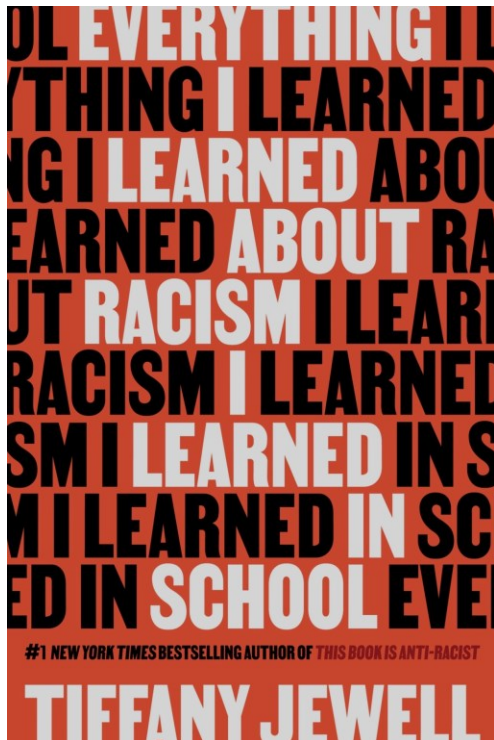


EVERYTHING I LEARNED ABOUT RACISM I LEARNED IN SCHOOL



Young Adult

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Book Summary:

An anthology of short stories discussing perceived racism encounters between students and education professionals.

Summary of Concerns:

This book contains alternate gender ideologies; alternate sexualities; derogatory term use; controversial racial, religious, and cultural commentary; references to racism, abortion, and suicide.

2 /5

Teen Guidance
BookLooks Review Rating

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3	Our school systems, whether public or private, traditional or alternative, are places where some of us experience racism and injustice and are witness to it daily.
4	Everything I learned about racism I learned on top of my desk White chalk scraping the board In a Catholic school While kneeling and praying to a white God
5	Everything I learned about racism I learned in school Forced to recite the preamble Required to put my hand on my chest Look up at the flag and let the Pledge Of Allegiance fall out my mouth
9	We didn't find out about our racialized labels until we were in high school. For fourteen years, my twin and I (and probably a bunch of other biracial and light-skinned kids in our city district before and after us) walked through our "racially imbalanced" schools with the privileges of a label that didn't fit and that not everyone got.
12	Because of our W, O, P, and N labels, some of us were given privileges, power, access, and advantages and some of us were never even given a chance. My district gave me Whiteness. And the schools I attended treated me like I was a White kid. I had privileges and immunity that a lot of my classmates and peers did not get: I was enrolled in Advanced Placement classes, which were filled predominantly with White kids.
17	Look at that one CEO. That one family living in a new McMansion built on the rich side of town. That one professor at Oakland University. That one doctor at Beaumont Medical Center. Look at the Burger King Kids Club and the Power Rangers and the Planeteers—one kid of each minority (but still several white kids)! "What are you?" Some who asked were living on land their ancestors had taken from the Potawatomi. A suburb whose population boomed because of white flight and redlining following the 1967 uprisings in Detroit.
18	Sick of being asked about my race by white people who pretended they did not see race when it was all they saw if it was not white.
19	You were Black or White. Straight or, well, nobody was gay—some boxes weren't available to us.
20	"It smells like a nigger. Like you." She was five years old and lived on my block. ...I thought it was pretty; she said it smelled bad, like a nigger.
22	Whenever I talk, think, and write about racism, I use the definition that was shared with me in an anti-racism training workshop years ago. Racism is both personal prejudice and bias and the systemic misuse and abuse of power by institutions.
23	Prejudice is personal, and racism is much more than just personal interactions between people. It's a system that keeps people with Black and Brown skin (People of the Global Majority) oppressed. It's a system in which people with White and light skin have advantages over people with darker skin. It's a system that keeps people divided from each other, and it has been doing so for hundreds and hundreds of years.

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	<p>I first heard the term PEOPLE OF THE GLOBAL MAJORITY from a friend who worked closely with Dr. Barbara J. Love. I love this term and use it instead of MINORITY. The word MINORITY makes me feel small and unimportant. Using PEOPLE OF THE GLOBAL MAJORITY reminds me that I am a part of a whole big group of people around the world who are Black and Brown and make up the majority of the planet’s population. It’s empowering! Racism is an unfair and unjust system.</p> <p>Racism was created and is maintained to ensure that White people (as a whole group) have the most resources and power. Racism is a system that keeps BIPOC people and White people separated and divided. Within this system, Indigenous, Black, Latine, Asian, and other People of the Global Majority have less resources and power.</p> <p>This was and is accomplished by creating unfair and unjust laws, rules, and policies and upholding them in traditions that have become part of our society.</p> <p>Racism is (and was) accomplished through colonization.</p> <p>COLONIZATION is accomplished when one group takes control of another by violence and force. Colonizers use brutality and manipulation to gain and maintain power and control over people, land, and resources. An example of this is when the U.S. government physically removed tens of thousands of Indigenous Native Americans from their homelands along the East Coast and forced them to go (mostly by foot) westward to reservations on undesirable land.</p> <p>Racism is accomplished by the creation of a criminal justice system that unfairly and unjustly incarcerates Black people at a rate much higher than and disproportionate to White people.</p>
26	<p>Racism is accomplished by local and federal governments demolishing predominantly Black, Brown, and Jewish neighborhoods and building highways to help White families who moved out of the cities access those cities with ease.</p> <p>Racism is accomplished by banking institutions refusing to give loans to Black and Brown people, making it difficult for folks to buy homes and accrue wealth for generations.</p> <p>Racism is accomplished by maintaining a health-care system that upholds the false belief that Black people have a higher tolerance for pain, which is why Black folks who give birth die during or after birth at a much higher rate than any other race.</p> <p>...Native Americans and Native Alaskans are two times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes. This is unfair and unjust.</p> <p>Racism is accomplished through gentrification, pushing people out of their homes, communities, and neighborhoods.</p> <p>GENTRIFICATION is when folks with wealth and resources buy homes, properties, and businesses in neighborhoods that are typically urban and poor. Neighborhoods are transformed, and because of the changes made (such as increases in rent, taxes, and mortgages), the original residents are often not able to stay in their neighborhoods. Gentrification can happen on small and large scales and has a lasting impact on community members.</p> <p>Racism is accomplished by businesses refusing to interview or hire people because their names sound “too Black” or “too Asian” or “too ethnic.” A recent study revealed that folks with names that sounded “too Black” had more than 2 percent less chance of being contacted by interviewers.</p> <p>Racism is accomplished by businesses and institutions paying People of the Global Majority much less than they pay White men for doing the same (or more) work. For every dollar a White man made in 2020, Pacific Islander and Asian American women made on average</p>

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	<p>eighty-five cents, Black women made sixty-four cents, multiracial Black women made sixty-three cents, Native American women made sixty cents, and Latine women made fifty-seven cents.</p> <p>...Racism is accomplished by politicians advocating for, supporting, and passing laws that remove books from our classrooms, schools, and libraries. These books are written by and about Black folks, trans folks, folks in the LGBTQIA + community, Latine folks, Asian folks, folks of the Global Majority, and any other folks who don't fit neatly into the country's prevailing culture of dominance.</p> <p>Racism is accomplished by books, magazines, television shows, and movies portraying White people as always kind, intelligent, and trustworthy and Black and Brown folks as unintelligent, violent, and unworthy of love.</p> <p>Racism is accomplished by schools enforcing strict attendance policies without taking the whole lives of their students into account.</p>
29	<p>Racism is accomplished by schools placing children in special-education classes because they are more comfortable speaking their home language than English.</p> <p>Racism is accomplished by school districts and systems refusing to teach ethnic studies and teaching only a one-sided history that glorifies the accomplishments of mostly White men.</p> <p>Racism is accomplished by schools everywhere, over and over again.</p> <p>As soon as I started school, I was inundated with the ways that our country's education system colludes with and maintains the culture of White domination. It's unavoidable.</p>
30	<p>. . . that the most qualified and important books to read were the "classics" written by long-dead White male authors, like William Faulkner, William Shakespeare, and William Wordsworth;</p> <p>...Although it wasn't stated explicitly in the core curriculum or a textbook, I was taught that certain people—Indigenous people, Black people, Asian people, Latine people, People of the Global Majority—were the problem, because I learned to blame individual people (and groups of people) for racism and Islamophobia and antisemitism and transphobia and ableism and all injustice and oppression. But, really, people aren't the problem; it's the institutions that are.</p>
39	<p>Living in poverty is not having enough to meet your basic needs because your community and your people have been systematically and historically excluded, exploited, and stripped of resources and power for decades and centuries.</p>
48	<p>However, instead of using either of the terms, I prefer to use what critical-race-theory scholar Gloria Ladson-Billings refers to as the "education debt." This is the debt that is owed to students of the Global Majority, a debt that has grown over decades and centuries. As Gloria Ladson-Billings says, "The historical, economic, sociopolitical, and moral decisions and policies that characterize our society have created an education debt." For hundreds and hundreds of years, Black people, Indigenous people, and People of the Global Majority have been purposely, systematically, and systemically excluded from education and learning. We've also been excluded from holding positions in government and having decision-making power. Schools have been consistently funded differently and inequitably depending on where they are and who makes up their student populations.</p>
55	<p>I learned how to stop saying the Pledge of Allegiance and how to build an imaginary brick wall around my desk when I wanted to concentrate or escape. I learned that it was okay for my teacher to regularly misspell words and control when we could go to the restroom. I learned that it was okay for her to talk about how great her own White children were in</p>

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	their suburban school, that they got to meet Bruce Coville, while all we got was her reading <i>My Teacher Is an Alien</i> to us.
56	<p>We didn't learn that we were on their stolen land. Elementary school was where I learned I wasn't White and I wasn't Black, that I was "other."</p> <p>...Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE for short) convinced me never to use drugs, and it was in that program that I learned that the cops thought it was cool to confiscate drug dealers' cars and slap the DARE logo on them.</p>
63	<p>Some of my friends were Black and the student who took the candy was white. When we were in the hall walking back to the classroom, my teacher, who was white, made me and my Black friends stand in a separate line from all our other classmates. She made us walk down the hall, and when other adults walked by us, she told them that we were in this line because we took something that wasn't ours.</p>
77	<p>Years before I even started my schooling journey, more than a quarter of the city's Black middle-school students attended this junior high. The community's identity changed quickly and some of the White families in the neighborhood did not like that. They were very vocal about the change in student demographics, and that scared the school board. One of the White caregivers told the school board at the time, "The school is getting a reputation from police, teachers, and kids that it is a totally Black school." The board members were afraid the White families would bail and go to other, predominantly White, public schools in the city or to private schools. That year, in hopes of reducing the 58 percent Black student population, the school board capped the enrollment of Black students, something they'd never done before. Only Black seventh graders were admitted, and they closed admissions to Black eighth graders.</p> <p>...Two years later, the population of Black students dropped to less than 44 percent, ensuring Black students wouldn't be in the majority at the school.</p>
90	<p>Tracking helps keep schools segregated, and White students are the ones who benefit most from this practice.</p>
92	<p>After the <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> court ruling, White families and those with money and resources were able to use the tracking practices to guarantee their children tested into and received elite and higher-level classes. Black families, immigrant families, families of the Global Majority, and poor families were purposely left out and left behind and tracked into lower-level classes.</p>
94	<p>Tracking replicates the unjust and racist hierarchy that exists within our society. It continues to be a tool of suppression and oppression. It guarantees that some people in society will succeed and hold more power and some people will not. Tracking guarantees that we will continue to have folks who are excluded and exploited, and those folks are almost always Indigenous, Black, and Brown People of the Global Majority. Tracking ensures that the unjust and racist hierarchy that we hold as normal is maintained. Tracking feeds the racist system that created it.</p>
98	<p>A voice rips through my button-up Cardinal jersey and into my chest: "If you had any more dirt on you, you'd be a ni**er."</p>
106	<p>American domination in the world as if it were victorious rather than shameful. I continued to be labeled gifted and sat among mostly White students in a class with a teacher who was fast approaching a midlife crisis. We continued to read books by deceased White men.</p>

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107	<p>Me and some of my friends, who were all Black boys, got to class a little late, but we got there at the same time as other students who were white. When we tried to explain why we were late, we were sent to the office, but my teacher accepted the other students into class. I was angry because it felt like he offered them a second chance because he looked like them, and he didn't believe us because my friends and I did not look like him.</p>
111	<p>In an odd and messed-up way, our teacher was preparing us to be in a society where the culture of White domination rules the world.</p>
113	<p>I had developed the rough exterior necessary to deal with these white teachers. ...And I think that what I learned is that white supremacy doesn't just look like white men, real scary-like, in robes, with pitchforks, violently screaming racial slurs at us. It can look like white women who don't care. Who don't listen. Who are there to collect their paychecks and see their "tough love" in our communities as charity. Who want their friends and acquaintances to see their daily drive across town (of course) as their way of doing "something great" for "those kids" and making their country a better place. And white supremacy can be calm, quiet, sitting at a desk, following the rules, saying things beneath its breath, not calling on us, not walking over when we're sick, mocking us, absent forever, laughing with each other in the hallway, and simply being part of a system that is killing us. All while wearing cute sweaters in craftily decorated classrooms.</p>
117	<p>Social distancing, being disconnected from classmates and peers, teachers, and school communities, lack of mental-health care and support, anxiety over family economic and health problems, and an increase in substance use all likely contributed to the increase in suicidal ideation and suicidality.</p>
118	<p>And some are trying to push SEL (social emotional learning) out of schools for fear students will learn to be compassionate to folks who are different from them. Not only is division a part of the status quo, we are placed into boxes with labels that give some of us power and privilege and deny it to others. ...The culture of White domination keeps us disconnected from one another and from ourselves. Fear is the driving force, and suicide is often driven by fear.</p>
120	<p>My adviser wanted us to be prepared to compete against white students. This meant extensive conversations on professional business attire, with her commenting that we were representing not just our teams but "our school, our family, our community." ...This was about making sure that Black kids from Detroit could assimilate with white kids from across the state of Michigan. ...I went to my adviser with wet eyes and told her that I was not good enough to be taken seriously in my first competition. Her first question was "Were they white?" She knew the answer to this. I nodded; she lowered her eyes, and her eyebrows sharpened. She told me that I had done the very best that I could and that she would handle it from there. Without further questions, she went to file a complaint with the conference officials. At the awards ceremony, with no surprise, I learned that I had not placed in the top three and would not be moving on to nationals, despite my business attire, despite the amount of time I spent practicing, despite doing everything right while Black. I had learned how not to stand out in the company of white people, but this did not create a safety net when the othering came. ...I had no understanding of how the system worked. I just knew things were unfair and I was different. I grew up in a Black neighborhood and went to a Black school. Having pride in our</p>

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	<p>Blackness was something that I had without question. But when it came to interacting with white people, the emphasis on pride was absent. May Black kids who leave their neighborhoods and see the world never lose themselves by trying to gain the acceptance of others deep in a system that depends on seeing Blackness as inferior.</p> <p>...May they be able to understand when racism stares them in the face and laughs in a whisper, and may they not flinch.</p>
128	<p>We learned about socialism without her actually saying socialism and how 99 percent of the Cuban population was literate while our own country's rate was about 80 percent.</p>
135	<p>I learned that the military and the government and the education system—which (I thought) was supposed to be watching out for my best interests—colluded in hopes of getting kids like me (poor and Black/ Brown and academically motivated) to head out into the world and defend the United States even though the country was rarely willing to defend me and people like me.</p>
137	<p>Around this time, you'll start hearing things from your peers and teachers like: "Of course you're good at sports, you're Black." ...You might be thinking to yourself, but those are good stereotypes, right? At least they're not using racial slurs or bad stereotypes, labeling me a "thug" or a "dog-eater."</p>
141	<p>He snarls, "This racist school." ..."C'mon. You know history'll be trash. Mr. R. is mad racist. Why he says '¿ Compende?' when he corrects Latino students? He doesn't say that to white kids or anybody else. And his Black jokes?" He's right. Mr. R. is racist. Russ rolls his eyes. "And English? Ms. L. ignores us participating and only picks white kids." ...Then one week of her discussing white people suffering and fighting back turned into weeks of her focusing only on white people. So the other day, I raised my hand. "It's great to learn white history. Will we learn how other people suffered and reacted too? Like, this country was taken from the Native Americans. Or we could learn how Black people were made slaves in the Americas. And how my people reacted."</p>
142	<p>"When you compare the Jewish Holocaust to the enslavement of Blacks, about as many Blacks were killed as Jews. Maybe more. We studied the Holocaust. Maybe let's study Black enslavement and how they suffered and reacted."</p>
143	<p>I don't say I can't cut for the same reason I had almost perfect attendance in my racist middle school: Because Ma says school is my shot out of our projects. ..."Now watch how racist Mr. R.' ll flex because we late." ...Russ interrupts, pointing at a white girl—Karen—who does whatever she wants here and gets babied. "Mr. R., she comes later than this at least twice a week. You never stop class to embarrass her." He points at a white boy—Jerry—who is basically a male Karen and gets babied too. "And Jerry strolls in late. You give him breaks. You give"—now Russ points at other white kids—" her, her, him, him—them all special treatment. But you clown and punish us because we're Black and Latino." Every white kid here knows he's right but puts on an innocent face. I wish one would defend us. Mr. R. tells Russ, "It's not about race. Take responsibility. Don't deflect. You're marked as cutting unless you serve detention." ...I nod and look at the white kids, wondering how school would be if we were treated like them.</p>

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146	<p>I learned that outspoken, overly confident, assured White boys could make racist jokes, and the teachers did nothing. I learned that it was okay for those same White boys to gaslight me and try to make me small. Senior year was the year I learned that, apparently, it wasn't strange at all to have a White male teacher mansplain how to alleviate period cramps. I learned that Advanced Placement English meant reading more "classic" books by deceased White men was normal and so was watching Blazing Saddles, a movie from 1974 filled with racist stereotypes and unfunny jokes. (I opted out of class that day.) My senior year was the year I learned I needed a break from White boys and White men, so when I was admitted to a small, all-female college in the Finger Lakes region of New York State, I eagerly accepted.</p>
151	<p>School administrators, faculty, staff, and district officials are more likely to target Black and Brown students when using reasonable suspicion. A study to determine whether Black students were disciplined and punished more than White students found that teachers attributed the behavior of White students to their having an off day while the same behavior from their Black students was seen as a disturbance that warranted punishment. Another study from the Department of Education found that schools with populations of more than 50 percent students of the Global Majority were four times more likely to conduct suspicion-less searches using drug-sniffing dogs. Reasonable suspicion to justify and conduct searches is often clouded by the implicit racial bias that the decision-makers have.</p> <p>Whether the search is being conducted by a school official or a police officer, you have the right to refuse the search. You do not have to consent to be searched. If your principal, the school resource officer, or a teacher ask you if they can search your locker or your backpack, you can refuse. However, schools may discipline you for not consenting and some schools have policies that require students to consent. Check to see what your school's (and district's) rules and policies are, and if they are not clear and easily found, ask for them to be made accessible to all students and the community.</p>
152	<p>Schools may not use evidence found in an illegal search against you in court. You have the right to refuse to be searched by school officials and police officers in your school.</p>
155	<p>You have the right not to salute the flag and not to participate in the Pledge of Allegiance or the national anthem without repercussions.</p> <p>You have the right to dress in clothes that are consistent with your gender identity and your gender expression. Schools cannot require you to wear clothes based on your assigned or perceived sex. They cannot create a dress code based on gendered stereotypes.</p> <p>...You have the right to go to school if you are undocumented, and you do not have to prove your immigration status. Your school cannot require you or your family to prove your immigration status.</p> <p>...You have the right to privacy and no one (including school and district administrators, faculty, and staff) should "out" you to your family, classmates, anyone.</p> <p>You have the right to join or form a Rainbow Club, a Gay-Straight Alliance, or any LGBTQIA +-related club if there are other clubs that aren't related to classes taught at your school.</p> <p>...You have the right to keep your transgender status private. Your school cannot disclose this information without your consent. You are protected by the federal privacy law.</p> <p>...You have the right to not be punished or excluded for having an abortion.</p>

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	<p>You have the right to keep your private medical information private; it cannot be shared with anyone without your consent.</p> <p>You have the right to attend doctor appointments and to take time off for giving birth and healing from childbirth in a judgment-free environment. Your school must provide accommodations for you if you are pregnant or have a medical condition that is temporary.</p>
161	<p>I chose the college because I wanted to attend a small college. I chose it because I needed a break from overly confident White boys.</p>
162	<p>Despite the ghost stories, our world was small and White and sugarcoated.</p> <p>We were told if the lake froze over in the wintertime (which it rarely did), it was because the freshman class were all virgins.</p> <p>...It was rumored that there was a local chapter of the Ku Klux Klan nearby. I hated walking alone on campus at night.</p>
163	<p>When I read through what I had written, I realized that there were no stories surrounding the joy being a Black student has brought me.</p> <p>...But I have witnessed that throughout my entire education, whenever race was brought into the classroom, it was done in a way that problematized my experience as a racialized student. That is, it was done in a way that focused on how terrible it was to be a Black student in the U.S. school system instead of on how bad U.S. school systems were to Black students.</p> <p>...Black, Indigenous, and other students of color aren't the problem. The problem is the ways in which school systems in the United States treat Black, Indigenous, and other students of color.</p> <p>...Racism, especially racism in educational spaces, has taught me that this world will do its best to reduce you to pieces.</p>
164	<p>I remember winning a spelling competition in the first grade, and my friend, another Black girl, getting upset and calling me darkness.</p>
165	<p>We attempted to find humor in our discomfort. "Caucasian overload," we'd whisper to one another as we filed down the church aisles.</p> <p>...All our teachers and administrators were white, and they didn't seem to understand the impact this had on the school and its students. I was often the only Black student in advanced classes.</p> <p>...The race-evasive approach the administrators utilized allowed them to ignore all the ways in which my white peers were prioritized. My Blackness was noticed only when it benefited my white classmates or teachers.</p> <p>...My success at the school hinged on me appealing to the interests of my white classmates and teachers. I often felt that the only reason I was there was to be of service to the white people; they assumed they had the right to demand it.</p> <p>While I often felt picked apart because of my race throughout my education, I was able to have my race centered in important ways both inside and outside of those various classrooms.</p>
166	<p>We came together because we felt a distance between us and our white peers.</p> <p>...We made a home for ourselves where we could exist specifically as students of color in a school dominated by whiteness that refused to acknowledge its racism.</p>
168	<p>I think I lost my way there for a bit, couldn't see past the fog of racism and whiteness.</p> <p>...While I know the hurt education has caused me because of racism, I also know the joy</p>

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	<p>education has brought to my life and why that’s worth pursuing. ...realize that my wholeness cannot be dependent on someone else’s ignorance or even systematic oppression. ...In toward yourself, to create and find narratives that haven’t been shaped by racism, and outward to the people who choose to see you and love you for who you really are.</p>
171	<p>“Typically, the people drawing up our cultural canons have been an elite group of scholars and critics” and are White cisgender men. Books by folks who identify as women, Black and Brown folks of the Global Majority, members of the LGBTQIA + community, and anyone who does not fit into the small box of the dominant culture have traditionally been left out of the discussions and decisions on what should be considered canonical. The American literary canon is a social construct. And, no surprise, most of the authors in the American literary canon are dead, White, cisgender men. ...One of them was born a light (White-passing) enslaved boy and the other was the White plantation owner’s son.</p>
172	<p>The real Tom returns to being a White man and becomes the heir to his family’s fortune, but because he was raised as an enslaved person, he finds that he no longer fits in anywhere, especially in the dominant society. The real Chambers loses his privileges as a White man and returns to being an enslaved person. ...That book was not the one we should have read to understand the way racism and socially created concepts like assimilation and enslavement and passing affected people’s lives. ...The course was really (without it being said) an exploration of the culture of Whiteness (as many college courses so often are).</p>
173	<p>On their way to a cabin in the mountains, they stop to get a drink at a bar, and Thelma is assaulted by a man. He tries to rape her, but Louise stops him, threatens to shoot him, then does shoot him after he insults her. ...The movie was a feminist anthem—or, rather, a White feminist anthem. ...For once, women were in the lead. They were making choices and decisions that affected their own lives and many others, and they were in charge of their sexuality and their narratives. ...The movie showed us how to react to and resist the male-dominated society. ...There was no representation of Black people, Indigenous people, or People of the Global Majority in the movie or in our Failure and Success in America course.</p>
175	<p>We were assured, as a group of young women on the verge of independence who were about to usher ourselves into a world that existed beyond our caregivers and childhood bedrooms, that the fictitious stories of White women were more important than the real-life stories of Black men, their families, and their communities.</p>
179	<p>We could have practiced using a critical lens to gain a deeper understanding of the way racism affects us all, of the criminal justice system, of the education system . . . we could have done so much with the book. Instead, my professor allowed a movie about two fictitious White women to be a substitute for a book about a very real Black man and his experiences in our country. ...In that class I learned that we were supposed to care only about the failure and, even more, the success of White folks. This was emphasized by the books we read and the movies we watched. I learned that the lives of Black people were not supposed to matter as much as the lives of White folks, whether they were fictional characters or very real individuals who walked the earth.</p>

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182	At my white high school, I never allowed myself the kind of public breakdown I thought only white girls were afforded.
183	And sometimes it was just easier to try to blend in, relying on the falsehood that I could be just like my White counterparts.
184	<p>Micro-and macroaggressions sliced through the classroom, opening fresh wounds on the few of us who dared to exist in the predominantly White space. Too much time and energy was given to their actions and, especially, to the mistruths and falsehoods they spilled onto the floor. Those moments forced me to speak on behalf of anyone who shared any identities with me—Black folks, biracial folks, Black biracial folks, folks who grew up in a single-parent home, kids of immigrants, people who lived in cities, folks who got weighed at the WIC clinic and shopped for groceries with food stamps, first-generation college kids, and so many other parts of me.</p> <p>I turned into the self-appointed representative or spokesperson for myself and so many others with shared, historically excluded identities.</p>
185	Other classmates nodded their heads willingly (or maybe unwillingly) and were often drawn to the charisma of the (usually) young, White, cisgender, heteronormative student who spoke with such unwarranted and assured certainty. They spoke with more authority than our professors. Which is probably why the professors rarely (if ever) called them out on their misinformation, bias, and racism.
187	<p>Directly across from us sat a White guy with floppy blond hair and a crooked smile.</p> <p>...He sat with his legs splayed out in front of him or sometimes spread out wide, and he took up as much of the physical space around him as possible.</p> <p>...He shared his opinion like it was gospel.</p> <p>...I didn't know him. I didn't like him. I didn't think much of him until his insufferable words sliced into my train of thought. He had no regard for people who held identities unlike his own.</p> <p>He wasn't easy to ignore. He took up a lot of space. Within his arguments (of which he made many), he blamed people. He blamed single mothers. He blamed Black people. He blamed Muslim people. But he never blamed the institutions. He never blamed the systems that oppressed. He never addressed the laws and policies and traditions and culture that forced injustice on us.</p> <p>And, a lot of us in that room, did the same—we blamed people over systems. Even when we were studying the history of society through different faiths with a critical lens, it was easier to blame people than whole foundational systems and institutions. We put individuals and groups of people at fault for oppressive systems rather than owning up to the reality that there are rules and structures that have been at play to cause division and harm for centuries.</p>
189	<p>All of my required English literature courses celebrated the works of dead, (usually) White, (usually) European men.</p> <p>...Rarely were books by female authors assigned, and when they were, the authors were almost always also dead, White, and European. We didn't read authors of the Global Majority. We didn't study artists of the Global Majority. ...Everything in every syllabus was so White because my professors were White . . . and most of the students in the college were White . . . and the college administrators were mostly White . . . and the board members were White . . . and the big-money donors were White . . . and because the</p>

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	<p>academic setting I was in maintained the rules of Whiteness as the default, and nobody questioned why.</p>
190	<p>Question why nearly all the professors are White—you'll get some answer about how there aren't enough Black people and Indigenous people and folks of the Global Majority with the appropriate degrees. And if you bring up how Black people and Indigenous people and folks of the Global Majority have been purposely excluded from higher education, you'll once again be labeled as a disruption and your question will go unanswered.</p> <p>Question why there are still way more White students attending your college—you'll probably hear about the diversity and inclusion initiatives of the school. ...Question why most of the administrators are White—you'll be told the university does an extensive and thorough search for the best candidates for the positions and the (usually White) people who are in those roles were really and truly the best people to fill those various positions. They have all the proper credentials, experience, and references.</p> <p>Question why the people on the board and the big donors of the college are nearly all White—you'll be told that doesn't matter. The folks on the board had some DEI training a couple of years ago and are donating their time and expertise to ensure the school is headed in a positive, sustainable, competitive direction. You might even hear something like "Anyone can donate to the school" or "No donation is too small." And you won't be given a response that actually addresses your question.</p> <p>Question why your college (and so much of academia in general) does so much to maintain the status quo of Whiteness and adheres to the characteristics of the culture of White domination—you will be made to feel like you are more than a disruption. You might possibly be made to feel like you don't belong and that your questioning is out of line. You might even be told that you are being racist by calling out racism. (You're not.) You will be dismissed—whether with a flick of the wrist, a dead-on stare, a back turned to you, or a quick phrase like "I think we're done here" or "I can't believe you're bringing this up now." ...I wasn't taught about oppressive systems, and I definitely wasn't taught that those systems can be dismantled.</p>
192	<p>Well, some folks are rewarded. Folks who fit into the dominant culture of our society are given opportunities by way of laws and policies and rules that keep them in the position of having more power and more resources. And folks who are historically excluded and marginalized aren't really a part of the reward system. Perhaps a few are so there is some kind of proof that the system isn't totally rigged against us.</p> <p>But it really is. And it's unfair and unjust.</p> <p>We know this because the number of Black men who are incarcerated is disproportionate to the number of White men.</p> <p>We know this because the number of Indigenous and Black people living in poverty is disproportionately higher than the number of White folks living in poverty. In 2020, the median household income for Americans was about \$ 67,500. The median income for White households in the United States was just under \$ 75,000. For Latine households, the median income dipped to about \$ 55,000, and for Black households and American Indian and Alaska Native households, it was about \$ 45,800. And the median income for Indigenous households on a reservation was about \$ 29,000. There's a big and purposeful difference in the amount of wealth and resources people have in our country!</p> <p>If we are taught at all about the huge discrepancies and injustices in our humanity, we are often told that it is the fault of the people (whether they are individuals or groups).</p>

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	<p>...We're taught that Black people and African Americans are poor because they're lazy and prefer to live off government assistance rather than get a job. We're taught that there's an educational achievement gap between Native American students and White students because Native Americans don't have the aptitude for learning. We're taught that Latine folks are all immigrants and refuse to learn English. We're taught that all Asian people and people of Asian descent are quiet and studious and compliant.</p> <p>...Institutions collude to keep the stereotypes alive. They work to keep the old status quo that is the culture of White dominance as part of our systems because if things change, power shifts.</p> <p>The work of racism is very much steeped in power and the maintenance of that power. Working to keep things "racially balanced" in our schools so that People of the Global Majority, particularly Black folks, would never actually be in the majority anywhere was about power. Not hiring more Black and Brown professors and administrators at colleges and universities and upholding the culture of dominance is about power. Not including more authors, scientists, creators, artists, dancers, builders, and so on of the Global Majority in the course assignments is about power. Not admitting more students of the Global Majority and not offering college fees (such as tuition and room and board) on a sliding scale that reflects the gap that exists between different racial and ethnic groups in our country is about power.</p> <p>It is the misuse and abuse of power by these institutions that we need to blame, not individuals and groups of people.</p>
194	<p>I also learned that people like me, Black biracial, first-generation college kids who grew up poor, weren't supposed to be in colleges like the ones I went to . . . unless they were willing to assimilate into the dominant culture. I learned that it was supposedly okay to leave out the majority of the world population in any thought process, in writing, in discussions, in everyday life. I learned that when I chose to do things differently, to speak up, to write truth that was my own, and to push back against the sugarcoated whitewashed history, I was quickly dealt a hand of naysaying lectures thrown at me by those with the power and those who wanted that power.</p>
197	<p>Schooling is a trap.</p> <p>...The not-so-hidden curriculum teaches you the Western European-centric version of yourself. You learn about world wars. You learn about Europe's heroes. All men. All white. You learn that Africans and Asians needed to be civilized. You learn that British benefactors brought schools to these lands for our own betterment. You learn to read Shakespeare and admire all things European.</p> <p>...You speak and behave like a brown-skinned Westerner. You devalue your own roots and reject them. You are highly educated but do not realize you are extremely misinformed. You believe you are bettering yourself. You believe you are better. You become elitist, and this is by schooling's design. You become trapped in internalized oppressive ways of being in the world.</p>
198	<p>Schooling is a vast ocean of oppression.</p> <p>Schooling is an entrapment in colonialism.</p> <p>Schooling is designed by colonizers to oppress while fronting as freedom.</p> <p>Schooling, for you, has been largely about conformity and not freedom.</p>
199	<p>You refuse to become a colonized oppressor repeating cycles of harm. You begin to unlearn, learn, and relearn new ways of being.</p>

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202	<p>Abuela’s movement inspired poetry. Grandma’s movement resisted. Ana Flecha, a veteran of U.S. colonialism, a dropout of the educational system that banned Spanish and the Puerto Rican flag, made sure I knew how to do physically what a colonizer’s education forced her to do linguistically and spiritually. Grandma taught me how to defy, how and when to hit.</p> <p>...Mobility lives at the intersection of inequities: racism, ableism, homophobia, racism.</p>
207	<p>Before we end this book, let’s pause here to talk about some of the most common ways racism shows up in schooling spaces. Actually, let’s be real—it shows up everywhere, but since the focus of this book is on school and schooling, we’ll stick to that.</p> <p>Some things can be easily and directly linked to racism. You can see something and hear it and know that it is racism immediately. Other times, many other times, it may not be as obvious. This is because the culture of White domination is so deeply embedded in our society that it’s what we think of as normal.</p> <p>...The dominant parts of the culture, things like fear, perfectionism, binary thinking, individualism, and “the worship of the written word,” exist in our school systems because they are part of the foundation of our country, and that foundation includes racism and oppression.</p> <p>In 1999, educator, artist, author, and activist Tema Okun and her colleague Kenneth Jackson Jones published an article titled “White Supremacy Culture.” The article laid out information that helps us understand the dominant culture of our institutions and country and how it exists in our everyday lives. (The article has since been updated, and you can read more about it at whitesupremacyculture.info.)</p> <p>In this book, I use the term WHITE SUPREMACY because it is the term we are more familiar with, and I also use the term WHITE DOMINATION. My friend Britt Hawthorne taught me that using White domination instead of White supremacy allows us to shift out of the old way of thinking that white people are superior to others. (Britt, like me, is a Black biracial educator and author. They do a lot of work with schools and teachers and help them build more just and equitable, bold and anti-racist spaces.) The term White domination more accurately depicts what is happening in the culture. I also think folks get caught up in the imagery of White supremacists when we talk about White supremacy culture. We know what the Ku Klux Klan and Nazis were like, and we’re familiar with the atrocities they inflicted on so many people. White supremacy culture is not the same as White supremacists. White supremacists are individuals and groups who believe that people who are White are supreme and should dominate society. White supremacy culture describes the ways in which colonizers and White folks with power have created Whiteness and the idea that there is a racialized hierarchy with White folks at the top of it. White supremacy and its culture are a construct that defines who is fully human and who is not. In this book we will use the term White domination when we’re learning about White supremacy and its culture to help us better understand how dominant this is in our country and society. I hope that gaining a deeper understanding of the culture of White domination will help us use more accurate language, which, I recognize, takes time.</p> <p>The culture of White domination is inescapable.</p> <p>Sometimes it’s obvious, like when you look around at the people working at your school and notice the majority of the teachers and administrators are White and most of the support staff are Brown and Black folks. Or you might notice that many of the books you are assigned are written by White authors, a lot of whom are men who died years ago. But other times, it might not be so obvious, like when you’re feeling rushed to complete an</p>

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	<p>assignment and hand it in on time without understanding the purpose of the work. You might also notice that students who complete their math assignments quickly are rewarded for how fast they worked rather than for the process they used to solve the problem. The culture of White domination is a part of everything, and when we let it be our normal, it divides us from other people and communities. It can even divide us from ourselves. It harms us all, especially BIPOC people and our communities.</p> <p>Tema Okun reminds us that while “White supremacy culture informs us, it does not define us. It is a construct, and anything constructed can be deconstructed and replaced.”</p> <p>Understanding what some of the characteristics are and what they look like in our schools and our communities can help us to resist them and break free of the hold this dominant culture has on us.</p> <p>What is the purpose of White domination?</p> <p>The goal of White domination is to divide people from each other. And it makes us afraid of people who are different from us. Racism is a tool of the culture of White domination, just as ableism, transphobia, classism, sexism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all the other oppressive-isms and-phobias are.</p> <p>The culture of White domination is everywhere in everything in society. It’s part of the values and belief systems in our daily lives—including our schooling. It has some of us convinced that Whiteness is valuable and in fact has more value than any other race. It targets BIPOC people and communities and harms us all. White domination has shaped what we view as and believe to be normal. Thankfully, what has been constructed can be deconstructed and what we know as normal can change.</p> <p>White domination has features and attributes, and when you know what they are and how they manifest in our lives, you are better able to resist them.</p>
211	<p>Fear is the driving force of White domination.</p> <p>...In school, fear shows up in many different ways. It comes in the way history is told through emphasizing conflict and differences among people and countries (often based on different religions, social, and political beliefs). We fear not being the best and being powerless and we fear for our safety. It lives in the ways we’re encouraged to compete with one another, whether for the highest grades, for college acceptance, in the sports we play.</p>
212	<p>Paternalism is a way of holding power and control over people (individuals, groups, even whole countries) by giving some folks barely enough resources to meet their basic needs and by withholding their rights.</p> <p>...Paternalism limits people’s right to autonomy and independence and sets up the belief that the persons/ people/ organizations who are “helping” are superior and necessary.</p>
213	<p>To be qualified means they may have the proper qualifications and requirements that have been defined by the dominant culture of the country (having a college degree, passing certain exams, and so on). However, these qualifications are often not easy to obtain and require the person to have more resources (time, money, energy) and advantages in life.</p>
216	<p>We learn about enslavement without ever reading or hearing stories of those who were enslaved. We learn about World War II and what happened in Europe without learning about how our own country imprisoned Japanese, Japanese Americans, and citizens of Japanese descent in internment camps at the same time. We don’t usually learn about racism and genderism and homophobia and all the other oppressive tools used by the culture of White domination, and that very silence is the denial of our lives and our</p>

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	<p>histories. We've heard phrases like "I don't see color!" and "We're all the same!" and "We're all a family!" and while the intent behind these is often to unite people, the impact is that we feel more divided because we're denied our full humanity in spaces. Upholding the belief that only some have a right to comfort, that people in power have the right to emotional, physical, and psychological comfort while others do not, is another characteristic of the culture of White dominance.</p>
218	<p>I'm still working on deconstructing the ways in which White domination exists within me. It's not easy to resist and unlearn the things that seem so "normal" and typical. Spending time learning about my own social and personal identities, where I hold power and where I do not, has helped. Connecting with people who are working on unlearning, undoing, and resisting the culture of White domination has also helped.</p> <p>...Reading and listening to other folks who are sharing the ways the culture of White domination has affected their lives and noticing when and where it shows up in me and in the systems I am part of also helps me to deconstruct a little more.</p> <p>...We have all witnessed, experienced, and dealt with racism in schools.</p>
219	<p>The culture of White domination is the underlying constant of so many of our stories because it's a part of the very foundation of our country and the institutions we are a part of.</p>

Derogatory Term	Count
Nigger	3