



Yale Club of Washington, DC's Black History Month Book Recommendations

(NOTE: This List will continue to be updated, and we welcome members' recommendations! If you would like to recommend a book by an African American Author, please reach out to caroline_drees@yahoo.com)

Selections by Yale Authors

	<p><u>Catherine House</u>, by Elisabeth Thomas '10</p> <p>“[A] delicious literary Gothic debut.” –<i>THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW</i>, EDITORS' CHOICE</p> <p>“Moody and evocative as a fever dream, <i>Catherine House</i> is the sort of book that wraps itself around your brain, drawing you closer with each hypnotic step.” – <i>THE WASHINGTON POST</i></p>
	<p><u>Joy Takes Root</u>, By Gwedolyn Wallace '21</p> <p><i>Black Caucus American Library Association Best of the Best 2023</i></p> <p>“A quiet, thoughtful tale that promotes mindfulness, intentionality, gratitude, and connection.” –<i>Kirkus Reviews</i></p> <p>“Moving... a reap-what-you-sow telling that considers what's been given and what's yet to come.” –<i>Publishers Weekly</i></p> <p>“A beautiful ode to both the natural world and intergenerational cultural wisdom that imbues the sequential steps of planting a garden with a deeply felt spirituality.” –<i>The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books</i></p>



	<p><u>The Sum of Us</u>, by Heather McGhee '01</p> <p>NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • LONGLISTED FOR THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARD • One of today's most insightful and influential thinkers offers a powerful exploration of inequality and the lesson that generations of Americans have failed to learn: Racism has a cost for everyone—not just for people of color.</p> <p>ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR: <i>Time</i>, <i>The Washington Post</i>, <i>BookRiot</i>, <i>Library Journal</i> • SHORTLISTED FOR THE PORCHLIGHT BUSINESS BOOK AWARD • LONGLISTED FOR THE ANDREW CARNEGIE MEDAL (Source: Penguin Random House)</p>
	<p><u>The Secret Lives of Church Ladies</u>, by Deesha Philyaw '93</p> <p>“<i>The Secret Lives of Church Ladies</i> heralds the arrival of Deesha Philyaw. Her debut collection revels in the beautiful mess of life, depicting generations of Black women navigating love, sex, death, family, and faith through the sanctuary and structures of the church. In a veritable showcase of narratives, each of Philyaw's stories explores these complex drives and the ways they resonate deeply within the community of her characters and the universal well of human experience.” - National Book Foundation</p>
	<p><u>There Will Be No Miracles Here</u>, by Casey Gerald '09</p> <p>NAMED A BEST BOOK OF 2018 BY NPR AND THE NEW YORK TIMES A PBS NEWSHOUR–NEW YORK TIMES BOOK CLUB PICK</p> <p>“Stunningly original ... By breaking every rule of the ... genre, [Gerald has] created something unique and sublime: a beautiful chronicle of a life as yet unfinished ... a shining and sincere miracle of a book.” –NPR</p>
	<p>“Casey Gerald’s book is urgent, mesmeric, soaring, desperately serious, wounded and, at times, slyly, brilliantly comic. The world he creates is vivid, the invocation of the personal and the political sharp and knowing. The style is flawless, the pace perfectly judged. Electrifying.” – Colm Tóibín</p>



	<p><u>While Justice Sleeps</u>, by Stacey Abrams YLS '99</p> <p>"<i>While Justice Sleeps</i> is a mesmerizing legal thriller that does the rare thing: It uses the novel to get at the truth. Stacey Abrams is a powerful new voice in fiction."—Michael Connelly</p> <p>"Glossy, gritty, breathlessly suspenseful, effortlessly authentic, and altogether wonderful. Why am I not surprised?"—Lee Child</p>
	<p><u>Drinking Coffee Elsewhere</u>, by ZZ Packer '94</p> <p>"This is the old-time religion of storytelling, although Packer's prose supplies plenty of the edge and energy we expect from contemporary fiction."—The New York Times Book Review</p> <p>"ZZ Packer writes a short story with more complexity and kindness than most people can muster in their creaking 500-page novels. It is the kind of brilliance for narrative that should make her peers envious and her readers very, very grateful."—Zadie Smith, New York Times bestselling author of <i>Swing Time</i></p>
	<p><u>South To America</u>, by Imani Perry '94</p> <p>A Most Anticipated Book From: <i>The New York Times</i> • <i>TIME</i> • <i>Oprah Daily</i> • <i>USA Today</i> • <i>Vulture</i> • <i>Essence</i> • <i>Esquire</i> • <i>W Magazine</i> • <i>Atlanta Journal-Constitution</i> • <i>PopSugar</i> • <i>Book Riot</i> • <i>Chicago Review of Books</i> • <i>Electric Literature</i> • <i>Lit Hub</i></p> <p>"An essential, surprising journey through the history, rituals, and landscapes of the American South—and a revelatory argument for why you must understand the South in order to understand America." (Source: Harper Collins)</p>

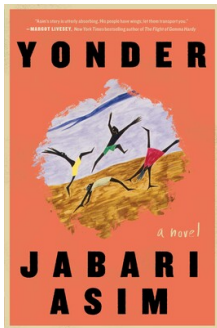


Selections by Non-Yale Authors

	<p><u>The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store</u>, by James McBride</p> <p>AN INSTANT <i>NEW YORK TIMES</i> BESTSELLER</p> <p>A <i>NEW YORK TIMES</i> NOTABLE BOOK</p> <p>NAMED A BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR BY <i>NPR/FRESH AIR</i>, <i>WASHINGTON POST</i>, <i>THE NEW YORKER</i>, AND <i>TIME MAGAZINE</i></p> <p>ONE OF BARACK OBAMA’S FAVORITE BOOKS OF 2023</p>
	<p><u>The Travelers</u>, by Regina Porter</p> <p>“American history comes to vivid, engaging life in this tale of two interconnected families (one white, one black) that spans from the 1950s to Barack Obama’s first year as president. . . . The complex, beautifully drawn characters are unique and indelible.”—<i>Entertainment Weekly</i></p> <p>“An astoundingly audacious debut.”—<i>O: The Oprah Magazine</i> • “A gorgeous generational saga.”—<i>New York Post</i></p> <p>NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY <i>ESQUIRE</i> • FINALIST FOR THE PEN/HEMINGWAY AWARD FOR DEBUT NOVEL</p>
	<p><u>Chain Gang All-Stars</u>, By Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah</p> <p>A <i>NEW YORK TIMES</i> TOP TEN BOOK OF THE YEAR • FINALIST FOR THE NATIONAL BOOK AWARD IN FICTION • NATIONAL BESTSELLER • LONGLISTED FOR THE ANDREW CARNEGIE MEDAL FOR EXCELLENCE</p> <p>A Best Book of the Year: <i>The New York Times</i>, <i>The Washington Post</i>, <i>NPR</i>, <i>Elle</i>, <i>Esquire</i>, <i>Chicago Tribune</i>, <i>Lit Hub</i>, <i>Kirkus Reviews</i>.</p>



	<p><u>Girl, Woman, Other</u>, By Bernardine Evaristo</p> <p>National bestseller</p> <p>Winner of the 2019 Booker Prize</p> <p>“A must-read about modern Britain and womanhood... An impressive, fierce novel about the lives of black British families, their struggles, pains, laughter, longings and loves... Her style is passionate, razor-sharp, brimming with energy and humor. There is never a single moment of dullness in this book and the pace does not allow you to turn away from its momentum.”—Booker Prize Judges</p>
	<p><u>Crook Manifesto</u>, by Colson Whitehead</p> <p>NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER • The two-time Pulitzer Prize winner and bestselling author of <i>Harlem Shuffle</i> continues his Harlem saga in a powerful and hugely-entertaining novel that summons 1970s New York in all its seedy glory.</p> <p>A Best Book of the Year: <i>The New York Times</i>, <i>The Washington Post</i>, <i>TIME</i>, <i>NPR</i>, <i>BookPage</i></p> <p>“Dazzling” –Walter Mosley, <i>The New York Times Book Review</i>.</p>
	<p><u>The Hill We Climb</u>, by Amanda Gorman</p> <p>“At 22, Gorman [was] the youngest inaugural poet ever in the United States. She joins a small group of poets who have been recruited to help mark a presidential inauguration, among them Robert Frost, Maya Angelou, Miller Williams, Elizabeth Alexander and Richard Blanco.</p> <p>“But none of her predecessors faced the challenge that Gorman did. She set out to write a poem that would inspire hope and foster a sense of collective purpose, at a moment when Americans are reeling from a deadly pandemic, political violence and partisan division.” (Source: New York Times)</p>

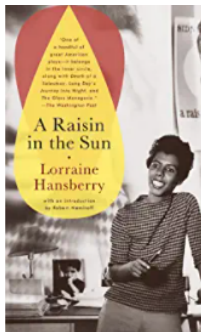


Yonder, by Jabari Asim

“In an elegant work of monumental imagination that will reorient how we think of the legacy of America’s shameful past, Jabari Asim presents a beautiful, powerful, and elegiac novel that examines intimacy and longing in the quarters while asking a vital question: What would happen if an enslaved person risked everything for love?” (Source: [Simon and Schuster](#))

“[M]ajestic...Asim demonstrates all a novel can be: soaring and grounded, personal and epic, thrilling and quiet. A wonder-filled novel about the power of words and stories to bring hope to the most difficult situations.” —*Kirkus* (starred review)

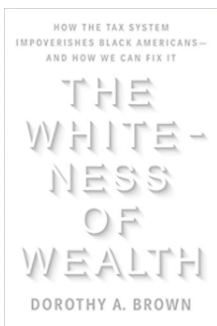
“Asim delivers a searing and redemptive story of slavery and survival...At once intimate and majestic, the prose marries a gripping narrative with an unforgettable exploration of the power of stories, language, and hope. With a bold vision, Asim demonstrates his remarkable gifts.” —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)



A Raisin in the Sun, by Lorraine Hansberry

When it was first produced in 1959, *A Raisin in the Sun* was awarded the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for that season and hailed as a watershed in American drama. A pioneering work by an African-American playwright, the play was a radically new representation of black life.

"A play that changed American theater forever."--The New York Times.



The Whiteness of Wealth, Dorothy Brown

“A groundbreaking exposé of racism in the American taxation system from a law professor and expert on tax policy.”

“NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY NPR AND *FORTUNE* • “Important reading for those who want to understand how inequality is built into the bedrock of American society, and what a more equitable future might look like.” —Ibram X. Kendi, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *How to Be an Antiracist*” (Source: [Penguin Random House](#))

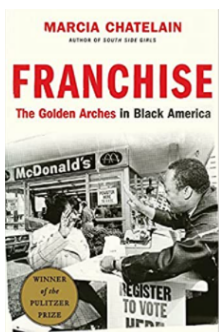


So You Want to Talk About Race, by Ijeoma Oluo

“In this #1 *New York Times* bestseller, Ijeoma Oluo offers a revelatory examination of race in America

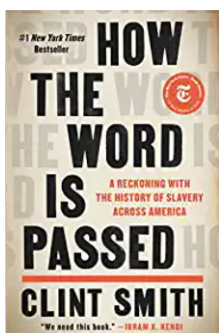
“Protests against racial injustice and white supremacy have galvanized millions around the world. The stakes for transformative conversations about race could not be higher. Still, the task ahead seems daunting, and it’s hard to know where to start. How do you tell your boss her jokes are racist? Why did your sister-in-law hang up on you when you had questions about police reform? How do you explain white privilege to your white, privileged friend?

“In *So You Want to Talk About Race*, Ijeoma Oluo guides readers of all races through subjects ranging from police brutality and cultural appropriation to the model minority myth in an attempt to make the seemingly impossible possible: honest conversations about race, and about how racism infects every aspect of American life.” (Source: [Seal Press](#))



Franchise: The Golden Arches in Black America, by Marcia Chatelain

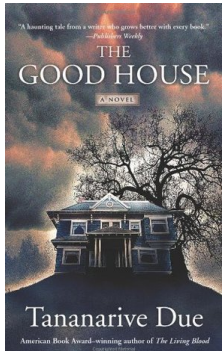
Winner of a 2021 Pulitzer Prize, and described by the Pulitzer Committee as, “A nuanced account of the complicated role the fast-food industry plays in African-American communities, a portrait of race and capitalism that masterfully illustrates how the fight for civil rights has been intertwined with the fate of Black businesses.”



How the Word Is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America, by Clint Smith III

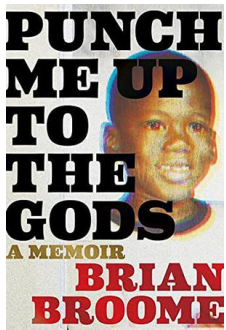
- #1 *New York Times* bestseller
- A *New York Times* 10 Best Books of 2021
- A *Time* 10 Best Nonfiction Books of 2021
- Named a Best Book of 2021 by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Economist*, *Smithsonian*, *Esquire*, *Entropy*, *The Christian Science Monitor*, WBEZ's Nerdette Podcast, *TeenVogue*, *GoodReads*, *SheReads*, *BookPage*, *Publishers Weekly*, *Kirkus*, *Fathom*



	<p><i>Magazine</i>, the New York Public Library, and the Chicago Public Library</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One of GQ's 50 Best Books of Literary Journalism of the 21st Century ● Longlisted for the <i>National Book Award</i> ● <i>Los Angeles Times</i>, Best Nonfiction Gift ● One of President Obama's Favorite Books of 2021 <p>Beginning in his hometown of New Orleans, Clint Smith leads the reader on an unforgettable tour of monuments and landmarks—those that are honest about the past and those that are not—that offer an intergenerational story of how slavery has been central in shaping our nation's collective history, and ourselves. (Source: Little, Brown and Co)</p>
	<p><u>The Good House</u>, by Tananarive Due</p> <p>*From the author of <i>The Reformatory</i>—A <i>New York Times</i> Notable Book of 2023*</p> <p>Award-winning author Tananarive Due's critically acclaimed story of supernatural suspense, as a woman searches for the inherited power that can save her hometown from evil forces.</p> <p>Recommended by author Elisabeth Thomas '10.</p>

Deesha's Book Recommendations

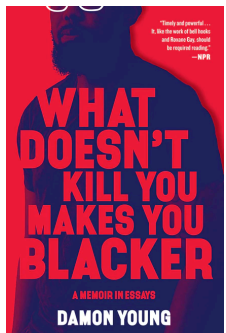
These are the books fellow Yale Deesha Philyaw '93, author of "The Secret Lives of Church Ladies" recommended during her Feb 10, 2022 Yale Club of DC event. Thank you Deesha!



Punch Me Up To The Gods, by Brian Broome

WINNER OF THE KIRKUS PRIZE - *PUBLISHERS WEEKLY* BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR - A *NEW YORK TIMES* EDITORS' PICK - A *TODAY* SUMMER READING LIST PICK - AN *ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY* BEST DEBUT OF SUMMER PICK - A *PEOPLE* BEST BOOK OF SUMMER PICK

"An engrossing memoir about growing up Black and gay and finding a place in the world. Structured around Gwendolyn Brooks' poem "We Real Cool," Broome's thought-provoking, emotional journey unfolds through a clever use of parallel stories and juxtaposition . . . Beautifully written, this examination of what it means to be Black and gay in America is a must-read. A stellar debut memoir." --Kirkus Reviews, Starred Review (Source: bookshop.org)

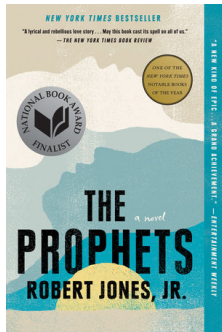


What Doesn't Kill You Makes You Blacker, by Damon Young

- A Finalist for the NAACP Image Award
- A Finalist for the Hurston/Wright Legacy Award for Nonfiction
- A Finalist for the Thurber Prize for American Humor
- Longlisted for the PEN/Diamonstein-Spielvogel Award for the Art of the Essay
- An NPR Best Book of the Year
- A *Washington Independent Review of Books* Favorite of the Year

From the cofounder of VerySmartBrothas.com, and one of the most read writers on race and culture at work today, a provocative and humorous memoir-in-essays that explores the absurdities and anxieties of being Black in America

(Source: [Harper Collins](http://HarperCollins))



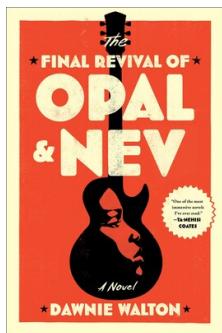
The Prophets, by Robert Jones, Jr

Best Book of the Year

NPR • *The Washington Post* • *Boston Globe* • *TIME* • *USA Today* • *Entertainment Weekly* • *Real Simple* • *Parade* • *Buzzfeed* • *Electric Literature* • *LitHub* • *BookRiot* • *PopSugar* • *Goop* • *Library Journal* • *BookBub* • *KCRW*

- Finalist for the National Book Award
- One of the *New York Times* Notable Books of the Year
- One of the *New York Times* Best Historical Fiction of the Year
- Instant *New York Times* Bestseller

A singular and stunning debut novel about the forbidden union between two enslaved young men on a Deep South plantation, the refuge they find in each other, and a betrayal that threatens their existence. (Source: [Penguin Randomhouse](#))

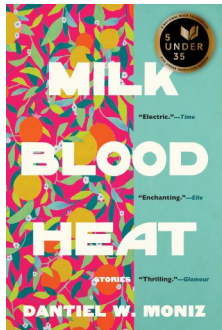


The Final Revival of Opal & Nev, by Dawnie Walton

“An electrifying novel about the meteoric rise of an iconic interracial rock duo in the 1970s, their sensational breakup, and the dark secrets unearthed when they try to reunite decades later for one last tour.” (Source: [Simon and Schuster](#))

**A GOOD MORNING AMERICA BUZZ PICK
NAMED A BEST BOOK OF 2021 BY BARACK OBAMA * *THE WASHINGTON POST* *
NPR * *ESQUIRE* * *ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY* * *GOODREADS* * *THE MILLIONS* *
READER'S DIGEST * *PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER* * *EERIE READER* * *PUBLIC RADIO TULSA* *
CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY * *KIRKUS REVIEWS***

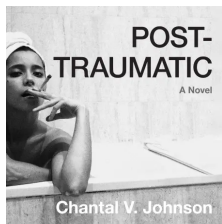
“Feels truer and more mesmerizing than some true stories. It’s a packed time capsule that doubles as a stick of dynamite.” —*THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW*



Milk Blood Heat, by Dantiel W. Moniz

SHORTLISTED FOR THE PEN/JEAN STEIN BOOK AWARD AND THE PEN/ROBERT W. BINGHAM PRIZE FOR DEBUT SHORT STORY COLLECTION

“A livewire debut from Dantiel W. Moniz, one of the most exciting discoveries in today’s literary landscape, *Milk Blood Heat* depicts the sultry lives of Floridians in intergenerational tales that contemplate human connection, race, womanhood, inheritance, and the elemental darkness in us all.” (Source: [Grove Atlantic](#))



Post-traumatic, by Chantal V. Johnson

“A “deeply original” (Elif Batuman), “violently funny” (Myriam Gurba), “brilliant and unforgettable” (Deesha Philyaw) debut about a young Black Latina lawyer finally confronting her dark past.”

“*Post-traumatic* is a new kind of survivor narrative, featuring a complex heroine who is blazingly, indelibly alive. With razor-sharp prose and mordant wit, Chantal V. Johnson performs an extraordinary feat, delivering a psychologically astute story about the aftermath of trauma that somehow manages to brim with warmth, laughter, and hope.” (Source: [Little Brown](#))



Ain't That A Mother, by Adiba Nelson (release date 05/03/22)

“Ain't That a Mother is the most honest, most hilarious, most unapologetic book about motherhood I've ever read. It's the book I desperately needed twenty-plus years ago when my mothering journey began. Adiba Nelson's story of faith, discrimination, trauma, love, loss, and, ultimately, healing, totally reinvents the motherhood memoir. Nelson is a survivor and a masterful storyteller. Her magnificent, unabashed voice and big heart will grab you from the very first page.” —*Deesha Philyaw, author of the National Book Award finalist The Secret Lives of Church Ladies*



	<p><u>Boys Come First</u>, by Aaron Foley (release date 05/31/22)</p> <p>“This hilarious, touching debut novel by Aaron Foley, author of <i>How to Live in Detroit Without Being a Jackass</i>, follows three Black gay millennial men looking for love, friendship, and professional success in the Motor City.” (Source: Belt Publishing)</p>
	<p><u>Half-Blown Rose</u>, by Leesa Cross-Smith (release date 07/05/22)</p> <p>From the award-winning author of <i>This Close to Okay</i> comes the irresistible story of a woman remaking her life after her husband’s betrayal leads to a year of travel, art, and passion in Paris. (Source: Grand Central Publishing)</p> <p>“Leesa Cross-Smith’s richly vivid prose pulls you in and transports you to Paris. Sharp-edged and sexy, <i>Half-Blown Rose</i> is an utterly intoxicating story of love, betrayal, and loyalty.” —Taylor Jenkins Reid, <i>New York Times</i> bestselling author of <i>Malibu Rising</i></p>
	<p><u>A Calm and Normal Heart</u>, by Chelsea T. Hicks (release date 06/21/22)</p> <p>“The stories in Chelsea Hicks's <i>A Calm & Normal Heart</i> are full of quiet truths and wry, soulful secrets. It is a book that doesn't at all feel like a debut story collection, but rather written with startling beauty and the flawless precision of a master storyteller. It is a genuine page-turner full of sentences so beautiful they demand re-reading.”</p> <p>—Brandon Hobson, National Book Award finalist and author of <i>The Removed</i></p>