

## Community Updates

The holiday season is upon us and is a time to appreciate the wonderful variety of celebrations that exist, while also realizing that some choose to celebrate none. A good way to increase awareness and inclusion in your work place is to display a multicultural calendar noting important cultural events throughout the year.

Here are a few to start you off:

International Day of Disabled Persons 12/03  
 Krampusnacht 12/05  
 St. Nicholas Day 12/05  
 Feast of Immaculate Conception 12/08  
 Human Rights Day 12/10  
 Bill of Rights Day 12/15  
 Hanukkah 12/18 to 12/26  
 St. Lucia Day 12/13  
 Winter Solstice 12/21/2022  
 Las Posadas 12/16  
 Winter Solstice 12/20 to 12/23  
 Festivus 12/23  
 Christmas Eve 12/24  
 Christmas 12/25  
 Kwanzaa 12/26 to 01/01  
 Wounded Knee Day 12/29  
 Osaka 12/31  
 New Year's Eve 12/21/2022  
 New Year's Day 01/01  
 National Braille Day 01/04  
 Coptic Orthodox Christmas 01/06  
 Maghi (sikh) 01/13  
 Martin Luther King Jr. Day 01/16  
 Lunar New Year 01/22  
 International Holocaust Remembrance Day 01/27

## Rachel's Corner

Psych Outside the Box: Somatic Abolitionism

Featuring Resmaa Menakem, MSW, LICSW, SEP

The following Diversity Development Digest column is intended to introduce readers to psychologists with diverse and intersecting identities and foster engagement with psychological theories that challenge eurocentrism in the field of psychology.

“While we see anger and violence in the streets of our country, the real battlefield is inside our bodies” – Resmaa Menakem

Resmaa Menakem is a healer, trauma specialist, and author of New York Times bestseller *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies*. Menakem created Somatic Abolitionism, which is an approach to racialized healing that utilizes the body, endurance, stamina, and discernment as mechanisms of change. Somatic Abolitionism is considered an emergent way of being in the world and embodying anti-racist practices to grow into a fuller human experience individually and collectively. Somatic Abolitionism is intended to draw attention to and target the ways in which bodies of all cultures are impacted by racial oppression.

Menakem's work combines old wisdom and new science to navigate the ways in which we carry racialized trauma in our bodies. Menakem coined the term *white body supremacy* to describe trauma responses that occur on a physiological level resulting from intergenerational exposure to oppressive race-based bias. White body supremacy captures policies, practices, and attitudes that center the white body as dominant and worthy in comparison to all other persons. Menakem conceptualizes white body supremacy as a virus, infecting bodies of all cultures. White body supremacy manifests on individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels. Research

in the field of epigenetics suggests that trauma and resilience are transferred genetically across generations; thus, our bodies are influenced by centuries of exposure to racialized trauma. The term white body supremacy highlights that racism is not just a cognitive experience, but also an unconscious physiological experience. Reflexive central nervous system responses that are informed by generations of racial bias continue to sustain systems of racism. These physiological processes occur unconsciously at the cellular level. Menakem poses that these deeply embedded patterns of white body supremacy must be addressed somatically, not just cognitively. Menakem's work addresses white supremacy as an intellectual term, that tends to cognitive aspects of racialized trauma, but falls short in terms of addressing genetically transferred physiological reactions informed by generations of white body supremacy.

In *My Grandmother's Hands* Menakem examines the damage that racism causes in America through the lens of trauma-informed and body centered psychology. Menakem asserts that racialized destruction will continue to grow until Americans learn to heal generations of white body supremacy which is deeply embedded in all of our individual and cultural bodies. *My Grandmother's Hands* features somatic methods of healing from white body supremacy for African Americans, White Americans, and blue Americans (i.e., Americans in the police force). Menakem's writings are works of advocacy for Somatic Abolitionism as a method of change. Menakem asserts that Somatic Abolitionism requires repetitive action and confrontation of the brutality of race and the impacts of racialized trauma across generations. Menakem offers wisdom, intelligence, and somatic tools for healing in his books and online courses. He encourages movement toward a new way of understanding racialized trauma and learning to heal it on individual levels with the hope that this

healing ripples outward into our institutions and collective culture.

If you would like to learn more, here are some resources:

Menakem, R. (2017). *My grandmother's hands: Racialized trauma and the pathway to mending our hearts and Bodies*. Penguin Books.

*Somatic abolitionism: Anti-racist practices*. Resmaa Menakem | Embodied Anti-Racist Education. (n.d.). Retrieved December 19, 2022, from <https://www.resmaa.com/movement>

Tippett, K. (2021, November 8). *Resmaa Menakem - 'notice the rage; notice the silence'*. The On Being Project. Retrieved December 19, 2022, from <https://onbeing.org/programs/resmaa-menakem-notice-the-rage-notice-the-silence/>

-Rachel Roewer, MA