

Decolonizing the Body: Healing, Body-Centered Practices for Women of Color to Reclaim Confidence, Dignity, and Self-Worth

Kelsey Blackwell

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Kelsey Blackwell's *Decolonizing the Body* is a body, mind, and spirit guide to attaining healing and wholeness.

Blackwell notes that living in a world wherein their cultures and identities are subjugated affects women of color in myriad ways, including by impacting their bodies—but she also asserts that somatics, or “the wisdom of my body,” can help women reclaim what is rightfully theirs. Noting that inner voices arise in women of color in everyday spaces that are dominated by white people, working to keep them small, her book works to counteract such negative influences caused by generations of history and trauma.

Conveying deep respect for women of color, the book takes a head-on approach to addressing the myths of colonization, such as that vulnerability is a weakness; it shares truths to counteract these harmful tropes, assuring its audience that “you unconditionally belong.” And Blackwell shares bits of her own story as well—her father is Black, her mother is white, and she grew up in a Mormon community—to further show how this book works for women of color with multiracial backgrounds, too.

With a supportive tone and practical advice that's up to the steep task of undoing harm, Blackwell introduces somatic practices that can help women to slow down, notice themselves, reclaim their bodies, release personal and generational trauma, and connect to others in order to foster joy. Each exercise is explained in detail, with information about how long they take, about their guiding practices, and about how to have clear, realistic expectations for their results. The presence of pauses and journal prompts mimics the slowness and depth that's needed for change.

Decolonizing the Body is a compassionate and affirming self-help book that treats the wisdom of one's body as an empowering force.

MELISSA WUSKE (March / April 2023)

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