

RECOMMENDED READING

Since February is Black History Month, the reader recommendations focus on Black writers. The Black authors represented address a variety of topics, with recommendations ranging from Barack Obama's *The Promised Land* to Isabel Wilkerson's *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* and Ruby Bridges' *This is Your Time*. I hope you enjoy the books and video as much as I did. I found that each had a message that provided me with tools to evaluate my role in our democracy.



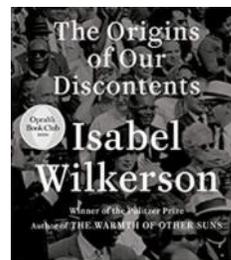
The Promised Land is the first of two volumes of Obama's presidential memoirs. The book starts with his early years, as he is raised by his

mother and grandparents in Indonesia and Hawaii, presenting the backdrop of who he became.

Continuing on to his years as student and a community organizer, Harvard law school, and then president, Obama tells the inside story of what happened during the eight years he was in office. He provides a frank assessment of the people he interacted with both domestic and foreign, and explains his decision-making process, his

evaluation of the country's progress under his terms in office, and what his thoughts are for its future.

I enjoyed all 700 pages of this book. It provided me with a deeper understanding of the office of the president, its processes and challenges, and its limited powers, as well as insight into recent political events.



In ***Caste***, Isabel Wilkerson describes our “original sin” of racism and its history that supported dis-

criminating practices and laws as a caste system based on race.

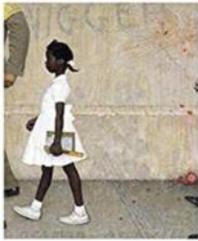
Wilkerson defines a caste system as “an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value that sets the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of other groups...” She compares the caste system in India towards the untouchables and Nazi Germany's treatment of Jews to American treatment of African-Americans. Wilkerson uses many examples to support her theory but one that stood out to me was the use by Nazi Germany of our laws when creating the foundation for their genocide against the Jews.

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Caste provides the basis for a frank and truthful discussion on race, and the American institutions and people that support the discrimination. The book left me with feeling the enormous mountain we must climb to finally and completely eradicate this original sin that has never been fully addressed.

RUBY BRIDGES
THIS IS YOUR TIME



This is Your Time by Ruby Bridges is written for children age 10 and up for sharing with your children and grandchildren. It is

the story of Ruby Bridges and her experiences being the first black girl at age six integrating the Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans in November 1960.

Bridges along with two other black children passed an entrance exam designed to prevent the integration of Black students in the white school system. The other two students decided not to attend. For her safety, she was accompanied to class by federal officers and was taught by a teacher recruited from Boston, since none of the white teachers at the school would teach her.

Bridges became an activist, creating the Ruby Bridges Foundation that promotes “the values of tolerance, respect and appreciation of all differences.”

This is a story written for children, but it contains an important message for adults. It is an American story of our abiding sin and the message we are sending our children.

“Civil Rights Pioneer Ruby Bridges on Activism in the Modern Era” is an interview with Ruby Bridges by journalist and activist Charlayne Hunter-Gault. In the interview Bridges discusses her journey from age six to adulthood, talking about the role adults play in the continuation of the racism that plagues our country stating: “racism is a grown-up disease and we must stop using our children to spread it.” Click [HERE](#) to access the interview.



Documentary footage from the interview with Ruby Bridges (see above)

—Kelly Davis

Rosa Parks

By Nikki Giovanni

This is for the Pullman Porters who organized when people said they couldn't. And carried the Pittsburgh Courier and the Chicago Defender to the Black Americans in the South so they would know they were not alone. This is for the Pullman Porters who helped Thurgood Marshall go south and come back north to fight the fight that resulted in *Brown v. Board of Education* because even though Kansas is west and even though Topeka is the birthplace of Gwendolyn Brooks, who wrote the powerful "The Chicago Defender Sends a Man to Little Rock," it was the Pullman Porters who whispered to the traveling men both the Blues Men and the "Race" Men so that they both would know what was going on. This is for the Pullman Porters who smiled as if they were happy and laughed like they were tickled when some folks were around and who silently rejoiced in 1954 when the Supreme Court announced its 9—0 decision that "separate is inherently unequal." This is for the Pullman Porters who smiled and welcomed a fourteen-year-old boy onto their train in 1955. They noticed his slight limp that he tried to disguise with a doo-wop walk; they noticed his stutter and probably understood why his mother wanted him out of Chicago during the summer when school was out. Fourteen-year-old Black boys with limps and stutters are apt to try to prove themselves in dangerous ways when mothers aren't around to look after them. So this is for the Pullman Porters who looked over that fourteen-year-old while the train rolled the reverse of the Blues Highway from Chicago to St. Louis to Memphis to Mississippi. This is for the men who kept him safe; and if Emmett Till had been able to stay on a train all summer he would have maybe grown a bit of a paunch, certainly lost his hair, probably have worn bifocals and bounced his grandchildren on his knee telling them about his summer riding the rails. But he had to get off the train. And ended up in Money, Mississippi. And was horribly, brutally, inexcusably, and unacceptably murdered. This is for the Pullman Porters who, when the sheriff was trying to get the body secretly buried, got Emmett's body on the northbound train, got his body home to Chicago, where his mother said: I want the world to see what they did to my boy. And this is for all the mothers who cried. And this is for all the people who said Never Again. And this is about Rosa Parks whose feet were not so tired, it had been, after all, an ordinary day, until the bus driver gave her the opportunity to make history. This is about Mrs. Rosa Parks from Tuskegee, Alabama, who was also the field secretary of the NAACP. This is about the moment Rosa Parks shouldered her cross, put her worldly goods aside, was willing to sacrifice her life, so that that young man in Money, Mississippi, who had been so well protected by the Pullman Porters, would not have died in vain. When Mrs. Parks said "NO" a passionate movement was begun. No longer would there be a reliance on the law; there was a higher law. When Mrs. Parks brought that light of hers to expose the evil of the system, the sun came and rested on her shoulders bringing the heat and the light of truth. Others would follow Mrs. Parks. Four young men in Greensboro, North Carolina, would also say No. Great voices would be raised singing the praises of God and exhorting us "to forgive those who trespass against us." But it was the Pullman Porters who safely got Emmett to his granduncle and it was Mrs. Rosa Parks who could not stand that death. And in not being able to stand it. She sat back down.