



## WILTON LIBRARY

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## NEWS

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### Wilton Library hosts Wilton Reads author virtually April 15

Wilton, CT – The cars were snaked through Wilton Library’s parking lot up to its Drive-Thru Window like a conga line, with drivers eager to receive their free copies of *Memorial Drive: A Daughter’s Memoir*, the *Wilton Reads 2021* selection. With the library’s choice of *Memorial Drive* by Natasha Trethewey, the community will explore racism and race relations through programming that will help continue the conversation begun with the events and headlines of last year. The book giveaway was made possible by Fairfield County Bank.

Elaine Tai-Lauria, executive director of Wilton Library remarked, “We are so pleased to see the interest that this book is generating. Through awareness, knowledge, and thoughtful dialogue, we hope to engage the community in an informative and meaningful exploration of race relations. Our ultimate goal is to foster mutual respect, empathy, and a deeper understanding and appreciation of our common humanity. For beneath the veneer of physical differences, we are all human beings!”

In her memoir, Trethewey chronicles her life growing up as a “child of miscegenation” in Mississippi, and how her life was impacted by her mother’s death during a horrific crime in 1985. *Memorial Drive* has garnered awards and accolades including becoming a *New York Times* Bestseller, a *New York Times* Notable Book, a *Washington Post* Top 10 Best Book of 2020, an *NPR* Best Book of 2020, a *Slate* Best Book of 2020, a *USA Today* Best Book of 2020, and an Amazon Best Book of 2020. Even President Obama has chosen it as one of his favorite books of 2020.

From an examination of the poetry of Natasha Trethewey to panelist discussions on the topics, from children’s and teen book giveaways to adult book discussions, there is something for everyone to enrich their personal experiences.

A virtual author talk by Pulitzer Prize winner Trethewey will take place on Thursday, April 15, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. The author will be in conversation with Wiltonian Megan Smith-Harris. Smith-Harris, a writer and filmmaker, is the founder and executive director of the Fairfield Film Festival.

The author will be recognized with a Grodin Family Fine Writers Award during her virtual talk. Elissa and Charles Grodin have been sponsoring the Grodin Family Fine Writers Awards for the library's Wilton Reads programs. The virtual talk is sponsored by The Village Market. Books may be purchased through [Elm Street Books](#) with a portion of the proceeds benefiting Wilton Library.

Two panel discussions will take place to further the community dialogue. "An Interfaith Panel— Finding Success: Women Clergy Share Their Experience" is set for Tuesday, April 13, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. This is a Wilton Reads interfaith clergy discussion moderated by Our Lady of Fatima Pastor Father Reggie Norman. Wilton is a unique town in that the majority of the religious leaders are women. Many have overcome discrimination and hardships to fulfill their vocations. They will discuss their experiences and how their ministries impact the daily lives of their congregations during this difficult time. Clergy panelists are Rev. Dr. Anne Coffeman, Sr. Pastor, Wilton Congregational Church; Cantor Harriet Dunkerley, Educator, Lead Clergy, Temple B'nai Chaim; Golnar Rassi, Muslim Community Representative; Rev. Marissa S. Rohrbach, Rector, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church; Caroline Smith, Pastor, Wilton Baptist Church; and Rev. Shannon White, Pastor, Wilton Presbyterian Church.

The second panel discussion is "Anatomy of Race Relations: The Way Forward" on Tuesday, April 20, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Four Wilton community members will discuss race relations in America and explore ways in which to make further progress on this critical issue. The panel includes Adrienne Reedy, currently a member of Wilton's Police Commission; Kelly Weldon, Director of Foundations in Faith for the Bridgeport Diocese; Bill Harris, adjunct professor at Sacred Heart University and Director of the SHU Community Theatre; and Chris Brubeck, musician and composer of jazz and classical music. Megan Smith-Harris will moderate the discussion.

Popular guest lecturer Dr. Gil Harel brings his infectious love of music to "Gospel, Soul, and Motown: the Transmutation of Rock" on Wednesday, April 14, from 5 to 6:30 p.m. The program centers on the musical environment of Trethewey's life growing up in the 1970s, which is referenced in the book. Harel leads the audience on a tour of several of the genres of popular

music of that era. He will discuss important artists including Curtis Mayfield, Al Green, Marvin Gaye, as well as iconic groups such as the Temptations, the Four Tops, and the Jackson Five, all whom provided a bold, improvisational singing approach that is often cited as reflecting consciousness and pride in being Black. Gil Harel is a musicologist and music theorist whose interests include styles ranging from the western classical repertoire to jazz.

Not to be missed is “Spring Poetry with Judson Scruton: Natasha Trethewey – Experiencing Prejudice in the American South.” The series is on four consecutive Thursdays in April beginning April 1, from 10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. Susan Boyar brings her popular book group facilitations to two book discussions of *Memorial Drive* on Tuesday, April 6, from 7 to 8:30 p.m. and on Wednesday, April 7, from 12 to 1:30 p.m.

Wilton Library’s Children’s Library presents “Celebrating Diversity” virtual story times in March and April in which free books will be given away each week. Attendees will be notified when their books are ready to be picked up at the Drive-Thru Window. A Teen Book Giveaway of *The Black Friend: On Being A Better White Person* by Frederick Joseph, takes place March 15 through 19, from 3 to 6 p.m. also at the Drive-Thru while supplies last.

A full list of the programs is available on the library’s website at [www.wiltonlibrary.org](http://www.wiltonlibrary.org) by clicking on the Wilton Reads icon. Since the programs are all virtual, including the author talk, registration will be required by all attendees in order to receive the Zoom links for access.

The website also highlights reading suggestions for adults, age-appropriate reading for students, and educational resources. The Wilton Historical Society has graciously provided a [link](#) to its History Is Here episode that features the remarkable singing career of Betty Jones. Together with her husband Doug Jones, the couple shared a lifetime of active civil rights engagement.

Wilton Library’s partners in this community-wide endeavor are Fairfield County Bank, the Wilton Public School District, The Village Market, Wilton Historical Society, and Elm Street Books, with *GOOD Morning Wilton* as the media sponsor.

For more information and to register for any of the programs, visit [www.wiltonlibrary.org](http://www.wiltonlibrary.org) or email [reference@wiltonlibrary.org](mailto:reference@wiltonlibrary.org).

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**Caption:** Stacy Meltzer eagerly waited in line to receive her free copy of *Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir*, Wilton Library's *Wilton Reads 2021* selection. The topic of racism and race relations will be explored through the lens of *Memorial Drive* and beyond. Adult library programs begin in April with the author talk a virtual experience on April 15. Visit [www.wiltonlibrary.org](http://www.wiltonlibrary.org) and click on Wilton Reads to register for the virtual programs. Wilton Reads 2021 is made possible through partnerships with Fairfield County Bank, The Village Market, Wilton Historical Society, Wilton Public School District, Elm Street Books, and media sponsor *GOOD Morning Wilton*. Wilton Library, 137 Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton, CT; [www.wiltonlibrary.org](http://www.wiltonlibrary.org); 203-762-3950. Photo credit: Janet Crystal