

Volume 7: Radical Reckoning Requires Hope

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In Volume 7 of this special issue of the Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives and Scholarship *A Time for Reckoning: Reflections and Analyses for "The Sum of Us"*, our seven contributors delve deeply into the enduring legacy of America's racism. For her book, *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*, McGhee documents and analyzes the result of racist economic and social policies and programs that operate on a zero-sum paradigm. Through these stories and research she convincingly shows how we all lose when we view the world through losses and gains in a system that values supremacist beliefs.

Through philosophical, medical, historical, and socio-political lenses, the authors in this special issue contemplate and analyze how McGhee's work impacts their creative works, community projects, and research. These essays can be tough to read because they require us to face a much broader view of America's obsession with supremacy and zero-sum mentality.

In *Chasing the American Dream, in Neoliberal Times*, professor James Zarsadiaz expertly persuades the readers that not only racism has led to structural racism and discriminatory policies that we see today, but that our embrace of neoliberal policies has also resulted in wide inequities.

In the essay, *Voter Suppression Undermines Public Health for All* by professors Erin Grinshteyn, Laura Chyu, Roman Pabayo, the authors explore how US voting policies have in fact repressed the voices of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) while simultaneously highlighting dominant voices. These policies have continued despite many constitutional amendments guaranteeing voting rights. They analyze how different states have imposed varying strategies relating to voter access and suppression. Moreover, the authors argue that voter suppression has contributed to poor public health outcomes. They connect these inequities in voter laws with McGhee's analysis about zero-sum decision making.

Professor Amanda Parris's provocative essay, *What Us?*, asks the readers to consider McGhee's work as yet another book that falsely comforts us into believing that

solutions are a matter of changing policies. Through the lens of Afropessimism, Parris deftly questions the premise that there is even an “Us” to consider.

In the essay, *Drug Policy and Our Self-Inflicted Harm*, professor Deborah Ahrens’s legal scholarship and activism on U.S. drug policies provides her the insights to demonstrate the far-reaching harms that go beyond the ones documented in McGhee’s book. The historical and current criminalization of substances harm communities of color on a disproportionate level with devastating impacts for communities and families.

Professors Laura Chyu and Erin Grinshteyn probe the chronic health impact of racism as a stressor. BIPOC communities are especially vulnerable to premature disease, disability, and death. The authors connect our economic system to systemic racism and argue that our current racial and class divides leave working and poor communities with fewer opportunities and poor health.

In, *The Stumped of Us: Why Teach Rhetoric in the Face of Racism?*, professor Jonathan Hunt discusses how McGhee’s (2021) book represents a profoundly ambivalent depiction of Rhetoric as a field of study. McGhee’s own hope and belief in research, findings, and truth-telling is contradicted by countless examples of the defeat of rational, ethical evidence in the face of racism and greed. This ambiguity leads to existential questions for rhetorical approaches in higher education.

As with volume 6, our responses to McGhee’s work continue to change from promising to pessimistic, from optimistic to hopeless, always questioning if we are going down the right path and what the future will hold. In volume 7, however, we are forced to confront the deep damage of racism in all aspects of our lives. While reading through these essays, we found ourselves wondering how we can emerge from despair. Is it even possible to reckon and move forward? Ultimately, though, we have no choice do we? Reckoning with our past and our current way of being requires radicalism. In this case, the need for action and transformation is not guided by anger or despair but with hope. It is now an act of radicalism to believe that we can forge a vision that McGhee lays out for us.