

BOOKS

Amazon Book names Top Ten Black Studies books for 1998

Amazon Books has released its list of the Top Ten Black Studies book list for 1998. This listing was compiled by Compass staffers Jacquie Casey and Ronel Brewer. Some of these titles may be familiar to you, but hopefully there will be some surprises too.

With Ossie & Ruby: In This Life Together

By Ossie Davis and Ruby Lee

This joint memoir, by one of the Twentieth centuries most important theatrical couples, is a lively, provocative account of more than 50 years of collaboration on and off the stage. It encompasses the antiliberal witch hunts of the 1950s, the rise to prominence of Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X in the 1960s, the birth of a commercially successful black cinema, and the intimate dramas that commercially successful black cinema, and the intimate dramas that help a marriage survive through five tumultuous decades in an industry where the half-life of relationships can often be measured in months.

Lift Every Voice

By Lani Guinier

When Bill Clinton nominated University of Pennsylvania Law School Professor Lani Guinier to the position of Assistant Attorney general for Civil rights in 1993, she was immediately set upon by right-wing critics of the president. Taking her writings on cumulative and proportional voting out of context, they branded her a "quota queen."

Guinier, on instructions from administration officials, made almost no effort to defend herself against public smearing of her work and reputation. Then, to her surprise, Clinton himself withdrew her nomination, stating in a press conference that her views were "undemocratic." In *Lift Every Voice*, Professor Guinier offers her perspective on what happened in the spring and summer of 1993, and more importantly, she writes about how, after she was cut loose by an intimidated white House, she eventually regained her confidence in the Civil Rights Movement.

The Children

By David Halberstam

Like the Revolutionary and Civil wars, the Civil rights movement has achieved mythical status in the United States--an epic tale of heroes and martyrs; of sacrifice, honor, and courage in the face of overwhelming odds. As a young Journalist, David Halberstam covered the rise of the Civil Rights movement in Nashville, Tennessee, and in *The Children* he revisits that pivotal era. From accounts of lunch counter sit-ins to the freedom rides, Halberstam's book covers the map of the

crusade for racial equality.

Speaking Truth to Power

By Anita Hill

In 1991, Anita Hill, a law professor, dropped a bombshell into the middle of Senate Supreme Court confirmation hearings for Clarence Thomas. Thomas had, Hill alleged, harassed and embarrassed her with repeated requests for dates and discussions about pornography while supervising her at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Hill's allegations introduced a volatile mix of sex, race, and scandal to the proceedings, deeply dividing both the Senate and the country. The aftermath of the Thomas hearings saw plenty of books about Anita Hill, some supporting her, others attacking, but Hill remained silent...until now. In *Speaking Truth to Power*, Anita Hill finally sets the record straight.

Dreamer: A Novel

By Charles Johnson

At the center of *Dreamer* are three remarkable men: Martin Luther King Jr.; his aid Matthew Bishop, an African American Philosophy student; and Chaym Smith, a man who is a dead ringer for the Civil Rights leader. Not only does Smith resemble King, but he also shares his intellectual voracity: widely read in both Eastern and Western Philosophy, proficient in Sanskrit and martial arts, and a talented painter. But where King is deeply spiritual, Smith is a cynic; where King has the full force of his strong beliefs and his family heritage, Smith had nothing but a lifetime of misfortunes to shape his attitudes. When Smith offers to become King's stand-in, Johnson has an ideal situation in which to explore issues long at the heart of the "race issue" in America: the inequality between black and white, even between black and black.

Paradise

By Toni Morrison

"They shoot the white girl first. with the rest they can take their time. No need to hurry out here. They are seventeen miles from a town which has ninety miles between it and another. Hiding places will be plentiful in the convent, but there is time and the day has just begun." So begins Morrison's first novel since she won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993. Ambitious, political deeply spiritual, and peopled with characters as complex as they are unforgettable, time is fluid in the universe of this particular novel. Though it is set up in 1976, Morrison travels easily between eras, taking the reader back in time to Ruby, an all black township in Oklahoma at the end of World War II, then further back

to the establishment of its predecessor, Haven. Paralleling the story of Exodus, a band of former slaves wanders the Oklahoma territory in search of homeland. Underlying the strong strength of character and place that imbues each page is a touch of the supernatural--ghost children skitter through the halls of an abandoned Catholic girl's school, while "unseen friends" visit lonely women by night.

King of the World

By David Remnick

You'd think there wouldn't be much left to say about a living icon like Muhammad Ali, yet David Remnick imbues *King of the World* with all the freshness and vitality this legendary fighter displayed in his prime. Beginning with the pre-Ali days of boxing and its two archetypes, Floyd Patterson and Sonny Liston, Remnick deftly sets the stage for the emergence of a heavyweight champion the likes of which the world has never known: a three dimensional, Technicolor showman, fighter, and minister of Islam--a man who talked almost as well as he fought. But mostly, Remnick's portrait is of a man who could not be confined to any existing stereotypes, inside the ring or out.

A Hope in the Unseen

By Ron Suskin

Ron Suskin won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing in 1995 for his stories on Cedric Jennings, a talented black teenager struggling to succeed in one of the worst public high schools in Washington DC. Suskin has expanded those features into a full length nonfiction narrative, following Jennings beyond high school graduation to Brown University, and, in the tradition of Leon Dash's Rosa Lee and Alex Kotlowitz's *There Are no Children Here*, he delivers a compelling story about the struggles of inner-city life in modern America.

Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary

By Juan Williams

Washington Post correspondent and TV commentator Juan Williams has produced an illuminating look at a true giant of 20th Century American politics, retelling the story of Thurgood Marshall's successful desegregation of public schools in the US. with his victory in the case of Brown vs the board of Education, followed by his appointment to the Supreme Court in 1967 for a 24-year term.

Williams has captured many examples of Marshall's heroism and humanity in this comprehensive yet readable biography of a complex, combative, and courageous Civil Rights figure.

DATES

Dec. 2, 1908

John Baxter "Doc" Taylor dies of typhoid pneumonia at age 26. Taylor had been a record-setting quarter miler and the first African-American gold medal winner in the 4 x 400 medley in the 1908 London Games.

Dec. 2, 1989

Andre Ware of the University of Houston becomes the first African-American quarterback to win the **Heisman Trophy**.

Dec. 3, 1847

Frederick Douglass and Martin R. Delaney publish **The North Star**, one of the leading abolitionist newspapers of its day.

Dec. 4, 1909

The New York Amsterdam News is founded by

James Anderson. Originally priced at 2 cents, it will grow to a circulation of almost 3,500 by 1990.

Dec. 4, 1927

The Duke Ellington band makes its debut at the **Cotton Club** in Harlem.

Dec. 9, 1922

Red Foxx is born in St. Louis, Mo. His records and concerts will catapult him to fame and fortune and his own television show, Sanford and Son.

Dec. 18, 1971

Rev. Jesse Jackson announces the formation of **Operation PUSH** (People United to Save Humanity), a new African-American political and economic development organization.

The history and legacy of African-Americans is an important and integral part of the nation's moral and political climate. Like many other ethnic groups, African-Americans have made valued contributions in every field of endeavor. In this issue of *The Compass* we share some little-known December ones with you.

Dec. 1, 1940

Comedian Richard Pryor was born in Peoria, Illinois. Pryor went on to star in well-known films like **Stir Crazy** and **Silver Streak**.

Dec. 1, 1955

Rosa Parks defied the segregated transportation ordinance in Montgomery, Ala. by riding in the front of the bus. Her actions will spark a 382-day bus boycott and signal the beginning of the modern American **Civil Rights Movement**.