Discussion Guide



Eating While Black
Psyche A Williams-Forson

Avery Hill Publishing
2021
168 pages
ISBN: 978-1910395646

Food and Nutrition

Summary

"Psyche A. Williams-Forson is one of our leading thinkers about food in America. *In Eating While Black*, she offers her knowledge and experience to illuminate how anti-Black racism operates in the practice and culture of eating. She shows how mass media, nutrition science, economics, and public policy drive entrenched opinions among both Black and non-Black Americans about what is healthful and right to eat. Distorted views of how and what Black people eat are pervasive, bolstering the belief that they must be corrected and regulated. What is at stake is nothing less than whether Americans can learn to embrace nonracist understandings and practices in relation to food.

Questions

1. Eating While Black opens with an analysis of a 2019 event that went viral on social media. In May of that year, a commuter on Washington D.C.'s metro snapped a photo of a transit employee eating on the train. The rider then shared the photo on Twitter and a caption berating the worker for consuming food in that public space.
    a. [QUOTE] Worry About Yourself
    b. If comfortable, share your personal or observed experience with food shaming or food policing.
2. What are your thoughts on Willams-Forson's assertion that food shaming in America is rooted in anti-Blackness? What evidence can you think of that supports this? What stories have you heard about Black cuisine?
3. Many arguments for "eating right" are grounded in "scientific and medical epistemologies," but almost all of them fail to consider how history and culture inform these conversations. We ignore them at our peril…what would happen if we allowed our food and health conversations to be based on "our most common-sense ideas about health [and] good diets"... culture, values, and ideologies shape good eaters." (p. 104)
    a. What are your thoughts about how personal identity informs food choice and foodways?"

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4. [QUOTE] "How and what people eat are intensely personal and central to the daily fabric of our lives. These issues and the conversations that surround them must be approached with respect for that complexity and with a sense of humility for what people are going through and what factors into their decisions. There should be no judgment!" (p. 194)
    a. La Williams-Forson suggests that multiple factors influence our choices about the foods we consume. She says that food choices are multifaceted, situational, dynamic, and complex.
        1. What do you consider when making choices about the foods you consume? What about comfort foods?
5. What was your overall impression of the book?
6. What are two takeaways from the book?
7. What “ah ha” moments, if any, arose as you read the book?

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