

Book Review

Saad, L. F. (2020). *Me and white supremacy: Combat racism, change the world, and become a good ancestor*. Sourcebooks.

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Journal of Social Work Values and Ethics, Volume 17, Number 2 (2020)
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What started out as an Instagram challenge has become a monumentally important book for white people to read. No, not read. Work through. Journal. Cry. Feel the heat of shame in your cheeks. And ultimately, make the commitment to “become a good ancestor.” Spoiler alert—though this workbook is designed to be completed in 28 days, it will stay with you each and every day after that. In this summer of learning, I engaged with Layla Saad’s first book each and every day, for the full 28 days, answering the questions, unearthing the painful and humiliating preconceptions I STILL hold. It was hard work and a labour of necessity. Allow this work to break your heart open...and then do the work. As Saad writes “BIPOC (Black, Indigenous & People of Colour) do not get a day off from your white supremacy.” (Day 6).

Layla Saad is “a writer, speaker, and podcast host on the topics of race, identity, leadership, personal transformation, and social change...[and] an East African, Arab, British, Black, Muslim woman [who is] driven by her powerful desire to become a good ancestor, to live and work in ways that leave a legacy of healing and liberation for those who will come after she is gone” (about the author). This is Layla Saad’s first book and is expanded and enriched with more history and context than the Instagram challenge.

The chapters follow a 28-day cycle and are grouped by the theme of the week, starting with “The Basics,” then heading into “Anti-Blackness, Racial Stereotypes and Cultural Appropriation,” then onto

“Allyship,” and ending with “Power, Relationships and Commitments.” The daily titles tell you exactly what you will be addressing and provide directive, personalized reflective journaling prompts at the end of each day. The quotes used at the start of each day provide more works to explore. For example, on Day 19, “You and Optical Allyship,” the starting quotation is from Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche’s *Americanah*: “Racism should never have happened, and so you don’t get a cookie for reducing it” (p. 155).

This book leads you through confronting and understanding your white privilege and requires you to answer how white supremacy shows up in your life, how white fragility makes you an unreliable ally, and how white centering, white saviourism, and white exceptionalism help you to not see how you are causing harm to BIPOC. The foreword is written by Robin D’Angelo, noted author of *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*, who justly opines, “This book is a gift of compassion from a brilliant Black woman willing to guide you through a deep examination of white racial conditioning in service of your liberation.” I recommend this book for every white social worker, student, and faculty member. Saad makes recommendations that folks with two socially constructed racial identities also can make use of this book. There is also information on how to join book circles to journey through the work together. I did not do this, as I didn’t want to get caught up in intellectual argument or, worse, censor my true answers to the questions posed each day.

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But you might be braver than me. The book ends with resources and a call to committed actions, even including suggested activities.

This book, *Me and White Supremacy*, is a comprehensive, scholarly, personal, logical, exquisitely designed, accessibly written change-maker of a workbook. Do not expect a gentle whisper of discomfort as you make your way through it, yet as Saad points out, “[T]here is no safety in the work. There has been no safety for BIPOC under white supremacy” (p. 243).