“Americans believe in the reality of “race” as a defined, indubitable feature of the natural world. Racism – the need to ascribe bone-deep feature to people and then humiliate, reduce, and destroy them, inevitably follows from this inalterable condition. In this way, racism is rendered as the innocent daughter of Mother Nature, and one is left to deplore the Middle Passage or the Trail of Tears the way one deplores an earthquake, a tornado, or any other phenomenon that can be cast as beyond the handiwork of men. But race is the child of racism, not the father” (p. 7).

“And still and all I knew that we were something, that we were a tribe – on one hand, invented, and on the other no less real.” P. 56

“I am black, and have been plundered and have lost my body. But perhaps I too had the capacity for plunder, maybe I would take another human’s body to confirm myself in a community. Perhaps I already had. Hate gives identity. The nigger, the fag, the bitch illuminate the border, illuminate what we ostensibly are not, illuminate the Dream of being white, of being a Man. We name the hated strangers and thus are confirmed in the tribe. But my tribe was shattering and reforming around me.” P. 60

“The girl from Chicago understood this too, and she understood something more – that all are not equally robbed of their bodies, that the bodies of women are set out for pillage in ways I could never truly know.” P. 65

“I thought of the great spectrum of The Mecca – black people from Belize, black people with Jewish mothers, black people with fathers from Bangalore, black people from Toronto and Kingston, black people who spoke Russian, who spoke Spanish, who played Mongo Santamaria, who understood mathematics and sat up in bone labs, unearthing the mysteries of the enslaved.” P. 68
“It is not necessary that you believe that the officer who choked Eric Garner set out that day to destroy a body. All you need to understand is that the officer carries with him the power of the American state and the weight of an American legacy, and they necessitate that of the bodies destroyed very year, some wild and disproportionate number of them will be black” (p. 103).

“And though I could never, myself, be a native of any of these worlds, I knew that nothing so essentialist as race stood between us. I had read too much by then. And my eyes – my beautiful, precious eyes – were growing stronger each day. And I saw that what divided me from the world was not anything intrinsic to us but the actual injury done by people intent on naming us, intent on believing that what they have named us matters more than anything we could ever actually do.” P. 120

“‘I spent years developing a career, acquiring assets, engaging responsibilities. And one racist act. It’s all it takes.’ And then she talked again of all that she had, through great industry, through unceasing labor, acquired in the long journey from grinding poverty. She spoke of how her children had been raised in the lap of luxury – annual ski trips, jaunts off to Europe.” P. 145

“We knew we did not lay down the direction of the street, but despite that, we could – and must – fashion the way of our walk.” P.69

For example
• Essentialism and anti-essentialism
• Intersectionality
• structural racism
• structure and agency
• race as neither “essence nor illusion”
• monolithic
• race vs. class