Discussion Guide

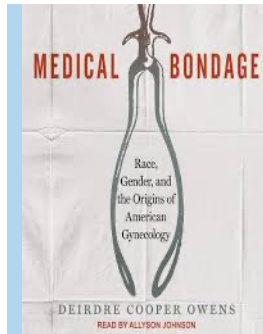|		
MEDICAL BONDAGE — Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology — DEIRDRE COOPER OWENS — READ BY ALLYSON JOHNSON	*Medical Bondage: Race, Gender, and the Origins of American Gynecology* Deirdre Cooper Owens University of Georgia Press 2017 182 pages ISBN: 978-0820351353	Black Maternal Health

Summary

Medical Bondage explores how, in the nineteenth century, experimental surgeries on enslaved and laboring women enabled the rise of American gynecology as a medical specialty and shaped our understanding of race. Merging women's, medical, and social history, the book makes Black and Irish women's lives--not just their bodies--part of an origins story of American medicine (one that has largely been told with an exclusive focus on white male historical actors) (from WorldCat).

Questions

1. How does the title relate to the contents of the book? Do you think the title is a good choice?

2. Cooper Owens examines primary sources to understand the stories and center the experience of the enslaved women involved in the medical experimentation. How did her work influence your understanding of the development of the field of gynecology?

3. Have you ever experienced bias from a healthcare provider? If so, how has that affected your healthcare?

4. How did reading this book affect the way you think about equity in healthcare? Why? Did it make you want to do anything or change anything?

5. Cooper Owens is cautious not to focus on one person, but instead on the systems of oppression that allowed for the exploitation of Black women. Why do you think Cooper Owens was worried about focusing this issue on only one person?

6. What surprised you most about the book?

7. The author brings up medical "fictions" around skin color such as pain tolerance. Can you think of any other medical assumptions that exist due to long held, but unproved beliefs?

8. If you could meet with the author, what would you ask?

9. How did reading this book impact you? Do you think you'll remember it in a few months or years? Would you ever consider re-reading it? Why or why not?

10. Who do you most want to read this book and why?

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