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RELATED READING LIST

The following titles were selected by members of the ALA Great Stories Club's Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation Implementation Team to offer additional support for the "Finding Your Voice" series. Great Stories Club program hosts are encouraged to recommend these titles for additional thematic exploration; plan supplemental programs using the list; or use project or local funding to expand the series to include discussion of one or more of these additional titles.

Implementation Team members include Angelina M. Cortes (Sno-Isle Libraries), Joslyn Bowling Dixon (Prince William Library System), and Amira Shabana (Proviso East High School).

After the Shot Drops by Randy Ribay

After his best friend, basketball superstar Bunny Thompson, transfers schools for a better shot at college scholarships, Nasir is left angry and alone, abandoned for bigger and better things. When Nasir's cousin Wallace gets into serious trouble trying to raise money to prevent his grandmother's eviction, Nasir sees only one way out—asking his former best friend to throw the state championship game. Bunny must choose between losing his best friend and throwing away everything he has ever hoped for. Ribay's depictions of Bunny's and Nasir's lives are beautifully—if not tragically—drawn using alternating points of view, allowing Ribay to revisit the same scenes from alternate angles. He painstakingly shows the state of (sometimes violent) desperation for many young men of the inner city, buoyed only by the distant chance of a better life through stardom. Despite its downbeat aspects, the story nevertheless manages to infuse humanity into the boys' lives by showcasing the importance of family, the value of friendship, and the role of courage in the face of difficult situations. —Reinhardt Suarez for [Booklist](#)

Anger Is a Gift by Mark Oshiro

Moss Jeffries is many things—considerate student, devoted son, loyal friend and affectionate boyfriend, enthusiastic nerd. But sometimes Moss still wishes he could be someone else—

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someone without panic attacks, someone whose father was still alive, someone who hadn't become a rallying point for a community because of one horrible night. And most of all, he wishes he didn't feel so stuck.

Moss can't even escape at school—he and his friends are subject to the lack of funds and crumbling infrastructure at West Oakland High, as well as constant intimidation by the resource officer stationed in their halls. That was even before the new regulations—it seems sometimes that the students are treated more like criminals. Something will have to change—but who will listen to a group of teens? When tensions hit a fever pitch and tragedy strikes again, Moss must face a difficult choice: give in to fear and hate or realize that anger can actually be a gift.

—Macmillan Publishers

Blended by Sharon Draper

Every week, Isabella has to change gears. She alternates between her white mom and her black dad, who have completely dissimilar lifestyles. Isabella loves both her families, but going back and forth often makes her feel like she has two lives. Her struggle to figure out who she is becomes even harder as the reality of racism hits close to home. An attack on her best friend, who is black, rocks Isabella's school and further confuses her search for identity. Though Isabella's mixed race and struggle to find identity in a world where racism exists are strong components of this book, it is primarily about a child of divorce finding her place in two different families. This is not a criticism; in fact, it makes this an honest and relatable story for a wide range of children. Readers will enjoy the short chapters and Isabella's questioning, conversational tone. Draper (*Stella* by Starlight, 2015) has written a book in which kids will see themselves, as the experience of being blended touches most lives. (HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY: Draper's books are favorites with the masses and the critics. Order extras!) —Florence Simmons for [Booklist](#)

Calling My Name by Liara Tamani

Through 53 vignettes set in the 1990s, Tamani deftly weaves a story of family, friendship, and identity. Taja Brown lives in Houston with her older brother, Damon; her younger sister, Naima;

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and her thoughts. Living with devout Christian parents, Taja must figure out how to navigate “movements” she feels that bring her closer to God but aren’t her parents’ kind of religion. She grows up through crushes, first kisses, and losing her virginity to her first boyfriend, even after her parents give them both purity rings. Later, she denies to a friend that she is no longer a virgin and grapples with feelings of shame and guilt. Taja also questions why Damon thinks it’s OK to call girls “easy”; why he can have his own phone line but her dad says “that’s just the way it is” when she asks why she can’t have her own; and the weight of societal pressures put on girls and women. Although Taja thinks often about the unspoken rules and misogyny of African American religious culture (Sister Davis has to wear “looser skirts, lighter lipstick, and panty hose” if she wants to continue reading church announcements), she doesn’t publicly challenge them with her friends or family members. An excellent portrayal of African American culture, gorgeous lyrical prose, strong characters, and societal critique make Tamani’s debut a must-read. —Courtney Gilfillian for [Booklist](#)

The Cholo Tree by Daniel Chacon

When Victor wakes up after having been legally dead for two minutes, he can’t remember what happened that caused him to end up in the hospital. His mom, some of his teachers, and other adults around him believe that he’s involved in a gang, even though all Victor spends his time doing is drawing, watching *Weeds*, listening to heavy-metal music, and hanging out with his friend Equis. Although he means well, Victor is constantly getting himself into trouble, to the point where his mom no longer believes he is not in a gang. As time goes on, Victor begins to have visions of his father, who died in a way Victor has never discovered. Just when it seems as if Victor’s life is moving forward and his art is moving him in a positive direction, he is sucked back into the life he is trying to avoid, a life that possibly caused his father’s death. Though the book at times contains the very stereotypes it describes, the ending provides a sense of hope for Victor. —Selenia Paz for [Booklist](#)

The Education of Margot Sánchez by Lilliam Rivera

After “borrowing” her father’s credit card to finance a more stylish wardrobe, Margot Sanchez

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suddenly finds herself grounded. And by grounded, she means working as an indentured servant in her family's struggling grocery store to pay off her debts.

With each order of deli meat she slices, Margot can feel her carefully cultivated prep school reputation slipping through her fingers, and she's willing to do anything to get out of this punishment. Lie, cheat, and maybe even steal . . .

Margot's invitation to the ultimate beach party is within reach, and she has no intention of letting her family's drama or Moises—the admittedly good looking but outspoken boy from the neighborhood—keep her from her goal. —[Simon & Schuster](#)

I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter by Erika L. Sánchez

Julia's older sister, Olga, was always polite, respected her parents, and eagerly took up the Mexican traditions her mother insisted upon. After Olga dies in a car accident, Julia is thrust into a spotlight she's not ready for. She's too angry, too unappreciative, too American, which results in her mother shutting out her social and love life. Then Julia discovers Olga's trove of secrets, which hint at a hidden life. As Julia pursues the mystery of the real Olga, she begins to find out that more than one of her family members has secrets. This bildungsroman immigrant story captures the chaotic life of a young person trying to navigate two worlds while trying to follow her own path. Julia wants to leave Chicago and attend college, while a "perfect Mexican daughter" would stay put, get a job, and contribute to the family. Sánchez weaves these threads along with a tragic story of distant sisters to create an earnest and heartfelt tale that will resonate with teens. —Reinhardt Suarez for [Booklist](#)

The Latte Rebellion by Sarah Jamila

"Lattes of the world, unite!" After 17-year-old "half-Indian" Asha is jokingly called a "towel-head" and "barely Asian" by a classmate, she is moved to advocate for people of mixed race and along the way earn money for a sorely needed summer trip before college. Thus the Latte Rebellion is born—latte, a perfect blend of coffee and "other," becomes shorthand for multiethnic people. Carey, Asha's driven fellow "Latte" and best friend, insists that they launch the enterprise

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anonymously, and rightly so. What begins as an online T-shirt-selling scheme becomes a movement, with chapters in colleges and high schools spanning the nation. As Asha's life is consumed by her cause, her grades slip, and her relationship with Carey deteriorates rapidly after the school begins to view the Latte Rebellion as a terrorist organization. In Stevenson's debut, illustrated with a few drawings and comics, the portrayal of Asha's initially misguided but relatable social awakening is so honest that readers will find themselves first cringing at her efforts, then cheering her on. —Courtney Jones for [Booklist](#)

Saints and Misfits by S.K. Ali

Janna, an Arab American hijabi teen living with her mom and brother, is in the midst of several dilemmas. First, her brother's courting the impossibly perky, perfectly pious "Saint Sarah," a study circle leader at their mosque. Next, Janna's crushing on non-Muslim Jeremy, which is definitely haram. Her biggest problem, though, is the Monster, who's revered by everyone at their mosque for his exemplary faith. But they don't know he sexually assaulted Janna, and now he's spreading cruel rumors about her. Janna's not sure who—or whether—she can tell, but as she starts relying on unlikely friends, she finds the strength to stand up for herself. Ali's debut offers a much-needed, important perspective in Janna, whose Muslim faith is pivotal but far from the only part of her multifaceted identity. Thanks to her sharp, wry first-person narrative, readers will gain deep insight into her anxieties, choices, and aspirations. For readers unfamiliar with Muslim traditions, Ali offers plenty of context clues and explanations, though she always keeps the story solidly on Janna's struggle to maintain friendships, nurse a crush, deal with bullies and predatory people in her life, and discover her own strength in the process. A wide variety of readers will find solidarity with Janna, and not just ones who wear a hijab. —Sarah Hunter for [Booklist](#)

Tyler Johnson Was Here by Jay Coles

Coles' unforgettable debut opens with a haunting incident of police brutality that sets the tone for the rest of the book. As Marvin, his twin brother, Tyler, and their best friends exit a convenience store, they are caught in the commotion surrounding a police chase. After the cop viciously beats

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one of the young men he was pursuing, he draws a gun on Marvin and his group, threatening to shoot as he yells racial hostilities. Guns appear once more when Marvin and Tyler attend a house party and a shooting breaks out, drawing the police. Amidst the chaos, Marvin loses track of his brother, who never comes home. Days afterward, detectives visit Marvin's house and inform him and his mother that Tyler was killed in a gang-related incident; but later, a video surfaces that shows a cop murdering Tyler, proving the detectives' claims false. In the aftermath of Tyler's murder, Marvin must grapple with his grief while also dealing with the social and racial outrage his brother's death sparks. Coles' story offers a glimpse into the injustices, struggles, and pain of being a black male in America. In addition, it crafts an authentic depiction of black life that shatters stereotypes. Its exploration of brotherhood, grief, friendship, and familial ties is as moving and relevant as its exploration of racism. —Enishia Davenport for [Booklist](#)