and the Soul of American Food
 Voracious, 2020

A blending of food, culture and history are used to present 150 recipes in honor of top Black chefs in America.
(e-book available)

Thomas, Haile
Living Lively: 80 Plant-based Recipes to Activate Your Power and Feed Your Potential

William Morrow Cookbooks, 2020
 Popular activist and motivational speaker combines cooking and inspiration to provide the boost needed for positive change.
(e-book available)



Tina Turner
Happiness Becomes You

HEALTH & SCIENCE

Adams, Eric
Healthy at Last: A Plant-Based Approach to Preventing and Reversing Diabetes and Other Chronic Illnesses

Hay House, 2020
Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams provides a plant based solution to beating chronic diseases surrounding the African American community.
(e-book, audio available)

Cox, Joy
Fat Girls in Black Bodies: Creating Communities of Our Own

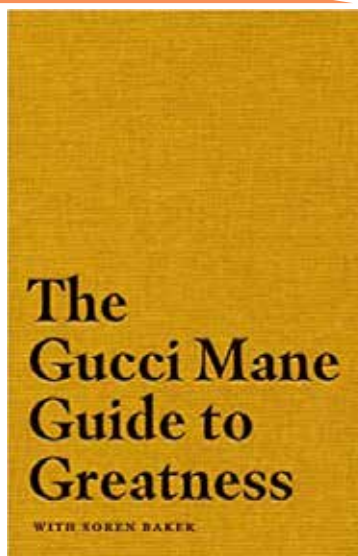
North Atlantic Books, 2020
Dr. Joy sheds light on the importance of creating safe communities for Black women to embrace and love their voluptuous bodies.
(e-book available)

Flowers, Catherine Coleman
Waste: One Woman's Fight Against America's Dirty Secret

The New Press, 2020
An activist wages a battle for environmental justice and the right to basic sanitation in rural, poor communities.
(e-book, audio available)

Jones, Chip
The Organ Thieves: The Shocking Story of the First Heart Transplant in the Segregated South

GalleryJeter Publishing, 2020
Astounding retelling of a chapter in medical history and the issues of race in the healthcare system.
(e-book available)



Gucci Mane and Soren Baker
The Gucci Mane Guide to Greatness

HISTORY

Adero, Malaika
True Names: Four Generations of My Afro Appalachian Family

Center Street, 2020
A rich narrative of two families from different cultures is told using oral history, government records and family documents.

Pilgrim, David, Franklin Hughes, and David Eisler
Haste to Rise: A Remarkable Experience of Black Education During Jim Crow

PM Press, 2020
Little known history of Ferris Institute, a majority white college in Big Rapids, Michigan which opened doors to African American students during the Jim Crow Era.
(e-book available)

Kendi, Ibram X, and Keisha N. Blain

Four Hundred Souls: A Community History of African America 1619-2019

One World, 2021
A collection of historical essays and short stories written by both famous and ordinary people each taking a five-year period to shed light on a varied past and present.
(e-book, audio available)

Jones, Martha
Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won The Vote and Insisted on Equality for All

Basic Books, 2020
Following the path from Seneca Falls to Selma, triumphant story of how African American women fought for voting rights.
(e-book, audio available)

Kearse, Bettye, and Karen Chilton
The Other Madisons: The Lost History of a President's Black Family

Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020
Author embarks on a journey to uncover and confirm the truths of her family's lineage.
(e-book available)

INSPIRATIONAL/RELIGION

Burton, Valorie
Let Go of the Guilt

HarperCollins Christian Publishing, 2020
Author shows how journaling and asking the right questions can lead to a peaceful life.
(e-book, audio available)

NON-FICTION (con't)

Curry, Michael B. and Sara Grace

Love Is the Way: Holding on to Hope in Troubling Times

Avery Publishing Group, 2020

The Most Reverend Michael Curry explains why love is an essential component to moving America forward.

(e-book, audio available)

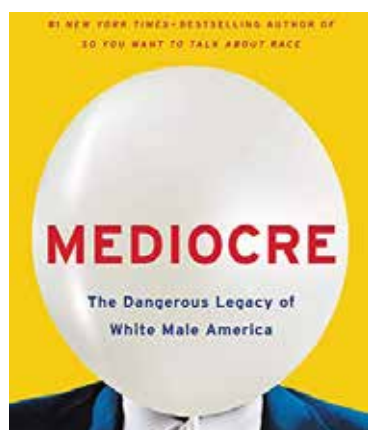
Grace, Jamie

Finding Quiet: My Journey to Peace in an Anxious World

Bethany House Publishers, 2020

Two-time Grammy-nominated singer, songwriter, and actress explains how music helped her manage ADHD, anxiety and Tourette's syndrome.

(e-book available)



Ijeoma Oluo

Mediocre: The Dangerous Legacy of White Male America

Gucci, Mane and Soren Baker
The Gucci Mane Guide to Greatness

Simon & Schuster, 2020

Platinum selling recording artist dispenses motivating and inspiring ideas for success.

(e-book, audio available)

Sheff, David

The Buddhist on Death Row: How One Man Found Light in the Darkest Place

Simon & Schuster, 2020

Renowned practitioner describes his profound transformation from a man filled with violence to a man whose mission is to prevent violence in others.

(e-book available)

Tisby, Jemar

How to Fight Racism: Courageous Christianity and the Journey Toward Racial Justice

Zondervan, 2021

Author discusses how the church can use the teachings of Christ in the pursuit of racial justice.

(e-book available)

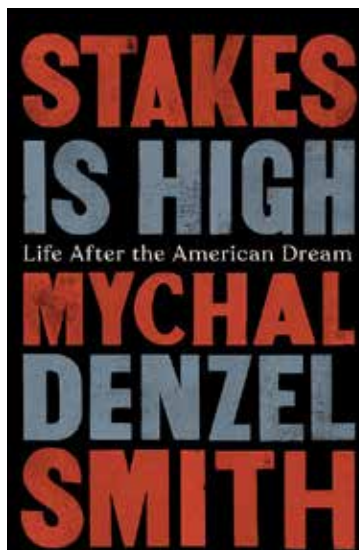
Turner, Tina

Happiness Becomes You

Atria Books, 2020

Highest selling concert performer and music legend shares advice on the many benefits of Buddhism and how it is linked to her ultimate success.

(e-book, audio available)



Mychal Denzel Smith

Stakes Is High: Life After the American Dream

POLITICAL/SOCIAL SCIENCES

Acho, Emmanuel

Uncomfortable Conversations with a Black Man

Flatiron Books: An Oprah Book, 2020

Ex-football player and Fox Sports analyst recounts his experiences with racial unrest and being Black in a white privileged America.

(e-book, audio available)

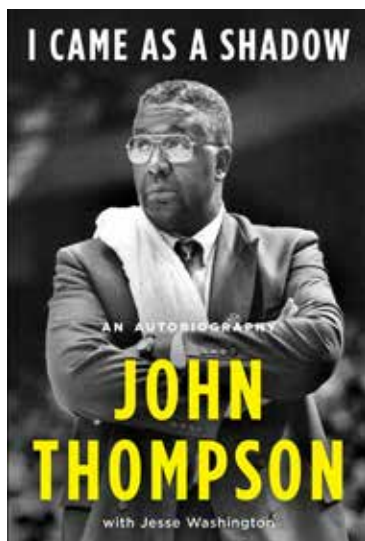
Bailey, Issac J.

Why Didn't We Riot? A Black Man in Trumpland

Other Press (NY), 2020

Journalist Bailey explains how Black people's reluctance to riot may have increased the number of Trump supporters in the U.S.

(e-book available)



John Thompson
I Came As a Shadow:
An Autobiography

Blow, Charles M
The Devil You Know: A Black Power Manifesto
 Harper Collins, 2020
 Columnist opines that a reversal of the Great Migration is how African Americans can create political power and destroy white supremacy in the South.
(e-book, audio available)

Cole, Johnetta Betsch
Racism in American Public Life: A Call to Action
 University of Virginia Press, 2021
 Former president of Spelman College discusses how creating more diversity in education and other institutions will further social progress.
(e-book available)

Cross, Tiffany
Say It Louder!: Black Voters, White Narratives, and Saving Our Democracy
 Amistad, 2020
 Explosive examination of the crucial role African Americans play in the voting process in spite of continuous subversive and suppression tactics.
(e-book, audio available)

Cummings, Elijah
We're Better Than This: My Fight for the Future of Our Democracy
 Harper Collins, 2020
 Eye-opening chronicle of the late Congressman and how seminal moments prepared him for a life spent fighting for justice and progress.
(e-book, audio available)

Dyson, Michael Eric
Long Time Coming: Reckoning with Race in America
 St. Martin's Press, 2020
 Exposes the horrific truths of police brutality and the negative implications on Black people throughout history.
(e-book, audio available)

Garza, Alicia
The Purpose of Power: How We Come Together When We Fall Apart
 One World, 2020
 Author reflects on the lessons of bringing people together to inspire and activate communities to fight for a more just society.

Hagopian, Jesse and Denisha Jones
Black Lives Matter at School: An Uprising for Educational Justice
 Haymarket Books, 2020
 An anti-racist approach to educating students on the Black Lives Matter Movement in school systems.

Hamad, Ruby
White Tears/Brown Scars: How White Feminism Betrays Women of Color
 Catapult, 2020
 Author builds a powerful argument about the legacy of white superiority and the impact on women of color.

Hill, Marc Lamont
We Still Here: Pandemic, Policing, Protests and Possibilities
 Haymarket Books, 2020
 The uprising of 2020 sparked this incisive collection of interviews and essays written during the largest protest movement in US history.

Hunt, Kenya
Girl Gurl Grrrl: On Womanhood and Belonging in the Age of Black Girl Magic
 Amistad Press, 2020
 A collection of personal essays detailing the many racial occurrences experienced by a Black woman living in the United Kingdom.

NON-FICTION (con't)

Obama, Barack and Ken Mondschein

Speeches

Canterbury Classics, 2020

A collection of inspirational speeches written by America's influential first Black President.

Oluo, Ijeoma

Mediocre: The Dangerous Legacy of White Male America

Hatchette, 2020

Examines the ways white supremacy has caused damage to not only people of color and women but also white men.

(e-book, audio available)

Owens, Candace

Blackout: How Black America Can Make Its Second Escape from the Democrat Plantation

Threshold Editions, 2020

Controversial pundit examines African Americans' long held allegiance to a political party she believes hurts rather helps the community.

(ebook available)

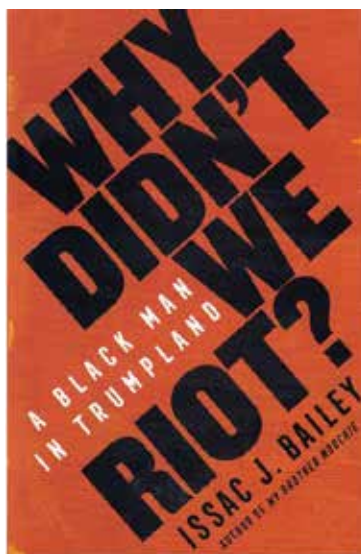
Ruffin, Amber, and Lacey Lamar

You'll Never Believe What Happened to Lacey: Crazy Stories About Racism

Grand Central Publishing, 2021

Popular late night talk show host helps her sister who lives in Nebraska deal with the racism she experiences.

(e-book, audio available)



Issac J. Bailey

Why Didn't We Riot? A Black Man in Trumpland

Sharpton, Al

Rise Up: Confronting a Country at the Crossroads

Hanover Square Press, 2020

Reverend Al Sharpton shares his unique experiences as a politician and leader in the fight for social justice.

(e-book, audio available)

Smith, Mychal Denzel

Stakes Is High: Life After the American Dream

Bold Type Books, 2020

Collection of essays that exposes the contradictions and harsh realities about America's identity.

(e-book, audio available)

Stewart, Dianne M

Black Women, Black Love: America's War on African American Marriages

Seal Press, 2020

Author argues that laws and policies created a crisis where nearly seventy percent of Black women will never marry.

(e-book, audio available)

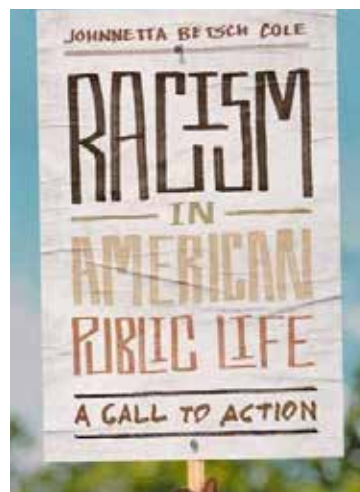
Smyer, Adam

You Can Keep That to Yourself: A Comprehensive List of What Not to Say to Black People, for Well-Intentioned People of Pallor

Akashic Books, 2020

A much needed humorous and astute conversation about race and culture.

(e-book, audio available)



Johnetta Betsch Cole

Racism in American Public Life: A Call to Action

Wilkerson, Isabelle

Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents

Random House, 2020

Pulitzer Prize-winning author discusses the caste system existing beyond race and class that secretly influences our lives and behavior.

(ebook, audio available)

Winters, Mary-Frances

Black Fatigue: How Racism Erodes the Mind, Body, and Spirit

Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2020

An examination of how being Black can negatively impact mental, physical and emotional health.

(ebook, audio available)

SPORTS & RECREATION

Bing, Dave

Attacking the Rim: My Journey from NBA Legend to Business Leader to Big-city Mayor to Mentor

Triumph Books, 2020

Inspirational tale of the personal saga of a man who achieved success in many arenas.

(ebook available)

O'Ree, Willie, and Michael McKinley

Willie: The Game-Changing Story of the NHL's First Black Player

Viking, 2020

Hockey Hall of Fame inductee recalls how his boyhood dreams manifested into a career filled with highs and lows.

(ebook, audio available)



Marc Lamont Hill

We Still Here: Pandemic, Policing, Protests and Possibilities

Thompson, John

I Came As a Shadow: An Autobiography

Henry Holt & Company, 2020

Biography discusses Georgetown University's late legendary coach and his philosophy of developing players into men.

(ebook available)

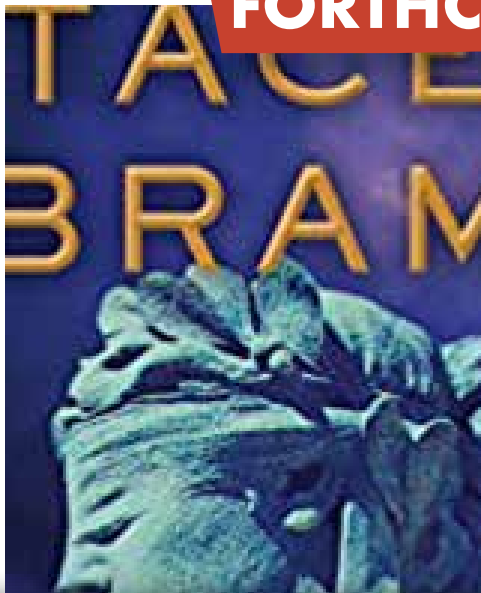
Spears, Marc J., and Gary Washburn

The Spencer Haywood Rule: Battles, Basketball, and the Making of an American Iconoclast

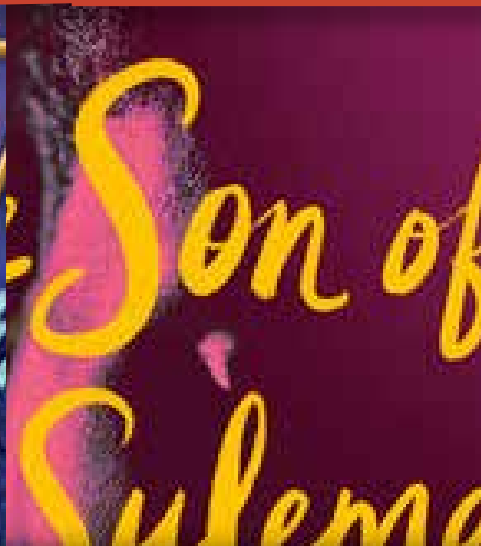
Explores the impactful career of the famed player and his legacy on and off the court.

(ebook available)

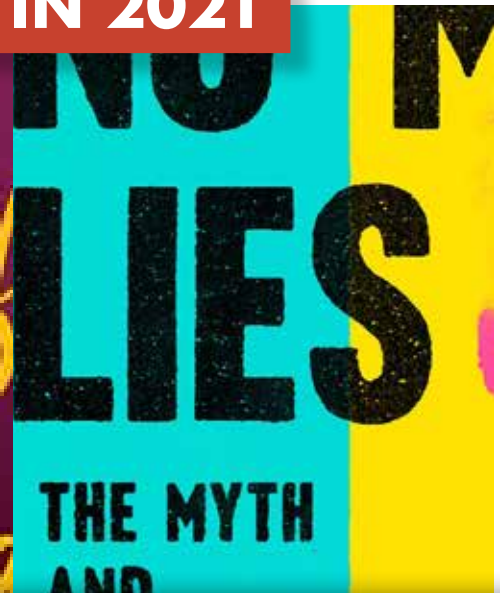
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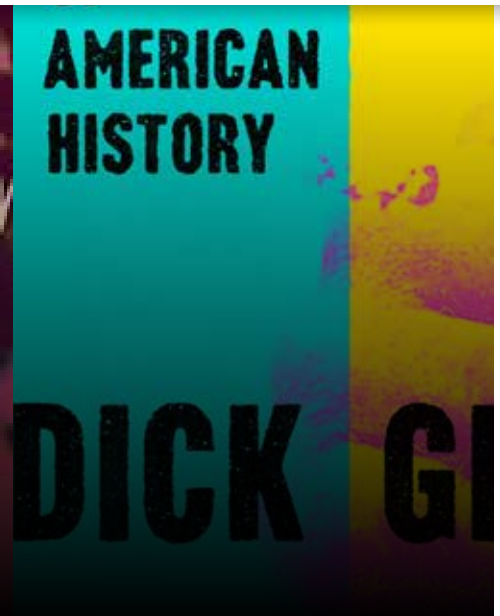
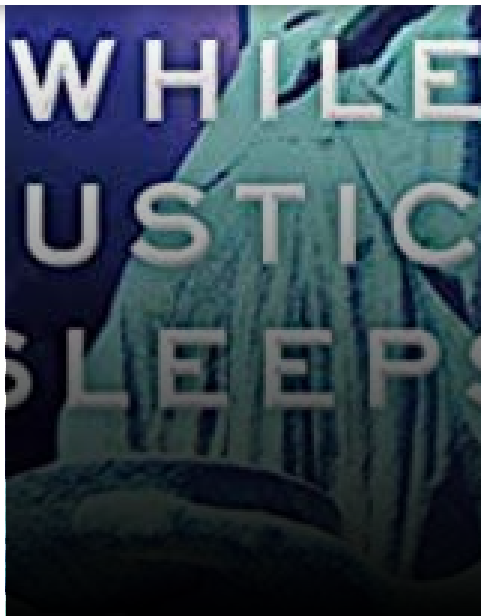
Abrams, Stacey
While Justice Sleeps:
A Novel
 Doubleday, 2021



Dickey, Eric Jerome
The Son of Mr. Suleman
 Dutton, 2021



Gregory, Dick
No More Lies: The Myth and Reality of American History
 Amistad, 2021



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