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A SYLLABUS FOR THE PRESENT PREDICAMENT

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This reading list provides resources for situating the simultaneous manifestations of antiblackness and assault on Black life in the present. We are specifically motivated by the murder of Tyre Nichols in Memphis, Tennessee, by police officers; the attack on the AP African American Studies course in Florida; and what might be interpreted as the capitulation of the College Board to the demands of Florida's Republican Governor. These convergent events serve as poignant reminders of the pervasiveness of anti-blackness, the everyday reality of gratuitous police violence, and the regressive nature of a politics of compromise that demurs to white supremacy, historical amnesia, and the sanitizing of Black social and political movements.

This bibliography is divided into four sections. The first provides a primer on the long struggle for Black life in Memphis. The second contextualizes the function of the police, to show how what happened to Mr. Nichols is possible even when the officers committing the violence are Black. The section shows why abolition is an imperative of the struggle for Black life. The third section deals with the ethics and care guiding Black mourning and hope amidst the death dealing of antiblack violence. The fourth and final section is concerned with the indispensability of Black Studies to American Studies, national memory, and the radically transformative potential of critical study.

In addition to this syllabus, we encourage readers to consult the American Association of Geographers statements "[On the Structural and Spatial Forces that Contribute to Police Brutality](#)" and on "[the targeting of diversity education and critical inquiry by U.S. States](#)".

Memphis Black History and Geographies

"I am a man!: Race, masculinity, and the 1968 Memphis sanitation strike." Steve Estes

An Unseen Light: Black Struggles for Freedom in Memphis, Tennessee. Aram Goudsouzian and Charles McKinney (Eds.)

[At the River I Stand.](#) David Appleby, Allison Graham and Steven Ross (Directors).

Beale Street Dynasty: Sex, Song, and the Struggle for the Soul of Memphis-- Preston Lauterbach

This Ain't Chicago : Race, Class, and Regional Identity in the Post-Soul South. Zandria F. Robinson.

Crusade for Justice : The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells, Second Edition. Ida B. Wells.

Chocolate Cities The Black Map of American Life Marcus Anthony Hunter, Zandria F. Robinson

Development Arrested: The Blues and Plantation Power in the Mississippi Delta - Clyde Woods

[The South is Everywhere](#)

[Environmental justice activist leads fight against lead exposure in Black and brown communities - MLK50](#)

[‘A victory for us’: Southwest Memphis residents elated as developers drop Byhalia Pipeline project - MLK50: Justice Through Journalism](#)

[Kellogg workers on why they went on strike for two months – Scalawag](#)

Police, State Violence, and The Imperative of Abolition

[“Cautionary Notes on Black Policing”](#). Adam Bledsoe

[Policing the planet: Why the policing crisis led to Black Lives Matter](#). Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton (Eds.)

Who do you serve, who do you protect?: Police violence and resistance in the United States. Alicia Garza

[“Fatal Couplings of Power and Difference: Notes on Racism and Geography”](#). Ruth Wilson Gilmore.

“Abolition Geography and the Problem of Innocence” in *Futures of Black Radicalism*. Ruth Wilson Gilmore.

Abolition geography: Essays towards liberation. Ruth Wilson Gilmore.

[We still here: Pandemic, policing, protest, & possibility](#). Marc Lamont Hill (Frank Barat, Ed.)

Race, media, and the crisis of civil society: From Watts to Rodney King. Ronald Jacobs.

[“On plantations, prisons, and a black sense of place”](#). Katherine McKittrick.

[“Black police officers aren’t colorblind.”](#) Rashad Shabazz

From #BlackLivesMatter to black liberation. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

[“Neoliberalisation of security, austerity and the ‘end of public policy’”](#) Simone Tulumello.

Police: A field guide. David Correia and Tyler Wall

[“Life after Death.”](#) Clyde A. Woods.

[“No humans involved”](#). Sylvia Wynter

Becoming Abolitionist: Police, Protests, and the Pursuit of Freedom Derecka Purnell

[Some cities treat gun violence as a public health crisis. Should Memphis? - MLK50](#)

[Editorial: Resistance lives in the South](#)

[Where do the police come from?](#)

[The Struggle Continues: A report by Andrea J. Ritchie and Interrupting Criminalization](#)

Black Mourning, Care, and Hope

Freedom is a constant struggle. Angela Y. Davis

[“We Wear the Mask.”](#) LaToya E. Eaves

Black Life Matter: Blackness, Religion, and the Subject. Biko Mandela Gray

[There is no healing in an antiblack world](#) Da’Shaun Harrison

All about love: new visions. bell hooks

[“Persevering almost killed one of Memphis’ most prominent artists: She doesn’t want you to make the same mistake - MLK50: Justice Through Journalism”](#) Victoria Jones and Jacob Steimer

Sister Outsider. Audre Lorde

[“The ‘Radical’ Welcome Table: Faith, Social Justice, and the Spiritual Geography of Mother Emanuel in Charleston, South Carolina.”](#) Priscilla McCutcheon.

[“A tribute to Orange Mound, where Blackness is celebrated every day - MLK50”](#) Andrea Morales and Zaire Love

Beloved. Toni Morrison

[“Black monument matters: Place-based commemoration and abolitionist memory work”](#) Alex Moulton

In the wake: On blackness and being. Christina Sharpe.

How we get free: Black feminism and the Combahee River Collective. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor (Ed.)

[On Witness and Repair: A Personal Tragedy Followed by Pandemic](#) Jesmyn Ward

[Memorial for Alton Sterling, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, 2016.](#) Willie Jamaal Wright.

[“What we do when we don’t want to remember - MLK50: Justice Through Journalism”](#) Nubia Yasin

[“Worn Out”](#) Katherine McKittrick

The Radical Promise of Black Studies beyond the AP African American Studies

“Everybody’s Protest Novel.” In *Notes of a Native Son.* James Baldwin.

Black Reconstruction in America: Toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880. W.E.B. Du Bois

[“Meet the Southern librarians fighting for racial justice and truth-telling”](#) Jason Christian

All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave. Akasha (Gloria T.) Hull, Patricia Bell-Scott, and Barbara Smith. (Eds.)

We do this' til we free us: Abolitionist organizing and transforming justice. Mariame Kaba.

Freedom dreams: The black radical imagination. Robin D.G. Kelley.

[*Vision and justice. A civic curriculum.*](#) Sarah Lewis.

Blackstudies. In *The Collected Poems of Audre Lorde.* Audre Lorde

South to America: A journey below the Mason-Dixon to understand the soul of a nation. Imani Perry.

[“The Meaning of African American Studies”](#) Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor

The warmth of other suns: the epic story of America's great migration. Isabel Wilkerson.

[“W.E.B. Du Bois, Black History Month and the importance of African American studies”](#) Chad Williams

[“Do You Know What it Means to Miss New Orleans?: Katrina, Trap Economics, and the Rebirth of the Blues.”](#)
Clyde Woods

[“On how we mistook the map for the territory, and reimprisoned ourselves in our unbearable wrongness of being, of desêtre: Black studies toward the human project.”](#) Sylvia Wynter

[“But What Does Wonder Do? Meanings, Canons, too? On literary Texts, Cultural Contexts, and What it's Like to be One/Not One of Us.”](#) Sylvia Wynter.