



NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER  
2015-2016 NUMBER 3

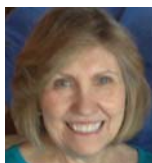
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# FRIENDS OF AMERICAN WRITERS CHICAGO

www.fawchicago.org

## President's Message

ROBERTA GATES, *President*



Our November meeting is a special one for three reasons. Firstly, our speaker will be Colonel Jill Morgenthaler who will give us a motivational speech about her role in the military—

a very appropriate program for Veterans Day. Secondly, we'll be honoring this year's scholarship winner, Kara Brinkman, a young writer who is currently enrolled in a master's-level program at National Louis University. And last but not least, we'll be recognizing our past presidents.

Friends of American Writers was organized and incorporated in April of 1922, and since then there have been 51 presidents, not counting myself. The "Founder President" was Mrs. John Bohr who served from 1922 to 1925. Women were typically known by their husbands' names at this time and that was the practice at FAW as well. Only 12 of our 51 presidents chose to use their first names rather than their husbands' (see the listing of presidents on pages 42 and 43 of your yearbook), with eight of those 12 having been elected in the 21st century.

Two of our members served as president more than once. The late Mrs. John P. Higginson, Jr. (affectionately known as Angie) was elected twice, once in the '70s and once in the '80s. And Vivian Mortensen was president three times, the most recent being in 2009-2010 when she stepped in to fill the unexpired term of Marion Faldet, who died shortly after being elected.

So don't miss the November meeting. You'll be able to hear an inspiring talk about women in the military, cheer on a promising young writer at the threshold of her career, and say thank you to our past presidents for keeping FAW a strong and vital organization that encourages the best in Midwestern writing

## NOVEMBER PROGRAM

**FAW Welcomes Jill Morgenthaler**  
It's only natural that Colonel Jill Morgenthaler would be drawn to a career in the military. Her father was an officer in the U. S. Air Force, which automatically made her a "military brat." As such, she moved every four or five years all over the country. She became close up and personal with the remarkable aircraft her father was responsible for, and she developed a lifelong respect for the men and women who dedicated their lives to serving the nation and for the leadership qualities they exhibited.

When Morgenthaler joined the U.S. Army in 1976, there were very few women in command positions. She did not let that deter her. She became the first female battalion commander in the 88th Regional Support Command. She went on to become the first woman brigade commander in the 84th Division. During the course of her military career, Col. Morgenthaler was assigned to some of the world's most dangerous war zones, including Bosnia and Iraq, where she had a face-to-face encounter with Saddam Hussein.

Morgenthaler is renowned throughout the world for her leadership qualities. In her book, *Take Command*, Colonel Jill (now retired from the military) sums up the leadership lessons she learned throughout her career. "Many leaders lead with their heads instead of their hearts," she says. "In order to become a great leader, it's critical that you go from *I* to *we*. Here are a few of the lessons she believes every effective leader should practice.

▼ Colonel Jill



- ▶ Stay connected to your team.
- ▶ Ask your team members what they need to get the job done, then do your best to get it for them.
- ▶ Care for the well-being of others.
- ▶ Share your feelings.
- ▶ Put people before politics and procedures.
- ▶ Keep your promises.
- ▶ Own up to your mistakes.
- ▶ When your team makes a mistake, take responsibility.
- ▶ Share the credit for your successes.
- ▶ Help the team to do its best.
- ▶ Always be hopeful.
- ▶ Put *we* before *me*.

Great life lessons for all of us.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Luncheon Reservations

Luncheon reservations for the November 11, 2015 meeting of the Friends of American Writers are due no later than 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, November 8. Please note, this deadline is firm. No reservations will be accepted following this date and time. To reserve, please contact only Lorraine Campione (773-275-5118) or Pat Adelberg (847-588-0911). Starting with the October meeting, standing reservations will carry over. If you have not already done so, simply indicate to Lorraine or Pat that you wish to have a standing reservation. They will note the request, and you will automatically be reserved for subsequent luncheons. Luncheon will be served at 12:00 noon in the main floor dining room of the Fortnightly Club of Chicago, 120 E. Bellevue Place. The cost of the luncheon is \$40 payable by **check only** made out to FAW in the front lobby on the day of the luncheon. **Please note that this is a change to our previous policy.** If you are reserving for a group, we ask that only one person make the group request to avoid confusion. Please note, if you make a reservation and find you cannot attend, you must cancel no later than 6:00 p.m. on the Sunday preceding the meeting. Reservations not cancelled must be paid for by the member. Parking is available at the parking lot at 100 E. Bellevue Place.

### New Members

We are pleased to announce that the following members have recently joined the *Friends of American Writers*.

- Margaret Barrett
- Katy Egan
- Mary Lou Einikis
- Jane Foster
- Judy Hannigan
- Margaret Heywood
- Nora Kaschube
- Mary Ann Kerrigan

- Diane Levy
- Freyda Libman
- Helen Madsen
- Judy Mantel
- Jacqueline McClean
- Diane Miller
- Mary Ellen Nichols
- Marva Paul
- Diane Sanofsky
- Alice Ann Steen
- Barbara Stegmiller
- Janet Stevens
- Sheila Weisman

Many of these members were mentioned in our previous issue, but we believe this is worth repeating. FAW welcomes you, and hopes that you will find membership in our group a rewarding experience. If you have recently become a member and I did not mention your name, please let me know, shirleyba@rcn.com

**Membership Chair, Sandie Weiss**, proudly announced that 24 new members have joined FAW. She would like to issue a special invitation to interested women (and men) to join our group. You will enjoy a delicious lunch, meet new friends, and experience an outstanding monthly presentation by a figure prominent in the arts. You may reach Sandie at 161 E. Chicago Ave. #35G, Chicago, IL 60611. Her email is redheadsandie@yahoo.com

### Foundation Fund Scholarship Committee Report

by LORRAINE CAMPIONE

On November 11, 2015, we will honor our scholarship recipient, Kara Brinkman. She is a graduate of Kalamazoo College, MI and also received her BA from Kalamazoo. Kara is a student at National Louis University who is working towards her Master of Science in Composition. Kara will be introduced by Dr. Joanne Koch, who is the Director of

the Science and Written Communication Program at National Louis.

This is one of the pursuits we take pride in doing. Through our scholarships, we encourage gifted writers and strive to prove that FAW is not just a “pretty face.” Come meet and welcome the latest scholarship winner and enjoy the program. Fall is here. Let’s celebrate!

The Foundation Fund Trustees: Corene Anderson (chairman), Linda Gustafson, and Lorraine Campione would like to issue a special “thank you” to those who recently contributed to the Foundation Fund. FAW greatly appreciates your support

### Young People’s Literature Committee Report

At the October board meeting, **Marti Daniel, chair of the Young People’s Literature Committee**, reported that her group of nine is currently reading 24 books. She said that new members are always welcome. Meetings are generally held on the third Wednesday of the month at the Fortnightly at 10:30 a.m. The November meeting will take place on Tuesday, November 17, at 10:30 a.m. at the Fortnightly.

### The Literary Awards Committee

**The Literary Awards Committee, chaired by Tammie Bob and Freyda Libman**, met in October and is considering 13 new entries, all of which are awards eligible. Tammie invites authors with Midwestern ties, publishers, and members to submit books to the committee for their consideration.

### A Call for Support for a New Orleans School Library Destroyed by Hurricane Katrina

CAROL ESHAGHY

My youngest son, Sean who is a member of FAW and served on the board as both secretary and program chair, is now teaching reading in

New Orleans at a high needs' school. Through a program called Teach NOLA, he was assigned to a middle school in New Orleans where all students participate in a program called DEAR ( Drop Every Thing and Read). DEAR aims at instilling a life-long love of reading in young people by providing a 30-minute block in the day where kids read books of their own choosing.

As of now their choices are slim to nonexistent. The school library was wiped out by Hurricane Katrina and now has a desperate need for books.

At present, the students, who are in middle school, have only one tiny shelf of books from which to select, and they are virtually falling apart. I asked the school to me send a list of books that the students would enjoy and that would be appropriate reading for them. The head of the English Department sent me a long list, all of which were favorites of my own children.

I checked, and the books are available on Amazon. They range from \$5.99 per book to \$30.00 for boxed sets. Initially, I thought I would

ask individuals to buy and send the books; but since I have free shipping on Amazon, I decided that with donations, I could ship them directly to the school at no cost. If you would like to participate in this much-needed and worthwhile program, please to send your contribution to Carol Eshaghy, 1613 Midwest Club Parkway, Oak Brook, IL 60523-2584. I will purchase the books and see that they are sent to the school.

Thank you for your care and support. 📖



By SHIRLEY BAUGHER

This month, I thought I would introduce a new feature called, "Reader of the Month." It will be a regular, although not monthly, addition. For my first reader, I selected longtime FAW member and avid reader, Carol Eshaghy. Here are the questions I put to her and her responses.

**Q. What books are your reading now? Would you recommend it to your friends?**

A. Right now I'm reading *Infinite Home* and *After You* the sequel to *Me Before You*, which was a favorite. I'm also reading candidates for the FAW juvenile award.

**Q. Who is your favorite writer of all time?**

A. I haven't one favorite author. I do love Anne Tyler, Jane Hamilton, and Ann Hood for fiction. For mysteries, Elizabeth George and Louise Penny.

There are too many wonderful writers to pick a favorite of all time!

I thought *The Secret Wisdom of the Earth* was a fabulous first novel. I wish more people would read it. It's a beautiful coming of age story.

**Q. What genres do you especially enjoy reading, and which do you avoid?**

A. I enjoy fiction and mystery and I do enjoy a well written non-fiction book as well, such as *Shadow Divers*, *Unbroken*, and *Boys in the Boat*. I do not enjoy science fiction. Unfortunately that genre is very popular with juvenile writers.

**Q. Who is your favorite fictional hero(ine) and your favorite villain**

A. Armand Gamache the detective in the Louise Penny novels is a favorite hero. Who could be a worse villain than Amy Dunne in *Gone Girl*?

**Q. What kind of reader were you as a child? Which childhood books and authors did you enjoy?**

A. I was a voracious reader as a child. I was always at the library. I enjoyed all the classics that are still popular today. I also enjoyed reading them to my own children. There are fabulous picture books out there too. So many talented illustrators.

**Q. If you had to name one book that influenced your life, what would it be?**

A. I can't pick one book that influenced my life. I've learned so much through reading. Last year I read over 140 books. I'm a member of Goodreads and Facebook and I share everything I read on these sites. It's exciting to find a book you love and recommend to friends. They appreciate it and books are always a good topic of conversation.

*Editor's Note: I have read many of the books Carol recommends, and have thoroughly enjoyed them. I, too, am a great fan of Louise Penny and her Inspector Gamache. And I hated Amy Dunne in *Gone Girl*. As a matter of fact, I hated *Gone Girl*. If you would like to be a Reader of the Month, please let me know. 📖*



**FEATURE**

## TRANSITIONS: A MOMENT IN TIME

*I saw old Autumn in the misty morn  
Stand shadowless, like silence, listening  
To silence. —Thomas Hood*

### Like Silence Listening to Silence

It happens every year. The autumn winds arrive, blowing away and blowing in. Blown away are the hot, humid days and the interminable television re-runs. A bold N next to program listings tell us something new awaits. Corn, peaches, tomatoes, and most berries have vanished from farmers' market stalls; replaced by squashes, sweet potatoes, and all manner of root vegetables. Daylight Saving Time is over, taking with it an hour of light from our day. Sidewalk cafes, our little bit of Paris in Chicago, have packed up and moved inside.

Actors on the political scene are caught up in the maelstrom of autumn winds. Which Republican hopefuls will be blown away, and which will remain standing come winter? On the Democratic side, will it be Hillary or Bernie—or, perhaps, a ringer? And in the game of to be(lieve) or not to be(lieve), which candidate will out-lie the other. In the words of Tribune reporter Rex Huppke, “lying has become the new honesty,” with candidates engaged in a “can

you top this” game with each other. If they were Pinocchio, their noses would stretch to infinity and beyond. So sad that it has come to this. Our founding fathers must be turning over in their graves.

October winds blew in a revitalized and rejuvenated young Cubs baseball team that threw north siders (and a few south siders) into a “next year is here” frenzy. Not only did the Cubs beat the Pittsburgh Pirates in a one-off that sent them to the division finals against the St. Louis Cardinals, they actually made it to a play-off series with the New York Mets. Sadly, the Mets dashed their World Series hopes, but, as my friend and Number One Cubs fan, Phil Grinstead said, “Just because it hasn't happened, doesn't mean it won't.” On a happier note, and of interest to FAW, the autumn winds have blown in a number of new books, movies, and television specials worthy of our time and consideration.

Here are a few.

### Books That Are In

If you are interested in award contenders, autumn winds have blown in the finalists for National Book Awards.

#### In fiction these are:

- ▶ **Karen E. Bender**, *Refund: Stories* (Counterpoint Press)
- ▶ **Angela Flournoy**, *The Turner House* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)
- ▶ **Lauren Groff**, *Fates and Furies* (Riverhead Books/Penguin Random House)
- ▶ **Adam Johnson**, *Fortune Smiles: Stories* (Random House)
- ▶ **Hanya Yanagihara**, *A Little Life* (Doubleday/Penguin Random House)

- ▶ **Jesse Ball**, *A Cure for Suicide* (Pantheon Books)
- ▶ **Bill Clegg**, *Did You Ever Have a Family* (Scout Press/Simon & Schuster)
- ▶ **T. Geronimo Johnson**, *Welcome to Braggsville* (William Morrow/Harper Collins)
- ▶ **Edith Pearlman**, *Honeydew* (Little, Brown/Hachette Book Group)
- ▶ **Nell Zink**, *Mislaidd* (Ecco/HarperCollins)

#### Nonfiction finalists include:

- ▶ **Ta-Nehisi Coates**, *Between the World and Me* (Spiegel&Gru/Penguin Random House)
- ▶ **Sally Mann**, *Hold Still* (Little Brown/Hachette Book Group)

- **Sy Montgomery**, *The Soul of an Octopus* (Atrix/Simon & Schuster)
- **Carla Power**, *If the Oceans Were Ink: An Unlikely Friendship and a Journey to the Heart of the Quran* (Henry Holt and Company)
- **Tracy K. Smith**, *Ordinary Light* (Alfred A. Knopf)
- **Cynthia Barnett**, *Rain* (Crown Publishing Group/Penguin Random House)
- **Martha Hodes**, *Mourning Lincoln* (Yale University Press)
- **Susanna Moore**, *Paradise of the Pacific* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)
- **Michael Paterniti**, *Love and Other Ways of Dying: Essays* (The Dial Press/Penguin Random House)
- **Michael White**, *Travels in Vermeer: A Memoir* (Persea Books)

*You might want to check them out, if you haven't already.*

*I would also suggest three that I have recently completed and enjoyed:*

- **David Lagercrantz**, *The Girl in the Spider's Web*, (an edge-of-your-seat continuation of the story of “*The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*” this one set in the world of high tech espionage)
- **JoJo Moyes**, *After You* (a sequel to the immensely popular best seller *Me Before You*)
- **Garth Risk Hallberg**, *City on Fire* (a Dickens-sized debut novel about New York circa 1976-77 that has critics raving)

*For you movie buffs, there are a number of must-sees on the big screen.*

- *Me and Earl and the Dying Girl*, is one of the best movies I have seen for a long time. It received a standing ovation at the Sundance film festival, where it won the Audience Award and the Grand Jury Prize. It has opened in local theaters to unanimous critical reviews and is also available on On Demand. You will laugh, you will cry, and you might even give it a personal standing ovation.
- *Bridge of Spies*, starring: Tom Hanks, Mark Rylance, Alan Alda, and Amy Ryan tells the story of James Donovan (Hanks), a Brooklyn lawyer who finds himself thrust into the center of the Cold War when the CIA sends him on the near-impossible task to negotiate the release of a captured American U-2 pilot. Directed by Steven Spielberg, this film has Oscar written all over it.
- Sci-fi lovers will enjoy *The Martian*. When astronauts blast off from the planet Mars, they leave behind Mark Watney (Matt Damon), presumed dead after a fierce

storm. With meager resources, Mark must use his wits and spirit to find a way to survive on the hostile planet. Meanwhile, back on Earth, members of NASA and a team of international scientists work tirelessly to bring him home, while his crew mates hatch their own plan for a daring rescue mission. This has been the number one box office favorite for several weeks.

- **On theater stages**, we can look forward to “Sherlock Holmes” starring David Arquette, coming in November to the Oriental Theatre. Also in November, for those who didn't catch it the first (or second) time around, “The Lion King” returns to the Cadillac Palace, and “Beautiful,” the much-hyped Carol King Story,” follows “Sherlock Holmes” at the Oriental.

- **On the small screen**, late autumn promises the return of Sherlock Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch) and his sidekick Watson (Martin Freeman), and, in an unusual twist,



▲ Sherlock and Watson

sends them back to nineteenth century London to get on with the hunt. Also on PBS, *Downton Abbey* will entertain us for one last season. For you sports aficionados (I confess I am one) the Chicago Bulls and Blackhawks will pursue championship seasons.



▲ The Bulls

I think the autumn winds will be very good to us. 🇺🇸

## The Reading Corner

Review by NORMAN BAUGHER

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

I read an article in the OpEd section of the October 18, 2015 edition of the *New York Times* as I was preparing to write this review. The article (excerpts below) from “Police Killings of Blacks: What the Data Says” by Sendhil Mullainathan, frames the issues that inform *Between the World and Me* the latest book by Ta Nehisi Coates.

As an economist who has studied racial discrimination, I've begun to look at . . . [police killing] deaths from a different angle. There is . . . large and persistent racial bias in other areas — from labor markets to online retail markets. So I expected that police prejudice would be a major factor in accounting for the killings of African-Americans. But when I looked at the numbers, that's not exactly what I found.

Police bias may well be a significant problem, but . . . it is swamped by other, bigger problems that plague our society, our economy and our criminal justice system.

Poverty plays an essential role in all of this. Jens Ludwig, an economist at the University of Chicago who also directs the Crime Lab there, points out: “Living in a high-poverty neighborhood increases risk of violent-crime involvement, and in the most poor neighborhoods of the country, fully four out of five residents are black or Hispanic.”

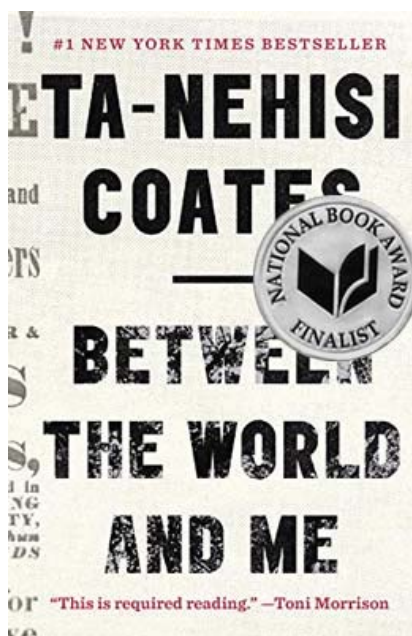
In her book, “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of



Colorblindness,” Michelle Alexander argues that the American criminal justice system itself is an instrument of racial oppression. “Mass incarceration operates as a tightly networked system of laws, policies, customs and institutions that operate collectively to ensure the subordinate status of a group defined largely by race,” she says.

We should eliminate police prejudice because it is wrong and because it undermines our democracy. It blights — and all too often destroys — lives. But there are also structural problems underpinning these killings. We are all responsible for those.

Ta-Nehisi Coates first caught my attention in an *Atlantic* article, “The Case for Reparations”. That article



earned him the George Polk Award. He has since received many other literary awards, including the National Magazine Award, and the Hillman Prize for Opinion and Analysis Journalism. He is a 2015 recipient of the MacArthur “Genius Grant”, and is a nominee for the National Book Award’s nonfiction prize. Marvel has asked him to take on a new Black Panther series set to begin next spring. He is a much sought-after guest on daytime and late night talk shows. Toni Morrison wrote: “I’ve been wondering who might fill the intellectual void that plagued me after James Baldwin died. Clearly it is Ta-Nehisi”.

The book is short, 150 pages, because he wanted the reader to “have a single experience”. Perhaps also because it’s epistolary. It begins:

Son,

Last Sunday the host of a popular news show asked me what it meant to lose my body. The host was broadcasting from Washington D.C., and I was seated in a remote studio on the far west side of Manhattan. A satellite closed the miles between us but no machinery could close the gap between her world and the world for which I had been summoned to speak. . . . [T]he host wished to know why I felt that white America’s progress, or rather the progress of those Americans who believe that they are white, was built on looting and violence. The answer to this question is the record of the believers themselves. The answer is American history.

Initially I read this sentence too quickly and did not explore what the author meant by the odd statement “those Americans who believe that they are white” even though it aroused my curiosity. I also failed to connect this phrase to his later explanation of why he believes America’s progress was built on looting and violence.

Americans believe in the reality of “Race” as a defined, indubitable

feature of the natural World. Racism—the need to ascribe bone-deep features to people and then humiliate, reduce, and destroy them—inevitably follows from this inalterable condition.

But race is the child of racism, not the father. And the process of naming “the people” has never been a matter of genealogy and physiognomy so much as one of hierarchy. . . . this is the new idea at the heart of these new people who have been brought up hopelessly, tragically, deceitfully, to believe that they are white.

I’m emphasizing this because Coates uses the phrase “people who believe they are white” throughout, much as Homer used “wine dark sea” and “rosy fingers of dawn”. Most notably, it appears in the epigraph for part III containing a quote from James Baldwin: . . . *And have brought humanity to the edge of oblivion: because they think they are white.* The *New York Times* article quoted earlier indicts the political, economic, and criminal justice system more than individual police for much of the social plague but Mr. Coates believes racism is a consequence of American history, beginning with slavery and he emphasizes the persistent, historical, learned, cultural, institutional, behavioral, “exceptional”, and false aspects of the color divide. He also uses “your people” and “the dreamers” to avoid using “white” a word he believes is a false construct to promote white superiority.

IThe police departments of your country have been endowed with the authority to destroy your body. It does not matter if the destruction is the result of an unfortunate overreaction. It does not matter if it originates in a misunderstanding. It does not matter if the destruction springs from a foolish policy. Sell cigarettes without the proper authority and your body can be destroyed. Resent the people trying to entrap your

body and it can be destroyed. Turn into a dark stairwell and your body can be destroyed. . . . All of this is common to black people. And all of this is old for black people. No one is held responsible.

In a *Tribune* interview with Kevin Nance, Coates said, “I was dealing with violence in a physical sense. You can’t talk about violence without talking about the body”.

He is saying that living in a black body is a different experience than living in a white body.

The underlying and unrelenting issue is fear. He learned fear from his father who used his belt, but out of anxiety rather than anger. His fear for his son prompted him to write the letter and to issue a heartfelt warning for him to be very careful in a world that is very dangerous for black bodies. The fear he learned from his father is not unique to him but existed throughout the black communities he grew up in. In his Baltimore neighborhood, that fear was displayed through the armor of extravagant behavior and dress, as well as bluster and boasting. He found the same fear in his aunt’s community in Philadelphia and in the community of a Chicago friend of his father.

In *The Case for Reparations* Mr. Coates uses historical data to establish the circumstances of black American life beginning with the time they were brought to America as chattel property and continuing to the present time. He shows that existing aspects of the relationship between Black America and White America is a residual pestilence of slavery that, though less overt now, continues to influence attitudes, laws, policy,

and perceptions of the majority population.

*Between the World and Me* moves from abstract evidence based on investigation and reportage of his *Atlantic* article to the personalized form of biography in this book. Within this form Coates guides us between the past and the present, using current events to explain the past and to illustrate the present. The biographical format allows him to use his formidable language skills to express his passion as he chronicles how relatives died from unnatural causes and how every family in his community had lost a child “to the streets, to jail, to drugs, to guns”.

Ta Nehisi’s path led to Howard University in Washington, D.C., where he arrived at his Mecca—“the crossroads of the black diaspora”. He discovered the alumni and professors who spanned generations and crossed international boundaries. He found the Moorland-Springarn Research Center that contained nearly every book about or by black people. He found variety and disputation where he expected to find coherence. He found arts that he could relate to. He found the woman who would become his wife. While he recognizes that his son will and must follow a different path, he hopes his letter will help his son to “walk his own”.

In my segregated Indiana town, I don’t remember seeing any black people until I was in high school, and





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there were only five in my graduating class of 390. There were perhaps three blacks in the art school I attended and none in the art institution I where I studied in Germany. My first real encounter with black people was as a draftee in the Army at Ft. Dix, where, because of my age, I was assigned the role of squad leader. There were eleven young black men in my squad, mostly from New Jersey. I was afraid. I did not look forward to passing on orders. I have only this experience, and that pales against the constant issues confronting black people. I can only guess what it is like to be an identifiable other.

When I came to Chicago for the first job of my publishing career, there were only two black people on my floor. In the neighborhoods where I lived then and where I live now the residents have been those “Americans who believe they are white”. Only in books by Baldwin and Wright and Malcolm X did I gain some perspective on the world inhabited by blacks.

While these books revealed past inequities, I assumed many things had changed for the better.

I read the papers and am not blind to the disparity between the segregated communities in Chicago. I was not aware of the extent to which I, and my fellow “Americans who think they are white,” are responsible for that disparity. I am saddened that I share the guilt for these inequities.

I take Mr. Coates’ word that the purpose of his book is to prepare his son to navigate a difficult world, made more difficult by the accident of being born black. For some of us, his book will arouse the uncomfortable feeling that America has perpetrated a kind of holocaust—although different than that inflicted in Germany in both the numbers of victims, and the instruments of the death which are applied individually instead of in mass. The timeline is so long that it has obscured the enormity of the devastation. America has lost so much as a consequence of this particular evil.

Near the end Coates writes about the beauty of black power, a beauty created in struggle:

Even the Dreamers (another term substituted for whites)—lost in their great reverie—feel it, for it is Billie (Holliday) they reach for in sadness, and Mobb Deep is what they holler in boldness, and Isley they hum in love, and Dre they yell in revelry, and Aretha is the last sound they hear before dying. We have made something down here. . . . They made us into a race. We made ourselves into a people.

Through this book, an intimate and passionate depiction of an American life, Ta Nehisi Coates gives us a succinct and poignant history of a terrible fault line in American history and culture. Every page is a new experience. I have to agree with Toni Morrison’s quote on the front cover, “This is required reading.” 