

Suggestions for Issue-Themed Book Clubs

Books can offer a good basis for discussion and further understanding of important subjects, and book clubs can be a great method for NCJW members to get more involved and active. Do you want to kick off a book club but not sure where to start? Are you already in a book club but can't think of what to read next? Here are some recommended books, separated into some of our top issues!

COURTS MATTER

[Gideon's Trumpet: How One Man, A Poor Prisoner, Took His Case to the Supreme Court- and Changed the Law of the United States](#), by Anthony Lewis (1966) – This book describes the Gideon v. Wainwright case, which ruled that state courts must provide an attorney for criminal defendants who are unable to pay for their own.

[The Majesty of the Law: Reflections of a Supreme Court Justice](#), by Sandra Day O'Connor (2004) – Sandra Day O'Connor's memoir is not just a memoir on her experience as the first female Supreme Court justice, but also gives her thoughts on American law and life.

[My Beloved World](#), by Sonia Sotomayor (2013) – In Justice Sotomayor's memoir, she writes about her experience growing up in a housing project in the Bronx, her success in school despite the odds, and her eventual appointment to the Federal District Court before she was 40. The memoir ends before she was appointed to as the first Hispanic justice on the Supreme Court, so don't expect any insights on this term's cases!

[The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court](#), by Jeffrey Toobin (2008) – Toobin's authoritative work profiles the Supreme Court, its justices, and the changes it has undergone and will undergo.

[Protect & Defend](#), by Richard North Patterson (2001) – A novel about the Supreme Court and the difficulties of nominating a pro-choice justice. This legal thriller focuses on an abortion case.

[The Roberts Court: The Struggle for the Constitution](#), by Marcia Coyle (2013) – This recent study of the Roberts Court (called such because it is led by Chief Justice John Roberts Jr.) looks four landmark decisions that explore the deep divides between justices in the Supreme Court.

[Unlikely Heroes](#), by Jack Bass (1990) – This book looks at the judges who implemented Brown v. Board of Education in six states. It gives profiles of the men who gave up so much to see this important decision through.

ECONOMIC JUSTICE

[Class Matters](#), by New York Times reporters (2005) – A team of New York Times reporters look at the influence of class on our society. They report on the far reaching effects of class from, "the doctor's office" to "the marriage altar."

[Good Girls Revolt](#), by Lynn Povich (2012) – Lynn Povich was a young journalist at Newsweek in the 1960s when she and several female Newsweek employees sued Newsweek for discrimination in hiring and promotion. Povich recounts this story, as well as exploring how and if legal changes have affected young women working now.

[Grace and Grit: My Fight for Equal Pay and Fairness at Goodyear and Beyond](#), by Lily Ledbetter (2013) – Lily Ledbetter's memoirs about her work for equal pay, starting with the original Goodyear case that went to the Supreme Court and her efforts after she lost in the courts.

EDUCATION

[The Death and Life of the Great American School System: How Testing and Choice Are Undermining Education](#), by Diane Ravitch (2010) – Ravitch, an expert on education, critiques current trends in school "reform," such as privatization, testing, and charter schools. She explains that the business model does not work in education, and offers her ideas for fixing public schools.

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[The Education of a White Parent: Wrestling with Race and Opportunity in the Boston Public Schools](#), by Susan Naimark (2012) – This book focuses on Naimark’s journey to enact change in Boston schools, and examines racial privilege inherent in the system.

["Multiplication Is for White People": Raising Expectations for Other People’s Children](#), by Lisa Delpit (2012) – Delpit takes on education in her book about raising expectations for all children, and showing that education should not be racially biased.

FEMINISM

[Feminism is for Everybody](#), by bell hooks (2000) – bell hooks, one of the foremost authors on feminism and feminist issues, approaches the idea that feminism touches aspects in everyone’s lives and that it is, truly, for everyone.

[Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism](#), by Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards (2005) – This book is “an activism handbook for social justice,” for everyone regardless of income, age, or gender.

[On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition](#), by Blu Greenberg (1981) – Greenberg’s classic examines Jewish women’s various life roles, and offers suggestions on how to make Jewish practices and Judaism for equal for women.

IMMIGRATION

[Beyond Smoke and Mirrors: Mexican Immigration in the Area of Economic Integration](#), by William Perez (2009) – Perez shares the stories of 16 immigrant students to exemplify the estimated 2.4 undocumented students who have been characterized as being a “drain” on resources. Perez provides evidence to the opposite and makes the case for better immigration policy.

[The Latino Threat: Constructing Immigrants, Citizens, and the Nation](#), by Leo R. Chavez (2008) – A critical investigation on the prejudices and stereotypes used to hurt immigrants and create the exclusionary definition of “American.”

[They Take Our Jobs!: And 20 Other Myths about Immigration](#), by Aviva Chomsky (2007) – Noam Chomsky’s daughter looks at the myths that surround the immigration debate, and how the opposition uses these myths to shape the way we think about immigration.

LGBT

[Gay American History: Lesbians and Gay Men in the U.S.A.](#), by Jonathan Ned Katz (1992) – Katz’s book gives a comprehensive, 400 year history of gay life and culture in the United States.

[PoMoSexuals: Challenging Assumptions About Gender and Sexuality](#), by Carol Queen and Lawrence Schimel (1997) – This book contains essays written by notable LGBT authors who want to challenge assumptions on sexuality and gender.

[Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality](#), by Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) –Fausto-Sterling argues that our knowledge of sex and sexuality has been constructed by society and politics, has a negative impact on intersex (those born outside the binary of male/female) people.

[She Looks Just Like You: A Memoir of \(Nonbiological Lesbian\) Motherhood](#), by Amie Klemptauer Miller (2011) – Miller describes her experience as a non-biological lesbian mother and her journey to find her role as a non-traditional parent.

[Transgender 101: A Simple Guide to a Complex Issue](#), by Nicholas M Teich (2012) – This book gives an “accessible portrait of transgenderism” along with a history of transgender life and discrimination.

[Zami: A New Spelling of My Name - A Biomythography](#), by Audre Lorde (1982) – Audre Lorde, a prolific writer on feminist, racial, and LGBT issues, wrote a “biomythography,” which details her life growing up in 1930s Harlem, becoming a writer, and falling in love.

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REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Abortion:

[Abortion & Life](#), by Jennifer Baumgardner (2008) – Issues and intersections within choice are explored through portraits and stories.

[Absolute Convictions: My Father, a City, and the Conflict that Divided America](#), by Eyal Press (2006) – Israeli emigrant Shalom Press was an abortion provider protested by Operation Rescue. It is an account of that time in Press's (who is the author's father) life.

[The Blue Orchard](#), by Jackson Taylor (2010) – A historical novel about a woman arrested for aiding a black doctor who offers abortions. The book is based on the author's grandmother.

[The Choices We Made: Twenty-Five Women and Men Speak Out about Abortion](#), by Angela Bonavoglia and Gloria Steinem (2001) – 25 men and women offer their perspectives on the personal nature of abortion and the harm that comes from restricting choice.

[The Cider House Rules](#), by John Irving (1985) - This novel (also a movie) is about a physician who performs illegal abortions, and his assistant's changing viewpoints on the subject.

[A Death in Wichita: Abortion Doctor George Tiller and the New American Civil War](#), by Stephen Singular (2012) – Dr. Tiller, a doctor who performed abortions, was murdered by an anti-choice radical. This book shares the story of the murder, along with its implications.

[Dispatches from the Abortion Wars](#), by Carole Joffe (2011) – Carole Joffe offers testimony of patients, doctors, and others on their experiences with abortion as a counter to the shame-based opposition movement.

[A Question of Choice](#) (40th anniversary edition), by Sarah Weddington (2013) – A key lawyer in *Roe v. Wade*, Sarah Weddington's book reflects the current status of choice and constitutional law in time for the 40th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*.

Contraception:

[America and the Pill: A History of Promise, Peril, and Liberation](#), by Elaine Tyler May (2011) – May looks at the achievements and failures of the pill since its introduction in the 1960s.

[How the Pro-choice Movement Saved America: Sex, Virtue, and the Way We Live Now](#), by Christina Page (2006) – Page addresses the positive outcomes of family planning, while also looking at the dangerous role the opposition movement plays.

[Sacred Choices: The Right to Contraception and Abortion in Ten World Religions](#), by Daniel C. Maguire (2001) – Maguire examines religious traditions and reinterprets their stances on family planning.

Reproductive Justice:

[Crow After Roe: How "Separate But Equal" Has Become the New Standard In Women's Health And How We Can Change That](#), by Jessica Mason Pieklo (2013) – *Crow After Row* examines how anti-abortion policies since 2010 have predominantly hurt poor women, rural women, and women of color.

[Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty](#), by Dorothy Roberts (1998) – This book looks at myths about black sexuality and racist policies. Roberts examines policies ranging from sterilization of black women to denial of benefits for the children of women on welfare and studies their historical precedent, starting with slavery.

[Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice](#), by Jael Silliman, Marlene Gerber Fried, Loretta Ross, Elena Gutierrez (2004) – This book looks at the reproductive rights movement through the actions and experiences of women of color.

Other Reproductive Topics:

[The Motherhood Manifesto: What America's Moms Want - and What to Do About It](#), by Joan Blades and Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner (2006) – This book gives a voice to mothers who are hurt by policies and jobs that make it difficult to raise children. It also looks at progressive legislation and actions to make it easier to be a working or low-income mother.

[The Purity Myth: How America's Obsession with Virginity Is Hurting Young Women](#), by Jessica Valenti (2009) – A book about the "virginity complex" in the United States, which idolizes "pure" girls and women, which is very damaging.

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SEXUAL ASSAULT

[Yes Means Yes: Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape](#), edited by Jessica Valenti and Jaclyn Friendman (2008) – Feminist, political, and activist writers alike present their ideas for a change in the “No Means No” model—an approach towards sexual assault and consent that was necessary in the past but now needs to be rethought.

[Transforming a Rape Culture](#), by Emily Buchwald, Pamela Fletcher and Martha Roth (2005) – First published in 1993, Transforming Rape Culture has provided a new understanding of sexual violence and its origins.

[Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault](#) by Justin and Lindsey Holcomb (2011) – This book is primarily written for those who have been assaulted (either as children or adults) but also equips family, friends, pastors, and others to care for victims in ways that are compassionate, practical, and informed.

[I Never Called it Rape](#), by Robin Marshaw (1994) – The classic book that broke new ground by thoroughly reporting on the widespread problem of date and acquaintance rape has now been completely updated to include recent studies, issues, current events, and controversies.

TRAFFICKING

[Not in My Town: Exposing and Ending Human Trafficking and Modern-Day Slavery](#), by Dillon Burroughs and Charles Powell (2011) – This book offers discussion about the United States slave trade and how it extends internationally. It calls for new abolitionists to join together to end slavery everywhere.

[Runaway Girl: Escaping Life on the Streets, One Helping Hand at a Time](#), by Carissa Phelps (2012) – The memoir of a girl who ran away from home and was “taken in” by a brutal pimp when she was 12. Against all odds, she managed to escape this life and attend and graduate from UCLA with both a law degree and an MBA.

[Renting Lacy: A Story of America’s Prostituted Children](#), by Linda Smith (2009) – Renting Lacy is based on true stories and interviews with teenage survivors of child sex trafficking. The book illustrates the hidden commercial sex trade in the United States and the young lives that are damaged forever.

[A Walk Across the Sun](#), by (2012) – Corban Addison leads readers on a chilling, eye-opening journey into Mumbai’s seedy underworld--and the nightmare of two orphaned girls swept into the international sex trade.

[Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide](#), by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn (2010) - From two fiercely moral voices, Half the Sky is a passionate call to arms against our era’s most pervasive human rights violation: the oppression of women and girls in the developing world.

Stuck on a book club name? We’ve got some ideas!

Choice Words • Repro Rights and Reads • Off The Shelf • Off The Shelf & In Your Laps • Page Turner • Pages & Pastries • Dessert & Discussion • The Written Word • Reading Matters • Novel Ideas • Novel Action • Fact v. Fiction • Reading On Purpose • Purposeful Reading • Purposeful Prose • Book Talk

If none of these books seem to fit with your group, or you have any suggestions or questions, please contact NCJW Grassroots Associate Lindsay Morris at lindsay@ncjwdc.org.