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WEEKLY ROUND-UP

WELL BEINGS TOUR SEATTLE, WASHINGTON THURSDAY FEBRUARY 25, 2021 7:00 PM PT

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Through Positive Eyes BANISHING STIGMA: Black Voices on HIV WED, FEB 24 | 12-1 PM - FREE

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SOUTH SEATTLE IS READING Just Drive Them Around for a Bit: WSP Officers May Have Violated Protestors' First Amendment Rights on MLK Day Seattle Police Shoot and Kill a Man Near Northwest African American Museum 'Whiteness Is Not an Ancestor' Book and Town Hall Event Explore Urgent Need for White People to Talk About Whiteness As Seattle Gears Up for Winter Weather, Officials Scramble to Secure Emergency Shelter South Shore Pre-K-8 Helps Sustain Families Through the Worst of Times

So, Seattle Emera @SoSeaEmerald Check out a new episode of @WWCorwaga's Clap Back Culture about to drop at 7pm tonight featuring political and social commentary by @treasuredofales and our very own @ReamDavid! View it on your platform of choice.

CLAP BACK CULTURE @WWCorwaga

So, Seattle Emera @SoSeaEmerald Advocates of drug reform have long argued that criminalizing use is a clumsy, ultimately harmful way to treat what they say should be viewed as a public health problem. On Friday they're finally get a hearing in the state legislature...southseattlemerald.com/2021/02/11/wall...

Washington Bill to D... by Ben Adlin Right no... southseattlemerald.c...

So, Seattle Emera @SoSeaEmerald "The constant compulsion to center white experiences, the fragility, the evasion, and the virtue signaling set me on edge... But the only thing worse than white people talking about whiteness is white people who ignore whiteness or refuse to talk about it." southseattlemerald.com/2021/02/11/w...

Whiteness is Not an ... by Sarah Stuteville Th... southseattlemerald.c...

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VOICES

'WHITENESS IS NOT AN ANCESTOR' BOOK AND TOWN HALL EVENT EXPLORE URGENT NEED FOR WHITE PEOPLE TO TALK ABOUT WHITENESS

FEBRUARY 11, 2021 EDITOR LEAVE A COMMENT

by Sarah Stuteville

There is something so obnoxious about white people talking about whiteness. The constant compulsion to center white experiences, the fragility, the evasion, and the virtue signaling set me on edge (even as I participate in it). But the only thing worse than white people talking about whiteness is white people who ignore whiteness or refuse to talk about it.

It was in this cringey tension that I held a copy of a recent collection of essays — and the centerpiece of this Thursday's Town Hall event, "Whiteness Is Not an Ancestor: Essays on Life and Lineage by White Women." The book — edited by Bellingham-based therapist, author, and publisher Lisa Iversen — is urgently personal. Whiteness is a system and all white people, past and present, have served to uphold it. Feeling the discomfort and pain in that truth — and using it to motivate change — is at the center of the project.

In one essay, a writer discusses the legacy of her great-great-grandfather who, as governor of Colorado, enabled the Sand Creek massacre of Cheyenne and Arapaho people. In another, June BlueSpruce — a long-time health care advocate and activist — describes her own grandfather's role in excluding Black people from medical practice.

BlueSpruce has spent most of her adult life working in healthcare and healing, from women's health collectives in her twenties to her current work as an intuitive healer. She says she owes this, in part, to her grandfather — though she is horrified by the racist policies he helped enact through his role in the American Medical Association in the early 20th century.

"I see him when I look in the mirror," says June grabbing her chin. "This jawbone — this is from him. And there is a direct line between him and the system he helped create, to the fact that more Black people are dying today of COVID."

The tension BlueSpruce feels towards her grandfather is itself a challenge to whiteness — an insidious system committed to obscuring truth in order to attribute unambiguous goodness to white people in history.

Iversen feels the need to identify perpetrators of whiteness — including family members and ourselves — as more urgent and timelier than any other issue. She points out that as we speak over Zoom, the impeachment hearings against the former president rage on. And while she refers to Trump as the "perpetrator in chief" she is emphatic that he is not the exception to whiteness' violent legacy but instead "enacting our history."

Both BlueSpruce and Iversen agree that white people who morally distance themselves from the horror of these past four years without engaging with the role of whiteness in their own lives are perpetuating racism.

"I am disgusted by Republican senators who would refuse to impeach Trump for inciting a white supremacist insurrection," says BlueSpruce. "But if I'm not looking at whiteness in my own life, I'm doing the same thing."

Iversen and BlueSpruce recognize that, inherently problematic in their work, there are unequal stakes. White people can still simply choose to engage with whiteness or not, whereas BIPOC communities have to engage with it in order to survive.

To this point, Iversen says that whiteness denies the full humanity of everyone who lives within its system.

"Whiteness is 365 degrees de-humanizing," says Iversen, explaining that white people are losing more than we realize by upholding whiteness. "It's not possible to feel fully human if you are participating in a system that relies on other people being less than human."

When asked what they hope for from tonight's event, they answer that they are looking forward to a conversation that is, as BlueSpruce puts it, "nourishing and painful" but also "engaging and motivating."

It's also urgently necessary.

The event will be tonight, Feb. 11, starting at 7:30. Tickets are \$5 and can be purchased here.

Sarah Stuteville is a writer, memoirist, educator, and nonprofit media consultant currently pursuing a master's degree in mental health counseling at Seattle University. She taught journalism and media production at the University of Washington. Feminism, journalism, motherhood, relationships, and mental health are subjects of Sarah's writings. Sarah has reported from over a dozen countries in the Middle East, East Africa, South Asia, and the former Soviet Union. She wrote a social justice issue column for the Seattle Times. Her memoir writing has been published in Mutha where her piece "No One Is Watching" was one of the most read on the site all year. Her piece "Windstorm" won "Honorable Mention" in the Hunger Mountain Nonfiction Writing Contest; "A Girl's History of Consent" was a finalist in the New Millennium Writings Nonfiction Awards. She also helped to co-found The Seattle Globalist, a nonprofit journalism organization that trains diverse media makers.

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