

Dr. William A. Smith

Professor and Department Chair of Education, Culture, and Society in the University of Utah's College of Education; Professor of Ethnic Studies (African American Studies Division)

william.smith@utah.edu

<https://changingdirectionsconsulting.org/home>

Dr. William Smith coined the term racial battle fatigue (RBF) in 2003 in what is now a seminal paper (Black faculty coping with racial battle fatigue: The campus racial climate in a post-civil rights era). Originally applied to the experience of Black faculty working on college campuses, the understanding and application of Smith's RBF has grown and is now used to deepen our understanding of racism's impact in a variety of contexts. In its most simple meaning, RBF refers to the physical, mental, and emotional toll that results from the continual navigation of and exposure to racism and anti-Black violence.

RBF has entered the national conversation on racism because it provides a powerful framework for understanding racism as an experience beyond a momentary flight or fight physical response to seeing anti-Black violence or the depression and frustration of a microaggression. Smith's theory of RBF understands that witnessing and/or experiencing racism will simultaneously include physical, mental, and emotional responses, always. Overtime, RBF leads to mental and emotional fatigue, professional burnout, and even long-term adverse health outcomes for a target of racism.

Smith has moved the conversation on race in America forward by advancing our understanding of what it means to be a person of color in the United States. RBF has become such a widely used term at the time of this writing, a Google Scholar search for racial battle fatigue returns 59,600 results, and Smith has received 4 awards, been featured in various popular [media 10 times](#), and given 15 presentations since August 2021, including to the **Utah Supreme Court Justices** and the **Chicago Center for Psychoanalysis & Psychotherapy**. RBF even has its own Instagram account (not started by Smith).

RBF is empowering other scholar researchers, the media, and the public by naming the effects of racism on the health and well-being of African Americans and other people of color. Through RBF, we are able to more fully grasp the threats of racism to our individual and collective physical, mental, and emotional health. And this understanding is spreading; the conversation Smith began has already surpassed our borders, with his recent presentations in Canada, Australia, Europe, South America, and Africa.

"If you can name your pain, you can develop effective strategies for resistance and resilience!"

— William A. Smith

Select Publications

Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate for Latina/o Undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review*, 2009.

'You Make Me Wanna Holler and Throw Up Both My Hands!': Campus Culture, Black Misandric Microaggressions, and Racial Battle Fatigue. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 2016.

"Assume the Position . . . You Fit the Description": Campus Racial Climate and the Psychoeducational Experiences and Racial Battle fatigue among African American Male College Students. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 2007.

Racial Battle Fatigue and the MisEducation of Black Men: Racial Microaggressions, Societal Problems, & Environmental Stress. *Journal of Negro Education*, 2011.

Black Faculty Coping with Racial Battle Fatigue: The Campus Racial Climate in a Post-Civil Rights Era. In *A Long Way to Go: Conversations About Race by African American Faculty and Graduate Students at Predominately White Institutions and Universities*, 2011.

Publication metrics

[About](#)

Dimensions Badge



522	Total citations
133	Recent citations
n/a	Field Citation Ratio
n/a	Relative Citation Ratio

Altmetric



News (37)
Policy documents (1)
Twitter (1)
Mendeley (571)

Citation metrics for a recent article.