

DAY 5: The Impact of Racial Trauma on Black, Indigenous and other People of Color

“It took many years of vomiting up all the filth I’d been taught about myself, and half-believed, before I was able to walk on the earth as though I had a right to be here.” — [James Baldwin](#)

On October 12, 2019, [Atatiana Jefferson](#), a black woman, was murdered by a police officer in her home and in front of her nephew, while playing video games with him. A welfare check up, requested by her Black neighbor, was the impetus for the call to police. Weeks after her death, her father died of a massive heart attack.

Whether you agree or disagree with the actions of the responding police officer, news like this is traumatizing and re-traumatizing to people of color. It is like a wound that never heals. Research has linked racism to psychological distress, physical health problems, depression, anxiety, and trauma. The internalization of bias and oppression can cause great distress to minds, bodies, and spirits.

As Dr. Monnica Williams of the University of Connecticut has written: “What we really need is a large-scale shift in our social consciousness to understand the toll this takes on the psyche of victims so that even small acts of racism become unacceptable. We need those who witness racism to speak out and victims to be believed.”

Today’s Challenge:

OPTION 1: Join the 4th annual National Day of Racial Healing. Held on January 21st, it’s an opportunity for people to engage in honest conversations and experiences to build relationships. Because healing is at the heart of racial equity. [Tune into the livestream on the 21st to watch the event.](#) Visit [dayofracialhealing.org](#) to find [tools and resources](#) to prepare your own event or activity.

OPTION 2: We invite you to read this [short article by Dr. Williams](#) to better understand the effects that racism can have on your mental health.

OPTION 3: Read this list of [8 ways to practice self-care](#) to support you and your loved ones when you are personally affected by racism.

OPTION 4: Did you know that University of Michigan professor [Dr. Enrique W. Neblett, Jr.](#) is one of the leading scholars on racism-related stress and the impact it has on physical and mental health? His research has been cited in Psychology Today articles on [why students of color feel like imposters](#) and [why it is important for black parents to talk about racism](#).

OPTION 5: Listen to this [Washtenaw United episode](#) interviewing attorney Michael Kiehne and Michigan Works! Washtenaw County Service Manager Johnny Epps discuss the importance of reintegration and reentry support after conviction.

Share your reflections on today's topic on social media using the hashtag [#unitedforequity](#) and tag [@uwwashtenaw](#).