



# HONEYBEE CAPITAL FOUNDATION

## SUMMER BOOK LIST AUGUST 2020

*Oh dear friends, what a time! It's like being shaken up amidst the evils of Pandora's jar, one plague after another, traumas old and new rising to the surface. As one of my colleagues said back in the springtime, "It's hard to know what is being caused, and what is being revealed."*

*At times like this, I find wisdom and comfort and courage - and yes, escape - in great books. I'm happy to share this summer reading list, with some new entries plus a few highlights of old favorites – shared with all best wishes, and with great hopes for the future.*

### BOOKS THAT HELP US TO CONSIDER – HISTORY, ECONOMICS, PHILOSOPHY, BIOGRAPHY

#### **W.E.B. DU BOIS'S DATA PORTRAITS, Whitney Battle-Baptiste and Britt Rusert**

I was alerted to this curious volume through the terrific team at Brookline Booksmith, and as usual their insights were right on point. These infographics were presented at the 1900 Paris Exposition by Du Bois and team. The first thing you will notice is their aesthetic appeal: a bar chart with a scale too big for the page becomes a big swooping spiral of data, a presentation so arresting that the reader is pulled into even closer examination of the information at hand. This presentation laid some of the groundwork for Du Bois' most widely read publication, [The Souls of Black Folk](#), published in 1903, with its especially enduring concept of two-ness, an understanding of identity that foretold our current explorations of intersectionality, a whole century later.

#### **CASTE, Isabel Wilkerson**

#### **THE WARMTH OF OTHER SUNS, Isabel Wilkerson**

I've just begun to dive into *Caste*, and even at this early stage of my reading it is clear how much this book will add to the most important discussions and decisions of our times. Wilkerson is well known as the Pulitzer Prize-winning historian who authored *The Warmth of Other Suns*, and her ability to combine deep scholarship with original analysis is clear in this volume. Some will be put off by the specific and provocative references to current events in the United States, which is too bad, because the underlying analysis is so important. Wilkerson's central premise is that we have

understood divisions in American society in an incomplete way, and that by recognizing the system of power that is at its core, and how it compares with other systems in other places at other times, we might be better able to see the sea in which we are swimming.

**BRAIDING SWEETGRASS, Robin Wall Kimmerer**

“Despite our fears of falling, the gifts of the world stand by to catch us.”

This book is science, and also poetry, so it could be placed in almost any category I invent. Robin Kimmerer is a professor of environmental biology and enrolled member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, and a combination of science, indigenous wisdom, and sheer love of our natural world shines through on every page. Whether you swim in a sea of digital data or in a pond hidden deep in the woods, you will find beauty and wisdom here. (Note: for video, see Robin’s [Bioneers](#) talk. For Audio, listen to the terrific conversation with Krista Tippett at [OnBeing](#).)

**DEAR IJEWELE, by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**

If you still tense up a little bit when you hear the word “feminist,” this tiny book, written as a letter to a dear friend and new parent, will bowl you over with its common sense. Plus, you can read it over a single lunch hour. Pair with [We Should All Be Feminists](#) if you want an extra oomph of understanding.

**ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: A GUIDE FOR THINKING HUMANS,  
by Melanie Mitchell**

I’ve been lucky to learn from Melanie Mitchell through her work with the Santa Fe Institute, and this latest publication illuminates her gift for distilling complicated topics in a way that preserves their nuance. As the title implies, Mitchell takes a decidedly human approach to this vital subject, a perspective that is especially valuable in a time when many accounts of AI are either technical engineering discussions or over-generalized philosophical declarations. We can all benefit from Mitchell’s candor, clarity, and expertise.

**JACOB LAWRENCE: THE AMERICAN STRUGGLE,**

**Elizabeth Hutton, Bailly Turner, et al.**

**JACOB LAWRENCE: THE MIGRATION SERIES,**

**by Elizabeth Alexander, Rita Dove, et al.**

I was first introduced to the striking work of Jacob Lawrence by my economist brother, who studies labor migration. The connection he made has stuck with me ever since, the recognition that all of those charts and graphs and statistics on labor force represent real live people, people who are moving and adjusting and suffering and thriving, sometimes all at once. There is no better way than to convey these many layers of adaptation and evolution than through images like Lawrence’s, and this new volume is a welcome extension of earlier, smaller publications.

*Though the 2020 Lawrence exhibit at the PEM was sadly curtailed by covid, you can see a terrific virtual view of the show here: <https://www.pem.org/exhibitions/jacob-lawrence-the-american-struggle>*

## BOOKS THAT HELP US TO IMAGINE - FICTION & POETRY

### [AN AMERICAN SUNRISE](#), Joy Harjo

Joy Harjo is US Poet Laureate, the first Native American poet to hold this position. These poems are simultaneously intensely personal and universal in their pain and joy and deep connection through space and time. Harjo travels to her family's lands, the places from which the Mvskoke people were forcibly removed in the 1800's. Poetry and prose intermingle in this volume in a beautiful way, weaving together a whole that is even greater than each individual thread. "The Old Ones will always tell you, your ancestors keep watch over you. Listen to them."

### [THE WATER DANCER](#), by Ta-Nehisi Coates

Powerful narrative plus complex history plus family in all of its forms plus a dash of magic make for a compelling story. I found myself picturing the Schuylkill River of my childhood all through the middle of this book, which made it all the more vivid and piercing.

### [PARABLE OF THE TALENTS](#), by Octavia Butler

I am not the biggest sci-fi fan and admit that it was LeVar Burton's [podcast](#) that drew me to read more Octavia Butler. The best futuristic or fantasy writing is just close enough to current reality that it's easy to imagine – just one slippery step or two, and there we land. In this regard Butler can be a little hard to read, since her future is in some ways stunningly close to our present... which in the end is all the more reason to dive in. (*Parable of the Talents* follows [Parable of the Sower](#), so if you are the kind of reader who likes to start at the beginning, please take note.)

### [SING, UNBURIED, SING](#), by Jesmyn Ward

Woah, this book pulls you in. It's like reading Foucault, you think you're following along but then the narrator shifts and the time frame slips out from under you and before you know it you've done a chutes-and-ladders transfer to a whole different part of the story, each piece compelling and well crafted and haunting, each page squeezing your heart a little bit more. By the end the pieces connect and the full picture finally comes into view... like arriving at an open view after a twisty turny path that's been obscured by brush the whole way up. If you admire Toni Morrison's [Beloved](#), this is the book for you.

### [THERE THERE](#), by Tommy Orange

One of the greatest things about reading is that it can introduce us to other communities. When I was a little kid in rural Pennsylvania, I read about New York City. When I was a liberal arts student in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I read about Edo Japan. When I am working in finance, I read about bees. The great gift of *There There* is that it avoids the single story, introducing us to a whole web of individuals as they weave together to form a complete, painful, beautiful narrative about the urban Native American community around Oakland. It is powerful and awful and infuriating and gorgeous and one of the best books I've read in years.

**CONVENIENCE STORE WOMAN, by Sayaka Murata**

It's a good sign when you can't quite come up with words to characterize a work of fiction. *Convenience Store Woman* is quirky and compelling and weirdly heroic, charting the course of a mini-mart employee in Japan as she finds her own unexpected definitions of identity and success. If you like Murakami ([1Q84](#)), or Han Kang's [The Vegetarian](#), I bet you will like this book too.

**AN AMERICAN MARRIAGE, by Tayari Jones**

The best stories show no seam between the macro and micro elements of their narrative, and this is how I know that Jones is an outstanding artist: this novel is seamless. The book is about a marriage, as the title says, but not just that. It's about growing into relationship, but not just that. It's about the justice system, and family, and race, and roots and grafts, and creation and destruction. And love.

**...AND OUR OWN SMALL CONTRIBUTION!**

**MONTH OF SUNDAYS, by Katherine Collins with Shalon Ironroad and Christa Alexandra Designs**

As many of you know, we've been working these last few months to bring forth a new creation based on our Sunday Best blog series. *Month of Sundays* invites us to reflect, restore, and revive, offering a pocket of calm and wisdom in our buzzing, busy lives. All profits from this publication are dedicated to support of organizations that provide essential wisdom and service, addressing some of our greatest needs.

***If you have a garden and a library,  
you have everything you need.***

***- Cicero***

## A NOTE ON BOOKSELLERS

*Alert readers may have noticed that many of our links connect you with a Very Large Online Retailer, and indeed, we appreciate that this retailer provides terrific customer service and helpful product detail. We are also loyal patrons of local booksellers, of course. In fact, one of my favorite ways to get to know a place is to seek out its bookstore. The IndieBound organization can help you find these local booksellers wherever you may be (including my personal favorite, Brookline Booksmith) – and if you are an e-loving person, they have handy online functions too.*

<http://Brooklinebooksmith.com>

<http://www.indiebound.org>

## STAYING IN TOUCH

Our next book list will be out at year-end, and we're already looking forward to it. If you'd like to stay in touch in the meantime, remember that we publish our short Sunday Best reflections every week. Just go to [HoneybeeCapital.org](http://HoneybeeCapital.org) and look for "subscribe" - it's a grey arrow on the right side of the screen for larger devices, and an orange banner at the bottom of the screen for smaller devices.

***Beware the person of one book.***

***- Thomas Aquinas***