



## Books for the year to come

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Welcome to 2025! While we face an uncertain year ahead, it is important to keep reading and stay as informed as possible. That's why we've curated a selection of books perfect for staying educated for the year to come, whether it be about the power of books, activism, climate change, education, or more.

## Activism Then and Today



If you're interested in learning more about activism in the coming months, UMass Press has titles ranging from the lives of influential activists to current and past movements. In *People Before Highways*, Karilyn Crockett provides a ground-level analysis of how a group of multiracial residents, planners, and activists from Boston not only stopped the detrimental construction of an interstate

highway but also obtained expansions to the transit system and a city park while deemphasizing highways in the process.

If you're seeking perspective from an incredible activist, Patrick Parr offers a new look at Malcolm X in his biography *Malcolm Before X*, reconstructing his time in prison and how it shaped him to be one of the most prominent activists of the civil rights movement. After placing on the **Best Nonfiction Books of 2024**, Kirkus Reviews says, "Parr has written the definitive story of the youth and early adulthood of one of the most dazzling and controversial civil rights leaders in American history."

In a similar vein, activist and scholar Michael Liu outlines the history of activism within Boston Chinatown and the people who organized against public institutions and authorities to protect their community in his book *Forever Struggle*. As the Boston Globe puts it, "[Liu] gives a rich and thorough history of this cross-section of the city and details a neighborhood that's long been under tremendous pressure."

*Libraries Amid Protest* pivots the focus to the inner workings of temporary protest installations and the rich history of the libraries that operate within them. Through Sherrin Frances' collection of interviews and resources, she makes the argument that protest libraries provide the opportunity and resistance that public libraries fail to provide.

## How Books Can Change the World



Activism doesn't just exist solely in protest and physical communities; it extends to the literary realm as well. For readers who are looking for the ways books have shaped our world, we recommend *Book Anatomy* by Amy Gore. *Book Anatomy* delves into how Indigenous authored texts push back against narratives of colonization. In writing these books, authors can alter the public's perception of Indigenous communities, regain authority over their own stories, and bring about powerful change.

Amy Fish's book *Writing Themselves into the Movement* similarly covers how young writers in the Black Arts Movement were uniquely able to speak truth about American racism and inequality. Their

stories reached national attention in the form of bestselling anthologies while allowing themselves to use their writing as a form of self-discovery. These young writers offered an influential, unique look into America's issues.

The circulation of books also became an important factor in activism and protest, as with the women's liberation movement from the 1960s to the 1980s. In *Closely and Consciously*, Yung-Hsing Wu unpacks how reading became a crucial, uniting part of the feminist movement, bringing together women of all backgrounds in an act of political resistance.

Comparatively, *Organizing Women* by Christina Pawley discusses how middle-class women of the early twentieth century used the growing print industry to tell their stories in what had been a male-dominated industry. Utilizing public and private institutions alongside various organizations, women used print culture to confront everything from gender discrimination to racial segregation.

## The Impact of Food Systems and Agriculture



Those who are looking for more ethical ways to shop and cook during the year should explore our selection of books centered around food systems, agriculture, and consumption. Books like *Food Margins* by Cathy Stanton blends memoir and history to argue for alternatives to the mainstream food system. From the politics of the plantation to the supermarket, Stanton examines the economical, ecological, and social impacts large chains versus sustainable co-ops.

Authors like Maria McGrath discuss how the natural food movement grew to the “food revolution” evident today in vegetarian cookbooks, co-ops, and health advocacy. In *Food for Dissent*, McGrath's case studies show how the changing the ways we shop and eat can be a powerful tool of civic activism.

Taking a step back, Lisa Chase and Vern Grubinger tells the stories of the farmers inside the food system, focusing on the people working together to build fresh, sustainable alternatives in *Food, Farms, and Community*. The authors break down how the current

food system is connected to various levels of energy use, climate change, food safety, and farming culture and exemplifies how we should diverge from it and its practices.

In *Pilaf, Pozole, and Pad Thai*, editor Sherrie A. Innessa takes a more intimate look at food through compiling stories that examine the social and political role of ethnic food and the women at the center. This book challenges how we understand ethnic food and has readers consider the impact it has on the women behind the dishes.

## How Media Shapes Culture



The last few decades have shown us that the media is a powerful force, shaping how we see the world, for better or for worse. In her book, Shayla Thiel-Stern provides an example of this power by showing how young teenage girls have been demonized in political and cultural spheres for over a century. As *Choice* says, “*From the Dance Hall to Facebook* is successful in revealing the voices of young women. . . and demonstrating how media reinforce the sense of crisis and panic while restricting the cultural and political agency of teenage girls. ”

Similarly, *Capturing COVID* looks at how the current media landscape acts as an equally unifying and polarizing force, allowing the spread of news and misinformation alike. Author Katherine A. Foss explores how the media portrayed the pandemic from first reports in Wuhan to personal accounts of vaccine rollout.

In *Contested Ground*, Mike Conway reveals how the rise of televised news was condemned by the government and print journalists, despite providing valuable news to the public. Focusing on the Cold War era of reporting and NBC’s documentary *The Tunnel*, Conway examines how television news influenced the American public and was received by the systems of power in place.

Shifting away from digital media, *Making World Literature* by Anna Muenchrath highlights how financially wealthy institutions and the market economy control the distribution of literature in the publishing industry.

## On the Importance of Empathy



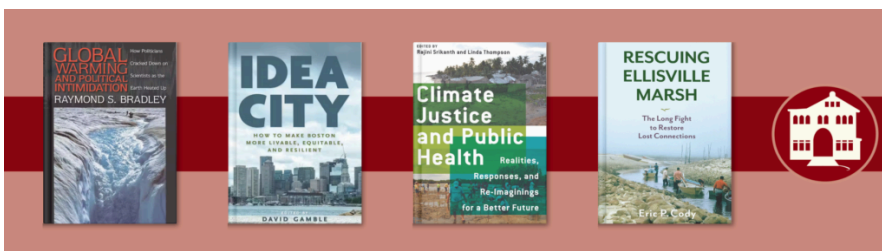
At a time where education is neglected or left behind entirely, it's important to demonstrate and teach empathy by listening to those around us. In his book *Empathetic Teaching*, Jeffrey Berman demonstrates how writing has allowed his students to grow intellectually and emotionally by giving them an outlet to confront their traumatic experiences. In showing these students essays, Burman explores the outcome of empathetic teaching and the empathetic learning it inspires.

Robert Petrone centers his book *Dropping In* around a group of students that may struggle in school but find purpose, community, and learning at the skate park. Petrone challenges educators to remodel school structures that often fail to include “struggling students” by encouraging them to discover what area these students thrive.

*Testing Education* follows another educator, Kathy Greeley, and her point of view as a teacher who watched the effects of the education reform unfold before her eyes. Having taught before schools were centered around standardized testing, Greeley advocates for a return to classrooms that prioritized students' needs and enjoyment to create a better learning environment and community.

*How the News Feels* by Jonathan D. Fitzgerald pivots to review the work of writers in nineteenth and twentieth centuries who worked to elevate the voices of those often left behind by society. Through his research, Fitzgerald exemplifies how these pieces founded the empathy between subject and reader.

## A Closer Look at Climate Change



As the effects of climate change become more and more evident, it's crucial we keep learning about our impact on the environment and the systems in power that allow it to be abused. Climate scientist Raymond Bradley not only recounts how politics and global warming have become entwined, but the failings of the global warming debate in his book *Global Warming and Political Intimidation*. Bradley reviews how intimidation and suppression have risen in prominence while outlining the truth of climate change.

On a smaller scale, *Idea City* edited by David Gamble is a collection of essays from a variety of academic and political experts who consider many inequalities within the city of Boston. One topic addressed in the collection is how climate change may exacerbate these preexisting inequalities within Boston. As they peer into Boston's future, readers learn about the problems and potential solutions the city is facing.

On a larger scale, in *Climate Justice and Public Health* editors Rajini Srikanth and Linda Thompson and their contributors expand on the social impacts of climate change, examining how it affects people around the globe. The two editors present new ways to combat climate change while looking into the inequalities social, political, and economic structures allow to worsen under climate change.

However, it is equally important that we don't just learn about the broader effects of climate change, but the ways others are currently working to fight it. *Rescuing Ellisville Marsh* by Eric P. Cody is centered around the local individuals who worked to address environmental problems within their community. Their activism not only speaks to their bond with the community and the surrounding environment but the power everyone possesses to fight against climate change.

## The Year to Come

We've covered a lot of titles in this post, ranging from activism, the power of books, food systems, the media's influence, empathy, and finally, to climate change. While the next year holds a lot of unknowns—and might even be a source of great fear for some—the importance of reading and the knowledge gained from it cannot be forgotten. Use these books to stay informed; you may find they offer some much-needed hope and even feasible solutions for the near future.

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