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## Featured Bookshelf: 2017 Black History Month

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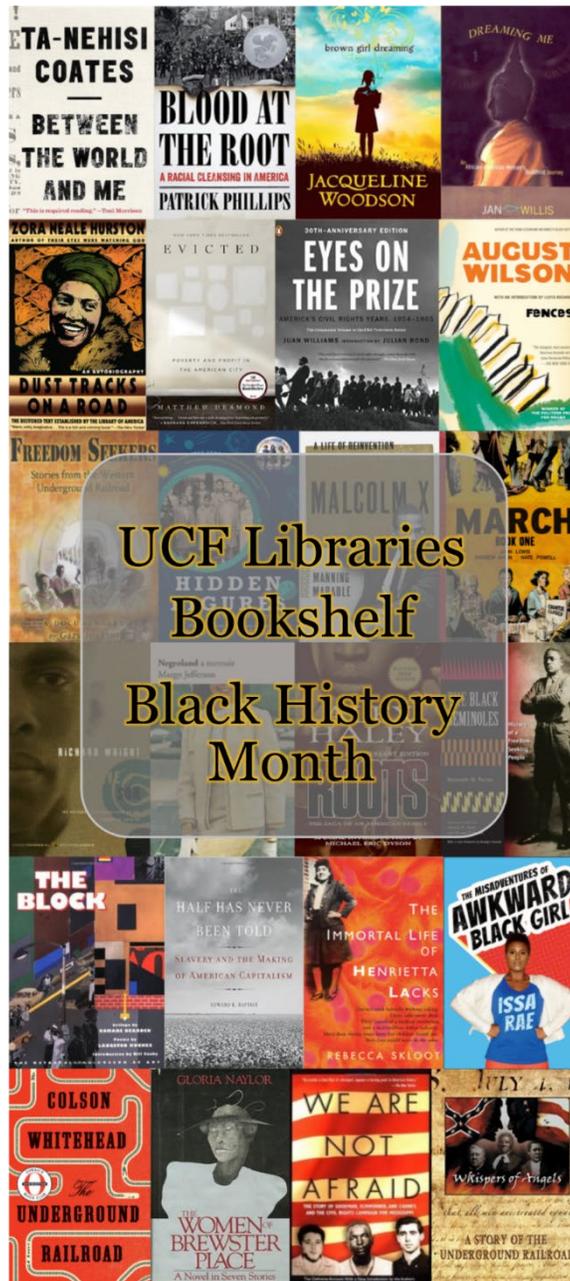
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The national celebration of African American History was started by Carter G. Woodson, a Harvard-trained historian and the founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and first celebrated as a weeklong event in February of 1926. After a half century of overwhelming popularity, the event was expanded to a full month in 1976 by President Gerald Ford.

Here at the library we are passionate about celebrating African American culture and history (no seriously, I got a massive amount of emails with suggestions). We are proud to present our top 22 favorite books by, and/or about, African Americans, plus two streaming films.

### **Between the World and Me by Ta-Nehisi Coates**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF033494814>

Framed as a letter to the author's teenage son, this chronicle of race in America works as memoir, meditation, and call to action.

*Suggested by Megan Haught, Teaching & Engagement/Research & Information Services*

### **Blood at the root : a racial cleansing in America by Patrick Phillips**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF034602759>

Forsyth County, Georgia, at the turn of the twentieth century was home to a large African American community that included ministers and teachers, farmers and field hands, tradesmen, servants, and children. Many black residents were poor sharecroppers, but others owned their own farms and the land on which they'd founded the county's thriving black churches. But then in September of 1912, three young black laborers were accused of raping and murdering a white girl. Soon bands of white 'night riders' launched a coordinated campaign of arson and terror, driving all 1,098 black citizens out of the county. In the wake of the expulsions, whites harvested the crops and took over the livestock of their former neighbors, and quietly laid claim to 'abandoned' land. The charred ruins of homes and churches disappeared into the weeds, until the people and places of black Forsyth were forgotten, as locals kept Forsyth 'all white' well into the 1990s. Blood at the Root is a sweeping American tale that spans the Cherokee removals of the 1830s, the hope and promise of Reconstruction, and the crushing injustice of Forsyth's racial cleansing. With bold storytelling and lyrical prose, Phillips breaks a century-long silence and uncovers a history of racial terrorism that continues to shape America in the twenty-first century

*Suggested by Mary Page, Administration*

### **Brown Girl Dreaming by Jacqueline Woodson**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF033007801>

Raised in South Carolina and New York, Woodson always felt halfway home in each place. In vivid poems, she shares what it was like to grow up as an African American in the 1960s and 1970s, living with the remnants of Jim Crow and her growing awareness of the Civil Rights movement. Touching and powerful, each poem is both accessible and emotionally charged, each line a glimpse into a child's soul as she searches for her place in the world. Woodson's poetry also reflects the joy of finding her voice through writing stories, despite the fact that she struggled with reading as a child. Her love of stories inspired her and stayed with her, creating the first sparks of the gifted writer she was to become.

*Suggested by Min Tong, Regional Librarian*

**Dreaming Me: An African-American Woman's Buddhist Journey by Janice Dean Willis**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF021180707>

In the fall of 1969, in the wake of a widening racial divide in the United States, Jan Willis began what would become a life-changing sojourn. By the time Willis left her home in an Alabama mining camp for undergraduate studies at Cornell University, the harsh reality of life in the segregated South of the 1950s and 1960s had left an indelible stain on her consciousness. Confronted then with the decision to either arm herself in the struggle for human rights at home or search for the possibility of a more humane existence abroad, Willis ultimately chose peace among the burgundy and saffron robes of a Tibetan Buddhist monastery over the black berets of the Black Panther Party. What she discovered, living in a narrow temple amid sixty Tibetan monks, was the healing place she had sought but not found in her Southern Baptist town of Docena.

*Suggested by Sandy Avila, Subject Librarian*

**Dust Tracks on the Road by Zora Neal Hurston**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF020971824>

First published in 1942 at the height of her popularity, *Dust Tracks on a Road* is Zora Neale Hurston's autobiography, an account of her rise from childhood poverty in the rural South to a prominent place among the leading artists and intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance. Hurston's personal literary self-portrait offers a revealing, often audacious glimpse into the life -- public and private -- of an artist, anthropologist, chronicler, and champion of the black experience in America.

*Suggested by Susan MacDuffee, Acquisitions & Collections*

**Evicted: poverty and profit in the American city by Matthew Desmond**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF034138525>

In this brilliant, heartbreaking book, Matthew Desmond takes us into the poorest neighborhoods of Milwaukee to tell the story of eight families on the edge. Arleen is a single mother trying to raise her two sons on the 20 dollars a month she has left after paying for their rundown apartment. Scott is a gentle nurse consumed by a heroin addiction. Lamar, a man with no legs and a neighborhood full of boys to look after, tries to work his way out of debt. Vanetta participates in a botched stickup after her hours are cut. All are spending almost everything they have on rent, and all have fallen behind. The fates of these families are in the hands of two landlords: Sherrena Tarver, a former schoolteacher turned inner-city entrepreneur, and Tobin Charney, who runs one of the worst trailer parks in Milwaukee. They loathe some of their tenants and are fond of others, but as Sherrena puts it, "Love don't pay the bills." She moves to evict Arleen and her boys a few days before Christmas. Even in the most desolate areas of American cities, evictions used to be rare. But today, most poor renting families are spending more than half of their income on housing, and eviction has become ordinary,

especially for single mothers. In vivid, intimate prose, Desmond provides a ground-level view of one of the most urgent issues facing America today. As we see families forced into shelters, squalid apartments, or more dangerous neighborhoods, we bear witness to the human cost of America's vast inequality ; and to people's determination and intelligence in the face of hardship.

*Suggested by Mary Page, Administration*

### **Eyes on the Prize: America's civil rights years, 1954-1965 by Juan Williams**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF024470175>

This compelling oral history of the first ten years of the Civil Rights movement is a tribute to the men and women, both black and white, who took part in the fight for justice and kept their eyes on the prize of freedom. Companion to the highly acclaimed PBS television series.

*Suggested by Rebecca Hammond, Special Collections & University Archives*

### **Fences by August Wilson**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF026342346>

From legendary playwright August Wilson, the powerful, stunning dramatic work that won him critical acclaim, including the Tony Award for Best Play and the Pulitzer Prize. Troy Maxson is a strong man, a hard man. He has had to be to survive. Troy Maxson has gone through life in an America where to be proud and black is to face pressures that could crush a man, body and soul. But the 1950s are yielding to the new spirit of liberation in the 1960s, a spirit that is changing the world Troy Maxson has learned to deal with the only way he can, a spirit that is making him a stranger, angry and afraid, in a world he never knew and to a wife and son he understands less and less.

*Suggested by Mary Page, Administration*

### **Freedom Seekers: Stories From The Western Underground Railroad by Gary Jenkins, filmmaker**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CFPDA000988645>

Freedom Seekers brings an understanding of the regional issues relating to antebellum slavery and the antislavery movement that helped shape the western Underground Railroad. Slaves, with the help of stationmasters and conductors, had to dodge professional slave catchers, federal marshals, and slaveholders on a grueling thousand-mile journey to freedom. Viewers will learn how the Kansas/Missouri political conditions created the opportunity for the perhaps less known escape route along the western frontier. This film uses primary source documents, historians, interviews with slave descendants, moving readings and dramatic depictions to tell exciting stories of Underground Railroad activities. (online streaming video through Kanopy)

*Suggested by Mary Page, Administration*

**Hidden figures: the American dream and the untold story of the Black women mathematicians who helped win the space race by Margot Lee Shetterly**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF034540334>

Before John Glenn orbited the earth or Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, a group of dedicated female mathematicians known as "human computers" used pencils, slide rules and adding machines to calculate the numbers that would launch rockets, and astronauts, into space. Among these problem-solvers were a group of exceptionally talented African American women, some of the brightest minds of their generation. Originally relegated to teaching math in the South's segregated public schools, they were called into service during the labor shortages of World War II, when America's aeronautics industry was in dire need of anyone who had the right stuff. Suddenly, these overlooked math whizzes had a shot at jobs worthy of their skills, and they answered Uncle Sam's call, moving to Hampton, Virginia, and the fascinating, high-energy world of the Langley Memorial Aeronautical Laboratory. Even as Virginia's Jim Crow laws required them to be segregated from their white counterparts, the women of Langley's all-black "West Computing" group helped America achieve one of the things it desired most: a decisive victory over the Soviet Union in the Cold War, and complete domination of the heavens.

*Suggested by Megan Haught, Teaching & Engagement/Research & Information Services*

**Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention by Manning Marable**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF024096037>

This biography of Malcolm X draws on new research to trace his life from his troubled youth through his involvement in the Nation of Islam, his activism in the world of Black Nationalism, and his assassination. Years in the making, it is a definitive biography of the legendary black activist. Of the great figures in twentieth-century American history perhaps none is more complex and controversial than Malcolm X. Constantly rewriting his own story, he became a criminal, a minister, a leader, and an icon, all before being felled by assassins' bullets at age thirty-nine. Through his tireless work and countless speeches, he empowered hundreds of thousands of black Americans to create better lives and stronger communities while establishing the template for the self-actualized, independent African American man. In death he became a broad symbol of both resistance and reconciliation for millions around the world. Filled with new information and shocking revelations that go beyond the Autobiography of Malcolm X, this work unfolds a story of race and class in America, from the rise of Marcus Garvey and the Ku Klux Klan to the struggles of the civil rights movement in the fifties and sixties. Reaching into Malcolm's troubled youth, it traces a path from his parents' activism through his own engagement with the Nation of Islam, charting his astronomical rise in the world of Black Nationalism and culminating in the never-before-told true story of his assassination. This work captures the story of one of the most singular forces for social change, a man who constantly strove,

in the great American tradition, to remake himself anew.  
*Suggested by Larry Cooperman, Research & Information Services*

### **March. Book One. by John Lewis**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF031978946>

This graphic novel is Congressman John Lewis' first-hand account of his lifelong struggle for civil and human rights, meditating in the modern age on the distance traveled since the days of Jim Crow and segregation. Rooted in Lewis' personal story, it also reflects on the highs and lows of the broader civil rights movement. Book One spans Lewis' youth in rural Alabama, his life-changing meeting with Martin Luther King, Jr., the birth of the Nashville Student Movement, and their battle to tear down segregation through nonviolent lunch counter sit-ins, building to a climax on the steps of City Hall. His commitment to justice and nonviolence has taken him from an Alabama sharecropper's farm to the halls of Congress, from a segregated schoolroom to the 1963 March on Washington D.C., and from receiving beatings from state troopers, to receiving the Medal of Freedom awarded to him by Barack Obama, the first African-American president. (Book Two

[<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF033274146>] and Book Three [Book three: <http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF034688965>] are also available at the UCF Curriculum Materials Center in the Education complex)

*Suggested by Cindy Dancel, Research & Information Services*

### **Native Son by Richard Wright**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF021494955>

The novel tells the story of 20-year old Bigger Thomas, an African American living in poverty in Chicago's South Side ghettos during the 1930s.

*Suggested by Megan Haught, Teaching & Engagement/Research & Information Services*

### **Negroland: a memoir by Margo Jefferson**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF033800315>

At once incendiary and icy, mischievous, and provocative, celebratory and elegiac, a deeply felt meditation on race, sex, and American culture through the prism of the author's rarefied upbringing and education among a black elite concerned to distance itself from whites and the black generality, while tirelessly measuring itself against both. Born in 1947 in upper-crust black Chicago--her father was for years head of pediatrics at Provident, at the time the nation's oldest black hospital; her mother was a socialite-- Margo Jefferson has spent most of her life among (call them what you will) the colored aristocracy, the colored elite, the blue-vein society. Since the nineteenth century they have stood apart, these inhabitants of Negroland, "a small region of Negro America

where residents were sheltered by a certain amount of privilege and plenty." Reckoning with the strictures and demands of Negroland at crucial historical moments--the civil rights movement, the dawn of feminism, the fallacy of post-racial America--Jefferson brilliantly charts the twists and turns of a life informed by psychological and moral contradictions. Aware as it is of heart-wrenching despair and depression, this book is a triumphant paean to the grace of perseverance. (With 8 pages of black-and-white illustrations.)

*Suggested by Richard Harrison, Subject Librarian*

**Roots: The saga of an American family by Alex Haley**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF021107708>

This poignant and powerful narrative tells the dramatic story of Kunta Kinte, snatched from freedom in Africa and brought by ship to America and slavery, and his descendants. Drawing on the oral traditions handed down in his family for generations, the author traces his origins back to the seventeen-year-old Kunta Kinte, who was abducted from his home in Gambia and transported as a slave to colonial America. In this account Haley provides an imaginative rendering of the lives of seven generations of black men and women.

*Suggested by Peggy Nuhn, Regional Librarian*

**The Black Seminoles : history of a freedom-seeking people by Kenneth W. Porter**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF031785026>

This is the story of a remarkable people, the Black Seminoles, and their charismatic leader, Chief John Horse, chronicles their heroic struggle for freedom. Beginning with the early 1800s, small groups of fugitive slaves living in Florida joined the Seminole Indians (an association that thrived for decades on reciprocal respect and affection). Kenneth Porter traces their fortunes and exploits as they moved across the country and attempted to live first beyond the law, then as loyal servants of it. He examines the Black Seminole role in the bloody Second Seminole War, when John Horse and his men distinguished themselves as fierce warriors, and their forced removal to the Oklahoma Indian Territory in the 1840s, where John's leadership ability emerged. The account includes the Black Seminole exodus in the 1850s to Mexico, their service as border troops for the Mexican government, and their return to Texas in the 1870s, where many of the men scouted for the U.S. Army. A powerful and stirring story, *The Black Seminoles* will appeal especially to readers interested in black history, Indian history, Florida history, and U.S. military history.

*Suggested by Megan Haught, Teaching & Engagement/Research & Information Services*

### **The Block by Langston Hughes**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF022825019>

A collection of thirteen of Langston Hughes poems on African American themes. For both Langston Hughes and Romare Bearden, the New York City neighborhood of Harlem was a source of inspiration, and its sights and sounds are reflected in the art that each created. Now 13 of Hughes's most beloved poems are paired with Bearden's painting, "The Block", in a dazzling celebration of city life.

*Suggested by Susan MacDuffee, Acquisitions & Collections*

### **The half has never been told: slavery and the making of American capitalism by Edward E. Baptist**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF032973302>

As historian Edward Baptist reveals in *The Half Has Never Been Told*, the expansion of slavery in the first eight decades after American independence drove the evolution and modernization of the United States. In the span of a single lifetime, the South grew from a narrow coastal strip of worn-out tobacco plantations to a continental cotton empire, and the United States grew into a modern, industrial, and capitalist economy. Until the Civil War, Baptist explains, the most important American economic innovations were ways to make slavery ever more profitable. Through forced migration and torture, slave owners extracted continual increases in efficiency from enslaved African Americans. Thus the United States seized control of the world market for cotton, the key raw material of the Industrial Revolution, and became a wealthy nation with global influence. Told through intimate slave narratives, plantation records, newspapers, and the words of politicians, entrepreneurs, and escaped slaves, *The Half Has Never Been Told* offers a radical new interpretation of American history. It forces readers to reckon with the violence at the root of American supremacy, but also with the survival and resistance that brought about slavery's end—and created a culture that sustains America's deepest dreams of freedom.

*Suggested by Peggy Nuhn, Regional Librarian*

### **The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF021502714>

Her name was Henrietta Lacks, but scientists know her as HeLa. She was a poor black tobacco farmer whose cells—taken without her knowledge in 1951—became one of the most important tools in medicine, vital for developing the polio vaccine, cloning, gene mapping, and more. Henrietta's cells have been bought and sold by the billions, yet she remains virtually unknown, and her family can't afford health insurance. This phenomenal New York Times bestseller tells a riveting story of the collision between ethics, race, and medicine; of scientific discovery and faith healing; and of a daughter consumed with questions about the mother she never knew.

*Suggested by Megan Haught, Teaching & Engagement/Research & Information Services*

### **The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl by Issa Rae**

<http://www.worldcat.org/oclc/900157945>

In the bestselling tradition of Mindy Kaling's *Is Everyone Hanging Out Without Me?*, a collection of humorous essays on what it's like to be unabashedly awkward in a world that regards introverts as hapless misfits, and Black as cool. My name is 'J' and I'm awkward--and Black. Someone once told me those were the two worst things anyone could be. That someone was right. Where do I start? Being an introvert in a world that glorifies cool isn't easy. But when Issa Rae, the creator of the Shorty Award-winning hit series *The Misadventures of Awkward Black Girl*, is that introvert--whether she's navigating love, work, friendships, or 'rapping'--it sure is entertaining. Now, in this debut collection of essays written in her witty and self-deprecating voice, Rae covers everything from cybersexing in the early days of the Internet to deflecting unsolicited comments on weight gain, from navigating the perils of eating out alone and public displays of affection to learning to accept yourself--natural hair and all.

*Suggested by Martha Cloutier, Circulation*

### **The Underground Railroad by Colson Whitehead**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF034477748>

Cora is a slave on a cotton plantation in Georgia. Life is hell for all the slaves, but especially bad for Cora; an outcast even among her fellow Africans, she is coming into womanhood—where even greater pain awaits. When Caesar, a recent arrival from Virginia, tells her about the Underground Railroad, they decide to take a terrifying risk and escape. Matters do not go as planned—Cora kills a young white boy who tries to capture her. Though they manage to find a station and head north, they are being hunted. In Whitehead's ingenious conception, the Underground Railroad is no mere metaphor—engineers and conductors operate a secret network of tracks and tunnels beneath the Southern soil. Cora and Caesar's first stop is South Carolina, in a city that initially seems like a haven. But the city's placid surface masks an insidious scheme designed for its black denizens. And even worse: Ridgeway, the relentless slave catcher, is close on their heels. Forced to flee again, Cora embarks on a harrowing flight, state by state, seeking true freedom.

*Suggested by Mary Page, Administration*

### **The Women of Brewster Place by Gloria Naylor**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF022102463>

Gloria Naylor weaves together the stories of seven women living in Brewster Place, a bleak inner-city sanctuary, creating a powerful, moving portrait of the strengths,

struggles, and hopes of black women in America. Vulnerable and resilient, openhanded and open-hearted, these women forge their lives in a place that in turn threatens and protects—a common prison and a shared home. Naylor renders both loving and painful human experiences with simple eloquence and uncommon intuition. Her remarkable sense of community and history makes *The Women of Brewster Place* a contemporary classic—and a touching and unforgettable read.

*Suggested by Rebecca Hammond, Special Collections & University Archives*

**We are not Afraid: the story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney, and the civil rights campaign for Mississippi by Seth Cagin and Philip Dray**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CF029266546>

The infamous murder of three civil rights workers by a Ku Klux Klan mob and Mississippi law-enforcement officers in 1964 takes on the dimensions of a personal, political and national tragedy in this riveting account. The drama of the triocollege students Michael Schwerner and Andy Goodman, both white Northerners, and James Chaney, a young black activist from Mississippi pits their faith in nonviolence against a murderous rage fueled by racism. Cagin and Dray, who coauthored *Hollywood Films of the Seventies*, have done their homework: interviews, news reports, FBI documents and trial transcripts undergird their brilliant re-creation of the incident, interwoven with a full-scale history of the civil rights movement. The search for the bodies turned up many black corpses, purported victims of police/Klan violence; the Klan conspirators were paroled before serving their full sentences; in the aftermath, Lyndon Johnson questionably maneuvered to defuse the situation.

*Suggested by Rebecca Hammond, Special Collections & University Archives*

**Whispers of Angels: A Story of the Underground Railroad by Sharon Kelly Baker, filmmaker**

<http://ucf.catalog.fcla.edu/permalink.jsp?29CFPDA001333007>

Defiant, brave and free, the great abolitionists Thomas Garrett, William Still and Harriet Tubman, along with hundreds of lesser known and nameless opponents of slavery, formed a Corridor of Courage stretching from Maryland's eastern shore through the length of Delaware to Philadelphia and beyond -- making the Underground Railroad a real route to freedom for enslaved Americans before the Civil War. Long-format interviews with prominent historians blend with dramatic reenactment to create a powerful story about the fight to end slavery. Actors Edward Asner and Blair Underwood portray the two most prominent abolitionists on the eastern line of the Underground Railroad, Thomas Garrett and William Still. Bearing a remarkable resemblance to Thomas Garrett, Asner reenacts the famous courtroom scene in 1848 in which Garrett foreshadows the Civil War and firmly declares to redouble his efforts in fighting for true freedom in America. In spite of the court's imposition of a crippling financial punishment, Garrett's ideals were not altered; his clandestine activities continued for many years

even during the War. Reading documented text in the form of letters exchanged by Thomas Garrett and William Still (a free black abolitionist in Philadelphia), Asner and Underwood bring to life the fascinating working relationship between the two men and those they helped. Underwood, as William Still, meets in secret with the frightened fugitives who pass through his Anti-Slavery Society Offices in Philadelphia on their dangerous journeys to the north. (online streaming film through Kanopy)

*Suggested by Mary Page, Administration*