



An excerpt from *Living While Black: Using Joy, Beauty, and Connection to Heal Racial Trauma*

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Navigating the world while Black can seem like being in a maze. There is no doubt that white supremacy inflicts harm and that this harm is often invisibilized. Racial trauma, as we have seen, is complex. It operates at many levels and often affects several generations, who become engaged in repeating histories, unaware that they are fulfilling scripts the world needs them to fulfill.

We have seen that trauma can leave us vulnerable to experiencing helplessness and to believing that we are powerless. In fact, society and white supremacy have much vested interest in us believing that we are. We are not powerless. And Black lives do matter. Our stories matter. Powerful Black people have always been feared. Especially when they draw from ancestral wisdom and memory and their hunger for justice and for freedom.

The world depends on us internalizing powerlessness, and so we may come to fear our own power and thus fear ourselves.

This fear of power is something each of us must confront. It does not sit in isolation from sociohistorical contexts. But the fear of our own power and the transformational potential it offers can stand in the way of our liberation, of us centering our needs and acting in a way that sustains us and resists racism.

This is the reason so many of us deny ourselves our creativity and why so many of us leave our gifts unwrapped. We make the decision—conscious or otherwise—not to materialize our potential because of this deep-seated fear.

But we sit at crossroads many times in our lives.

Perhaps even many moments in the day. The direction we take at these junctions is up to us. We do have the power to make different choices even as we remain constrained within the violent structures of anti-Blackness.

The freedom to choose direction is power. Where do we go from here? The familiar road? The one that guarantees a degree of safety because of familiarity . . . or do we choose the unknown? Do we take the way of uncertainty, trusting the path laid by our ancestors? Trusting our intuition and our body?

We deserve to be free. And we deserve to thrive. It is time to connect with our power.