



Tip of the Month for May 2022

Summer reading ideas to grow our understanding of poverty and other justice issues.

Submitted by VLN staff

May is here, summer is nearing, and April's cold weather is but a memory. With beautiful warm weather comes the need for a summer reading list. So here is a book list to inspire your choices. And of course, VLN does not endorse any of these books. Yet, these books do have potential in that they all have great reviews, so who knows? Enjoy!

NONFICTION

We Fed an Island: The True Story of Rebuilding Puerto Rico, One Meal at a Time, by Jose Andres.

Publisher's summary: "The true story of how a group of chefs fed hundreds of thousands of Americans after Hurricane Maria and touched the hearts of many more."

Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City, by Matthew Desmond.

"Astonishing... Desmond has set a new standard for reporting on poverty." — Barbara Ehrenreich, *New York Times Book Review*

Call Me American, by Abdi Iftan.

"Riveting... [Abdi Nor Iftin] had to endure famine, war, a precarious life as a refugee, and a visa-rejecting bureaucracy before a green-card lottery win, in 2014, enabled him to emigrate. His narrative is both panoramic and particular, full of irreverent asides, and suffused with appreciation for the humanity of others." — The New Yorker

The Origin of Others (The Charles Eliot Norton Lectures), by Toni Morrison.

"Pulitzer– and Nobel Prize–winning novelist Morrison analyzes the language of race and racism and the classification of people into dehumanizing racial categories in American culture... Lyrically written and intelligently argued, this

book is on par with Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* and *The Black Book*." —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

Broke in America: Seeing, Understanding, and Ending US Poverty, by Colleen Shaddox.

"Clear, concise, and packed with facts, figures, and suggestions for action, *Broke in America* shows that poverty is not the result of individual laziness or 'bad choices' but of economic and social policies that produce inequality by design." —Katha Pollitt, columnist for *The Nation*

The Emergency: A Year of Healing and Heartbreak in a Chicago ER, by Thomas Fisher.

"Riveting . . . [Fisher] eloquently captures the intensity of the situation . . . and shares heartrending stories of victims. . . . The result is a powerful reckoning with racial injustice and a moving portrait of everyday heroism." —*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

FICTION

The Office of Historical Corrections: A Novella and Stories, by Danielle Evans.

"[A] collection for the moment. Evans skillfully interprets cancel culture, fake news, and political cults in order to craft a unique critique of the country's underlying racism. The success of the collection stems from balancing the gloom of racism with Evans wry commentary. The snarky narrative voice cuts deeply. These stories are now even more necessary." —*Chicago Review of Books*

Darius the Great is Not Okay, by Adib Khorram.

"Layered with complexities of identity, body image and mental illness that are so rarely articulated in the voice of a teenage boy of color. Khorram writes tenderly and humorously about his protagonist's journey of self-acceptance, making it hard not to want to reach through the pages, squeeze his hand and reassure Darius that he is, in fact, going to be O.K." —*The New York Times*

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian, by Sherman Alexie.

"This is a gem of a book.... may be [Sherman Alexie's] best work yet." —*New York Times*

Exit West, by Mohsin Hamid.

"In spare, crystalline prose, Hamid conveys the experience of living in a city under siege with sharp, stabbing immediacy. He shows just how swiftly ordinary life — with all its banal rituals and routines — can morph into the defensive

crouch of life in a war zone. ... [and] how insidiously violence alters the calculus of daily life. ... By mixing the real and the surreal, and using old fairy-tale magic, Hamid has created a fictional universe that captures the global perils percolating beneath today's headlines." --*Michiko Kakutani, New York Times*

Behold the Dreamers, by Imbolo Mbue.

"Undocumented immigration, the widening gulf between rich and poor, and the thinly veiled racism of an avowedly 'post-racial' culture converge in this new generation of immigrants' painful encounter with the American Dream. . . . The prose grows luminous." --*The Christian Science Monitor*

The House in the Cerulean Sea, by TJ Klune. (Highly recommend getting the Macmillian Audio version).

"This is a sweet narrative about the value of asking questions and the benefits of giving people (especially children) a chance to be safe, protected, and themselves, regardless of what assumptions one might glean from, say, reading their case file." --*Booklist*

"1984 meets *The Umbrella Academy* with a pinch of Douglas Adams thrown in. Touching, tender, and truly delightful, *The House in the Cerulean Sea* is an utterly absorbing story of tolerance, found family, and defeating bureaucracy." --Gail Carriger, *New York Times* bestselling author of *Soulless*