



Questions and Topics for Discussion

My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies by Resmaa Menakem

For a printable copy of these questions, visit: beclibrary.org/book-discussion-questions

1. What is the book title a reference to?
2. What is the lizard brain? Discuss its role in perpetuating white-body supremacy.
3. Address the myth of race. When and why was the concept of race invented?
4. How has white supremacy affected our society and American culture?
5. How does trauma affect the human body? How is trauma passed down through generations?
6. Black and white Americans suffer from intergenerational trauma. Discuss the roots of this trauma, taking into account US and European history. Why does Menakem not address African history in his discussion of Black historical trauma?
7. Menakem discusses the vagus or soul nerve. Why is this discussion important? What are your feelings on this?
8. The movement in family therapy to understand race as an organizing principle of society marches along, with therapists of color teaching, pushing, sharing, yelling, offering grace, repeating, with many white therapists diligently reading their books and claiming they've "got it" while microaggressions and racial assaults continue. The field of family therapy parallels society— laws have been passed, DE&I trainings have become standard and yet "The widespread destruction of Black Bodies continues... Why is there such a chasm between our well-intentioned attempts to heal and the ever-growing number of dark-skinned bodies who are killed or injured, sometimes by police officers?"
9. My Grandmother's Hands is a book of individual and collective body practices, with the goal of healing racialized trauma and moving away from white-body supremacy. Changing the white-body supremacy structure operating in our society takes legal work, policy change and body work. What survival strategies have Black bodies developed to survive? What strategies did white bodies employ to watch, witness and perpetrate hundreds of years of brutality to Black bodies?

10. What are some practical strategies that individuals and groups can use to address their trauma?
11. Describe “clean pain” and what are the five anchors?
12. What pathways does the book open up for healing or surmounting the racial divide in America?
13. How is this book different from other, related books?

Do you have a good question to add to this list? Contact: reference@blueearthcountymn.gov