



# MEETING IN A BOX

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## Black History Month Toolkit

Black History Month takes place in February to celebrate the history, culture, achievements and resilience of the Black community in the United States. The month of reflection and celebration recognizes the contributions the African American community has made to U.S. history, despite the racism, violence and other systemic obstacles Black people have had to overcome since the country was founded. 2020 may have been a watershed year in the fight for racial justice in the U.S., but the fight for civil rights has been going on for decades. This Meeting in a Box is designed to be a valuable tool which you can share with your staff to enhance your team's cultural competence skills and celebrate the contributions Black Americans have made to the U.S. as well as the entire world.

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# THE LEGACY OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The monthlong celebration of Black history has a [history](#) of its own.

In 1915, 50 years after passage of the 13th Amendment (which abolished slavery in the U.S.) the state of Illinois held an emancipation anniversary celebration. Among thousands of Black attendees from across the country, Harvard-educated historian Carter G. Woodson [displayed](#) an exhibit focusing on Black history. In September 1916, Woodson and minister Jesse E. Moorland took those efforts one step further, founding the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH), aimed at studying and promoting the achievements of Black Americans and other people of African descent. The group still exists today and is known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH).

In 1926, the group sponsored the first Negro History Week during the second week in February. They chose this week because it coincided with the birthdays of both President Abraham Lincoln and abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Following this first observance, mayors across the country began recognizing Negro History Week each year.

In the 1960s, the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement brought an increased awareness of and pride in Black identity, prompting universities across the country to extend the observance and led to the creation of Black History Month.

The monthlong observance became officially recognized in 1976 when President Gerald Ford called upon Americans to, “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.”

To help celebrate Black history, each year since 1928 the ASALH has also [assigned a theme](#) to the yearly observances. 2020 was “African Americans and the Black Vote” in honor of the 150-year anniversary of the 15th Amendment which granted Black men the right to vote and the 100-year anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which granted women the right to vote.

2021’s theme is “The Black Family: Representation, Identity and Diversity.” According to the ASALH, “The Black family has been a topic of study in many disciplines — history, literature, the visual arts and film studies, sociology, anthropology and social policy. Its representation, identity and diversity have been revered, stereotyped and vilified from the days of slavery to our own time. The Black family knows no single location, since family reunions and genetic-ancestry searches testify to the spread of family members across states, nations and continents.”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- What do you already know about Black history? What about the establishment of Black History Month did you not previously know?
- Why is it important to have nationally recognized celebrations of heritage? How do they contribute to cultural awareness and pride?



Carter G. Woodson (Public Domain image)

## TIMELINE:

# BLACK HISTORY THROUGH THE YEARS

## 1619–1865

Millions of people kidnapped from their homes across the continent of Africa are enslaved in the “New World.” In 1808, when importation of slaves from Africa is banned, there are 3.9 million slaves living in the U.S. On June 19, 1865 the last slaves are freed in Texas, more than two and a half years after President Lincoln issues the Emancipation Proclamation.

### 1831

Nat Turner leads the largest slave rebellion prior to the Civil War in Southampton County, Virginia. Rebelling slaves kill more than 50 people. Turner survives in hiding for more than two months after the rebellion is stomped out.

### 1847

Abolitionist Frederick Douglass founds *The North Star*, an anti-slavery newspaper based in Rochester, New York. The paper eventually gains more than 4,000 readers across the U.S., Europe and the West Indies.

### 1849

Harriet Tubman escapes to Philadelphia and helps about 300 enslaved people escape to the North for freedom via the Underground Railroad, a network of secret routes and safe houses to aid slaves in their escape.

### 1857

Dred Scott, an enslaved man, sues for freedom for himself and his wife, Harriet Robinson Scott. For four years, the couple lived in Illinois and Wisconsin territory, where slavery was illegal, and laws said that slaveholders from other states gave up their rights to own enslaved people if they visited for an extended period of time. The case, *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, became a nearly decade-long fight through several courts before reaching the Supreme Court. The Court ruled 7–2 against Scott, saying that no Black person could claim citizenship in the U.S. The decision helped stoke the fire for the Civil War in 1861.

### 1868

The 14th Amendment, which allows Black people to be considered U.S. citizens, is ratified.

### 1870

The 15th Amendment is ratified, guaranteeing that the right to vote cannot be denied because of race, color or previous condition of servitude.

Hiram Rhodes Revels becomes the first Black and Native American member of Congress, representing Mississippi as a Republican.

### 1888

The True Reformers Bank, the first officially chartered Black-owned bank, is founded by Reverend William Washington Browne, a former slave and soldier. It opens a year later. The [Capitol Savings Bank](#) in Washington, D.C. opens in 1888 becoming the first Black-owned bank to open.

### 1889

Journalist and activist Ida B. Wells becomes co-owner of the *Memphis Free Speech and Headlight* newspaper [founded](#) in 1888 by the Reverend Taylor Nightingale, and launches an anti-lynching campaign.

### 1896

The U.S. Supreme Court rules in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that segregation doesn't violate the 14th Amendment's equal-protection clause as long as conditions provided are “separate but equal.”



Ida B. Wells (Public Domain image)

## 1900

William H. Carney becomes the first Black soldier to be awarded the Medal of Honor for his valiant work protecting the regimental colors during the Battle of Fort Wagner in 1863.

## 1909

A group of Black and white activists, including W.E.B. Du Bois and Ida B. Wells found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

## 1921

The Tulsa Race Massacre, also known as the Black Wall Street Massacre, takes place as mobs of white people attack the economically thriving Black neighborhood in the Greenwood District of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands left homeless, leaving a devastating mark on Black wealth in the U.S.

## 1938

Singer Ella Fitzgerald releases a playfully sung version of the nursery rhyme “[A-Tisket, A-Tasket](#).” It goes on to be her first hit, staying on the pop charts for 19 weeks and sold 1 million copies.

## 1939

Singer Billie Holiday gives her first performance of the biting anti-lynching song “Strange Fruit,” at Café Society, New York’s first integrated nightclub. The song goes down in history as one of Holiday’s most gripping performances, and Holiday goes down in history as a jazz superstar.

## 1947

Jackie Robinson becomes first Black person to play Major League Baseball.

## 1950

Ralph J. Bunche becomes first Black person to win the Nobel Peace Prize for his work with the U.N. in the 1940s to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict in Palestine.

## 1954

In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the U.S. Supreme Court rules that racial segregation in public schools violates the 14th Amendment.

## 1955

Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat on a bus to a white man in Montgomery, Alabama. Her arrest leads to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, led in part by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

## 1957

The Little Rock Nine integrates Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas.

## 1959

Fifteen-year-old Diana Ross begins singing in a group called The Primettes, later to be renamed The Supremes. Though the group only lasts a few years, Ross and the Motown movement become internationally famous. Ross goes on to become one of the first major Black international superstars, having success in music, film and television.

## 1961

Freedom Rides begin in Washington, D.C. Activists ride buses throughout the segregated South to protest segregation on buses.

## 1962

Astronaut John Glenn becomes the first American to orbit Earth. Behind this achievement are thousands of people — including a group of Black women who were “human computers” calculating the precise math behind the landing. They include NASA’s first African American supervisor Dorothy Vaughan, mathematician Katherine Johnson and aeronautical engineer Mary Jackson.

## 1963

More than 200,000 people march on Washington, D.C.; Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. gives his historic “I Have a Dream” speech.



The March on Washington (Public Domain image)

## 1964

President Johnson signs Civil Rights Act of 1964, giving government more power to protect citizens against race, religion, sex or national-origin discrimination.

Bahamian-American actor Sidney Poitier becomes the first Black man to win the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role as Homer Smith in *Lilies of the Field*.

## 1965

Malcolm X, civil rights activist and former minister in the Nation of Islam, is assassinated in New York City.

## 1967

Thurgood Marshall becomes first Black U.S. Supreme Court justice. Some of his notable stances include opposing the death penalty and supporting the right to abortion.

## 1968

Dr. King is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

Democrat Shirley Chisholm becomes the first Black woman elected to the U.S. Congress, representing New York's 12th district. She goes on to become the Secretary of the House Democratic Caucus.

## 1969

President Richard Nixon authorizes the Office of Minority Business Enterprise — later renamed the Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) — to support the expansion of minority-owned businesses.

## 1970

The Black Business Association is founded to support entrepreneurship and development of Black-owned businesses.

## 1971

Hair care company Johnson Products (founded by the husband and wife team of George and Joan Johnson) becomes the first Black-owned company to be listed on the American Stock Exchange.

## 1972

Democrat Shirley Chisholm becomes first Black candidate from a major party to run for president.

## 1984

Civil rights activist Rev. Jesse Jackson becomes second Black person to make a bid for the presidency, running as a Democrat.

## 1987

Dr. Clifton R. Wharton, Jr. of TIAA-CREF (now a Diversity-Inc [Top 10](#) company), becomes the first Black chairman and CEO on the Fortune 500. Roger W. Ferguson Jr., who is also Black, goes on to become the company's CEO in 2008.

## 1989

Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a legal scholar and activist, coins the term “intersectionality” to describe the specific forms of compounding discrimination people face based on their race, class, sexuality, gender and ability.

## 1990

Democrat Lawrence Douglas Wilder of Virginia becomes the first Black person to be elected governor.

Trumpeter, composer, vocalist and actor Louis Armstrong is inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame as an early musical influence.

## 1991

President George H.W. Bush signs the Civil Rights Act of 1991, which strengthens laws on employment discrimination. It provided the legal right to trial by jury on claims of discrimination and the possibility of emotional distress damages, as well as limiting the monetary amount that a jury could award.

## 1993

Dr. Joycelyn Elders becomes first Black Surgeon General, known for her views on progressive issues such as drug legalization and distributing contraception in schools.

## 2001

Republican four-star General Colin Powell becomes first Black Secretary of State under President George W. Bush.

## 2003

Talk show host Oprah Winfrey becomes the first Black woman billionaire to be named on Forbes' "World's Richest People" list. Winfrey grew up in rural poverty and worked her way up as a news anchor to eventually host her syndicated talk show.

## 2009

Barack Obama becomes the U.S.'s first Black President.

## 2010

Beyoncé becomes the first woman to win six Grammys in one night. As of now, she has 24.

Poet and author Maya Angelou is awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom for being one of the most prolific writers and activists of her time.

## 2012

George Zimmerman fatally shoots 17-year-old Trayvon Martin, who was walking in a gated neighborhood unarmed. Nationwide protests begin. Zimmerman is acquitted in 2013.

## 2013

Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors and Opal Tometi create Black Lives Matter, a Black-centered activism movement calling for racial justice.

## 2014

NYPD officer Daniel Pantaleo places Eric Garner in an illegal chokehold, killing him. Garner was unarmed. His last words, "I can't breathe" become a Black Lives Matter rallying cry. Pantaleo is ultimately removed from the NYPD but federal prosecutors decided in 2019 not to bring charges against him.

## 2017

Lt. Gen. Stayce D. Harris, who is the highest-ranking Black woman pilot in all U.S. armed forces, gets inducted into the Women in Aviation International's Pioneer Hall of Fame.

## 2019

Congresswoman Maxine Waters, a Democrat from California, founds the Subcommittee on Diversity and Inclusion as part of the House Committee on Financial Services. Erica Miles is chosen to become the subcommittee's director of diversity and inclusion.

## 2020

After police killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and many other unarmed Black people, nationwide protests against systemic racial injustice in America begin. Protestors, often faced with brutal treatment from the police, demand jurisdictions to reduce police budgets and invest instead in communities. These demonstrations trigger a reckoning, demanding politicians, business leaders and citizens to take action against racism and injustice.

California Senator Kamala Harris becomes the first Black and South Asian woman to be the Vice President-elect alongside President-elect Joe Biden. A record number of Black people vote in the 2020 election, thanks largely to the lobbying efforts of Black politicians including politician and voting rights activist Stacey Abrams, who registered 800,000 voters during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# 2021

Georgia runoff elections flip the Senate to a Democratic majority. Newly elected senator Raphael Warnock delivers a victory speech, talking about how his elderly mother who lived through segregation, now got to vote for her son.

Kamala Harris is sworn in as Vice President.

Rosalind Brewer becomes the CEO of Walgreens, making her the only Black woman leading a Fortune 500 company.



Greg E. Mathieson, Sr./MAI/Shutterstock

# DIVERSITYINC'S FACTS & FIGURES

Available demographic, economic, employment and education data helps us understand why achieving equality for Black people is not only right and just, but also has profound business and cultural benefits. Interpreting these numbers can offer insight on the work we can do to address issues Black communities face. Here, we also include DiversityInc's exclusive data on Black leadership and employment in our Top 50.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Estimated U.S. Black/African American Population

**46.7 million** (2020 estimate), or **14.23%** of total pop. (2019 estimate)

### Projected Growth of U.S. Black/African American Population

**60.7 million** by **2060**, **15%** of total pop.  
(a **41.1%** increase from **2019**)

Sources:

[2019 American Community Survey](#), [2019 American Community Survey](#), [Census PDF 2020-2060 Projections](#)

## EMPLOYMENT

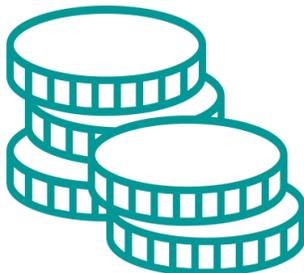
### Black civilian labor force, 2020

**33.5 million**

Sources: [Census PDF Nov. 2020](#)

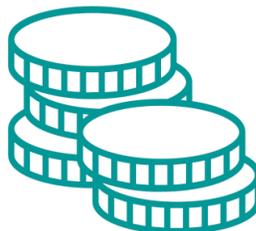
## FINANCES

U.S. Median Income, 2018



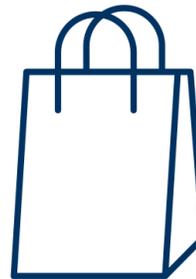
\$61,937

Black Median Income, 2018



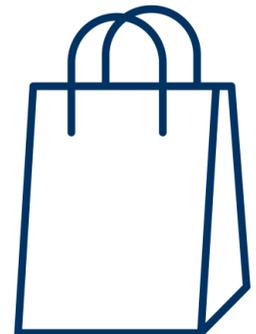
\$44,511

Black Buying Power, 2019



\$1,400 billion

Projected Black Buying Power, 2023



\$1,533.1 billion

Sources: [Catalyst.org](#), [2019 Selig Center for Economic Growth](#), [2018 Census](#)

# DIVERSITYINC 2020 TOP 50 DATA

## Black Representation at Different Organizational Levels

Group	Top 10 + HoF*	Top50 + HoF*	All Survey Participants
Black Men on Boards of Directors	6.6%	6.8%	5.8%
Black Women on Boards of Directors	4.1%	3.2%	2.3%
Black Men in Management	3.6%	3.3%	3.2%
Black Women in Management	4.2%	3.9%	3.5%
Black Men in Workforce	5.6%	5.7%	5.9%
Black Women in Workforce	7.2%	7.4%	6.9%

\*Hall of Fame

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

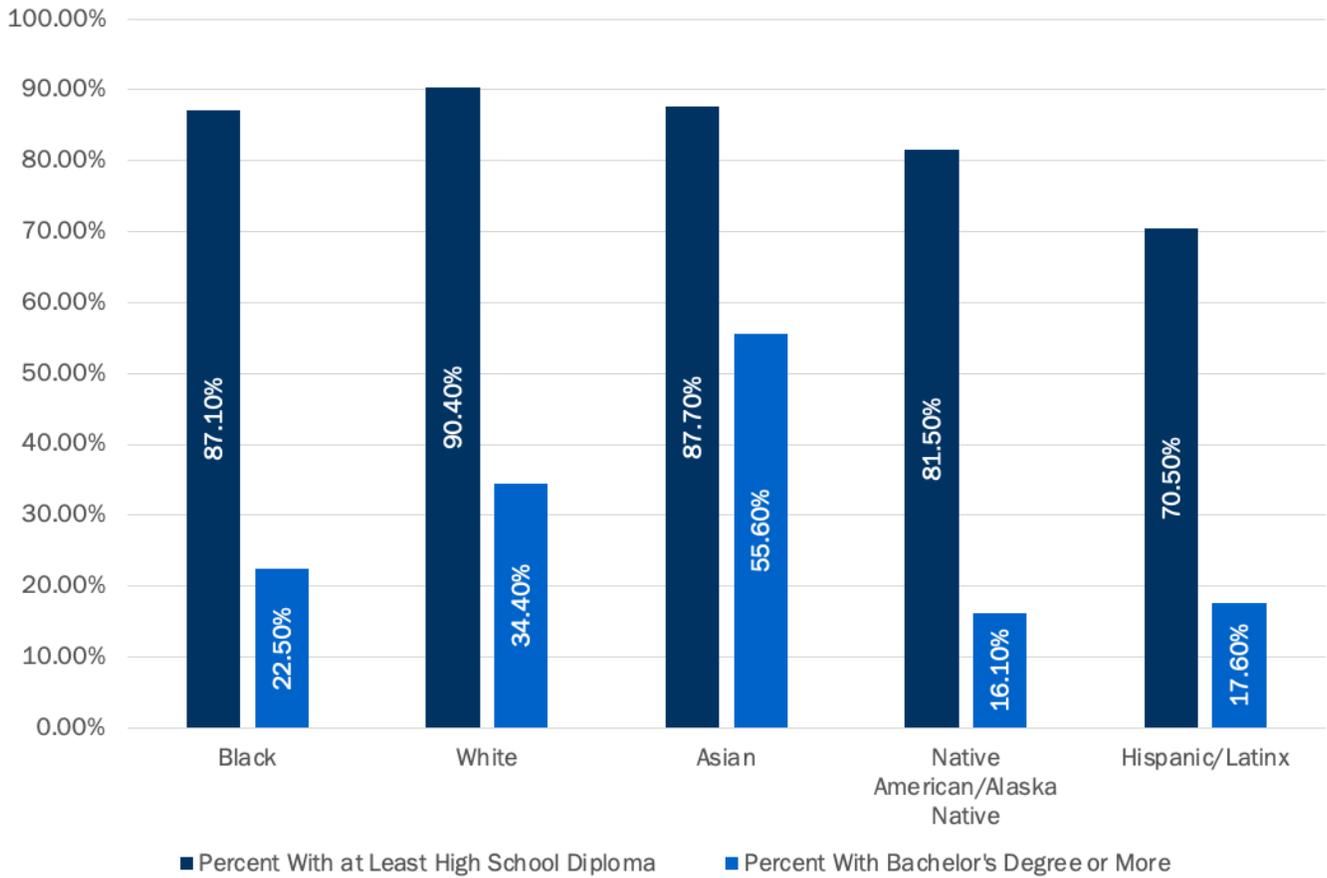
- What can our organization glean from these numbers to better serve our Black customers and employees?
- Where are some areas where racial disparities exist? How have systemic and historical issues contributed to them? What is the path forward toward equity?



fizkes/Shutterstock.com

# EDUCATION

## Educational Attainment



Source: [2019 Census Educational Attainment](#)

## Black Women's Degrees on the Rise

Group	Percent with Just High School Diploma	Percent with Bachelor's Degree	Percent with Master's Degree
Black Men	35.74%	16.72%	5.82%
Black Women	30.03%	16.43%	9.29%
Both Genders	29.6%	16.60%	7.7%

Source: [Census PDF 2019 Educational Attainment](#)

## ALLYSHIP:

# WHAT BLACK PROFESSIONALS WANT THEIR EMPLOYERS TO KNOW

2020 was a year of racial reckoning, especially in the corporate space. Many powerful, wealthy organizations were called out for marginalizing Black communities and employees – and called in to improve their diversity, inclusion and corporate social responsibility practices.

In the wake of this past summer’s protests against police brutality and systemic racism, Black DiversityInc employees anonymously offered their feedback on what they want businesses and allies to know about the ways racism and injustice impacted them and how organizations can support Black employees.

### **On dealing with current events and racist violence in the news...**

**"If there is an instance of racist violence, I might need a mental health day – a short break from the questions and negative news."**

**"Upon hearing news of injustice, I'll also want to hear from my leader at some point. I want to get their take on things, to see if we're on the same page or differ on the issue at hand."**

**"In corporate, I need partners to help me manage the situation and determine what next steps to support our employees will be. Partners from communications and HR should always be close at hand."**

### **On the importance of support from leaders...**

**"I need a safe space; the ability to be candid about feelings without backlash."**

**"I need security. Black employees need to know that if they speak out on injustices or need mental health assistance, their jobs will be there in the morning."**

**"Not just 'allyship' but leading the way. Not just 'standing with me' but standing in front of me in recognition that this is not just my fight – this fight is on all of us."**

## On discussing racism...

“I need you to not ask me to be your emotional support by speaking about the issues in such a way that it becomes more about YOUR feelings and thoughts than my experiences.”

“I need you to understand that just because I’m Black, I don’t have all of the answers. I can’t tell all of you what to say and what to do next. You have to know what you’re willing to do to ensure the tragedies stop. You must know what action you want to take to bring equality and justice to the forefront and hold folks accountable.”

“Recognize that, for me, talking about racism is not an academic exercise. When I’m asked to speak about it, it will be emotional. Every Black person in American has to navigate their oppression. It doesn’t matter if you are the first Black President or a random dude on the corner. No one who is Black escapes having to do it.”

## On creating systemic change in the working world and beyond...

“We need organizational support from leadership – and not cookie-cutter support either. We need real, sustained, lasting support that will dismantle the impact of systemic racism in the organization.”

“Please educate yourselves on what systemic racism actually is and how it permeates almost every law and interaction this country has with Black people.”

“Be action-oriented. Organizations need to use their power to advocate for policies at the local, state and federal level that will protect Black people and support organizations committed to justice reform.”

“Hire, promote and support Black professionals. That’s the only way to ensure lasting progress.”

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- How can our company center the points of view of Black employees without forcing them to be our sole educators? What resources are already out there?
- How has our company allied with historically underrepresented communities in the past? What did we learn from 2020 that we are using to move forward?



Jacob Lund/Shutterstock.com

# HOW TO SUSTAIN YOUR COMPANY'S ALLYSHIP TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY

As DiversityInc CEO Carolynn Johnson often says, the goal of diversity and inclusion work is to create irreversible systemic change resulting in equity for historically marginalized groups. Although events like George Floyd and Breonna Taylor's murders or the recent violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol may spark increased awareness, organizations and individuals should always be supporting the fight against racial injustice – whether or not it makes the headlines.

Here are some ways your organization can sustain its allyship to create lasting, systemic change:

## **INVEST IN BLACK COMMUNITIES.**

Donate and explore partnership opportunities with organizations such as supporting or partnering with grass-roots, Black-run advocacy groups. Pick which causes to align yourself with, whether it's prison reform, protecting the rights of Black transgender people, strengthening communities and/or supporting Black people's mental and physical health. Offer donation-matching programs for employees. Strengthening the Black community from the ground up is work that directly combats racism.

Support Black and minority-owned businesses through supplier diversity programs. As a company who needs to seek out suppliers, know that where you spend your money is powerful. Empower Black and minority suppliers that do ethical work and uplift young entrepreneurs of color.

Value Black consumers; ensure you are inclusive in your ad campaigns and online imagery. Hire a team of diverse professionals to target and connect to diverse communities and make sure your imagery is always uplifting and empowering.

## **TAKE CARE OF YOUR EMPLOYEES.**

Continually educate yourself and your workforce on the ever-growing number of resources that are available – from books to essays and even infographics. Provide these resources to your employees and have discussions about them. DiversityInc provides anti-racist [recommended reading](#) to leaders.

Commit to hiring and promoting Black employees. One of the most important action you can take lies within your preexisting diverse hiring and pipeline-building efforts. [This DiversityInc Best Practices webinar](#) on mitigating bias in recruiting contains some helpful tips. Advocate for Black employees entering positions of power – even when they're not in the room. Offer them high-visibility networking opportunities through mentorship and sponsorship programs.

Be clear and public about your anti-discrimination policies and enforce them. Clearly lay out behaviors your anti-discrimination policy seeks to prevent and be transparent about consequences. Conduct swift investigations into misconduct and quickly take disciplinary action when necessary.

Support Black employees' mental and physical health; wellness is crucial and racial fatigue is real. Aside from being there to listen and advocate, help connect your team to mental health and wellness resources and benefits your company may have in place. Informational resources and toolkits, inclusive physical and mental health benefits and even just space to speak out and feel heard are all important to those fighting racial injustice.

Sponsor and leverage your Black and multicultural resource groups. These groups are places where employees can speak to others who have shared experiences, where they are able to be their most authentic selves and have access to networking opportunities. They are also powerful resources for anti-racist education because they center the experiences and work of people of color.

### USE YOUR PLATFORM FOR GOOD.

Working within the diversity space, you have remarkable influence and can set the stage for how the rest of your organization will operate. Any opportunity to speak to your customer base and other leaders is an opportunity to speak out against injustice. Send out press releases, show support over social media, address racism as part of speaking opportunities, hold public and company-wide events to further anti-racist work and education — but always remember your work goes further than what you can say in a press release.



Michal Urbanek/Shutterstock.com

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

- How has our company already committed to irreversible, systemic change in our industry and community? What more can we do?
- What challenges come with publicly committing to racial justice? How can we overcome them?

### MORE RESOURCES:

[Strategies for Including Women of Color in Workplace Planning](#)

[Microaggressions: Crash Course](#)

[A Fireside Chat: White Women Allies in Action](#)

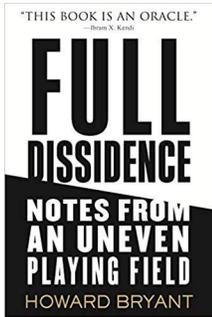
[Supplier Diversity Practices in the New Normal — The Impact of COVID-19 and Race on America](#)

[Best Practices in Recruiting Diverse Vendors](#)

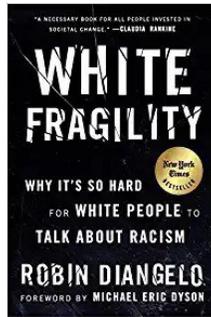


Flamingo Images/Shutterstock.com

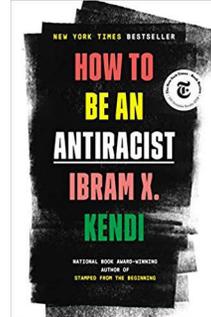
# ANTI-RACIST READING LIST



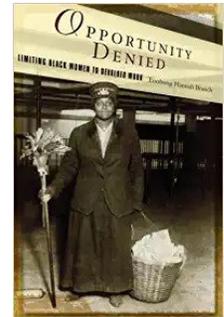
[Full Dissidence: Notes from an Uneven Playing Field](#)  
by [Howard Bryant](#) (Author)



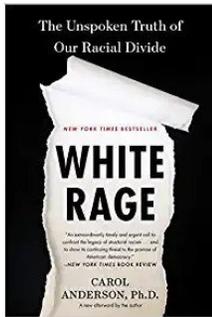
[White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism](#)  
by [Robin DiAngelo](#) (Author)



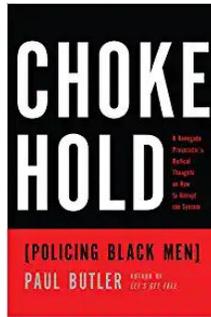
[How to Be an Antiracist](#)  
by [Ibram X. Kendi](#) (Author)



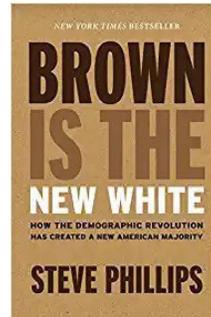
[Opportunity Denied: Limiting Black Women to Devalued Work](#)  
by [Enobong Branch](#) (Author)



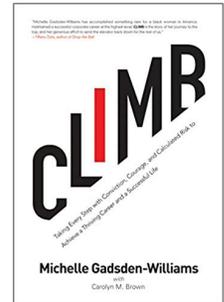
[White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide](#)  
by [Carol Anderson](#) (Author)



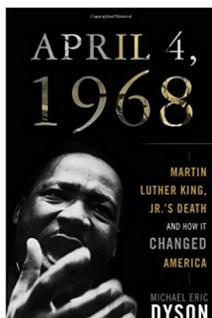
[Chokehold: Policing Black Men](#)  
by [Paul Butler](#) (Author)



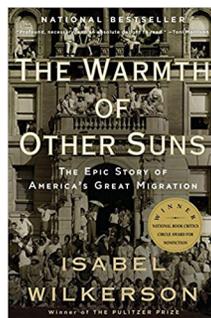
[Brown Is the New White: How the Demographic Revolution Has Created a New American Majority](#)  
by [Steve Phillips](#) (Author)



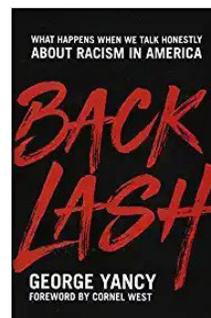
[Climb: Taking Every Step with Conviction, Courage, and Calculated Risk to Achieve a Thriving Career and a Successful Life](#)  
by [Michelle Gadsden-Williams](#) (Author), [Carolyn M. Brown](#) (Contributor)



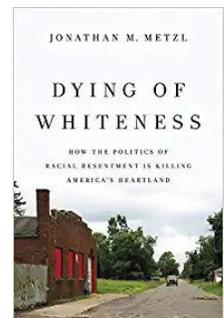
[April 4, 1968: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Death and How It Changed America](#)  
by [Michael Eric Dyson](#) (Author)



[The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration](#)  
by [Isabel Wilkerson](#) (Author)



[Backlash: What Happens When We Talk Honestly about Racism in America](#)  
by [George Yancy](#) (Author), [Cornel West](#) (Foreword)



[Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment Is Killing America's Heartland](#)  
by [Jonathan M. Metz](#) (Author)