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While the USA and the UK seem to be two very different countries, our histories are very intertwined and have given way to parallels in the present realities both are experiencing. I feel this to be especially true when we consider the origins and reasons for the centuries long systemic racism and particularly anti-Black racism present in both countries.

My hometown Bristol, in the South-West of England, was one of the main departure ports for slave traders going to West Africa to traffick Black people and sell them as expendable labour to White people occupying stolen land in the Caribbean and North America, some of the first of which were taken to the British colony of Jamestown, Virginia. Some were also brought back to the UK and forced into personal servitude for the rich.

Both countries benefited and still benefit from the exploitation of Black people and people of colour whether it is from the wealth built through slavery and empire, the removal of Indigenous people from their ancestral lands in order to exploit mineral and oil resources, or the use of low-paid labour to make our clothes, our technology, and produce our food.

It is the continued presence of the systemic racism and the colonial/neo-colonial mindset of white supremacy which is used to justify slavery along with the subsequent policies of racial segregation in our societies which cause the deeply entrenched inequities and discrimination experienced by people of colour, and particularly Black people, to continue today.

While all of us, I hope, in the Sufi Ruhaniat and Dance communities commit to meet and treat all as part of the same one being we know we are, we must also acknowledge that we are still subject to the societal conditioning in which we have lived most of our lives. Implicit or unconscious bias and discrimination, by their very nature, can go unnoticed and affect the way we interact with others in our daily lives, even if we would never consciously think to act in such a way. These conditioned, and, for the actor, often undetectable, ways of thinking have a huge role to play in propping up systemic racism in our societies and can impact all the spaces we occupy.

My mother and I have felt the result of this implicit bias played out both in Dance communities and in our daily lives in the wider world, in the way of assumptions based on the colour of our skin or the 'foreign' soundingness of our names. And yet, as people of colour who speak with British accents and have a lighter skin colour due to our mixed Black and White heritage, lessening the level of assumption and bias about us, we are afforded many privileges by society, that many people of colour are not. It is up to those of us who have privilege within our society resulting from our background and skin colour to work to recognise and remove the biases and assumptions in ourselves and others, which prop up the systemic racism that results in so many inequalities and injustices.

When we, as beneficiaries, work on addressing the still current results of centuries of European colonialism and empire from within this community, we must also remember that many of the spiritual practices we use and benefit from, come from the cultures and spiritual traditions of the colonised people that still encounter the detriment that this causes today. It is our imperative duty to learn and educate ourselves about the cultures and spiritual traditions of the practices that we use, and what they mean for the communities from whom they originate.

I feel we are very fortunate in our community that we have so many practices and teachings to help us with this work. We have all intoned the sacred phrases that confirm our oneness in humanity and as universal beings and know this to be true. We must now do the work to fully live these affirmations in our daily lives and in the commitment to justice and equality for those who continue to be othered and discriminated against in our society.

The following are some resources and works that I have seen recommended for educating ourselves further about racism and the work that we, and particularly those of us with white privilege, need to do in order to put an end to racial injustices. I am looking forward to reading them as soon as I can.

Blog: by Reni Eddo-Lodge - [Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race](#)

Book: by Layla F Saad - [Me and White Supremacy](#)

Book: by Akala - [Natives: Race and Class in the Ruins of Empire](#)

Other suggested books: [Do the work: an anti-racist reading list | Layla F Saad](#)