

Discussion questions:

1. The book is structured as a sermon. How does that impact your reading? Would a traditional narrative structure have worked as well?
2. Did the book change your thinking in any way?
3. Do you have friends of different races? Why or why not?
4. How does the use of music in the second chapter, “Hymns of Praise,” create a chorus that further strengthens the argument?
5. In the “Invocation,” Dyson’s voice changes as he simultaneously begs for forgiveness and defends his actions. Why does Dyson take this voice, and what does it invoke in you?
6. What alternate history does Dyson present in the “Scripture Reading,” and how does it conflict with the “history” accepted by many Americans?
7. Is whiteness an invention?
8. Why does the statement Black Lives Matter make so many people so angry?
9. How does Dyson restructure the responsibility of understanding and combating racism?
10. What is white fragility and how does it hinder constructive communication surrounding race?
11. Does every white person have white privilege?
12. In “The Plague of White Innocence,” Dyson states, “Justice is what love sounds like when it speaks in public.” What does he mean by that?

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13. If someone uses a racial slur in your presence, how do you react?
14. Throughout the book, Dyson dedicates stories to destabilizing white American “truths.” In “Coptopia,” what “truths” does he say that police represent to white Americans? How do Dyson’s memories break down those “truths”?
15. How do we work with local, state, and federal governments to prevent violence against people of color?
16. What actions can you take in your private and work life to combat institutional racism?
17. What are reparations? If reparations were adopted and approved by federal and state governments, what forms do you think they’d take?
18. Is it unpatriotic to refuse to stand for the National Anthem?

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