

So You Want to Talk about Race - Ijeoma Oluo

Listened to in June, 2020 AND read the paperback in July/August, 2020

All notes are probably quoted right from the book (unless it's in parentheses). They may be out of order, as my first notes (without page numbers) are from when I listened to the book the first time on LibroFM. I then added in more notes when I read the print version.

Introduction:

When I became older it was the clothes not cut for my shape and the snide comments about my hair and lips and the teen idols that would never ever find a girl like me beautiful. Then it was the clerks who would follow me around stores and the jobs that were hiring until I walked in the door and then they were not. And it was the bosses who told me that I was too "loud," the complaints that my hair was too "ethnic" for the office, and why, even though I was a valued employee, I was making so much less money than the other white employees doing the same job. It is the cops I can't make eye contact with, the Ubers that abandon their pickup, driving on instead of stopping when they see me... pg 1-2

I just had to keep going on like normal... if I stopped to feel... the pain of the racism I encountered, I would start screaming and I would never ever stop. Pg 3

Race is not something people can choose to ignore anymore. Pg 5

You are here because you know that something is very wrong and you want a change. Pg 6

...a centuries-old system of oppression and brutality is not an easy fix... I hope that the information provided here...can help provide you with a starting point... p7

Chapter 1 - Is it really about race?

Pgs 9-10 she explains the myth that it's NOT about class.

You cannot put chains around the necks of other human beings or slaughter them wholesale, while maintaining social rules that prohibit such treatment, without first designating those people as somewhat less than human. ... the ultimate goal of the economic and political supremacy of white elites. Pg 11

...race is a social construct ... *BUT* ... Money is also a social construct ... It has woven its way into every part of our lives. It has shaped our past and our futures. It has become alive. Pg. 11-12

Racism in America exists to exclude people of color from opportunity and progress so that there is more profit for others deemed superior. ... you will get more because they exist to get less. P 12

Is this my parents?? → Even those who have lost everything to the scheme are still hanging in there, waiting for their turn to cash out. P. 12

Obama being elected... was a clear, undeniable sign that some black people could get more, and then what about everyone else's share? ... suddenly this didn't feel like "their country" anymore. Suddenly, they didn't feel like "their needs" were being met. (*They - whites - felt threatened, and Obama being elected was mostly symbolic.*) P. 13

What keeps a poor child in Appalachia poor is not what keeps a poor child in Chicago poor ... And what keeps an able-bodied black woman poor is not what keeps a disabled white man poor... p 13

...because we have come up in a society where talking about race is just not something you "do" in polite company, we don't have a lot of practice... pg. 14

Is it about race?

1. It is about race if a person of color thinks it is about race.
2. It is about race if it disproportionately or differently affects people of color.
3. It is about race if it fits into a broader pattern of events that disproportionately or differently affect people of color. Pg. 14-15

...race impacts almost every aspect of our lives. Pg 15

We are, each and every one of us, a collection of our lived experiences. Our lived experiences shape us, how we interact with the world, and how we live in the world. And our experiences are valid. Pg. 15

...there are a lot of hardships that hit people of color a lot more than white people. Pg 18

Disadvantaged white people are not erased by discussions of disadvantages facing people of color, just as brain cancer is not erased by talking about breast cancer. They are two different issues with two different treatments, and they require two different conversations. Pg. 18

When I was in an abusive relationship, it was not just about one incident. Pg 18

...it was just an individual incident, and the next abuse was also an individual incident... To me, it was a daily onslaught of emotional pain. Pg. 19

Often, being a person of color in white-dominated society is like being in an abusive relationship with the world. Every day is a new little hurt, a new little dehumanization. Pg 19

...our bodies are covered in scars...the abuser is the world around you... pg. 19
(Arm punch analogy - pg 20)

...race was designed to be interwoven into our social, political, and economic systems. ... look at race as a piece of the machine... pg 21

...if your lived experience and your interpretation of that lived experience are valid, why wouldn't the lived experience of people of color be just as valid? Pg 22

Chapter 2 - What is racism?

We couldn't talk about the ways in which race and racism impacted my life, because he was unwilling to even acknowledge the racism that was impacting my life and he was unable to prioritize my safety over his comfort - which meant that we couldn't talk about me. Pg 26

This book will not tell you how to get unabashed racists to love people of color. I'm not a magician. Pg. 27

Over four hundred years of systemic oppression have set large groups of racial minorities at a distinct power disadvantage. If I call a white person a cracker, the worst I can do is ruin their day. If a white person thinks I'm a nigger, the worst they can do is get me fired, arrested, or even killed in a system that thinks the same - and has the resources to act on it. Pg 28

Systemic racism is a machine that runs whether we pull the levers or not, and by just letting it be, we are responsible for what it produces. We have to actually dismantle the machine if we want to make change. Pg 30 (*We can't be silent. We can't be complicit.*)

...did you pick up this book with the goal of helping fight a system of oppression that is literally killing people of color? Pg 30

We live in a society where race is one of the biggest indicators of your success in life. Pg. 31

We can get every person in America to feel nothing but love for people of color in their hearts, and if our systems aren't acknowledged and changed, it will bring negligible benefit to the lives of people of color. Pg 31

...the problem isn't just that a white person may think black people are lazy and that hurts people's feelings, it's that the belief that black people are lazy reinforces and is reinforced by a general dialogue that believes the same, and uses that belief to justify not hiring black people

for jobs, denying black people housing, and discriminating against black people in schools. Pg 32

The ultimate goal of racism was the profit and comfort of the white race, specifically, of rich white men. Pg. 32

...our emotions, ignorance, fear and hate have been easily manipulated to feed the system of White Supremacy. And we have to address all of this, our emotions, our ignorance, our fear, and our hate - but we cannot ignore the system that takes all of that, magnifies it, and uses it to crush the lives and liberty of people of color to enrich the most privileged of white society. Pg 32-33

If peers say the same thing is happening to Whites... (being called "cracker" vs. the n-word -- *there is no such thing as reverse racism!*)

Ask...

"I am talking about issues of systemic racism, which is measurably impacting the health, wealth, and safety of millions of people of color. What are you talking about right now?"

"I do hear you. Although your experience is valid, it is a different experience."

"What was said to you wasn't okay - and should be addressed. But we're talking about two different things. Being called 'cracker' hurts - may even be humiliating. But after those words fade, what measurable impact will it have on your life? On your ability to walk the streets safely? On your ability to get a job? How often has the word 'cracker' been used to deny you services? What measurable impact has this word had on the lives of white Americans in general?"

Instead of posting on FB **"This teacher shouted a racial slur at a Hispanic child and should be fired,"** you can ADD *"This behavior is linked to the increased suspension, expulsion, and detention of Hispanic youth in our schools and sets an example of behavior for the children witnessing this teacher's racism that will influence the way these children are treated by their peers and how they are treated as adults."*

In response to **Black people are always late...**

"That's racist. And it contributes to false beliefs about Black workers that keeps them from being interviewed for jobs, while White workers can be late or on time but will always be judged individually with no risk of damaging job prospects for other White people seeking employment."

Tying racism to its systemic causes and effects will help others see the difference between systemic racism and anti-White bigotry. Tie individual racism to the system that gives it power.

Ask what the school's suspension rate for Hispanic kids is. Ask how many teachers of color they have on staff. Ask that their policies be reviewed and reformed.

Ask what processes your company has to minimize racial bias in their hiring process.
Ask for more diversity in management and cultural sensitivity training for staff.
Ask what procedures they have in place to handle allegations of racial discrimination.

Chapter 3 - What if I talk about race wrong?

We will not know what needs to be done if we are not willing to talk about it.

My mom has shifted her focus on race from proving to black people that she is “down” to pressuring fellow white people to do better. Pg 42

Friendships can be lost, holidays ruined, jobs placed in jeopardy. ... we *have* to talk about race. Pg. 43

...we live in a society where the color of your skin still says a lot about your prognosis for success in life. Pg 44

You're going to screw this up royally. More than once. ... It's going to happen, and you should have these conversations anyway. Pg 45

What we CAN do to lessen the number of times you'll screw this conversation up. Minimize the amount of damage you do, and maximize the benefit to all involved. Pgs 45-48

Basic tips:

1. State your intentions. Do you know why you are having this particular conversation? Do you know why this matters to you? Figure this out, then state what your intentions are, so that others may decide for themselves if this is a conversation they want to join.
2. Remember what your top priority in the conversation is and don't let your emotions override them.
3. Do your research.
4. Don't make your anti-racism argument oppressive against other groups.
5. When you start to feel defensive, stop and ask yourself why. What is being threatened? What am I thinking that this conversation says about me? Has my top priority shifted to preserving my ego? Take a few minutes away, so you can hear what needs to be heard.
6. Do not tone police. No one has to make this comfortable for you.
7. Watch how many times you say “I” or “me.” Systemic racism is more than one individual; it is not about you and your feelings.
8. Ask yourself, “Am I trying to be right, or am I trying to do better?” Conversations about race should not be about winning. You are in this to share and to learn. You are in this to do better and BE better. Your opponent is the system of racism.
9. Do not force people of color into discussions of race. They live with instances of racism every day.

...learn how to fail...learn how to be wrong... pg 49

Tips for when your conversation on race has gone very wrong:

1. Stop trying to jump back in when a conversation is beyond saving.
2. Apologize.
3. Don't write your synopsis of this conversation as "the time you got yelled at."
4. Don't insist that people give you credit for your intentions.
5. Don't beat yourself up.
6. Remember that it is worth the risk and commit to trying again.

These conversations will always be hard... and if they're not, then you are likely not having the right conversation.

Racial oppression should always be an emotional topic to discuss. It should always be anger-inducing. As long as racism exists to ruin the lives of countless people of color, it should be something that upsets us. But it upsets us because it exists, not because we want to talk about it. And if you are white, and you don't want to feel any of that pain by having these conversations, then you are asking people of color to continue to bear the entire burden of racism alone. Pg 51

You should be having these conversations with people of your own race... pg 51

These conversations will never become easy, but they will become easier. They will never be painless, but they can lessen future pain. They will never be risk-free, but they will always be worth it. Pg 52

Chapter 4 - Why am I always being told to "check my privilege"?

She shares the story of the FB group they set up in Seattle...

...understanding privilege... might make you feel very bad... pg 59

Privilege (in the social justice definition of the word) is "an advantage or a set of advantages you have that others do not." pg 59

No more throwing around the word "meritocracy" for me!

If we are truly dedicated to addressing systemic oppression and inequality, we must understand the full impact of these advantages and disadvantages in order to move toward real change in our society and ourselves. Pg 60

To look at this list and say, "anybody could do this if they just work hard enough" would be a lie. Pg 61

I do deserve to feel proud of my degree, but it isn't deserving of the general reputation that I, as a college graduate, am a smarter, more responsible, and more valuable citizen than those without a degree... pg 61-62

...the realization that we may be a part of the reason why the deck is stacked against others, that we may have been contributing to it for years without our knowledge, is why the concept of privilege is so threatening to so many. We don't want to think that we are harming others, we do not want to believe that we do not deserve everything we have, and we do not want to think of ourselves as ignorant of how our world works. ... *What about the "American Dream" of hard work paying off and good things happening to good people?* Pg. 63

...pause and consider how the advantages you've had in life are contributing to your opinions and actions, and how the lack of disadvantages in certain areas is keeping you from fully understanding the struggles others are facing and may in fact be contributing to those struggles. ... It is hard and often painful, but it's not nearly as painful as living with the pain caused by the unexamined privilege of others. Pg 63

The concept of privilege violates everything we've been told about fairness and everything we've been told about hard work paying off, and good things happening to good people. We want to protect our vision of a world that is fair, and kind, and predictable.

A privilege has to come with somebody else's disadvantage... otherwise, it's not a privilege. Pg 64

I have to do my part by confronting it whenever I encounter it - even if it means less benefits for me and some uncomfortable conversations. Pg 64

Check your privilege (*advantages you've had in life*):

Have you always had good mental health?

Did you grow up middle class?

Are you white?

Are you male?

Are you non-disabled?

Are you neurotypical?

Are you a documented citizen of the country you live in?

Did you grow up in a stable home environment?

Do you have stable housing?

Do you have reliable transportation?

Are you cisgender, straight, thin, tall, or conventionally attractive?

Once you've written down a nice long list of privilege, start thinking about how this privilege might have influenced not only your status in society, but your experience with and understanding of the world at large... Then start seeking out work on these subjects by people

who don't have your same privilege ... Being privileged ... means that there is a good chance you are missing a few very important pieces of the puzzle. Pg 66

It is also easier to explain privilege to someone else, if you...are familiar with explaining it to yourself. Pg 67

...you have unexamined privilege too, no matter how woke you think you are. Pg 68

Try to remember that the alternative to not being made aware of your privilege (no matter how it may sting) is your continued participation in the oppression of others. Someone is giving you an opportunity to do better, no matter how unpleasant the delivery. Thank them. Pg 68

When politicians come to the door - ask what they are going to do for people of color.

Support levies to improve public schools

Support employer-funded childcare and family leave programs.

Ask them to move future meeting times to hours that more working parents can attend and give parents other ways to contribute.

The possibilities of where you can leverage your privilege to make real, measurable change toward a better world are endless. Pg 69

Chapter 5 - What is intersectionality, and why do I need it?

Intersectionality - the belief that our social justice movements must consider all of the intersections of identity, privilege, and oppression that people face in order to be just and effective pg 74 (*Term coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989*)

Each of us has a myriad of identities - our gender, class, race, sexuality, and so much more - that inform our experiences in life and our interactions with the world. Pg 75

How do our social justice efforts so often fail to help the most vulnerable in our populations? This is primarily a result of unexamined privilege. Because of how rarely our privilege is examined, even our social justice movements will tend to focus on the most privileged and most well represented people within those groups. Pg 76

Am I looking for what I don't know?

Am I asking people to tell me what I'm missing?

Am I prioritizing the goals of those who are often overlooked?

Am I providing a safe space for marginalized people to speak out?

Everything we do can become exclusionary and oppressive without thinking about intersectionality.

Chapter 6 - Is police brutality really about race?

This is the peer to the officer's intent

So you want to talk about race problem here?" So he doesn't ask anymore, and after seeing what happened to Sandra Bland, I certainly don't ask either.

If we don't know if each individual encounter with police officers is truly about race, and if we can't safely ask—why do we talk about police brutality like it is about race? At its core, police brutality is about power and corruption. Police brutality is about the intersection of fear and guns. Police brutality is about accountability. And the power and corruption that enable police brutality put *all* citizens, of every race, at risk. But it does not put us at risk equally, and the numbers bear that out. My fear, as a black driver, is real. The fact is that black drivers are 23 percent more likely to be pulled over than white drivers¹, between 1.5 and 5 times more likely to be searched (while shown to be less likely than whites to turn up contraband in these searches),² and more likely to be ticketed³ and arrested⁴ in those stops. This increase in stops, searches, and arrests also leads to a 3.5–4 times higher probability that black people will be killed by cops (this increase is the same for Native Americans interacting with police, a shamefully underreported statistic). Even when we aren't arrested or killed, we are still more likely to be abused and dehumanized in our stops. A 2016 review of a thirteen-month period showed that Oakland police handcuffed 1,466 black people in nonarrest traffic stops, and only 72 white people⁵, and a 2016 study by the Center for Policing Equity found that blacks were almost 4 times more likely to be subject to force from police—including force by hand (such as hitting and choking), pepper spray, tazer, and gun—than white people.⁶

Is police brutality really about race?

And
this page

So maybe that time I got pulled over wasn't about race. Maybe the time I'd been pulled over before that wasn't about race. Maybe even the time before that. But those who demand the smoking gun of a racial slur or swastika or burning cross before they will believe that an individual encounter with the police might be about race are ignoring what we know and what the numbers are bearing out: something is going on and it is not right. We are being targeted. And you can try to explain away one statistic due to geography, one away due to income—you can find reasons for numbers all day. But the fact remains: all across the country, in every type of neighborhood, people of color are being disproportionately criminalized. This is not all in our heads.

When we first learn to drive it's with the same excitement of anybody else newly behind the wheel. A bit of fear mixed with a sense of freedom and power. But while our white friends quickly settle into the mundanity of the daily commute, we never get that sense of ease. The first time I was pulled over was at age sixteen, for going five miles over the speed limit in a wealthy white neighborhood. I explained that I hadn't realized the speed limit had been recently lowered. But the cop wanted to know if I was drunk. If I was on drugs. What he would find if he looked in my trunk (I believe I answered "snacks"). A few months later I was pulled over for not coming to a "complete stop" on a suburban road, empty of all traffic except for me and the officer. I've been stopped for having my vehicle tabs expired by one day (even though it was still within the month indicated on the tab, which meant scanning my plates for the hell of it). Time

...near-constant reminder...those assigned and empowered to protect you see your skin color as evidence of wrongdoing, and could take your freedom or even your life at any time, with no recourse. Pg 89 (*qualified immunity??*)

Witnesses are the only defense people of color seem to have against police brutality. (She can't ask why she's pulled over... the police respond, "Are we going to have a problem here?")

Police Brutality is about power & corruption

Black drivers are 23% more likely to be pulled over than White drivers, between 1.5 and 5% more likely to be searched and less likely than Whites to turn up contraband in these searches, and more likely to be ticketed and arrested in those stops. This increase in stops, searches, and arrests also leads to a 3.5 to 4 times higher probability that Black people will be killed by cops. This increase is the same for Native Americans interacting with police.

2016 - 13 month period - Oakland police handcuffed 1466 Black people in non-arrest traffic stops and only 72 White people.

2016 - Blacks were almost 4 times more likely to be subject to force from police.

History - Police forces were born from night patrols who had the principal task of controlling Black and Native American populations in New England and slave patrols, who had the principal task of catching escaped Black slaves... The night patrols were turned into America's first police forces. Not only to combat crime, but also to return Blacks to slavery and control and intimidate free Black population. Local police sometimes joined in on the terrorizing of Black communities that left thousands of Black Americans dead. In the South... many police officers were also members of the KKK. Through much of the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries, American police forces were one of the greatest threats to the safety of Black Americans. It was created to POLICE Black Americans and SERVE White Americans. They were not created to protect Americans of color, but to CONTROL Americans of color.

Saying "Black on Black crime" is racist. We don't call crime that happens in White communities "White on White crime."

Communities with higher poverty, fewer jobs, less infrastructure, are going to have higher crime, regardless of race. When the average Black American has 1/13th the net worth and the average Hispanic American has 1/10th the net worth of the average White American, and when the poverty rate among Native Americans is over three times that of Whites, it is a strong bet that neighborhoods of color are more likely to be poor neighborhoods with higher crime and that higher-priced neighborhoods with easier access to jobs, and more funding for education that lead to less crime would be more likely to be populated by comparatively wealthier White people. Crime in communities of color is often compounded by the contentious relationship with police.

People of color are not asking white people to believe their experiences so that they will fear the police as much as people of color do. They are asking because they want white people to join them in demanding their right to be able to trust the police like White people do. Pg 98

chapter six: Is police brutality really about race?

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Chapter 7 - How can I talk about affirmative action?

Employers and educators could set forth goals to increase diversity, provided there were enough qualified people of color or women to make such goals reasonable. These were never huge percentages and were most often below a representational percentage.

Goal: force educators and federal employers to get creative and proactive in their efforts to combat the effects that hundreds of years of racial and gender discrimination had had on the diversity of their work places and universities.

Raegan rolled into office - it was on the decline already.

The author shares a story of her brother in one classroom - the teacher had a (terrible) system of reward and punishment... her brother lost money and didn't earn any stickers or treats. 103

...we live in a society where if you are a person of color, a disabled person, a single mother, or an LGBT person you have to be exceptional. Pg 122

...you will most likely just barely get by. (*if you're lucky*) pg 113

...affirmative action has been chipped away at over the last thirty years. Pg 114

...the majority of the costs and benefits of affirmative action are easily supported by data, and the arguments against it are easily countered. Pg 115

The author shares arguments against Affirmative Action and how easy it is to refute them.

Argument 1 - "We don't need affirmative action because society isn't as racist or sexist as it used to be."

We can easily see the effects of racism and sexism in our society today.

Examples: If you have a Black-sounding name, you are FOUR TIMES less likely to be called for a job interview. White women still make only 82 cents for every White man's dollar. Black women only earn 65 cents... Hispanic women earn 58 cents... Black men - 73 cents... Hispanic men - 69 cents. *She shares TONS of examples to refute this one argument, and she does the same for all the other arguments people could share.*

When you add this (*preschool teacher*) bias to the fact that children of color are more susceptible to food insecurity; are more likely to have to work after school; are less likely to have financial resources to supply regular Internet, study guides, and tutoring; and are more likely to attend underfunded schools - children of color get to their college applications at a stark disadvantage. And this shows in the numbers. Currently, black and Hispanic students are underrepresented in the vast majority of colleges and universities, by 20 percent.

Argument 2 - If an employer is racist or sexist, you can just sue them.

Unless you can prove malice, unless there is a paper trail of racism or sexism, it is incredibly hard to get a judge to find in your favor. Pg 117

Argument 3 - Affirmative action teaches people of color and women that they don't have to work as hard as white men.

...the vast majority of affirmative action goals aim for a representative number of people of color and women. .. The goal is simply equal opportunity for female applicants and applicants of color. Pg 117

Argument 4 - Affirmative action is unfair to white men because it causes them to lose opportunities to less qualified women and people of color.

Either you believe these disparities exist because you believe that people of color and women are less intelligent, less hard working, and less talented than white men, or you believe that there are systemic issues keeping women and people of color from being hired into jobs, promoted, paid a fair wage, and accepted into college. Pg 118

Argument 5 - Affirmative action doesn't work.

...it has been one of the most successful programs for helping combat the end-effects of racial discrimination in education and employment that we've tried. Pg 118

...white women have been by far the biggest recipients of the benefits of affirmative action. Pg 118

...even if implemented across the public and private sectors, even if vigorously enforced, affirmative action will never be more than a Band-Aid... pg 118

Chapter 8 - What is the "School to Prison Pipeline" ??

The author shares the story of the boy who "assaulted" his teachers... he was five. They never even asked him what was wrong - just told him to stop.

Our public-school system sees black and brown children as violent, disruptive, unpredictable future criminals. Pg 124

Black students make up only 16% of our school population, and yet 31% of students who are suspended and 40% of students who are expelled are Black. Black students are 3.5 x more likely to be suspended than white students. Seventy percent of students who are arrested in school and referred to law enforcement are black. ...2011-2012 school year alone, 92,000 students were arrested. Pg 124

...we have a serious problem with how our schools are educating and disciplining black and brown children. Pg 125

...alarming number of black and brown children who are funneled directly and indirectly from our schools into our prison industrial complex, contributing to devastating levels of mass

incarceration that lead to one in three black men and one in six Latino men going to prison in their lifetimes. Pg 125

Psychologist attest that overly harsh discipline destroys children's trust in teachers and schools, along with damaging their self-esteem. Pg 125

The school system is marginalizing, criminalizing, and otherwise failing our Black and Brown kids in large numbers.

What factors contribute? Pg 126

- Racial bias of school administrators

- Racial bias of teachers

 - ...more likely...to view the play of black and brown children as aggression

- Lack of cultural sensitivity of black and brown children

 - ...black children are more likely to be suspended for subjective reasons...while white children are more likely to be suspended for provable reasons...

- The pathologizing of black children - (putting them in special education)

 - One in four black, American Indian, Pacific Islander, and mixed-race boys identified by schools as having a developmental disability was suspended in the 2011-2012 school year. Pg 128

- Zero-tolerance policies

 - ...and high-profile school shootings primarily were perpetrated by white youth!*

- Increased police presence in schools ("School Resource Officers")

 - These officers have become an easy way for schools to delegate their disciplinary responsibilities to a criminal justice system that has already shown quantifiable racial bias.

Tips:

- Include the School to Prison pipeline in your discussions

 - Talk to your schools and school boards - ask what their disciplinary procedures are, what the rate of suspension and expulsion for black and Latinx students is, and what the racial achievement gap for their school is - and what they plan to do about it.

- Recognize the achievements of black and brown children - everyday achievements!

- Normalize black and brown childhood - when you imagine, imagine black children, too.

- Challenge language that stereotypes black and brown kids.

 - Our children are criminalized in casual conversation every day. Their swagger is analyzed, the sag of their pants pathologized... This is culture, and any suggestion otherwise is racist. Pg. 131

- Discuss deeper causes of defiant and antisocial behavior in black and brown youth.

 - Ask - What does this kid need? What is keeping this kid from thriving?

- Don't erase disabled black and brown youth.

- Challenge the legitimacy of white-centered education.

When our kids spend eight hours a day in a system that is looking for reasons to punish them, remove them, criminalize them - our kids do not get to be kids. Our kids do not get to be rambunctious, they do not get to be exuberant, they do not get to be rebellious, they do not get to be defiant. Our kids do not get to fuck up the way other kids get to; our kids will not get to look back fondly on their teenage hijinks - because these get them expelled or locked away. Pg 133

Chapter 9 - Why can't I say the "N" word?

The history of a word matters as long as the effects of that history are still felt. Pg 137

...words have been used to separate, dehumanize, and oppress, and the power of those words is still felt today. Pg 139 (*Same for ghetto, nappy, uppity, articulate, and thug.*)

It is completely fair that a word used to help create and maintain the oppression of others for your benefit would not be able to be used by you without invoking that oppression, while people of color who had never had the power to oppress with those words would be able to use them without invoking that same oppression. Pg 141

..the fact that people of color can say words that white people can't *is* an example of injustice - but it's not injustice against white people. Pg 141

Chapter 10 - What Is cultural appropriation?

Cultural appropriation - the adoption or exploitation of another culture by a more dominant culture. Pg 146

That power imbalance allows the culture being appropriated to be distorted and redefined by the dominant culture and siphons any material or financial benefit of that piece of culture away to the dominant culture, while marginalized cultures are still persecuted for living in that culture. Pg 147

Until we do live in a society that equally respects all cultures, any attempts of the dominant culture to "borrow" from marginalized cultures will run the risk of being exploitative and insulting. Pg 151

Remember that YOU are not the victim. (152)

Chapter 11 - Why can't I touch your hair?

(and other microaggressions)

The author shares a story of one of her bosses "commending" her for having natural hair. She also shares stories of how much of a pain it was to try to make her hair like those beautiful girls she sees in all the media. Also, white people don't have a clue how black people get their hair to look like they do.

Reasons on pg 159-

Touching anybody anywhere without their permission or a damn good reason is just not okay. It's weird.

Hands are dirty.

Curls are precious.

It is a continuation of the lack of respect for the basic humanity and bodily autonomy of black Americans that is endemic throughout White Supremacy.

Since the first black Americans were brought over as slaves, our bodies have not been our own. We were objects - property. Our bodies have been objects of curiosity and tools to be exploited. Our bodies were sources of judgment and shame. But they were never beautiful, and they were never our own.

Whatever respect we could get in White America came from how closely we could get our bodies to resemble those of white people. Pgs 159-160

We still live in a country where our hair can cost us our jobs, even our place in the military. We still live in a country where our hair determines how professional, how respectable and even how intelligent we seem. Our hair is used to help determine our place in a white supremacist society. Pg 160

...maybe for now you just set your curiosity aside and allow some of the space to determine who does or does not touch their hair, without labeling them rude, sensitive, or divisive. Pg 161

Chapter 12 - What are microaggressions?

The author shares a story about lipstick, about her weight, about her voice. She changed for everyone.

Microaggressions are small and can be easily explained away.

Microaggressions are cumulative.

Microaggressions are perpetrated by many different people.

Many people do not consciously know that they are perpetrating a microaggression against someone.

TONS of examples on pg 170-171...

Microaggressions are constant reminders that you don't belong, that you are less than, that you are not worthy of the same respect that white people are afforded. Pg 172

Microaggressions...normalize racism. Pg 172

The assumption that a black father isn't in the picture reinforces an image of irresponsible black men that keeps them from being hired for jobs. The assumption that a Latinx woman doesn't

Speak good English keeps her from a promotion. The assumption that a child of color's parents wouldn't have a college degree encourages guidance counselors to set lower goals for that child. The assumption that black people are "angry" prevents black people from being taken seriously when airing legitimate grievances. These microaggressions help hold the system of White Supremacy together, because if we didn't have all these little ways to separate and dehumanize people, we'd empathize with them more fully, and then we'd have to really care about the system that is crushing them. Pg 172

Tips when you are called out for microaggressions (pg 175):

Pause.

Ask yourself - Do I really know why I said/did that?

Would I have said this to someone of my race?

Don't force people to acknowledge your good intentions.

Don't take it as a hit to your ego. It's not about YOU. Again.

Remember - it's not just this one incident.

Research further - on your own time.

Apologize. If you don't want to hurt people.

When it comes to racial oppression, it really is the little things that count. Pg 178

Chapter 13 - Why are our students so angry?

Because in this world - "liberty & justice for all" - does not apply.

The author shares some promises that fell short on page 184.

We raised our children not knowing that by the time they became adults, one in three black men would be likely to see prison, that they could expect to have one-thirteenth the household income of their white counterparts, that they would see hundreds of black and brown men and women shot and killed by cops every year with no recourse. We raised our kids with all the audacity and hope of generations of protest and progress, and the world expected them to be happy with the sorry state of things as they actually are. Pg 185

...they had been learning, far more than we apparently had, and that was why they were protesting. Pg 187

No matter what our intentions, everything we say and do in the pursuit of justice will one day be outdated, ineffective, and yes, probably wrong. That is the way progress works. Pg 187

(PARENTS →) It is our job to be confused and dismayed by the future generation, and trust that if we would just stop trying to control them and instead support them, they will eventually find their way. Pg 188

Chapter 14 - What is the model minority myth?

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI)

Do not put “Asians” all together - there are soooo many different people!

Japanese, Korean, Chinese, South Asians, Southeast Asians, Pacific Islanders, Indian Americans, Hmong Americans, Vietnamese Americans, Samoans, Native Hawaiians, and more. ... war refugees, tech professionals who first arrived on H-1B visas, and third-generation Midwesterners. ... pg 194

...being a “model minority” .. is often used to silence them. Pg 192

1966 - William Peterson

Included in these stereotypes are presumptions of academic and financial success, social and political meekness, a strong work ethic, dominance in math and the sciences, and strict parenting. Peterson’s use of “model minority” was to study the success of Asian Americans (*who I found out later the US actually HELPED*), contrasting them with what he termed “problem minorities.” Pg 193

Who and what do we not see when we see the “model minority?”

Pacific Islanders (Hawaiian, Guamanian, Tongan, Fijian, Samoan, Marshallese descent) are often left out of the discussion

- Extreme economic disparity
- Extreme educational disparity
- Limits on professional success
- Hate crimes against Asian Americans
- Health and safety of Asian American women
- Lack of political power
- Everyday discrimination and microaggressions against Asian Americans
- Common struggle with other people of color

If you want to fight racism in America, you have to fight the model minority myth. P 200

Also, saying anyone is a “model” minority is simply showing White supremacy.

Chapter 15 - But what if I hate Al Sharpton?

MLK’s death was seen as the martyrdom of a legend ... Malcolm’s death was no more than a natural consequence of being black and angry ← dichotomy...

No matter how loud OR quiet blacks are.... MLK AND Malcolm X were BOTH killed.

...no matter what we ask for, if it threatens the system of White Supremacy, it will always be seen as too much. Pg 203

For hundreds of years we have been told that the path to freedom from racial oppression lies in our virtue, that our humanity must be earned. We simply don't *deserve* equality yet.

So when people say that they don't like my tone, or when they say they can't support the "militancy" of Black Lives Matter, or when they say it would be easier if we just didn't talk about race all the time - I ask one question:

Do you believe in justice and equality?

Because if you believe in justice and equality you believe in it all of the time, for all people. You believe in it for newborn babies, you believe in it for single mothers, you believe in it for kids in the street, you believe in justice and equality for people you like and people you don't. You believe in it for people who don't say please. Pg 204

...tone policing places prerequisites on being heard and being helped.

You may be ... thinking, "well, that sounds like a healthy way to avoid stressful and harmful conversations. Isn't that how we're taught to handle people who are treating us with disrespect? Aren't we supposed to stand up for ourselves if people are being mean or rude?" First, let me be clear that accusations of tone policing don't apply to actual abuse - threats and violence are not okay. Neither is bringing more oppression into the conversation as a weapon against oppressors... But hurt feelings and rudeness are not oppression, and will always come second to the oppression being discussed. ...conversations on race and systemic oppression are never...simple. Pg 206

When you talk about oppression with oppressed people, you are talking with hurt, scared, angry, and grieving people (*one punch in the arm... then another... then another...*). Pg 207

When people of color speak out about systemic racism, they are opening up all of that pain and fear and anger to you. They are not doing this because they enjoy it; it is an incredibly painful and vulnerable experience. ... But to see all that pain... and then to tell us to be more polite is just plain cruel. Pg 207 *It's another* way of asserting your dominance over them...

Even if you do not agree with the way in which someone is going about their fight for racial justice, recognize when they are indeed fighting for it, and that you have the same goals. When you instead shift your focus to getting people of color to fight oppression in a way in which you approve, racial justice is no longer your goal - your approval is. ... this isn't about you (*AGAIN*) pg 208

...know that if you are a privileged person trying to impose your wishes on social justice movements, you are trying to remake that movement in your image, which is exactly what social justice movements are fighting against. Pg 208-209

- Be aware of the limits of your empathy. Your privilege will keep you from fully understanding the pain... that does not make it any less real.
- Don't distract or deflect.
- Remember your goal. - to end systemic racism.

- Drop the prerequisites. You are fighting systemic racism because it is your moral obligation...
- Walk away if you must, but don't give up. ...step aside and find where you can help elsewhere.
- Build a tolerance for discomfort. ...get used to being uncomfortable.
- You are not doing any favors, you are doing what is right. Your efforts to dismantle White Supremacy are expected of decent people who believe in justice. You are not owed gratitude or friendship... We are not thanked for cleaning our own houses.

...you are either fighting the system or you are complicit. ... If you believe in justice and equality, we are in this together, whether you like me or not. Pg 211

Chapter 16 - I just got called racist. What do I do now?

To many white people, it appears, there is absolutely nothing worse than being called a racist... pg 213

It's not as if it's easy for people of color to call out racism. When we decide to talk about these things, not only are we having to confront our own feelings of hurt, disappointment, or anger, we know that we are also risking any of the above reactions (*try to get them fired + other retaliations*) and more. ... it could indeed end our friendships, our reputations, our careers, and even our lives. Pg 215

So why do we talk about racism if it's so risky and so painful? ... Because not talking about it is killing us. Pg 216

This part is still hard for me to swallow... but I can't leave it out of my notes because I need to revisit it...

You are racist because you were born and bred in a racist, white supremacist society. White Supremacy is, as I've said earlier, insidious by design. The racism required to uphold White Supremacy is woven into every area of our lives. There is no way you can inherit white privilege from birth, learn racist white supremacist history in schools, consume racist and white supremacist movies and films, work in a racist and white supremacist workforce, and vote for racist and white supremacist governments and not be racist. Pg 218

If you've been confronted with the possibility of your own racism...

- Listen.
- Set your intentions aside.
- Try to hear the impact of what you have done.
- Remember that you do not have all the pieces.
- Nobody owes you a debate.
- Nobody owes you a relationship. (*Lauren Meeks*)

- Remember that you are not the only one hurt.
- If you can see where you have been racist, or if you can see where your actions have caused harm, apologize and mean it.
- If, after a lot of careful thought, you still do not see your actions as racist and feel strongly that this is simply a misunderstanding, do not then invalidate that person's hurt.
-

Chapter 17 - Talking is great, but what else can I do?

I do this in the hopes that what I write and say ... will inform and inspire action. Pg 227

When I wrote about why I would not be participating in the march, I explained that I could not ignore how much the economic exploitation of women of color had contributed to the racial oppression of women of color. And I did not believe that women of color should be asked to put forth the emotional and mental labor of discussing their racial oppression to a majority white audience for free, especially an event with a large budget like this one. Pg 228

We have to learn and fight at the same time .. people have been waiting far too long for their chance to live as equals in this society. Pg 230

TALKING is a start.
Then DO something.

- Vote local.
- Get in schools.
- Bear witness.
- Speak up in your unions.
- Support POC-owned business.
- Boycott banks that prey on people of color.
- Give money to organizations working to fight racial oppression and support communities of color.
- Boycott businesses that exploit workers of color.
- Support music, film, television, art, and books created by people of color.
- Support increases in the minimum wage.
- Push your mayor and city council for police reform.
- Demand college diversity.
- Vote for diverse government representatives.

...it seems like too much, but understand that the system is invested in you seeing it this way. ... The way we vote, where we spend our money, what we do and do not call out - these are all pieces of the system. Pg 234

My next steps: See ask for body cams for our police officers. See what the local people running are DOING. Share that information.

[Other person's notes are HERE.](#)