

Black Market Reads: Special Edition

Team Up for Health Equity, presented by Stamp-Connect

With Lissa Jones, Bukata Hayes, Nneka Sederstrom, Chaz Sandifer, R.T. Rybak

(transcript of a conversation recorded at the Capri Theater 12/10/21 – lightly edited for length and clarity)

[00:00:00] **Yo Derek:** For the smart and free thinking. Welcome to Black Market Reads with your host Lissa Jones.

[00:00:12] **Lissa Jones:** Welcome to Black Market Reads. This is a special edition of Black Market Reads coming live to you from the Capri Theater in north Minneapolis. Today, we're going to have a very important conversation about health equity and the role that individuals and organizations can play in overcoming our chilling health disparities.

A little later in the program, we'll hear from representatives in government, philanthropy, healthcare, and community, but first our opening guest today is Bukata Hayes. Bukata is the first ever VP for racial and health equity at BlueCross BlueShield. Prior to that he served for 15 years as the Executive Director of the Greater Mankato Diversity Council, a non-profit focused on diversity inclusion and equity in Southern Minnesota.

In 2020 he co-authored a book titled *Write on Race to be Right on Race: Resource Journaling Guide*, which is a self-study on race highlighting its many impacts in our community. Bukata, welcome to Black Market Reads.

[00:01:12] **Bukata Hayes:** Thank you. Thank you for having me.

[00:01:13] **Lissa Jones:** I'm so delighted you're here. Let's jump right in. Your book was the result of a two-year process of community reflection. Tell us a little bit about the process and what you take with you as a result?

[00:01:28] **Bukata Hayes:** So, the book, and this is the thing we, me and my coauthor, Stacy Wells, we'd like to really underscore is that the book was the result of two years of engagement in community.

So, this effort happened between 2016 and 2018. So, for us, we had just grown tired of not having substantial, meaningful engagement on race to really get to the bottom of it and we fashioned this way forward.

We started that two-year effort in Mankato, and it was around inviting folks to be a part of a cohort of folks committed to being actively anti-racist. We didn't have a prescribed - here is the end point. What we did have is this core set of places in which we know race impacted existence, and that's what we went with.

So, as you look at the book, you'll see it's broken out into sections, thematic areas, Race and Education, Race and Health, Race and Housing, Race and Income, Race and Criminal Justice. The past, present, and future of race. We set out to say, we are going to dive deeply into race and with intentionality.

And we're going to ask you to wait to go to solutions. Because what we found is that when folks see an issue, one of the things we tend to do is try and figure out the answer, the solution, really fast, right away, instead of first understanding.

And this is the instance with something as entrenched as race. And that is, race impacts every single moment of our existence. And so, we can't solve race by simply saying we're gonna solve race in Criminal Justice. We can't solve race by saying we're simply going solve Race in Education. We have to look at *all* the areas in which race impacts our existence. And then, think about a comprehensive, overarching way in which we can address race for a solution there.

We had about a hundred people stay with us through that entire two years in Mankato.

[00:03:26] **Lissa Jones:** A hundred people! Two years!

[00:03:29] **Bukata Hayes:** We thought it was a long time, and it really was, but when we finished there were folks who were saying, "You can't leave us here."

We got to keep doing it. We got to keep meeting.” And we were like, we said we would do it for two years.

[00:03:38] **Lissa Jones:** Like, our commitment is met.

[00:03:42] **Bukata Hayes:** Our commitment is met. And at some point, you have to gain the confidence and the courage to go out there and do it. Be a part of it. And I think that's what was really special about that effort. And we tried to capture that in the book to provide the same information that folks were engaging with during that time.

[00:04:02] **Lissa Jones:** You know, I think about what you said, your table of contents, race in this race, race in that. I interviewed Dr. William Green, who wrote his book called *Degrees of Freedom*. He said that Black people in Minnesota are free by degree. And that Minnesota chooses our degree of freedom, practically speaking, at a whim. Intersectionality, race is at the bottom or the core or the base of everything.

Why was it necessary to call out all those places, education and all those things to talk about health disparities?

[00:04:33] **Bukata Hayes:** So, I think about my grandmother. She was born in the 1920s, grew up in this country, 1920s, thirties, forties, fifties, sixties, until she passed away in 2000. She didn't have a choice on which way she thought race would impact, it impacted. It impacted, whether her kids stayed with her or not. It impacted how she was treated within a community. It impacted her employment opportunities.

So, my grandmother watched *Jeopardy* every day. I watched it with her. So, I'm pretty good at *Jeopardy*. If anybody wanted to have that, I could do that too (audience laughs).

But, she tried out for *Jeopardy*, made it to the final stages. They told her she wasn't "the look" they were going for. Brilliant woman, who through all of those areas was impacted.

And I think that's the part of, at least for me. If you've talked to my coauthor, Stacy, she would say the same thing as a Black woman. In each of those areas we face obstacles, lack of access, and some ways intentionally targeting us as

well. So, I think we had to go down this long road, and that was the reason for two years because you can't go through all that in six months.

You have to allow some time to process and digest and come back. And, we felt it was important to have folks in a predominantly white community understand that race is threaded through the existence of Black folks. We don't get a choice to step away from a system that doesn't view us as whole, as complete. So that *by degree* we're constantly having to fight for that. And so, we felt that was critical to show this intentionality.

The other thing is, as you walked through it, you saw that race was factored into how we decided whose property was valuable or not, in the original documents. If you look at it, it says percentage, and you match up these percentages. You get a grade A, B, blue, green, red. So, redline comes from that. Infiltration of Negroes was one of those criteria. Percentage of foreign born was one of those criteria. That said, if you have high infiltration of Negroes, your property isn't going to be worth as much as if you had no Negroes. Think about that.

We think about medicine, healthcare, right? We think about the father of gynecology, experimenting on slaves, slave women, Black women, without consent or anesthesia. We see some of that linger within our healthcare system, in which there's this belief that Black women tolerate more pain than others.

[00:07:10] **Lissa Jones:** Henrietta Lacks.

[00:07:11] **Bukata Hayes:** Yes. And then we see that manifests itself in disparities, such as Black women are three or four times more likely than their white counterparts to die in childbirth. So, you can't look at race in this particular sector and not understand its thread and connection, for many of our institutions it's in their origination. In the very founding of those institutions were racist principles. Racist ideas and notions that we still live with today.

[00:07:44] **Lissa Jones:** Absolutely the repercussions. And particularly in this time and context in Minneapolis and the place where George Floyd was murdered and right where kids are getting murdered every single day, the issue of health equity becomes even more urgent. Violence is a public health crisis.

[00:07:59] **Bukata Hayes:** It is. Washington Post reported in 2019, in terms of public safety and interaction with public safety, that became the seventh leading cause of death for Black boys and Black men between a particular age range.

So, the idea that along with heart disease, cancer, it was this particular interaction, deadly force, that we saw was the seventh leading cause of death. So, when we talk about health equity, systemic racism is at the root of health inequities.

[00:08:33] **Lissa Jones:** Yes.

[00:08:34] **Bukata Hayes:** I think it's important that we treat that with the seriousness and the intensity that it deserves. In terms of thinking about how do we get towards an equitable healthy, health and wellbeing society we have to address race.

[00:08:49] **Lissa Jones:** Minnesota is very interesting. I've lived here my whole life and we have this thing. Well, we don't really talk about race. And if you do, they consider you to be an agitator. And you might not keep your job, or you might not get a job, or you might not be famous or popular.

Prince once told me that you could not have an all-Black band in Minneapolis. That's still true today. So, when I think about this idea of health inequity, and it being present in every place, what about the issue of will and intentionality.

Minnesota plays like we're liberal and progressive. We give ourselves all these wonderful labels that we love, for whatever reason. But we have the grossest health disparities in the country for the same populations, every single year.

[00:09:30] **Bukata Hayes:** You know, one of the things that was laid bare for Minnesota as we became the epicenter of global unrest, racial protest, after the murder of George Floyd, was our disparities.

I remember folks said, "How could that be?" Like, "How is that possible?" And Black folks were saying, "About time."

We live it, we live in the existence of it. The void where those inequities exist. And I think that's the part that we have to be courageous about - the will piece.

We have all the data. Data does not seem to compel us to work on this particular issue. Data compels us in a whole bunch of other ways to tackle some things. It does not compel us to talk about race and racism and its impacts on us as people and as systems.

And I think that's the part that we have to push and demand. In the aftermath of George Floyd, a lot of folks made a lot of commitments, institutions, organizations, nonprofits in terms of funding. Nonprofit Quarterly Research recently said that a very small percentage of those commitments and pledges have actually come through. Minuscule, right?

That's the idea of the will? Do we have the will? We can state a whole bunch of things, but it comes down to - do you actually act? And I think unfortunately with those commitments that we see in the non-profit sector and philanthropy, we haven't. And as Minnesota, unfortunately we haven't acted, which I think is part of the reason why we wanted to talk today and also why we wanted to really try and move the needle. It keeps me up at night, the longer it takes us. Those are, those are real folks.

[00:11:20] **Lissa Jones:** These are real lives.

[00:11:21] **Bukata Hayes:** These are real lives that are impacted every single day. As we admire the data, where we simply can't get the political will within an organization to do something. Simply put, we have to act.

[00:11:33] **Lissa Jones:** Right, right.

[00:11:34] **Bukata Hayes:** We just have to. It is no longer where good intentions are good enough.

[00:11:40] **Lissa Jones:** When I was in high school, I graduated from the Blake School and we always had these famous people coming in and out. And Lou Holtz was a hockey coach, who came to the school. He said, "After everything is said and done, generally more gets said than done". And that's how I feel about Minnesota. We always talk and talk, but very few things end up getting done. Unless powerful people feel affected and want it to get done.

Why was it important to pause, reflect and journal, Bukata? Why is journaling important to be *Right on Race*?

[00:12:11] **Bukata Hayes:** So, folks, they catch that- W R I T E to Be RIGHT? So, we thought journaling provided us, a personal space to reflect, to reject, to challenge, to wrestle with. And then through that process, we would be better able to engage with folks.

Because being asked this really high-level question, complex question, and then being asked to talk about it a minute later. Does not, allow for thoughtful response, meaningful response. So, we thought let's give folks this personal space in which they could really work on it.

And then when we come back together, you digested it, processed it, and then you can share. You even have done this personal introspection to challenge yourself as why? Why am I reacting this way, when I see this information? And what we found was that power of that personal space, and then doing that in a collection of other folks who were using that personal space was really, really powerful.

I mean, the fact that we had that many folks stay with us for the whole two years. We have folks say, "I can't go back to my pre-*Write on Race* self. I see race everywhere now."

During one of the sessions, one particular person was reflecting on her dad's process of passing and what he was leaving them.

And, at the time we were going over the GI bill and how Black folks weren't able to access that. So she was going through that, cause her dad's a GI, he used it, and she said, "you know, I'm now starting to realize that my dad's best friend who is Black, couldn't pass on a house and wealth, to his kids, like my dad is passing on to me and my sibling". It hit her in that particular session.

And to me, that's the part of this collective walking through this process that is really powerful, that you're doing this in a group of other folks who have committed to wrestle with it, and say "We may not have the answers. And I don't know if any of us truly have the answers because we've never lived it"

[00:14:23] **Lissa Jones:** That's it!

[00:14:24] **Bukata Hayes:** There's never been just racially, just equitable environment in our American experiment. And so, if we've never really seen it, well, we have to go off of, is this collective belief in each other that we're going

to work to do it. And to figure it out. And I think that's what came through in this process of two years. Is that folks genuinely believed in each other that we were trying to do it, that we were trying to fix it. We were trying to address it.

We had a racial incident that happened in our community towards the end of that and we made a call to the community. And folks showed up to do something. So we, we took that as a sign of success that folks showed up to say, "Hey, what part am I playing? I'm gonna go talk to my city council. I'm gonna send some postcards to folks who were affected by that. I'm going to show up. To be with you, as you walk through the place where that happened."

So I think that journaling, provided for deep, meaningful connection. This process of wrestling with really difficult information for some of us who were seeing it for the first time and doing it in a collective, allowed folks to build the collective courage to move forward, which I think all of us really need. There's no one person who's gonna solve this. I think we have to believe that both you and I are at least moving in the same direction on this.

There are many lessons from history, but I think about Martin and Malcolm. They were moving in the same direction.

[00:15:51] **Lissa Jones:** Oh yeah. They were moving in the same direction.

[00:15:53] **Bukata Hayes:** And I think that's what we really have to be about. We're moving in the same direction. Liberation of our folks, liberation of our people, racially just societies. That's what we're working for.

[00:16:04] **Lissa Jones:** Everybody loses on race. That's what, I don't think people really recognize everybody loses on race.

[00:16:09] **Bukata Hayes:** Yeah.

[00:16:10] **Lissa Jones:** You know, Bukata, in your book on page 249, you feature a quote from one of our most famous poets, Danez Smith. Their book, *Don't Call Us Dead*. "*The Black male body is imperiled from both within and without -some of us are killed in pieces, some of us all at once*".

I invite the audience, as we transition to our panel, to close your eyes and listen to Danez speaking their truth in Episode 39 of [Black Market Reads](#). And Bukata, we'll be right back,

A reading from poet, Danez Smith..

[00:17:02] **Danez Smith:** *Summer Somewhere*, for the readers out there is the first poem in the book, and it imagines an afterlife that is exclusive to Black men and boys killed by the police by vigilante violence, and by other ways and modalities of White supremacy. All right.

Summer Somewhere.

*somewhere, a sun. below, boys brown
as rye play the dozens & ball, jump*

*in the air & stay there. boys become new
moons, gum-dark on all sides, beg bruise*

*-blue water to fly, at least tide, at least
spit back a father or two. I won't get started.*

*history is what it is. it knows what it did.
bad dog. bad blood. bad day to be a boy*

*color of a July well spent. but here, not earth
not heaven, boys can't recall their white shirt*

*turned a ruby gown. here, there is no language
for officer or law, no color to call white.*

*if snow fell, it'd fall black. please, don't call
us dead, call us alive someplace better.*

*we say our own names when we pray.
we go out for sweets & come back.*

[00:18:51] **Lissa Jones:** Poet, Danez Smith. This is Black Market Reads. I'm your host Lissa Jones. We'll be right back.

[00:18:59] **Yo Derek:** You're listening to Black Market Reads, a series of conversations, highlighting the Black literary voices of today. Join the conversation. For more great content about authors you love, visit us at [Blackmarketreads.com](#). Your opinion counts. Let us know what you think. Share us with your friends. Rate and review us on Apple Podcasts.

[00:19:24] **Lissa Jones:** Welcome back to Black Market Reads. I'm delighted to be able to sit with you.

I am very, very delighted to introduce our panel today. Thank you for being here. First, let me start with Dr. Nneka Sederstrom, Chief Health Equity officer for Hennepin Healthcare. In this role, Dr. Sederstrom leads the work to assess, build and execute strategies across the system to cultivate a culture of diversity equity and transform how healthcare is delivered for our community. Welcome Dr. Sederstrom. .

[00:20:01] **Nneka Sederstrom:** Thank you.

[00:20:01] **Lissa Jones:** I'm so delighted to have you. And Chaz Sandifer is the CEO and founder of [theNEWminneapolis](#), which focuses on affordable fitness, wellness, and nutrition, bringing her holistic approach to the community. Chaz teaches others how to break generational cycles, instilling that fitness is fun, quality nutrition is king and wellness is key to a healthy future. Welcome.

[00:20:26] **Chaz Sandifer:** Thank you.

[00:20:26] **Lissa Jones:** I'm delighted to have you. And last, but certainly not least, R.T. Rybak is here. He's led the Minneapolis Foundation since July 2016, deepening its community impact, growing its donor base and contributions, and launching a strategic framework that more directly focuses on using multiple impact levers to dismantle inequities. I'm delighted you are here. Welcome.

All right, let's go ahead and engage in a discussion because panels are no fun, but discussions are real good. So, let's talk about intersectionality Kimberle Crenshaw taught us about how intersectionality plays in the law, and now we're having conversations, or not, about whether race plays into every other aspect of life. And according to Bukata's book, it does. Each of you represents a different part of our sector, an intersection of itself. You (Nneka) in the healthcare system, you (Chaz) in community and healthcare, and you, former Mayor Rybak, in government and in philanthropy.

So, let's talk a little bit about ideating. What do we do about these health disparities? What do we do to collaborate about health inequities? What do we do about seeing a different vision? And maybe we want to start out with

comments. Let's just start talking about it. Shall we? All right, go ahead, Dr. Sederstrom thank you.

[00:21:37] **Nneka Sederstrom:** I am fortunate every day to work on this problem. It is a passion. It's a calling. It's not the easiest job in the world, which is why so many people shy away from it. But it provides me with the opportunity every morning to wake up and say, today I can do one thing to make it better.

And I think that's what we tend to forget when we don't engage in work around racism and how to become anti-racist. We feel like we need to see an immediate impact that's huge, right? That there's something significant that has occurred. When the reality is, is that this mountain that's bigger than Everest times Everest still requires little bitty steps to climb. And if we just keep going in the same direction, like what Bukata said a few minutes ago, just going in the same direction, we will eventually get there. But if we allow the mountain to seem insurmountable, we just turn around and go back or just sit there because sitting still is more comfortable, then we're never going to change it.

And so, in my role, in my position, I get to take baby steps within the hospital, within our community to try and attempt to climb as much of it as I can in my time. And get us a little further, so whoever comes up behind me can keep going on the next steps.

[00:22:51] **Lissa Jones:** Thank you so much. Hennepin Healthcare, such an important institution. It's a research hospital. I mean, people from all walks of life, go there. I don't even know that we know in the Twin Cities just how important that institution it is. So, I'm delighted to see you there driving change.

[00:23:06] **Nneka Sederstrom:** Thank you.

[00:23:07] **Lissa Jones:** Thank you, Dr. Sederstrom, and Chaz. Welcome. How's fitness in the community. What's up with your best life. Talk to us. How do we deal with this? Give us the recipe for your best life.

[00:23:18] **Chaz Sandifer:** Oh, fitness, wellness, and nutrition in the community. The lack of. The lack of knowledge of what you need in your family to change a trajectory of obesity is huge. The diabetes in families, I see. When

you go to the grocery store, it's a difference of the Cub on Broadway compared to the Cub in Edina.

When you first walk in and it's all sweets, what does that tell our families? When I walk into Edina, it's all fresh vegetables, right? Sweets clog our pores, clog our minds, clogs everything. So then if you don't eat well, you won't be well. So, my whole approach is to teach others, how can we change this? How do we break this cycle? It is through fitness, wellness, and nutrition. We live with so much trauma that we go back to eating bad. And so as myself and my two children, as I teach them, and as you were saying, building that generational wealth is how we do it through fitness, through wellness, through nutrition, through farmer's markets, through accessing diabetes programming and through teaching them how to eat well on a budget.

[00:24:23] **Lissa Jones:** That is so excellent. It's really critically important that we recognize how health disparities exist. If you walk into Cub on Broadway, there really is a significant difference. And what does that say about the value of a life? What does that say about what to eat. What does that say about what's affordable and what does that do to longevity?

We just lost a 50 year old man at KMOJ Radio, 50 years old, partly because he's Black. Hmm. Thank you. Bukata, What you got to say?

[00:24:55] **Bukata Hayes:** To that point, and we use this quote at the beginning of our *Race and Health* chapter.

Ossie Davis once said, "Black folks in America die, first of all, from being Black, anything else isn't even worth putting on the death certificate."

When I think about what we saw through COVID, George Floyd, health, housing, environmental racism, like all these sorts of things that we see and we encounter Ossie Davis, politically active. You know, he was a power couple with Ruby Dee, actor. He didn't say that in 2020. He said that 40 years ago, 50 years ago, maybe. And the idea that it is still soberingly true, speaks to the political will we talked about, that we have to have to do something about it.

So, I just wanted to add that as you said, partly because he was Black. Absolutely. Data shows that. And then, are we willing to act off of that data? Which up until now, I would say we, we have not been.

[00:25:57] **Lissa Jones:** What we do is we get data, and then we say, oh my gosh, this is terrible. This is horrible. And then we say, this is terrible. Who can we blame? Okay, then we go back. So, we need another study to see how this is going. This is terrible. I'm just saying.

R.T. Rybak, welcome to Black Market Reads. How can philanthropy and government collaborate to do something about these horrid health inequities, RT?

[00:26:22] **R.T. Rybak:** I'm really lucky to be on a panel with three people who describe work that obviously impacts health. Obviously impacts race. And you recognize that in your work that none of that can be done in isolation. That intersections are really pivotal now. So, at the Minneapolis Foundation, and this is work that's led by our chief impact officer Chanda Smith Baker. When she came, we really agreed, we had to deal with those intersections. So, in health, we have an initiative called the Catalyst Initiative, which we do with the George Foundation. It really recognizes that to build true health equity, you have to build from community out. Not up or down, community out.

And what that recognizes is that I, a white man who's lived in a community that sits on land of Native people who have absolutely nothing in my health experience that draws from the fact that people have lived in this climate and thrived in this climate through native strategies that are not part of the majority culture here. That is wrong. And it is core to what the Catalyst Initiative does. It means when we, this year did a very deep dive on climate it was climate reaction. The intersection of race and climate. And so, we dealt with food systems, which are absolutely so smart to be dealing with Chaz, and the work that my wife helped lead when I was mayor on Homegrown Minneapolis was very much about the idea that getting control of your food systems is part of this work. But it also means you need to recognize that you can't just put this in certain areas. It's tempting to say at a foundation, let's deal with that on our impact side. And let's not address where the money comes from.

So, what we really recognized is we have about 1800 different people who contribute to funds to put a hundred million out a year. No secret that that's majority white people making a lot of decisions about where things should go with Black people. How do we disrupt that? Well, there's a great person in the audience Sarah Leavitt, I know you're out there somewhere. We hired Sarah to lead our work in Giving Circles, which was about the idea of recognizing that

while it's incredibly important to grow more donors of color, it is also important to recognize that community power, to build Giving Circles among communities that have not had as much wealth to distribute philanthropically.

So, Sarah's job is to help us go among communities where there have been disparities and build collective wealth. So increasingly over the years, fewer decisions about community will be made by others with the resources. So, this is really about saying once we got out of the idea that somehow you can deal with any of these things in isolation, we began to look at the idea that there are better ways to do it.

[00:29:12] **Lissa Jones:** Excellent. And everybody's nodding, thank you so much. One thing I think about is the invention of the white savior myth, the invention of Rudyard Kipling. The idea that he was really an imperialist and believed that the United States should come over and civilize the Filipino people. And so, he invented the white savior myth and we live in the white savior myth in Minnesota. We create the disparities for Black and Brown and Indigenous people. And then we throw philanthropy at it, with not quite enough resources, and government. Of course, we argue about it, not quite enough resources. And then we blame it on the people who are suffering the disparity. So, jump in. Let's go. School is in. Black Market Reads is here. Dr. Sederstrom.

[00:29:50] **Nneka Sederstrom:** There's so much to say. I truly appreciate all of it. And as a medical professional, it is so daunting to continue to get study after study, after study. Saying the same things over and over and over. And it's fascinating to me when I see them pop up in my professional societies. And it's like, Look new study out of new England Journal that confirms racism still exists!! It's this amazing aha moment. And I still haven't figured out why there needs to be still more data. At what point is there enough data to act? And it's not just the failing of the medical system it's everywhere, right?

It's in every foundational resource that we have in this country. Cause, it's like Bukata said. I mean, that is that the foundation of America was built on racism. So, you can't have a structure within America where it's not there. And there is still data proving that it's still there. And I am not someone who does good with problems that just admire. Never have been. I've been called a disruptor, which I don't know if that's a good thing some days.

[00:31:01] **Bukata Hayes:** It's a great thing.

[00:31:03] **Nneka Sederstrom:** But I don't appreciate data just for data's sake. That is not useful. It's not helpful. Doesn't make any change. So, when you get the data, I've been asked many times, "why can't we just do something?"

But I don't know why. Cause, I do things. I don't understand what that step is that's needed to make more people do. As a philosopher. I can intuitively understand the human condition that goes into why people don't move forward.

I live in Prior Lake. Which many of you have seen on the news, now is another little mini epicenter of racism. And I have been working with my government leaders to try and help them understand why we need to do something, which I still don't get, why it takes deliberation, discussion and debate, but I will still help them.

And I was asked today by one of the community members. "Why is it so hard for white people to just do the right thing?" Like, why is that so difficult to just do the right thing? And I said, as a Black person, I feel you, right? Like, I feel, why is it this continuation of having to share your lived trauma. Whether it's through how many relatives you had, who died from COVID or how many relatives that you know, who are dying from chronic conditions because of being Black. I've written a couple of articles on the burden of Blackness that we talk about and how Blackness is starting to become a chronic condition.

And since birth, you're born already with this disability, as someone would say. So, I get why the question of doing the right thing is so difficult for us to understand? Like, why can't we just do it? But if you think about the philosophy behind how we decide to do things that are right, it is very difficult for humans to just innately, be altruistic.

There is a feeling of self-servingness that needs to be there. Machiavelli, great philosopher, wrote that the nature of man and woman is to be self-serving at first. So, speaking of the white savior complex, it feeds into that. It is easy to do the right thing when you get something back from it, it's easy.

Even if you believe that the thing you're getting back is just the pat on the back and "you did a good job". Like there's something in us that makes us feel like we will do that thing. For that one reaction. And that reaction is a self-serving reaction. There are very few humans who will do it, just to do it.

And that I think is the problem, because if we truly want to tackle race and racism issues, then we're going to need white people who decide to do things like give up that generational wealth. Agree to not have access to resources at the same level, agree to not have money, agree to have their children go to schools that don't teach them at the same level.

There's going to be this immediate impact that takes away resources and privilege. And it's very hard for someone to be that altruistic.

[00:34:08] **Bukata Hayes:** I think about, to that point of giving up something. I also think about this framing that believing having 97% of something or 98% of something is okay. So, like when the whole notion of giving up, like going from 97 to like two. Most times in reality of it all, it's probably going from 97 to 92. And that piece is what I think we don't speak to. Like all our leaders, if you will, are white. Why does it feel like when you get two leaders (of color) who join a board, that all of a sudden all the power's gone. Like this notion of always being in control has to be questioned, too. Like that's part of the illogicalness of racism. Is that believing always being empowered is the default condition.

And if I lose a percentage point, yes, a percentage point,

[00:35:17] **Lissa Jones:** I'm a come up fighting, burnin', and ...

[00:35:19] **Bukata Hayes:** Absolutely, absolutely. Absolutely.

[00:35:21] **Lissa Jones:** That's, you know? Yeah. Thank you.

[00:35:23] **Chaz Sandifer:** And it's a lack of connection. It hasn't happened to them. They haven't felt that pain that's living within them. Ours is passed down from generation to generation. We feel it in our back and our souls. It's in our food.

[00:35:34] **Nneka Sederstrom:** It's printed in our DNA.

[00:35:36] **Chaz Sandifer:** It's printed. So that's why, when you're explaining to white people, sometimes it's like sometimes "deer in the headlights". I'll take myself, for instance. I was born in Edina. Don't hate me, but at the end of the day, I'm still a Black woman.

That's what shows up first, not where I was born. Not that I'm educated or anything like that. They can never relate that no matter what we do, the Blackness always shows up first. So, no matter what, if I walk in a hospital, it doesn't matter that I have good health care. I'm going to be treated until they really figure out who I am, I'm going to be treated different. And it happens all the time.

[00:36:09] **Nneka Sederstrom:** Even when they figure it out.

[00:36:10] **Chaz Sandifer:** Even when they figure it out. And like you were saying before the pain, right? All of our pain, whether it's actual pain that they're seeing, or pain that's living inside of us, it's still always minimize that “We gave you this. Why are you complaining now? We gave you this little part, like you said, we had 97%. We gave you 5%. What are you complaining about? You should be happy. “

[00:36:34] **Bukata Hayes:** Right? Right.

[00:36:36] **Lissa Jones:** You know, I think that people need to recognize that equity is a way to safety. Yes. Equity, the way to security. You think you got something in the house that somebody else wants? How about if they have what they want in their own house and they don't have to bother with your house? We can think about safety in that way.

In Episode 59 of [Black Market Reads](#), we talked to Resmaa Menakem, the author of *My Grandmother's Hands*. And one of the things Resmaa teaches us is that trauma when decontextualized in an individual - So I'm on the corner. You see me active. Now you say, dang, what's the matter with her? Instead of thinking what might've happened to her. So, trauma decontextualized in a person can look like personality traits, right? And trauma, when decontextualized in a family can look like family traits, and trauma when decontextualized in a people can look like culture.

And that's what media does to Black people is pathologize us to a point where we are the sum of our traumas and that is all. R.T., you want to say something? You're looking intently.

[00:37:32] **R.T. Rybak:** I mean, part of the thing is it's really hard in the history of the world to look at a period of time where within one generation, one part of the population had to give up a huge amount of power to another. That is

what is happening right now, and it explains a lot. It needs to happen. It needed to have happened and we're in it. Whether people want to accept it, or not. What's important about that is, I guess maybe you can look at south South Africa is kind of an example.

The financial giving is still not happening. The fact of the matter is right now, what's going to happen on many levels is for, and I think this happened more since George Floyd, is that white people have started to recognize that the discussion of race is not one that one can stand on the outside and say, that's a good thing.

Race is about everything. And everyone is in that conversation and it really requires you to be in it. So, then the discussion about not being a racist versus aggressively anti-racist. Now what that's meant, I think, is for a lot of white folks to have to do the personal navigation and re-understand our history completely.

That's a hard thing to do. But you see the backlash going on in education, where really good work is being done to rewrite the history and the appropriate and true way it's done. At the Minneapolis Foundation, one of the things we've done is we've launched this series conversations with Chanda, a series of podcasts where Chanda brings in folks who give viewers of our podcasts the ability, just like this, to get insight into it. In addition, we have to have lived experiences. In addition, decisions have to be made by people more proximate, but white folks also have to their work. One of the many, many things I'm trying to do is I'm reading a really phenomenal book right now. *The Love Songs of W.E.B. Dubois*, which is a phenomenal book.

[00:39:35] **Lissa Jones:** Black Market Reads!

[00:39:36] **R.T. Rybak:** I'm on page 700, I'm not done with all the 800. Yeah. It's a big read, but for those who don't know about it, it's on some levels what *Roots* would be if it was written with today's context? I think may be a way of saying it. It's a way for a white person to get inside the history through a personal experience. And it's one thing to go through a DEI training where somebody comes in and you check the box, it's much better to get inside the lived experience. What does multi-generational trauma mean person by person by person? No easy answer on it.

[00:40:10] **Lissa Jones:** Thank you so much. This is crazy. The time has gone Bukata, bring us home.

[00:40:16] **Bukata Hayes:** I would end with a couple of things. A lot of this I get from my father, a pro Black civil rights activist, but spoke to, and we talk about health equity and the work that we have to do around race, spoke to having both immediate relief because the Black masses are suffering.

So, we can't neglect the immediate relief folks need for only long-term solutions. People are dying every day. And so, we have to be ready and willing to figure out the ways we provide immediate relief and provide a coalition of those willing to do that while at the same time, working for long-term liberation and equality and equity and justice.

And I think that's the key. All of us have a role in that. All of us have a role in figuring out how we help immediately. Or, if you're more of a big long-term thinker, how you do that work more long-term, but we got to connect those. And I think that's the part I hope that we figure out and then have the political will, the courage to do like Bryan Stevenson talks about. Like this work we do in this auditorium today can help us walk maybe for the first time freer than we've ever been. And I think that's what we hope happens.

[00:41:35] **Lissa Jones:** Race is a prison and it imprisons all of us, if we let it. This is Black Market Reads. I'm your host Lissa Jones. Bukata, Nneka, Chaz, R.T., thank you for being our guests. We appreciate it. We'll see you again. Next time.

[00:41:59] **Yo Derek:** [Black Market Reads](#) is produced by the Givens Foundation for African-American Literature in partnership with iDream.tv. Black Market Reads is made possible through the generous support of our individual donors, the Target Foundation, and the voters of Minnesota through the Minnesota State Arts Board with support from the Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

Our production team includes executive producer, Herman Milligan, coproducers Lissa Jones and Edie French, technical director. Paul Auguston, associate writer Maya Auguston, the voice "Yo" Derek Emery and our artist of inspiration Ta-coumba Aiken. This is Black Market Reads. I'm your host Lissa Jones, a luta continua. The struggle continues.