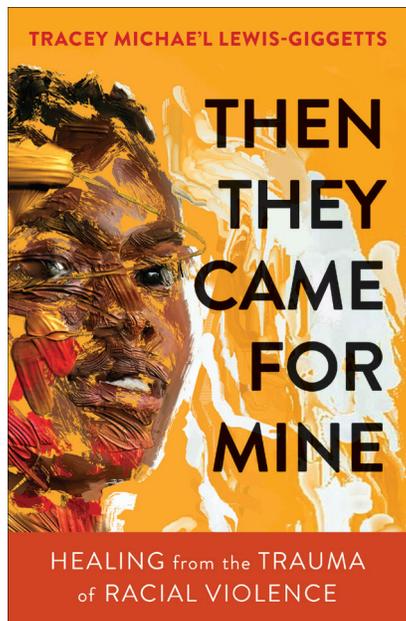


Then They Came for Mine, by Tracey Michae'l Lewis-Giggetts

Discussion Guide



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1. The book's title was inspired by the Martin Niemoller poem that ends "Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me." Lewis-Giggetts also quotes James Baldwin, who wrote, "If they come for me in the morning, they will come for you in the night." Do you ever consider that the time may come when you are at risk? Why or why not?
2. Do you have experience with trauma symptoms? What could it look like to have the collective trauma of Black people acknowledged and addressed on a community or national level?
3. What are some of the unique experiences and consequences that emerge from intersecting identities of race and gender? How have you been shaped by the intersections of your own identities?
4. The author discusses various origin points for racism—justification for slavery, pseudo-scientific categorization, white supremacy, etc—many of which seem like chicken-or-egg situations. What do you think is the cause of racism?
5. Have you ever considered that resilience can have a downside? What are the pros and cons of learning to endure numerous hardships?
6. Do you think it is reasonable to expect victims' families to offer forgiveness to perpetrators? Is there a timeline for forgiveness, and if so, who should be the arbitrator of that timeline? What do you think of the author's metaphor that asking people who are consistently victimized to forgive is like "trying to heal while still bleeding"?
7. Were you aware of policing's origins in the United States, or the many unprosecuted killings of Black men and women in the century following emancipation? Do you think progress has been made in the time since then? What remains to be done so Black Americans can feel safe in their bodies and their neighborhoods?

8. How are laws applied differently to Black and white communities? Do you think the terms white supremacy and white privilege are applicable when examining the legal and social landscape in the U.S.?
9. On p. 66, the author says, "As I stare into the void of my heritage, I call white people to stare into the reality of theirs." What do you see when you stare into your heritage? How does the past affect your life today?
10. What does it mean to have the privilege of staying silent or the privilege of being colorblind? When have you been hurt by another's silence or stayed silent when you should have spoken up?
11. Name some of the intersecting and compounding factors that cause problems in some urban communities with large Black populations. Do you feel compelled to name one root cause? If so, what is it?
12. How do you (and your faith community, if applicable) respond when you hear news of Black people being shot in a grocery store or church by a racist white man? What about when the shooter is a police officer? How can we avoid being desensitized to continual violence against Black communities? Do you agree with the author that white people have "had their empathy eroded over time"?
13. The author quotes Martin Luther King Jr., who said "A riot is the language of the unheard." Do you understand that statement more now that you have read this book?
14. What are the complicating factors of blaming racist violence on mental illness? How do you respond to the idea that racist violence is "not a bug but a feature" of our social system in the U.S.?
15. Do you agree that white people have experienced racialized trauma from which they also need to heal? Why or why not?
16. How have both Black and white people absorbed white-centered standards of beauty? How do standards and stereotypes of appearance, body type, and lifestyle affect the images we are presented with in the media and the way we receive them?
17. How would you define the differences between allies, accomplices, and co-conspirators? What examples of each have you seen or yourself embodied in the ongoing fight for justice?
18. Lewis-Giggetts opens her final chapter with a story about taking the "polar bear plunge" as a way to embrace discomfort and mark a transition in her own healing, and later tells a story about a hike that exemplified the work still to be done. What significant actions have you taken or could you take to honor and advance your own journey of healing?