

“Racial Justice and Equity” book group – books read

**Caste, by Isabel Wilkerson:** May have been the most influential book we read. It challenged us to think about how our entire social structure is an unrecognized caste system.

**His Truth is Marching On, by Jon Meacham:** A biography of John Lewis. We were so moved by his unwavering bravery and commitment to civil rights, as well as his deep Christian faith.

**The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, by Michelle Alexander:** Definitely one of the more difficult books we read. It challenged us to re-examine most of what we had previously believed about governmental efforts to keep us safe and to address crime. An excellent resource for thinking through how we move forward with making decisions about what we fund and why. She wrote movingly how large segments of our society may have given up hope that the dominant majority is concerned with all in our nation, as opposed to just their own communities. We read the 10th anniversary edition of the first book which was published in 2010. The new edition included an extensive preface by the author, Michelle Alexander, discussing all that has changed and what has heartbreakingly remained the same in the criminal justice system and in our democracy as a whole since the book was published.

**My Grandmother’s Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies, by Resmaa Menakem:** Written by a licensed clinical social worker about the complex effects of racism and white privilege on all races. Provided exercises to work through our own reactions to racial trauma.

**Devil in the Grove, by Gilbert King: The winner of the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction:** A historical account of how Thurgood Marshall (before he was a Supreme Court Justice) and the NAACP brought civil rights cases to courts throughout the county. It highlighted the huge legal challenges to correct injustices, how fragile some of those victories were, and how it could have all gone wrong.

**Between the World and Me, by Ta-Nehisi Coates:** A moving account of how a young man felt about growing up Black in America, written in the form of a letter to his young son.

**Dear Church, a Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in America (ELCA), by Lenny Duncan:** a very challenging book which made us consider our own implicit racism and what our responsibility is to address it in our church and in our neighborhoods.

**The Vanishing Half, by Brit Bennett:** our first novel. It introduced the subject of colorism and what sacrifices people make to integrate into the dominant society and what it costs to leave your family behind.

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Group Members: Lynn Barth, Judy Depaolis, Karen Devlin, Claire Dutrow, Roxanne Englund, Judy Kuhagen, Ann Lawrence, Lena Martikainan, Cindy Morrow, Flo Ofili and Teresa Schellenger.

Other participants in 2021 were Roxanne Englund, Vicar Hephzibah, Ann Lawrence, Hugh Stevenson, and Linda Stennett.