

Book Club Discussion Topics for “We Hold These Truths: Dismantling Racial Hierarchies, Building Equitable Communities” Edited by Tia Brown McNair

Opening Question:

- What were your impressions of this publication? Or share any thoughts or reflections that came up for you or feel free to pose a question.

Additional Questions?

- What do you think of the idea that truth telling and trust building are necessary before the work can begin? How might you or does your institution seek to foster truth telling, trust building, healing and/or reconciliation?
 - “Any of these ideas for action is less likely to encounter resistance or to increase campus tensions when leaders and diverse participants have already engaged in circles of racial healing and trust building before undertaking assessment and transformation work” (p. 4)
- The importance of relationship building was raised by multiple institutions. How are you or how do you imagine facilitating this important aspect of the work at your own institution?
- Have you had a local catalyst that has brought the topic of racial injustice to the forefront at your institution? How do you plan to keep up the momentum for change?
- What contexts are a focus or do you think make sense as a focus for your institution? Examples include classroom settings, campus meetings, community engagements (p. 11).
- What do you think of the “cohort model” discussed on p. 16 that offers “an innovative admissions approach to provide opportunity to individuals who have been systematically disenfranchised by systems of inequality”? Could it work for midwifery programs?
- Are you familiar with the idea of Rx Racial Healing Circles (RHC)? Restorative Justice Circles? Our publication refers to them as “a core component for deep listening and building trust” (p. 1) and as an “antidote to racism”(p. 5). Is this an idea you could see incorporating at your institution? How might you go about doing that?
- How might you leverage existing programs and resources at your institution? See p. 14-16 for how Rutgers University - Newark is working with the public library system
- On page 1, a path forward for dismantling the tools that perpetuate oppression is outlined. If any of the following are happening at your institution, what does it look like or do you have specific ideas related to these areas of focus?
 - Creating positive narratives about race
 - Identifying and examining current realities of race relations in communities
 - Envisioning communities without entrenched racial hierarchies
 - Pinpointing levers for change
 - Engaging key individuals
- The campus centers in the book spent time visioning. Is there a group that you work with that might benefit from co-creating a vision?
- What do you think of the five key components of the recommended framework that are proposed and how do you think you might tackle them at your institution? The

components are: narrative change, racial healing, separation, law, and economy. See pages 3-4 for 10 recommendations to align with these components.

- If your institution is already on a path, how will you build capacity for the work? Duke noted that they have “new cofacilitators working with experienced RHC cofacilitators” (p. 8) which brings up the significance of scaling up the the work and building the capacity to do so is no small task in and of itself.
- Ensuring that this work is incorporated into larger strategic plans at our institutions was raised a few times. Is there work underway at your institutions to achieve this goal?
- Millsaps College noted “the significance of having a group of leaders on campus who are constantly thinking about this work” (p. 28). Does that currently exist at your institution? Is it a “structured initiative with accountability demands” (p. 28) or lead by someone in a paid position with influence?
- Has it worked to engage campus leadership in the work of social justice at your institution?
- How might we keep the focus on the “narrative” even when a discussion turns towards language?

General Questions:

- Did this reading spark any ideas that you hope to pursue at your own institution?

Resources:

- American Library Association Great Stories Club
 - Deeper Than Our Skins: The Present is a Conversation with the Past
 - Finding Your Voice: Speaking Truth to Power
- Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is a platform for examining implicit bias and intercultural competence
- P. 19 offers a link to an audit that was done with young people at the center
- Book - *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (2016)
- Everyday Democracy's Guide - *Facing Racism in a Diverse Nation* (2008)

Quotes especially relevant to midwifery:

- “Implement evidence-informed strategies to help reduce bias and generate greater capacities for compassion and empathy” (p. 4)
- “Additionally many students appreciated the opportunity to shift from a ‘head space’ into a ‘heart space’ and expressed intentions of recreating circles in their dorm” (p. 7).
- “Existing racial hierarchies and beliefs were not created overnight, and they will not be dismantled easily or quickly. At every juncture, we will continue to proceed intentionally, thinking carefully and strategically not only about *what* we are doing, but more importantly, *how* we are doing the work *who* is included in decision-making processes” (p. 8).
- “Entering into these spaces with a lens for racial healing, an ear for narrative, and an understanding of the role self-reflection must play resulted in an experience that was equally meaningful for all involved” (p. 18).