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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Humanity Over Comfort* by Sharone Brinkley-Parker, Tracey L. Durant, Kendra V. Johnson, Kandice Taylor, Johari Toe, Lisa Williams.

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How to Use This Book

This book is intended to help readers develop their ability to engage in both capacity building and leadership practices that dismantle systems of oppression. The authors advance ideas, ways of being, and practices to address not only the straightforward aspects of this work but also the nuances. This textured exploration is needed because systems of advantages and disadvantages live in society as natural and normal. In order to actualize organizational transformation and dislodge systems of oppression, we must begin to interrogate the very idea of what is “natural” and “normal.” To serve this overarching goal, the authors want you to *feel something*. We want you to diversify the ways you understand how marginalization occurs. The journey to understanding race as it intersects with other marginalized identities in America is a labor of both the head and the heart. The authors would offer that your full self-engagement is your best self-engagement. When you show up as your best engaged self, the fullness of your humanity is also present. The authors intentionally use language that the authors believe will elicit an emotional response from readers, including the potential feeling of discomfort. The authors do so to challenge and reframe the reader’s current understanding and application of intersectional issues of racial equality and social justice.

The authors also believe that this learning journey is deeply personal. For this reason, the authors have included a variety of tools to contextualize the work so individuals and/or organizations might find their appropriate entry point and personalized developmental pathway. The reality, however, is that many may simply need to start at the beginning. The beginning for many is to uncover the stories they have been told and interrogate how these stories position them to function in their lives, the family, community, and organization. Based on what individuals, teams, and groups come to understand

through this process, how do they “relearn” what they think about how America got to this point? But most importantly, what will they determine needs to be done to center, value, and honor the humanity of the collective? We know that the past cannot be changed, but what we understand about the past can serve to bolster resolve in the kind of present and future that we collectively elect to create.

American history is rich, dynamic, sad, horrific, powerful, and disturbing all at the same time. Being a great America is not in conflict with being a complex America. Being a great America without being a complex, often inconsistent, America is not possible. We want to decouple worthiness from the need to valorize history. Our challenge, in this moment, is that some believe we cannot honor our greatness as a people and a nation if we openly discuss our complex history. Not only is this belief false, but it is dangerous if we ever intend to live up to the great ideas this nation purports as fundamental to its existence.

The authors are proud Americans, so this internal realization of our dark and complex history is one the authors bear with readers. To help readers along the way, the authors created the following chart to describe the features and tools that run throughout the book. The content will inform when authors elect to utilize these tools.

THROUGHOUT THE BOOK		
Tool	Purpose	Intended Reaction(s)
Chapter Reflection	To call the reader’s attention to examples from the book that requires reflection or pause	To connect the learning to readers’ personal experiences and/or highlight nuances that readers may have noticed in their learning/lived experiences to date
Journal Prompts	To provide additional opportunities for readers to pause and offer personal responses as they make meaning of the text	
Pause and Reflect, Ideas to Sit With, and Interruptions	To promote reader reflection as readers interact with text as well as to highlight essential points—whether to challenge the reader’s understanding of where dominance might exist and where transformation is needed or simply stop and chew on content more deeply	
Scenarios	To provide a lived experience to situate the learning	
What Nobody Talks About	To call forward the nuances that require responses that we tend to undervalue and/or not discuss	
Your Lived Experience	To ask readers to use their sphere of influence as they center and situate the new learning directly in their own lives	

Equally as important, the authors offer a few definitions of concepts and ideas to norm readers with our thinking. The concepts and ideas include but are not limited to the following.

Anti-Oppression: An idea that advances, in principle and practice, the equal treatment of identity. A lens of anti-oppression guides its users to consider the intersected, interlocking systems of marginalizing practices that compound to reproduce predictable advantage and disadvantage in service of disrupting said practices and replacing them with those that are equally accessible.

Anti-Racism: An active process of disrupting the conceptual and material manifestation of patterns that advantage Whiteness (inclusive of Eurocentric culture and people called White) over all others. The authors contend that anti-racism involves more than simply opposing racist ideas and policies. To be an anti-racist, you must actively challenge the reproduction of racialized outcomes. There is a certain level of consciousness that must be acquired to engage in anti-racist work. When individuals declare themselves as anti-racists without the consciousness of their actions, these individuals are usually supporting racist systems and showing up as performative.

Equity: Unlike equality, equity is the idea of giving individuals what they need to survive and succeed. Equity takes into account the effects of discrimination and aims for a just outcome.

Humanity: The notion of showing a compassionate, sympathetic, and generous behavior or disposition for each human irrespective of gender, class, ability (physical and mental), ethnicity, native language, or other aspects of identity.

Institutional Racism: Closely connected to systemic racism but different. Remember those beliefs that still lingered after laws were abolished and/or statutes amended? Today the beliefs are still dwelling and operating under the veil in many institutions (e.g., preK–12 institutions or local police departments). Irrespective of changes in laws and/or policies, there are traditions, beliefs, opinions, and even myths that are crystalized into the fiber of institutions. Institutions seeking to examine how racism and other forms of marginalization might be operating can start by examining data to assess patterns of predictability.

Intersectional Racial Equity: A lens of analysis that centers race as it interfaces with other aspects of identity such as gender,

class, ability (physical and mental), ethnicity, or native language to interrogate how systems function (i.e., whether they are advantaging or disadvantaging) based on experiential, observational, and empirical data.

Racial Equity: A lens of analysis that centers race to interrogate how systems function based on experiential, observational, and empirical data. Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's race identity no longer predicted how one thrives in school and in life.

Social Justice: The idea that everyone deserves a right to succeed by having access to economic, political, and social rights and opportunities.

Structural Inequality: Characterized by the confluence of systems (education, criminal, legislative, health, etc.) created with roles, functions, decisions, rights, and opportunities designed for those who have typically sat in positions of power and have typically been identified as White with no regard that the adverse outcomes continuously disservice individuals of color, in particular, Black and Brown individuals.

Systemic Racism: While systemic racism and institutional racism are often terms used interchangeably, we proffer the ideas are distinctly different. Systemic racism can be defined as the infrastructure of government with laws, statutes, ordinances, and so on, that promulgate the rights and privileges of the people. The fabric of our society was established through a system of laws, statutes, and ordinances that declared some were better than others, that some had more rights than others. Today, the laws may no longer exist but the longstanding beliefs that undergirded these laws are alive—they linger and are evident in every facet of American life.

Systems of Oppression: Phrase used to identify inequity by naming the historical, organized, and intentional patterns of mistreatment of certain populations. In this book, the specific population we call attention to is Black and Brown individuals; however, there is a long and dark history of marginalization of many other intersectional populations in these United States of America.

White Supremacy Culture/White Dominant Culture (Eurocentric Culture): A historically based, institutionally perpetuated system of exploitation and oppression of people of color by

White people/European nations for the purpose of upholding normative ways of being and doing to maintain and defend a system of wealth, power, and privilege.

How the Book Is Organized

The organization of this book has been thoughtfully designed. The authors include three sections for readers that correspond to three spaces we expect readers to experience when interacting with this text: (1) the reflecting space (Chapters 1–3), (2) the making meaning space (Chapters 4–5), and (3) the doing space (Chapters 6–9).

While the authors present the chapters in a sequential order, the ideas are emergent and presented in a way to support the intersectional racial equity framework introduced in Chapter 2. Further, it is important that we, as authors, explicitly name that this book advances an intersectional racial equity framework and not a diversity, equity, and inclusion framework. We believe that our collective humanity requires more than what traditional diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts suggest (more than diverse hires, more than purchasing diverse textbooks, more than approving contracts with vendors of color, etc.). Of course, we think increased diversity and inclusion efforts are components of the overall work; however, these components must be carefully and thoughtfully integrated into a larger, more complex end goal. As six unapologetic Black women, we, the authors, bring our whole selves to this work. In our writing, our experiences and perspectives come from living and breathing in Black skin and dwelling on this earth as cisgender women. Hence, we joyously uplift the voices of Black, Brown, and Native/Indigenous lives, experiences, and struggles in this work. We can unequivocally pronounce that **it is not enough** to simply engage in “check it off” diversity and inclusion effort (refer to the brief list of diversity and inclusion efforts described earlier, if needed).

Finally, the authors deliberately integrated academic and conversational language throughout this book. This integration may occur within a chapter, and/or some chapters may lean toward one disposition or the other. The ultimate goal is to invoke access. For some readers, the academic language is more accessible, whereas conversational language, for others, is best. The authors acknowledge and broadly name that language convention is about access and not intellect. Our hope is to create a pathway to understand, disrupt, and then

transform practice with the goal of healing—healing so we might cohere a collective humanity. The authors not only have a moral imperative, we have a survival imperative. We simply cannot continue in a world that dehumanizes others—it is unhealthy, unethical, and unlivable. The events of 2020 and 2021, to date, illustrate this point more than any words on a page can!