

5 Books To Read To Educate Yourself About Fighting Racism & Allyship

By Emily Lee, Jun 2, 2020

George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police officers, as well as the worldwide protests against police brutality that followed, have left many white people eager to be better allies in the fight against racism. If you're seeking to learn how to be a better ally to your Black friends, family and co-workers, the below books are an excellent place to start.

1) So You Want To Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo

Official Synopsis: "Widespread reporting on aspects of white supremacy—from police brutality to the mass incarceration of Black Americans—has put a media spotlight on racism in our society. Still, it is a difficult subject to talk about. How do you tell your roommate her jokes are racist? Why did your sister-in-law take umbrage when you asked to touch her hair--and how do you make it right? 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 intersectionality and affirmative action to 'model minorities' in an attempt to make the seemingly impossible possible: honest conversations about race and racism, and how they infect almost every aspect of American life."

2) Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America by Ibram X. Kendi

Official Synopsis: "Some Americans insist that we're living in a post-racial society. But racist thought is not just alive and well in America—it is more sophisticated and more insidious than ever. And as award-winning historian Ibram X. Kendi argues, racist ideas have a long and lingering history, one in which nearly every great American thinker is complicit.

In this deeply researched and fast-moving narrative, Kendi chronicles the entire story of anti-black racist ideas and their staggering power over the course of American history. He uses the life stories of five major American intellectuals to drive this history: Puritan minister Cotton Mather, Thomas Jefferson, abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, W.E.B. Du Bois, and legendary activist Angela Davis.

As Kendi shows, racist ideas did not arise from ignorance or hatred. They were created to justify and rationalize deeply entrenched discriminatory policies and the nation's racial inequities.

In shedding light on this history, Stamped from the Beginning offers us the tools we need to expose racist thinking. In the process, he gives us reason to hope.

Kendi also adapted Stamped, as well as his book How to Be an Antiracist, for younger readers with the help of young adult author Jason Reynolds in Stamped: Racism, Antiracism and You.

3) White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism by Robin DiAngelo

Official Synopsis: "The New York Times best-selling book exploring the counterproductive reactions white people have when their assumptions about race are challenged, and how these reactions maintain racial inequality. In this vital, necessary, and beautiful book' (Michael Eric Dyson), antiracist educator Robin DiAngelo deftly illuminates the phenomenon of white fragility and "allows us to understand racism as a practice not restricted to 'bad people' (Claudia Rankine). Referring to the defensive moves that white people make when challenged racially, white fragility is characterized by emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and by behaviors including argumentation and silence. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium and prevent any meaningful cross-racial dialogue. In this in-depth exploration, DiAngelo examines how white fragility develops, how it protects racial inequality, and what we can do to engage more constructively."

4) Me and White Supremacy: Combat Racism, Change the World and Become a Good Ancestor by Layla F. Saad

Official Synopsis: "Based on the viral Instagram challenge that captivated participants worldwide, Me and White Supremacy takes readers on a 28-day journey of how to dismantle the privilege within themselves so that they can stop (often unconsciously) inflicting damage on people of color, and in turn, help other white people do better, too.

When Layla Saad began an Instagram challenge called #meandwhitesupremacy, she never predicted it would spread as widely as it did. She encouraged people to own up and share their racist behaviors, big and small. She was looking for truth, and she got it. Thousands of people participated in the challenge, and nearly 100,000 people downloaded the Me and White Supremacy Workbook.

Updated and expanded from the original workbook, *Me and White Supremacy*, takes the work deeper by adding more historical and cultural contexts, sharing moving stories and anecdotes, and including expanded definitions, examples, and further resources."

5) Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do by Jennifer L. Eberhardt

Official Synopsis: "From one of the world's leading experts on unconscious racial bias come stories, science, and strategies to address one of the central controversies of our time. How do we talk about bias? How do we address racial disparities and inequities? What role do our institutions play in creating, maintaining, and magnifying those inequities? What role do we play? With a perspective that is at once scientific, investigative, and informed by personal experience, Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt offers us the language and courage we need to face one of the biggest and most troubling issues of our time. She exposes racial bias at all levels of society—in our neighborhoods, schools, workplaces, and criminal justice system. Yet she also offers us tools to address it. Eberhardt shows us how we can be vulnerable to bias but not doomed to live under its grip. Racial bias is a problem that we all have a role to play in solving."