

Community  
Engagement  
Toolkit

# MORTE VIVUM

PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE POLITICS OF THE VISUAL



# Community Engagement Toolkit

# MORTEVIVUM

## PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE POLITICS OF THE VISUAL

Brown University Digital Publications  
Providence, Rhode Island

The MIT Press  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
London, England

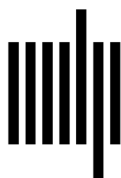
Except for the illustrations credited to third party sources, Brown University dedicates this work to the public domain under Creative Commons License [CCO](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

This Community Engagement Toolkit was developed by Brown University Digital Publications to be used with *Mortevivum: Photography and the Politics of the Visual* by Kimberly Juanita Brown.



Please scan this QR code to find an open access digital edition of *Mortevivum: Photography and the Politics of the Visual*.

Cover image: Carrie Mae Weems, *All the Boys (Profile 1)*, 2016. Courtesy of the artist.



BROWN UNIVERSITY  
Digital Publications

## HOW TO SET GUIDELINES FOR SUCCESSFUL CONVERSATIONS

Open conversations about antiblackness, visual culture, and death are never simple or easy to have. We all have a responsibility to take care of ourselves and each other. One way to begin is by setting agreed-upon ground rules that create space for open-mindedness, curiosity, and discovery.

When setting ground rules, it's important to keep the following in mind:

Make it clear that the group is here to discuss, not debate or argue.

Outline what it means to talk respectfully: listening to one another, not making assumptions about others' statements, asking questions, etc.

Clarify the goals in mind for the meeting/conversation. Are you making a decision? Exploring options? Learning more about one another?

Borrowed from *Ground Rules: How to Set Successful Guidelines for Your Conversation Programs* by the American Library Association Public Programs Office. Read in full at <https://programminglibrarian.org/articles/ground-rules-how-set-successful-guidelines-your-conversation-programs#:~:text=Make%20it%20clear%20that%20the,Are%20you%20making%20a%20decision%3F>, archived at <https://perma.cc/7MGM-2634>.

**Consider these questions:**

What brought us together?

What unique perspectives or experiences do we each bring to the conversation?

What protocols do we want to establish for when disagreements arise?

How will we hold ourselves accountable? What do we expect from each other?

Think of a conversation you've had about antiblackness that felt generative. What happened? What made it feel generative?

Think of a conversation you've had about antiblackness that felt unproductive. What happened? What made it feel unproductive?

## CONVERSATION PROMPTS

### WORDS

Consider the term “Mortevivum,” which Kimberly Juanita Brown has coined to understand “the hyper-availability of images in the media trafficking in tropes of impending black death....living death in a series of still frames.”

What are your reactions to this word? What does it bring up for you?

Are there other words in the book that resonate with you? Why?

### TEXTS

According to Brown, James Baldwin’s 1965 short story “Going to Meet the Man” conjures up a lynching scene “without reproducing the visual image itself.”

What other texts come to mind as alternatives to “the excessive and repetitive display of black visualized death” — or images that do harm?

What texts do you now want to turn to or revisit, having read this book?

## FURTHER READING

Did the conversation prompts take you or your group in new directions? Are you curious about other books that delve further into these themes? Below is a short list of books mentioned by Kimberly Juanita Brown that examine the politics of the visual.

## TEXTS & TENSIONS

Gilroy, Paul and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, editors. *Stuart Hall: Selected Writings on Race and Difference*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2021.

Goldsby, Jacqueline. *A Spectacular Secret: Lynching in American Life and Literature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Harper, Michael S. *Images of Kin: New and Selected Poems*. Urbana Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1977.

## IMAGES

Browne, Simone. *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Sealy, Mark. *Decolonising the Camera: Photography in Racial Time*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 2019.

Wekker, Gloria. *White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

## **FURTHER READING** (continued)

### PLACES & WORDS

Lowe, Lisa. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

Hartman, Saidiya. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Gobodo-Madikizela, Pumla. *A Human Being Died that Night: A South African Woman Confronts the Legacy of Apartheid*. New York: Mariner Books, 2003.

Christina Sharpe, *Monstrous Intimacies: Making Post-Slavery Subjects*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.

## TRAUMA AND CARE RESOURCES

We all have a responsibility to take care of ourselves and each other. Below is a short list of resources that offer help with resilience, recovery, and renewal.

### The Impact of Racial Trauma and How to Cope

Guide for understanding racial trauma from a mental health perspective

<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-racial-trauma-5210344>, archived at <https://perma.cc/HU4N-Y8MM>.

### Resources to Support Children’s Emotional Well-Being Amid Anti-Black Racism, Racial Violence, and Trauma

Caregiver guide for speaking with children about racism and racial trauma

<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/resources-to-support-childrens-emotional-well-being-amid-anti-black-racism-racial-violence-and-trauma>, archived at <https://perma.cc/R8GT-9GU3>.

### Tender Loving Self-Care for POC: A Guide for Tending to the Wounds of Racial Trauma

Techniques for cultivating bodily, emotional, and social awareness and resilience

<https://www.mindfulleader.org/blog/56241-tender-loving-self-care-for-poc-a-guide>, archived at <https://perma.cc/Z2HN-R3WB>.

### Radical Self-Care

Resources about womxn of color traditions of radical self-care

[https://libraryguides.saic.edu/learn\\_unlearn/wellness5](https://libraryguides.saic.edu/learn_unlearn/wellness5), archived at <https://perma.cc/F2LT-PHQH>.