

New Year, New Reads

From compelling memoirs to a treatise on Black joy, these books set the tone for 2022

BY KENRYA RANKIN

HOME

In the wake of 2020's police killings, Tiffanie Drayton returned to her native Tobago in search of a freedom she didn't feel in the United States. **Black American Refugee: Escaping the Narcissism of the American Dream** (Viking, \$26) follows her round-trip journey and the lessons she learned along the way.

FLASHBACK

Edited by Genevieve West, **You Don't Know Us Negroes and Other Essays** (Amistad, \$29.99) brings together more than 35 years of Zora Neale Hurston's work—including some never-before-published pieces—to paint an unparalleled picture of Black life from the Harlem Renaissance to the Civil Rights Movement.

BAD RELIGION

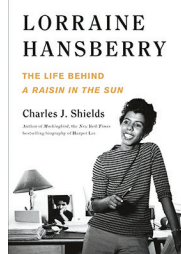
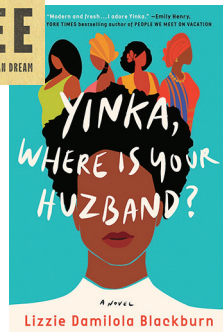
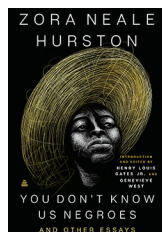
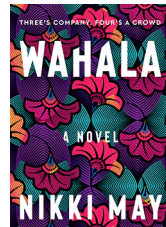
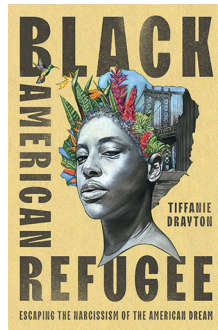
Remember the syllabus that helped us process Beyoncé's *Lemonade* album? The brilliant creator-theologian Candice Marie Benbow is back with **Red Lip Theology: For Church Girls Who've Considered Tithing to the Beauty Supply Store When Sunday Morning Isn't Enough** (Convergent Books, \$26). Her vision for a progressive interpretation of Christianity centers our liberation.

RENEWAL

Destiny O. Birdsong's **Nobody's Magic** (Grand Central, \$28) explores the lives of three Black women with albinism in Shreveport, Louisiana. The women all forge relationships that push them to rethink the stories they tell themselves, to stand in their power and to claim futures they never thought possible.

REVELATIONS

For **Lorraine Hansberry: The Life Behind A Raisin in the Sun** (Henry Holt and Co., \$29.99), Charles J. Shields draws on unpublished interviews with friends, private letters and original research to examine the contradictions that drove the queer playwright behind one of the most celebrated stage plays.



TROUBLE

When newcomer Isobel joins their long-established friend group, biracial best friends Boo, Ronke and Simi are forced to face their own specific forms of trouble. Pick up **Wahala** (Custom House, \$27.99) for its gorgeous cover; stay for Nikki May's sharply rendered characters and the twist at the end.

SWIPE RIGHT

Yinka Oladeji doesn't think it's funny when her aunties pressure her to find love—but it's impossible to read about her extraordinarily organized attempt to do just that without side-splitting laughter. You won't be able to put down British-Nigerian author Lizzie Damilola Blackburn's debut novel, **Yinka, Where Is Your Husband?** (Pamela Dorman Books, \$26).

POWER

In **Civil Rights Queen: Constance Baker Motley and the Struggle for Equality** (Pantheon, \$30), Tomiko Brown-Nagin chronicles the life and career of the first Black woman to argue a case before the U.S. Supreme Court. Vice President Kamala Harris counts her as a personal hero. You will too.

HAUNTED

The Great Mrs. Elias (Amistad, \$26.99), the latest from Barbara Chase-Riboud (author of 1979's *Sally Hemings*), is a fictionalized account of real-life Black Philadelphian Hannah Elias. Set in the late 1800s, the book tells of Elias shedding early traumas to reinvent herself in New York—only to have her past threaten her newly amassed fortune.

SHINE

The world may seek to dismantle you, but **Black Joy: Stories of Resistance, Resilience and Restoration** (Gallery Books, \$27), by Tracey Michael Lewis-Giggetts, will piece you back together. What better way to start a new year than by reveling in the things that make us feel whole?