



Health Equity & Social Justice Discussion Club – May 13, 2021 @ 7:30 p.m.
My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies by Resmaa Menakem

Discussion Questions

Trauma compounds over time, between individuals, and across generations.

1. The lizard brain is responsible for coping mechanisms to help the body feel safe. However, sometimes it does not work out as planned and can even pass on trauma to other people. How might our reptilian brains have evolved, for survival, differently for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) than for white people?
 2. Racism is a very real concept, but it's also fictional. People were only categorized as white or non-white in the late 1600's as a way to marginalize the benefits to whites and invent a culture of white body supremacy. How has this ancient and destructive myth institutionalized racism in our culture, in our bodies and in our policing today?
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Overcoming racism begins with healing our bodily trauma

Racism is so deeply ingrained in our society that it affects the way white people see Black bodies. When a police officer sees a Black body, their lizard brain reacts with fear and shoot before they can think. White officers have to change this reaction because it's deadly wrong.

1. How do you care for yourself, reach out for help and support to heal from the trauma of living surrounded by, harmed by, and affected by white-body supremacy culture?
2. There are Five Anchors listed that describe the process for moving through 'clean pain' the author believes is necessary for all of us to heal from white body supremacy created trauma. How might those Anchors be viewed as congruent with meditation practice?
3. The author suggests that body-based exercises such as "The Body Scan" can help Black people metabolize trauma and work through the pain of healing. What type of exercises would you deploy for yourselves to tackle the intersectional trauma of being a primary care physician with trauma experiences?

To Unravel White Body Supremacy, White People and the Police Should Start with Their Own Bodies

It's undeniable that black bodies are more affected by racism than white bodies. However, it doesn't mean that white people and the people who police our streets aren't affected by trauma too.

1. What do you think about the idea that police officers are traumatized through chronic stress and the day-to-day dealing with traumatized people? What kind of individual or institutional help do you think could help address this? What is the role, of the community in the creation of a policing system that is healthier than the one we have now?
2. White people should start with their own trauma (historical or secondary) to unravel body supremacy which includes the very difficult task of slowing down, paying attention to what they feel in their bodies, and developing the skill of settling themselves so they can overcome the discomfort of healing their trauma. Give examples of how white people can challenge their lizard-brain, racist beliefs (example: ask a Black salesperson for help instead of the white one, call out white privilege when it's encountered.)

Creating a Culture of Anti-Racism Begins One Step at a Time

We can create anti-racist cultures by coming together in our own communities and expanding outward from there.

1. Inclusion in our lives of elders, rituals, symbols, stories, rules, roles, shared history, codes of behavior, mentoring all make up culture and contributes to our sense of belonging. Since white Americans, BIPOC Americans, and police have discernible sub-cultures, how might we, in those spaces, contribute to new stories, rituals, symbols, role models as part of dismantling white body supremacy and begin healing our trauma?
2. The author believes that we will not end white-body supremacy by trying to tear it to pieces but must, instead, offer people better ways to belong and better things to belong to. Discuss your ideas for achieving this in your own communities where you, as a physician have influence.
3. Having had the experience of this book and the discussion with your peers, what are your commitments to yourself, to our community, to your family, to your friends, to the future?