

## LWVSC 2022 Book List

### January 21, Moderated by Mary Virdeh

***Owls of the Eastern Ice***, by Jonathan C Slaght, 370 pages, 2020.

This is a story about a graduate student who goes to the Russian province of Primorye. This is a remote corner of the world, not far from where Russia, China, and North Korea meet. He goes there to try to find an owl called Blakison's Fish Owl in an effort to craft a conservation plan to ensure the species survival. This is an enormous owl described as looking like a small bear with decorative feathers.

The book introduces us to characters, living conditions and weather that are very difficult to imagine but make us feel like we are there experiencing them. I found it very gratifying that enormous efforts like this are made to ensure the survival of a species. The author has an excellent writing style that engulfs our imagination.

### February 18, Moderated by Judie Coleman

***Mind\*ck: Cambridge Analytica and the Plot to Break America***. by Christopher Wylie, 270 pages, 2019.

This book will blow your mind. It details how the power of social media manipulation has been used to topple government, to be the deciding influence for Brexit, to help Trump get elected, and to destroy America's democracy. Data manipulation in social media can result in the bloodless takeover of governments. The author, Wylie, is one of the founding fathers of this new style of mind manipulation and walked away when he realized that he had helped to open Pandora's box upon the world. He educates us on how it works and concludes with some concrete and realistic suggestions for how social media can be regulated. It's well written and will hold your interest all the through. Even if we don't pick it for the book club, this should be required reading for everyone.

***How To Lose The Information War: Russia, Fake News and the Future of Conflict***  
by Nina Jankowicz . 288 pages, 2020

Disinformation and Fake News is the new form of war. The US has finally begun to wake up to online threats and the disinformation attacks from Russia. The question: what can they do about it? Ms. Jankowicz takes us through five Western governments' responses to Russian information warfare tactics – all of which failed. She shows us how these campaigns are run, the motivations behind these attacks, and, most importantly, how to beat them. This book shows what is at stake: the future of civil discourse and democracy, and the value of truth itself. Judie's note: fascinating and very readable book. Disinformation and social media manipulation are the two most important and most powerful factors impacting our world right now -- in our politics, in whether or not we believe in getting vaccinated and wearing masks -- it could even cause a civil war in our country, etc., etc. The biggest problem is that we barely understand it. We are going into an election year, and both books are critical to both helping you to recognize these mind and emotional manipulations when you see them and to be savvier about a lot of techniques that will be used on us and others.

**March 18, Moderated by Carrie Anabo**

***There Is Nothing for You Here***, by Fiona Hill. 432 pages 2021

A celebrated foreign policy expert and key impeachment witness reveals how declining opportunity has set America on the grim path of modern Russia and draws on her unique perspective as an historian and policy maker, to show how we can return hope to our forgotten places.

**April 15, Moderated by Karen Rust**

***Forget the Alamo, Rise and Fall of an American Myth***, by Bryan Burroughs, Chris Tomlinson, Jason Stafford. 417 pages. 2021

Sometimes I would love to just forget Texas, but we don't get to. Texas is at the heart of many current issues and this book examines how the stories people tell themselves influence their actions. What really happened at the Alamo? Who are the "heroes" and what brought them to the Alamo? What was the role of slavery? How do we whitewash history and teach that history in public schools? And what do British rockers Ozzy Osborne, Phil Collins and David Bowie have to do with the Alamo?

**May 20, Moderated by Juanita Roland**

***Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don't Know***, by [Adam Grant](#) 319 pages, 2021. The bestselling author of *Give and Take* and *Originals* examines the critical art of rethinking: learning to question your opinions and open other people's minds, which can position you for excellence at work and wisdom in life

Intelligence is usually seen as the ability to think and learn, but in a rapidly changing world, there's another set of cognitive skills that might matter more: the ability to rethink and unlearn. In our daily lives, too many of us favor the comfort of conviction over the discomfort of doubt. We listen to opinions that make us feel good, instead of ideas that make us think hard. We see disagreement as a threat to our egos, rather than an opportunity to learn. We surround ourselves with people who agree with our conclusions, when we should be gravitating toward those who challenge our thought process. The result is that our beliefs get brittle long before our bones. We think too much like preachers defending our sacred beliefs, prosecutors proving the other side wrong, and politicians campaigning for approval--and too little like scientists searching for truth. Intelligence is no cure, and it can even be a curse: being good at thinking can make us worse at rethinking. The brighter we are, the blinder to our own limitations we can become.

**June 17, Moderated by Joyce McLaury**

***The Cabinet: George Washington and the Creation of An American Institution***, by Lindsay M. Chervinsky, 323 pages

This is another recommendation from the Poor Richard's Book Club. It is on my bedside table, unfinished, because I got too busy. It explores Washington's style as an administrator, taken

from his experience as a farm manager and General. It then goes through each cabinet member, describing who they were, their motivations, and contributions. It describes how Washington grappled with establishing his cabinet, trying to work with congress (an hysterical passage – they couldn't decide a thing!), all mindful of the precedent he was setting for future presidents. It well printed- spaced 1-1/2 lines, so the 323 pages go quickly.

### **July 15, Moderated by Jan Randall**

*The Code Breaker, Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race*, by Walter Isaacson, 560 pages, 2021.

Doudna and Charpentier — one American, the other French — are the sixth and seventh women to win the chemistry Nobel in its century-plus history. The landmark research that brought Doudna and Charpentier to the pinnacle of global acclaim in 2020 has the potential to control future pandemics — either by outwitting the next viral plague through better screening and treatment or by engineering human beings with better disease resistance programmed into their cells. The technique of gene editing that they patented, which goes by the unwieldy acronym of CRISPR-Cas9, makes it possible to selectively snip and alter bits of DNA as though they were so many hems to take up or waistbands to let out. Jennifer Doudna, a genuine heroine for our time, may be the code breaker of the book's title, but she is only part of Isaacson's story. The subtitle promises a wider reach: "Jennifer Doudna, Gene Editing, and the Future of the Human Race." Isaacson devotes much anguished discussion to the ethics of gene editing,

### **August 19, Moderated by Carole Sunlight:**

*Empire of Pain: The Secret History of the Sackler Dynasty* by Patrick Radden Keefe, 560 pages, 2021.

The Sackler name adorns the walls of many storied institutions—Harvard, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Oxford, the Louvre. They are one of the richest families in the world, known for their lavish donations to the arts and the sciences. The source of the family fortune was vague, however, until it emerged that the Sacklers were responsible for making and marketing a blockbuster painkiller that was the catalyst for the opioid crisis.

This is the saga of three generations of a single family and the mark they would leave on the world, a tale that moves from the bustling streets of early twentieth-century Brooklyn to the seaside palaces of Greenwich, Connecticut, and Cap d'Antibes to the corridors of power in Washington, D.C. *Empire of Pain* chronicles the multiple investigations of the Sacklers and their company, and the scorched-earth legal tactics that the family has used to evade accountability. The history of the Sackler dynasty is rife with drama—baroque personal lives; bitter disputes over estates; fistfights in boardrooms; glittering art collections; Machiavellian courtroom maneuvers; and the calculated use of money to burnish reputations and crush the less powerful.

### **September 16, Moderated by Mary Fricker**

***The Outlier: The Unfinished Presidency of Jimmy Carter***, by Kai Bird, 628 pages plus bibliography and notes, 2021.

Remember Jimmy Carter? If you do remember him, it may be more for his post president activities than for what he did during his presidency. Although Carter's one-term presidency is often depicted as a failure, his four years resulted in some formidable accomplishments, and, yes, some notable failures. Carter was not only an outsider, having no direct Washington experience, he was also an outlier as a born-again Christian and peanut farmer from the Deep South. His humility, honesty, and predilection for doing what is right, rather than political, made him unique but vulnerable, and he lost his re-election bid to Ronald Reagan. Kai Bird, an award-winning historian, delivers an evaluation of a leader whose legacy has been misunderstood and traces Carter's administration with insights into the Oval Office, through Carter's battles with the political establishment and the press, and his aggressive domestic and foreign agendas. In many ways Jimmy Carter was ahead of his time, which became more and more obvious as I read the book. The book reminds us what Americans can still learn from him today.

**October 16, Moderated by Sukey Robb-Wilder**

***Hidden Valley Road: Inside the Mind of an American Family*** by Robert Kolker, 400 pages, April 2020.

Named a BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR by The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR, TIME, Slate, Smithsonian, The New York Post, and Amazon

Don and Mimi Galvin seemed to be living the American dream. After World War II, Don's work with the Air Force brought them to Colorado, where their twelve children perfectly spanned the baby boom: the oldest born in 1945, the youngest in 1965. In those years, there was an established script for a family like the Galvins--aspiration, hard work, upward mobility, domestic harmony--and they worked hard to play their parts. But behind the scenes was a different story: psychological breakdown, sudden shocking violence, hidden abuse. By the mid-1970s, six of the ten Galvin boys, one after another, were diagnosed as schizophrenic. How could all this happen to one family?

What took place inside the house on Hidden Valley Road was so extraordinary that the Galvins became one of the first families to be studied by the National Institute of Mental Health. Their story offers a shadow history of the science of schizophrenia, from the era of institutionalization, lobotomy, and the schizophrenogenic mother to the search for genetic markers for the disease, always amid profound disagreements about the nature of the illness itself. And unbeknownst to the Galvins, samples of their DNA informed decades of genetic research that continues today, offering paths to treatment, prediction, and even eradication of the disease for future generations.

With clarity and compassion, bestselling and award-winning author Robert Kolker uncovers one family's unforgettable legacy of suffering, love, and hope.

**BOOKS NOT CHOSEN**

As always, there were many great books that didn't make the list because we could only choose ten. Here are some of those.

***The Address Book: What Street Addresses Reveal about Identity, Race, Wealth, and Power*** by Deidre Mask 327 pages, 2020

Deidre Mask combines deep research with skillfully written, memorable anecdotes to illuminate the vast influence of street addresses as well as the negative consequences of not having a fixed address. In this eye-opening book, the author clearly demonstrates that mail deliveries constitute a minuscule part of the significance of addresses—not only today, but throughout human history. Judie's Note: My friends who have read this book rave about it – they say it really opened their eyes and was a fascinating read.

***The Once and Future Witches***, by Alix E. Harrow, 516 pages, 2020.

There used to be witches, in the wild, dark days before the burnings, but in 1893, witching is now nothing but tidy charms and nursery rhymes. If the modern woman wants any measure of power, she must find it at the ballot box. But when the Eastwood sisters join the suffragists of New Salem, they begin to pursue the forgotten words and ways that might turn the women's movement into the witches' movement. Stalked by shadows, hunted by forces that will not suffer a witch to vote — and perhaps not even to live — the sisters must delve into the oldest magics, draw new alliances, and heal the bond between them to survive. “A delightful, satisfying novel, a tale of women's battle for equality, of fairy tales twisted into wonderfully witchy spells, of magics both large and small, and history reimaged.” Louisa Morgan, author of *A Secret History of Witches* (From the dust jacket)

***Fulfillment: Winning and Losing in One-Click America***, by Alec MacGillis, 338 pages, 2021.

The story of regional inequality in America as revealed by the rise of Amazon. Amazon's sprawling network of delivery hubs, data centers, and corporate campuses epitomizes a land where winner and loser cities and regions are drifting steadily apart, the civic fabric is unraveling, and work has become increasingly rudimentary and isolated. Ranging across the country, MacGillis tells stories of those who have thrived and struggled to thrive in this rapidly changing environment. Office towers displace a historic black neighborhood; homeowners try to protect their neighborhood from the environmental impact of a new data center. He shows how Amazon has become a force in Washington, D.C., ushering readers through a revolving door for lobbyists and government contractors and into CEO Jeff Bezos's lavish Kalorama mansion.

***Give Us the Ballot, The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America*** .by Ari Berman, 386 pages

I have already read this, after I had attended a Voter Service meeting and discovered how ignorant I am. Also, I wanted to better understand what was being proposed in the new voting rights legislation – what was the existing status, what would the proposed legislation change? This book explains, in simple but specific terms, the original 1964 Voting Rights Act, how and why it came to be, and the specific decisions in the US Supreme Court that changed the application of the law over time. There are now, if I understand correctly, two pieces of voting rights legislation pending. Are these bills extensions of this original act? How much is added? Do they go too far? Not far enough? This book gives me a context for that internal discussion. Ari Berman, the author, appears in Stacy Abrams recent documentary on voting

rights. New York Times Notable Book of 2015, Washington Post Notable Nonfiction Book of 2015, Boston Globe Best Book of 2015, Kirkus Reviews Best Nonfiction Book of 2015, NPR Best Book of 2015

***Thirteen Clocks: How Race United the Colonies and Made the Declaration of Independence***, by Robert G. Parkinson, 185 pages.

I have not read this. It was recommended by Poor Richard's Book Club, an erudite group of historians, too heady for me. I found this book club through a podcast, Ben Franklin's World, produced by women *historians*. Good stuff. This book is a rewrite of a larger book "The Common Cause", in order to produce a text that can be more easily used by educators in the classroom. The research was gathered through reading of newspapers from the period focusing on the 15 months between Lexington and the Declaration of Independence. The writing is ..... different? The perspective unique, I think. Its premise is that fear and prejudice have been used as a method of political mobilization since the beginning of our American history, but the author wants to show how these abstract fears can be brought to ground as realities – through the use phrases like "merciless savages" and "domestic insurrectionists" (sound familiar?). The book is short, though the type is rather small.

***Pastoral Song, A Farmers Journey***, by James Rebanks, 304 pages (hardcover)

I have not read this. It was given to me as an ebook through my Wall Street Journal subscription, after I had already put it on my wish list. In the midst of crushing environmental despair, fear of destruction and death from fires, summers of unbreathable air, unable to open windows or go outside, this book sounded hopeful and positive, about restoring a farm and its environment. While the farmland is in England, hope and nature are not national things. "It tells of how rural landscapes around the world were brought close to collapse; and the age-old rhythms of work, weather, community, and wild things were lost. And yet this elegy from the northern fells is also a song of hope; of how, guided by the past, one farmer began to salvage a tiny corner of England that was now his, doing his best to restore the life that had vanished and to leave a legacy for the future. This is a book about what it means to have love and pride in a place, and how, against all the odds, it may still be possible to build a new pastoral: not a utopia, but somewhere decent for us all." National Bestseller, Winner of the Wainwright Prize for Nature Writing; Named "Nature Book of the Year" by the Sunday Times. New York Times Editors' Choice. Shortlisted for the Orwell Prize and the Royal Society of Literature's Ondaatje Prize. A Best Book of the Year, Sunday Times, Financial Times, New Statesman, Independent, Telegraph, Observer, and Daily Mail.

***Forward - Notes on the Future of Our Democracy***, by Andrew Yang, 368 pages, 2021.

The machinery of American democracy is failing, argues former presidential and New York mayoral hopeful Andrew Yang, and we need bold new ideas to rewire it for twenty-first-century problems. Inspired by his experience running for office and as an entrepreneur, and by ideas drawn from leading thinkers, Yang offers a series of solutions, including data rights, ranked-choice voting, and fact-based governance empowered by modern technology, writing that "there is no cavalry"—it's up to us. This is a powerful and urgent warning that we must step back from the brink and plot a new way forward for our democracy. Yang recently announced that he is forming a third political party, The Forward Party.

***The Premonition, a Pandemic Story***, by Michael Lewis. 320 pages, 2021.

There's nobody Michael Lewis likes better than a hero who gives a defiant middle finger to the conventional wisdom. And then there's Lewis himself, who has made his own name and fortune by writing against expectations, taking arcane subjects that most of his mega-readership might know next to nothing about and skillfully unfurling their intricacies in all of their dramatic glory. In Lewis's new book, "The Premonition," he follows medical renegades who warned for years that something like the Covid-19 pandemic was bound to happen, while the federal government proved to be inordinately unhelpful. The main question running through "The Premonition" is how, when it came to the initial Covid response, a very rich country that was ranked first globally in pandemic readiness in 2019 managed to incentivize almost all the wrong things. (Taken from *New York Times* review.)

***UFO's***, By Leslie Kean. 354 pages, 2010.

Generals, pilots, and government officials are coming forward and speaking out because of investigative journalist Leslie Kean who has spent 10 years studying this still unexplained phenomenon. She examined photos and interviewed dozens of high level officials and aviation witnesses from around the world. With the support of former White House Chief of Staff John Podesta, she draws on her research to separate fact from fiction and lift the veil on decades of United States government misinformation.

***Invisible Child: Poverty, Survival and Hope in an American City***, by Andrea Elliot. 623 pages, 2010

From a prize winning journalist the story of a girl whose indomitable spirit is tested by homelessness, poverty and racism in an American city. Based on nearly a decade of reporting, *Invisible Child* illuminates some of the most critical issues in contemporary America through the life of one remarkable child. (The *New York Times* magazine a few weeks ago featured an article about this child. "Dasani")

***Devil's Playbook, Big Tobacco, Juul, and the Addiction of a New Generation***, by Lauren Etter, 493 pages, 2021

Juul was started by 2 Stanford students to allegedly help people wean themselves of smoking addiction and create a device that was slick and trendy. Add millions of dollars of venture capital, advertising, buy in by Big Tobacco and you have millions addicted to nicotine vaping, many of them teens. Shades of Elizabeth Holmes and Theranos as another Silicon Valley firm is changed by floods of money, having to answer to investors and a new product that is not covered by existing regulations.

***Pharma: Greed, Lies, and the Poisoning of America***, Gerald Posner, 557 pages, 2020

This carefully researched book is a definitive history and a wealth of knowledge about the trillion-dollar-a-year pharmaceutical industry that helped to turn the U.S. into a medicated society. Posner details how life improved with pharmaceutical discoveries ranging from antibiotic wonder drugs to vaccines while the drug companies flourished with little regulation and massive profits as drug prices soared and opioid addictions took over user's lives. Much of the book centers around the Sackler family, whose aggressive marketing techniques led to much of the overprescribing and overpricing of drugs. The family became wealthy with the success of Oxycontin, the blockbuster narcotic that became the center of the opioid crisis. At the writing of



this book no decision was made on liability of the Sackler family but on September 1, 2021, after a lengthy trial and years of negotiation to settle thousands of individual lawsuits the Sacklers agreed to pay around 4.4 billion in damages (they earned over 10 billion from opioid sales) and to forfeit ownership in Purdue Pharma. The Sacklers admitted no wrongdoing and are exempt from any liability going forward.

***Say Nothing: A True Story of Murder and Memory in Northern Ireland*** by Patrick Radden Keefe, 348 pages, 2019.

Between the late 1960s and 1998 violent conflicts erupted in Northern Ireland between mostly Catholic Republicans (IRA), who sought unification of Ireland, and a mix of Protestants, police and British army forces, who were against unification. Keefe provides a balanced and detailed narrative that describes simply and clearly what happened in Ireland during the Troubles. This very readable book begins as a detective story about an unsolved murder and continues with a historical perspective about the main players in the conflict.

***Frederick Douglass: Prophet of Freedom***, by [David W. Blight](#) , 828 pages, 2018.

There are many biographies of Frederick Douglass, but there has not been a major one written in nearly twenty-five years. David W. Blight's new book is a valuable contribution to the understanding of Douglass as both a man and as a historical figure, utilizing papers that had not previously been available. Although direct in his message, Douglass, like many great men, was a person of contradictions. Blight explores those contradictions, painting Douglass as a complete human being, even as he lays out the clear argument for his greatness. This thorough and highly readable biography traces Douglass's entire life, starting on a plantation in Maryland, covering his education and eventual escape, his two marriages, his complicated relationship with his family, and his work as an abolitionist and orator. In the end, the reader will walk away with a deeper grasp of a still deeply misunderstood chapter of American history, as well as understanding, respect, and admiration for one of the country's greatest figures.

***Resistance: How Women Saved Democracy from Donald Trump***, by [Jennifer Rubin](#), 409 pages, 2021.

In the tradition of *Shattered* and *Game Change*, *Washington Post* columnist Jennifer Rubin provides an insider's look at how women across the political spectrum carried a revolution to the ballot box and defeated Donald Trump, based on interviews with key figures such as Kamala Harris, Amy Klobuchar, Stacey Abrams, Nancy Pelosi, and many more.

This book is much more overtly political than the League usually is involved with, but as was discussed at the 2016 convention. The League does oppose policies of candidates that go against our values. And it chronicles experiences and reactions that many of us had after the 2016 election, and the way women and women's groups especially responded to the challenges.