



ABHM Book Club Discussion Guide

January 25th, 2024

All That She Carried by Tiya Miles (2021)

How to Use this Guide:

[America's Black Holocaust Museum](#), [Milwaukee County Historical Society](#), and [Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design](#) staff created this guide to assist in reading and discussion of *All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, a Black Family Keepsake* by Tiya Miles (2021). Please feel free to print a copy and keep it with your book as you lend to friends and others who are interested. Do not expect to get through all of the questions during the upcoming meeting nor in one sitting. Perhaps consider them as conversation starters or an invitation to reflect more deeply about this book.

Suggested Questions for Discussion:

1. We chose *All That She Carried* to coincide with the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design's current exhibition, *Growing Resistance*. Were any of you able to see the exhibition yet? If so, how does this book connect to the stories explored and shared at the exhibition? More information about the exhibit is shared below.
2. What methods does Miles use to uncover this history? Why do you think she has to look to alternative sources and methods for this research? Do you think she was successful in conveying the history behind this one artifact? Was there anything that seemed either particularly compelling or like a stretch? See pages 3, 17, 27-29, 65, 77, 89, 204, 222, 228, 273, 300, and 302.
3. What is the role of museums in the research for this book? What does this story tell us about the importance of Black museums, Black archives, Black newspapers, and family collections? What responsibility do historians, collectors, and museums/historic sites have going forward in light of the history shared here? How can we encourage people to collect and share their stories? See pages 6, 33, 37, 243, 265, 266, and 276.

4. Miles argues that history is storytelling and that “telling is an action that can revise one's relationship to the past.” Do you agree or disagree with this sentiment? How does Dr. Cameron's quote (listed below) relate to this idea? See pages 58, 228, 231, 233, 256, and 259.
5. How does Ashley's sack allow us to think differently about the concept of “love” in history? As it relates to materials items in museums and in our own lives? How does this complicate thinking about items as simply possessions? Have you received a sack or a feminist survival kit of some kind passed? Or rather have you made one or would consider constructing one for yourself or someone else? What are some material or immaterial objects that would be included? See pages xiv, xv, xvi, 3, 36, 90, 96, 100, 103, 117, 125, 191, 264, 297, and 304.
6. Miles argues that objects themselves have a life of their own. Do you feel that objects can have animate meaning? What layers of meaning does Miles find in the sack? Do you have such an object that tells your family history? How does this object or your family's story contribute to the larger narrative of the nation's history? See pages 4, 6, 13, 94, 107, 124, 130, 189, 202, 204, 234, 267, 268, and 270.
7. What role do textiles, fabric, clothing, and quilting have in this book and in the story of Ashley's family? How was dress used during enslavement as a means to control the social order created in South Carolina and on plantations across the South? Are there other groups who have experienced similar forms of restrictive and hyper-surveillance with regard to their clothing? See pages 11, 14, 134-142, 147, 150, 163, 233, 271, and 272.
8. How is gender discussed in this book? Did you find that there were missed opportunities to further unpack gender identities in this narrative? What does this book tell us about traditional gender roles and how they intersect with racial identities at this time? See pages 23, 27, 84-85, 112, 145, 173, 247, 251, 256, 257, and 262.
9. This book was written for a public audience, rather than traditional academic audiences. How did that impact Miles's writing style? Who exactly do you think she was trying to reach with this book and what impact do you think this research will have since it is available to all? Should all such research be made accessible like this? See pages 291 and 296.
10. Miles reveals how investigating this one piece of material culture illuminates indigenous history, as well. How does she do so? Where do we see the lives of Black people and indigenous people intersecting in this narrative and through material culture? How is or isn't this unique to the specific places she is discussing (South Carolina, westward expansion/Indian removal, etc.)? See pages 40, 44, 46-52, 166, 181, 208, 214, and 268.

Growing Resistance

Brooks Stevens Gallery at the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design

January 8th through March 2nd, 2024

Monday through Saturday, 10 AM to 5 PM

More information: <https://www.miad.edu/miad-galleries-overview>

Growing Resistance Gallery Tour & Zine-Making Workshop

Saturday, February 17th, 10 AM to 2:30 PM

Bus departs at 10 AM from America's Black Holocaust Museum (401 W North Ave) for Growing Resistance Gallery Tour at MIAD (273 E. Erie Street); Bus departs from MIAD at 12 PM for a zine-making workshop at ABHM. Space is limited.

Learn more and register: bit.ly/GRTZine

Dr. Cameron Quote

“History tells me that a people without a story are a people with no name. Without a name, one is not respected or understood. Without a name or a story, the depth-regions of the heart will never be plumbed. You remain a stranger to yourself and others. Stories give shape to our personal journey. Stories give context to our collective pilgrimage.”