Summer reading list for Facing History 2018-2019

Instructions to all 2018-2019 Facing History students: You must read ONE of the following 24 books as part of your summer reading. You must choose only one (1) book from the list of books listed below. All touch on some aspect of the Facing History curriculum that we will explore next year.

You must complete this summer reading either before beginning Facing History in the fall (ideally—and before you are caught up in the chaos of the school year) or by no later than Friday, September 27 (absolutely). There will be an assignment related to your summer reading that will be distributed in early September.

[Important note: This book will count as one of the optional books required for English class, unless you are in AP Literature, in which case you must read one of these volumes in addition to your AP Lit required books.]

--Ms Freeman

Summer reading options for ALL Facing History students:

- Anne Applebaum, Gulag: A History. (New York: Anchor Books, 2004). Thanks to Solzhenitsyn's masterful book, The Gulag Archipelago, most Americans thought that they "knew" about the gulag system of prisons under the Soviet Union. More than 30 million—yes, 30 million—people passed through these gulags during their existence. What happened in the Soviet Union under Stalin's watch (and after) was nothing short of an incarcerated, starved, tortured and sizeable percentage of the population. This is a long read but is a meticulous account of the staggering loss of life and denial of human rights that the Soviet regime carried out in these prisons. This is a magisterial, frightening, and eye-opening volume, justifying its considerable length.

- Peter Balakian, Black Dog of Fate: A Memoir. An American Son Uncovers his Armenian Past (New York: Basic Books, 1997, republished in 2009). In 1939, Adolf Hitler famously declared, just before invading Poland (with the intent of murdering all Poles) and dismissing the possibility of any outrage from the rest of the world, “Who today remembers the extermination of the Armenians?” He had a point. Imagine growing up as an Armenian-American in suburban New Jersey in the 1950s-1960s and never hearing a word about the Armenian genocide. Such was the case for Peter Balakian who discovers in his twenties that his beloved grandmother was an Armenian genocide survivor. As she says, “Appearances are deceiving . . . The world is not what you think.” Thanks to his curiosity about his grandmother’s experience, Balakian discovers what happened during that genocide, exposing a rich array of details related to his family’s experience and sharing stories of the eyewitnesses to the genocide and what they did—or didn’t—try to do to stop it. This is one of the most compelling books ever written about the Armenian genocide and well worth the read.

- Anna Bikont, The Crime and the Silence: A Quest for the Truth of a Wartime Massacre. (New York: Farrar Strauss & Giroux, 2015; originally published in Polish in 2004). When Jan Gross, a Polish-American professor at NYU, published a book on the small town of Jedwabne, Poland in 2000, he sent shockwaves through his native Poland. His book revealed that the hundreds of Polish Jews who lived in the town had been rounded up in the summer of 1941, locked in a barn, and burned to death. That wasn’t news. What was news was that, despite a memorial in the town, attributing the massacre to the Nazi invaders, in reality Polish Catholic neighbors of the Jews had committed this act. Poles across the nation were furious; they insisted that Gross’ book was untrue and that his account besmirched the reputation of the townspeople. As of spring 2016, the current Polish government has sought to strip Jan Gross of honors he received after the book appeared. Enter Anna Bikont, a Polish journalist. Bikont decided to investigate and what she turned up after immersing herself in the life of Jedwabne and its people was even more shocking the original account Gross produced. She spends time with perpetrators who were still alive in 2004 and uncovers ongoing denial and anti-Semitic views in the town. This book sent yet more shockwaves through Polish society and made headlines around the globe when it first appeared in English in 2015.

- Cynthia Carr, Our Town: A Heartland, a Lynching, and the Hidden History of White America. (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007). Cynthia Carr, a former Village Voice journalist, spent her childhood in Marion, Indiana. But on August 7, 1930, well before she was born, three black teenagers were dragged from jail cells, beaten by a mob and two were hanged in the courtyard of the prison. We know this from news reports but also from a famous photograph taken of the event and reproduced multiple times. In the photo we see the crowd of onlookers up close.
Carr was intrigued. Who were these onlookers? Were members of her family among them? And why did this violence take place, with the participation of so many people, in what she saw as an idyllic Midwestern town?

- Iris Chang. *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (New York: Penguin, 1998). The English-speaking world knew little of the horrors of what the Japanese perpetrated in Nanking in 1937 until Iris Chang published this landmark book in 1998. The product of extensive and meticulous research on the mass killings of thousands of Chinese in and around the city, her book was nevertheless challenged by Japanese government officials and historians. Ultimately the truth of her research prevailed and graphically demonstrated the merciless rule of the Japanese on the mainland of Asia. Tragically, Iris Chang died in her early 30s in 2004. Many in Nanking are still waiting for some measure of justice from the Japanese. This book details their plight as well as the heroism of key upstanders present in the city during the invasion.

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me.* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2015). One of the most searing discussions of what it means to be black in 2015 America, Coates’ short book, published as a letter to his teenage son, looks at the author’s childhood and adolescence, his college experience at Howard University, and the killing of his college friend, Prince Carmen Jones, Jr. Recipient of the National Book Award, Coates’ discussion of the vulnerability of the black body and the violence facing black males, especially, in this society, triggered numerous discussions among journalists, sociologists, and academic scholars. It is a “must read” if you want to understand key aspects of the current debates about race in this country.

- Romeo Dallaire, *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda.* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2003). Romeo Dallaire’s book amply demonstrates why he is a heroic figure but a tragic one. He led United Nations’ forces in Rwanda when the UN’s headquarters in New York refused to let the UN forces intervene in any meaningful way to prevent the Rwandan genocide. In effect, Dallaire was ordered to stand by and watch…and do nothing. Broken by his inability to act, Dallaire has committed his life from that point forward to ensuring that there is a responsibility among nations to protect those who are threatened with destruction and death. This memoir is a compelling look into the mind and life of a military leader who believes passionately in the need to make change in the way nations conduct themselves.

- Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005). This is a book about post-World War II Kenya, controlled by the British as one of their remaining African colonies. Despite the lessons of World War II, we find the British practicing ethnic cleansing directed at the native group the Mau Mau, setting up concentration camps and carrying out mass slaughters. What were, indeed, the lessons of World War II? We spend a significant amount of time in Facing History talking about European imperialism and its legacy, especially in Africa. And astonishingly, for the first time in June 2013, the British government agreed to pay reparations to torture victims among the Mau Mau and apologized for British actions in Kenya. (For more info, see the BBC’s article at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22790037](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22790037))

- David Scott FitzGerald and David Cook-Martin, *Culling the Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). One of the hot topics in the 2016 presidential election is immigration policy. Should this country, which has historically been a haven for prospective immigrants but has not always been welcoming or even open to all potential newcomers, let everyone in? Some people in? No one in? This book takes a look at six different countries in this hemisphere—Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Cuba, Mexico, and the US—and asks how immigration became entangled with racial attitudes. The authors discovered that the most seemingly democratic countries admitted immigrants by race for the longest uninterrupted period of time. The idea that democracy meant being exclusionary seems a contradiction; yet, the authors discover that racist immigration policy went hand-in-hand with so-called democratic values and societies. It’s hard not to be dismayed by this account; so much for the ideal of the “golden door,” as the Statue of Liberty invites the tired, poor, and huddled masses to walk through.

- Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, *A Human Being Died That Night: A South African Story of Forgiveness* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003). Psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela not only sat on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in post-apartheid South Africa and had family who were victims of apartheid, but she had the rare opportunity to spend months interviewing one of apartheid’s leading perpetrators, Eugene de Kock, nicknamed “Prime Evil.” Her account here is one in which we are afforded a look into the heart of evil and try to reach some form of forgiveness. Is it possible to forgive a killer who was responsible for ending the lives of people who look like you do? Ms. Gobodo-Madikizela wrestles with this and, as readers, we do too.

- Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Picador, 1999). Gourevitch was one of the few journalists on the ground in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide that killed more than 80,000 people in fewer than 100 days. The series of harrowing, riveting
stories that constitute this Pulitzer Prize-winning book chronicle the experiences of victims and survivors of the genocide. One of the first books published in English about the genocide, Gourevitch chronicles the vast number of brutal killings via machete, the desperation of people trying to flee the killers in Rwanda, and the neighbors killing neighbors. This is a tough read emotionally but it conveys the sheer brutality and tsunami of killing that characterized the Rwandan genocide.

- Mary Matsuda Gruenewald, **Looking Like the Enemy: My Story of Imprisonment in Japanese-American Internment Camps**. (Troutdale, Oregon: NewSage Press, 2005). If you remember reading *Farewell to Manzanar* (during class V), you know at least something about the Japanese internment camps that were set up during World War II. At age 17, Mary Matsuda Greenwald was imprisoned in one such internment camp (known at the time as “concentration camps,” a term that was abandoned when the “concentration camps” of Europe became widely known in the US) because she was a “Nisei,” a second-generation Japanese-American, born to Japanese-born parents (“Isseis”). What she endured, the rights she lost, the trauma of incarceration because of who she was—all of these were buried by Ms. Matsuda Gruenewald until she was 75 years old and taking—for the first time!—a writing class. As she says, it was time to break through “the self-imposed barbed-wire fenced built around my experiences in the camps.” Thus this powerful book. If you think that it isn’t possible for an entire group of people to be denied basic human rights in the United States at the proverbial drop of a hat, the story of the Japanese American internment camps makes you rethink that assumption.

- Adam Hochschild, **King Leopold’s Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa** (New York: Mariner Books, 1999). Adam Hochschild, a leading historian and journalist, provides a detailed account of the consequences of colonialism in the Congo in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when it was controlled not by a nation but by one man: King Leopold of Belgium. King Leopold considered the Congo his personal fiefdom and used its population as his personal slave labor force to harvest ivory and then rubber. You think that’s just typical colonialism (which was bad enough!)? Think again. This slave labor force was nearly eviscerated, replaced, and then eviscerated again. And Leopold made what would be the equivalent of billions in the process. The book reveals how one man, a modest shipping clerk in Brussels, unearthed the truth of what was happening in the heart of Africa and informed the world. (If you read Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* for English, this is an excellent companion volume.)

- Jonathan Scott Holloway, **Jim Crow Wisdom: Memory and Identity in Black America since 1940**. (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). Recently appointed as Provost at Northwestern University, Holloway sought to understand black identity through stories, songs, film, dance, memoirs, and key sites. He did this while reflecting on his own upbringing and peeling away the memories—both disclosed and obscured—that family members had about their slave ancestors, their lives in the Jim Crow-dominated South, and their experience in more recent decades. This is a most unusual history text, in which the realities of history are fused with Holloway’s own family research and broader ruminations on memory. Brilliantly written and insightful beyond measure, this is a book well worth reading. (Full disclosure: Ms. Freeman took a seminar with Jonathan Holloway at Yale several years ago and is an unabashed fan.)

- Clea Koff, **The Bone Woman: A Forensic Anthropologist’s Search for Truth in the Mass Graves of Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, and Kosovo** (New York: Random House, 2005). Someone has to unearth mass graves and identify the victims and Clea Koff, beginning in her late 20s, found herself at the epicenters of the world’s recent atrocities: Bosnia and Rwanda. Koff takes us inside the life of a forensic anthropologist so that we see what it takes to dig away, day after day, at suspected sites of mass internment. What it means to dig up history and then reconstruct it based on the bones and their cracks and the pieces of human bodies that are found is revealed in this book. A compelling book that offers us insights into how we get the information we have about genocide. Ms. Freeman used this book as a road map for mass graves in Bosnia and Serbia when she visited both countries in 2006.

- Deborah Lipstadt, **The Eichmann Trial**, (New York: Schocken, 2011). Ordinarily I don’t include Holocaust-related texts on the FHAO summer reading list because we do significant reading on the topic during the year. But Deborah Lipstadt’s book on the Eichmann trial of the early 1960s offers a perspective that is uniquely Lipstadt’s, insofar as she was the target of courtroom battle over Holocaust denial. This meticulously researched book takes us to the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a key architect of the Holocaust, who escaped arrest at the end of World War II and was captured by Israeli Mossad agents in Argentina in May 1960. Later tried in Jerusalem by an Israeli court and sentenced to death (the only time in Israeli history that a court has handed down such a sentence), Eichmann’s trial was one of the first times that Holocaust survivors gave testimony in a courtroom about what happened to them and their families. The story of this trial is simply fascinating.

- Eric Liu, **A Chinaman’s Chance: One Family’s Journey and the Chinese American Dream**. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2014). Liu, a former speechwriter in the (Bill) Clinton White House and now executive director of
the Aspen Institute Citizenship and American Identity Program, offers us a memoir of his own family as well as a history of the Chinese-American experience in this country. Liu tackles the stereotypes associated with the Chinese in this country as well as the obstacles placed in the way of prospective Chinese immigrants to America beginning in the late 19th century. Lest you think that discrimination and racism are only referencing the dynamic of black-white interaction, this book proves that utterly wrong. An eye-opening and deeply engaging account of the triumph over restrictions to immigration, Liu’s book captures the trajectory that families experienced who succeeded in coming to the US and building lives here.

- Lewis P. Masur. *The Soiling of Old Glory: The Story of a Photograph that Shocked America.* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2008). One of the most famous photographs to appear in the Boston Globe was taken by Stanley Forman in front of Boston’s City Hall Plaza in 1975. It appears to show a man—Ted Landsmark—being attacked by a crowd of men with an American flag. Landsmark was indeed injured, the photograph was—in the pre-Internet age—seen worldwide, and Boston’s reputation of being a racist city, especially on the heels of the court-ordered desegregation/busing plan of less than a year earlier, was cemented. Masur’s book tells the story of the photograph: what Forman actually photographed, how the photograph was cropped and edited to appear to tell a slightly different story, and what the effect of the published image was. This is a fascinating read.

- Samantha Power, *Chasing the Flame: One Man’s Fight to Save the World.* (New York: Penguin, 2008). Sergio Viera de Mello was the Brazilian-born United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights who, after his appointment to that post in 2002, found himself in Iraq after the US invasion of the country in 2003. By that time, Viera de Mello had already had a distinguished career as an advocate for the world’s refugees, working for the UN High Commissioner on Refugees in places as far flung as Bosnia, Lebanon, Vietnam, Kosovo, Tanzania, and East Timor but his passion was human rights overall. His was a complex career, where often his decisions were heavily criticized and proved questionable. But by the time he arrived in Iraq, he had hopes of improving conditions for the Iraqis, post-Saddam Hussein. Tragically, two months after his arrival in Baghdad, a truck bomb exploded in front of United Nations headquarters there, leaving him severely injured and trapped in the building’s wreckage. He died of his injuries and we will never know what the second half of his life might have looked like. Power, who was Barack Obama’s UN ambassador, wrote the principal book we will read this year but in this book, she creates a compelling portrait of a complex figure who mirrors the complexity of working for the United Nations.

- Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America.* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2017). We often talk about de facto segregation—the notion that the neighborhoods we live in are in effect segregated based on the preferences and life choices of residents who live there. Rothstein says the story is not that sample and, in this eye-opening book, documents how the government at the state and federal level issued policies that created residential racially segregated neighborhoods. How did that happen? And how did the government(s) get away with that? Residential segregation became even more fixed in the past century. Rothstein’s account is a powerful account of how this country was deftly and discretely segregated for centuries; if you want to know why your neighborhood looks as it does, you must read this book.

- Victoria Sanford, *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala.* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). Sanford is an anthropologist who dug up the skeletons of the victims of the Guatemalan genocide of the 1980s. What, you say? There was a genocide in Guatemala? Yes there was. The statistics are startling: 626 communities experienced massacres resulting in the deaths of more than 200,000 Mayans. Sanford is among the anthropologists doing exhumations since 1994 at secret cemeteries found in Guatemala. Being an anthropologist does not only mean digging up dead bodies; Sanford also took testimonies from survivors, all as part of a report she wrote for the Guatemalan Truth Commission. Though it is now clear that the Guatemalan army carried out the genocide (with some international help), only in 2015 did any trial begin to bring justice to the victims and hold the perpetrators responsible. Sanford’s story is both eye-opening and heart-breaking. This is an important read.

- Randy Shilts, *The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk.* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2008). If you want to understand the history of gay activism in the 1970s-1980s in this country, you need to learn about Harvey Milk. New York-born, Milk moved to San Francisco in 1972 and opened a camera shop in the Castro neighborhood of the city, the heart of San Francisco’s gay community. Gradually emerging as a community leader, nicknamed the “Mayor of Castro Street,” he ran repeatedly for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, winning a seat in 1977 and becoming the city’s first publicly gay government official. Outspoken on a wide variety of city issues, Milk was tragically assassinated, along with San Francisco’s mayor, at City Hall in 1978. Shilts, who also wrote an acclaimed book on the AIDS crisis (*And the Band Played On*), is masterful in this book, capturing the electrifying and passionate persona of Harvey Milk. This book is a tour-de-force about one of the most promising activists of his time in the gay community.
Bryan Stevenson, *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2014). “The true measure of our character is how we treat the poor, the disfavored, the accused, the incarcerated, and the condemned,” Bryan Stevenson writes. American criminal justice system has 2.3 million people in 1,719 state prisons, 102 federal prisons, 942 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,283 local jails, and 79 Indian County jails (and this doesn’t include military prisons, immigration detention facilities, civil commitment centers, etc.). The US may have 5% of the world’s population but we have 25% of the world’s prisoners. Lawyer Bryan Stevenson is the consummate upstander. Based in Montgomery, Alabama, he is not only outraged by the sheer number of Americans in prison but he is particularly concerned with the numbers facing life imprisonment and/or sitting on death row. In this book he focuses on Walter McMillan, an African-American man on death row for murder, who claims to be innocent. Stevenson devoted years to get McMillan a new trial. And McMillan is only one of many examples in which Stevenson fights—sometimes successfully, other times not—to get new trials for his clients. His plea? “We have to reform a system of criminal justice that continues to treat people better if they are rich and guilty than if they are poor and innocent.” You have to read this book. Bryan Stevenson has gone on to build the National Museum for Peace and Justice (aka: The Lynching Memorial) and the Legacy Museum, both in Montgomery, Alabama. After reading this book, you undoubtedly will be angry, frustrated, and inspired.

Loung Ung, *First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000). Loung Ung recounts the experience she and her family had when they were forced to flee from the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia when they came to power in 1975 after much of the nation had been destroyed during bombing by the United States that was tied to the Vietnam War. Ung’s tale of hiding and surviving the regime, despite the deaths of her parents, is unforgettable. Examining the brutal regime brought to power in so-called “Democratic Kampuchea” between 1975 and 1979 provides insight into how groups seize power and destroy societies and other nations simply watch in horror. Over 1.7 million people are believed to have perished in the Cambodian genocide. That Ung survived this is a testament to her stamina and sheer luck.