
Suggested Readings: Power, Race & Building Toward Shared Leadership

Prepared for the Saint Mark's Cathedral CBO Committee and Board of Directors

As the CBO committee works to bring on founding board members who will make this a majority-Black board, it's worth building a parallel learning path that encourages applying continued growth as the Board of Directors takes form and the power of decision begins to pivot from the committee to the Board.

These readings are meant to give those who are engaged with the CBO a shared understanding of cross-racial dynamics before they show up in the room, not after. None of them are required reading in the academic sense — think of this as a resource shelf to draw from, individually or together, as the board-building work continues.

Start Here — Short Reads

"The White-Savior Industrial Complex"

Teju Cole • *The Atlantic*, 2012 • Essay, ~10 minutes

[Read online →](#)

The White-Savior Industrial Complex is a short, widely cited essay naming the impulse to make someone else's struggle into an occasion for one's own significance. This is useful foundational materials that can help shape a shared vocabulary for an organization that wants to build with people, not for them.

Race to Lead: Confronting the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap

Building Movement Project • Research summary

[Read online →](#)

Race to Lead: Confronting the Nonprofit Racial Leadership Gap offers national survey data on why nonprofit leadership stays disproportionately white even when organizations say diversity is a priority. This essay grounds the conversation in sector-wide patterns rather than treating this as one committee's unique challenge.

Racial Covenants & Redlining

The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America

Richard Rothstein • 2017 • Book

The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America is the definitive national account of how redlining, racial covenants, zoning, and public housing policy were not incidental prejudice but deliberate government action that engineered segregation and blocked

Black homeownership and wealth-building for generations — the backdrop against which any single community's history sits.

Redlining, Racial Covenants, and Housing Discrimination in Seattle

HistoryLink.org • Washington's online encyclopedia of state history

[Read online →](#)

Redlining, Racial Covenants, and Housing Discrimination in Seattle is a general-audience overview of how covenants and redlining shaped which Seattle neighborhoods Black residents could and couldn't live in through much of the 20th century — this is the closest thing to a starting point for the specifically local version of this history.

Racial Restrictive Covenants

Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project, University of Washington • Interactive map & database

[Read online →](#)

The Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project allows you to look up the actual covenant language recorded on specific Seattle properties and see, block by block, where it applied. Turns the history from an abstraction into something concrete — including, in many cases, into neighborhoods board members will recognize.

Redlining and Disinvestment: A Case Study on Racial Segregation and Gentrification Throughout Seattle's Central District

Harvard Law School, Systemic Justice Project • Article

[Read online →](#)

Redlining and Disinvestment: A Case Study on Racial Segregation and Gentrification Throughout Seattle's Central District is a study that traces how covenants and redlining confined Black Seattleites to the Central District while banks starved those same blocks of reinvestment, then how that engineered disinvestment left the neighborhood exposed to the displacement pressure of the last two decades. The most directly relevant piece here to the neighborhood this project sits in. It is a good context for the CBO project.

On Power, Whiteness & Learning to Follow

White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism

Robin DiAngelo • 2018 • Book

White Fragility names the defensive reactions — anger, guilt, argument, withdrawal — that white people commonly have when race comes up, and why those reactions function to end the conversation rather than continue it. A useful early read for a group about to have a lot of these conversations.

White Awake: An Honest Look at What It Means to Be White

Daniel Hill • 2017 • Book

White Awake was written by a white pastor for a majority white church audience. It walks the reader through stages of racial identity development in accessible, faith-grounded language which is a natural fit given SMC's own context for this project.

Towards Collective Liberation: Anti-Racist Organizing, Feminist Praxis, and Movement Building Strategy

Chris Crass • 2013 • Book

Towards Collective Liberation: Anti-racist Organizing, Feminist Praxis, and Movement Building Strategy is a series of essays from a white organizer on what it actually looks like to build multiracial coalitions and follow the leadership of people of color rather than direct it. Practical rather than theoretical.

My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies

Resmaa Menakem • 2017 • Book

My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies is a fascinating body-based look at how racialized trauma lives in white bodies as well as Black and Indigenous bodies. Helps explain why this work can trigger real discomfort, not just intellectual disagreement.

On Being a Strong Ally — Especially With Power

The Guide to Allyship

guidetoallyship.com • Free online guide

[Read online →](#)

The Guide to Allyship is a practical, accessible starting point on what allyship actually requires day to day — listening, using one's position to open doors rather than speak over people, and being willing to be corrected. This is a good first stop to engage in before the more pointed piece below.

Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex

Indigenous Action Media • 2014 • Essay, ~15 minutes

[Read online →](#)

Accomplices Not Allies: Abolishing the Ally Industrial Complex is a sharper, more challenging piece arguing that "ally" can become a label people claim for themselves without ever putting real power, resources, or risk on the line, and proposing "accomplice" instead— action alongside and being accountable to the people most affected — as the higher bar. This is especially relevant for anyone who holds real institutional authority, perceived or actual, in this work.

Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation

Latasha Morrison • 2019 • Book

Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation is a faith-grounded, practical guide to relational bridge-building across race, from the founder of a national racial-reconciliation organization by the same name. Pairs well with the two pieces above for a community that wants the theology alongside the practice.

On Money, Giving & Repair

Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance

Edgar Villanueva • 2018 (2nd ed. 2021) • Book

Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance was written by a philanthropy insider, reframing money and giving through an Indigenous lens of healing rather than control. Directly relevant to SMC and the CBO as they raise and steward funds for community repair.

Reparations: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair

Duke L. Kwon & Gregory Thompson • 2021 • Book

Reparations: A Christian Call for Repentance and Repair is a theological case for reparative work built explicitly around repentance and repair — worth flagging given that the CBO project already frames its own strategy in those terms.

When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself

Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert • 2009 • Book

When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty Without Hurting the Poor . . . and Yourself is a faith-based, cautionary look at how well-meaning charity can reinforce the very dynamics it means to fix. A good check for any committee member inclined to think of this work as "helping."

On Why This Serves Everyone

The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together

Heather McGhee • 2021 • Book

The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together makes the case, with data and reporting, that racial hierarchy carries costs for white communities too. It is also useful for reframing this work as mutual benefit rather than a sacrifice for white folks.

From Saint Mark's Own Tradition

Becoming Beloved Community

The Episcopal Church • Denominational framework

[Read online →](#)

Becoming Beloved Community is the Episcopal Church's own long-term framework for racial healing, reconciliation, and justice, including diocesan reparations work already underway elsewhere in the Church. This is a resource already inside SMC's own tradition, and not an outside import which is helpful for creating a throughline from what the church has embedded in its values and teachings.

On Liberatory Governance

***Cultivating a Liberatory Board**

Ananda Valenzuela • *Nonprofit Quarterly* • Article, ~15 minutes

[Read online →](#)

Cultivating a Liberatory Board is the clearest introduction to why this model exists: traditional boards concentrate unilateral decision-making authority in a small group of largely insulated volunteers, which tends to pull organizations toward safe, palatable choices instead of the systemic change they were formed to pursue. The article lays out three shifts a liberatory board makes instead — from an insular body to an accountable part of a larger ecosystem including staff and community; from "power over" to "power with"; and from making every decision itself to holding real accountability while trusting the people closest to the work. Worth reading as a picture of where founding board culture could head, not a prescription for where it starts.

***Liberatory Governance Community of Practice**

Justice Funders • *Framework overview*

[Read online →](#)

Liberatory Governance Community of Practice takes a closer look at the framework behind the article above and it is an invitation for an organization's leaders to examine how power actually moves through their governance structures — who decides, who's consulted, who's assumed to know best — and to deliberately redesign that flow rather than just diversify who sits at the existing table.

A note on using this list: no need to read everything at once. The two short reads at the top are a natural place to start together; the books work well as an ongoing, rotating shared read as the board-building work continues.