

Marblehead League Book Discussion Group 5/28/2021

1. "Kill Switch: The Rise of the Modern Senate and the Crippling of American Democracy" by Adam Jentleson (2021) Author recommends return to the talking filibuster to increase functioning of the Senate, reversing the concentration of power in the hands of the minority. Nonfiction
2. "The Premonition: a Pandemic Story" By Michael Lewis (2021) Lewis profiles doctors and public health people in the very early days of pandemic planning, 2003, and tells how the CDC was/is bureaucratic, slow, unable to respond to emergencies, and is risk adverse. The coming chapters will talk about the response to COVID-19 with this baggage and the people at the forefront who were ignored or disparaged. The book is engaging and interesting, and reads like an action-packed novel. Nonfiction
3. "The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism by Edward E Baptist (2016) Historian details the link between slavery and the rise of capitalism in the United States, told through the stories of slaves. Not only the South was benefited by slavery. Nonfiction.
4. "Remember: The Science of Memory and the Art of Forgetting" by Lisa Genova (2021) A neuroscientist discusses how memory works, what affects memory, normal forgetfulness vs. medical deficits and offers suggestions. Nonfiction
5. "The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America" by Richard Rothstein by Richard Rothstein (2018) This book walks through US history detailing how the institutions of the US, including the Supreme Court, reflecting the tone of the times, were complicit in discrimination and segregation. Nonfiction
6. "The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?" by Michael J. Sandel (2020) Political philosophy professor shares his view why we live in an era of huge disparity of wealth and class. He contends there is a framework of Western ideas suggesting that being successful implies you are hard-working and deserving... and the converse. He suggests that the rise of populism is due to such attitudes and challenges us to be humble. Nonfiction
7. "Religion and the Rise of Capitalism" by Benjamin M. Friedman (2021) Author traces current practice of capitalism and free markets to a set of 17th century beliefs embedded in religion, accounting for some of the current economic conundrums. Nonfiction

8. "Project Hail Mary: A Novel" by Andy Weil (2021) Hopeful book about connections. Our reader raved. She also praised previous book, "The Martian" Science Fiction.
9. "Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together" by Heather McGhee (2021) The title says it all. McGhee begins with the fallacy of the scarcity mentality and how it poisons the struggle for equality, and follows with examples of nonsensical choices made by white communities to block advances for those of color. Nonfiction
10. "The Man Who Mistook His Wife For A Hat: And Other Clinical Tales" by Oliver Sacks A neuroscientist shares case histories of patients with a variety of surprising symptoms, including one man who has aphasia and cannot recognize faces. Nonfiction
11. "The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil" by Eric Fromm (1964) Grappling with the question of what is the true essence of mankind, and the struggle to understand by a psychologist and social scientist who has seen it all. Riveting and frightening if you believe rational thought rules us. Nonfiction
12. "Less Than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others" by David Livingstone Smith (2012) Philosopher takes a historical look at how dehumanization has been used to justify genocide. He presents a multipronged evolving theory of how groups are pushed by political leaders to act against others, as a means to gain power. Fascinating and challenging. Nonfiction.
13. "On Inhumanity: Dehumanization and How to Resist It" by David Livingstone Smith (2020) Smith hones his theories about dehumanization from his previous work into this short book. New examples give it life. The theory is still challenging to this reader although solid insights are offered. Nonfiction.
14. "The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma" by Bessel van der Kolk M.D. (2015) Trauma is everywhere, from police and veterans with PTSD to victims of abuse and it literally reshapes the brain and the body. van der Kolk uses his lifetime of experience as a psychiatrist and the advances in mental health over his professional career to explore how the understanding and treatment of trauma has progressed. A tour de force about human curiosity, relationships and the power of science to unravel mysteries of human behavior. Highly recommended. Nonfiction.