

**me and  
white  
supremacy**

**workbook**

**layla f. saad**

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## *Foreword by Leesa Renee Hall*

**Writer, Storyteller & Racial Justice Advocate**

I'm a fan of science fiction.

I especially love television shows and movies which center on how humans react to an extinction level event caused by a tidal wave, meteor, virus, alien, deep freeze, robots, zombies, or trees.

The cataclysmic event brings on a sense of panic, but amongst the chaos, a ragtag group of humans clumsily work together to try and save the planet. They compute calculations, make guesstimates, even sacrifice their own lives, just to give the human race another chance.

Others, however, will ignore the warnings, even going as far as to sabotage the efforts of those trying to save the human race. Their efforts are fruitless. Why? Because the individual need to save one's self can never compete with the group's desire to save the species.

Fiction imitates life. While we may not be fighting a species-ending virus or an earth destroying meteor, there is something we battle that destroys a bit of our humanity each day. White supremacy, a concept created in a 1681 courtroom in the state of Virginia, has robbed so many of so much in so many ways for close to 400 years.

It is not surprising that the state where white supremacy was born is the same stawwte where a white supremacist rally took place in 2017. The rally in Charlottesville, Virginia captured the world's attention. The photos of angry white men holding tiki torches stunned and horrified many.

Layla Saad was one of those people. What she witnessed troubled her so much, she wrote an impassioned letter to spiritual white woman, the very women who were the majority of her clients in her coaching business.

Aptly entitled "*I need to talk to spiritual white women about white supremacy,*" Layla directed the letter to white women for they are the mothers, sisters, aunts, grandmothers, godmothers, and cousins of the men who

gathered in that city for that rally. Although the expectation was that only her clients would read it, the letter Layla penned was shared a quarter of a million times in just a few short weeks.

Yet, despite it going viral, many still didn't believe the letter was directed at them. They thought they were the exceptional ones because they attended marches, wore pink pussy hats, put a Black Lives Matter icon on their social media profiles, and donated a few dollars to activists who are people of color (POC).

They posted the books they were reading penned by POC authors, shared which anti-racism courses they were taking, and made it very clear that they are an ally. Surely, they were one of the good ones.

They weren't.

Deep down, their inner white supremacist was in control, guiding their decisions and actions. It'd take a deep process to disarm generations of conditioning. Woken out of a deep slumber, Layla put together a series of prompts to share on Instagram. Calling it the 28-Day #MeAndWhiteSupremacy challenge, Layla invited people who hold white privilege to participate by journaling on a theme each day. Thousands participated in the challenge using a process of self-reflection and expressive writing. All for free. All to set people free.

What you hold in your hand is the legacy of what Layla shared during the challenge. Due to the emotional labour she had to expend for those who showed up to do the challenge, the posts are no longer available to comment on through her Instagram account. Instead, she has lovingly and fiercely put together this workbook to help you continue the work of becoming a better ancestor. Not only will Layla's instructions guide you as you write, but so, too, will the words from those who took part in the challenge.

I often ask myself, "What would the world look like without white supremacy?" We may not live long enough to know. However, if the rise and fall of empires is any clue, white supremacy doesn't have much time left.

The work you do as you go through this workbook will make you feel



uncomfortable. You'll feel queasy in your stomach. Like the ragtag group of humans who are trying to save planet earth for future generations, you may face opposition, not only from your inner self, but also from friends, family members, and others who are close to you.

The good news is that white supremacy's desire to save itself will never overcome humanity's need to save the species. Because you're doing this work, not for the survival of self, but for the benefit of those who will come after you, they will look back and say that you were, indeed, a good ancestor.



# *Introduction*



## PRELUDE

### *The Night This Work Was Born*

It is almost 2am in the middle of the night and I can't fall sleep. It's the night of the June 2018 full moon, and full moons always leave me feeling jittery and on edge. I'm wired and tired, but I can't fall asleep. I am tossing back and forth trying to will myself to sleep, but it's just not happening.

Since sleep is obviously not happening tonight, I let my mind wander. I begin to think about the past few weeks and months. I begin to reflect on the journey I've been on ever since publishing my viral letter "I need to talk to spiritual white women about white supremacy" after the August 2017 'Unite the Right' rally in Charlottesville, Virginia. The same rally where US President Donald Trump attempted to draw a moral equivalency between Neo-Nazis and anti-Nazi protesters. I think about how it was when I first started publicly speaking and writing about the intersections of race, feminism, spirituality and leadership. I think about the amount of pushback, spiritual bypassing and white fragility I encountered in those early months when I wrote social media posts and blog posts, and when I shared podcast interviews about white supremacy. And I begin to reflect on how different things are now, ten months later. How there is a greater willingness now by white people in the spiritual, wellness and personal growth industry to talk about white supremacy and anti-racism work.

As I do whenever I begin to feel words about to pour through me, I grab my phone and begin to type something out in my Notes app. At first I think it's just another Instagram post, or possibly a blog post. Either way it's a post inviting people in my community to reflect on their white privilege and white supremacy now that they seem to be more comfortable with these concepts, terminologies and dynamics. I open up the WordSwag app, which is where I like to create Instagram graphics and memes. I type out "What have you learnt about You & White Supremacy" in black font on a

square-shaped white tile. And then something interesting begins to happen. As I type out the words, I realise there are so many different aspects of white supremacy that can be reflected on. Not just white privilege. But also tone-policing, white fragility, white silence, white superiority, anti-blackness, cultural appropriation, tokenism, white feminism, and so much more. Each one a huge topic within itself, and simultaneously interlocking with all the other aspects to form this thing we call ‘white supremacy.’

I begin to jot down all of the different aspects of white supremacy that I have written about, witnessed and been subjected to ever since I started publicly talking about racism. I save the first graphic with “You & White Supremacy” and go back and replace those words with “You & White Privilege.” I save that image and then go back again and replace those words with “You & White Fragility.” I repeat this again and again. Saving the image and then going back, deleting those words and replacing it with another aspect of white supremacy that needs examining. I’m working quickly and efficiently now. I can barely keep up with the prompts that are pouring through me from what I believe is God (or Spirit, or however you define Source) working through me. All that frenetic, scattered full moon energy is now focused like a pinpoint on creating these journaling prompt graphics. Soon I have a few dozen of these graphics saved on my iPhone photo gallery. It’s now close to 3am. I look at the sea of white graphics on my phone and ask myself ‘what IS this?’ It’s clear it’s not a single Instagram post or even a blog post. It’s something more. It’s an experience. A journey. A body of work.

I ask God for further direction. I listen for an answer. Suddenly I recall that it’s the full moon. As someone who likes to work with lunar cycles, I wonder how many prompts I’ve created. As I count them I see it’s almost 28. Almost a lunar cycle. I write out a few more prompts and then I have more than thirty to work with. A strong intuitive knowing then dawns upon me. This is a month-long Instagram challenge. A free month-long Instagram challenge. For anyone in my community with white privilege who wants

to join in. The fact that it's a FREE challenge feels very important. I don't question it, but I also don't think about what that could mean for me in terms of the emotional labour of holding that space for 28 days. I am simply following Divine directions. I create one final graphic.

**The graphic reads:**

“You & White Supremacy

A 28-day truth-telling journey of what you have learnt about your personal complicity in white supremacy.

#MeAndWhiteSupremacy”

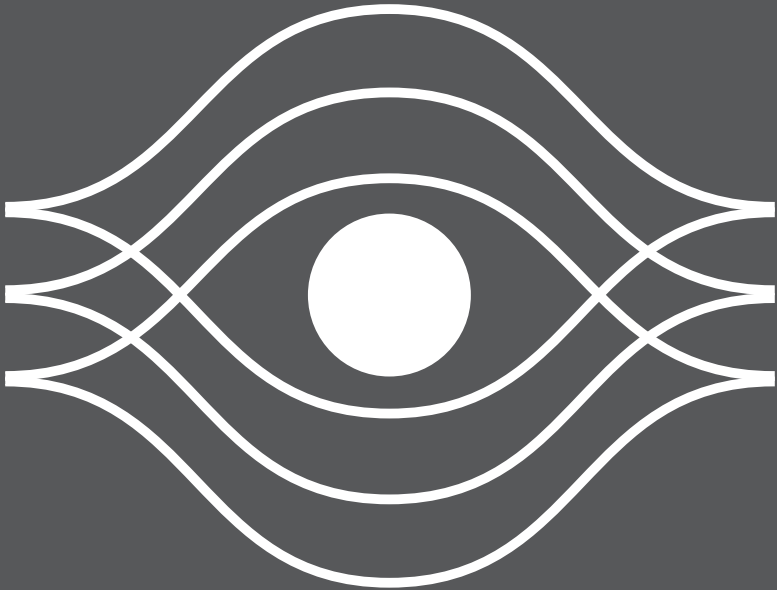
**The caption reads:**

“White folks: Time for some radical truth-telling about you and your complicity in white supremacy. Not those white people ‘out there.’ Not white people as a collective. But you. Just you. We start tomorrow. 28 days of simple yet direct questions for you to share where you are at in your journey so far of understanding and owning your racism. This is not me educating you. This is you being honest about the work you have been doing so far, and how you have been internalising that work. Don't comment unless you are willing to be all the way honest. I don't care about perfectionism. I care about truth, because truth sets us free and makes us better. Use the hashtag #MeAndWhiteSupremacy if you want to share. See you tomorrow ;)”

I'm finally feeling tired now. It's past 3am and I'm ready to sleep. I do a quick spell-check on the caption and then publish it to Instagram. And then I put my phone down on my nightstand and promptly fall asleep.

The next morning I begin a month-long journey that radically changes my life and the lives of thousands of people around the world. This workbook is here as a result of that journey, and a manifestation of a mystical experience that happened in the middle of the night of a full moon.

# *Chapter 1*



# *Welcome To The Work*

## **Dear Reader,**

*Welcome to The Work.*

Perhaps you have been following my work for a while, so you know exactly what this workbook is about. Or maybe you were referred to this workbook by a friend, family member, teacher, employer, colleague, or peer because you have shown interest in wanting to examine your white privilege and begin the work of anti-racism. Wherever you are on your journey so far, I welcome you.

The *Me And White Supremacy Workbook* is a one of a kind self-guided workbook and personal anti-racism tool that has been designed to help you to take ownership of your participation in the oppressive system of white supremacy, and to help you take responsibility for dismantling the way that this system manifests both within you and within your communities. This workbook is part education, part activation. It helps you to take a clear look at the different multifaceted aspects of white supremacy and how they operate in both subtle and direct ways within you, and within others. It acts as a mirror being held up to you so that you can deeply examine how you have been complicit in a system that has been purposely designed to benefit you through unearned privileges, at the expense of BIPOC (Black people, Indigenous people and People of Colour).<sup>1</sup> This workbook is for people who are ready to do the work; people who want to create change in the world by activating change within themselves first.

We are at a very important time in history. Many white liberal progressives like to believe that we are in a post-racial time in history. But the truth is, racism and anti-blackness are still alive and well today. The legal abolition of slavery did not abolish the slavemaster's mindset. People of colour are suffering daily from the effects of historic and modern colonialism. Right-wing, anti-Muslim nationalism is gaining popularity not just in the United States, but across the western world. And anti-blackness continues to be a



form of racism that can be found all around the world. It may seem like we are at a time history when racism and white supremacy is resurfacing, but the truth is, it never went away. And so, while it is true that recent events such as the 2016 US presidential election have really brought these issues to the forefront, the reality is these issues have always been there. And BIPOC in white-dominated societies and spaces have always been at the receiving end of constant discrimination, inequities, injustices and aggressions.

More white-privileged people like yourself are learning about racial dynamics and social justice terminologies than ever before. You are awakening to the fact that your white privilege has protected you from having to understand what it means to navigate the world as a black or brown person, and to the ways in which you have unintentionally caused harm to BIPOC through racial aggressions. This workbook is here to change that. It is here to wake you up by getting you to tell the truth. This workbook is not about those white people 'out there.' It is about you. Just you.

This workbook will challenge you in ways that you have not been challenged before. But we are living in challenging times. There is much work to be done. And it begins with getting honest with yourself, getting educated, becoming more conscious about what is really going on (and how you are complicit in it), getting uncomfortable, and questioning your core paradigms about race, spirituality, feminism and leadership. If you are willing to do that, and if we are all committed to doing the work that is ours to do, we may just have a chance in creating a world and way of living that is closer to what we all desire for ourselves and one another.

This work may sound overwhelming, intimidating, and unrewarding. I won't lie to you: It is. You will become overwhelmed when you begin to discover the depths of your internalised white supremacy. You will become intimidated when you begin to realise how this work will necessitate seismic change in your life. You will feel unrewarded because there will be no black or brown people rushing to thank you for doing this work. But if you are a person that believes in love, justice, integrity and equity for all people, then

you know that this work is non-negotiable. If you are a person who wants to become a good ancestor, then you know that this is some of the most important work that you will be called to do in your lifetime.

Here's to doing what is right, and not what is easy.

*Layla*

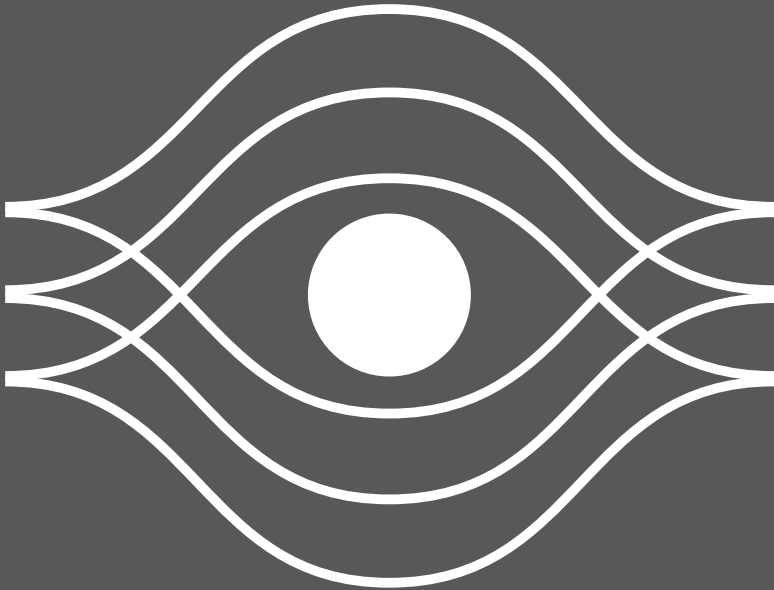
"This work was life-changing. I had (what I thought was) good awareness of white privilege, systemic racism and related concepts before participating, but when I dove into the work, I realized to my horror that I'm complicit in white supremacy in all sorts of unconscious ways. I have a renewed commitment to this work and a deeper sense of its unending nature. I'm no longer striving to be 'a good white person,' as I now see how destructive that mindset is. Instead I am taking concrete actions toward supporting, elevating, amplifying and prioritizing BIPOC, and remaining open to hearing about/examining the mistakes I make along the way. Layla has taught me so much."

**—Stephanie Dobbin, New York, United States**

"This work changed my life. It helped me understand how I have been systematically programmed to be racist. It enabled me to begin dismantling the racism that I truly believed wasn't there. My world has opened up in ways I didn't know were possible. I am now actively engaged with life and I am aware of my impact of my actions. I will never be able to thank Layla enough for leading me to my humanity."

**—Brenda Amaral, Dighton, United States**

# *Chapter 2*



# *Who Is Layla?*

## **Who Am I?**

My name is Layla Saad, and I am a writer, speaker, podcast host and racial justice advocate. My work explores the intersections of Race, Spirituality, Feminism and Leadership, and I am passionate about creating personal and collective change in the world. My work confronts the oppressive systems of white supremacy and patriarchy, while offering important teachings and tools for transforming consciousness, cultivating personal anti-racism practice and taking responsibility for our individual and collective healing. The impact of my work on race and feminism through a spiritual and leadership lens has extended beyond the personal growth industry where my work began. My writings have been brought into homes, educational institutions and workplaces around the world that are seeking to create personal and collective change. As an East African, Arab, British, Black, Muslim woman who was born and grew up in the West (United Kingdom), and lives in the East (Qatar), I have always sat at a unique intersection of identities from which I am able to draw rich and intriguing perspectives. My work centers my experience as a person who is Black, Muslim & Woman.

## **How I Began Talking About Race**

I began my career as a life and business coach in the personal growth industry in 2014. In 2017, I published the viral blog post *"I need to talk to spiritual white women about white supremacy,"* following the 'Unite The Right' rally in Charlottesville, USA. My writings and podcast episodes stirred up a tidal wake of awakening and activation in an industry which is largely white-centered, white-washed and white-dominated. In 2018, I hosted a 28-day free Instagram challenge called #MeAndWhiteSupremacy. Thousands of people took part in the challenge, which was described as

a month-long truth-telling journey for people who hold white privilege to explore their personal complicity in white supremacy. Following the challenge, I have written this workbook, which is a first-of-its-kind personal reflection tool for people with white privilege to explore, interrogate, gain clarity on and dismantle their internalised white supremacy.

## **Becoming A Good Ancestor**

The primary force which drives my work is my desire to become a good ancestor. I know that my soul work is to help create change, facilitate healing, and seed new possibilities for those who will come after I am gone. This workbook is a contribution to that purpose. It is a resource which I hope will help you do the internal and external work needed to become a good ancestor, too. To leave this world in a better place than you have found it. The system of white supremacy was not created by anyone who is alive today. But it is maintained and upheld by everyone holding white privilege today—whether or not you agree with it. It is my desire that this workbook will help you to question, challenge and dismantle this system that has harmed and killed so many BIPOC.

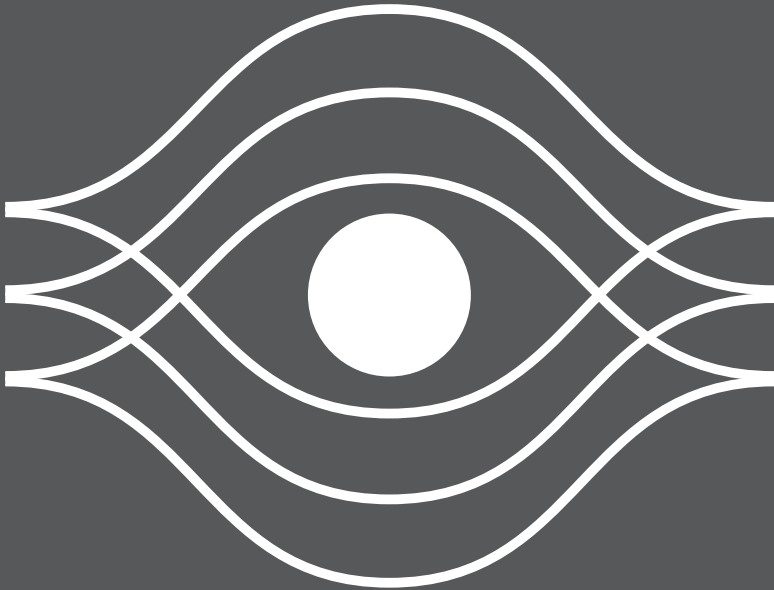
"I'm a white woman and a public school teacher. I was passionate and social-justice oriented before, but the challenge helped me see and be real about how I am part of the problem, the ways in which I reinforce the system of oppression, and how I need to be more aware of what I do and say that reinforces it. My job is powerful in ending white supremacy or perpetuating it. The challenge helped me be real and honest with myself in my thoughts and assumptions and how they contributed to the problem at large. It helped me to learn and listen especially to people of color and especially black women. It changed how I have conversations with white people, with my students, and with my family and how I am now aware of what's really being said, the implications of certain opinions and reactions, and that I am not done learning. I still have a lot of work to do, but Layla's work changed me in ways I never imagined."

**—Rachel, Philadelphia, United States**

"Every white person needs to do this workbook. The challenge made me painfully aware that I did not escape racist socialization and white supremacy, even as a progressive, educated white person. It has also started me on a journey to be more accountable, humble, and committed to real racial justice. I can apologize more sincerely. I can see my failures and address them. The challenge was a gift, and I believe the workbook is too, because it unveils how we all participate in white supremacy, and shows that we can and must do better."

**—Bri Farber, Columbia, United States**

# Chapter 3





## *What Is White Supremacy?*

You may be wondering why I chose to use the words “White Supremacy” for this book and not something softer or less confrontational like “Internalised Racism” or “Unconscious Bias.” You may be thinking that white supremacy is a term that is only used to describe far right extremists and Neo Nazis. However, this idea that white supremacy only applies to the so-called “bad ones” is both incorrect and dangerous, because it reinforces the idea that white supremacy is an ideology that is only upheld by a fringe group of white people. White supremacy is far from fringe. In white-dominated societies and communities, it is the dominant paradigm that forms of the foundation from which norms, rules and laws are created.

### **So what is white supremacy?**

According to Wikipedia, white supremacy or white supremacism is a racist ideology based upon the belief that white people are superior in many ways to people of other races, and that therefore white people should be dominant over other races. You may read that definition and think that it doesn't apply to you. That you don't hold that belief, but rather you believe that all of us are equal and that you don't modify your treatment of people based on the colour of their skin. What this workbook, which is a deep-diving self-reflection tool, will help you to realise however is that that isn't true. White supremacy is an ideology, a paradigm, an institutional system, and a world view that you have been born into by virtue of your whiteness. I am not talking about the physical colour of your skin being bad. I am talking about the historic and modern legislating, societal conditioning and systemic institutionalising of the construction of whiteness as inherently superior than people of other races. Yes, outwardly racist systems of oppression like slavery, Jim Crow, apartheid have been abolished. But the discrimination, marginalisation, abuse and killing of BIPOC in white-dominated

communities continues even today, because white supremacy continues to be the dominant paradigm under which white societies operate.

## **So we must call a thing a thing.**

We must look directly at the ways in which this racist ideology of white supremacy, this idea that white equals better, superior, more worthy, more credible, more deserving, and more valuable actively harms anyone who does not own white privilege. And we must look at the ways that this plays out at an individual, personal, intimate level—within you as a person. It is so easy to blame the system “out there” for creating this oppression. But the system was created by individual people, and it is upheld by individual people (whether knowingly or unknowingly).

If you are willing to dare to look white supremacy right in the eye and see yourself reflected back, you are going to become better equipped to dismantle it within yourself and within your communities.

White supremacy is a system that you have been born into. Whether or not you have known it, it is system that has granted you unearned privileges, protection, and power. It is also a system that has been designed to keep you asleep and “unaware” of what you having that privilege, protection and power has meant for people who do not hold white privilege. What you receive for your whiteness comes at a steep cost for those who are not white. This may sicken you and cause you to feel guilt, anger and frustration. But you cannot change your white skin colour to stop receiving these privileges, just like I cannot change my black skin colour to stop receiving racism. But what you can do is wake up to what is really going on, challenge your complicity in this system and work to dismantle it within yourself and the world.

**That *you* can do. This workbook will help you.**