

STUDY AND REFLECTION GUIDE OF

TRANSFORMING GHOSTS INTO ANCESTORS: UN - SILENCING THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CASE FOR REPARATIONS TO DESCENDANTS OF AMERICAN SLAVERY AUTHORS: BRYAN NICHOLS, PhD. And MEDRIA CONNOLLY, PhD.

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1. Our authors, Nichols and Connolly, remind us that reparations, a formal apology and financial compensation, have been paid to Japanese Americans and Jewish Holocaust survivors and Native Americans. However, there is an intense emotional reaction to the idea of reparations for African Americans. This intense reaction involves moral injury.

Moral Injury is defined by:

- When one is ordered to engage in acts of killing that violates one's moral code of right and wrong
- The moral wounds soldiers sustained by "perpetrating, failing to prevent, or bearing witness to acts that transgressed deeply held moral beliefs and expectations."
- Dishonoring the enemy
- Resides in both conscious and unconscious contents

Discuss the concept of moral injury. What meaning does it have for you?

2. Our authors maintain that "the moral injury residing in the U.S. white collective (with respect to Slavery and the resulting discrimination) is largely unconscious and protected by various forms of denial." Can you cite some examples of our country's denial?

3. The concept of White Fragility has been used to explain how white Americans cope with acknowledging moral injury. What are some examples of white fragility? What are some examples of the white backlash when African Americans pursue equality?

4. We need a "conscious, collective, emotional "knowing" about the legacy of slavery." Otherwise, our moral wounds of slavery will show up as metaphorical ghosts. Is it truly possible for the ghosts of American slavery to be integrated into our culture as ancestors?

5. Our authors state that the ghosts are spirits of both former slaves and former slave owners. Do you agree? Please explain?

6. "The past always haunts the present" "The past is never dead. It's not even past." How do we reach people who do not embrace this concept?

7. Historians have stated that slavery was begun to reap financial gain. However, racism was used to justify slavery and racism has been transmitted inter-generationally – another

ghost. Can you discuss how Americans continue to define African Americans as inferior? As Animalistic? As un-deserving?

8. Can you discuss how reparation discussions become distorted by projection?

9. Do you think it is possible for white people to confront their guilt for the harm done to black people and support reparations? What would facilitate this?

10. White Americans must contend with feelings of shame to embrace the concept of reparations. To manage shame, white Americans must assume responsibility for undoing this racist system. How does a white American accomplish this? Can you give examples?

11. The authors state that healing would come to African Americans when we demand reparations. It would be “an affirmation of humanity.” Receiving reparations would heal the hurt, anger and mistrust of African Americans. Do you believe that reparations would have such healing functions? How?

12. Discuss the function of the defenses of splitting and projective identification in racism. How would reparations challenge the use of these defenses?

13. The contemporary reparations movement has been given more power, more hope by:

- Ta-Nehisi Coates’ widely-read essay, “The Case for Reparations”
- The mass demonstrations protesting police shootings of black men and women
- President Barack Obama’s presidency and his suggestion that Trayvon Martin could have been him may have helped white Americans to identify with the injustices of black Americans.
- White inability to identify with the injustices experienced by black Americans has been a key aspect of white resistance to reparations.

Do you agree with the above statements? What has given the reparations movement more hope?

14. Since some African people sold Africans into slavery in the Americas, why should white Americans even consider reparations?

15. For those of us educated in the United States public school system, what is your memory of the education you received about slavery? Was slavery discussed at all? Why?

