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Fall 2019

## So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo

Nicole P. Dyszlewski

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ABA Journal. *The Modern Law Library*. Denver: Legal Talk Network, 2012-current. [http://www.abajournal.com/topic/the\\_modern\\_law\\_library](http://www.abajournal.com/topic/the_modern_law_library) [<https://perma.cc/5CES-BL4Q>]. \$0.

*Reviewed by Kathryn Crandall\**

¶1 Keeping up with new legal titles—typically, that is why librarians care about publication reviews. It is also the primary goal of this section of *Law Library Journal*. It is with this knowledge of a common aim that I recommend readers of *Law Library Journal* listen to the *Modern Law Library* podcast from the American Bar Association and Legal Talk Network. This podcast will help law librarians make more informed collection development decisions and provide awareness of upcoming publications that may not be on a collection committee's radar.

¶2 Though not regularly produced (typically averaging two podcasts a month), the *Modern Law Library* presents polished and professional author interviews that provide a deep dive into recent publications in less than an hour. The focus is generally on more popular titles addressing legal theories and historical events. The primary host, Lee Rawles, begins each interview with an introduction to the author and a brief publication summary. With a conversational interview style reminiscent of *Fresh Air's* Terry Gross, Rawles then prompts a broad look into the author's perspective on his or her story and how the author chose to tell it in the work being discussed. The interview is always set at an easy pace and follows a narrative arc. Rawles tends to ask questions that reveal the author's views on how his or her publication will be received by critics, any particular motivations behind the author's writing or in his or her life, and other publication recommendations.

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acknowledging that the answers are not mine to give or to formulate, and may require my silence, and my cultivating of space for others to speak over me” (p.176). While I admire her self-awareness, I found the barrage of disclaimers before she poses a particular idea exhausting (e.g., “[t]hroughout the chapter and especially in the final section, I draw upon the voices of Black British feminists and indigenous Australian authors to question my own complicity in the production of privilege and to explore the preceding steps that are necessary to genuinely open feminist dialogues on international law. . . .” (p.174)).

¶48 Overall, this book has a limited potential audience; it may appeal to and perhaps inspire feminist legal scholars of international law. It is recommended, with some reservations, for academic law libraries.

Oluo, Ijeoma. *So You Want to Talk About Race*. New York: Seal Press, 2018. 248p. \$27.

*Reviewed by Nicole P. Dyszlewski\**

¶49 In 1997, Beverly Daniel Tatum authored the book, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*. This seminal text was updated by the author and rereleased several times, most recently on its 20th anniversary in 2017. In the updated text, the author asserts, “We need to continually break the silence about racism whenever we can. . . . But talk does not mean idle chatter. It means meaningful, productive dialogue to raise consciousness and lead to effective action and social change. But how do we start?”<sup>4</sup> Ijeoma Oluo’s 2018 book *So You Want to Talk About Race* is how.

¶50 The chapters of Oluo’s book are structured as responses to common questions she gets asked as a black, female, queer writer. The author understands that conversations about race, racism, and racial oppression can be difficult, and she has created a toolkit of sorts for those willing to engage in this challenging work. Although primarily about race, the book also discusses sexuality, gender, and intersectionality, generally. Each chapter asks and answers one discrete question. For example, chapter 10 asks and answers the question: what is cultural appropriation? Without exception, the chapters are thought-provoking, passionate, and informative.

¶51 Oluo does not write for just one type of reader. Her work is written for and useful to all readers. The book can be read as a whole work or as freestanding chapters on important issues of race, racism, and racial oppression. The author’s writing is sometimes strident, sometimes pained, sometimes frustrated, sometimes sad, and sometimes personal, but it is always thoughtful. Each chapter gives concrete examples and, when necessary, presents readable, data-driven information to support the author’s positions, such as in the chapters on hate crimes, police brutality, and the school-to-prison pipeline.

¶52 *So You Want to Talk About Race* is not forgiving of racism, but it is generous toward people who have grown up in a racially biased social and economic system and are genuinely trying to come to terms with what that means for a person of privilege. As such, Oluo gives advice on how to confront systems of racism, how to

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4. BEVERLY DANIEL TATUM, *WHY ARE ALL THE BLACK KIDS SITTING TOGETHER IN THE CAFETERIA? AND OTHER CONVERSATIONS ABOUT RACE* 331 (20th Anniversary ed. 2017).

see microaggressions, how to act if you have been accused of a racist microaggression, and how to act if you have been confronted with the possibility of your own racism. Oluo particularly shines during chapter 10's discussion of tone policing. The chapter contains concrete suggestions for white people who want to avoid tone policing and for people of color being criticized for their tone during a conversation on race and/or racial oppression.

¶53 Additionally, the 2019 paperback edition of the book contains an outstanding discussion guide. This guide includes suggested guidelines or ground rules for group discussions to reduce harm and increase productivity in these conversations. The only thing lacking is an index.

¶54 *So You Want to Talk About Race* is recommended for all law libraries, plus college and public libraries. It is appropriate for faculty, legislators, judges, staff, students, attorneys, and the general public. In fact, it is beyond appropriate; it is needed. It not only introduces difficult topics of race and privilege, but it also acts as an accessible primer on how to get into, get out of, and get proximate with conversations on race and racism. This book is not about idle chatter; it is about difficult but productive dialogue.

Paul, Joel Richard. *Without Precedent: Chief Justice John Marshall and His Times*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2018. 502p. \$17.

*Reviewed by Pat Newcombe\**

¶55 This lively and engrossing biography of the fourth Chief Justice of the United States examines Marshall's path to the Court, providing insight into his personality, his career, and the personal experiences that forged his judicial philosophy. Professor Joel Richard Paul's historical narrative humanizes Marshall, one of the preeminent founders of the United States, and emphasizes Marshall's focus on moderation, compromise, and pragmatism during the country's turbulent early years.

¶56 Paul starts with Marshall's inauspicious beginnings as the oldest of 15 children growing up on the remote Virginia frontier with little formal education. The self-taught Marshall went on to serve in the American Revolution, where he made a favorable impression on George Washington, and later gained prominence as a successful attorney. He was elected to the Virginia legislature and, at the request of President Adams, served on a diplomatic mission in France to forge a peaceful solution to French attacks on American shipping. Not long after, he began his tenure as Adams's secretary of state. A year later, Adams appointed him to the Supreme Court where Marshall served for 34 years—the longest term as chief justice in the history of the Court.

¶57 After this exploration of Marshall's pre-Court years, Paul shifts the focus to Marshall's years on the Court and analysis of Marshall's landmark cases—*Marbury v. Madison* and *McCulloch v. Maryland*, among many others. When Marshall began serving as Chief Justice in 1801, the Court had little authority, very few cases before it, and no home of its own (the Court met in the basement of the U.S. Capitol). Yet Marshall completely reconstructed the Court during his time. To begin with, he

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