



## WILTON LIBRARY

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# NEWS

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Wilton Library and Wilton School District explore racism for Wilton Reads 2021

Wilton, CT – With headlines and graphic images underscoring recent racial unrest and injustices, Wilton Library has chosen to explore the topic of racism and race relations for *Wilton Reads 2021*, its community-wide reading program. The library will again be collaborating with the Wilton School District to facilitate discussions and conversations throughout the community on all levels.

At the recent Board of Education meeting, Elaine Tai-Lauria, Executive Director of Wilton Library, and Fran Kompar, Director of Digital Learning, Wilton Public Schools), announced the topic for *Wilton Reads 2021*. The library's selection is *Memorial Drive: A Daughter's Memoir*, by Natasha Trethewey.

Tai-Lauria credited Lauren McLaughlin, Assistant Director of Patron Services, for the selection and securing the author talk. Tai-Lauria said of the choice, "Much in the way we brought the community together to discuss the Holocaust, now it is time to tackle another difficult conversation – that of racism. The topic and book choices will allow us to explore the subject matter via educational experiences and constructive dialogues among community members thereby fostering a deeper understanding of the issues."

Kompar remarked, "As with previous Wilton Reads collaborations, the school district will choose age-appropriate reading selections and activities for the various schools."

Dr. Kevin Smith, Superintendent of Wilton Public Schools noted, "With Wilton residents showing their interest in this issue by participating in demonstrations and discussions this past spring, it is only natural that the schools should take part in the dialogue with the greater community. We applaud Wilton Library for advancing the conversations around this important and timely topic."

The author Natasha Trethewey is a United States Poet Laureate (2012-2014) and a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet. In her memoir, the author 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.

According to the HarperCollins Publishers website:

“At age nineteen, Natasha Trethewey had her world turned upside down when her former stepfather shot and killed her mother. Grieving and still new to adulthood, she confronted the twin pulls of life and death in the aftermath of unimaginable trauma and now explores the way this experience lastingly shaped the artist she became. With penetrating insight and a searing voice that moves from the wrenching to the elegiac, Pulitzer Prize–winning poet Natasha Trethewey explores this profound experience of pain, loss, and grief as an entry point into understanding the tragic course of her mother’s life and the way her own life has been shaped by a legacy of fierce love and resilience... *Memorial Drive* is a compelling and searching look at a shared human experience of sudden loss and absence but also a piercing glimpse at the enduring ripple effects of white racism and domestic abuse.”

*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, an Amazon Best Book of 2020. Even President Obama has chosen it as one of his favorite books of 2020.

The Wilton Reads program will culminate with an author visit by Natasha Trethewey on Thursday, April 15 at 6 p.m. using a virtual platform. 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.

Free copies of *Memorial Drive* will be given away in March by the library thanks to Fairfield County Bank. The giveaway date will be announced shortly. Books and audiobooks can be borrowed through the library’s catalog at [www.wiltonlibrary.org](http://www.wiltonlibrary.org) and can be picked up at the library’s Drive-Thru window when available; eBooks and eAudiobooks can be downloaded to mobile devices through the Libby/Overdrive app. People may email [techref@wiltonlibrary.org](mailto:techref@wiltonlibrary.org) for help with this Digital Library service.

The library plans a host of virtual programs that will include book discussions, films, music appreciation, historical context programming, and provide educational resources for personal exploration.

Details of the library's *Wilton Reads 2021* programming will be on the library's website at [www.wiltonlibrary.org](http://www.wiltonlibrary.org) in February. The school district's programming details may be found by visiting <http://wiltonps.org> in February.

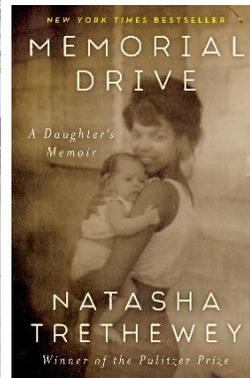
This is the fifteenth season of Wilton Reads. The program originated with a reading of Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. A complete list of all the Wilton Reads selections can be found at <https://www.wiltonlibrary.org/past-wilton-reads-selections>.

The Village Market is the sponsor of the virtual author talk. The media sponsor of Wilton Reads is *GOOD Morning Wilton*.

For more information visit [www.wiltonlibrary.org](http://www.wiltonlibrary.org), call the library's reference librarians at 203-762-6350 or email [reference@wiltonlibrary.org](mailto:reference@wiltonlibrary.org).

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**Caption:** Wilton Library and Wilton Public Schools have announced that *Memorial Drive* by Natasha Trethewey has been selected for the library's community-wide reading event, *Wilton Reads 2021*. Programs will be on the library's website at [www.wiltonlibrary.org](http://www.wiltonlibrary.org) in February and the school district website at <http://wiltonps.org>. Age-appropriate book selections will be made for the district schools. Free copies of the book will be given away courtesy of Fairfield County Bank in March. The author will visit virtually in April thanks to the sponsorship of The Village Market. Pictured (front to back): Elaine Tai-Lauria, Executive Director of Wilton Library, Fran Kompar, Director of Digital Learning for Wilton Public Schools, and Dr. Kevin Smith, Superintendent of Wilton Public Schools. Wilton Library, 137 Old Ridgefield Road, Wilton, CT; [www.wiltonlibrary.org](http://www.wiltonlibrary.org); Main number: 203-762-3950. (Photo credit author: Nancy Crampton; photo credit Wilton Library: Janet Crystal)