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

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

BOOKS

Babies & Toddlers

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

K-2nd

❖ Let’s Talk About Race by Julius Lester. Introduces concept of race as part of a person’s story; introduces the idea of prejudice based on skin color. Picture book for K-2.
❖ Henry’s Freedom Box by Ellen Levine. Excellent book about a child’s resistance to slavery.
❖ A Sweet Smell of Roses by Angela Johnson; illus. by Eric Velasquez. A stirring yet jubilant glimpse of the invaluable contributions of youth in the Civil Rights movement. Ages 5-8.
❖ Yours for justice, Ida B. Wells: the daring life of a crusading journalist by Philip Dray
❖ Dolores Huerta: a hero to migrant workers by Sarah E. Warren; illustrated by Robert Casilla

3rd-6th

❖ Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson. Through poetry, Woodson shares her experience growing up African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Grade 4 & up.

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❖ **Through My Eyes** by Ruby Bridges. Autobiography about the harrowing story of how Bridges integrated a public school in New Orleans when she was 6 years old. Grades 2-4.

❖ **One Crazy Summer** by Rita Williams-Garcia. Three sisters visit their mother, a Black Panther Party member, during a memorable summer in Oakland. Sequel *P.S. Be Eleven*. Grades 3 & up.

❖ **Freedom over me: eleven slaves, their lives and dreams brought to life** by Ashley Bryan. Uses primary sources (and poetry) to contrast the monetary value of a slave with the priceless value of life, dreams and dignity. Grades 4 & up. *NEW

❖ **Turning 15 on the road to freedom: my story of the 1965 Selma voting rights march** by Lynda Blackmon Lowery. The youngest person to complete the Selma to Montgomery March shares her involvement in historic Civil Rights events. Grades 4 & up. *NEW

❖ **Little Rock Nine** by Marshall Poe; illustrated by Ellen Lindner. Two boys in Little Rock get caught up in the struggle over public school integration. Grades 4 & up.


❖ **The Watsons Go to Birmingham** by Christopher Paul Curtis. The Watsons’ lives are drastically changed after they visit Grandma in Birmingham in the summer of 1963. Grades 4 & up.

❖ **Revolution** by Deborah Wiles. Twelve-year-old Sunny evolves a growing sense of justice and empathy after “the invaders” arrive in her Mississippi town to integrate public facilities and register voters during “Freedom Summer.” Grades 4 & up.

❖ **The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny and the Fight For Civil Rights** by Steve Sheinkin. The riveting local account of African American sailors who were charged with mutiny for refusing to work in unsafe conditions after a deadly explosion during World War II. Grades 4 & up.

❖ **The kid's guide to social action: how to solve the social problems you choose -- and turn creative thinking into positive action** by Barbara A. Lewis

❖ **Claudette Colvin: twice toward justice.** An excellent book parents and teachers can use to raise the question: Who gets to be a leader? Which Black lives matter, and who gets left out when we look for just one kind of hero? Grades 6 & up.

❖ **Black lives matter** by Sue Bradford Edwards and Duchess Harris. Grades 6 & up.

❖ **In the shadow of liberty: the hidden history of slavery, four presidents, and five black lives** by Kenneth C. Davis. Grades 6 & up. *NEW

7th & Up

❖ **From #BlackLivesMatter to Black liberation** by Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

❖ **All-American Boys** by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely

❖ **How it Went Down** by Kekla Magoon

❖ **March: books 1, 2 and 3** by John Lewis; with Andrew Aydin; art by Nate Powell *NEW

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❖ A young people’s history of the United States by Howard Zinn
❖ Police Brutality (opposing viewpoints series) by Sheila Fitzgerald.
❖ Are Prisons Obsolete? by Angela Davis. Grades 9 & up.

See also:
❖ Canerow Book List, titles featuring children of color as central characters in their own stories, curated by Bay Area mom, activist and author Mia Birdsong for children of color to see themselves and their histories reflected in literature.
❖ #RaiseUpJustice Diverse Books Starter Kit from Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ)
❖ The Zinn Education Project teaching materials on racism, civil rights and other social issues.
❖ Teaching for Change. Resources by theme, including Racial Identity and Fairness and Activism.
❖ Putting the Movement Back into Civil Rights Teaching. Sample lesson plans and resources.
❖ #WeNeedDiverseBooks envisions a world where all children can see themselves in the pages of a book. Get involved with the #WeNeedDiverseBooks campaign by tweeting and contacting publishers. http://diversebooks.org

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

PARENT and TEACHER PERSPECTIVES
❖ Rest in power: the enduring life of Trayvon Martin by Sybrina Fulton and Tracy Martin *NEW
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❖ A Mother’s White Privilege by Elizabeth Broadbent in the Huffington Post

❖ Talk to Your Kids About Ferguson by Bruce Reyes-Chow in the Huffington Post

❖ Telling My Son About Ferguson by Michelle Alexander, author of The New Jim Crow

❖ What White Children Need to Know About Race by Ali Michael and Eleonora Bartoli in Independent School Magazine.

❖ Your Child and the Juvenile Justice System by Lenore Anderson. For parents.

VIDEOS & MULTIMEDIA

❖ Black Lives Matter Co-Creator on the New Civil Rights Movement. Alicia Garza, co-founder of #BlackLivesMatter, tells AJ+ about the young Black activists leading a movement for change and what it is they are asking for (03:51 minutes). Grades 7 & up.

❖ Cracking the Codes dir. by Shakti Butler (film and discussion guide)

❖ Teaching Ferguson in the Classroom from PBS. Various videos for discussion.


❖ Letter to the Local Police by June Jordan. Use this poem as a conversation starter: Remove key identity words from the poem and ask students to fill in the blanks. Discuss how the poem could actually be about racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia, or sexism.

❖ The Knotted Line by Evan Bissell. An interactive media project exploring the historical relationship between freedom and confinement in the United States. With miniature paintings of over 50 historical moments from 1495-2025. Includes resources for educators.

❖ For Teens: “Is Ferguson Like Mockingjay?” from MTV Braless. (03:15 minutes, clip continues until 04:09 - Strong language in the unrelated segment starting at 03:16 mins). Grades 8 & up.

USEFUL WEBSITES & OTHER RESOURCES

❖ Resources for Families from SURJ (Showing Up for Racial Justice)

❖ Raising Race Conscious Children (blog)

❖ Embrace Race (newsletter), also on facebook.

❖ YWCA Stand Against Racism

❖ Teaching #BlackLivesMatters, a guide from San Francisco Unified School District Guide

❖ St. Louis School Librarian Offers LibGuide on Ferguson from School Library Journal

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- The Children’s Peace Education and Anti-Bias Library
- Teaching African American Literature and History from the National Humanities Center
- Teaching About Ferguson: Race and Racism in the United States from Teaching Tolerance
- Books to Increase Awareness of the Cycles of Poverty, Race and Incarceration from Reaching Reluctant Readers, a blog by Amy Cheney.
- The Other America, speech by Martin Luther King Jr. Read what MLK actually said about riots, protest and racism in the weeks before he was assassinated in 1968.
- In the Margins booklists for youth in custody
- Gale Opposing Viewpoints: Racial Profiling • Community Policing • Racism • Activism

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