



Representations of Black Women in 20th Century United States & Beyond

The experience of the Black woman in the United States during the twentieth century is one that is highly complex and variable. Towards the earlier half of the twentieth century, less than fifty years following the abolition of chattel slavery, Black women became the first to record Blues music. This music, which was influenced by the Negro spirituals sung on slave plantations, often contained accounts of the everyday problems faced by working class people at the time whose everyday problems included issues with racism, dealing with poverty, losing love, migration, and keeping a family. Despite the level of fame and notoriety Blues women often gained, their music remained relatable to other working class Black women. Titles such as *Blues Legacies* and *Black Feminism* paint an image of this time in history, while novels such as *The Bluest Eye* and *The Color Purple* allow readers to “travel” to this time period through the subjecthood of their working-class protagonists.

Towards the mid-twentieth century, most Black women [and people] in the United States held interest in the Civil Rights Movement. Some Black women entertainers, such as Billie Holiday, Mariam Makeba and Nina Simone, played an important role in disseminating political messages to mass audiences through song and performance, while working class Black women held foundational roles as local community organizers and activists. An important aspect of this period is that a lot of intra-communal social scrutiny was placed on Black women due to respectability politics. More than ever, with the entire nation paying attention to Civil Rights, Black women were expected to embody perfect moral piety, so as to “disprove” existing stereotypes. But, not all Black women would agree to this social code, and many-faced social consequences for it. Titles such as *In Search of Billie Holiday*, *How It Feels to Be Free*, *Unbought and Unbossed*, and *Black Women & Politics in NYC* paint a vivid historical image of this political moment.

It was this political climate which bred the careers of politicians such as Shirley Chisholm, who became the first Black woman elected to Congress in 1968. The lasting impact of Shirley Chisholm inspired the curation of literary and other works which also do the important work of providing representation—particularly, representation of Black women’s experiences in the United States.

Representations of Black Women in 20th Century United States and Beyond is curated by Monben Mayon, 2022 awardee of the Gottesman Libraries’ commissioned artwork, *Peacing Shirley*, an installation which pieces together different aspects of congresswoman Shirley Chisholm’s multifaceted and wide-reaching legacy. The book display is designed by Trisha Barton, Gottesman’s Lead Designer.

The Bluest Eye

A novel by
Toni Morrison
WINNER OF THE NOBEL PRIZE

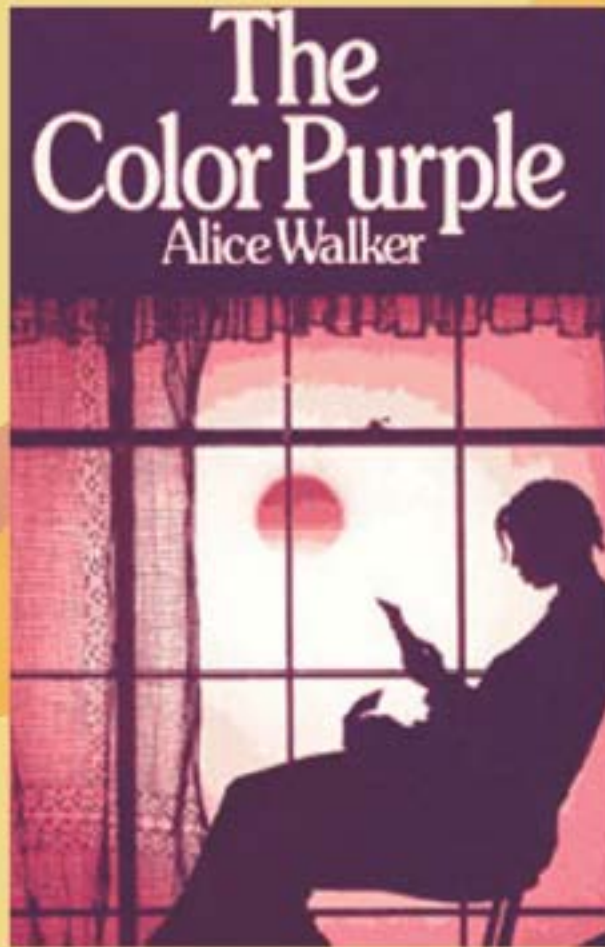
WITH A FOREWORD BY THE AUTHOR

The Bluest Eye

by Toni Morrison

"Grass wouldn't grow where they lived. Flower died. Shades fell down. Tin cans and tires blossomed where they lived. They lived on cold black-eyed peas and orange pop. Like flies they hovered; like flies they settled. And this one had settled in her house . . . 'Get out,' she said."



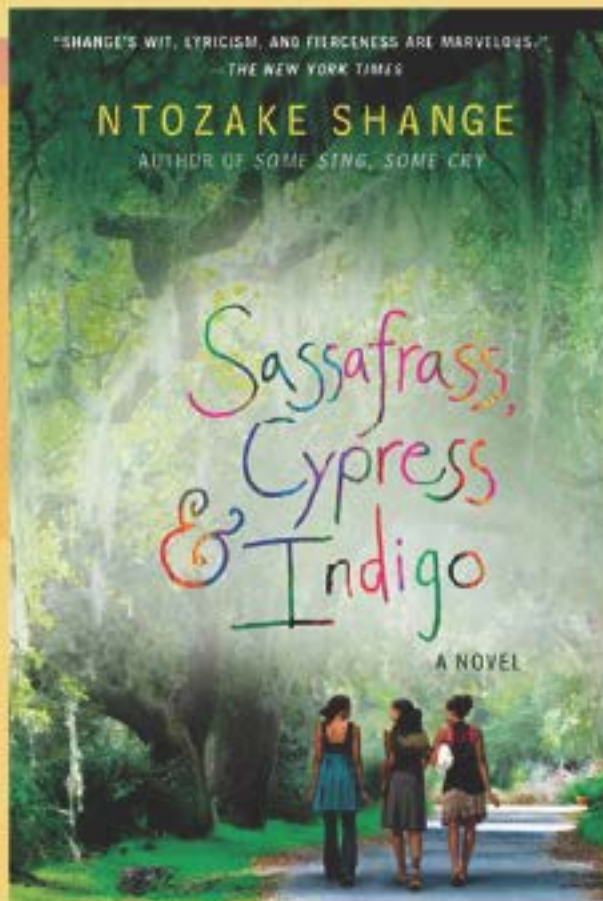


The Color Purple

by Alice Walker

Celie is a poor Black girl in Southern Georgia who is forced to marry young. While enduring a turbulent marriage, she meets other women like Harpo and Suge Avery who inspire her to break her silence and to create an identity for herself. Alice Walker's debut novel *The Color Purple* illuminates the themes of sisterhood, artistic freedom, and Black women's personal autonomy—which would eventually become the pillars for the Womanist movement she would start only a few years later.

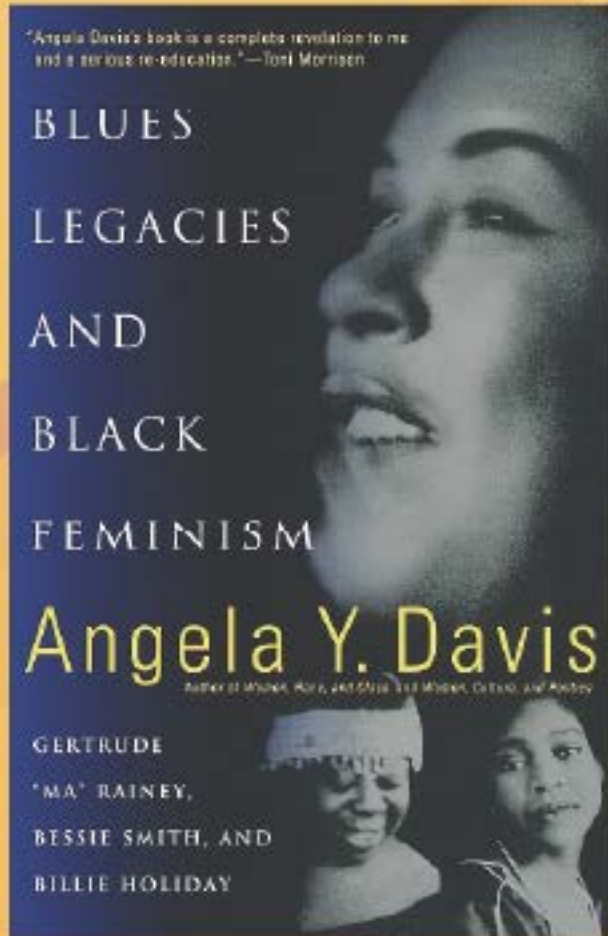




Sassafras, Cypress, & Indigo

by Ntozake Shange

Sassafras, Cypress, and Indigo is the story of three sisters from Charleston, South Carolina. Written by Ntozake Shange, the novel is stippled with narratives, recipes, songs, and instructions for spiritual practice. Shange's work serves as both a novel and as a work of cultural anthropology, providing a record of the foodways, music practices, and religious beliefs of Black Carolinians during the late twentieth century.



**Blues Legacies and Black Feminism:
Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Billie Holiday**

by Angela Davis

Angela Davis' *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* traces the lasting impact that the early Blueswomen have on American music and on broader American culture. Black women were the first to record Blues music; and these Blueswomen, such as Mamie Smith and Ma Rainey, laid the blueprint for the sound to American music in the twentieth century and beyond. The presence of Blueswomen and blues music is seen throughout Black American prose and poetry in the twentieth century.



If You Can't Be Free, Be a Mystery: In Search of Billie Holiday

by Farah Jasmine Griffin

In an intimate and empathetic investigation, Farah Jasmine Griffin uncovers the many prevailing myths about the life of Jazz virtuoso Billie Holiday's and paints a picture of Holiday's complex identity as a Black American woman, musical genius, and political activist.



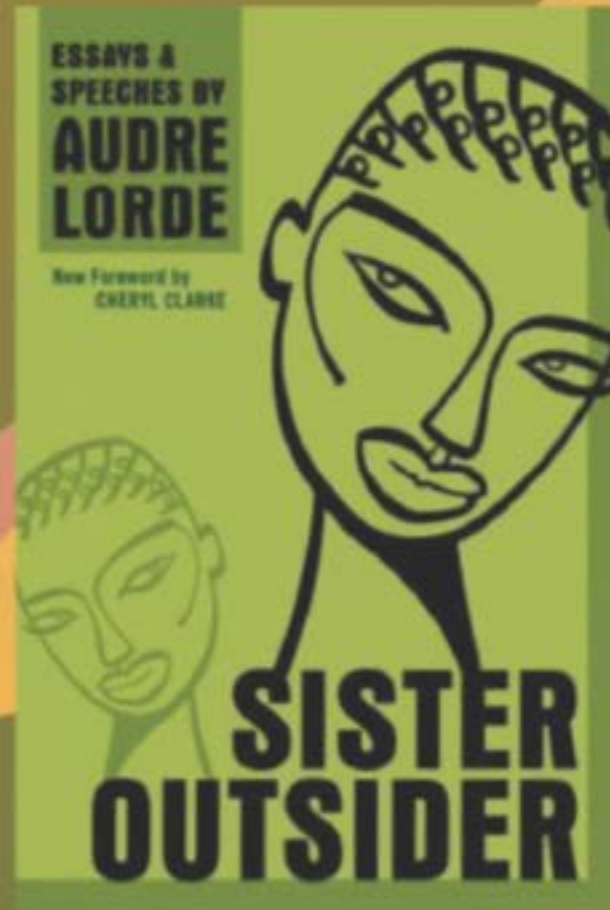
BRITNEY C. COOPER · SUSANA M. MORRIS · ROBIN M. BOYLORN

The Crunk Feminist Collection

by Brittany C. Cooper, Susana M. Morris, Robin M. Boylorn

In a series of laugh-out-loud funny, heartbreaking, and eye-opening essays, the Crunk Feminist Collective reflect on their experiences coming of age in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s as a part of the Hip Hop Generation.





Sister Outsider

by Audre Lorde and Cheryl Clarke

"As women, we have come to distrust that power which rises from our deepest and non-rational knowledge. We have been warned against it all our lives by the male world, which values this depth of feeling enough to keep women around in order to exercise it in the service of men, but which fears this same depth too much to examine the possibility of it within themselves."



NUBLANS OF PLUTONIA: BLACK WOMEN IN MODERN POST-APOCALYPTIC
AND DYSTOPIAN GRAPHIC LITERATURE

BY

MARTHA D. FULLER

B.A., Music Theory/Composition, University of Richmond, 2004
B.A., African American Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University, 2008
M.A., Afro American Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, 2011

DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
(interim version)

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

July 2020

**Nublans of Plutonia: Black Women in Modern Post-Apocalyptic and Dystopian
Graphic Literature**

by Martha D Fuller

This work investigates how Black women and girls are represented in graphic novels and comic books in the speculative future. Martha Fuller investigates these future representations of Black girls to determine whether futuristic narratives provide liberation, or whether they perpetuate gendered and racial ideologies.



MAKING ALL BLACK LIVES MATTER

REIMAGINING
FREEDOM IN THE
21ST CENTURY



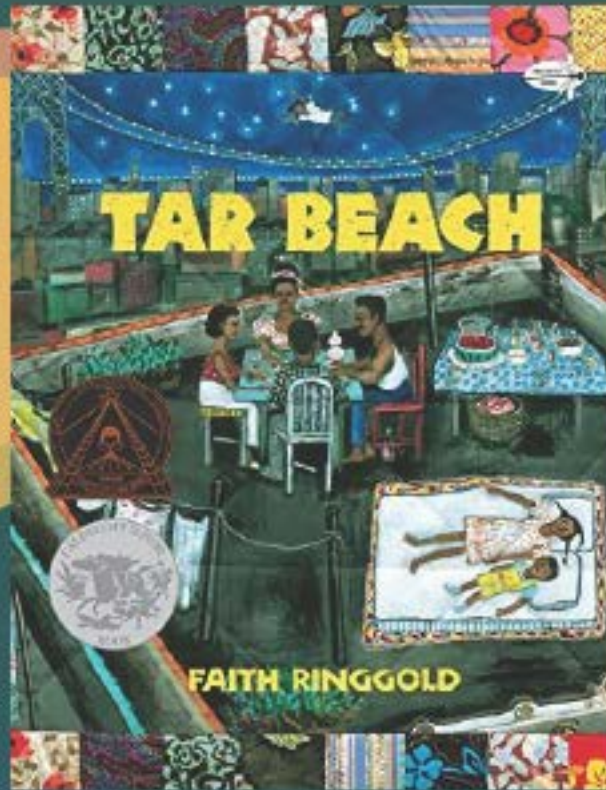
BARBARA RANSBY

Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century

by Barbara Ransby

Making All Black Lives Matter: Reimagining Freedom in the Twenty-First Century is a genealogy of the Black Lives Matter movement. In a thorough critical and historical investigation, Barbara Ransby illuminates the Black Lives Matter movements' inseparable relationship to the Black feminist movements of the twentieth century and to the broader Black radical tradition.

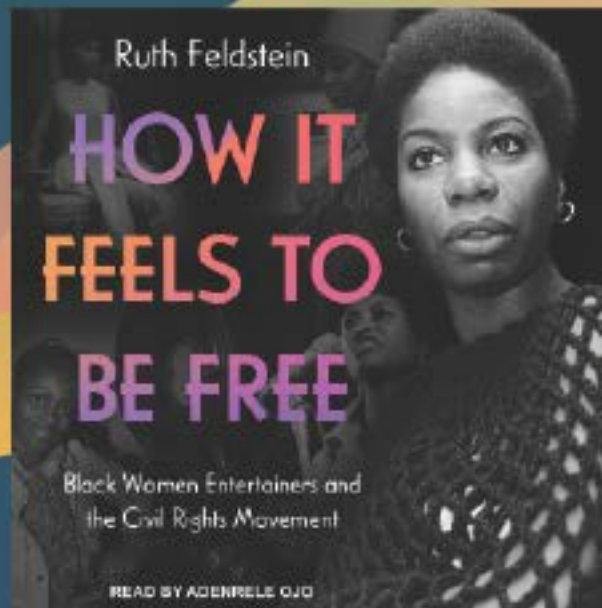




Tar Beach

by Faith Ringgold

Cassie, a young Black girl in 1930s Harlem, goes on an adventure and learns to fly above the world.



How It Feels to Be Free: Black Women Entertainers and the Civil Rights Movement

by Ruth Feldstein

Black entertainers played an important role in the Civil Rights Movement, whether they were performing songs with explicit political messages or daring to take on roles in film which deviated from stereotypical representations of Black people. In *How It Feels to Be Free*, Ruth Feldstein highlights the politics of entertainment in the mid-twentieth century and shows how the efforts of community organizers, legislators, and Black entertainers worked hand-in-hand to advance the causes of the Civil Rights Movement.



FOR
COLORED GIRLS
WHO HAVE
CONSIDERED
SUICIDE/
WHEN THE
RAINBOW
IS ENUF



A CHORUSPOEM

Ntozake
Shange

For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide / When the Rainbow Is Enuf

by Ntozake Shange

"I found god in myself & I loved her / I loved her fiercely"



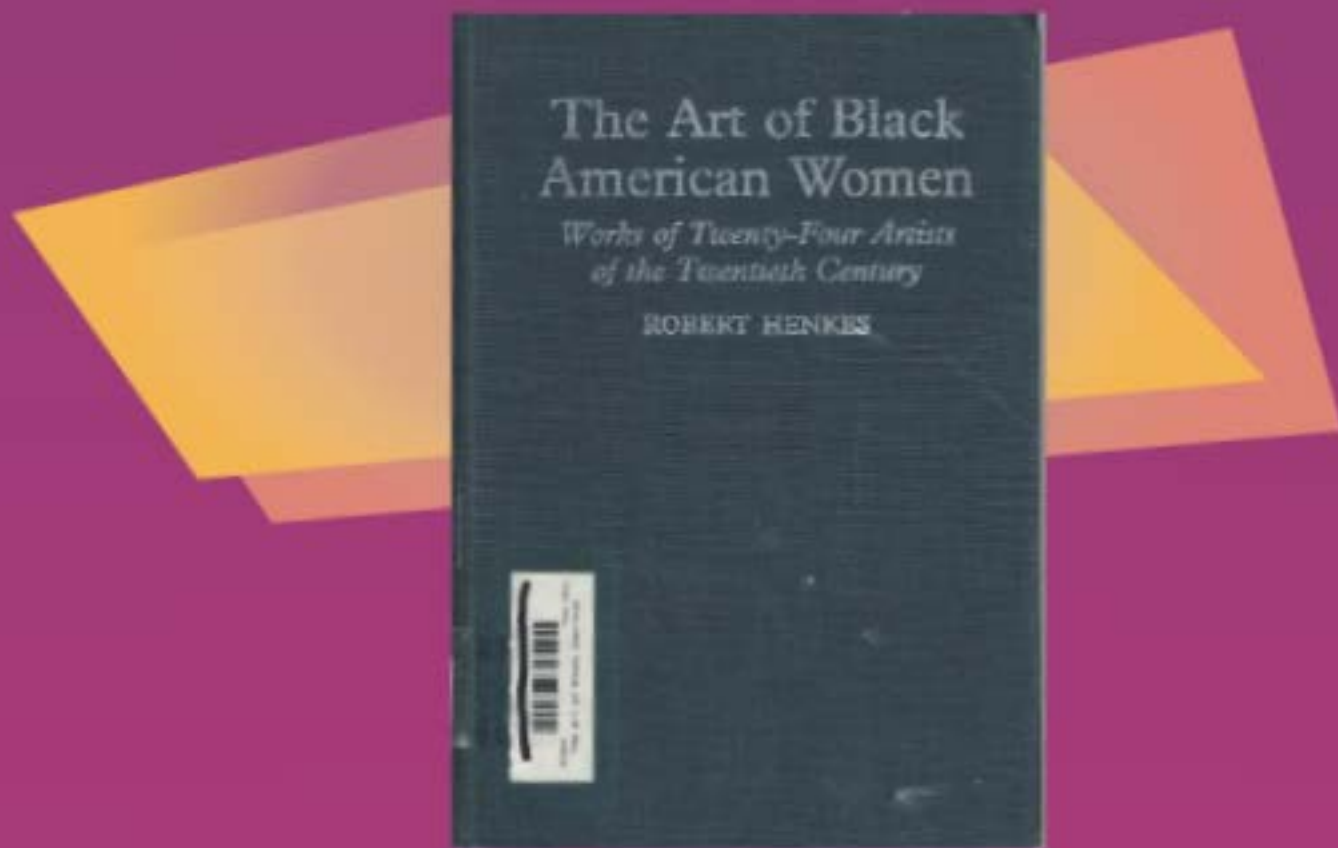


Black Women & Politics in NYC

by Julie A. Gallagher

Shirley Chisholm changed politics forever when she became the first Black woman elected to congress and the first to run for president on a national party ticket. In *Black Women and Politics in New York City*, Julie Gallagher historicizes the success of Shirley Chisholm's career and situates her career in a larger narrative with other influential Black women politicians.





**The Art of Black American Women:
Works of Twenty-Four Artists of the Twentieth Century**

by Robert Henkes

I selected this title because the artistic works of Black women who center Black women as subjects in their art can provide insight into the broader experience of Black girls and women, and highlight broader themes of visual representation among Black women.