8

BEYOND RECONCILIATION IN THE WILD

The Importance of Engagement with the Intricacies of Race and Ethnicities in Missions and Missiology

★

HAVE SO MUCH TROUBLE talking about race and ethnicity with him," she said to my mentor. "I just don't know where to begin," she went on. "I mean, I guess, race is still a problem, but it's really only a problem when we keep talking about it." The conversation continued. "Can we just talk about race, racism, or whatever the issue is without the anger? Can't you just separate that?"

This conversation took place with a former supervisor of mine who, in all regards, is an internationally recognized speaker and author, and she is considered a ministry expert. And while White women tend to be able to better understand the plight of ethnic minorities than White men, the difficulties of privilege, ignorance, and personal racial neglect cannot be overlooked or avoided. This conversation took place when another good friend and mentor of mine intervened in a conversation about race I was trying to have with my boss. At this point, I was still young in my career, and, like many Blacks in an all-White environment, I had to choose my battles wisely.[1] The

---

[1] This is not a "made up" phenomena. For some, this is merely an overreaction and an emotional response, yet that perspective typically comes from ignorance and a privileged racial position. For a further investigation into this issue, especially within Christian ministries, and to explore the effects of being an ethnic minority in White space, see Anthony B. Bradley, *Black Scholars in White Space: New Vistas in African American Studies from the Christian Academy* (Eugene, OR: *Wipf & Stock,* 2015); and Bradley, ed., *Aliens in the Promised Land: Why Minority Leadership Is Overlooked in White Christian Churches and Institutions* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2013).

slightest move toward a threatening posture could not only ruin my career but also my reputation. I was walking a thin line. But I could not take the racist overtones anymore; I had had enough. I needed to say something. So, after careful thought, counsel, prayer, and preparation, I decided to talk this over with her and have a witness, my mentor—who was also a woman—be present while this conversation happened.[2]

I wanted to confront the issue of being ignored, talked down to, and being the only person of color on the entire staff in an organization that claimed to be "about the kingdom." I had prepared well and had carefully thought through what I wanted to say. My mentor and I had worked together to get my points clear and avoid any hint of anger, which proved to be much more difficult than I had imagined. About a quarter of the way through our conversation I was making a point of feeling invisible and being talked down to. Up until this point, we were having a decent exchange. I then noticed my boss take a deep breath, look away, and then interrupt me, "Daniel, I think what you're feeling is valid, but I just don't see where I have any part in this. I've never looked at you as a color, nor do I hold any prejudices against you. So, I'm not sure where I fit into this equation." My mentor attempted to speak up and interpret what I was saying to her, to no avail. I grew impatient. The belittling remarks over my time there had grown overwhelmingly difficult to deal with. All of the passive racist nature of ignoring my thoughts on Black or Latino theologians swelled me with anger, and the passive nature of her privilege, which in turn ignored my experience, created a sense of injustice in me. She said, "I'd love to talk to you about race, but can we do that without the anger? I don't see the gospel in your anger, and it is difficult to talk with you when you're mad. You're very off-putting."

---

[2]A Black man confronting a White woman carries with it historical overtones of rape, carnage, and Black male violence. When entering these situations, I have learned to have a witness and position myself carefully to avoid the "brutal Black man" syndrome that so often comes with being a bald, large, loud Black man in America. For privileged and racially unconscious White women, I tend to fall into one of three categories: (1) pervasively sexual and exotic, (2) violent and threatening, or (3) comedic or neutral (typically for younger Black males). And so, with those racial overtones, I must navigate those environments carefully to avoid land mines that could put me in jail or, even worse, killed. See bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1990), 51-56, 193-200; Traci C. West, "When a White Man-God Is the Truth and the Way for Black Christians," in *Christology and Whiteness: What Would Jesus Do?*, ed. George Yancy (New York: Routledge, 2012), 117-30.

No, you can't separate the anger from the experience. No, you can't separate the anger from the racism. No, you cannot micromanage an ethnic minority's experience and narrative. No.

I have come to learn that is a quite frequent experience. White supervisors in Christian ministries, who are ignorant and unconscious of their own race, culture, and ethnic position, proceed to prescribe what is right and just for other ethnic minorities. Moreover, they assume a position of dominance and prescribe treatment based on White hegemonic experience and narrative, particularly White men. They are ignorant of both what is and what was in terms of race and ethnicity. This is ever present in missions. Whites ignore the issue of race and only pursue the gospel or God's kingdom while trampling the framework of race. We need to recognize that this is outdated. The ideological construct surrounding reconciliation is based on a White supremacy myth that states we "all have the problem of racism." It does not recognize the history of systemic violence of White racism in the United States. For me, the term *reconciliation* has no meaning other than marketable charm—much like the word *justice*. Often, even more after the 2016 election, White Christians say they want reconciliation until the matter of race comes up, and then it becomes an uncomfortable theological issue. "Jesus sees no color"; "God is the God of everyone"; "Don't be political regarding race"; or "You're a race baiter." Racial reconciliation cannot happen—at least not yet. Reconciliation is too often reduced to "feeling good" about another race. But it isn't. Further, we in the ethnic-minority community have been asking for reconciliation for decades, even centuries. Yet a known racist and anti-Semite, Stephen Bannon, was an adviser to the president in 2017. What then does that say to us as people of color? What does it say when the highest office in the land is occupied by people hostile to the existence of ethnic-minority life? And what does it say about American Christianity when a majority of White evangelicals support a presidential candidate who goes against almost all that they say is "biblically important"? Reconciliation, then, is just a word.

Therefore, we need to dismantle and deconstruct issues on race, which this chapter attempts to do. If you are not convinced by the scholarship dealing with race, ethnicity, racism, White privilege, and its effect on

Christian theology, then this chapter will not make any difference for you.[3] But if you are wondering, questioning, or possibly attempting to figure out what next steps you should take to move forward in your mission organization, then the precepts I lay will help to begin the conversations and to construct a new path toward racial, ethnic, and cultural literacy, primarily for Euro-Americans.[4] I offer three imperative starters that, while not eliminating racism and White supremacy, will prayerfully limit their sting for ethnic minorities.

THE DEATH OF AND MOVEMENT AWAY FROM RESPECTABILITY AND BOOTSTRAP NARRATIVES

Jesus' life was grounded on the importance of ethnicity and cultural heritage. Why else would Matthew spend so much time describing Jesus' lineage, which is the first thing we read in the New Testament? Even more than that, Jesus knew of the reality of both his time and context. He did not provide simplistic answers regarding life, love, death, or even sorrow. In other words, Jesus had a complex view of life, society, and his era. In fact, in many stories in the Gospels, Jesus shatters respectable norms (see Mt 5–7; Mk 2:1-12; 3:1-6; Lk 7:36-50; Jn 6). Jesus was not concerned with saying the right things, being

---

[3]The following are a few of the key works that have influenced my work: hooks, *Yearning*; West, "When a White Man-God Is the Truth"; Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013); *White Supremacy and Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Boulder, CO: L. Rienner, 2001); Tim J. Wise, *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*, rev. ed. (Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull Press, 2008); Ronald J. Ercoli, "Institutional Racism, the White Image of Jesus Christ, and Its Psychological Impact on African Americans" (PhD diss., Illinois School of Professional Psychology, 1996); Dyson, *Is Bill Cosby Right?*; Neal, *New Black Man*; Anthony Pinn, *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Alphonso Pinkney, *Black Americans*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000); Franklin E. Frazier and Nathan Glazer, *The Negro Family in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966); Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002); Amos Young, "Race and Racialization in a Post-Racist Evangelicalism: A View from Asian America," in Bradley, *Aliens in the Promised Land*; Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009); Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon, 1976).

[4]This is important because, as an ethnic minority, I have "changed" as much as I can racially. All of my life I have had to submit, readjust, conform, resubmit, and suppress my way of life for Whites and White culture. Further, ethnic minorities also have to conform to White culture within missional situations; therefore, it is imperative that Whites begin to do the same difficult work it takes to be interculturally literate for not just their own lives but for the work of the kingdom.

the right person, or dressing a certain way to win followers and notoriety.[5] Therefore, it is imperative to note his example when dealing with our need for respectability and bootstrap narratives, which have harmed not just ethnic minorities but, as we see from the November 2016 election, poor, lower-middle-class Whites too.[6]

"Just be good." "Dress nicely." "Always do what the police officer asks." "Follow orders." "Respect them, and you'll gain their respect." These are components and markers of the politics of respectability.[7] They are rooted in bootstrap narratives and meritocracy:[8] if you simply work hard enough, look good enough, talk well enough, and show respect long enough, you will gain the respect of Whites and be able to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps and succeed. But I ask, Will someone tell that to the countless number of ethnic minorities who have been laid off, fired, or even killed following those mantras? Ask Alton Sterling if that worked. Talk to Trayvon Martin, and tell him to pull his pants up; maybe that would have kept him alive. Write a letter to Sandra Bland and let her know how much she needs to respect White police officers. And maybe if Walter Scott had just stood still, he would have gained the White officer's respect. Bootstrap narratives simply do not work. The notion that you will succeed if you are good enough and respectable

---

[5]This does not give permission to or sanction the politics of correctness. Often political correctness is used negatively among some Christians; that is, they feel they have to say certain words regarding ethnic minorities, women, or of sexual orientation. Some argue that we need to return to a more honest way of talking to each other and avoid correctness. I believe Jesus was not about the politics of respectability in the sense of being liked for the sake of being liked. His "correctness" made sure the marginalized felt welcomed, loved, and cared for no matter who or what they were.

[6]Jabari Brodrick says, "The bootstrap narrative is essentially the belief that a person in the United States who works hard, assumes personal responsibility, and maintains a strong moral center can accomplish anything. Unfortunately for many students from low-income families, this narrative does not reflect their experiences." Jabari Bodrick, "The Myth of the Bootstrap," *Socioeconomic and Class Issues in Higher Education,* 2015, www.naspa.org/constituent-groups/posts/the-myth-of-the-bootstrap.

[7]This is the framework that desires to maintain respect, at almost any costs, over the dignity of ethnic minorities and any confrontation of Whiteness and White racism; it is the act of respecting Whiteness while submitting to Whiteness. Historically, it was how "African American elites sought to develop independent institutions that would enable free people of color to 'uplift' themselves to conditions of respectability." Jeffrey R. Williams, "Racial Uplift," in *American History Through Literature 1870–1920*, ed. Tom Quirk and Gary Scharnhorst (Detroit: Charles Scribner's, 2006) 933.

[8]"Meritocracy refers to a social system in which individuals advance and earn rewards in direct proportion to their individual abilities and efforts." "Meritocracy," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. William A. Darity Jr. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2008), 98.

enough needs to be rooted out of our vocabulary. Behind it is White culture demanding that ethnic minorities act right so all will be made right.

However, these notions often are promoted passively and through a screen of unknowing maltreatment. In other words, most Whites are not consciously exhibiting racist behavior; it occurs through socially constructed, passive, and sometimes repressed memory.[9] Whites assume their dominance because their history books and curriculum asserts it this way. Whites assume their governance because the majority of political leaders in the United States reflect their race. Whites assume their theological authority because seminaries and mission schools and their curricula reflect While authority. Racism and White supremacy is in the theological DNA of Christianity in the United States. In other words, if you ask a fish what water is, it will not know because it has always been submersed in water. It is the same with White supremacy. It has always been there for Whites; it is assumed as the "invisible knapsack," as Peggy McIntosh puts it.

> I think whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege. So I have begun in an untutored way to ask what it is like to have white privilege. I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks.[10]

Whiteness and White privilege are unseen and not recognized. As with my former supervisor, Whiteness is invisible and weightless to many White people. So, that ignorance creates a "right way" of presenting the gospel, God, Jesus, and Christianity. It leaves little room for openness and

---

[9]Though, as the Trump election campaign has revealed, White hate for ethnic minorities is quite pervasive, and the conservative White evangelical framework has left little room to disagree with a White notion of God, life, family, marriage, society, and especially the language to communicate. Therefore, I doubt that this hate is absent within missional societies or Christian ministries. And so I, along with other ethnic minorities, are confronted with the reality that long before Donald Trump this type of hate has entered communities, cities, and countries masked as Christian love but rooted in a deep hate for "those people" when they question or disrupt Whiteness. For a broader view of this point, see William R. Jones, *Is God a White Racist? A Preamble to Black Theology*, C. Eric Lincoln Series on Black Religion (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1973).

[10]Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," *Independent School* 49, no. 2 (1990): 33.

discussion outside of what has already been branded as the right way to do things. McIntosh continues,

> My schooling gave me no training in seeing myself as an oppressor, as an unfairly advantaged person, or as a participant in a damaged culture. I was taught to see myself as an individual whose moral state depended on her individual moral will. My schooling followed the pattern my colleague Elizabeth Minnich has pointed out: whites are taught to think of their lives as morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal, so that when we work to benefit others, this is seen as work that will allow "them" to be more like "us."[11]

Training and schooling is crucial here. Training done within a homogenous perspective will continue the legacy of White supremacy in missions and missiology. Therefore, the death of bootstrap narratives and movement away from maintaining respectability are vital in order to begin dismantling White privilege.[12] McIntosh contends,

> One factor seems clear about all of the interlocking oppressions. They take both active forms, which we can see, and embedded forms, which as a member of the dominant group one is taught not to see. In my class and place, I did not see myself as a racist because I was taught to recognize racism only in individual acts of meanness by members of my group, never in invisible systems conferring unsought racial dominance on my group from birth.
>
> Disapproving of the systems won't be enough to change them. I was taught to think that racism could end if white individuals changed their attitudes. But a "white" skin in the United States opens many doors for whites whether or not we approve of the way dominance has been conferred on us. Individual acts can palliate, but cannot end, these problems.[13]

In other words, simply acknowledging individual racism is not enough. Simply saying racism exists or, even worse, *existed* creates a way out of acknowledging systemic racism and White supremacy. McIntosh is correct in

---

[11]Ibid., 32.

[12]This is not a singular solution. In other words, if you solve this, then you will have solved that. I am suggesting a start. The start is not the end, and Whites must do the difficult work of intercultural competence. Ethnic minorities cannot be the teachers in this journey either. Whites will have to seek other conscious Whites to help them; they will have to do the historical analysis of their own Whiteness and complicity in racism. This is overwhelming for many. It's like being shoved out of a warm bed into frigid waters. The shock can be overwhelming for Whites.

[13]McIntosh, "White Privilege," 35.

her statement: individual acts can be of use, but we cannot end there. The dismantling of systems, protocols, and governance must be undertaken. On a national level, this could prove to be impossible, but on a domestic missiological level it could be enacted, albeit with tension.

For this dismantling to happen, several steps need to occur first.

- White leaders first take a step back to examine their own power, privilege, and position. This will not be easy or stress free. Examining historical, familial, and social contexts is crucial. Learning about these issues is a must. This can be done through multitude methods, but learning and education are key.[14]

- White leaders must educate themselves through exposure to intercultural values and norms. In North Park University's program called Sankofa, participants are matched up with people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, spend at least six months in training, and then take an intensive four- to five-day trip in the South touring places of significant civil rights history. They end in Ferguson, Missouri. This creates a genuine sense of accountability for attitudes regarding race and ethnicity. Most who participate are changed for a lifetime. This is an example of what is needed.

- Embracing Black post-soul voices in constructing new pathways for mission. This means allowing those on the margins, those who have been overlooked, and those whose perspective could be seen as radical to be included in our missiological perspectives. We must embrace the tension and conflict that comes with sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The issue of oppression cannot end at the border of

---

[14]I suggest reading and fully digesting Robin DiAngelo's work on White fragility. This is important because it affects how White missionaries operate and engage with ethnic-minority groups. Moreover, it affects aspects of resources, access, and power, which also impact the way missions are done. DiAngelo states, "White Fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation. These behaviors, in turn, function to reinstate white racial equilibrium." This aspect of White fragility affects how the story of Jesus is told and how the components of ethnicity are embraced. Thus, DiAngelo is not to be ignored. See Robin DiAngelo, "White Fragility," *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* 3, no. 3 (2011): 54.

race and ethnicity. While we may disagree with someone's sexual ori-
entation, it does not make it right or just to turn them away, ignore
them, undermine them, passively try to save them, or simply write
them off. Often, those voices provide direction to enter into spaces our
own voices could not go. And I believe Jesus will be right there moving
forward with us.

- We should embrace tension as a theological standard. Good news—
the gospel—appears within tension. The messier and more difficult
things get, the more Jesus' commandments have a chance to take
hold. The uglier it gets, the more space is created for Jesus' love to
move in. The more that tension rises, the more God can be seen, if
God is sought. Tension for tension's sake can be an impossible scheme,
but tension seeking God can be productive. Thus, when it comes to
issues of race and ethnicity, tension is the heat that can burn through
the walls of hostility to the other side (see Eph 2:14). I cannot imagine
the disciples of Jesus never having an argument with him; all of those
cats were too passionate about their work and lives to not have had at
least one verbal altercation with him. Do you think that Jesus never
truly ticked off someone to the point of frustration? The gospel, when
seen and embraced without social filters, is sharp and cutting. It
forces us to introspectively see the nature of ourselves and purge
those areas not fitting as a follower of Jesus—the ones that are truly
difficult and full of tension. Therefore, a theology of tension is needed.
Most Christians avoid theological tension at all costs and might even
contend that it is sinful. However, I believe tension is essential for
growth and development. It will be at the center of our breakthrough
on race and ethnicity.

These are areas we must begin to consider for a paradigm shift in missi-
ology. The old ways are not working. It is time to shed the old skin, much
like a snake does, and create new skins of thought, worldview, and theology
in relation to race and ethnicity. It is time to put to death bootstrap narra-
tives and the politics of respectability.

We will now look at the second imperative to begin dismantling racism
within missions.

THE DEATH OF AND MOVEMENT AWAY FROM
WHITE DOMINANCE IN MISSIONS

In an era of demographic change that favors an intercultural perspective, the prevalence of Whiteness in missionary settings is problematic.[15] Further, the image seared into the minds of non-Christians is that of White, blonde Christians joyfully doing the work of God in other countries or working among the "at risk" youth in inner cities. Couple that with social media representations of these groups amid ethnic minorities—assuming dominance, declaring victory, and asserting the dominance of White values. All of these make mission a "White thing." These images must cease.

Predominately White church plants in ethnic-minority communities are problematic as well. Many times this type of gentrification unknowingly destroys any indigenous or local voice in the community. Churches springing up in the new urban landscape are often ignorant of that particular community and typically upset the community's socioeconomic balance.[16] A common scenario is when a White suburban megachurch enters an urban context to teach those in that context to do missions using White suburban methods, practices, and theology.[17] A partner of our center at North Park from south side Chicago runs one of the largest Black youth ministries in

---

[15]Jones notes that White ignorance of social injustices experienced by ethnic minorities is grand. He says, "America's still-segregated modern life is marked by three realities. First, geographic segregation has meant that—although places like Ferguson and Baltimore may seem like extreme examples—most white Americans continue to live in locales that insulate them from the obstacles facing many majority-black communities. Second, this legacy, compounded by social self-segregation, has led to a stark result: the overwhelming majority of white Americans don't have a single close relationship with a person who isn't white. Third, there are virtually no American institutions positioned to resolve these persistent problems of systemic and social segregation" (Robert P. Jones, *The End of White Christian America* [New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016], Kindle ed., loc 2049). This is highly problematic for those same White Christians desiring to enter predominantly ethnic-minority communities to do missions and bring the gospel.

[16]Urban environments are quickly changing in the US. High rents and stratospheric real estate have created a type of new urban center. The once-feared inner city is developing into a White, affluent, and green spaces, which have erased many relics of local history. It is as if the Apple Store and Starbucks have always existed and the ugliness of displacement and inequality never happened. Scholars of urban studies agree that the term *urban* is rapidly changing. See Edward W Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (New York: Blackwell, 2000); William E Thompson and Joseph V. Hickey, *Society in Focus*, 7th ed. (New York: Pearson Books, 2011); and William H. Whyte, "The Design of Spaces," in *The City Reader*, ed. Richard T. Le Gates and Frederic Stout (New York: Routledge, 1996).

[17]This comes from a position of dominance rather than out of a genuine call from God. It reflects the superiority to "teach" others without asking, learning, and collaborating with the people of that community, who often are doing great work.

the city. They have been a cornerstone of that community for decades. A White suburban church approached them desiring to train them on how to do missions and outreach in their community—for a fee, of course.[18] The church was looking to expand by working in the city. My friend said they talked, but in the end they lovingly yet firmly rejected the proposal. If anything, my friend's church could have taught the suburban church how to develop intercultural and multiethnic relationships, how to create a Christian Community Development model, and how to live with and among people, even if they never change.[19] This is an example of the imperialism that has continued to plague missions and missional approaches to community engagement.

The White gaze upon multiethnic contexts needs redirection and reconstruction. Willie Jennings explains that the movement away from White dominance entails doing Christian theology differently: "Christian intellectual identity that is compelling and attractive, embodying not simply the cunning of reason but the power of love that constantly gestures toward joining, toward the desire to hear, to know, and to embrace."[20] No one would plot a course across the country without consulting a map and acquiring the necessary knowledge prior to departure. The same is true for engagement with an unfamiliar context. We cannot assume God is not doing God's work in a specific context long before we arrive. To assume we are saviors or rescuers creates an imperial status of dominance in that context. This is why we must move away from White dominance in any missional settings.

The death of White dominance means that fundraising strategies and models will be overhauled. Mission donors tend to be White and affluent,

---

[18]The monetizing of Christian ministry is troublesome on many levels. I support honorariums, pastors' salaries, and the professional component of ministry, yet the how-to market is treacherous to navigate and the expertise of many Christian consultants is questionable. Monica Miller contends that the focus is on money and profit rather than on people—a recipe for disaster and exploitation (Monica R. Miller, *Religion and Hip Hop* [New York: Routledge, 2013], 6-7).

[19]The Christian Community Development model is based on John Perkins' now-famed model of the three Rs: restoration, relocation, and reconciliation. This model focuses on developing the community holistically and not placing the sole emphasis on salvation and church attendance. It is about community and working with the people already in a space and place. See John Perkins, *With Justice for All* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1982).

[20]Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 291.

and they tend to fund other Whites. And mission organizations reflect that White dominance. Christian mission organizations lack diversity and engagement with diverse perspectives. Volunteer organizations and evangelical outreach ministries (EOMs) are likewise racially homogenous; most EOMs are led by White evangelicals.[21] In his study of social capital and fundraising within EOMs, Samuel Perry found that Whites dominate the ministry landscape: 84.8 percent White, 4.8 percent Black, 8.3 percent Asian, and 2.2 percent Latino.[22] We see similar numbers among young ministry organizations. These numbers present several problematic variables. Whites tend to be unaware of much of the history of race in the United States.[23] Because these Whites lead or are in supervisorial roles at EOMs, it is likely that they will dismiss or minimize racial identity and racism within the EOM, and appear unsympathetic toward the deaths of young Black bodies (e.g., Trayvon Martin). On the second front, it is difficult for subordinates to discuss issues of racism and racial inequality with their supervisors—even more so if the issue is *with* their supervisor.

Thus, fundraising becomes problematic when issues of social capital are factoring into the context. As Marla Fredrick McGlathery and Traci Griffin remind us,

> Further complicating this problem is that upon becoming a part of contemporary interracial evangelical mission organizations, many workers do not know the history of African American evangelical missions or the struggle of the black church in America. Without this knowledge, the appeal of white-conversion Christianity can appear unproblematic. Those who want to share the gospel with the world and be held accountable for living lives of more

---

[21]Michael D Lindsay and Robert Wuthnow, "Financing Faith: Religion and Strategic Philanthropy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, no. 1 (2010): 87.

[22]Samuel L. Perry, "Social Capital, Race, and Personal Fundraising in Evangelical Outreach Ministries," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52, no. 1 (2013): 164.

[23]Michael O. Emerson, *People of the Dream: Multiracial Congregations in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Antony W. Alumkal, "American Evangelicalism in the Post-Civil Rights Era: A Racial Formation Theory Analysis," *Sociology of Religion* 65, no. 3 (2004); Wilbert R. Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999); Tim J. Wise, *Little White Lies: The Truth About Affirmative Action and "Reverse Discrimination,"* Blueprint for Social Justice (New Orleans: Twomey Center for Peace Through Justice, Loyola University, 1995); Tim J. Wise, *Colorblind: The Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat from Racial Equity*, Open Media Series (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2010); Wise, *Between Barack and a Hard Place: Racism and White Denial in the Age of Obama*, Open Media Series (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2009).

integrity would "naturally" become part of such an organization. . . . [This] immediately places them in a position that requires them to work against the stigma within African American communities regarding the racist history of white missionary organizations in places like the United States, Africa, and South America.[24]

Lack of diversity presents difficulties for ethnic minorities attempting to raise funds. When I was a young area director with Young Life on the Central Coast of California, my metro area director (supervisor), who was Black, lost 75 percent of his funding within the first two months of assuming the leadership role. Further, parents did not want to send their children to our weekly club meetings for fear of the new "urban youth ministry" component, and within the next three months he lost over half of his parental support and committee members. While he and I lamented these issues, his supervisors were unsympathetic to the situation and even suggested that he change his approach to "be more like them." Conforming to the dominant culture is often a struggle for ethnic-minority youth workers in EOMs. The mere fact of being an ethnic minority in an EOM can place them in an adversarial stance. The ethnic minority who works for an EOM will likely have to give up their ethnic identity and heritage to fit in with their White counterparts, presenting more issues for fundraising.[25]

This is not an isolated occurrence. As I have interviewed other ethnic-minority youth workers in EOMs, they relayed the following tropes told to them by their White supervisors:

- Race is something of the past; let's leave it there.

- Social problems are not our concern; preaching the gospel is.

- The reason there are still race problems is because we keep talking about racism.

[24]Marla Frederick McGlathery and Traci Griffin, "'Becoming Conservative, Becoming White?' Black Evangelicals and the Para-Church Movement," in *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith*, ed. Robert J. Priest and Alvaro L. Nieves (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[25]Micah Singleton, "To Pimp a Butterfly: Kendrick Lamar's New Album Is Perfect," *The Verge*, March 19, 2015, www.theverge.com/2015/3/19/8257319/kendrick-lamar-album-review-to-pimp-a-butterfly; Emerson, *People of the Dream*; and Samuel L. Perry, "Racial Habitus, Moral Conflict, and White Moral Hegemony Within Interracial Evangelical Organizations." *Qualitative Sociology* 35, no. 1 (2012).

- I don't think racism is at play here in this situation.

- You're making more out of this than is really there.

Often, ethnic-minority staff are cross-examined when they relay narratives of racism within EOMs and are told their experience is invalid or inadequate. Having an ethnic-minority leader in senior leadership is needed. Samuel Bell correctly observes that

> Recent research on race relations within evangelical institutions suggests that white evangelicals, like white Americans in general, tend to embody a complex of covert racial ideologies, attitudes, and practices collectively labeled "white racial identity" or "whiteness" that serve to legitimize and reproduce white structural and cultural dominance within evangelical institutions.[26]

Thus, it becomes difficult when *one* ethnic minority is hired; they are faced with a myriad of issues in regard to race and ethnicity. This Whiteness that Bell refers to complicates the fundraising process and facilitates fundraising models not suitable for ethnic-minority contexts.

Learning the history of racism, inequality, and oppression toward US ethnic minorities could alleviate some of these problems. When we are aware of our own ethnic heritage and become knowledgeable of the continuing significance of race in the United States, we are better able to listen to others' narratives and life experiences.[27] Further, a diverse staff means diverse views and approaches to Christian theology and the gospel within respective contexts. However, ethnic minorities are typically siloed within EOMs. For them, the only way to organize is a once-a-year national events sponsored by Christian Community Development Association or Urban Youth Workers Institute.

White supremacists do not like to be in discomfort. Moreover, they will not allow themselves to be in distress over racial issues. Whites continually comment on how uncomfortable they became the first time they realized they are a minority. Whites feel stressed, anxious, and even angry being the "other." Exclude a White person from something, and they will let you know

---

[26]Samuel L. Perry, "Diversity, Donations, and Disadvantage: The Implications of Personal Fundraising for Racial Diversity in Evangelical Outreach Ministries," *Review of Religious Research* 53, no. 4 (2012): 398.

[27]Alvaro L. Nieves, "An Applied Research Strategy for Christian Organizations," in Priest and Nieves, *This Side of Heaven*, 310-11.

immediately. Any perceived injustice leads to a claim of "reverse racism." Yet many Whites remain passive while ethnic minorities experience discomfort, stress, anxiety, and even fear of death.

Just because there is ethnic inclusion does not mean there will be ethnic unity. If we learned anything from the 2016 election, it is that the dream of a multiethnic future is yet to be realized; the hope of having the minority vote triumph over a person like Donald Trump was a myth. This is true when EOMs hire an ethnic minority—the hope is that somehow the evil of racism will suddenly end, and the organization is reconciled. But, in fact, most White organizations do not realize their racism and bigotry until an ethnic minority is present. Therefore, the presence of one, while good, often causes more problems. If that person wants to change the mission statement to reflect a more interculturally sensitive perception, how will the organization react? If that person wants to hire more women and ethnic minorities to positions of power, will donors withdraw their support? If that person suggests the cross has connections to the lynching tree, will that organization have the strength to engage, or will it wither into a mythical land of "unity" and White fragility? In each case, the latter often is the course of action, and White voices remain in control.

To overcome this, power and control must be yielded. That is easier said than done, especially when those in control fear the ascendancy of ethnic minorities and the retreat of White hegemony.[28] I am not convinced that by hiring someone of ethnic-minority descent the organization will somehow become inclusive. If anything, the organization has just begun that process and might not be able to survive if that person is freed to be culturally ethnic.

I long for a different route that allows the voices of ethnic minorities to be heard. I desire much broader perspectives and different voices within

---

[28]Fear is what drives many Whites. The 2016 election of Donald Trump was no different. Fear of immigrants. Fear of losing control. Fear of Blacks. Fear that somehow the United States is becoming more multicultural—and that is a problem. This type of fear is embedded deep within the American Christian imagination, and the threat of anything other than Whiteness presents a clear and present danger to a supremacy that many Whites simply do not and care not see. Thus, it is with ease that many White people dismiss a candidate for an evangelical outreach ministry position by openly saying race had nothing to do with it, yet power and control remains with Whites. It is also easy for Whites to dismiss anyone who suggests racism is at work. See Brenda Major, Alison Blodorn, and Gregory Major Blascovich, "The Threat of Increasing Diversity: Why Many White Americans Support Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, October 20, 2016.

Christian theology—especially in missiology. My goal here is to present new ideas that resist White dominance in missions. However, I do not believe that if and when my ideas and actions are accepted, White supremacy will end and racism will stop. This is a much more complex problem that cannot be written off as "the fall of humanity" (e.g., sin). I am not hopeful that Whites will turn over their power to ethnic minorities. I am not ambitious enough to believe that somehow God will sprinkle magic dust on US Christianity, and things will work out.

Deep divisions and hurts exist—especially within the ethnic-minority community. Those hurts have gone unaddressed for far too long. When a known racist is in the highest position of the land, it is neither a hopeful nor joyful time. It is a time of lament. A time for sorrow. And a time for action. I am not convinced that White people can partake in that action for justice. While I believe some, if very few, Whites "get it" and are allies, the vast majority—especially those in positions of power in EOMs—cannot undo their supremacist nature.[29] Thus, the next and final imperative is to nurture and nourish doubt and ambiguity in missiology as we dismantle and move away from White dominion in missions.

NURTURING DOUBT AND AMBIGUITY IN MISSIOLOGY

Doubt is essential for faith development. Without it, we grow stagnant and set in our worldview. Doubt creates a sense of ambiguity, which when embraced can bring about new understandings of God. Most of us are used to being in control. We seek order and not chaos. As Christians, we have lost the sense of the wildness so entrenched in the biblical narratives. We seek that which is known, secure, and safe. Western culture has lost its sense of the wild. Economic stability is a measure of success and social status, and with it come accolades and social capital. After all, no one seeks advice from someone who is in the unemployment line, buried in debt, or without secure social moorings. Most of the legendary voices who write leadership texts come from affluent contexts. We see success all around us, which is typically

---

[29]I realize this is a strong statement to make. But it is not much different from James Baldwin, W. E. B. DuBois, or Angela Davis in their understanding of how Whiteness works. White supremacy, in their estimation, is like a disease, and thus without the proper treatment (e.g., continual intercultural engagement and training) it will be impossible for those Whites to move away from it. It is a difficult realization.

neat and tidy. And all of this is closely tied to our faith—good Christians are successful and possess a certain amount of wealth. Home ownership, good education, upward mobility, stability in lifestyle, healthy eating, and faith in God are touted as the right stuff for Western life. I refer to this by the acronym RAP: resources, access, and power. But despite the illusion of control and stability, in reality, life for humans is messy. It always has been. Somehow Christians have twisted the narratives of the Bible to mean "success equals control times wealth," which means God's blessing. Friends, this is a lie.

In the pursuit of control, Western Whites have overlooked the human element—humans are imperfect and uncontrollable. The veneer of control is easily removed. After the horrific events of 9/11, many Americans felt unsafe, insecure, and threatened by forces they did not think could breach our borders. Then came the Great Recession of 2008. What was once "secure" turned out to be a mirage. Doubt crept in. As new research emerged on millennials and Gen Ys regarding their religious and spiritual sensibilities, we began to doubt the future of Christianity. Instead of embracing doubt and confusion, we create ideologies and theologies that soothe us. For example, after 9/11, there was a resurgence of American exceptionalism, and when we went to war in 2003, the idea that the United States is "God's nation" reemerged. However, God has not declared the United States as his "chosen nation." Rather, it would be more appropriate to question those mantras. We must critique those ideological structures and disrupt the flow of thought that no longer functions in the wild. That is what embracing doubt and ambiguity requires.

For missiologists, this means giving up control of the newsletter headline declaring "Those Saved This Week." It means embracing that fact that not all will fall into line behind a simplistic gospel message. Simply listening to a passive sermon causes the Gen Y community to question whether the pastor is trustworthy; making a faith commitment is almost out of question. Doubt is about leaning on God, much like the disciples had to do.

John 6 gives us a clear picture of what this doubt looks like in real time. The passage opens with Jesus feeding the multitudes and generating food from a small bag of fish and bread.[30] This established Jesus as a true miracle

---

[30]Although the number is typically referred to as five thousand, most scholars agree that the number was closer to fifteen thousand, and some render it as large as eighteen thousand when women, children, and the disabled are included.

worker. Of course, he had already performed a miraculous Sabbath healing at a pool in Jerusalem (Jn 5) and had turned water into wine at the wedding in Cana (Jn 2). And prior to feeding the multitudes, he had walked on water (Jn 6:16-21). Though these signs and wonders were amazing, they did not convince everyone about Jesus.

The Jews challenged Jesus' authority (Jn 6:22-59): Where did it come from? And where did he come from? They asked Jesus for a sign that they might believe (vv. 30-31). But Jesus knew where these questions were coming from. Moreover, he knew the hearts of these people. Yet he said he was the "bread of life" (vv. 35-40). In response, many grumbled and complained (v. 41).

Rather than sitting with the tension Jesus created and realizing their own theological highway had ended, they pressed on. Rather than doubting their theological training, they resisted. They argued with Jesus. But Jesus did not waver; he used some of the most direct, strong, and even profane language with his critics. In verses 51 and 54-59, Jesus told his questioners that he was the way to God the Father, and to get there they had to drink his blood and eat his flesh—this was the bread of life. In that context, Jesus had broken every rule. A zombie-like savior? *No! This is not the way; nor is it even theological! This conversation has shifted from contentious to blasphemous!*

Rather than sitting with their tension and doubt, and rather than struggling with Jesus' hard message, they pushed back toward assurance. But Jesus gave no earthly assurances and made no outlandish promises of security. But even in that context, people sought a concrete understanding of who and what Jesus was. They found Jesus' words tough, hard, stern, and even dangerous (v. 60). Jesus, not missing a beat, asks, "Do you take offense at this?" (v. 61). The grumbling and pushback continued to a breaking point: "After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him" (Jn 6:66 ESV).

I am convinced many of those who walked with Jesus at some point probably felt as though Jesus was their pal. Yet without the messiness and tension of what a relationship brings, that notion was never tested—until then. Again, doubt is messy. Ambiguity is too much for many. Jesus knew this and even turned to the Twelve and asked them if they too were going to leave (v. 67).

This story reveals the true nature of where unengaged and unchallenged doubt can lead. Yes, engage in the debate. Yes, embrace the tension and conflict. Yes, seek wise counsel and wisdom. And yes, continue to seek God, by all means. But we must learn to sit with that ambiguity. We must, for example, nurture doubt and ambiguity in an era when a known racist has become the president of the United States. And while we do that, we must also seek out and nurture a multiethnic perspective on God.

While Western evangelicalism did establish pillars on which many people have stood on, it is not the be-all and end-all of Christianity in the twenty-first century. Western evangelicalism has run its course. There is not much we can salvage from it. Hip Hop theology creates space for multiethnic voices to imagine God and heaven while filled with doubt. It allows us to live in ambiguity while still seeking the face of God. Hip Hop theology gives credence to love, unity, peace, and fellowship with God from the context of a multiethnic and intercultural perspective. This is where missiology needs to go, and together we can begin to reconstruct what Christianity looks like in the wild for a generation seeking new and fresh symbols of Jesus.

The problems facing missiologists in the twenty-first century are vast and complex. There is no simple fix. The issue of race remains significant, especially in the West. The 2016 presidential election exposed the fact that hate mongering, xenophobia, fascism, and racism run deep in Christian evangelical circles.[31]

---

[31]The nefarious stew of racism woven with Christian ideology and the mythology of "God's country" was evident when Donald Trump ran for president in 2016. Trump gave conservative evangelicals permission to come out of the closet and be a racist. Trump did not create what he was peddling, however. He was merely the catalyst and the conduit that, for some, revealed this nation's racist and hateful past. For those of us in ethnic-minority communities who study religion and race, this is nothing new. Problematic was the endorsement of Trump by so many evangelicals—both Black and White—and their silence when violence spilled into Trump's rallies.