international university students are non the biggest of the biggest of microme for Australia but if we continue to tolerate racism in our workprinking, universities won't be a superscription of the students of the the losing those students."

#### AVOID TOKENISM

Mind Tribes co-founder Div Pillay warns cultural intelligence programs can be tokenistic, as though an organisation is protected by adopting it without necessarily following through. Mind Tribes helps professional women experiencing bias at work and consults organisations to

"Cultural intelligence is a way to look at the problem of racism in the workplace and is good as a foundation but people also need to

If someone doesn't feel safe at work it's likely they're feeling that way when servicing a customer

be held accountable," Pillay says. "Not enough companies are applying any of the intelligence in decision-making and no one follows up on whether the CQ wa applied in a selection interview. There needs to be checks on whether it's being applied, especially in hiring and promotional decisions because that's where it matters most." The effect on the sufferer of racism is palpable, with Mind Tribes and CPSU research findin anviety. deression, loss of

#### for Wellness

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#### A Digital Toolkit by FAIR**WORK**™

FOR RIGHT TO WORK

#### **ISSUE #01**

#### 03 Summary

We Are More than Conquerors

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*Press this button to come back to this page at anytime.* 

## Summary wearemore than conquerors

The most important thing about this toolkit is for us Sisters to realize that even when we recognize racism, it's completely up to us how we choose to navigate it. Some of us may choose to confront it. Some of us may choose to ignore it. Some of us may opt to remove ourselves from it altogether. (Note that Black women left workplaces and started their own businesses in record numbers between 2014 to 2019; freedom from patriarchal and racist workplaces were key factors) (Barrons, 2021). But, the most important thing is to recognize racism in the workplace and to do what is necessary to protect your space, your mental and physical health, your earning potential, especially if needed for your family or your lifestyle.

How can we do what is needed and be anti-racist and block that negative energy with all that comes at us in our various workplaces? It's doable, and this toolkit will help us all be aware of using ART for our optimal health as Black women.



As you navigate through this toolkit, know that it's built to help you process racism encountered at work, so that you can get what you need to focus on working in the healthiest way possible. It's built for you to take what you need on various days, knowing that on some days, you may not need anything from this toolkit at all. Other days, you might need it 4 or 5 times just to get through the day!

#### Let's get started!



Dr. Madeline Y. Sutton Author



#### Adjective

: equipped or protected with covering to prevent injury



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For too long, powerful people have expected the people they have mistreated and marginalized to sacrifice themselves to make things whole. The burden of working for racial justice is laid on the very people bearing the brunt of the injustice, and not the powerful people who maintain it. I say to you: I refuse."

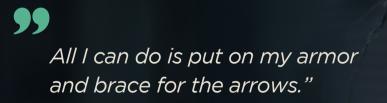
- Dr. Nikole Hannah-Jones

When we are armored up in the context of potentially racist work environments and/or people, we have taken the time to prepare mentally, physically and emotionally for situations, people, entities that may come for us and try to disturb our peace and/or our health. Environments that are not conducive for our learning or mental and emotional wellness can be contributed factors to stress and health problems such as coronary heart disease, memory and concentration impairment, headaches, etc. Thus leading to low performance and commitment to work. (Patro & Kumar, 2019) When we are armored up, we have taken the time to be equipped or protected with covering to prevent injury from assaults that may come at us.



In today's workplaces, being armored up often requires that we tap into multiple sources as part of being anti-racist. Coping with racism and discrimination is psychologically taxing and for this reason we suggest coping by reading, by studying, by getting advice from elders or others with experience in certain workplaces, by surrounding ourselves with music and sources of laughter and strength, by being more physically fit, by being ready.

Readiness doesn't mean that we are looking for a fight, but that we are protected with armor if and when someone demonstrates discriminatory behavior against us. We will address emotion-focused and problem-focused coping strategies within this toolkit to armor you with the knowledge and resources to combat the negative effects of workplace racism and discrimination.



- Jamie Kennedy

## reading as armor

There are many books that can help us "get our minds right" when it comes to navigating racist spaces; they have content that can help you strengthen your resolve and prevent or decrease the impact of an injury.

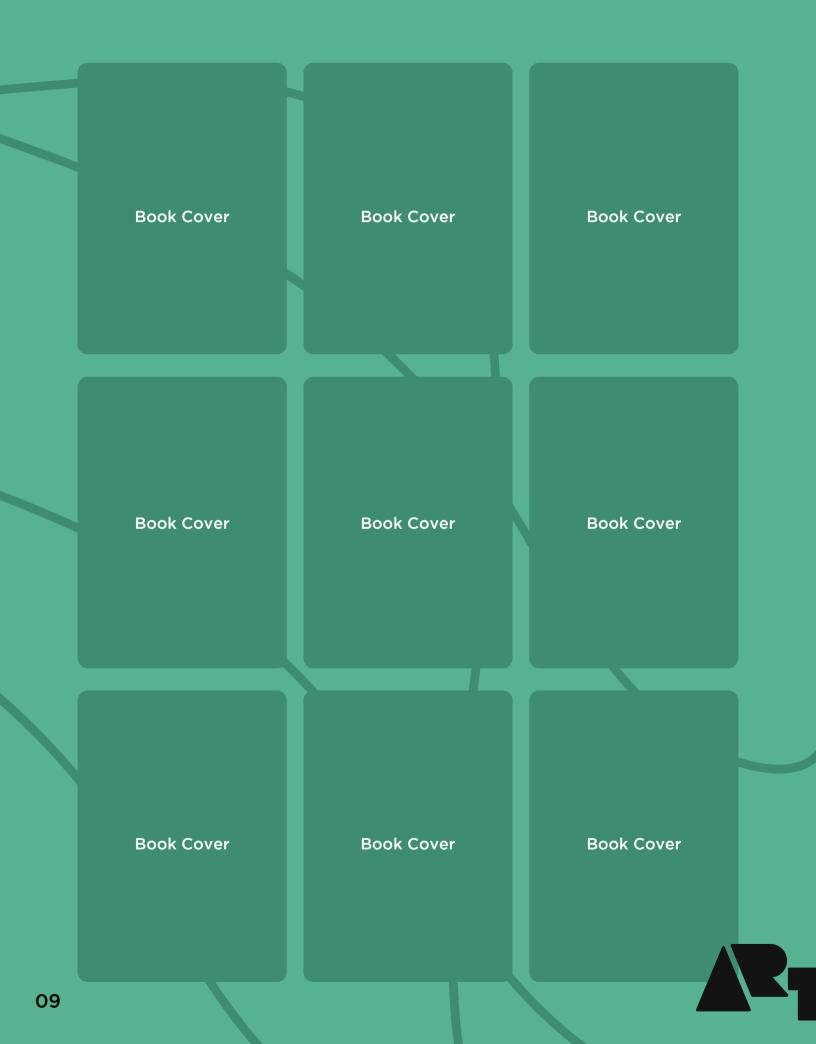
We list a few reading resources here, and we encourage you to constantly explore other resources and add to this list and your own list as part of expanding your armor.

Check out our virtual library on the next page to see examples of reading resources below and select a book cover to learn more:









# music Marine Mar

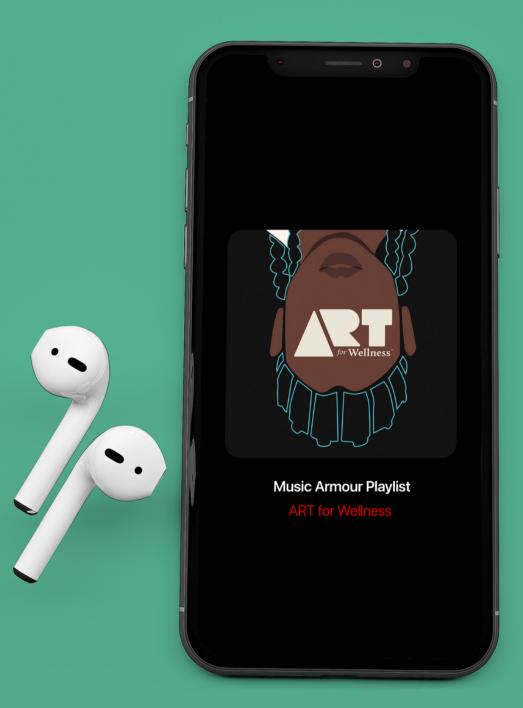
As a people, we enjoy a wide range of music that provides us solace and lifts our spirits. Music can bring a positive energy that can serve as armor against daily stressors that we might face in the workplace, including racism. Most distinctive forms of Black/African American music today, including jazz, rhythm and blues, hip-hop, and neo-soul, are rooted in Black (Negro) spirituals. Spirituals are rooted in our Black/African American experiences of weariness and resistance, that when Issa Rae famously tweeted, "deep, heavy, negro spiritual sigh" in 2017, nothing else needed to be said for us all to understand that she was in a space of weariness, but also resistance.

There are often too many spaces of weariness for Black/African American women, especially in the workplace. This can be exemplified by inadequate benefits, pay, respect, and assistance in comparison to their counterparts. We encourage you to surround yourself with music that can help create armor for you at the workplace.



*The music is not just in the notes, it's in the silence between them."* 

- Mozart



Click the iPhone above to access our curated playlist



## physical activity as armor

Physical movement, whether it's an exercise class, kickboxing, running on the treadmill, or taking a leisurely walk outside, all cause our bodies to release chemicals that help uplift our moods. These chemicals are called endorphins; they help decrease our perception of pain, and they are also associated with decreased stress and improved self-esteem. The more endorphins we have in our systems, the more armored up we are for things that may come at us in the course of a workday.

Physical activity is also a way to cope with stressful work and stressful situations. It can help reduce the impace of stress-eating, subsequent increased risk for diabetes and/or hypertension. The more physically and mentally fit we are, the stronger our armor. If you have not moved as much lately, try doing one activity 2-3 times a week, then as you develop a liking for certain activities, increase how frequently you do them. Please be sure to check with your healthcare provider if you are newly starting a program. [a collage of physical activity suggestions]

[CYL2 Program Promo]

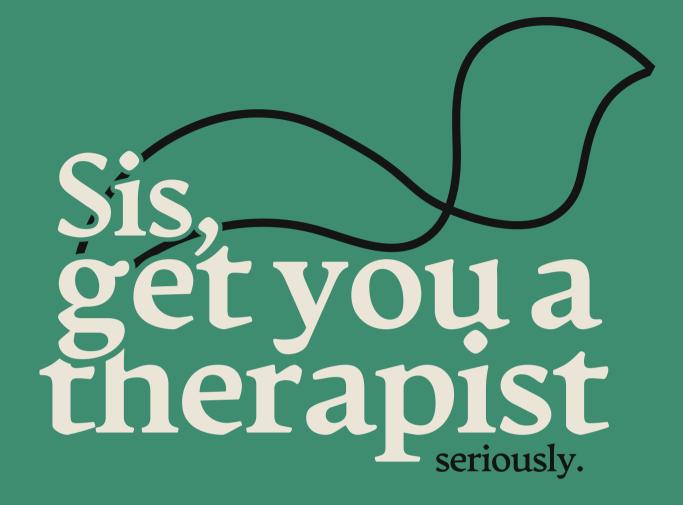


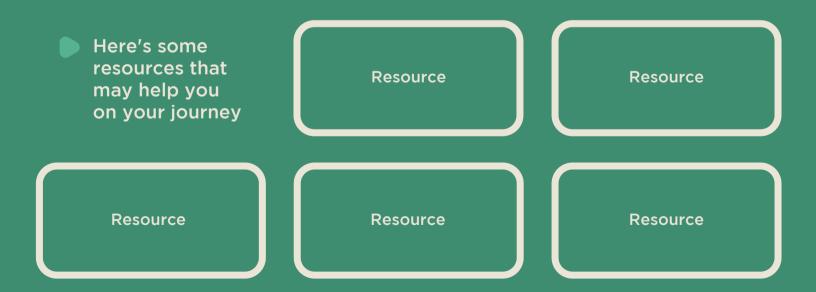
# mentalhealth

Racial trauma can increase Black/African American's prevalence for developing Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) due to both the mental and physical effects. As well as depression and anxiety. Historically, utilizing therapy resources have been challenging due to associated stigmas and the fear of being shamed or viewed as lesser than. In 2020, more than 80% of Black Americans were more concerned with the stigmas associated with mental illness which in turn discouraged them from seeking treatment. (Specialist et al., 2022)

Be proactive with ensuring that your mental health is as healthy as can be by exploring your nontraditional coping and treatment options. You can attend therapy, virtual or physically join a group to build stronger community, journal, create a safe space, and or limit your consumptions of substances such as alcohol, caffeine, social media, etc. By talking with objective, unbiased support persons, whether individually or in group sessions, we start to bring a voice to the centuries of trauma, racism, disproportionate policing and law enforcement, less pay for equal work, and so much more. There are more culturally-tailored resources being created for Black women, so let's check them out as part of our efforts to be as armored up as possible.







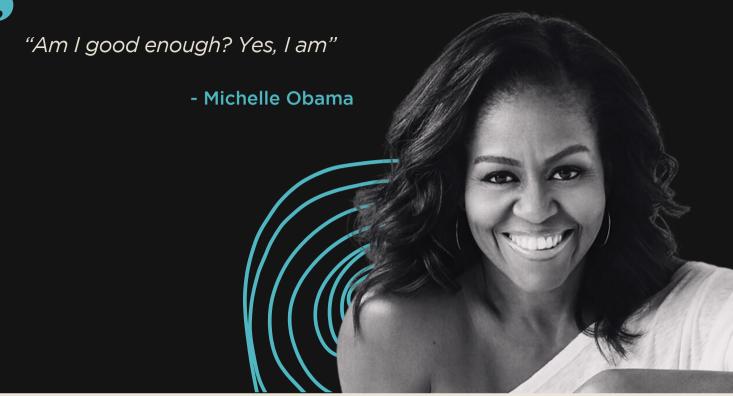




Refreshers to stay armored up everyday



#### **,**



Being armored up requires daily refreshers, especially if your workplace requires you to be physically present in a work environment every day. We can't get complacent as we try to navigate racism in our workplaces. So, each day, consider entering work spaces and starting with brief meditations, and also surrounding yourself with positive affirmations.

An affirmation is a positive statement that helps to overcome negative thoughts and feelings, and they help restore our confidence. Affirmations, whether you say them in the morning, at lunchtime, or before bed at night, help speak life into you, and can go a long way in helping to decrease stress responses that can be triggered by workplace racism.



[Collage of Affirmations]



# Maintaining Alignment & Boundaries

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Having healthy boundaries in your life and relationships is an act of self-advocacy."

- Alexandra Elle

Whether we love our job/career and stay in a workplace for decades, or we depart after several months, or whether we decline to start in a new workplace because we recognize the racism early, we need alignment and boundaries to be in place. Maintaining alignment with our core values and keeping boundaries in place whenever we encounter racism are vital to workplace survival.

Especially during the COVID pandemic, with more telework from home than ever, many were forced to blur the lines between work and home. Handling group work calls from what may have normally been a home sanctuary requires that we rethink and become even more focused on maintaining lines of separation, especially as women of color.



Yes, it is an act of self-advocacy! And part of dealing with workplace racism requires not only self-advocacy, but also self-care, and self-love. So, protect your boundaries at all costs, Sis. Maintaining boundaries can be very freeing. Start by creating a list of your boundaries for different situations. Then, make sure you communicate those boundaries to your co-workers, in a professional way. No one needs to know why you have boundaries unless you decide to share your reasons with them.

For work, a couple boundaries to start with are:

No expectation of response or contact after work hours for non-urgent matters. For this one, be very specific about what is considered urgent.

2 No entering your work space without asking, knocking or announcing themselves first. You decide whether someone enters your work space; no one can decide that for you.

Sometimes, we have no choice but to address racism head-on in certain work scenarios. Sometimes the disrespect is so blatant, so hurtful, that you have to speak on it in an effort to effect change and protect your mental and physical health and wellness. This is not an easy decision, so it should not be taken lightly.



#### Here are some steps to consider when addressing racism in the workplace:

- Determine if there are any allies in your workplace. You may need their support at some point.
- If a meeting is needed, suggest an unbiased third party who might help facilitate discussions.
- Establish goals for accountability and change.
- If you are in a leadership position, encourage and empower everyone to speak out against racist workplace practices. This will help people feel protected.
- Take a hard look at the leadership team. Is there diversity at the top of the team? This will help you understand the broader context of your work environment and allow you to consider what your ultimate goals are for this discussion that addresses racism.
- Keep in mind that although you may identify and report concerns about what you observe, it is not your job to try to fix any specific, racist individuals you note at your workplace. Protect your peace by directing them to other resources, and focus on what you need to do for your peace, your health, your wellness.



## when one wins, we all do...



Recently, we had a strong example of what it looks like to confront racism in the workplace. Black/ African American women everywhere collectively shouted "Yes!" when Dr. Nikole Hannah-Jones declined a professorship offer from University of North Carolina @ Chapel Hill after months of them belittling and disrespecting her scholarly work. Instead, she accepted a professorship offer from Howard University, an HBCU.

We all felt it when it happened, because we understood exactly where she was coming from, and her written letter to UNC undressing their multiple, systemic and individual levels of racism was a joy to behold.

## Dream It. Create It. Achieve It.

Planning your self-care and mental health breaks **,** 

Caring for myself is not self-indulgence. It is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare."

- Audre Lorde

Maintaining your anti-racist stances as you navigate through your workplaces also requires that you be adamant about your self-care and mental health. Although there have been more discussions about selfcare during the COVID pandemic, its definition remains straightforward. So what is self-care?

#### self-care noun

: The practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own well-being and happiness, especially during periods of stress

Self care can be any of the following, from no-cost to putting some savings aside, and many of these can be practiced in the workplace during your day:



## Request that time off!

ART for Wellness also includes travel, which is a form of selfcare. Travel removes us from our current environments and shows us something different, something new, something refreshing, and sometimes something unexpected. Travel that includes an expanded awareness of culture is becoming more popular among Black women, whether we travel solo or with a group. Travel allows us to exhale, while also strengthening our resolve. So, once you know your days off, consider if you'd like to spend them on a travel experience. If you need to stay local, rent a fancy hotel room in your home city, and go there for the day. Do nothing, except relax... Knowing your days off is key to you planning your breaks.

If your workplace does not afford you a predetermined number of days off, then count any weekend days that you might have away from the workplace. And I want you to take them all, Sis. Write in a journal about the things you'd like to do on your days off, and then check them off as you go. The satisfaction you feel will also help decrease any workplace stress. Don't leave even one day on the table, Sis, unless you are accumulating days for something extra special, like a 2-week African safari.



Here are some places different groups of Black women have found to be especially enjoyable for self-care and stepping away from the daily struggles of workplace racism.

#### Accra, Ghana

**Paris**, France

Cartagena, Colombia

Montreal, Canada

Bali, Indonesia

Thailand

San Juan, Puerto Rico



# Passing Based of the second se

l got you, sis.



Remember, Sis, whatever you dream, create, or plan, be especially generous with the gifts of time, peace and joy that you give to yourself whenever you step away from the workplace. Pouring into these lessons into yourself and your community will help make you that much stronger when you return to your own form of ART wellness in the workplace, whatever that looks like for you.

What are things you learned as you effectively navigated the system as an employee? What have you learned from this toolkit? It's important that you pass that on to another Sister in the workplace, and let her know that the expectation is that she will share her journey with the next Sister after her. Survival in the workplace, depending on how long you are present in one workplace, is generational. We must look out for each other and continue to build community



Here are a few tips to share with and help encourage the next woman of color who might be having a hard time in a racist workplace culture:

- Keep a work diary of accomplishments; help ensure she gets credit for her work.
- Assist her in creating a list of professional or personal goals.
- Help her format and update her resume correctly, so that she's ready when a new opportunity presents itself.
- Introduce her to people in the workplace who can help facilitate her success.
- Ask her what she's doing to level up every week; support her innovations.
- Make sure you acknowledge when she's done a great job.
- Support and encourage her to attend certain lectures, conferences, trainings, or any opportunities that will help strengthen her professionally based on her goals; at least one per year.
- When/if she's outgrown her job, encourage her to not be fearful about moving on



### why is ART for Wellness<sup>TM</sup> necessary for Black Women?

Balance is necessary for my well-being. I will work to make it an essential part of my life.

- Byllye Avery

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"Anti-racism" happens when we identify and oppose individual, institutional, and systemic racism, wherever we find it, and too often we find racism at our workplaces. An antiracism toolkit (ART), or focused strategies to help us be healthy and whole as we navigate our various workplaces outside of the home, is vital for our health and protection.

Our numbers in workplaces outside of our homes are strong; compared with women of other races and ethnicities in the United States (US), Black/African American women have always had the highest levels of labor market participation regardless of age, marital status, or presence of children at home. Recent data show that an estimated 59% of Black/African American adult women work outside of the home, 57% of Hispanic women/Latinas, and 56% of white women in the US (www.bls.gov). Across many employment sectors, Black/African American women have worked to provide and lead competently and with unique flavor, in spaces that were not designed for us, are not ready for us, and that often work to minimize our efforts and strengths. And data continue to show that we do so for less pay compared with men and our white women peers.

Many women of color have reports of workplace micro- and macro-aggressions that we are all too familiar with and that are often rooted in racism. Overt racism and daily aggressions contribute to: the dissatisfaction many Black women feel at work, and also to the disparities in promotional opportunities. We hear workplace stories and reports from our Sisters, and we nod our heads in unison and say, "Um hmmm," because we already know, and we empathize...



#### ...and still we rise.

But we still need help. In recent years, more and more Black women are realizing that although we are strong, although we are powerful, although we are resilient, dealing with racism on a daily basis, especially in workplaces, is hard, and we need help.

In 2021, the Black Women's Health Imperative launched FairWork<sup>™</sup> an evidence-based strategy to measure and eliminate the barriers to healthy and fair workplaces. An initial donation of \$1 million was awarded by The Hewlett Foundation to Black Women's Health Imperative as part of its commitment to nonprofits fighting systemic racism. The wage gap for Black women is \$0.58 for every \$1.00 made by white men. Black women also receive less support from managers, are underrepresented in leadership positions, are overrepresented in minimum wage jobs, and experience a greater variety of micro-aggressions than women of other races and ethnicities. Chronic stress due to racism and discrimination is aging Black women by 7.5 years and has been well documented as a precursor to heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and other illnesses.

In 2022, FairWork Research<sup>™</sup> conducted a survey of nearly 4,000 Black women across the country, 62% of them reported experiencing racism due to their workplace policies and 64% did not have wellness resources or support from their employers that counter these experiences. This toolkit is intended to provide some of that help. Black Women's Health Imperative had a vision of helping Black women by providing tools that will allow us to maintain our peace and improve our health in the workplace.



#### FairWork<sup>™</sup> addresses workplace health, culture, policies, and practices and encompasses:

- FairWork Index<sup>™</sup>: An interactive modeling tool based on 350+ metrics used to measure fairness in workplace culture, policies, and practices to model systems-level change.
- FairWork Training<sup>™</sup>: Evidence-based resources that extends beyond traditional diversity, equity, and inclusion training to shift and establish a gold standard of fairness in workplace culture, policies, and practices.
- FairWork Research™: Surveys and interviews that center on the voices of employees and their experiences in the workplace to promote solutions that are sustainable within the workplace.
- FairWork Toolkit<sup>™</sup>: Resource used to empower and support employees as they navigate the workplace and seek ways to thrive.



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## FAIRWORK

For more information, please visit www.fairwork.bhi.org

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