



A 7-DAY WORKBOOK · 30 JOURNAL PROMPTS

# Inherited.

*Seven days of clinical work and cultural truth for  
Black men carrying what was passed down.*

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**FREE COMPANION RESOURCE**

# Before you begin.

*If you are reading this, your body already knows something your mind has not given itself permission to say. This workbook is permission.*

I'm Randy Wynglass — a California and Florida licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. **U.S. Navy Veteran | Fleet Marine Force (FMF) Combat Corpsman embedded with Marine Infantry Units | 2006-2011.** For fourteen years I have sat in rooms with Black men who came in tired — and not the kind of tired that sleep fixes.

Racial trauma is the cumulative impact of racism on the body, the relational system, and the sense of self. It does not always arrive as a single event. More often it accrues — a thousand small accommodations made before lunch — and shows up later as exhaustion, hypervigilance, and a quiet conviction that the cost of being whole in public is too high.

This workbook is seven days. Thirty prompts. No homework you have to perform. The point is not to cure something — it is to bring into the room what has been waiting to be named.

## How to use this workbook

Take it one day at a time. Read the day's framing. Then write. Do not edit. Do not perform. Half-sentences count. Crossed-out words count. The page is yours.

Some days will land harder than others. The hard days are not failures — they are information about where the body has been carrying the heaviest weight. Stay with it. Or come back to it. The work is not linear.

On Day 7 you will find suggested reading and clinical resources. They are there when you are ready.

*"The body keeps the score, even when the mouth keeps quiet."*

AN ADAPTED TRUISM, AFTER VAN DER KOLK



# 01

DAY ONE

THE BODY YOUR GRANDFATHER BUILT

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## The body your grandfather built.

Your grandfather lowered his eyes when the sheriff drove by. You don't remember that. But your nervous system does.

When the cop pulls behind you on the highway and your shoulders rise to your ears before you have thought a thought — that is not anxiety. That is inheritance. That is the body of a man you never met, still operating inside your spine.

Polyvagal theory and the work of Stephen Porges describe what we are working with: the autonomic nervous system learns hypervigilance from caregivers before language exists. The mother whose own grandmother lived through Jim Crow scans every room. The baby in her arms scans with her. By age two, the scanning is baseline. By forty, you do not know you are doing it. You think the world really is that dangerous.

Resmaa Menakem calls this somatic abolitionism — the long, careful work of unlearning the body's inheritance. Today you start by noticing what is already in the body.

**1.** What was your earliest memory of being hyperaware of your race in a room? Describe it. Who was there. What you did.

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**2.** What does your body do when a police car pulls behind you on the highway? Describe the exact physical sensation.

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**3.** Who in your family taught you, by example, to be small in public?

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**4.** What does your body do when you walk into a room where everyone else is white?

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**5.** Name three places in your body where you can feel tension right now. Do not fix it — just name it.

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# 02

DAY TWO

THE TWO SELVES

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## The two selves.

W.E.B. DuBois named it in 1903. *Double consciousness* — the sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others. He thought he was diagnosing a sociological condition. He was actually diagnosing a neurological one.

Most Black men have learned, by their mid-twenties, to be at least two men. The man at work, the man at home. The man on the Zoom call with executives, the man in the kitchen with his mother. Each version is real. Each version is necessary. Each version costs energy to maintain.

Code-switching is not a metaphor. It is somatic labor. Every time you shift between modes of self-presentation, your autonomic nervous system performs work: monitoring tone, controlling facial expression, scanning the room for cues. Researchers call the cumulative cost *allostatic load*. In Black professionals, allostatic load shows up consistently — elevated cortisol by forty, hypertension by fifty, heart conditions doctors cannot explain by sixty. The doctor is looking for lifestyle risk factors. The risk factor was the lifestyle of being two men.

You did not invent this. You inherited it. Today you begin naming it.

**6.** How many "versions" of yourself do you switch between in a typical day? Name them — give each one a working title.

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**7.** Which version do you trust the most? Which version do other people trust the most? Are they the same?

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**8.** What is one room in your life where you cannot bring your whole self? What does that cost you?

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**9.** Who in your life — name them — knows the version of you that is not on display?

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## The armor.

Somewhere between five and ten years old, you learned what it cost to cry. Maybe your father said *be a man*. Maybe your uncle laughed. Maybe a teacher embarrassed you in front of a class. Maybe the neighborhood you grew up in did not have room for a boy who fell apart in public.

So you learned what every Black boy in America eventually learns: that softness will be punished, that needing too loudly will cost you, that the safer move is to harden up early and keep it there.

That hardening saved you. It probably kept you employed. It probably kept you alive. It also probably keeps your wife asking, twenty years in, why she still feels like she does not really know you. It keeps you from sleeping. It keeps you from crying at the funerals where everyone else is crying. It is, by forty, the armor that is welded to your skin.

The work is not to take the armor off in a day. The work is to begin admitting it is there.

**10.** Who specifically taught you that crying wasn't safe? Name them. What did they say or do?

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**11.** When was the last time you cried? When was the last time you cried in front of someone?

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**12.** What is one thing you would cry about today, if you let yourself? Write it down.

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**13.** Who in your life right now has earned the right to see you cry? If no one — what would it take to grow that into someone?

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## The boy you left behind.

Attachment theory has a name for what happened to you at six or seven or eight years old: *attachment deactivation*. The boy needed something — comfort, attention, the right to be small for a minute longer than the room allowed — and learned that needing it cost more than not needing it. So he stopped needing it.

That deactivation was a brilliant adaptation. It kept him safe. It probably saved his relationship with his father, his standing in his neighborhood, his ability to perform school.

Forty years later, the adaptation is still running. Your wife asks how you are. The deactivation answers before you do. *Fine. Tired. Good*. The boys at the cookout ask what's new. The deactivation gives them an updated highlight reel. There is no liar in this story. There is a younger version of you who learned a job a long time ago, and has not been told that he can rest.

The boy is still in there. He has been waiting.

**14.** How old were you when you remember being told to "be a man" or "stop crying"? Where were you?

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**15.** What was happening in your life just before that moment? What were you actually feeling that you were not allowed to feel?

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**16.** Where do you carry that boy now? In your body? In a habit? In a relationship pattern? Be specific.

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**17.** If you could speak to that boy today — write him a sentence or two. What would you want him to hear?

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## The inheritance.

Your grandfather did not survive Jim Crow because he was tough. He survived because his body learned to scan and contract and lower his eyes at the right moments. The armor saved his life. He passed it to your father. Your father passed it to you. Three generations of survival are inside your spine.

This is what Joy DeGruy calls post-traumatic slave syndrome. It is what Resmaa Menakem calls *somatic inheritance*. The trauma did not stay in 1865. It did not stay in 1955. It travels through every cradle. The lullaby a hypervigilant mother sings is a hypervigilant lullaby. The boy raised by men who never relaxed becomes a man who never relaxes.

This is not weakness. It is intelligence. It is the body of an oppressed people learning to survive an unsafe country. The cost is real. The lineage of survival is also real.

Today you do not try to fix the inheritance. You name it. Naming is the first move.

**18.** What did your grandfather (or great-grandfather, or an ancestor whose name you know) survive that you have not had to?

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**19.** What survival adaptation did he pass to your father? Be specific — name the behavior, the silence, the rule.

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**20.** What did your father pass to you? What is the rule you still live by that came from him?

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**21.** Which of those adaptations no longer serves you in the life you are living now?

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# 06

DAY SIX

THE NAMING

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## The naming.

For most of our history, the trauma was unnamed. It was just *how it is. That's life. You'll be alright.* Our grandmothers did not have the language. Our fathers did not have permission. Most of us learned to inherit the weight without ever being told what to call it.

Today is for naming. Not for fixing. Not for solving. Just for putting a word on the thing that has been in your house for as long as you have been alive.

When you name something, you change your relationship to it. You move from being inside the trauma to being someone who is in a relationship with the trauma. That move is the foundation of everything that comes after.

This may be the hardest day. That is information, not failure.

**22.** Write out, in your own words, the name of the trauma that has been in your family for generations. Not a clinical term — your name for it.

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**23.** What name did your family use for it, if any? What was the silence around it?

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**24.** Speak (or write) the names of three ancestors who carried this. Even if you only know one or two. Thank them out loud or on the page.

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**25.** What is one belief about yourself that came from this inheritance — that is not actually true about who you are?

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# 07

DAY SEVEN

THE SETTING DOWN

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## The setting down.

Your grandfather did not survive Jim Crow so you could die of a stress-induced heart attack at fifty-two. He carried what he had to carry. You are allowed to put it down. Carefully. Slowly. With gratitude. But down.

This is not a one-week project. The body of an oppressed lineage does not unburden in seven days. It unburdens across months and years of small, faithful work. What you have done this week is start. Starting is the part most men never do.

Setting down does not mean betraying your ancestors. It means continuing their work in a generation where you are allowed to finish what they had to start. You are not abandoning the lineage. You are honoring it differently.

Today you choose what you are setting down — and you name a witness. Because the unburdening, like the inheritance, does not happen alone.

**26.** What is one specific thing you are setting down this week? Be precise. Not "stress" — what specifically.

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**27.** Who needs to witness you setting it down? Name one person. What conversation do you need to have with them this week?

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**28.** What is one thing you are picking up instead? A practice, a relationship, a way of being.

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**29.** What is one ancestor you want to dedicate this work to? Write his or her name. Tell them what you are doing.

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**30.** Write a letter — short or long — to the version of yourself who will be living in this body in five years. Tell him what you started this week.

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## SUGGESTED INFORMATION

# For when you are ready.

*The work you have started in these pages goes further than seven days can hold. Below are the books that shaped my thinking, the clinical resources I recommend most often, and a few practitioner directories worth knowing about.*

## Suggested reading

*My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*

**RESMAA MENAKEM** The single most important book on somatic racial trauma. Read this first.

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*Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*

**JOY DEGRUY** The clinical framework for understanding how systemic trauma is transmitted across generations.

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*We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity*

**BELL HOOKS** The cultural diagnosis. Sharp, loving, unsparing.

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*The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*

**BESSEL VAN DER KOLK** The foundational text on how trauma lives in the body — essential for understanding what you are working with.

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*The Souls of Black Folk*

**W.E.B. DUBOIS** Where double consciousness was first named. Public domain — free everywhere.

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*Brotherman: The Odyssey of Black Men in America*

**EDITED BY HERB BOYD & ROBERT L. ALLEN** The historical anthology of Black male voice.

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# If the work brings up more than the page can hold.

## **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**

Call or text 988. 24/7. Free, confidential. For veterans: 988, then press 1.

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## **Therapy for Black Men**

therapyforblackmen.org — a national directory of clinicians specifically serving Black men.

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## **BEAM (Black Emotional and Mental Health Collective)**

beam.community — peer support, healing circles, training programs.

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## **Black Men Heal**

blackmenheal.org — clinical access, particularly for those new to therapy.

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## **Open Path Collective**

openpathcollective.org — sliding-scale therapy directory (\$30-\$80/session) for those without insurance.

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## **Loveland Foundation Therapy Fund**

thelovelandfoundation.org — financial support for therapy access for Black women and girls (worth knowing if a woman in your life is also doing this work).

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## **Randy Wynglass, LMFT — Direct Care**

randywynglass.com · Telehealth in California and Florida. Clinical psychotherapy for adults navigating identity, trauma, and the architecture of healing.

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## About this workbook

This workbook is offered free as a companion resource. The clinical work behind it draws on cognitive-behavioral therapy, polyvagal theory, attachment theory, Internal Family Systems, and the somatic abolitionism framework of Resmaa Menakem.

If you found this useful, the deeper companion *Anchored — A 30-Day Workbook for the Anxious Mind* integrates these tools into a daily practice journey. Visit [randywynglass.com](http://randywynglass.com) to learn more.

**IMPORTANT — Educational use only.** This workbook is educational and does not constitute clinical advice, nor does using it establish a therapist–patient relationship with the author. If you are in crisis or experiencing thoughts of self-harm, contact **988** (the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) immediately. For veterans, dial 988, then press 1.

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