



Materials for Reflection on Racism and Anti-racism compiled by researchers at the IZEW, University of Tübingen

Initiative and Responsibility: Laura Schelenz, IZEW Uni Tübingen, laura.schelenz@uni-tuebingen.de

Motivation

The present document responds to increasing awareness but also continued sustaining of **systemic racism** in societies across the world. **Academia is no exception**. While diversity is hailed and institutions seek to incorporate scholars from diverse backgrounds, power relations and structures of domination have not substantially changed. Women and people of color remain less employed in high-level positions and less cited in research papers or academic conferences. This trend is amplified in certain fields of study, such as STEM fields. Since academia is no stranger to dynamics of racism, this **list invites scholars and students to self-reflect and broaden our understanding** of race, racism, and anti-racist causes. The readings and films, podcasts, and music listed below may nourish our minds with theories and practices that help in our endeavor to end racism in higher education and society at large.

Readings

This list compiles academic literature, novels, podcasts, and films that study and analyze **racism and antiracism**. They may also address issues as wide-ranging as colonialism, discrimination, civil rights, diversity, inclusion, exclusion, privilege, and oppression. The materials cited below contribute to antiracism and social justice by **producing and sharing knowledge** as well as **raising awareness** about historical or ongoing forms of racial injustice and suggesting theories or practices for racial justice. The materials were **selected by researchers** at the IZEW, University of Tübingen. Comments by the researchers explain their choice of item, which may be due to personal reasons or because the text has particular advantages. The reading list is compiled in three languages, whereas variations of literature exist in the three versions: **English, German, and Spanish**.

Reading list

1619. New York Times Magazine. Available online at:
<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/1619-america-slavery.html> (last accessed 20 September 2020)

This project compiles stunning journalistic material in images and text on the beginning of American slavery. It tracks current forms of racism and discrimination back to policies and attitudes of the time around the founding of America, when slavery was institutionalized in the USA. Description from the website: “The 1619 Project is an ongoing initiative from The New York Times Magazine that began in August 2019, the 400th anniversary of the beginning of American slavery. It aims to reframe the country’s history by placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative.”

Adams, Maurianne (Ed.). 2007. **Teaching For Diversity and Social Justice**. Second Edition. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, New York

“A landmark in its field, Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice provides the conceptual framework, historical background, and rationale for understanding the necessity and significance of social justice education.” (Sonia Nieto). The book (or rather, reference work) offers curriculum designs (and critiques how curricula can reproduce oppressions) for not only racism, but for most of the oppressions, from ableism to sexism. It helps to understand how oppression per se functions, why all of the individual targets are connected, and why they are not in a ‘hierarchy of oppressions’ - which I find particularly important today. It has been an extremely valuable resource for my own understanding and my teaching practice.



Alper, Meryl; Katz, Vikki S.; Schofield Clark, Lynn. 2016. **Researching children, Intersectionality, and Diversity in the Digital Age.** *Journal of Children and Media*, 10:1, 107-114.

This article examines Intersectionality with regard to media and children and argues that children from so-called WEIRD contexts (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic) are the main focus of attention. It shows that the experiences of "other" children tend to be understood as weaknesses and rarely as strengths (or competencies).

Baboeram, Pravini. 2019. **The Uprising.** Music documentary. Available on: <https://youtu.be/8GjRMQrJ2ig>

Pravini explains on her website: "This film tells the story I was looking for but couldn't find. Countless films have been made that touch on issues related to racism. But very few of them actually address the link with the colonial past and the common challenges different communities of color face. And none of the films I encountered focus on the European context and current struggles of people of color. (...) I was looking for (...) more than storytelling. I was looking for analysis of institutional racism. I was looking for a language to challenge people who uphold this system, whether they are aware of it or not. I was looking for a story that connected the dots between different communities who are fighting the same system of oppression. I was looking for a story not to convince white people of the problem, but to empower people of color to challenge and combat it." Although it doesn't focus on Spain and Portugal, those countries which started colonialism, and lacks contributions from indigenous communities in Oceania or the Americas, it is a powerful documentary, mixing her own songs and the commentary and experiences of academics and activists.

Bennett, Brit. 2020. **The Vanishing Half.** London: Dialogue Books.

This is a first novel taking up the topic of "passing" (passing as black or white in society) in a new way.

Bridges, Khiara. 2017. **The Poverty of Privacy Rights.** Stanford University Press.

The book is an ethnographic study of a hospital, which shows that the privacy of financially constrained black people is less respected than the privacy of white people.

Carby, Hazel. 1982. **"White Woman Listen! Black Feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood."** In: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies. 1982. *Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism In 70's Britain.* London: Routledge.

The text criticises the blind eye (white) feminism turns on the experiences of BIPOC women. Arguments made in the text in the 80s would probably be found in the discourse on intersectionality today. Simultaneously, the issues of white feminism back then were different to the issues tackled today and the critique is framed accordingly: "Three concepts central to feminist theory become problematic in their application to black women's lives: "the family," "patriarchy," and "reproduction." When used they are placed in a context of the herstory of white (frequently middle-class) women and become contradictory when applied to the lives and experiences of black women." (S. 112) Carby concludes with a call to white feminists: "Instead of taking black women as the objects of their research, white feminist researchers should try to uncover the gender-specific mechanisms of racism among white women. This more than any other factor disrupts the recognition of common interests of sisterhood" (p. 128).

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2015. **Between the World and Me.** New York: Spiegel and Grau.

This is a non-fiction letter by the author to his 15-year-old son. It starts out like that: "[...] That was the week you learned that the killers of Michael Brown would go free. The men who had left his body in the street would never be punished. It was not my expectation that anyone would ever be punished. But you were young and still believed. You stayed up till 11 p.m. that night, waiting for the announcement of an indictment, and when instead it was announced that there was none you said, "I've got to go," and you went into your room, and I heard you crying. I came in five minutes after, and I didn't hug you, and I didn't comfort you, because I thought it would be wrong to comfort you. I did not tell you that it would be okay, because I have never believed it would be okay. What I told you is what your grandparents tried to tell me: that this is your



country, that this is your world, that this is your body, and you must find some way to live within the all of it. [...] I write you in your 15th year.”

Dübgen, Franziska; Skupien, Stefan. 2019. Paulin Hountondji. **African Philosophy as Critical Universalism**. Cham: Palgrave.

Critical assessment of the philosophy and political engagement of Benin philosopher Hountondji. Reconstructing Hountondji's famous critique of ethnophilosophy, the book explores what constitutes “African” philosophy.

Eubanks, Virginia. 2017. **Automating Inequality. How High-tech Tools Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor**. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

This academic contribution focuses on marginalization and oppression through technology in Western contexts, especially the United States. The author shows how the use of algorithms in public administration and welfare offices reinforces social divides by “profiling, policing, and punishing the poor”.

Garza, Alicia; Poo, Ai-jen. 2020. **Sunstorm. Podcast**. Available on Spotify.

Alicia Garza and Ai-jen Poo are leading activists and advocates in the Black Lives Matter movement and for the rights and well-being of domestic workers, especially women of color. In their podcast series, they host leaders from the US Congress, academia, and activism to discuss all matters concerning Black and Brown women. Although there is a lot of pain in many stories, the hosts spread so much laughter, optimism, and love that it is simply a pleasure listening! Especially those interested in self-care should try taking half an hour of their time and make this podcast experience their self-care.

Ingram, David. 2000. **Group Rights. Reconciling Equality and Difference**. Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press.

Well-known contribution on the debate of group rights vs. individual rights. Deals with questions of affirmative action, immigrant policies, culture and US racism from a justice point of view. Supports an elaborate form of multiculturalism.

Lee, Spike. 1989. **Do the Right Thing**. Movie.

An early movie by Spike Lee about racial tensions and violence in a Brooklyn neighborhood – extremely relevant for today (if you deduct Lee's representation of women).

Lorde, Audre. 2007. **The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism**. in: *Sister Outsider*. Crossing Press Berkeley, 124-133

What startled me in this text was the description of the author's experience in a supermarket: a white girl seeing the author's baby calls to her mother and says: “Oh look, Mommy, a baby maid!” (126) This illustrates that young children can give a pretty good description of the world they live in. But what perpetuates this world, is the white mother's reaction to her girl: she shushes her. She does not correct, nor explain. From this and other episodes just alike, Lorde talks about her own reaction which is anger. Other than guilt, anger pushes to act for a better world where we all can grow and love.

Mercer, Kobena. 1987. **Black Hair/Style Politics**. *New Formations* (3).

A review of cultural practices in hair styling and the symbolic value of different hair structures using binaries with reference to 'scientific racism' in Europe and the Black Pride and Black Power movements of the 1960s: "Although dominant ideologies of race (and the way they dominate) have changed, the legacy of this biologizing and totalizing racism is traced as a presence in everyday comments made about our hair. 'Good hair', used to describe hair on a black person's head, means hair that looks 'European', straight, not too curly, not that kinky. And, more importantly, the given attributes of our hair are often referred to by descriptions such as 'woolly', 'tough', or, more to the point, just plain old 'nigger hair'. [...] The pejorative precision of the salient expression, 'nigger hair', neatly spells out how, within racism's bipolar codification of human value, black people's hair has been historically devalued as the most visible stigma of blackness, second only to skin." (S. 35)



Milan, Stefania; Treté, Emiliano. 2019. **Big Data from the South(s): Beyond Data Universalism**. *Television & New Media*, 20(4), 319-335

This article investigates how non-Western epistemologies could influence the work with (big) data and to what extent this might open up new perspectives.

Noble, Safiya Umoja. 2018. **Algorithms of Oppression. How Search Engines Reinforce Racism**. New York: New York University Press.

Wonderful contribution to the study of racism in and through technology. Among other things, the author examines Google and the results of image and text searches. She shows how socially prevailing stereotypes (e.g. sexual degradation of black women) are reproduced and reinforced by search engines. According to her study, these are not individual mistakes, but patterns of stereotyping and racism.

Peck, Raoul. 2017. **I am Not Your Negro**. Documentary film based on an unfinished manuscript by James Baldwin.

This documentary is centered around the murders of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and Medgar Evers and is for me one of the most important contemporary political films.

Salgado, Sebastião. 2015. **Workers. Archaeology of the Industrial Age**. Pictures. Thames & Hudson.

This is a conversation and an illustrated book by the photographer Salgado, who has documented the destructive rage, the abysses and the beauty of being human and, after a severe depression, has recently set out to photograph groups of people who still live far away from Western hegemony.

Steffensen, Victor. 2020. **Fire Country. How Indigenous Fire Management Could Help Save Australia**. Melbourne/Sydney: Hardie Grant Travel.

The book highlights the potential of indigenous land management practices and indigenous knowledge of "country", for dealing with environmental challenges in contemporary Australia. At times of climate change and increasing disastrous fire seasons such as the Black Summer Bushfires of 2019/20, the revival of cultural burning practices, i.e. "firesticks" or "cool burning", could help restore balance with nature. A powerful landmark for the value of indigenous and local knowledges, and a reminder of the importance of interrogating our (western) relationships with nature, the book provides important implications for political and scientific practice well beyond Australia.

About the IZEW

The International Center for Ethics in the Sciences and Humanities (Ethics Center) is an interdisciplinary research center that raises ethical questions about science and its results at the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen. Here, a strategy of "ethics in the sciences and humanities" is pursued which by its very nature directly addresses the question of responsibility in science itself. The ethics in sciences that was developed at the Ethics Center has proven to be useful in the practice of research, teaching and public communication and is thereby very helpful to promote an open dialogue between life sciences, humanities, and social sciences in terms on ethical issues.

For more than 25 years, the Ethics Center is successfully working on a wide range of ethical topics at the University of Tübingen. It focusses on the collaboration between researchers across all disciplinary borders, as well as on the promotion and support of future researches in ethics in sciences and humanities.

Research at the Ethics Center addresses issues such as genetic engineering on human beings, animals and plants, as well as the topics of environmental ethics, security technologies, and fundamental questions of ethics in the sciences and humanities. A further point of interest is the transfer of information between research and teaching, as well as the coordination of research networks.

The Ethics Center is a trademark of the University of Tübingen with a high national and international reputation. It consistently publishes a variety of high-quality research papers, including a total of 55 doctoral dissertations. Furthermore, the Ethics Center has one of the largest libraries of scientific ethics in Europe.

Spokespersons of the Ethics Center are Prof. Dr. Regina Ammicht Quinn and Prof. Dr. Thomas Potthast.