

Patrik Henry Bass

MATTERS OF THE HEART & SOUL

THIS MONTH'S READING SELECTIONS ARE ALL ABOUT CHOICES, INCLUDING LOVE, IDENTITY AND HAPPINESS

1 TROUBLE IN MIND
Kalisha Buckhanon has no problem taking readers into the lives of those we often pass by. Take her searing new effort, **Solemn** (St. Martin's Press, \$25.99). Solemn Redvine, her main character, has seen more in her youth than most of us would in three lifetimes. Growing up in a Mississippi trailer park, Solemn remains haunted by an unimaginable murder. Withdrawing into a fantasy world where she dreams of stardom, Solemn wakes from her Tech-

nicolor alternate universe when her father's ill-fated actions turn her world upside down and threaten to undo her.



Kalisha Buckhanon

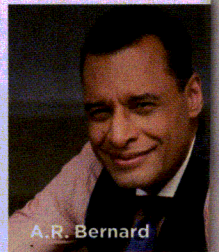
2 PASSING STRANGE
In **The Gilded Years** (Washington Square Press, \$16), former Politico reporter Karin Tanabe smoothly blends history, race and class into a whip-smart novel. Based on a true story, it takes place in the late nineteenth century, at the height of America's fabled gilded age. Anita Hemmings, Tanabe's vividly complex heroine, loves her family and community in the Roxbury section of Boston. Fiercely determined, she sets her sights on attending Vassar College in upstate New York. The challenge? The school doesn't accept Black women. So Anita passes for White, which is a decision that doesn't come easily, and opens up a world of possibility and pain.

3 WE, TOO, SING AMERICA
At 85 artist Faith Ringgold shows no sign of slowing down. The author of 1991's trailblazing children's book *Tar Beach* (Dragonfly) delivers **We Came to America** (Knopf Books for Young Readers, \$17.99; ages 5-8). It's a magnificent way to teach children about race, difference and those aspects that define and unite us. As she did with her acclaimed innovative story-book quilts (vibrant paintings in which handmade quilts are used as a canvas), Ringgold celebrates America's diversity through a pastiche of nearly every color in the melting pot. The artist complements her emotionally moving images with spot-on text that uplifts and inspires while saluting what makes this nation great.



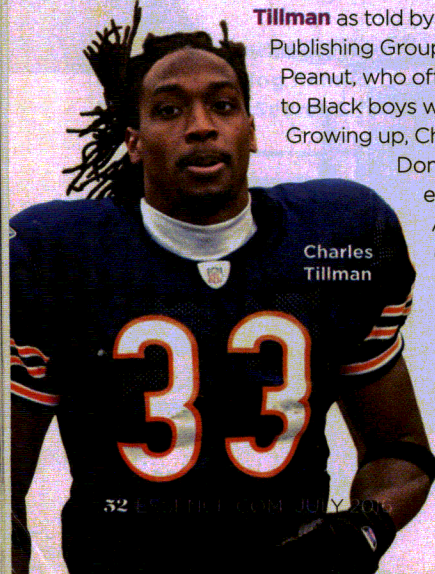
Faith Ringgold

4 WHEN A WOMAN LOVES A MAN
I want to caution everyone when you read this book title: **Four Things Women Want From a Man** (Howard Books, \$19.99). I've heard you—I really have! You want relationship advice from someone in your heels or flats. But longtime pastor A.R. Bernard, who's the founder of Christian Cultural Center in Brooklyn, leans on almost four decades of counseling. He has seen and heard it all when it concerns trying to navigate love and marriage. So what is it that Bernard knows for sure? He has found four traits that could lead to a lasting union: Maturity, decisiveness, consistency and strength are the attributes to look for in a mate.



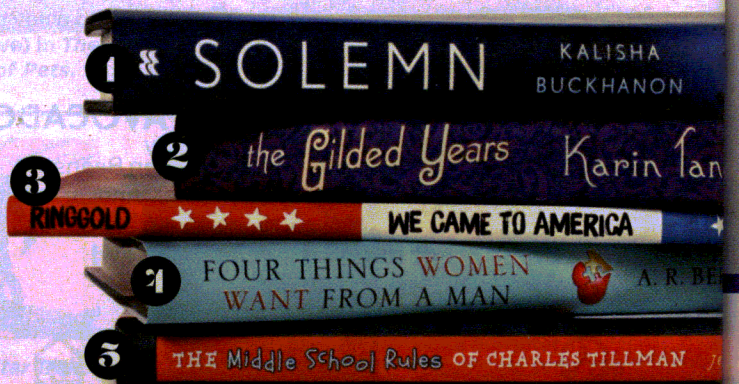
A.R. Bernard

5 GREAT FOR BOYS
Charles "Peanut" Tillman, take a bow. Even if you aren't a Chicago Bears fan, you will applaud the legendary cornerback's latest project. **The Middle School Rules of Charles "Peanut" Tillman** as told by Sean Jensen (Broadstreet Publishing Group, \$14.99; ages 9-14) centers on Peanut, who offers much-needed life lessons to Black boys without a hint of earnestness. Growing up, Charles and his older brother



Charles Tillman

Donald ("Duck") attended 11 different schools, traveling with their Army vet father. Their itinerant experience is put to effective use in this narrative, as Peanut has to learn to adapt to a new environment and to make friends. While our hero feels like an outsider, he will quickly earn your respect.



MAJOR: AL MESSERSCHMIDT/GETTY IMAGES; DE JOHN BARNES; GRACE MATTHEWS; BOOK STILL: TERRA TAYLOR



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