The Great READ: Reading, Exchange and Dialogue

Thought-provoking books can pave the way for change by inspiring understanding, compassion, inquiry and conversation. At the beginning of the year, NICHQ's staff came together to share the books that have most impacted their understanding of inequities and what's needed to achieve equity. Below, we share their top picks with hope that this list will support our readers on their equity journeys.

We know this list is not all encompassing, in fact it is just a small sample (!), and we are eager to learn from your recommendations. Reach out to us on social media by tagging @NICHQ on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.
The 1619 Project
Published by the New York Times, 2019
A collection of essays covering how many aspects of our culture (e.g., health care, economics, democracy, music, urban city design, prison system) can be traced to enslavement; together, they offer a comprehensive picture of how enslavement has directly impacted the America we know today.
https://store.nytimes.com/products/the-1619-project

Black Man in a White Coat
By: Damon Tweedy
Published by Picador, 2015
In his memoir, Tweedy confronts what it means to be Black, both as patients and as a doctor, within the health care system. From looking at the impact of socioeconomic challenges on Black patients, to sharing his own reflections on the prejudice he encountered as a doctor, Tweedy paints a profound picture of race and inequity within health systems.

Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People
By: Mahzarin R. Banaji and Anthony G. Greenwald
Published by Delacorte Press, 2013
Banaji and Greenwald explore how our unconscious perceptions about social groups shape our attitudes, and identify opportunities to acknowledge and address our hidden biases.
https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/13131582-blindspot

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
By: Rebecca Skloot
Published by Crown Publishing Group, 2010
Henrietta Lacks was a Southern tobacco farmer whose ancestors were enslaved. Her cells were taken without her consent and ultimately changed the face of modern medicine and saved countless lives; yet Lacks was buried in an unmarked grave and her family never saw any of the profits from the multi-million-dollar industry her cells launched.

Makes Me Wanna Holler
By: Nathan McCall
Published by Vintage Books USA, 1995
Washington Post Reporter Nathan McCall shares his story, which illustrates the impact of implicit bias across his lifespan from his childhood to his career as a journalist.
Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present
By: Harriet A. Washington
Published by Doubleday, 2007
A comprehensive history of medical experimentation on African Americans, detailing atrocities beginning before enslavement continuing to present day.
https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/114192.Medical_Apartheid

Random Family: Love, Drugs, Trouble, and Coming of Age in the Bronx
By: Andrian Nicole LeBlanc
Published by Scribner, 2004
A true story that illustrates the realities of people living through poverty and the systems that perpetuate it across generations. Written without judgement and with raw honesty, Leblanc captures so much complexity that would otherwise be impossible to understand unless you've lived through it.

Seeing White (Podcast)
Editor: Loretta Williams
Published by Scene on Radio, 2017
A 14-part documentary series that dives into the concept of “whiteness,” its origins and its consequences.
https://www.sceneonradio.org/seeing-white/

What the Eyes Don't See: A Story of Crisis, Resistance and Hope in an American City
By: Mona Hanna-Attishia
Published by One World, 2018
The story of the Flint Michigan water crisis told by the pediatrician who helped uncover the crisis reveals the dire consequences of system and policy failures. A reminder of the tremendous difference we can make in public health.

The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America’s Great Migration
By: Isabel Wilkerson
Published by Random House, 2010
Covering interviews with over a thousand people, Wilkerson shares the Pulitzer Prize winning story of the millions of Black citizens who moved across the country attempting to flee the racism and inequities they were experiencing in the South.
Whatever it Takes
By: Paul Tough
Published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2008
In 1970, Geoffrey Canada launched the Harvard Children’s Zone, a social experiment seeking to end generational poverty in Harlem. Tough explores the project’s impact and findings, looking at the impact and intersections between race, poverty, and education.

White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism
By: Robin DiAngelo
Published by Beacon Press, 2018
In his deep dive into what it means to be white, DiAngelo explores how the feelings brought on by whiteness—including guilt and shame—can ultimately perpetuate structures that support disparities.
https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/43708708-white-fragility

Looking for more resources?

- Register for NICHQ's new webinar, From Awareness to Action: Strategies for Combating Racism in Health Systems.