



BIGGER THAN BRAVERY

BLACK RESILIENCE AND RECLAMATION IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

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- Why do you think editor Valerie Boyd opens the anthology with an account of mistaken identity in a police raid of her father's business when she was a child? How does this anecdote relate to other writers' concerns in the anthology?
- Reread Jericho Brown's poetry epigraph, "Crossing." What kind of "crossings" are addressed in the essays and poems in *Bigger Than Bravery*?
- Several essayists—Deesha Philyaw (9–16), Karen Good Marable (89–96), and Imani e Wilson (205–215)—focus on their experiences of music during the pandemic. How does each writer use specific songs to highlight her unique perspective? Is there a song that resonated for you, or that reflects your viewpoint during the pandemic, and, if so, why?
- In "Build Back a Body," Destiny O. Birdsong describes the Korean concept of *son mat* as "the taste of one's hands" (33). How did traditions around food and cooking inspire her, as well as other writers in the anthology, to deepen their awareness of familial and cultural heritage?
- In her essay "Racism Is Terrible. Blackness Is Not," Imani Perry writes, "Americans in general have a hard time dealing with death" (133). What are your thoughts on this statement? Using essays and poems from the book, explain how others contributors grappled with this concept.
- Tayari Jones (25–28) and Aunjanue Ellis-Taylor (153–158) address the experiences of "essential workers" and low-wage employees during the pandemic. How does each writer humanize the people in their essays while drawing critical attention to issues of economic disparity?
- Does any specific essay or poem in the anthology inspire within you a call to action? If so, why? What form might that action take?
- What emotions arose for you while reading this anthology? Sadness? Discomfort? Anger? Relief? Elation? Inspiration? How do you account for your response?
- Have your perspectives—on racial or cultural identity, community, resilience, the pandemic, social injustice, death, and loss—changed in any significant way after reading this anthology? If so, how? If not, why not?
- Throughout the anthology, do the writers see technology as expanding communication or widening division among people? Do you think Zoom technology ultimately helps bring us together or further disconnects us?
- Imani Perry considers the repetitive trauma of racism in the U.S. and the importance of cultivating Black joy. How does she—and the other writers—see joy's place alongside grief and suffering?
- The book ends with Kamilah Aisha Moon's posthumously published poem "Another Quarantine Blues" (216–18). How does the poet use imagery to teach us about being present in a time of collective loss? What is the impact of closing the anthology with this poem?
- In what ways is *Bigger Than Bravery* a fitting title for this collection of essays and poems? How do you see the themes of resilience and reclamation threaded through individual pieces in the anthology?

