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Featured Bookshelf: 2018 Black History Month

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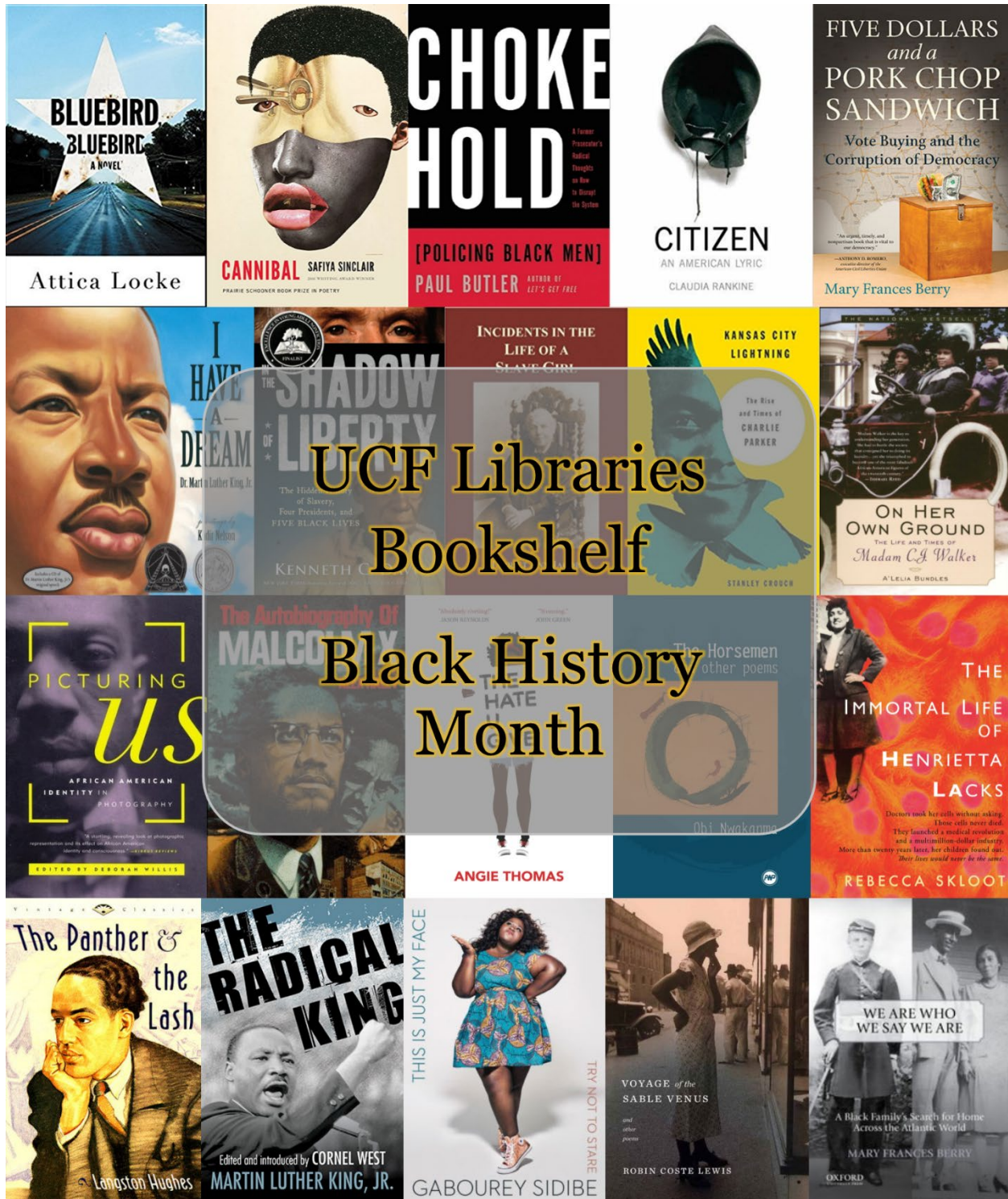
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The national celebration of African American History was started by Carter G. Woodson, a Harvard-trained historian and the founder of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and first celebrated as a weeklong event in February of 1926. 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. We are proud to present our top 20 favorite books by, and/or about, African Americans.

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Bluebird, Bluebird by Attica Locke

When it comes to law and order, East Texas plays by its own rules--a fact that Darren Mathews, a black Texas Ranger, knows all too well. Deeply ambivalent about growing up black in the lone star state, he was the first in his family to get as far away from Texas as he could. Until duty called him home.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

Cannibal by Safiya Sinclair

Colliding with and confronting *The Tempest* and postcolonial identity, the poems in Safiya Sinclair's *Cannibal* explore Jamaican childhood and history, race relations in America, womanhood, otherness, and exile. She evokes a home no longer accessible and a body at times uninhabitable, often mirrored by a hybrid Eve/Caliban figure. Blooming with intense lyricism and fertile imagery, these full-blooded poems are elegant, mythic, and intricately woven. Here the female body is a dark landscape; the female body is cannibal. Sinclair shocks and delights her readers with her willingness to disorient and provoke, creating a multitextured collage of beautiful and explosive poems.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

Chokehold: policing black men by Paul Butler

Cops, politicians, and ordinary people are afraid of black men. The result is the Chokehold: laws and practices that treat every African American man like a thug. In this explosive new book, an African American former federal prosecutor shows that the system is working exactly the way it's supposed to. Black men are always under watch, and police violence is widespread—all with the support of judges and politicians.

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

Citizen: an American lyric by Claudia Rankine

Claudia Rankine's bold new book recounts mounting racial aggressions in ongoing encounters in twenty-first-century daily life and in the media. Some of these encounters are slights, seeming slips of the tongue, and some are intentional offensives in the classroom, at the supermarket, at home, on the tennis court with Serena Williams and

the soccer field with Zinedine Zidane, online, on TV-everywhere, all the time. The accumulative stresses come to bear on a person's ability to speak, perform, and stay alive. Our addressability is tied to the state of our belonging, Rankine argues, as are our assumptions and expectations of citizenship. In essay, image, and poetry, *Citizen* is a powerful testament to the individual and collective effects of racism in our contemporary, often named "post-race" society.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

[Five Dollars and a Pork Chop Sandwich: vote buying and the corruption of democracy](#) by Mary Frances Berry

Though voting rights are fundamental to American democracy, felon disenfranchisement, voter identification laws, and hard-to-access polling locations with limited hours are a few of the ways voter turnout is suppressed. These methods of voter suppression are pernicious, but in *Five Dollars and a Pork Chop Sandwich*, Dr. Mary Frances Berry focuses on forms of corruption including vote buying, vote hauling, the abuse of absentee ballots, and other illegal practices by candidates and their middlemen, often in collusion with local election officials. Voter manipulation is rarely exposed and may be perceived as relatively innocuous, however; Dr. Berry observes that in addition to undermining basic democracy, it also leads to a profound lack of accountability and a total disconnect between politicians and their constituents, and that those in poor and minority communities are the most vulnerable. While reforming campaign finance laws are undeniably important to our democracy, being attuned to issues of structural powerlessness and poverty, and to the cycles that perpetuate them, is no less crucial. In *Five Dollars and a Pork Chop Sandwich*, Dr. Berry shares specific successful voting strategies that other countries have adopted and urges creativity in rewarding people for voting. She also underscores the continued importance of grassroots education, so that citizens see voting as desirable and empowering—as a tool to help create the kind of environment they deserve.

Suggested by Nadia Fortune, College of Medicine Health Science Library

[I Have a Dream](#) by Martin Luther King, Jr

On August 28, 1963, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington, Martin Luther King gave one of the most powerful and memorable speeches in our nation's history. His words, paired with Caldecott Honor winner Kadir Nelson's magnificent paintings, make for a picture book certain to be treasured by children and adults alike. The themes of equality and freedom for all are not only relevant today, 50 years later, but also provide young readers with an important introduction to our nation's past.

Suggested by Caroline Gray, Research & Information Services

[In the Shadow of Liberty: the hidden history of slavery, four presidents, and five black lives](#) by Kenneth C. Davis

Did you know that many of America's Founding Fathers—who fought for liberty and justice for all—were slave owners? Through the powerful stories of five enslaved people who were “owned” by four of our greatest presidents, this book helps set the record straight about the role slavery played in the founding of America. From Billy Lee, valet to George Washington, to Alfred Jackson, faithful servant of Andrew Jackson, these dramatic narratives explore our country's great tragedy—that a nation “conceived in liberty” was also born in shackles. These stories help us know the real people who were essential to the birth of this nation but traditionally have been left out of the history books. Their stories are true—and they should be heard.

Suggested by Emma Gisclair, Curriculum Materials Center

[Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl](#) by Harriet A. Jacobs

Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl is an autobiography by a young mother and fugitive slave published in 1861 by L. Maria Child, who edited the book for its author, Harriet Ann Jacobs. Jacobs used the pseudonym Linda Brent

Suggested by Sandy Avila, Research & Information Services

[Kansas City lightning: the rise and times of Charlie Parker](#) by Stanley Crouch

Charlie Parker personified the tortured American artist: a revolutionary performer who used his alto saxophone to create a new music known as bebop even as he wrestled with a drug addiction that would lead to his death at 34. With the wisdom of a jazz scholar, the cultural insights of a social critic, and the narrative skill of a novelist, drawing on interviews with peers, collaborators, and family members, Stanley Crouch recreates Parker's Depression-era childhood; his early days navigating the Kansas City nightlife, inspired by lions like Lester Young and Count Basie; and on to New York, where he began to transcend the music he had mastered. Crouch reveals an ambitious young man torn between music and drugs, between his domineering mother and his impressionable young wife, whose teenage romance with Charlie lies at the bittersweet heart of this story.

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

[On Her Own Ground: the life and times of Madam C.J. Walker](#) by A'Lelia Bundles

On Her Own Ground is not only the first comprehensive biography of one of recent history's most amazing entrepreneurs and philanthropists, it is about a woman who is truly an African American icon. Drawn from more than two decades of exhaustive research, the book is enriched by the author's exclusive access to personal letters, records and never-before-seen photographs from the family collection. Bundles also

showcases Walker's complex relationship with her daughter, A'Lelia Walker, a celebrated hostess of the Harlem Renaissance and renowned friend to both Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. In chapters such as "Freedom Baby," "Motherless Child," "Bold Moves" and "Black Metropolis," Bundles traces her ancestor's improbable rise to the top of an international hair care empire that would be run by four generations of Walker women until its sale in 1985. Along the way, *On Her Own Ground* reveals surprising insights, tells fascinating stories and dispels many misconceptions.

Suggested by Peggy Nuhn, UCF Connect Libraries

Picturing us: African American identity in photography edited by Deborah Willis

Winner of the International Center for Photography's 1995 Award for Writing on Photography, *Picturing Us* brings together a diverse group of African American writers, scholars, and filmmakers in the first concerted effort to analyze and respond to the photographic images of blacks through history. The book's contributors—including bell hooks, E. Ethelbert Miller, Angela Davis, and others—examine the personal and public issues embedded in family portraits and news photographs, movie stills and mug shots.

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

The Autobiography of Malcom X by Alex Hailey

Through a life of passion and struggle, Malcolm X became one of the most influential figures of the 20th Century. In this riveting account, he tells of his journey from a prison cell to Mecca, describing his transition from hoodlum to Muslim minister. Here, the man who called himself "the angriest Black man in America" relates how his conversion to true Islam helped him confront his rage and recognize the brotherhood of all mankind.

Suggested by Rebecca Hammond, Special Collections & University Archives

The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas

Sixteen-year-old Starr Carter moves between two worlds: the poor neighborhood where she lives and the fancy suburban prep school she attends. The uneasy balance between these worlds is shattered when Starr witnesses the fatal shooting of her childhood best friend Khalil at the hands of a police officer. Khalil was unarmed. Soon afterward, his death is a national headline. Some are calling him a thug, maybe even a drug dealer and a gangbanger. Protesters are taking to the streets in Khalil's name. Some cops and the local drug lord try to intimidate Starr and her family. What everyone wants to know is: what really went down that night? And the only person alive who can answer that is Starr. But what Starr does or does not say could upend her community. It could also endanger her life.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

The Horsemen and Other Poems by Obi Nwakanma

Lyrical, expansive poetry taking the reader from the intimate to the worldly - from here to the universe and back again. The war in Biafra; a life in exile. A life before exile, among the smells of coconut, thatched synagogues, swollen bands of God gathering in faith by the river. This is the voice of the traveler navigating the divide: the soul of a mystic, rooted in the vibrant culture of his people. Universal lyrics whose language can reach to us all.

Suggested by Jacqueline Johnson, Cataloging

The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks by Rebecca Skloot

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 Peggy Nuhn, UCF Connect Libraries

The Panther & The Lash: poems of our times by Langston Hughes

From the publication of his first book in 1926, Langston Hughes was America's acknowledged poet of color, the first to commemorate the experience--and suffering--of African-Americans in a voice that no reader, black or white, could fail to hear. In this, his last collection of verse, Hughes's voice is more pointed than ever before, as he explicitly addresses the racial politics of the sixties in such pieces as "Prime," "Motto," "Dream Deferred," "Frederick Douglas: 1817-1895," "Still Here," "Birmingham Sunday." "History," "Slave," "Warning," and "Daybreak in Alabama." Sometimes Ironic, sometimes bitter, always powerful, the poems in *The Panther and the Lash* are the last testament of a great American writer who grappled fearlessly and artfully with the most compelling issues of his time.

Suggested by Larry Cooperman, Research & Information Services

The Radical King: Martin Luther King Jr edited and introduced by Cornel West

Arranged thematically in four parts, *The Radical King* includes twenty-three selections, curated and introduced by Dr. Cornel West, that illustrate King's revolutionary vision, underscoring his identification with the poor, his unapologetic opposition to the Vietnam War, and his crusade against global imperialism. As West writes, "Although much of America did not know the radical King—and too few know today—the FBI and US government did. They called him 'the most dangerous man in America.' . This book

unearths a radical King that we can no longer sanitize.”
Suggested by Ven Basco, Research & Information Services

[This is Just My Face, Try Not to Stare](#) by Gabourey Sidibe

Sidibe’s memoir hits hard with self-knowing dispatches on friendship, depression, celebrity, haters, fashion, race, and weight (“If I could just get the world to see me the way I see myself,” she writes, “would my body still be a thing you walked away thinking about?”). Irreverent, hilarious, and untraditional, *This Is Just My Face* will resonate with anyone who has ever felt different, and with anyone who has ever felt inspired to make a dream come true.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

[Voyage of the Sable Venus and other poems](#) by Robin Coste Lewis

Robin Coste Lewis’s electrifying collection is a triptych that begins and ends with lyric poems considering the roles desire and race play in the construction of the self. The central panel is the title poem, “Voyage of the Sable Venus,” a riveting narrative made up entirely of titles of artworks from ancient times to the present—titles that feature or in some way comment on the black female figure in Western art. Bracketed by Lewis’s autobiographical poems, “Voyage” is a tender and shocking study of the fragmentary mysteries of stereotype, as it juxtaposes our names for things with what we actually see and know. Offering a new understanding of biography and the self, this collection questions just where, historically, do ideas about the black female figure truly begin—five hundred years ago, five thousand, or even longer? And what role has art played in this ancient, often heinous story? From the “Young Black Female Carrying / a Perfume Vase” to a “Little Brown Girl / Girl Standing in a Tree / First Day of Voluntary / School Integration,” this poet adores her culture and the beauty to be found within it.

Suggested by Sara Duff, Acquisitions & Collections

[We Are Who We Say We Are: a Black family's search for home across the Atlantic world](#) by Mary Frances Berry

This colored Creole story offers a unique historical lens through which to understand the issues of migration, immigration, passing, identity, and color-forces that still shape American society today. *We Are Who We Say We Are* provides a detailed, nuanced account of shifting forms of racial identification within an extended familial network and constrained by law and social reality. Author Mary Frances Berry, a well-known expert in the field, focuses on the complexity and malleability of racial meanings within the US over generations. Colored Creoles, similar to other immigrants and refugees, passed back and forth in the Atlantic world. Color was the cause and consequence for migration and identity, splitting the community between dark and light. Color could also split families. Louis Antoine Snaer, a free man of color and an officer in the Union Army who

passed back and forth across the color line, had several brothers and sisters. Some chose to "pass" and some decided to remain "colored," even though they too, could have passed. This rich global history, beginning in Europe--with episodes in Haiti, Cuba, Louisiana, and California--emphasizes the diversity of the Atlantic World experience. *Suggested by Nadia Fortune, College of Medicine Health Science Library*

Tumblr post: <https://ucflibrary.tumblr.com/post/170615218443/the-national-celebration-of-african-american>

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