

## Mini-Mentor Stations



Tone & **Voice**

## From "The Case for Reparations"

By Ta-Nehisi Coates

*The Atlantic*

June 2014

The state's regime partnered robbery of the franchise with robbery of the purse. Many of Mississippi's black farmers lived in debt peonage, under the sway of cotton kings who were at once their landlords, their employers, and their primary merchants. Tools and necessities were advanced against the return on the crop, which was determined by the employer. When farmers were deemed to be in debt—and they often were—the negative balance was then carried over to the next season. A man or woman who protested this arrangement did so at the risk of grave injury or death. Refusing to work meant arrest under vagrancy laws and forced labor under the state's penal system.

Well into the 20th century, black people spoke of their flight from Mississippi in much the same manner as their runagate ancestors had. In her 2010 book, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, Isabel Wilkerson tells the story of Eddie Earvin, a spinach picker who fled Mississippi in 1963, after being made to work at gunpoint. "You didn't talk about it or tell nobody," Earvin said. "You had to sneak away."

When Clyde Ross was still a child, Mississippi authorities claimed his father owed \$3,000 in back taxes. The elder Ross could not read. He did not have a lawyer. He did not know anyone at the local courthouse. He could not expect the police to be impartial. Effectively, the Ross family had no way to contest the claim and no protection under the law. The authorities seized the land. They seized the buggy. They took the cows, hogs, and mules. And so for the upkeep of separate but equal, the entire Ross family was reduced to sharecropping.

**From "The bar for TV diversity is way too low"**

**By Roxane Gay**

***Salon***

**August 22, 2013**

The Internet tells me I'm supposed to love "Orange Is the New Black." The show is reasonably well written, there's an "interesting" premise, and the cast is diverse. You can't blink without someone celebrating the show's diversity. "Orange Is the New Black" is very, very diverse. Did you hear?

I should love "Orange Is the New Black" for the same reason I should (but do not) love "Red Tails" or "The Butler" or "42." Time and again, people of color are supposed to be grateful for scraps from the table. There's this strange implication that we should enjoy certain movies or television shows simply because they exist.

The critical response to "OITNB" has been overwhelmingly positive. Emily Nussbaum, the New Yorker's television critic, [wrote](#), "Smart, salty, and outrageous, the series falls squarely in the tradition of graphic adult cable drama; were you pitching it poolside in Beverly Hills, you might call it the love child of 'Oz' and 'The L Word.'" The description is perfect—there's grit and heartache balanced by charm and the soapy, outrageous goodness of melodrama. "Orange Is the New Black" also has impressive staying power in the cultural conversation, particularly given that the show streams exclusively on Netflix, a subscriber service. It premiered on July 11, ages ago in Internet News Cycle days and we're still talking about the show, every single day.

By the way, did you know this show is remarkably diverse?

**From "Time for a kindness break"**

**By Alexandra Zayas**

***Tampa Bay Times***

**November 4, 2016**

Join hands with me, will you, for a pre-Thanksgiving prayer:

Please, just let Tuesday come and go. Let this presidential election be over.

Let its results be conclusive and undisputed.

Let them not prompt half the country to flee to Canada.

Let them not trigger bloodshed, assassination or Revolutionary War — actual threats uttered at actual rallies this past month.

Because I don't think we can take any more of this.

Last summer, the Pew Research Center published findings collected in the spring, that voters' views of the opposing party have reached unprecedented lows in modern political history.

That was before a Republican headquarters in North Carolina was firebombed. Before the nightly newscast included a warning to clear the room of children, just to discuss a presidential debate.

"For the first time in surveys dating to 1992," the report concluded, "majorities in both parties express not just unfavorable but *very* unfavorable views of the other party. And today, sizable shares of both Democrats and Republicans say the other party stirs feelings of not just frustration, but fear and anger."

On both sides, the number of people is growing who believe the opposite party is a "threat to the nation's well-being."

You'll read all about the sad state of American politics throughout this website.

But let this collection of stories be your bright spot.

**From “Why I won't allow myself to grow numb about what Trump is doing to our country”**

**By Shaun King**

***New York Daily News***

**July 10, 2017**

The White House banned cameras from Monday's press briefing. That's not normal. They have absolutely no rational reason whatsoever for removing cameras from these briefings.

This weekend Donald Trump had his daughter, Ivanka, sit in for him at the G20 roundtable among 19 other presidents and prime ministers. That's not normal.

Donald Trump on Saturday celebrated a cyber-security alliance he had formed with Russia. Members of his own administration went on the Sunday morning shows to promote the alliance. About 12 hours later, Trump tweeted that he knew the alliance couldn't work. Members of his own party said the whole situation was one of the dumbest things they've ever heard. That's not normal.

For months, Donald Trump, Jr. has said he never met with Russians while working for [his father's campaign](#). When the New York Times prepared to run a piece on him, he then released a statement saying his meeting with a Russian attorney largely [involved adoptions](#). Trump Jr. later admitted that he was initially told that the lawyer might have negative information about Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton, and that Paul Manafort and Jared Kushner attended with him. Kushner, of course, admitted this meeting on his security clearance forms — as he did multiple other meetings. That's not normal.

**From "Think innocent people are never wrongly convicted? Think again - then ask Marcellus Williams"**

**By Leonard Pitts, Jr.**

**Miami Herald**

**August 25, 2017**

Last week, on the day he was scheduled to die, Marcellus Williams didn't.

Just hours before he was to be strapped down and pumped full of poison, Williams, the convicted killer of Felicia "Lisha" Gayle, a former reporter for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, received a reprieve. Missouri Gov. Eric Greitens stayed the execution and announced formation of a panel to review the case.

To be sure, no one will ever mistake Williams for a choir boy. At the time he was charged with Gayle's 1998 murder, he was a 29-year-old with a rap sheet including convictions for burglary. He was also a suspect in an armed robbery at a fast food restaurant, a crime of which he was later convicted.

Whatever his other sins, though, there's reason to believe Williams may not, in fact, have been the person who stabbed Gayle 43 times during a burglary. Yes, two witnesses — a jailhouse snitch and a woman Williams had dated — both came forward after a \$10,000 reward was posted and claimed he had confessed to them. And granted, a piece of the victim's property was found in Williams' car and the girlfriend led police to a laptop computer belonging to Gayle's husband. She said Williams had bartered it for drugs.

On the other hand, no forensic evidence places Williams at the murder scene. Kent Gipson, an attorney for Williams, has told reporters that hair fibers and bloody footprints found in Gayle's home did not match his client and bloody fingerprints found there were lost by police and never tested.

As if all that were not enough, there's this: in 2015, the Missouri Supreme Court stayed an earlier execution date after Williams' attorney pleaded for time to conduct DNA testing. The results of that testing showed that genetic material found on the murder weapon did not come from Williams. And yet this month, faced with that actual evidence of actual innocence, the same court said the execution could now proceed.

Truly, the mind boggles.