



Body Politic

DELVE DEEPER READING LIST



This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Susan Conlon and Kim Dorman, of Princeton Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary *The Body Politic*.

THE BODY POLITIC follows Baltimore City Mayor Brandon Scott during an unprecedented election and throughout his first year in office as he puts his political future on the line in hopes of saving lives by implementing a new violence reduction policy in the city.

Contributors



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ADULT NON-FICTION

Auster, Paul. *Bloodbath Nation*. Grove Atlantic, 2023.

Since 1968, more than one and a half million Americans have been killed by guns. Why is America so different—and why are we the most violent country in the Western world? Interwoven with Spencer Ostrander's haunting photographs of the sites of more than thirty mass shootings in all parts of the country, *Bloodbath Nation* presents a succinct but thorough examination of America at a crossroads, and asks the central, burning question of our moment: What kind of society do we want to live in?

Greenberg, David. *John Lewis: A Life*. Simon & Schuster, 2024.

A comprehensive, authoritative biography of Civil Rights icon John Lewis, “The Conscience of the Congress,” draws on interviews with Lewis and approximately 275 others who knew him at various stages of his life, as well as never-before-used FBI files and documents.

Cox, Karen L. *No Common Ground: Monuments and the Ongoing Fight for Racial Justice*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2021.

When it comes to Confederate monuments, there is no common ground. Polarizing debates over their meaning have intensified into legislative maneuvering to preserve the statues, legal battles to remove them, and rowdy crowds taking matters into their own hands. These conflicts have raged for well over a century—but they've never been as intense as they are today. *No Common Ground* is the story of the seemingly invincible stone sentinels that are just beginning to fall from their pedestals.

Davis, Angela. *Policing the Black Man: Arrest, Prosecution, and Imprisonment*. Pantheon Books, 2017.

Policing the Black Man explores and critiques the ways the criminal justice system impacts the lives of African American boys and men at every stage of the criminal process, from arrest through sentencing. Essays range from an explication of the historical roots of racism in the criminal justice system to an examination of modern-day police killings of unarmed black men. The contributors discuss and explain racial profiling, the power and discretion of police and prosecutors, the role of implicit bias, the racial impact of police and prosecutorial decisions, the disproportionate imprisonment of black men, the collateral consequences of mass incarceration, and the Supreme Court's failure to provide meaningful remedies for the injustices in the criminal justice system.

Dixon, Ejeris, and Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, editors. *Beyond Survival: Strategies and Stories from the Transformative Justice Movement*. AK Press, 2020.

In this collection, a diverse group of authors focuses on concrete and practical forms of redress and accountability, assessing existing practices and marking paths forward. They use a variety of forms—from toolkits to personal essays—to delve deeply into the “how to” of transformative justice, providing alternatives to calling the police, ways to support people having mental health crises, stories of community-based murder investigations, and much more. At the same time, they document the

history of this radical movement, creating space for long-time organizers to reflect on victories, struggles, mistakes, and transformations.

Douglass, Frederick. *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass*. Dover Publications, Incorporated, 2016.

Former slave, impassioned abolitionist, writer, newspaper editor, and eloquent orator whose speeches fired the abolitionist cause, Frederick Douglass (1818–1895) led a remarkable life. Physical abuse, deprivation, and tragedy plagued his early years, yet through sheer force of character, he was able to overcome these obstacles to become a leading spokesman for his people. In this, the first and most frequently read of his three autobiographies, Douglass provides graphic descriptions of his childhood and horrifying experiences as a slave as well as a harrowing record of his dramatic escape to the North and eventual freedom.

Friedman, Barry. *Unwarranted: Policing without Permission*. Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2018.

Unwarranted tells the stories of ordinary people whose lives were torn apart by policing—by the methods of cops on the beat and those of the FBI and NSA. Driven by technology, policing has changed dramatically. Once, cops sought out bad guys; today, increasingly militarized forces conduct wide surveillance of all of us. Friedman captures the eerie new environment in which CCTV, location tracking, and predictive policing have made suspects of us all while proliferating SWAT teams and increased use of force have put everyone's property and lives at risk. Policing falls particularly heavily on minority communities and the poor, but as *Unwarranted* makes clear, the effects of policing are much broader still. Policing is everyone's problem. Police play an indispensable role in our society. But our failure to supervise them has left us all in peril. *Unwarranted* is a critical, timely intervention into debates about policing, a call to take responsibility for governing those who govern us.

Garza, Alicia *Who Do You Serve, Who Do You Protect?: Police Violence and Resistance in the United States*. Haymarket Books, 2016.

This collection of reports and essays (the first collaboration between Truthout and Haymarket Books) explores police violence against black, brown, Indigenous, and other marginalized communities, miscarriages of justice, and failures of token accountability and reform measures.

Kaba, Mariame and Shira Hassan. *Fumbling Towards Repair: A Workbook for Community Accountability Facilitators*, Project NIA, 2019.

Fumbling Towards Repair is a workbook by Mariame Kaba and Shira Hassan that includes reflection questions, skill assessments, facilitation tips, helpful definitions, activities, and hard-learned lessons intended to support people who have taken on the coordination and facilitation of formal community accountability processes to address interpersonal harm & violence.

Kaba, Mariame. *We Do This Till We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*, Haymarket Books, 2021

What if social transformation and liberation aren't about waiting for someone else to come along and save us? What if ordinary people have the power to collectively free themselves? In this timely collection of essays and interviews, Mariame Kaba reflects on the deep work of abolition and transformative political struggle. With a foreword by Naomi Murakawa and chapters on seeking justice

beyond the punishment system, transforming how we deal with harm and accountability, and finding hope in the collective struggle for abolition, Kaba's work is deeply rooted in the relentless belief that we can fundamentally change the world. As Kaba writes, "Nothing that we do that is worthwhile is done alone."

Lorde, Audre. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Crossing Press, 2007.

In this charged collection of fifteen essays and speeches, Lorde takes on sexism, racism, ageism, homophobia, and class, and propounds social difference as a vehicle for action and change. Her prose is incisive, unflinching, and lyrical, reflecting struggle but ultimately offering messages of hope. This commemorative edition includes a new foreword by Lorde-scholar and poet Cheryl Clarke, who celebrates the ways in which Lorde's philosophies resonate more than twenty years after they were first published.

McGhee, Heather. *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*. Penguin Random House, 2021.

The Sum of Us explores what is lost in the zero-sum paradigm- the idea that progress for some of us must come at the expense of others. This is a story of how public goods in this country - from parks and pools and functioning schools - have become private luxuries: of how unions collapsed, wages stagnated, and inequality increased; and how this country, unique among the world's advanced economies, has thwarted universal healthcare. McGhee proposes the Solidarity Dividend: the benefits we gain when people come together across races to accomplish what we simply can't do on our own.

Muhammad, Khalil Gibran. *The Condemnation of Blackness, Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*. Harvard University Press, 2019

How did we come to think of race as synonymous with crime? A biography of the idea of black criminality in the making of modern urban America, The Condemnation of Blackness reveals the influence this myth, rooted in crime statistics, has had on our society and our sense of self. Black crime statistics have shaped debates about everything from public education to policing to presidential elections, fueling racism and justifying inequality.

Pietila, Antero. *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

Eugenics, racial thinking, and white supremacist attitudes influenced even the federal government's actions toward housing in the 20th century, dooming American cities to ghettoization. The Federal Housing Administration continued discriminatory housing policies even into the 1960s, long after civil rights legislation. This all-American tale is told through the prism of Baltimore, from its early suburbanization in the 1880s to the consequences of white flight after World War II, and into the first decade of the twenty-first century. The events are real, and so are the heroes and villains. Mr. Pietila's narrative centers on the human side of residential real estate practices, whose discriminatory tools were the same everywhere: restrictive covenants, redlining, blockbusting, predatory lending.

Taylor, Keeanga Yamhatta. *From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation*. Haymarket Books, 2016

In this analysis, activist and scholar Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor surveys the historical and contemporary ravages of racism and the persistence of structural inequality such as mass incarceration and Black

unemployment. In this context, she argues that this new struggle against police violence holds the potential to reignite a broader push for Black liberation.

Wehle, Kiml *What You Need to Know About Voting and Why*. Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2020.

Law professor and constitutional scholar Kimberly Wehle offers practical, useful advice on the mechanics of voting and an enlightening survey of its history and future.

ADULT FICTION

Brown, adrienne maree & Imarashia, Walidah. *Octavia's Brood*, AK Press, 2015.

Whenever we envision a world without war, without prisons, without capitalism, we are producing speculative fiction. Organizers and activists envision and try to create such worlds all the time. Walidah Imarisha and adrienne maree brown have brought twenty of them together in the first anthology of short stories to explore the connections between radical speculative fiction and movements for social change. The visionary tales of *Octavia's Brood* span genres—sci-fi, fantasy, horror, magical realism—but all are united by an attempt to inject a healthy dose of imagination and innovation into our political practice and to try on new ways of understanding ourselves, the world around us, and all the selves and worlds that could be. The collection is rounded off with essays by Tananarive Due and Mumia Abu-Jamal, and a preface by Sheree Renée Thomas.

Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Sower*. Aspect/Warner Books, 2019.

In 2024, with the world descending into madness and anarchy, one woman begins a fateful journey toward a better future. Lauren Olamina and her family live in one of the only safe neighborhoods remaining on the outskirts of Los Angeles. Behind the walls of their defended enclave, Lauren's father, a preacher, and a handful of other citizens try to salvage what remains of a culture that has been destroyed by drugs, disease, war, and chronic water shortages. While her father tries to lead people on the righteous path, Lauren struggles with hyperempathy, a condition that makes her extraordinarily sensitive to the pain of others. When fire destroys their compound, Lauren's family is killed and she is forced out into a world that is fraught with danger. With a handful of other refugees, Lauren must make her way north to safety, along the way conceiving a revolutionary idea that may mean salvation for all mankind.

Morrison: Toni. *Beloved: A novel*. Vintage reprint edition, 2024.

Sethe was born a slave and escaped to Ohio, but eighteen years later she is still not free. Sethe has too many memories of Sweet Home, the beautiful farm where so many hideous things happened. And Sethe's new home is haunted by the ghost of her baby, who died nameless and whose tombstone is engraved with a single word: Beloved.

Morrison, Toni. *The Bluest Eye*, Vintage reprint edition, 2007.

In Morrison's first novel, Pecola Breedlove—an 11-year-old Black girl in an America whose love for its blond, blue-eyed children can devastate all others—prays for her eyes to turn blue: so that she will be beautiful, so that people will look at her, so that her world will be different. This is the story of the nightmare at the heart of her yearning and the tragedy of its fulfillment.

Ward, Robert. *Red Baker*. Gallery Book; illustrated edition, 2014.

When Red Baker, a Larmel steel worker in Baltimore, Maryland, gets laid off from his job he goes crazy: boozing, attempted philandering, running away from his future. Filled with unforgettable characters from Red's angry but loyal wife, Wanda; his basketball-star son, Ace; his lifelong friend Dog, a casualty

of the layoff; and Crystal, the go-go dancer at Lily's bar who embodies Red's fantasies of escape. Red Baker is a classic American novel about a man with no identity who tries to replace the one he's lost.

Simon, David, and Edward Burns. *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood*.

Through the eyes of one broken family--two drug-addicted adults and their smart, vulnerable 15-year-old son, DeAndre McCollough, Simon and Burns examine the sinister realities of inner cities across the country and unflinchingly assess why law enforcement policies, moral crusades, and the welfare system have accomplished so little. This book is a look at the price of the drug culture and the poignant scenes of hope, caring, and love that astonishingly rise in the midst of a place America has abandoned.

YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION

Degroat, Cayla Bellanger, and Cicely Lewis. *We Shall Not Be Denied: A Timeline of voting rights and suppression in America*. Lerner Publications, 2025.

The book takes an in-depth look at voting rights in the US, particularly examining when certain groups of people won the right to vote, with special features that highlight why voting is important.

Fleischer, Jeff. *Votes of Confidence: A Young person's guide to American elections*. Zest Books, 2024.

Updated for the 2024 election cycle, this revised edition provides a compelling primer of how US election processes came to be and how they work.

Jenkins, Tommy. *Drawing the Vote. A Graphic novel history for future voters*. Amulet Books, an imprint of Abrams, 2022.

Originally published in the lead-up to the 2020 US presidential election, *Drawing the Vote: A Graphic Novel History for Future Voters* looks at the history of voting rights in the United States and how it has affected the way we vote today.

Levinson, Cynthia. *Fault Lines in the Constitution, the Graphic Novel. First Second*, 2020.

In 1787, after 116 days of heated debates and bitter arguments, the United States Constitution was created. This imperfect document set forth America's guiding principles, but it would also introduce some of today's most contentious political issues—from gerrymandering to the Electoral College, to presidential impeachment. With colorful art, compelling discourse, and true stories from America's past and present, the book sheds light on how today's political struggles have their origins in the decisions of our Founding Fathers.

Lewis, John, and Andrew Aydin. Illustrated by Nate Powell. *March: Book One, Book Two, Book Three*. Top Shelf Productions, 2013-2016.

A graphic novel trilogy is a first-hand account of John Lewis's lifelong struggle for civil and human rights, meditating in the modern age on the distance traveled since the days of Jim Crow and segregation.

Rusch, Elizabeth. *You Call This Democracy? How to Fix Our Government and Deliver Power to the People*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020.

The author examines the challenges facing our democracy today, from problems with the electoral college, gerrymandering, voter suppression, lack of representation, voter disinterest, citizens who cannot vote, lobbying, and money, that lead to two questions: why doesn't every vote really count? And what are we going to do about it?

YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Aguirre, Jorge. *Call Me Iggy. First Second*, in imprint of Roaring Brook Press, 2024.

Ignacio "Iggy" Garcia is an Ohio-born Colombian American teen living his best life. searching for his place in his family, his school, his community, and ultimately--as the political climate in America changes during the 2016 election--his country. Focusing on familial ties and budding love, the book challenges assumptions about Latino-American identity while reaffirming our belief in the hope that all young people represent.

Colbert, Brandy. *The Voting Booth*. Hyperion, an imprint of Buena Vista Books, Inc., 2020.

The first year they are eligible to vote, Marva and Duke meet at their polling place to fulfill their civic duty. Marva, passionate about politics, has been working to get out the vote. When Duke is unable to vote at their mutual polling place due to a registration mix-up, she makes it her mission to ensure he can cast his ballot.

Rodkey, Kelsey. *Class Act*. Harper, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2024.

Ella knew transferring to a new school wouldn't be easy. On the first day, while defending her sister, she makes an enemy of the student council president and lands in detention. Swearing revenge on him, Ella will stop at nothing to update him – even calling for a redo election in which she's the only one brave enough to run against him.

Sanchez, Jasper. *The (Un)popular Vote*. Katherine Tegan Books, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2021.

Optics can make or break an election. Everything Mark knows about politics, he learned from his father, the Congressman who still pretends he has a daughter and not a son. Mark has promised to keep his past hidden and pretend to be the cis guy everyone assumes he is. But when he sees a manipulatively charming candidate for student body president inflame dangerous rhetoric, Mark risks his low profile to become a political challenger.

BOOKS FOR YOUNGER LEARNERS AND CHILDREN

Bingham, Winsome. *The Walk*. Abrams Books for Youth Readers, 2023.

As a little girl accompanies her grandma on a walk to the polling station, members of their community join and the grandmother explains the importance of their journey.

Brown, Don. *We the People!* Amulet Books, 2022.

This graphic novel tells the history of American democracy and how it evolved from other forms of government, explaining the fundamental ideas of democracy as liberty, equality, and justice for all.

DiFranco, Ani. *Show Up and Vote*. Rise x Penguin Workshop, 2024.

Musician Di Franco and illustrator Baker emphasize the significance of doing one's civic duty in this story of a Black mother and child heading to the polls.

Henderson, Leah. *Your Voice, Your Vote*. Harper, an imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers, 2024.

On Election Day, as they walk through their vibrant neighborhood on their way to vote, Quetta, her mother, and her grandmother face obstacle after obstacle before and after reaching their voting station, showing Quetta the importance of raising her voice.

Hudson, Wade. *The Day Madear Voted*. Nancy Paulsen Books, 2024.

Charlie and Ralph's mom has waited a long time to vote because countless obstacles have been put in Black people's way to stop them from having a say in elections—obstacles that it took a lot of hard work to tear down. But now, in 1969, Madear is going to vote for the very first time, and the boys are coming along on this exciting day.

MacLeod, Elizabeth. *How You Can Shape the Future*. Orca Books, 2023.

Dive into the past, present, and future of voting around the world, and discover why it's one of the most important acts of being a citizen. It includes profiles of young people who are making the vote count, to help empower readers to make their voices heard.

MacMillan, Kathy. *Baltimore*. Arcadis Children's Books, 2023.

Explore the historic city of Baltimore, Maryland.

Soontornvat, Christina. *Leo's First Vote!* Alfred A. Knopf, 2024.

Leo's dad is voting in his first election as a naturalized US citizen, and he promises to take Leo to the polls with him. Leo can't wait! But, after his cousin Ray casts doubt on the importance of a single vote, it'll take Leo's class mock election results, as well as a talk with his dad to convince him that each and every vote matters.

Winter, Jonah. *Lillian's Right to Vote: A Celebration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965*. Schwartz & Wade Books, 2015.

As Lillian, a one-hundred-year-old African American woman, makes a “long haul up a steep hill” to her polling place, she sees more than trees and sky—she sees her family’s history. She sees the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment and her great-grandfather voting for the first time. She sees her parents trying to register to vote. And she sees herself marching in a protest from Selma to Montgomery.