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.

**Economic Justice**

_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.


_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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**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.


*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.

**LGBTQ**


*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 Klempnauer Miller (2011) – Miller describes her experience as a non-biological lesbian mother and her journey to find her role as a non-traditional parent.


*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:**

*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 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.


**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.


**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.


**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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**SEXYUAL 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.


*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