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Changing the Story of White Supremacy in the Church: Towards a Trauma-Informed Model of Racial Reconciliation

Andrea Saccoccio

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CHANGING THE STORY OF WHITE SUPREMACY IN THE CHURCH:
TOWARDS A TRAUMA-INFORMED MODEL OF RACIAL RECONCILIATION

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
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BY

ANDREA SACCOCCIO

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Portland Seminary
George Fox University
Portland, Oregon

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

Andrea Saccoccio

has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 16, 2021
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry.

Dissertation Committee:

Primary Advisor: Karen Claassen, DMin

Secondary Advisor: Trisha Welstad, DMin

Expert Advisor: Trisha Welstad, DMin

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DEDICATION

To the countless known and unknown, who have been wounded and lost under the tragic regime of white supremacy and to those who have paid so dearly generation after generation to call the people of God to account. I see you, and in this I hope to honor you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Doctor of Ministry faculty and staff, and particularly my fearless leader, Rev. Dr. Karen Claassen: Thank you for showing the way when I did not see a way, for believing in me when I did not believe in myself, for calling me off the ledge and back to the work, and for reminding me that this is good work in a world that desperately needs good work. And to my cohort: Brian, Heath, Stephanie, and Matt—thank you for your wisdom, your laughter, and reminding me of the joy in this journey.

Dr. Alice Brown-Collins: You took a wide-eyed white girl under your wing in the early 1990s and let me ask my clueless questions, gently asked probing questions in return, invited me in, and let me say all the wrong things. You saw past the missteps to my heart and called me forward. I simply would not be who I am today without you.

Jimmy McGee: Your friendship over the decades has always been a respite of mutuality and inspiration. Thank you for trusting me enough to invite me into your world and giving me a voice in it. This would not have happened without you and Derek taking a risk on my epic chess move nor your vision to imagine five steps from where we were. This work is as much yours as it is mine.

To all my brothers and sisters of color, particularly to *The Impact Movement* Board, staff, alumni, and student community: I have learned more from you than I could capture in mere words, and I am endlessly grateful that you not only invited me into the kitchen but generously allowed me to cook with you. You are truly the hope of the church present and future: This is for you.

EPIGRAPH

You must accept them and accept them with love. For these innocent people have no other hope. They are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be released from it. They have had to believe for many years, and for innumerable reasons, that black men are inferior to white men. Many of them, indeed, know better, but, as you will discover, people find it very difficult to act on what they know. To act is to be committed, and to be committed is to be in danger. In this case, the danger, in the minds of most white Americans, is the loss of their identity.

~James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*

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PREFACE

*We shall not cease from exploration
And at the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.*

TS Elliot *Four Quartets*

I sat in the hot winter sun in the small courtyard of the District Six Museum in Cape Town, South Africa, in 2002, listening intently and wondering how what I was hearing was reflected in my world back home. I had brought 22 students to learn about how the church, the press, and the government worked together to bring down Apartheid in South Africa, and we arrived this morning eager to learn about the role of the church in bringing healing to post-Apartheid South Africa. We sat in plastic chairs hugging the shade while looking out on piles of rubble; the only remnant of homes in what was once regarded as the Harlem of Cape Town. District Six was once a thriving multi-ethnic community whose inhabitants the Apartheid government forcibly removed in the mid-1970s, bulldozing their homes and leaving the Methodist church, now the District Six Museum in whose shadow we gathered, the only building still standing. After his community was scattered, the church's pastor, Rev. Dr. Peter Storey, served as chaplain to nearby Robben Island for nearly 20 years, caring for prisoners there, including Jacob Zuma, Robert Sobukwe, and Nelson Mandela.

Storey greeted us warmly and started our time together by recounting how he came to work with the South African Council of Churches and his role in establishing and overseeing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission post-Apartheid. He told many stories about his experiences, but one passing comment caught me: He challenged us to

think about the connections between South Africa and the United States, particularly as both were once English colonies which had faced civil war over the fate of their inhabitants of color. He illustrated his point by drawing a line connecting the abuse that the English had administered to the Boers in South Africa, the scorched-earth campaign marked not only by the destruction of generations of the Dutch settler's farms, but also by violence, rape, and illegal detention against them, and the Boers subsequent abuse of the indigenous Africans and the Indian settlers in what became the Apartheid era.

Fifteen years passed, and Storey's ideas lay largely dormant until I sat listening to psychotherapist Dr. Dan Allender speak about the generational impact of trauma and abuse on people, systems, and cultures. I was immediately taken back to that moment in South Africa and began to think anew about the ways in which racism in America paralleled the racism that defined the Apartheid era, wondering if we in America had something to learn by taking seriously personal and corporate effects of trauma and how they play from one generation to the next, particularly with respect to racism. Given the lack of identifiable progress in the work of racial reconciliation since the 1960s, rising racist rhetoric and racial violence following the Obama administration, and the seeming impotence of the church to speak into this reality, I am interested in how using a trauma-informed approach to racial reconciliation might be helpful in mitigating the gaps in existing models. What follows is my attempt to understand racial reconciliation through the lens of trauma and to apply related modalities for addressing trauma as a potential new approach to addressing racial reconciliation more effectively.

GLOSSARY

Black: I have chosen to capitalize *Black* while leaving *white* in lowercase as a deliberate expression of my desire to disrupt cultural tendencies which center whiteness and de-center Blackness.

Race: an evolving social construct used to define relation to others through varying degrees of dominance and subordination.

Racial Reconciliation: An ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance, and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish. (Brenda Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*)

Racism: The systemic use of the social construct of race to legitimize racial inequity and protect white advantage (Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*)

Shalom Theology: Rooted in a reading of Genesis 1, *Shalom Theology* sees the interconnectedness of all of creation born in God's proclamation that it was both *very good* and designed to cause the flourishing of all things. To be an image-bearer is to be responsible to facilitate flourishing between all of God's creation and with God. To diminish this creation, and one another, is to diminish the image of God on the earth and reflects our fallenness, not our created intent.

White Identity: an identity largely associated with those of Euro and North African descent rooted in a cultural background not imbued with white-body supremacy or white privilege.

White Privilege: The cultural and societal advantage and opportunities experienced by those who present as white over those who present or are labeled as Black or people of color.

White-body Supremacy: A term coined by Menakem and which I will use primarily as the term that refers to the belief that white-skinned bodies—regardless of who inhabits them, what they think, believe, do, or say—automatically benefit from the color of their skin because it is deemed as more valuable than other skin colors. (Resmaa Menakem *My Grandmother's Hands*)

White Supremacy: a highly descriptive term for the culture we live in; a culture which positions white people and all that is associated with them (whiteness) as ideal. (Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility*) Because "White Supremacy" often gets associated with extreme views of this perspective, per Menakem I will rely on the term 'white-body supremacy' when referring to the overall belief that white bodies are more valuable than Black bodies.

ABSTRACT

The lack of identifiable progress regarding racial reconciliation since the 1960s has become increasingly evident in the growing mainstream appeal of extremist views on race in the wake of the Obama administration and intense rise in racial tensions across the country. The seeming impotence of the church to effectively speak into this climate has sparked renewed conversation in how the church engages racial reconciliation, particularly in an approach that considers how white evangelicals can recognize themselves as key factors in both the problem and the solution. Additionally, there is a growing interest in the role that trauma plays in these incidents, however, most of the attention focuses on the victim's trauma, largely represented by the Black community.

This dissertation reviews how race and trauma interact, considers how they may contribute to the lack of measurable progress in the white church's pursuit of racial reconciliation, and ends with offering a new approach to racial reconciliation that considers these dynamics. Section 1 explores the relationship between race and trauma. Section 2 examines current approaches to racial reconciliation. Section 3 offers a solution that focuses specifically on equipping white evangelicals to the work of racial reconciliation by combining white identity development education, narrative therapy techniques, and an application of trauma therapy modalities for a new approach to racial reconciliation focused specifically on the role that white people play in the dynamic.

The outcome is a curriculum that can be utilized to help white Christians begin to recognize how their white identity is both formed and reformed and when their reactions in racially charged situations and conversations may be rooted in traumatic response. It is

intended to equip them to mitigate those responses in healing ways, thus better preparing them for the ministry of racial reconciliation.

SECTION 1:

THE PROBLEM THAT REMAINS

She confronted me in the hallway of the hotel where we were staying in Montgomery, Alabama. Eyes were brimming with tears, her face flushed, and visibly shaking—my first response at the sight of her was one of fear. I honestly thought she might hit me, and I braced myself.

We were part of a group that had gathered to talk about race, trauma, and the gospel, and had just spent the afternoon walking through the National Memorial for Peace and Justice. Informally referred to as the Lynching Memorial, the hallowed ground left us dumbstruck by its vastness, its beauty, and its heaviness. The memorial was established to acknowledge the legacy of lynching in America, naming and placing its victims by presenting over 800 steel pillars: each engraved with first and last names of victims, if known, and a date. Some of these pillars have just one name, some merely say “200, names unknown.” As the floor slopes, visitors are slowly brought down to walk underneath hundreds of these pillars as one might have once walked under a body strung up in a tree. On plaques along the wall are vignettes, each telling a brief story: “James and Sarah Parker were lynched at (location) on (date) for talking back to a white woman.”

“I.... hate.... white... women,” Tonya stuttered at me, almost spitting the words into my white face. My pulse raced, my face flushed, I began to sweat, and struggled to keep her gaze while inside I was madly trying to figure out what to do.

We were both experiencing the symptoms of trauma. And in this space, designed to help us face the traumatic implications of racism in the American story, I found myself

struggling with what I would do as this tiny Black woman, a member of my small group, held my very white countenance in a death-grip stare.

Whiteness and Racism

As I processed this exchange, I began with a deep understanding that being white in America comes with endless privilege and mystery. It is “everywhere present and nowhere visible,”¹ woven into the very fabric of our society. It is present in our worship, our economics, and our politics, but it is also entirely unnoticeable for most who are white. Submission to its reality has always been part of what it means to become American, particularly for those of European descent. “All immigrants to the United States know (and knew) that if they want to become real, authentic Americans they must reduce their fealty to their native country and regard it as secondary, subordinate, in order to emphasize their whiteness.”² My Italian and Polish ancestors certainly did, but what, exactly, is whiteness? Who defines it? And why does whiteness always get to be in charge?

¹ Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1999), 3.

² Toni Morrison, “Aftermath: Sixteen Writers on Trump's America,” *New Yorker* (November 2016), accessed April 3, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/21/aftermath-sixteen-writers-on-trumps-america#anchor-morrison>. For the duration of this dissertation, I will focus on the binaries of Black and white, knowing that there exist significantly more complex representations for those at the center of this conversation. I choose to lean into these two, however, as they are the most prevalent and for many, the foundational, categories of race in America. They also represent two categories of people whose specific cultures have essentially been erased in the pursuit of the “American Dream.” For whites, as Morrison notes here, this was largely a deliberate choice to abandon ethnic culture for the sake of assimilation. For those stolen and sold into chattel slavery, the term Negro or “Black” was intended to forcibly erase the particularities of identity and culture to ensure racial inferiority.

Whiteness is built on several assumptions. Sociologists generally agree that it is a social construct used to define the relation to others through dominance and subordination, revealed in conventions that rely “upon understandings of racialized others to understand and represent itself.”³ In essence, whiteness is what the people who have the power to decide and enforce the definition determine that it is. It is not a distinctive race, but rather a “social theory that was devised and refined over the centuries to serve the economic and religious goals of a majority culture, first in European territory, then later in America.”⁴ While there is essentially only one *human* race, we have been socialized to think of genetic distinctives through a racial lens. What has emerged is now a series of social-political determinations that have made the concept of race, and particularly whiteness, an “idea that was created to legitimize racial inequality and protect white advantage.”⁵ It is an idea that has been thousands of years in the making, and as recent events have revealed, closely connected to the concept of white supremacy, which may be better termed *white-body supremacy*.

Sociologically speaking, “white supremacy is a highly descriptive term for the culture we live in; a culture which positions white people and all that is associated with

³ Nichole E. Grant, *Does It Make Me White If...?*, ed. Darren E. Lund, Paul R. Carr, and Virginia Lea, vol. 3, *Critical Multicultural Perspectives On Whiteness: Views from the Past and Present* (New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2018).

⁴ John Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church On Race and Love* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2018), 46.

⁵ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2018), 17.

them (whiteness) as ideal.”⁶ It assumes that what is “white” is normative for all people and that all systems ought to benefit those who identify as white and protect their societal interests. Consider that in the year 2017,

90% of Congress was white
 96% of Governors were white
 Top Military Advisers: 100% white
 President and Vice President: 100% white
 Current POTUS cabinet: 91% white
 People who decided which TV shows we see: 93% white
 People who decided which books we read: 90% white
 People who decided what news is covered: 85% white
 People who decided which music is produced: 95% white
 Teachers: 83% white
 Full-time college professors: 84% white⁷

Position is power, and when the predominant voice in positions of power reflect white culture, then that white cultural voice and its ideology reign supreme. When the voices are also predominantly male that narrows the perspective even more. Given the increasing diversity of the American population, there is rising anxiety among whites, particularly for those in political and economic positions of influence, who feel that this shift away from a white majority status is a threat to their power. “So scary are the consequences of a collapse of white privilege that many Americans have flocked to a political platform that supports and translates violence against the defenseless”⁸ in an effort to hold on to that privilege. In the end, anywhere white-body supremacy “asserts

⁶ Robin DiAngelo, “No, I Won't Stop Saying 'White Supremacy,’” *Yes! Magazine* (June 2017), accessed April 1, 2019, <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/no-i-wont-stop-saying-white-supremacy-20170630>.

⁷ DiAngelo, *No, I Won't Stop Saying*.

⁸ Morrison, *Aftermath: Sixteen Writers*.

that paler people deserve more—more respect, more resources, more opportunity—for no other reason beyond the utterly arbitrary and ultimately meaningless pigmentation of their skin,”⁹ racism is at work.

Racism as Trauma

In the spring of 2020, the video clip of Amy Cooper wrangling her dog while she called the police on bird watcher Christian Cooper snapped me back to the interaction I had with Tonya in Montgomery, Alabama.¹⁰ Social media blasted Amy Cooper, a white woman, for her decision to call the police and falsely report that Christian Cooper, a Black man, was threatening her when, in fact, he was not. I was struck not just by the appalling choices she made but by the strangeness of her actions. She was acting unreasonably, almost frantically, as she called the police while half-choking her unleashed dog, the reason for the confrontation. While her choice to falsely report to the police that Mr. Cooper was threatening her was indeed racially motivated, it seemed completely irrational and rooted in fear, particularly traumatic fear.

Trauma is that which remains of our pain and suffering held in our bodies.¹¹ It remains as fragments of memories, as sensations of panic or unease, and as visceral

⁹ Edgar Villanueva, *Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance*, BK Currents book (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2018), 24.

¹⁰ Ann Ransom, “Amy Cooper Faces Charges After Calling Police on Black Bird-Watcher,” *The New York Times*, July 6, 2020, sec. New York, NY. Accessed August 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/06/nyregion/amy-cooper-false-report-charge.html?auth=login-google>.

¹¹ Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*, 1st ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 15.

responses that penetrate deeper than our minds can reach or reason. Trauma responses are not emotional responses but are initiated by the sympathetic nervous system in what is commonly referred to as our primal or reptilian brain, that part of the brain that issues *freeze, fight or flight* reactions and behaviors designed to protect us by bypassing the cerebral cortex. When activated in the face of real or imagined threat or harm, the sympathetic nervous system overrides our thinking brain and releases hormones into our bloodstream that are designed to protect us by preparing us for danger. These hormones are usually experienced as a racing heart, dread, fear, anxiety, even immobility, all while our minds are unaware of what is happening. When such traumatic experiences are not addressed in healing ways that allow the mind and body to process the energy and responses generated by the triggering incident, trauma can remain perpetually lodged in our bodies. Once established, it can continue to impact future generations by persisting within individuals and communities as behavior and culture, thus retaining in the present the patterns and layers of past violence and harm.¹² This propensity for traumatic retention may be the most significant factor when considering the lack of progress in race relations both in and outside the church in America.

For the past three decades, we've earnestly tried to address white-body supremacy in America with reason, principles and ideas—using dialogue, forums, discussions, education, and mental training. But the widespread destruction of Black bodies continues... It's not that we've been lazy or insincere, but we've focused our attention in the wrong direction. We've tried to teach our brains to

¹² Bessel A. Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2015), 154. Research in epigenetics indicates that traumatic experiences affect gene expression in humans and thus indicate how the effects of trauma can be passed down generationally. It is an emerging area of study, however, so there is no specific research that applies directly to racism, although there is growing interest in this specific application of trauma work and how it may be expressed generationally.

think better about race. But white-body supremacy doesn't live in our thinking brains. It lives and breathes in our bodies.¹³

Thus, the behavioral patterns associated with racism in America are essentially trauma behaviors, a persistent cycle of personal and cultural responses of harm and shame for both the perpetrators and victims of its violence. This cycle cannot be unbroken without addressing racism in its most basic form: trauma.

The study of trauma began largely from a need to understand the lasting impact of war on veterans, who returned from combat “shell shocked” and emotionally wounded from their experiences in WWI and again in WWII. After Vietnam, mental health professionals sought to understand how trauma from the battlefield continued to impact soldiers upon their return in symptoms such as drug abuse and domestic violence, which affected both veterans and their families. These responses to war trauma were labeled as Post-traumatic Stress Syndrome (PTSD) and initially applied solely to veterans. Ongoing research has broadened the term to include the consequences associated with general experiences of trauma as well as those effects specific to perpetrators of trauma in the general population. Both aspects play into the cycle of shame and harm called “racism,” and need to be considered in addressing racially rooted harm.

Trauma and the Self

Experiences of trauma initiate trauma responses that linger in the body long after the trauma has ended. “Post-traumatic symptoms are, fundamentally, incomplete

¹³ Resmaa Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* (Las Vegas, NV: Central Recovery Press, 2017).

physiological responses suspended in fear.”¹⁴ The most common response is a supercharged hypervigilance and a posture of protection, both of which attempt to safeguard the victim of trauma from future traumatic encounters and events. If not addressed, this response continues over a lifetime and can become a way of managing and relating to others, a pattern that can be perceived as personality or even culture if held collectively.

Menakem identifies three main strategies for coping with the trauma we carry in our bodies.¹⁵ The first appears as the tendency to snap or overreact in situations that trigger memories of an incident of harm for the victim of trauma. Fearing a repeat of past trauma, the body initiates the trauma response at the slightest hint of the precipitating harm, appearing to overreact given the circumstances. The second strategy is trauma ghosting, which Menakem suggests is the propensity to wait for danger at every turn to avoid a repeat of a specific experience of trauma. It looks like hypervigilance, suspicion, and a reactivity to stimuli that may have no reasonable bearing on a current situation and comes across as being suspicious and reactive. The third strategy lies in the tendency to re-enact the trauma, called traumatic retention. Traumatic retention can appear as a pattern of behavior wherein the victim of trauma recreates situations or relationships that may mirror the context of their initial trauma. Traumatic reenactment is the victim’s attempt to reconstruct that initial traumatic event in an effort to override their former

¹⁴ Peter A. Levine, *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma: The Innate Capacity to Transform Overwhelming Experiences* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1997), 34.

¹⁵ Menakem, *My Grandmother’s Hands*, 8.

primary trauma response with a healthier option, but this rarely works. Rather than experiencing a breakthrough, these reenactments retraumatize, and further cement the particular response pattern in their behavior. Traumatic retention explains why those who have experienced abuse often become abusers themselves, and how abuse can be traced generationally. “When this same strategy gets internalized and passed down over generations within a particular group, it can start to look like culture.”¹⁶ In this sense, trauma is a personal experience, but never an individual one.

When a traumatic response interrupts the normal process by which the brain regulates the energy of a particular experience and translates it into emotional perceptions, the energy and emotion of that event will remain disconnected within us. Trauma thus lodged in the body thus creates a dis-regulated brain which “feels vulnerable, confused, and miserable.”¹⁷ Humans can experience this disconnection as indignity, embarrassment, humiliation, disgrace, and ultimately a deep sense of shame or even contempt, which may be focused inwardly on the self or outwardly towards another. This type of shame and contempt is often related to how the traumatized person behaved during the trauma incident and applies whether they committed the act of violence or were a victim of it. In this way, shame is actually a deep neurobiological response that originates in victims’ bodies rather than their thinking brains, as evidenced by the involuntary shame-response of blushing. As long as its victims are caught in this endless

¹⁶ Ibid., 9.

¹⁷ Curt Thompson, *The Soul of Shame: Retelling the Stories We Believe about Ourselves* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 39.

attempt to emotionally and cognitively metabolize and interpret that event, trauma continues to affect them physically and psychologically where it generates the deep yet contradictory desires to connect with others seeking comfort and a fear of being seen out of shame. This interplay of desire for comfort and connection alongside the response of shame leaves trauma victims conflicted and lost, and thus, perpetuates deeper shame. In this way, shame initiates a cycle of isolation, and leads one to conclude “*I am not enough; There is something wrong with me: I am bad: or I don’t matter.*”¹⁸ Shame remains both for the victims of trauma and those who perpetrate that trauma.

Guilt is the far healthier sister of shame. Where shame longs to stay hidden, guilt strives to be seen, confessed, and forgiven. Guilt can motivate us to reveal our true selves and seek reconnection and forgiveness in its attempt to resolve the sense of dissonance that comes with being the cause of harm to another. “Guilt is a feeling, Shame is an identity.”¹⁹ Guilt, then, is a healthy response in the face of trauma, as it motivates connection and restoration of relationships, unlike shame which prefers to remain hidden and isolated.

Trauma and Black Bodies

Acknowledging the generational aspects of trauma, trauma studies have more recently turned their attention to include the topic of race and racism. Dr. Joy DeGruy

¹⁸ Ibid., 24.

¹⁹ Gilda Graff, “The Name of the Game Is Shame: The Effects of Slavery and Its Aftermath,” *The Journal of Psychohistory* 39, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 134.

coined the term “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome” as a framework by which to understand the harm brought to the collective Black psyche in America due to slavery. Africans were torn from land, family, customs, and language, and shipped like cargo to the Americas. Once they arrived, if they survived the passage, they were sold, exploited, and endured physical and emotional abuse as they were again ripped from family and often literally beaten and worked to death.

The trauma and shame of slavery did not end with emancipation. The same dehumanizing attitudes endured in Jim Crow laws, Black codes, and the torturous yet legal practice of convict leasing. These patterns of institutionalized attitudes and behaviors are not just reflected in current American culture in mass incarceration, racial profiling, and disproportionate incidents of police brutality against Black bodies, but written into laws as red-lining, discriminatory regulations for Black borrowers, and regulations aimed at suppressing Black votes. They are also evident in higher instances of hypertension, depression, asthma, and heart disease among Blacks compared to whites.²⁰

DeGruy highlights that within the Black community, embodied trauma, as generational trauma, has outward and inward expressions. The first pattern is often perceived as culture. For example, DeGruy points to a Black cultural tendency to downplay compliments aimed at their children, particularly from outside their community. She suggests that when a white teacher complements a black student to their

²⁰ David Williams and Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, "Being Black Is Bad for Your Health." *U.S. News World Report*, April 2016.

parent, the parent will typically counter with comments intended to negate the praised behavior or juxtapose it with other more problematic behaviors. DeGruy suggests this unwillingness to openly praise Black children may be an expression of a trauma response from chattel slavery wherein Black parents attempted to make their children seem less desirable to potential white slave buyers, to protect them from being sold away.²¹

The second pattern might be identified as personality, or worse, as evidence of genetic inferiority, particularly in the tendency for victims of trauma and abuse to internalize blame as self-hatred or shame which gets expressed as a deep sense of not being good or smart or capable enough to succeed. “When a person walks around with that sense of shame and self-hatred, they are likely to function poorly in society, no matter who they are.”²² Shame becomes an identity, internalized and passed on as a trauma response from one generation to the next as what Menakem calls a “soul wound.”²³ Carrying such wounds for generations forms and deforms the collective psyche, and ingrains traumatic responses into culture. DeGruy sees her work as “really about Black people looking at ourselves and understanding how our lives have been shaped by what we’ve been dealt.”²⁴ Certainly one aspect to consider in seeking an effective path forward in racial reconciliation is in creating opportunities for Black

²¹ Joy DeGruy Leary and Randall Robinson, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America’s Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (Portland, OR: Joy Degruy Publications Inc, 2017), 9.

²² Silja J. A. Talvi, “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome,” *In These Times; Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Institute for Public Affairs, Inc., March 2006), accessed July 3, 2020, <https://inthesetimes.com/article/post-traumatic-slave-syndrome>.

²³ Menakem, *My Grandmother’s Hands*, 38.

²⁴ Talvi, “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome.”

individuals and communities to grieve and process their trauma as it surfaces in this way, through telling their stories and acknowledging the impact that generations of systemic racism have wrought upon Black bodies.

Trauma and White Bodies

My small group for the Montgomery experience was comprised of Black, Korean, Native American, and mixed-race campus ministers. I was the lone white face in the group. I listened as they shared stories of their experiences of being non-white in America. They told stories of being told to “go back to China,” of being followed in stores, of being overlooked in meetings, and of the considerations they made when thinking about their hair and clothing when participating in events where they would be the minority. It was sobering to hear how regularly these men and women took my perceptions as a white person into consideration in their daily lives, both socially and professionally, particularly considering that I hardly, if ever, reflected on how my whiteness might play in my day-to-day interactions and activities. I learned how they perceived white fear, white insecurity, and white fragility as people who look like me dismissed them by distancing themselves from the system that continues to traumatize them, saying, “We weren’t slave owners,” or “I have Black friends.” I felt a sense of guilt when I recognized that my privilege permitted me to ignore their reality. I also felt incredibly honored to be able to be present as each shared so honestly, ever aware as I listened to their stories of moments of defensiveness that would arise within me during the conversation.

White Americans are slowly becoming more aware that we, too, are wounded as a result of being socialized into white-body-supremacy. Whites have been socialized to see

racism as a “Black problem,” the consequence of slavery’s damage upon Black minds and bodies which lives on as low self-esteem and lack of opportunities. However, the recent rise in racial tension in America has pulled back the curtain on white fear and shame in the face of institutionalized racism. Authors like Robin DiAngelo (*White Fragility*), Jennifer Harvey (*Dear White Christians*), and Jemar Tisby (*The Color of Compromise*) and a host of others are boldly speaking of current issues to demonstrate that racism is actually a “white-people problem,” and that white-body supremacy is the root of American racial tension. DeGruy agrees, seeing America as “sick with the issue of race”²⁵ and she names the most significant barrier white people face in confronting white-body supremacy: fear. “Fear mutates into all kinds of things: psychological projection, distorted and sensationalized representations in the media, and the manipulation of science to justify the legal rights and treatments of people.”²⁶ As one of my friends often reminds me, the most dangerous place for a Black man to live is in the imagination of a white man.

White fear is realized in the tendency for white people to believe “the Black body is dangerous and threatening, impervious to pain, incredibly strong and resilient—almost invulnerable, hypersexual, dirty, unattractive, especially in comparison with the white body; therefore the Black body needs to be managed and controlled by any means necessary.”²⁷ Fear perpetuates the belief that white bodies are somehow more human than

²⁵ Leary and Robinson, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome*, 11.

²⁶ Talvi, “Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome.”

²⁷ Menakem, *My Grandmother’s Hands*, 90.

Black bodies, leading to the conclusion that white bodies are the standard by which all other bodies are meant to be judged.²⁸ This attitude towards non-white bodies is the root of white-body supremacy, which we often short-hand in America as *racism*. “Racism identifies the characteristics of one’s own race with human being itself: e.g., to be *human* means to be *white*. Persons of other races are perceived as ‘sub-human.’”²⁹ In this sense, racism in the American context is a white-body supremacy that dehumanizes those who are the victims, but it also simultaneously dehumanizes and harms its white perpetrators. As Leronne Bennett Jr, noted in 1965, “we misunderstand racism completely if we do not understand that racism is a mask for a much deeper problem involving not the victims of racism but the perpetrators.”³⁰ In order to truly address racism, we need to look at the connection between white-body-supremacy and racism in America.

There are two major theories for how white bodies came to be perpetrators of trauma. The first comes from Menakem, building on DeGruy, who makes a case for his view that all whites were once victims before they became victimizers. He argues, not unlike Peter Storey, that whites are part of a larger pattern of harm in which the abused becomes an abuser and should be treated accordingly. The second theory for white

²⁸ The very notion that we have an entire body of work referred to as “Black Theology” (and even feminist theology) denotes the unnamed assumption that white males, who have authored much of the theology passed down in the white evangelical church, is normative. There is a host of study on this topic, but it is beyond the scope of this paper.

²⁹ Jürgen Moltmann and M Douglas Meeks, “Liberation of Oppressors,” *Christianity and Crisis* 38, no. 20 (December 25, 1978): 310–317, accessed July 3, 2020, <https://georgefox.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lsdar&AN=ATLA0000759347&scope=site>.

³⁰ Jr. Bennett Lerone, “The White Problem in America,” *Ebony*, August 1965.

trauma comes from recent studies on *Perpetrator Induced Traumatic Syndrome* (PITS), the body of work formed by Rachel McNair who suggests that causing harm to others is another form of trauma. MacNair suggests that perpetrators of trauma are dehumanized by the very act of being an abuser and that they are thus traumatized traumatizers. In both Menakem's and McNair's reasoning, perpetrators are also victims of trauma, albeit for different reasons. In either case, the embodied trauma remains.

In *My Grandmother's Hands*, Resmaa Menakem begins his exploration of white trauma by building DeGruy's arguments in *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* but he expands her thinking to apply to white bodies and white-body-supremacy. Menakem contends that the abusers (whites) were once abused themselves and he uses DeGruy's thesis to create a framework for understanding why those who are white continue in the patterns of violence associated with white-body supremacy. By acknowledging that many white immigrants were refugees of the traumas of famine, war, and religious and political persecution and consequently many white settlers brought with them the embodied trauma of torturous realities of Medieval Europe, Menakem makes the case that all European-Americans are carrying enculturated patterns of traumatic retention. This is not a new idea. Writing well before Menakem in 1965, James Baldwin agrees, sharing Menakem's view that white people operate largely unaware of their own historical arc, saying "For these innocent people have no other hope. They are, in effect, still trapped in a history which they do not understand; and until they understand it, they cannot be

released from it.”³¹ What Baldwin observes of white people as “a creature despised by history...impaled on their history like a butterfly on a pin...incapable of seeing or changing themselves or the world,”³² Menakem concludes is an expression of the European roots of white America caught in an endless pattern of traumatic reenactment as an expression of traumatic retention, a consequence of their own abuse.

MacNair’s work adds to the conversation, seeing perpetrators of trauma as traumatized by the experience of their acts, acknowledging the shame they carry as a result. “One of the hardest things for traumatized people to do is to confront their shame about the way they behaved during a traumatic episode, whether it is objectively warranted (as in the commission of atrocities) or not.”³³ While her work is applied more broadly on perpetrators associated with acts of war and generalized violence, she concludes that while facing suffering at the hand of another is indeed horrific, many traumatized people are haunted by the shame they feel about their responses in situations where they were participants in traumatic events, either through what they did or did not do. “They despise themselves for how terrified, dependent, excited, or enraged they felt,”³⁴ and often struggle to hold these feelings together with a belief that they are essentially good people. When applied to those who benefit from the systems of white-body supremacy and white privilege, McNair’s research would suggest that the trauma

³¹ James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, 1st Vintage International ed. (New York, NY: Vintage International, 1993), 19.

³² James Baldwin, “The White Man’s Guilt,” *Ebony*, August 1965.

³³ Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 13.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

and shame rooted in perpetuating racist acts remains largely unaddressed in white bodies, and thus retained, becomes expressed as more trauma.

Thus, while there may not be consensus on how, there is an agreement that white-body supremacy is a pattern of traumatic harm retained within white bodies, which in turn hurts Black and white bodies alike. While this may be a new idea for many in the white community, it is not new to the Black community, as Baldwin added “Please try to remember that what they believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure, does not testify to your inferiority but to their inhumanity and fear.”³⁵ This acknowledgement that racism is a definitively self-inflicted wound upon the white body, even as it is aimed at Black bodies, has become an emerging topic that warrants greater scrutiny. Morrison states:

So scary are the consequences of a collapse of white privilege that many Americans have flocked to a political platform that supports and translates violence against the defenseless as strength. These people *are not so much angry as terrified, with the kind of terror that makes knees tremble* [emphasis added].³⁶

Similarly, in his book *Dying of Whiteness*, Jonathan Metzi documents the baffling ways that the culture and fear associated with white-body supremacy encourages white people to support legislation that harms them, particularly when it comes to gun laws,

³⁵ Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time*, 19.

³⁶ Toni Morrison, “Making America White Again,” *The New Yorker*, accessed January 9, 2021, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/21/making-america-white-again>.

welfare support, and drug programs.³⁷ Rather than face the truth about the patterns of self-destruction at work in the overall white-body supremacy culture, white fear perpetuates harm aimed at Black bodies and communities, which ironically ricochets back to white bodies and communities. In commenting on one of these areas, specifically the opioid drug abuse pattern at work in white communities, theologian Serene Jones concludes,

Clearly the levels of this epidemic show that white people are not functioning in the narrative they tell themselves about what white life is. It's not working for them, but the story of white supremacy, which includes the story about them being better than black people, is so strong it blocks off their capacity to deal with the reality of their unemployment, their lack of hope, their inability to find jobs, the deterioration of their own families, and the list goes on. So, embedded in the whole story of white supremacy as it lives in our bodies, is a repressed story of the traumas that inevitably human beings experience and have to deal with. And it stops white people from being whole human beings.³⁸

White trauma lives so deep that we are generally unaware of this pattern and are, at best, just beginning to recognize the fact that we have created a pattern of harm to ourselves and others, a cycle of trauma from which we cannot escape without some sort of therapeutic intervention that can interrupt the pattern of traumatization and invite healing.

³⁷ Jonathan Metzl, *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment Is Killing America's Heartland*, First edition. (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2019). The thread of Metzl's work is the ultimate illustration of how white-body-supremacy leads to self-contempt so hidden in our bodies and psyches that it presents as contempt towards others, despite the reality that harm thus focused actually becomes self-inflicted wounds.

³⁸ Serene Jones, *Trauma + Grace: Theology in a Ruptured World*, Second edition. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2019), 180.

Summary

My experience as a white woman participating in the conference in Montgomery was deeply challenging, although not unique. Far too often, white leaders are placed in multiethnic situations and expected to function and lead in ways that are contradictory to how they have been trained for ministry. It was hard to bear witness and deliberately turn towards the pain and systems of abuse at work in our community, historically, currently, and residing in my own thinking. It was also hard to see the ways that many white attendees reacted in response to the shame and pain which surfaced in the group conversations as we reflected on our place in the story of racism. While many were able to attend to the discipline of learning to listen to our bodies' responses in the face of conversations and situations about race, most were not. They deflected, got defensive, and shut down, triggering traumatic responses in attendees of color in the process.

Looking into Tonya's eyes, I saw her anger, her pain, and the woundedness that remains in her body from the lynching deaths of James and Sarah Parker for upsetting a disgruntled white woman. I faced her aware of the fear and shame that lives in my body, yet also aware that while she spoke to me, she both was and was not really talking to me when she said, "I hate white women." Conscious of my anxiety, I chose to employ trauma therapy modalities, breathe deeply, and name my fear to myself. I kept her gaze as I mentally rejected all the inadequate and deflecting responses that I wanted to lean upon: "My people are from the North!" and "I am one of the key people behind this event; I get it!" Instead, I took a few deep breaths and brought my sadness to meet hers as I slowly responded, "Me, too." There was a long pause, and then I added, "and I hope you can hold the particularity of who I am in light of that reality." Tonya stared at me a

moment, her eyes narrowing, and then she took a deep breath, exhaled, and walked away saying nothing; yet I believe something may have changed for both of us in that exchange, a lighter step forward on our long journey.

SECTION 2:

CURRENT MODELS OF RACIAL RECONCILIATION

Racial reconciliation is promoted both inside and outside the church and uses models that offer helpful insights as we consider new possibilities for racial reconciliation models. Whereas the church begins with the notion that humanity is made in the image of God and therein has dignity and purpose, the secular world begins with the notion that there is only one human race, and the term “race” is essentially a social construct by which we understand culture and ethnicity. Both perspectives examine core identities and implications that are worth considering as we seek to understand more fully what it means to become racially reconciled, and both have helpful insights as we consider new paradigms for a trauma-informed approach to racial reconciliation.

Models Within the Faith Community

The Traditional Model

When I first started working with Black Campus Ministry within the largely white evangelical organization I served, I was introduced to the notion that racially reconciled communities were those which reflected God’s hopes for humanity in creation: flourishing interracial communities where differences were honored and respected as an integral component of God’s creative design and evidence that the world was living into God’s created intent. Rooted in the teachings of *shalom theology*, my work as a campus minister was thus to create such a community by uniting the predominantly white ministry I was leading with another ministry on campus specifically for students of color. I worked with leaders from both organizations towards this goal as together we studied

scripture, participated in service projects, and learned side by side. We had honest conversations about the assumptions we made about each other, and ways we knew we would need to learn to trust one another. The multiethnic community came together in beautiful ways but left both white and Black students somewhat disappointed and did not last beyond my departure. In hindsight, this experience embodies many of the realities associated with this model for racial reconciliation.

The theological foundation for this model begins with the creation narrative in Genesis. At its core is the belief that “the creation account reveals God’s desire for the earth to be filled with a great diversity of races and peoples,”³⁹ which culminates in Revelation with a vision of a multitude of people from every nation, tribe, and land worshipping together before the Throne of God (Rev. 7:9-10). John Perkins calls it the “picture of true biblical reconciliation—the removal of tension between parties and the restoration of loving relationship.”⁴⁰ He suggests that a reconciled community is one marked by unity and diversity bound by Christ’s own reconciling work for humanity, by which we have been forgiven for our sins and restored to a right relationship with God, self, and others. In his speaking events he reiterates these themes by telling stories of restored relationships accentuated with a call for repentance, shared leadership, and mutuality among ethnically diverse leaders who embody humility and willingness to work hard at loving one another well.

³⁹ Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness, and Justice* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books / InterVarsity Press, 2015), 23.

⁴⁰ John Perkins, *One Blood: Parting Words to the Church on Race and Love* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2018), 28.

This model has been the primary model for white evangelicals since the Civil Rights Movement and was certainly the one I was given to use in my work within the context of my campus ministry. This meant that I worked to win the trust of Black students, to learn from them and with them, and to make sure that their voices were given a place of honor and prominence within the larger campus fellowship. The white community assumed a posture of humility and service, and saw their work as creating more space for voices of color in leadership.

It was not an easy journey, nor was it without its challenges. With more integration came more opportunities for strong Black voices to speak into the existing ministry, which confused white members of the campus fellowship community who felt lost when Black perspectives confronted existing norms of a white-centric reading of the biblical narrative. Teaching and preaching began to sound less familiar to the white students and challenged their familiar approach to scripture. For instance, white students often assumed the perspective of Esther's character in the book bearing her name; however, a Black student would interpret the story of Esther and Mordecai as a Black community story of oppression, resilience, and deliverance. White students became uncomfortable, confused, and even angry when a Black student insinuated that the white community was more reflective of Haman and his quest to eliminate the Jews than it was Esther.

The sure confidence with which the Black students shared their perspectives was matched only by the discomfort white students experienced as they lost their sense of centeredness in their traditional interpretations of scripture. While some white students faced these revelations with curiosity and openness, most did not, and they pushed back

on much of what was new in this new multi-ethnic community. The one exception was the cultural contributions the Black students offered with respect to worship.

Unity is not Enough

In the end, the most common concern of the white students was that some, particularly from more conservative backgrounds, felt that we as leaders were distracted by an agenda with a newfound attention to justice issues while discipleship was being lost in this pursuit. Some from more conservative backgrounds also chafed at being asked to focus on a “liberal” interpretation of scripture which carried with it new scrutiny of mainstream political and social ideas, causing them to question their traditional understanding of the text and the community. It was not that they disagreed that things ought to change, but they did not want their existing experience to change in the process. They were unaware that making a shift to have more Black voices in the mix meant that their underlying assumptions associated with white-body supremacy, namely the centering of the white experience, were being challenged and changed.

Later, while pondering the work of Change Management guru Ronald Heifetz, I realized that one of the reasons this integrated fellowship failed shortly after my departure was that I failed to manage white students’ sense of loss at a rate they could tolerate.⁴¹ In retrospect, it would have helped if I had taken advantage of the work of

⁴¹ Ronald A. Heifetz and Martin Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive through the Dangers of Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2017). The authors suggest that change leaders must manage the sense of disappointment and loss of those whom they lead at a rate that is tolerable

Beverly Daniel Tatum, who was a professor at the school at that time, in helping my students navigate their own racial identities and the various ways those identities were informed by culture, especially within the church. It was years later before I understood that racial reconciliation required more than just individual acts and decisions that any one person could make, and reflected entire systems at work.

Only after learning to recognize the patterns of white privilege did I come to understand that creating a reconciled group would require much more than just adding chairs to the table. This belief unknowingly accepted that the goal would be to create a place where Black students could be treated as equals with white people, including myself. This assumption was still an act of white-body supremacy in which the white leaders were permitting Black students to sit at the white folks' table rather than reimagine a new table entirely.⁴² I also underestimated the significance of raising up a shared, multi-ethnic leadership team to ensure ongoing partnership and vision.

In the end, this model of racial reconciliation failed my community for several reasons. Most significantly, I had accepted that racial separation was the problem, a common critique of this model, and failed to consider that inclusion did not address

in order for any change to last. At the time I did not have a paradigm to understand that the white students were experiencing a loss of their white privilege in the act of pursuing this model of reconciliation, which would need to be addressed. I believe that this reality was a contributing factor to the lack of lasting change in this instance.

⁴² Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack (1989) 1," in *On Privilege, Fraudulence, and Teaching As Learning*, by Peggy McIntosh (Routledge, 2019), 29–34, accessed August 16, 2020, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781351133784/chapters/10.4324/9781351133791-4>.

underlying causes of the separation itself.⁴³ I did not understand that merely inviting Black students to the existing ministry without addressing the underlying attitudes, systems, and structures, which were mainly rooted in white culture, created an unsustainable long term situation amid emerging tensions. While the predominantly white community was open to a new perspective of theological anthropology that valued diversity, it lived with a real, unnamed sense of fear and loss connected to white privilege and white-body supremacy. This fear was interwoven with a similarly rooted theological perspective; an idea which the existing community said that they valued but was not challenged to name or address in specific ways. Love for one another aside, these underlying tensions served as a sociological undertow that drowned any notion of effective racial reconciliation.

In many ways, my experience reflects the criticism generally levied at this model of reconciliation, which assumes that forgiveness, justice, and peace mean the same thing to all participants. While this is true in principle, the model generally fails to address the underlying systemic realities behind the need for forgiveness and justice; namely the centering of whiteness present in white-body supremacy and white privilege, which are interwoven into white American evangelicalism. As such, this model often asks Black communities to bear the burden of the labor and conflict when convincing the white community that forgiveness and justice are even necessary, reinforcing the notion that those who are white hold the power to decide if the work is worth their while. This

⁴³ Brandon Wrencher, "The Myth of Reconciliation?," *Sojourners Magazine* (Washington, D.C.: Sojourners, December 2015), 41, accessed January 6, 2020, <https://sojo.net/magazine/december-2015/myth-reconciliation>.

reduces white members to passive actors rather than actively engaged in creating something new.

One example of this is the use of a panel discussion on racism that consists of Black participants speaking to a largely white audience. This approach relies upon the Black presenters making convincing arguments to the white community as to why change is needed and thus puts the burden for creating a rationale for change within a community upon its Black members, essentially leaving them exhausted and frustrated when things remain unchanged. White audiences are then passive listeners who frequently assume that the gaining of information is an experience of transformation, unaware that knowing about racism is not the same as actively working to address racist ideas and structures. In such settings, white communities frequently experience a cathartic moment of understanding and believes that this breakthrough in perspective is evidence that they now know all they need to successfully navigate racial differences, when it is really just one small step towards recognizing the complexities and pervasiveness of white-body supremacy and white privilege at work in all social structures, including the church.

With this approach, racial reconciliation routinely fails to put the burden on the white community to understand both what it means to be white and what whiteness brings to the work. Menakem notes, “American have lived under a strange and contradictory delusion: Black bodies are incredibly strong and frightening and impervious to pain...but white bodies are extremely weak and vulnerable, especially to Black bodies. So it’s the job of Black bodies to care for white bodies, soothe them, and

protect them.”⁴⁴ The pattern of making Black bodies responsible for white ones, even in the work of racial reconciliation, runs deep.

Voices of Change

A particularly vocal critic of the pitfalls of the traditional model, white theologian Jennifer Harvey states that “as long as the particular problem of whiteness remains unaddressed, the reconciliation paradigm and the universal ethic on which it rests will prove utterly inadequate and ill-suited to the changes we face.”⁴⁵ Harvey is not alone in this critique, and she concludes there is little to be gained in just adopting this model. Many Black leaders agree, acknowledging that often they feel like their faith is still more informed by whiteness than it is Christianity.

It is interesting that many of the most recognized voices for this traditional approach to racial reconciliation are Black and tend to be more readily received in white evangelical circles than I have found them to be in Black communities. Some Black faith leaders, although appreciative of their work, dismiss them for coming across as placating white fragility and softening the harder parts of their prophetic call to repentance in order to make it more well-received. They conclude that the challenges issued to white churches are too soft and not disturbing enough to disrupt the systems that continue to oppress Black voices. Given the general lack of progress in racial reconciliation in the

⁴⁴ Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands*, 97. This theme is prevalent in both secular and ecclesial racial reconciliation work and warrants further exploration, specifically for implications on the ways that white leaders partner with leaders of color in multiethnic contexts, but is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁴⁵ Jennifer Harvey, *Dear White Christians: For Those Still Longing for Racial Reconciliation*, Prophetic Christianity (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 62.

church since the Civil Rights Movement as evidenced in the continued rise in racial tension within our own country, these critiques bear reflection.

Theologian Doug Foster, also white, is a more moderate voice between these historic models and Jennifer Harvey. Foster wholeheartedly agrees with McNeil that racial reconciliation is primarily a Holy Spirit empowered spiritual undertaking that must speak to how people relate even after justice and forgiveness have occurred, but he rejects the traditional model because he believes there can be no *re*-conciliation where there was never conciliation in the first place.⁴⁶ While he and Harvey conclude that the lack of focus on whiteness and white complicity in the traditional model of racial reconciliation renders the very notion of reconciliation and diversity impossible, Foster offers two significant adjustments to the traditional model of racial reconciliation, believing that it can be modified in its current form rather than abandoned altogether as Harvey suggests.

First, Foster believes that any attempt at racial reconciliation must bring a reckoning of white people for white privilege and white-body supremacy whereby we acknowledge that we have “used the myth of white supremacy for our own interests.”⁴⁷ He contends that confession and forgiveness cannot honestly transpire without self-awareness on the part of white participants. Secondly, Foster states that following such a confession there must be a deliberate attempt to undermine and deconstruct systems that

⁴⁶ Douglas A. Foster, “Reclaiming Reconciliation: The Corruption of ‘Racial Reconciliation’ and How It Might Be Reclaimed for Racial Justice and Unity,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 55, no. 1 (April 8, 2020): 67, accessed May 9, 2020, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/753125>.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

uphold notions of white-body supremacy and make restitution where possible. “Truth telling is hard, but it is not the hardest part of the reclamation of reconciliation.”⁴⁸ From Foster’s perspective, we must take deliberate steps to become actively anti-racist: to be willing to stand in places of past harm, offer confession, and seek restitution in meaningful ways. For example, Foster tells the story of white community and church leaders who arranged to meet with descendants of the victims of racial injustice in their town to confess complicity in the system that allowed injustice and to ask forgiveness from the descendants of the victims of that crime. Foster sees such actions as a form of reparation for past wrongs. These acts are powerful moments of truth-telling by the white community, although Harvey would suggest that it still is not enough.⁴⁹

While Harvey agrees with Foster that whiteness and restitution must take a central role in any pursuit of racial reconciliation and laments that the traditional model has failed to yield any progress, she is deeply critical of the church’s lack of acknowledgement of white-body supremacy and white privilege in its history and thinking. She believes that the current paradigm wrongly assumes what she calls a “universal ethic,” a common starting point for racial conversations by which both white and Black participants come fully aware of their own identity and, for white participants,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 72.

⁴⁹ Both Foster and Harvey identify the need for reparations in the dialogue and work of racial reconciliation. Harvey calls for a broad economic application while Foster considers the need for smaller, and less drastic, acts of repentance preferring to move one story at a time. Secular voices, including Ta-Nehesi Coates, agree with Harvey. Regardless, this is a heated topic for many reasons, not the least of which would be the need of the white community to confess past wrongs, and is beyond the scope of this research project.

their complicity with white-body supremacy.⁵⁰ For Harvey, this is where conciliation begins, but given that most whites have extraordinarily little awareness of their own racial identity and its connection to white-body supremacy, she believes they traditionally arrive to the conversation woefully unprepared to do the hard work of confession and repentance necessary to establish a new community. In this sense, she agrees with Foster. However, for this very reason, Harvey insists that the church must let go of the old paradigm completely. She believes that we need an entirely new approach to reconciliation: an approach that offers a more holistic methodology for engaging race and justice. This approach would encourage white people to grow in their understanding of what it means to be white apart from white-body supremacy and white privilege, offer a chance to see themselves as beneficiaries and holders of a system that is designed to suppress non-white voices, and provide the opportunity to actively engage in revealing and dismantling that system. Rather than involve Black communities in this aspect of reconciliation, she believes that white Christians must start with their own work first and thus “connect our faces to our souls,” saying, “God wants whites to be white.”⁵¹ While Foster agrees with Harvey that white people must actively claim their complicity with white-body supremacy, she sees this as the foundational and primary work for the white church before it can begin to fully pursue conversations about forgiveness or becoming anti-racist.

⁵⁰ Harvey, *Dear White Christians.*, 56.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

Recently, there have been leaders within the white church who are beginning to ask probing questions about both the church's call to discipleship and its priorities given that it has largely chosen neither to prioritize matters of racial justice and reconciliation nor to ask how whiteness may be contributing to the tensions around it. Daniel Hill's book *White Awake* and David Swanson's *Rediscipling the White Church* are two examples of white leaders who are willing to ask these uncomfortable questions in hopes of starting difficult conversations that are long overdue. The greatest challenge is, as Hill notes, helping white people see just how white their world is and to move them to a theological discomfort with this trend. For Hill, this meant that he returned to the story of Nicodemus, whose question he reframed as "What am I supposed to do?" recognizing that he needed to start over, be reborn so to speak, in his journey to see his own whiteness.⁵² But what does it mean to be white? For this, we will look to secular models.

Secular Models

The most frequent tools for approaching racial reconciliation in secular settings involve teaching white people about white privilege and fall under the prevue of racial literacy, diversity education, and race studies, all housed principally in the fields of Sociology and Psychology. Generally focused on racial identity studies and whiteness studies, educators approach their curriculum through a variety of pedagogical methods, including group conversations, presentations, simulations, and journaling/reflection

⁵² Daniel Hill, *White Awake: An Honest Look at What It Means to Be White* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books / InterVarsity Press, 2017), 19.

exercises. Educators attempt to help participants recognize their own ethnic identities, often referred to as *race*, within the culture so that they can recognize various expressions of bias and prejudice and thus empower them to think critically about personal and corporate responsibility within societal constructs.

Racial identity education tends to approach racism less as an individual issue and more as a structural problem, and ultimately was designed to prepare students to be thoughtful participants in US democracy.⁵³ It relies heavily upon a framework originating in the practice of law designed to assess race in legal privilege so as to address structural oppression more effectively in the American legal system. Racial identity development is an aspect of this theory that “refers to the process of defining for oneself the personal significance and social meaning of belonging to a particular racial group.”⁵⁴ Whiteness studies and white identity development are avenues of study designed to delve into various aspects of institutionalized power and privilege typically associated with white identity.

There are two schools of thought concerning whiteness studies. The first dismisses whiteness as nothing more than an expression of racism itself, “nothing but

⁵³ Rebecca Rogers and Melissa Mosley, “Racial Literacy in a Second-Grade Classroom: Critical Race Theory, Whiteness Studies, and Literacy Research,” *Reading Research Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (October 12, 2006): 465, accessed August 11, 2020, <http://doi.wiley.com/10.1598/RRQ.41.4.3>.

⁵⁴ Beverly Daniel Tatum, “*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*”: *And Other Conversations about Race* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1999), 16. This framework is Critical Race Theory and has become a point of contention in white American conservative and evangelical circles. These groups tend to see aspects of CRT, specifically Intersectionality, and those who promote it, as everything from Marxists to following an alternate religion of some kind. This conversation is beyond the scope of this dissertation. In light of this reality, in this document I have deliberately chosen to focus the conversation on white identity development as rooted in Sociology and Psychology and shy away from the other terms in order to focus on the more critical issues at hand.

oppressive and false.”⁵⁵ The second, and more helpful perspective, argues that whiteness has validity and is inherently neutral. In this sense, while white identity has the potential to present as unhealthy (racist), it can also be fully developed in order to realize a healthy notion of what it means to be white, as evidenced in an anti-racist sense of white identity. A healthy white identity looks like appreciation for one’s culture and heritage without the need to belittle those who are different in order to have value. Because this model acknowledges a trajectory and growth from an unhealthy to a healthy sense of white identity and informs a path for development, it proves particularly helpful as we consider critiques to the traditional model of racial reconciliation and is thus worth some reflection.

White identity development theory has its roots in the work of Dr. Janet Helms, who created the schema to explain the bias present in Black and white counseling relationships in the early 1970s.⁵⁶ Helms recognized that for white people, identity was primarily meant to flow towards a healthy sense of what it meant to be white. Dr. Beverly Daniel Tatum built upon Helms’ work in her award-winning book *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*⁵⁷ More recently, renowned white anti-racist educator, Dr. Robin DiAngelo has added the notion of *white fragility*, the defensive

⁵⁵ Rogers and Mosley, “Racial Literacy in a Second-Grade Classroom,” 466.

⁵⁶ Janet E. Helms, “Towards a Theoretical Explanation of the Effects of Race on Counseling: A Black and White Model,” *The Counseling Psychologist* 12, no. 4 (1984): 153–164. Helms is not the definitive voice on white identity development, and others have taken her work and built upon it. For the sake of simplicity and because she is largely considered the origin of this work, I have chosen to use her model and stay within it for this project.

⁵⁷ Tatum, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*

postures that white people tend to take, particularly in the earlier stages of white identity development, as they begin to recognize and confront their unhealthy white identity rooted in white-body supremacy. While these are not the only voices that speak to white identity development, they represent bodies of work that help frame the following overview of racial identity education and white identity development. Their unique perspectives each contribute something significant towards helping those who are white recognize how white-body supremacy and white privilege undermine progress towards racial reconciliation.

White Identity Development

Helms' work was built upon the assumption that all people go through a stagewise process of developing racial consciousness. Racial identity development is the process by which a person's identity, reference group orientation, and understanding of their racial or ethnic group inform their overall sense of self and how they then interact with others both inside and outside of their identity group.⁵⁸ Racial identity development studies started as research into the effects of race in counseling relationships, attempting to understand why working models tended to put the burden of cultural adaptation on the minority client while the majority professional was presumed a neutral party, a practice indicative of racial bias.⁵⁹ Out of this work came a model for Black identity development

⁵⁸ Sherlon P. Brown, Thomas A. Parham, and Robert Yonker, "Influence of a Cross-Cultural Training Course on Racial Identity Attitudes of White Women and Men: Preliminary Perspectives," *Journal of Counseling & Development* 74, no. 5 (1996): 510.

⁵⁹ Helms, "Towards a Theoretical Explanation of the Effects of Race on Counseling: A Black and White Model," 155.

in four stages. Later Helms developed a basic model for white identity development with six stages of white racial consciousness, attempting to map the process by which those who identify as white come to understand themselves as such and to describe the “psychological shifts that whites undergo in moving towards a fully committed form of anti-racism.”⁶⁰

Helms saw white identity moving primarily along two trajectories: the first was a movement towards a more entrenched white identity that accepted and internalized the cultural assumptions of racism; the second constituted a movement that embraced an active posture in opposition to both cultural and institutional racism and a sense of what it means to be white apart from these assumptions. “Concurrently, the person must become aware of her or his whiteness, learn to accept whiteness as an important part of herself or himself, and to internalize a realistically positive view of what it means to be white.”⁶¹ One of the critiques of the traditional model of racial reconciliation is that whites rarely recognize their own racial identity let alone comprehend how that identity expresses itself personally or systemically in the context of racial reconciliation. Consequently, white identity development is worth exploring as a viable tool to empower whites to see their biases at work in perceptions of race, ethnicity, and social constructs.

White racial identity development assumes that white people “have the potential to evolve to the point where the individual can accept racial aspects of the self, respect

⁶⁰ Rogers and Mosley, “Racial Literacy in a Second-Grade Classroom,” 466.

⁶¹ Janet E. Helms, *Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, Research, and Practice*, Contributions in Afro-American and African studies (Westport, CT.: Praeger, 1990), 55.

the diversity of others, and work to abolish racial oppression.”⁶² This evolution occurs by moving through six stages or schemas of self-awareness, lenses through which a person interprets racial cues, including Conformity, Acceptance, Resistance (or Re-entrenchment), Retreat, Emergence, and Integrative Awareness. The tool maps out a trajectory for growth, and each stage comes with helpful questions for reflection and assessment. Movement through stages tends to be more cyclical than linear, and it is possible to identify with more than one stage at a time. For example, it is not uncommon for an event or experience to stimulate the need to revisit a previous stage, inviting a newfound awareness of deeply held attitudes, beliefs, and practices, all of which are normal to personal growth and development. It is important to note that each stage has significance in our process of understanding ourselves and others in a racialized context and it is difficult to develop a positive sense of white identity without experiencing each schema in the model.⁶³ As people of faith, we are always in the process of growth towards becoming more fully ourselves and becoming more Christ-like as we do. White identity development assessment is one tool for white Christians to more fully examine where we are being conformed to the image of a culturally bound expression of a white Jesus versus the very non-white image of the first century Palestinian Jew in the Biblical Christ.

⁶² Brown, Parham, and Yonker, “Influence of a Cross-Cultural Training Course on Racial Identity Attitudes of White Women and Men,” 511.

⁶³ Anneliese A Singh, *Racial Healing Handbook: Practical Activities to Help You Challenge Privilege, Confront Systemic Racism, and Engage in Collective Healing*. (New Harbinger Publications, 2019), 29.

Interactive Racial Identity Education

Helms' stages of white identity development are a useful tool for helping us identify ourselves in a racial story of becoming, and in mapping our emotional and spiritual journey in the process as well. It is less than a roadmap of "how to get from point A to point B, but it will tell you what kinds of territory you may pass through on your way towards anti-racism."⁶⁴ An anti-racist identity, personified in Helms' final stage *Integrative Awareness*, is marked by an active commitment to dismantle the structures, practices, and policies which support white-body supremacy and likewise embodies behavior which would be reflective of effective racial reconciliation. Research demonstrates that growth of this kind requires experiences that create dissonance, subsequently forcing the white individual to choose either to take a risk explore the source of that dissonance and thereby grow in self-understanding, or to withdraw and remain stagnant or entrenched. Dissonance in this sense indicates a breakthrough in understanding of white-body supremacy attitudes and behavior based on one's invisible status. It happens when a trigger event, turning point, epiphany in thinking, or a sense of discomfort raises awareness and inspires action.⁶⁵ As such, dissonance reflects a new level of self-awareness and discomfort with the status quo, which forces an individual to choose to either explore the dissonance with curiosity or, out of fear, withdraw and

⁶⁴ Carolyn B Helsel, *Anxious to Talk about It: Helping White Christians Talk Faithfully about Racism* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2017), 41.

⁶⁵ William E. Cross and Jessica S. Reinhardt, "Whiteness and Serendipity," *The Counseling Psychologist* 45, no. 5 (July 2017): 697–705, accessed November 29, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000017719551>.

remain where they are. Disruptive experiences that create dissonance are very much at the center of racial identity education, which relies upon disturbances of current thinking to move from one stage to another.

Calling Out White Fragility

Racism is not just a personal problem, but “structured into the fabric of our society. Thus, changing racist practices and policies needs to include changes in habit of mind coupled with changes in economic and political structures.”⁶⁶ Perhaps no one has done more of late to bring this to the attention of the American public than Sociologist Robin DiAngelo through her NYTimes bestseller *White Fragility*, which has been part of a tidal wave of voices adding to the conversation in recent years.

DiAngelo’s work focuses on dismantling the ways white people talk and act, which insulate us from doing the hard work of examining and calling out our individual and collective responsibility for perpetuating racism. She represents a rising number of white voices who are challenging white people to recognize themselves in the systems in which racism continues to thrive, taking the burden of responsibility for changing attitudes and systems and placing it squarely on the shoulders of the white community. DiAngelo’s body of work focuses on challenging the ways white people avoid recognizing themselves in systems of racism, and thus the ways they defend and deflect personal responsibility.

⁶⁶ Rogers and Mosley, “Racial Literacy in a Second-Grade Classroom,” 467.

In the late 1980s, Dr. Peggy McIntosh published an article in which she connected her work in women's studies with white privilege, acknowledging that "whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege."⁶⁷ McIntosh invites broader reflection from the white community on our assumptions that white is normative by reflecting on ways that maleness is often normative, as in the tendency to default to using "he" when speaking of doctors or scientists. She notes that making white privilege visible is particularly challenging because white people are acculturated to believe that we are normative, and questioning these assumptions undermines the reality in which we operate.

Points of Tension

The need to help white people see their whiteness in the work of racial reconciliation is paramount. However, there are also challenges in bringing racial identity development to the church. Most significantly, this foundational tool for the work has been dismissed with suspicion by white evangelical and conservative Christians who believe that such work is associated with ideologies and paradigms they believe are counter to the faith. Additionally, since Helms' work in this area was initially published, others have built upon her theory with variations that have merit and may be worth further review and consideration. However, given the foundational nature of her schema, Helms' framework is a helpful starting point for further engagement in this context. Lastly, white voices who are raising awareness of the problem of whiteness in the work

⁶⁷ McIntosh, "White Privilege."

of racial reconciliation are gaining increasing pushback. For example, Robin DiAngelo is criticized from white and Black perspectives. The Black community views her as problematic because they feel she has used racism and her whiteness for personal profit, while the white community is critical because she is placing the onus for racial discrimination and violence squarely on their shoulders.⁶⁸ Interestingly, she has recently been in dialogue with Menakem to talk about the interplay between racism and trauma.⁶⁹

Summary

The church remains committed to the call to racial reconciliation, even if it cannot agree on how to get there. The traditional model speaks prophetically in places of tension within our society and challenges the church to seek God, to be reconciled to one another, and to embody the beloved community where, despite our differences, we are one in Christ. However, this model has traditionally put the burden of change on the Black community, failing to fully equip the white church to understand how it is part of both the problem and the solution. Emerging voices have begun to name racialized identity as a significant hindrance to substantial gains in reconciliation and are calling upon the white community to look critically at what it means to be white in our context and culture. For this, we turn to the fields of Psychology and Sociology, which have created helpful

⁶⁸ John McWhorter, “The Dehumanizing Condescension of ‘White Fragility,’” *The Atlantic*, last modified July 15, 2020, accessed July 15, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/07/dehumanizing-condescension-white-fragility/614146/>.

⁶⁹ Krista Tippett, “Robin DiAngelo and Resmaa Menakem: In Conversation,” On Being Podcast, n.d., accessed December 14, 2020, <https://onbeing.org/programs/robin-diangelo-and-resmaa-menakem-in-conversation/>.

frameworks by which whiteness can be understood, seen, and studied. White identity development is one such framework that breaks down the process by which individuals learn to understand themselves and others as racialized people. This framework differentiates between a healthy white identity and a white identity distorted by white-body supremacy and white privilege. Consequently, it can be useful in addressing the shortcomings in existing models for racial reconciliation in the church as it offers a tool to help white people recognize the difference between a white-centered model of racial reconciliation and a model that does so without assuming assimilation to whiteness. None of these models factor within them the role that trauma plays in determining racialized patterns of relating to self and others or in racial identity development.

SECTION 3:

A NEW APPROACH TO RACIAL RECONCILIATION

The Stories We Tell

We met for dinner, a chance for her to process her recent experience at a conference intended to help people better understand how stories of past harm remain with us in the present. My friend had brought a story to her group as a healing exercise. In the recollection of a memory from her childhood, she and her group were able to identify specific patterns established in that traumatic event; patterns that have persisted in her life as attitudes and behaviors towards herself and others. These attitudes and behaviors have often inhibited her ability to experience meaningful relationships in the ways she wished. She shared how painful and terrifying the whole experience was, facing her fears and working through them. “It was like digging to extract a deep splinter—it got worse before it got better,” but she also marveled at the liberating outcome. The group helped her to see and name the patterns of behavior she was using to protect herself and how she kept the people she longed to know better at a distance. “I thought I was keeping myself safe when time and time again I was making things worse.” The group then invited her to imagine new ways of relating to herself and others moving forward. “They helped me see how my story of being set free from this cycle of harm brings with it an opportunity to serve others who may be experiencing the same thing. As soon as they said that I realized I have a narrative for that.” She thought for a moment, then added, “As a Black woman, I have countless stories of traumatized women set free from harm who then used their freedom to set others free: Harriet Tubman, Fannie Lou Hamer, Maya Angelou...” She was silent for a moment and then commented, “I realized then how

blessed I was that I have a culture that tells these stories and that they are accessible to me. I wondered if the white women in my group had had narratives like that to turn to.” It was a provocative statement and made me wonder about the stories that we, as white people, tell ourselves about what it means to be white.

Stories Matter

Stories are the building blocks of meaning. To be human is to be an embodied collection of stories: stories that tell us who we are, what we do, and where we belong. The stories we tell shape how we engage with the world around us, informing how we relate to ourselves and others. As with my friend, stories that are informed by trauma may reinforce patterns and behaviors that we believe will keep us safe when, in fact, they bring us harm. But not all stories are readily available for us to learn from or reflect upon; some are deeply embedded in our consciousness, lost to us because time or pain has made them difficult to access. Some of these stories live in our very DNA, passed down to us from one generation to the next so deep that we are often unaware that they are there.⁷⁰ Stories about white bodies being more important than Black bodies, stories that tell us Black bodies are violent and to be feared, or stories that tell us we need to

⁷⁰ Van der Kolk, *The Body Keeps the Score*, 154. This, and Menakem’s exploration of generational traumatic retention per Section I.

control Black bodies are all stories that, in the end, harm us and rob us of our own humanity.⁷¹

Each of these narratives tells us something of who and what we are, but apart from our commitment to dig deep and uncover the story that drives the narrative, we will continue to live as a diminished version of the people we have been created to be, subsequently diminishing the image of the God to whom we have been called to bear witness. Such storytelling is a discipline that has the potential to help heal our minds, our bodies, and our souls, particularly when we can make connections between our present and our past.⁷² Such work would not only uncover what has been hidden but also create an opportunity to metabolize and internalize what is discovered, creating transformative growth in and around us.

Changing the Narrative

As Foster, Harvey, Hill, and Swanson have all noted, hope for effective racial reconciliation requires that we who are white pay closer attention to the constellation of

⁷¹ Metzl's book *Dying of Whiteness* is full of such stories and focuses on legislation. Metzl exposes narratives about gun legislation, social services, and health reform that are crafted to convince whites to vote to protect their best interests and suppress Black interests, when they are actually harming themselves as much if not more.

⁷² Rita Charon, "Narrative and Medicine," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 350, no. 9 (February 26, 2004): 862, accessed December 31, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1056/nejmp038249>. Charon's contribution to the field of narrative medicine is transforming how doctors work with their patients. The benefits of adopting this approach are so compelling that there are new centers devoted to the study.

stories we tell ourselves about who and what we are.⁷³ Effective racial reconciliation depends upon our ability to first recognize the often-indiscernible role of white-body supremacy and white privilege in a culture formed by them, and then to acknowledge how they surface in our personal and collective stories. Movement requires an honest appraisal of how the white evangelical church has been impacted by its formation in a culture that assumes superiority and dominance in multiethnic spaces as well as frank reflection upon the ways that this formation is replicated in our theology and theological praxis.⁷⁴ This type of work is difficult, which may account for why it is readily avoided. Even so, it is clear that ignoring such self-reflection is no longer an option for white American evangelicals.

Digging the deep splinter of racism from the white American church will not be easy or pleasant if it is done honestly, as “recognizing privilege and the role it plays in the oppression of others brings with it a great deal of inner turmoil and anguish.”⁷⁵ This deep turmoil and the shame that accompanies it are woven into our history, bound together by the trauma that holds them there. As such, an exploration of the stories that have formed healthy and unhealthy white identity may be aided by applying methods effective in

⁷³ The foundational belief that *all* of humanity is the embodied image of God as reflected in Revelation’s “multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages” (7:9) is covered in depth in the first training module of the sequence for which this study is designed and it is beyond the scope of this paper.

⁷⁴ After many attempts to offer examples of the stories the white church in America tells itself about who and what it is so as to connect those stories to the traumatic response pattern of protecting self while harming self, I became aware that such an effort was complicated and extensive, and as such, is alluded to but beyond the scope of this paper.

⁷⁵ Gary R. Howard, *We Can’t Teach What We Don’t Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*, Third edition., Multicultural education series (New York, NY: Teachers College Press, 2016), 2.

naming and treating trauma. One such method involves the application of narrative exercises for group and individual reflection supported and informed by methods effective in addressing trauma. This combined approach would create a safe environment in which to untangle the threads of shame, trauma, and identity formation while providing white ministry practitioners insight and tools to critically consider how racialized identities, both personal and corporate, have contributed to creating and maintaining dividing walls of hostility that perpetuate harm in their communities. Thus, it would better equip them to effectively recognize and dismantle racist systems that inhibit the reconciling work of the Gospel in their contexts.

The Healing Power of Storytelling

If you ask any hairdresser, barber, or bartender about their work, they almost always will refer to their roles with a nod of being an “armchair therapist.” These professionals intuitively know that telling stories is a healing act. Research supports this notion and demonstrates that healing occurs whether stories are spoken aloud or written down. “When people put their emotional upheavals into words, their physical and mental health improved markedly. Further, the act of constructing stories appeared to be a natural human process that helped individuals understand their experiences and themselves.”⁷⁶ Healing from cycles of traumatic retention takes place when individuals are allowed an opportunity to revisit traumatic events to reconnect the emotional

⁷⁶ James W. Pennebaker, “Telling Stories: The Health Benefits of Narrative*,” *Literature and Medicine* 19, no. 1 (Spring 2000): 3–18.

processes that were interrupted in the formation of that trauma.⁷⁷ Thus, the opportunity to honestly tell and deeply connect with formative stories is essential for healing.

The act of writing a story from memory requires distinct attention to its setting, circumstances, context, and emotional framework, all of which are needed to create an accurate record of what transpired. The engagement required to recall and express an emotional event with this kind of detail provides the storyteller the opportunity to convert emotions into words and to reflect upon how they experience that event from the past in the present, subsequently creating an opportunity in which to reframe it. “By integrating thoughts and feelings, then, the person can more easily construct a coherent narrative of the experience.”⁷⁸ In this sense, revisiting stories, particularly those which are formative to our self-understanding, provide the storyteller with an ability to experience formative stories with fresh eyes, to notice the origin of a theme that has played out in other circumstances, and to make connections that might otherwise remain below the surface.

The process of bringing such stories to a trusted community for further engagement by reading them aloud allows other, more objective, interaction with the narrative. In turn, such interaction offers the storyteller and the community greater insight and connection for reflection as they simultaneously work together to connect the details of the story with the emotions that arise in the telling. This is especially true when other members of the group have similar experiences. In this way, group members are given the ability to practice mindfulness in relation to another person’s story in order to better

⁷⁷ Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 67.

⁷⁸ Pennebaker, “Telling Stories.”

connect to their own. Consequently, the whole group benefits from this reflective work and can translate that discovery into healing and growth. This type of story work is called Narrative Exposure Therapy (NET) and it is often used to help reestablish the link between memories associated with a traumatic incident and the emotions trapped as a result of trauma.⁷⁹

Trauma and the Storyteller

The capacity to heal from trauma lies in the ability to metabolize the energy that was locked in our bodies in response to a traumatic event. When not addressed, this energy can appear as anxiety, depression, panic attacks, aggression, and even “unexplained anxieties or phobias,” all of which are present in racialized traumatic responses.⁸⁰ NET effectively brings these deeply held emotional responses to the surface, inviting the storyteller to pause and notice their emotions and feelings, and then creates an opportunity to cognitively metabolize the event. Thus, the storyteller practices exercising awareness and control in the face of a traumatic trigger rather than repeating a familiar pattern of a traumatic reaction. This capacity to metabolize the trauma creates a new internalized response and subsequently allows the storyteller to embody the truths they have discovered by empowering them to re-write the story for their future. In this sense, while trauma changes the brain, healing also changes it.

⁷⁹ Research in this area tends to focus on children who are survivors of natural disasters and genocide, but the concepts remain applicable in this context.

⁸⁰ Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 44.

The key to healing traumatic retention lies in empowering traumatized individuals to create new responses to stimuli that trigger traumatic events to conclude the story with a different ending. Therapy in such instances might include allowing an individual to describe a traumatic event, helping them recognize autonomic traumatic responses, and then guiding them through exercises to metabolize the energy released through these traumatic responses. Humming, rocking, tapping, and mindful breathing are common ways to self-regulate in the face of such responses. These exercises can be facilitated by someone trained in trauma therapy or self-administered, although the latter is best done with guided practice in early stages of this type of work.

Another method for healing trauma is through literally or symbolically completing the action that created the trauma. One way this might happen is through writing a letter or having an imaginary conversation that expresses the emotions that were trapped when the trauma was created. Another approach might involve creating symbols of a particular pain, shame, or lie that has been used to protect or harm oneself and take some form of action with them. Examples include throwing a rock into the water or burning a symbol of the trauma as an act of completion.⁸¹ There are many creative expressions by which to mend trauma in this way, and such methods are often applied in conjunction with NET groups. In this way, storytelling seamlessly works with trauma therapy approaches, and when used together empowers participants to reconstruct and

⁸¹ Menakem, *My Grandmother's Hands*, 178.

retell formative stories in such a way that they become conscious of traumatic responses and thus learn to control them rather than be controlled by them.⁸²

Telling our Stories of Becoming White

Applying the healing work of storytelling to the progressive stages of white identity may provide a helpful construct for recognizing and engaging trauma expressed as white-body supremacy and white privilege. Helms' white identity development schema describes movement either towards a more entrenched and unhealthy racial identity or towards a healthier one that is not informed by white-body supremacy and white privilege. Using prompts for story reflection that reflect the progressive stages of self-understanding in white identity development offers the opportunity for stage-by-stage discovery and reflection, revealing otherwise hidden trajectories of movement and growth. This discovery and exploration would create space for healing work to take place. The process of writing and telling these formative stories, often collected when we are younger, provides a mature posture from which to reflect upon them, and thus the opportunity to reframe and process the emotions that embedded those memories in our bodies where they often remain as unaddressed trauma.

Pennebaker's groundbreaking study of story and healing notes "it is critical for the client to confront anxieties and problems by creating a story to explain and understand past and current life concerns." He concludes that revisiting stories from the

⁸² Marcene Robinson, "Therapy That Uses Storytelling May Be Key to Fighting Trauma from Bullying, Violence among Youth," *Mental Health Weekly Digest* (February 8, 2016): 367–367, accessed January 4, 2021, <http://www.buffalo.edu/news/releases/2016/01/035.html>.

past challenges the storyteller to integrate new information and a broader perspective in relaying the context in which that story was formed.⁸³ Applied to stories of white identity development, this discipline provides the ability to face emotions and feelings that are deeply associated with an event that was formative to our white racial identity. It offers a key to unlocking a new way for white people to see how stories we tell ourselves about what it means to be white may inform the larger narrative of our current racial perceptions. In turn, this would provide a foundation for reflection upon how these elements may also be at work in individual, institutional and cultural settings around us free of trauma-informed response.⁸⁴ While this kind of exploration is time-consuming, it is also thorough, requiring the same attention for developing a positive white identity as was involved in learning white-body supremacy and white privilege. In this sense, the work is truly a life-long pursuit.⁸⁵

⁸³ Pennebaker, "Telling Stories."

⁸⁴ Howard, *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know*, 99. It would have been informative to apply this story approach to institutions as well. The stories that organizations tell about who they are may serve to reveal institutionally held beliefs that reinforce white-body supremacy and privilege, but such application is beyond the scope of this project.

⁸⁵ One of the unfortunate consequences of the use of "woke" or "waking" is an association with the complex realities of white-body supremacy and privilege. It denotes that becoming awake to racism is the goal, when it may be more honest to say this is an ongoing journey. In speaking with Black leaders about racism, I have concluded that moving towards positive white identity may be more akin to adopting the posture of a substance abuser in recovery: a "recovering racist" as it were. When we face our racism and embrace a positive white identity, we are both recovering and recovered from distorted white identity only to the extent that we daily choose to move towards healing and away from the temptation ever-present in our current culture.

Conclusion

“This is not who we are.”

What if it is? What if we are telling ourselves a story that is not true?

Over the past year, I have heard this statement echoed in conversations among white evangelicals as our public discourse becomes more heated. In a season of history when we have seen footage of the endless murders of Black men and women as acts of law enforcement, the Black community calls for justice and the white community overwhelmingly tells the story of how each victim deserved their fate.⁸⁶ We have seen white church leaders decry restrictions on gathering in person for worship and wearing masks in the face of a pandemic that has disproportionately killed Black and brown bodies, objecting on the grounds of personal and religious freedom.⁸⁷ More recently, we have watched the brazen destruction of the Capitol Building, the “people’s house,” as an overwhelmingly white mob of men and women armed with tactical gear and flags declaring “Jesus is my savior” sought to violently remove elected officials and execute justice.⁸⁸

This is exactly who we are. Why are we unable to see it?

⁸⁶ Jemele Hill, “Stop Calling Breonna Taylor’s Killing a ‘Tragedy,’” *The Atlantic*, last modified September 29, 2020, accessed January 9, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/09/tragedy-means-blaming-black-people/616528/>.

⁸⁷ Cindy Chang, “Do Coronavirus Social Distancing Orders Violate Religious Freedom? Local Pastors Say Yes,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 2020, sec. California.

⁸⁸ Gina Ciliberto, “They Invaded the Capitol Saying ‘Jesus Is My Savior,’” *Sojourners*, January 6, 2021, accessed January 9, 2021, <https://sojo.net/articles/they-invaded-capitol-saying-jesus-my-savior-trump-my-president>.

“The poison of White supremacy is so widespread and deeply internalized by its victims that many are unaware of their illness, and others who are often do not have the cultural and intellectual resources to heal their wounded spirits.”⁸⁹ Traditional resources for healing, particularly within the white evangelical church, have failed to mark any significant progress since the Civil Rights Movement and have not considered the role of white narratives on both the diagnosis and the treatment for racial division. These narratives, which perpetuate the entrenchment and institutionalization of white privilege and white-body supremacy in our culture, are woven deep into our personal and corporate stories, so deep that they are easily overlooked and often disregarded. These stories, laid down as emotional and physiological consequences of trauma, remain deeply embedded in the narrative of the white evangelical church. They abide with us, from our homes to our houses of worship and the houses of our government, remaining generation upon generation as a deep-seated cycle of harm upon both Black and white bodies.

We cannot change the story we tell ourselves unless we recognize the complex ways in which it holds the physical, emotional, and spiritual impact of embodied trauma on our white identity. Only then will we be able to see where we have accepted the lesser narrative of white-body supremacy and white privilege in place of a biblical narrative in which we are ministers of reconciliation who break down dividing walls of hostility and bear witness to Jesus through our love of others.

⁸⁹ James H Cone, “Theology’s Great Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy,” *Black Theology* 2, no. 2 (July 2004): 141.

It also means that we have to probe the “why” behind our assumptions: to ask why white people assume Black people are dangerous or deserving of police brutality when white people aren’t; why personal liberties are more important than the command that we die to ourselves and love and serve one another; and why wanton violence and destruction are done in the name of Christ. This kind of white-focused conciliation would provide the foundation upon which true multiethnic racial *re*-conciliation can emerge, allowing the whole church to flourish and become the embodied witness of the church for which Jesus prayed, “I in them and you in me, that they may be completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23 NRSV). Unbroken, the cycle of traumatic retention has embedded racism within us and will continue to further entrench these responses where they will remain as personality and culture, inhibiting our ability to break down dividing walls.⁹⁰ Our healing necessitates that we commit to “the counter-intuitive act of turning toward what we are most terrified of”⁹¹ to learn where our white identity became entwined with the distortions of supremacy and privilege that perpetuate the cycle of harm in our current narrative.

It has been said that if we do not tell our stories, they will tell us.⁹² Racial reconciliation depends upon white leaders who can recognize the narrative of white-body supremacy in the white evangelical church, who are empowered to dismantle the cycle of

⁹⁰ Thompson, *The Soul of Shame*, 35.

⁹¹ Levine, *Waking the Tiger*, 98.

⁹² Dan B. Allender and Lisa K. Fann, *To Be Told: Know Your Story, Shape Your Future. Workbook*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2005), 2.

harm it has unleashed on us all, and who are equipped to lead in multiethnic spaces with a healthy white identity that is not threatened by racial tension. What follows is a curriculum designed to empower white ministry practitioners to recognize the difference between a healthy white identity and one formed by white-body supremacy and white privilege. It also provides tools for personal and organizational reflection and application for growth.

SECTION 4:

ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

The curriculum that follows was created to address an obvious shortcoming between two existing training events aimed at equipping ministry practitioners to engage the work of racial reconciliation more effectively in predominantly white Christian organizations (see Fig. 1). These events include the *Cultural Competency Training* and the *Race, Trauma, and Gospel Experience* Conference.

The *Cultural Competency Training* serves to introduce participants to racism in an American context from a Christian perspective. The training is offered in-person and at various locations throughout the country, usually through the Spring, Summer, and Fall. This training incorporates a large group simulation and whole and small group exercises designed to help participants, including white, Black, Native, Latinx, Asian, and mixed-race identities, explore the systemic nature of racism in America. These topics broadly survey history, politics, theological assumptions, and current events. The training also introduces participants to racial identity development and Shalom theology and provides both mixed-group and ethnic-specific conversations, encouraging participants to both personal and professional application of learning.

The *Race, Trauma, and Gospel Experience* Conference is held annually in Montgomery, Alabama in February, and assigns participants to small, multi-ethnic groups for the duration of the conference. These groups are comprised of about six participants and co-facilitated by a ministry leader and a practitioner of trauma therapy and story work. They are designed to allow participants to process the overall conference in a more intimate and concentrated setting and convene intermittently throughout the

conference. Additionally, participants attend large-group plenary sessions, panel conversations, and small group excursions to The National Memorial for Peace and Justice (informally known as The Lynching Memorial), The Legacy Museum, and the Rosa Parks Museum. The overall content of the conference is built upon engaging the realities of trauma in the story of American Christianity. Topics include specific instruction on the nature of racism as trauma, the epigenetic implications of trauma on our culture, and the role of faith in response to these realities. While the *Cultural Competency Training* reflects participation that is generally 50% white and 50% people of color (consisting of Black, Latinx, Asian, Native, Indian, and mixed-race ministry staff), at the *Race, Trauma, and Gospel Experience* Conference white participants represent a minority, generally less than 25% of the overall participants.

Understanding Whiteness in the Ministry of Racial Reconciliation

This curriculum has been created out of an assessed need to bridge between the two experiences due to the observation that while these concepts were not new for attendees of color, many white participants had never needed or been required to reflect so personally upon how racism looks in everyday life. Perhaps unsurprisingly, many of the white participants in the *Race, Trauma, and Gospel Experience* Conference exhibited trauma responses and signs of distress when engaging their peers of color in this context. These responses were expressed as defensiveness, deflection, anger, and the propensity to shut down, all attempts to self-soothe by working “to reinstate white equilibrium as they repel the challenge, return our racial comfort and maintain our dominance within the

racial hierarchy.”⁹³ These responses demonstrated that most white participants were unable to be present to the material in the same ways that their peers of color were, which made group times especially difficult. It became clear that an intermediary experience specifically for white participants may be necessary to better prepare them and provide time to delve into both their white identity and the personal and systemic implications of being part of a white majority culture that assumes white-body supremacy. Providing additional training would allow white participants to more fully benefit from the *Race, Trauma, and Gospel Experience* event and thus be more present to the overall group learning in that space.

⁹³ Robin DiAngelo and Michael Eric Dyson, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, Reprint edition. (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2018), 2.



<p>1.0 Cultural Competency Training</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered Spring/Summer/Fall as 4-day Conference • Facilitated by leaders in Diversity and Ministry Communities • Generally 50/50% white/POC participants • Introduces Shalom Theology • History of Systemic and Institutionalized Racism • Examines Current Events through the lens of Systemic Racism • Large Group Activities and Conversation • Break-Out Sessions by Cultural Identity
<p>1.5 PROPOSED CURRICULUM:</p> <p><i>Understanding Whiteness in the Ministry of Racial Reconciliation</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Offered after Cultural Competency Training as a prerequisite for RTGE Conference</i> • <i>Co-facilitated by therapists trained in narrative trauma work and leaders in Diversity and Ministry Communities</i> • <i>Focus on white participants only</i> • <i>Applies white identity development training and tools</i> • <i>Introduces trauma, traumatic retention, and trauma therapy modalities in connection with racism</i> • <i>Equips participants to recognize patterns of white-body supremacy and white privilege in their own stories and utilize trauma therapy modalities to mitigate traumatic defenses</i> • <i>Challenges participants to create a plan for moving towards a positive white identity separate from white-body supremacy and white privilege as an expression of discipleship</i>
<p>2.0 Race, Trauma, and Gospel Experience Conference</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offered in February as a 4-day Conference • Facilitated by therapists trained in narrative trauma work and ministry leaders in predominantly white institutions • Generally 25/75% white/POC participants • Explores the interplay between Trauma and Racism both historically and in current events • Explores the Generational Impact of Trauma on Race and Culture • Highlights the role of Faith Communities in perpetuating and changing institutionalized racism • Large Group Activities and Conversations • Break-Out Sessions • Experiences at the Memorial for Peace and Justice, The Legacy Museum, and the Rosa Parks Museum

Figure 1: Overview of Training Modules (Photos by Author).

SECTION 5:

ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

This curriculum, *Understanding Whiteness in the Ministry of Racial Reconciliation*, is designed to serve as a bridge between the two existing training events. It provides white participants space and time to process white identity after attending the *Cultural Competency Training* and prepare to face the embodied aspects of the topic of trauma from the *Race, Trauma, and Gospel Experience* Conference. As presented, *Understanding Whiteness in the Ministry of Racial Reconciliation* has been modified from its intended format: an in-person conference over a period of four days, which would be convened periodically throughout the Spring, Summer, and Fall, not unlike the *Cultural Competency Training*. Due to COVID-19 considerations, the curriculum as presented is now designed for four consecutive group meetings to be held in an online platform retaining the element of co-facilitation by a trained trauma therapist and a ministry leader serving in a multi-ethnic setting.

The curriculum spans four co-facilitated consecutive sessions convened online, each requiring preparation and response, which participants are expected to bring to each session. The curriculum is designed to help white ministry leaders more fully engage their own white identity, thus developing a capacity to see patterns of white-body supremacy and white privilege at work in their personal and professional contexts. Additionally, participants will work through material designed to facilitate a greater personal and inter-personal awareness of the nature of embodied trauma and responses. The white identity and trauma work are designed to equip white participants to recognize where systemic racism has become part of their culture, both personal and organizational,

and give them tools to dismantle those systems in order to more effectively address racial disparity within their organizations, thus equipping them to be effective reconcilers.

Audience

Participants will be comprised of white ministry leaders in multi-ethnic settings who have completed the *Cultural Competency Training*. Applicants for the program will need to submit both a letter of recommendation from a colleague of color within their organization and responses to survey material, including stories that concretely follow the white identity development schema. Upon submission of these materials, potential participants will be interviewed by designated facilitators, who will use the information they gain in the interview to thoughtfully place participants into groups for the course.

Goals

The overall goal of the curriculum is to help white people see themselves as white and help them differentiate between white-body supremacy, white privilege, and a positive white identity. This aspect of the course will invite participants to reflect upon the ways that the church has remained largely segregated and equip participants to recognize subtle ways white-body supremacy has become woven into the theological fabric of the American church.⁹⁴ Additionally, the curriculum will provide white

⁹⁴ Helsel, *Anxious to Talk about It*, 33. Helsel uses her own story of white identity growth to encourage readers to reflect on their own. “I realized that in all my upbringing within the Christian church and a Christian college, no one had pointed out the sin of racism as something I needed to watch out for or repent from...Such condemnation was reserved for issues of sexuality or other “cultural values,” but never

participants tools so that they may recognize their own traumatic responses in the face of situations that threaten the underlying assumptions of white-body privilege, and they might mitigate those traumatic responses to establish a new way of relating which better empowers them to the ministry of racial reconciliation.

Scope and Context

The four segments follow the progressive schemas of Janet Helms' model of White Identity Development and move through content that introduces and engages the participant with an approach to trauma and trauma therapy through the sociological lens of race. All participants are practitioners in ministry in some form and represent predominantly white Christian organizations that work with communities of color. Many of these practitioners have expressed a sense of failure, foundering in their attempts to shepherd their communities in the wake of high profile racially charged events like the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and others. These leaders are looking for tools to better lead and minister in their organizations. Given the traumatic impact of these situations, there is a need to equip white leaders to understand how these events, which combine systemic racism and trauma, impact their communities and how to respond accordingly. *Understanding Whiteness in the Ministry of Racial Reconciliation* is designed to meet this need.

racism.” This thoughtful but gentle push is woven throughout her book and provides a safe space to bring questions about American church culture without inciting a defensive posture, which is helpful and necessary for this work to succeed.

Methods

Participants will read and work through exercises incorporated into readings from *Anxious to Talk about It* (Helsel) and *My Grandmother's Hands* (Menakem), view selected movies and videos reflecting current events, and complete a variety of assessments designed to offer self-reflection and inform paths for growth. The body of the meetings will function as group work and will bring opportunities for personal and group narrative and trauma therapy modalities, allowing participants to incorporate trauma therapy exercises as they engage specific stories which follow Helms' model: awareness of white identity, awareness of learning white is more desirable/better than brown, defense of white-body privilege, and integration for growth.

The bulk of the sessions will consist of facilitated group work. These sessions are an invitation to reflect on formative stories in participants' lives in order to provide a deeper examination of the context and the messages of what was transpiring in each exchange and to invite curiosity and perspective, with the help of faithful and like-minded companions. This work allows participants to see these stories in new ways, equipping them to see how white-body supremacy and white privilege became intertwined with their white identity and held there by trauma, so that they may actively disentangle and reclaim a positive white identity as a minister of reconciliation.

Promotion

Invitation for participation in *Understanding Whiteness in the Ministry of Racial Reconciliation* will be issued via an existing database of past participants in the *Cultural Competency Training*, and at the conclusion of future trainings. Due to the sensitive

nature of the work, in its current form, it will be by invitation only and require an application process to ensure high commitment on the part of those participating. The database currently spans over 30 ministries and includes over 300 people from both denominational and parachurch ministries nationwide.

Budget

Due to the current virtual setting, the budget for this program is minimal and consists of compensation for facilitators and materials, which would be limited to providing facilitators with books and a small budget for miscellaneous needs.

Budget for a group of six, the minimum number needed to convene this training:

Table 1: Proposed Budget

<u>Facilitators Costs (2 Facilitators)</u>	
Pre/Post Interviews	
6 pre-course interviews (1 per participant)	\$135/hour x 6 = \$860
6 post-course interviews (1 per participant)	\$135/hour x 6 = \$860
Total Facilitator Cost for Interviews	\$1,620
Group Sessions	
Session Rate per Facilitator	\$135/hour x 2 hours/session = \$270
Group Meetings Rate per Facilitator	\$270 x 4/sessions = \$1,080
Total Facilitator Cost for Sessions	\$2,160
Total Cost for Facilitators	\$3,780
<u>Printing/Materials:</u>	
Books for Facilitators	
Menakem	15.50 x 2 = \$31.00
Helsel	16.30 x 2 = \$32.60
Total Cost for Materials	\$63.60
TOTAL COST FOR TRAINING	\$3,843.60

Participants would be charged \$650 each to cover costs, bringing in \$3,900

Considerations

In the context of a global pandemic, this online forum can move forward with the existing pool of past participants of the *Cultural Competency Training*. Once travel restrictions are lifted and in-person events can safely resume, this curriculum will very likely be modified for an in-person conference. However, given the effectiveness of online groups, it may be able to proceed in both formats and thus appeal to a larger audience for whom travel is restricted.

As outlined in the *Postscript*, this curriculum allows for several configurations that could be offered to a single small group of six participants or to larger groups of 12-14. In either case, the costs would remain minimal with respect to overhead, although the latter format would create space for a profit margin and potentially finance the development of other training modules.

SECTION 6:

POSTSCRIPT

Beginnings

Due to the realities of 2020 and COVID restrictions, we were unable to implement the curriculum in the original context of a four-day in-person conference. Given these limitations, the curriculum was reworked to be offered in four separate 2-hour sessions conducted over an online platform.

In its initial presentation, the reading material for the course consisted of selections from Robin DiAngelo's book *White Fragility* and Menakem's *My Grandmother's Hands*. The sessions were structured to follow a modified group therapy session: Each participant would bring something either from the reading or their engagement with it and present it to the group. The facilitators would use the allotted time to moderate the conversation, inviting participants to pay attention to aspects of the stories, the conversation, and the responses within it as a tool by which group members could reflect upon what was revealed personally and as a group. The time was opened and closed by the facilitators, drawing attention to the body, and asking participants to pay attention to their particular body's way of holding the emotions of the encounter.

First Iteration

The first attempt to implement the curriculum structured the session to function like a typical group therapy meeting with the discussion content focused on race. The group consisted of six participants and two co-facilitators. Each participant committed to

holding the group time confidential, to attend all four sessions, and to read the assigned material prior to each session. Convened by the co-facilitators, each session started with a mindfulness meditation designed to help center and focus the participants and bring them to a baseline awareness of their body. Participants were then invited to share either a personal story from the past or present that reflected the reading material or something from the reading itself for the group time.

Structure and Analysis

The four sessions were very unstructured, which allowed participants to bring what was most important to their learning at the current moment, thus moving conversation with few gaps. Facilitators were diligent to consistently pause the conversation so that participants could stop and take a personal inventory of how their body was responding to the content and intensity of the conversation as a means of reflection and teaching on body awareness. Over the four sessions, this served to build more organic check-ins and self-regulation from participants without prompting, such as when one participant offered, “I feel anxiety rising in my body as we talk about this. Can we stop and breathe for a few moments before we continue?” Overall, this was exactly what the groups were designed to achieve. Additionally, group conversation tended to begin with one person’s choice to be vulnerable about their own self-understanding, which then opened a larger conversation on the topic, creating helpful personal access to a group conversation.

Upon review of participant feedback with the facilitators, it was clear that the overall impact was effective in helping participants gain a better sense of both what it

means for them to be white and how their bodies can hold anxiety amid uncomfortable conversations about race. The groups were effective at giving participants tools to manage these bodily responses to rising anxiety and tension. The more challenging aspect of this iteration of the curriculum was that at times the group conversations were so broad that it was difficult to know where to start due to the density of the readings. Moving forward, the determination was made that it might be helpful to introduce more structure to the time and be more deliberate by focusing on white identity development prompts for reflection.

Second Iteration

For the second implementation, the group was expanded to include 12 participants. Along with the two co-facilitators, there was an overall group of 14. With this structure, the facilitators were able to offer a large group conversation for part of the session and follow it with smaller break-out groups where each half of the group was led by one facilitator. The reading materials remained the same. However, each week the participants were given a question for reflection rooted in Helms' white identity development schema around which to focus their thinking for that week. The meeting began with the whole group and met for about 45 minutes, allowing for a broader engagement with the reading material and providing the facilitators space to expand on ideas that were presented in the reading with brief elements of explanation and instruction on complex ideas. The smaller groups, which met for 45 minutes after the large group time, tended to bring the white identity questions into a more intimate

framework as in the previous cycle. The facilitators used the remaining 15 minutes to reconvene the two groups and bring closure to the session.

Structure and Analysis

The dual-group approach brought more focused teaching and overview time with the material, particularly the reading. The conversation in this space tended to stay on an informational plane, which helped group members digest the ideas that DiAngelo and Menakem were introducing, much of which was new to the participants. This high-level conversation was beneficial for members to get the big picture of the work and gain a better sense for the overall time. The small group sessions then allowed a more intimate conversation between group members, who brought their personal stories to this time. For instance, one small group session began with a participant telling a personal story from their childhood in which their parent's behavior towards a childhood friend formed a damaging sense of how they perceived themselves as a white person. The conversation that followed allowed other participants to engage with that person's story while simultaneously bring curiosity to their own early memories of learning about their race. Facilitators implemented the same body awareness modalities in these spaces to demonstrate how such interventions can help regulate personal and group dynamics during an emotionally charged conversation.

The feedback from the facilitators concluded that the change in format improved the ability to cover a larger swath of the material and created more time to process difficult subject matter in a setting that felt private and intimate. The whole group sessions could be challenging, as one person's reactive comment could potentially

redirect the topic at hand, but even so, these were teachable moments. For instance, one participant, when asked to bring a story from her childhood about white identity, painted her story in terms of the “racism of the Black kids” she had encountered. At first, the group responded by affirming her observation and adding their own stories of similar experiences and feelings. However, the facilitators were able to use that situation to bring pause and explain the difference between *racism*, which is based on a power structure, and *bias*, which is based on experience. That moment proved helpful in equipping the group to recognize the propensity towards deflection in intense conversations about race.

Conclusion

Both group formats were effective in helping white participants engage with trauma and white identity. In the end, there are benefits to both the smaller group and mixed-group approaches to this curriculum, and there may be some flexibility in how it can be implemented depending upon the number of participants interested in the training, the number of facilitators available, and the setting, particularly in applying the online forum.

Participant feedback revealed that DiAngelo’s text was difficult to engage in along with Menakem and the story work. The decision was made to change one of the mentor texts from DiAngelo’s *White Fragility* to Helsel’s *Anxious to Talk about It*, as the latter incorporates the white identity development schema specific to a faith-based context and, like Menakem, concludes each chapter with questions for reflection.

The addition of the story framework from Helms’ white identity development schema brought improved cohesion to the group times, and as such, it is applied more

intentionally in the final curriculum. Due to the impact of returning to stories that represent the origins of deeply held attitudes of white-body supremacy and white privilege, and the insight gained through group conversation, it may be helpful to include an invitation for participants to re-write the stories they initially submit over the duration of the course to reflect their learning, and subsequently deepening their growth and understanding.

Overall, participants were able to identify places in their stories of white identity development, including stories formative to their faith, where they learned to believe that white-body supremacy and white privilege were normative. Participants also learned to recognize the subtle ways that trauma responses were connected to challenges to these deeply held beliefs whether they were telling their story or responding to another group member's story. In addition to reporting a growing awareness of the ways their bodies would respond in difficult conversations, they demonstrated their willingness to try a variety of trauma treatment modalities to regulate their responses and thus move more deeply into identity work. This approach proves effective, and may continue to improve with adaptations.

Concluding Thoughts

White man, hear me! History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled by it in many ways, and history is literally *present* in all that we do. It could scarcely be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities, and our aspirations. And it is with great pain and terror that one begins to realize this. In great pain and terror one begins to assess the history which has placed one where one is, and

formed one's point of view. In great pain and terror because, thereafter, one enters into battle with that historical creation.⁹⁵

I started this journey believing that I had a better handle on the topic of racism than most of my white peers. At the close of this project, what has been most astounding to me is the realization that I actually know very little and that I still have a long way to go. I do not think my story is particularly unique. As a person of faith I believe that God calls us to be people of justice, that all people have been created in the image of God and reflect God's glory, and that the gospel cannot be preached without speaking and acting against the evil of racism. I have spent the better part of my career invested in racial reconciliation. Even so, I was not entirely prepared for how challenging this journey has been. In recognition of this, allow me to offer some personal reflections.

First, this is deep, deep work that, if done well, messes with our identities to the very core. To be a white Christian in America comes with a whole slate of unseen assumptions and privileges for what "normal" is. Even the terms *diversity*, *equity*, and *inclusion* have at their core an assumption that white is normative because the terminology itself invites us to ask: *Diverse from whom? Equity and inclusion with what group?* We are so accustomed to white normativity that we do not, or cannot, naturally see it; thus, white culture remains invisible unless we learn to look and listen for it. Even then, we will often miss what people of color naturally see because they are not part of

⁹⁵ Baldwin, "The White Man's Guilt," 47.

the predominant culture.⁹⁶ To realize a healthy white identity in America, and certainly the church, we must be willing to dismantle the one we have inherited, intertwined with its assumptions of white normativity and privilege, and redefine what it means for us to be white. This requires that we are honest with ourselves, that we tell real stories, ask hard questions, choose to question narratives that have been passed down to us, and not assume that the stories we have inherited are telling the *whole* story. If we ask hard questions, we will get uncomfortable with what we learn about ourselves and the world around us. Discomfort is not an easy feeling to sit with for any length of time but I have found that if you feel like quitting, you are probably on the right path.

Secondly, I began this journey thinking it had an endpoint; that it would have a place at which I could note that I had “arrived.” At the end of this project, I have become convinced that it will be a lifelong journey because I live in a world that will constantly feed me material that reinforces an identity that is interwoven with white-body supremacy and white privilege. It is a diet that we have been trained to consume, and I have concluded that this path is more like Alcoholics Anonymous in that it will require a daily acknowledgement of my temptation to return to my old identity and its practices as I determine, moment by moment, how I will bring myself to each person and situation I encounter. It will be a lifelong, daily practice.

Another lesson I learned was the significance of holding curiosity and grace for myself and others. Curiosity invites me to reflect on my reactions and responses, my

⁹⁶ This project has deliberately focused on the Black/white dynamic, however, the persistence of white-body supremacy and white privilege remains at work concerning all people of color whether they are Asian, LatinX, Native American, Middle Eastern, mixed-race, or any other “non-white” identity.

choices, and the spaces of discomfort that I would generally avoid if possible. Grace allows me to extend kindness to the choices I and others have made and to wonder what pain has informed that choice. For instance, because of the relationship between shame and racist behaviors, I am learning to bring curiosity to situations and people that are rife with traumatic and defensive responses: *Why does that person feel so threatened? What about this situation might be reflecting this person's self-hatred more than other hatred?* In learning to practice this kind of grace and curiosity, I am also building a greater capacity for empathy and the skills to mitigate my own traumatically-formed responses.

Lastly, I will add that my friends of color have done this for me for years. Their kindness, the embodiment of God's own, has led to my repentance—my desire to change and walk in a new direction. When I would bring up some new discovery on my part, they would often kindly nod and appreciate my epiphany, but over time I came to understand that they already knew what I was just learning: that there could be no reconciliation without conciliation, that white people were bound up in a larger story than the one they presented, and that progress depends upon our (white folks) capacity to walk into the deepest, darkest places of our identities to meet a new beginning on the other side. May this find you on that journey.

APPENDIX A:
ARTIFACT



Understanding Whiteness

IN THE MINISTRY OF
RACIAL RECONCILIATION

UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS

COURSE OVERVIEW



SPRING 2020

This course follows Impact's Cultural Competency Training and serves as a pre-requisite for the Race, Trauma, and Gospel Experience Conference.

This segment course is designed to help you understand how white identity can impact your work and ministry in racial reconciliation and equip you to engage your ministry and personal growth more effectively in pursuit of that work. It will be co-led by a practitioner in multi-cultural ministry and a trained 'story guide' who specializes in narrative trauma work.

At the end of this course, participants will have explored healthy and unhealthy white identity as well as the link between racial identity and trauma in order to understand how both are at work in the church's call to racial reconciliation. Participants will end the course with a plan for personal and professional growth in the work and ministry of racial reconciliation.

Understanding Whiteness

IN THE MINISTRY OF
RACIAL RECONCILIATION

Pre-Course

Determine
*personal and
organizational
hopes for
participation*

Session 1

Learning
to be White

*Conversation:
How white-body
supremacy and
white privilege
distort our
white identity.*

Session 2

The Link Between
Race & Trauma

*Conversation:
How race
and trauma
overlap in our
personal and
collective stories.*

Session 3

Addressing
Racialized Trauma

*Learning
to recognize race-
informed
traumatic
responses and how
to address them in
healing ways.*

Session 4

Racial
Identity Growth

*Factors
that help and
hinder growth
towards a healthy
white identity.*

Follow up

Discussion
*of personal and
ministry goals,
and next steps in
the journey
towards a positive
white identity and
culture.*

UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS

PRE-PARTICIPATION ASSIGNMENTS

LOOKING BACK/LOOKING FORWARD

Based on your participation in Impact's Cultural Competency Training:

- Identify three strengths and three areas for growth which you envision for yourself and your organization in the area of cultural competency.
- What do you bring to the conversation that might be helpful to others?
- What are you hoping to gain by participating?

STORIES

Briefly (2-3 paragraphs, but no more than 1 page each) write down 5 stories which informed your understanding of what it means to be white, and if applicable, how your faith played into that understanding in response to the following questions:

1. Share a story of when you first became aware that you had a race/were white.
2. Share a story of when you became aware that whiteness was "better/more valuable" than brown/black.
3. Share a story of when you embraced the belief that white people were superior/more valuable to those who are brown/black.
4. Share a story of when you became aware that your whiteness was an advantage to you.
5. Share a story that informs your desire to participate in this workshop.

UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS

PRE-PARTICIPATION ASSIGNMENTS

RECOMMENDATION

Ask a colleague of color within your organization to submit their responses to the following confidential reference for you and submit it to the address below:

Participant's Name/Organization _____ / _____

Your name/Role: _____ / _____

1. What are your hopes for _____ as they participate in this training?
2. What strengths do you see that they bring to your organization in the area of cultural competency?
3. How might _____'s participation in this program enhance your organization's goals for racial reconciliation?
4. Do you have any reservations about _____'s participation in this program?
5. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Thank you! Your responses are completely confidential.

Please submit your referral to: lefko_consulting@outlook.com

PRE-PARTICIPATION ASSIGNMENT

UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS

SELF-ASSESSMENT ON WHITE IDENTITY

For each of the subsequent items, use the following scale to indicate the extent to which the item is true of you:

0—No Preference 1—Strongly Disagree 2—Disagree 3—Agree 4—Strongly Agree

Write the numbers of your responses on the line next to the item. Add together your responses to the items preceded by the same combination of letters and plot your scores on the graph at the end. Draw one line to connect the totals preceded by the double letters (e.g., CB) and another to connect the totals preceded by single letters (e.g. C) This will give you a racial identity profile. *We'll talk about your individual results prior to group sessions.*

- C1___ There is no 'race problem' in America
C2___ My race is the human race
C3___ I personally do not notice what race a person is.
___ **C total**

- CB1___ If I am asked to describe a person, I would not or do not mention
the person's race.
CB2___ Outside of international travel, I have or would dress like people from
other cultures.
CB3___ I do not discuss characteristics of white people in public settings.
___ **CB total**

- D1___ American society is sick, evil, and racist.
D2___ There is nothing I can do to prevent racism.
D3___ I avoid thinking about racial issues.
___ **D Total**

UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS

SELF-ASSESSMENT ON WHITE IDENTITY

For each of the subsequent items, use the following scale to indicate the extent to which the item is true of you:

0—No Preference 1—Strongly Disagree 2—Disagree 3—Agree 4—Strongly Agree

DB1___ I left or would leave the country to escape racism.

DB2___ I do not discuss 'touchy' racial issues.

DB3___ I avoid people who talk about race.

___ **DB total**

R1 ___ I believe that white culture or Western Civilization is the most highly developed, sophisticated culture to ever exist

R2 ___ Africans and Blacks are more sexually promiscuous than Europeans and whites.

R3 ___ The whiteness will be polluted by intermarriage with Blacks.

___ **R total**

RB1___ When a Black male stranger sits or stands next to me in a public place, I want or attempt to move away from him.

RB2 ___ I live or would live in an all-white neighborhood.

RB3___ I generally socialize with those who are white or Blacks who "act white."

___ **RB total**

PB1___ I tend to primarily identity myself by my ethnic group, or social class rather than "white."

PB2 ___ For MLK Jr's birthday, I choose to attend a commemorative event.

PB3 ___ I have tried to help whites understand Blacks.

___ **PB total**

E1 ___ White culture and society must be restructured to eliminate racism and oppression.

E2 ___ Whites and white culture are not superior to Blacks and Black culture.

E3 ___ A multi-cultural society cannot exist unless whites abandon their racism.

___ **E total**

UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS

SELF-ASSESSMENT ON WHITE IDENTITY

For each of the subsequent items, use the following scale to indicate the extent to which the item is true of you:

0—No Preference 1—Strongly Disagree 2—Disagree 3—Agree 4—Strongly Agree

EB1___ My study of history has largely focused on white and European History.

EB2___ I have met with other white folks to discuss white racism and feelings and attitudes about being white.

EB3___ I have voluntarily participated in activities to help me recognize and address my racism.

___ **EB total**

A1___ I accept that being white does not make me superior to any other racial group.

A2___ Being a member of a multi-ethnic environment is a must for me.

A3___ My whiteness is an important part of who I am.

___ **A total**

AB1___ I speak up in situations when I feel that a white person is being racist.

AB2___ I express my honest opinion when a Black person is present without worrying about whether or not I appear racist.

AB3___ I live in a multi-ethnic community.

___ **AB total**

Adapted from *Helms: A Race is a Good Thing to Have* (2020)

UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS

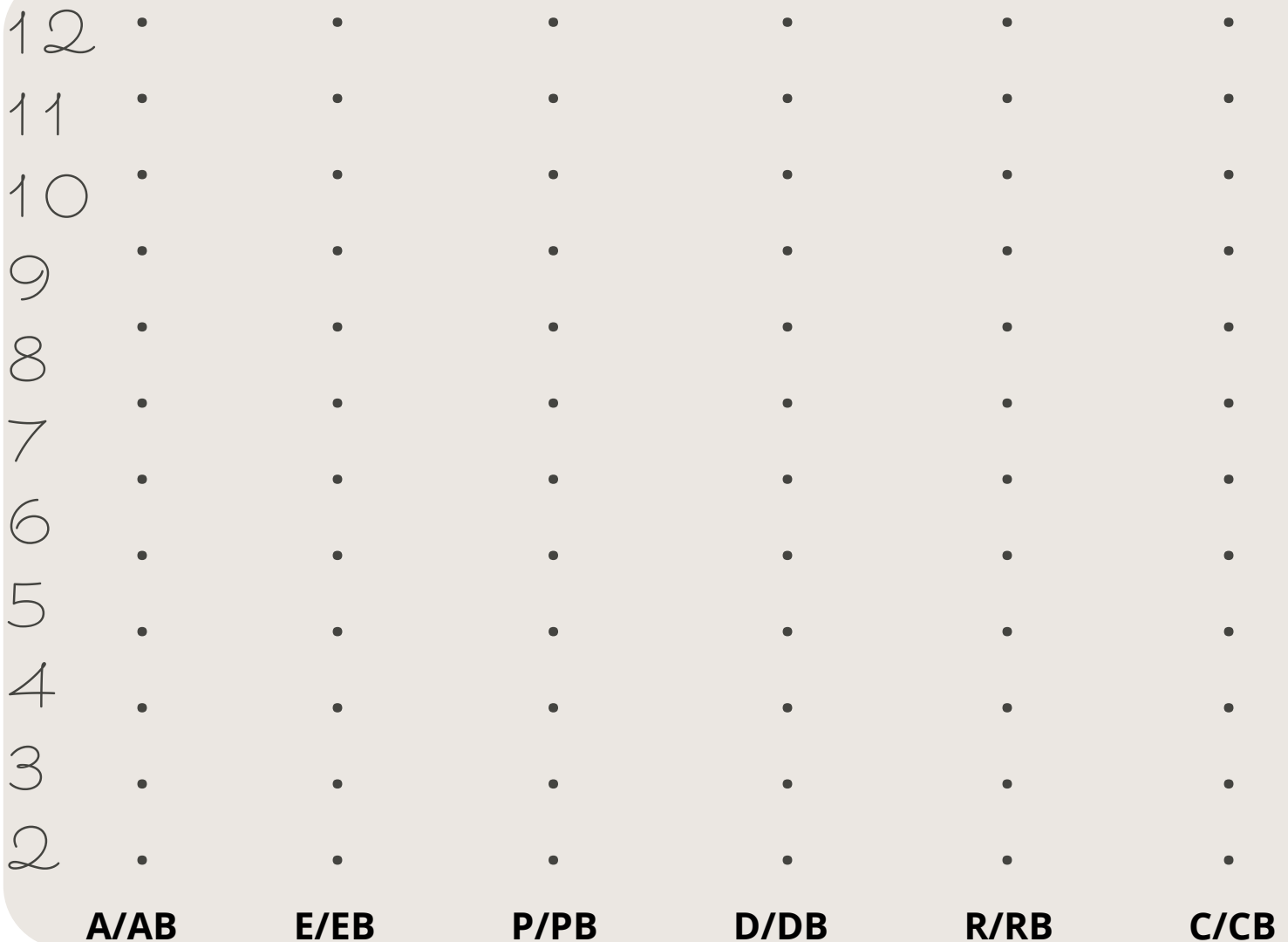
SELF-ASSESSMENT ON WHITE IDENTITY

Plot your results on the chart below. These items are not from a validated scale and are presented here as a pre-/post course test for possible self-exploration.

Abbreviations are

C=contact attitudes; CB=contact behavior, R=Reintegration attitudes,
D=Disintegration behavior, P=Pseudo-Independent attitudes,
PB=Pseudo-Independent behavior, E=Emersion attitudes, EB=Emersion behavior,
A=Autonomy attitudes, AB=Autonomy behaviors.

Higher scores indicate higher levels of attitudes/behaviors.



UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS

COURSE PREPARATION



YOU'LL NEED:

This course will invite you to sit at the feet of two wise reconcilers, Rev. Dr. Carolyn Helsel, Associate Professor in the Blair Monie Distinguished Chair of Homiletics at Austin Theological Seminary, and Therapist Resmaa Menakem MSW, LICSW, SEP, an expert of conflict and violence. You'll need to purchase their books:

- **Anxious to Talk about It: *Helping White Christians Talk Faithfully about Racism*, Carolyn B. Helsel**
- **My Grandmother's Hands: *Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending our Hearts and Bodies*, Resmaa Menakem**

Additionally, we'll be using select videos to help us see what we are learning. Most of them are accessible through course document links via YouTube, but one of them is a movie that you can either rent or purchase:

- **Rosewood, (1997)** *A dramatization of a 1923 mob attack on an African-American community in Rosewood, FL (Directed by John Singleton)*

You'll want a journal of some kind, and maybe an additional place to process your learning (small group, counselor, etc.). Lastly, We encourage you to invite friends to pray for you as you participate in this course.

SESSION 1

Understanding Whiteness

Learning Whiteness

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Identify instances of white-body privilege in both the participants' personal and work environments.
2. Identify and practice basic trauma interventions/body regulations
3. Demonstrate awareness of the Stages of White Identity by preliminarily placing themselves within the schema

DISCUSSION

Bring a story of when you first became aware that you had a race/were white

READINGS

Menakem: *My Grandmother's Hands*
Chapters 1-4

Helsel: *Anxious to Talk About it*
Introduction and Chapter 1

REFLECTION

1. Pick one or two of the body exercises Menakem lists throughout the reading and give them a try. Journal your experience/response to that exercise.
2. At the end of each chapter, Helsel lists a series of questions for further engagement. Pick any two questions from Chapter 1 and use them for personal reflection. Journal your experience/response to these two questions.

EXERCISES

Complete the chart on the next page. At the conclusion of the exercise, take a few moments to journal how you experienced this exercise and how you felt about your answers, and what you may have experienced in your body as a result. Come prepared to share.

Understanding Whiteness

IN THE MINISTRY OF
RACIAL RECONCILIATION

Fill in as many words or phrases as you can under each column in about 5 minutes. Don't spend too much time thinking or censoring your thoughts, just write whatever comes to mind. Each column has an entry to get you started...

"White"

Positive characteristics:

- Snow
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Negative characteristics:

- Bland
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

"Black"

Positive characteristics:

- 'In the black'
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Negative characteristics:

- Dirty
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

Understanding Whiteness

The Link Between Race & Trauma

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Trace the general trajectory of racist practices in American history.
2. Define micro-aggression and implicit bias and give examples for both.
3. Identify typical expressions of white avoidance for facing unhealed trauma.

DISCUSSION

Bring a story of learning that white was 'better/more valuable' than brown/black.

READINGS

Menakem: *My Grandmother's Hands*
Chapters 5-7, 9

Helsel: *Anxious to Talk About it*
Chapter 2 & 3

REFLECTION

1. As before, pick one or two of the body exercises Menakem lists throughout the reading and give them a try. Journal your experience/response to that exercise.
2. At the end of each chapter, Helsel lists a series of questions for further engagement. Pick one question from each chapter and use them for personal reflection. Journal your experience/response to these two questions.

EXERCISES

Grab your journal and set a timer for 2 minutes. Without censoring your thoughts or responses, write down as many answers as you can to the following question: *What do I like about being white?*

After completing the exercise, watch the [Amy Cooper video](#). What do you notice about her voice, face, actions, etc.? What trauma responses do you see, if any? Watch it again and pay attention to your body. What do you notice?

Go back to your list of what you like about being white and cross out all responses that

- involve comparing yourself to other racial groups
- use variants of the word 'race'
- involve defining yourself by what you are not.

Count the number of items remaining: this is your *White Identity* score.

In your journal, note how you felt about completing this exercise and what you learned about yourself as a result. What questions did the exercise raise for you? How did you feel in your body at the conclusion of the exercise?

SESSION 3

Understanding Whiteness

Addressing Racialized Trauma

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Define 'soul nerve' and briefly explain its function.
2. Identify basic techniques for soothing a traumatized body.
3. Recognize personal triggers for traumatic responses.

DISCUSSION

Bring a story of when you embraced the belief that you were superior to those who are brown/black.

READINGS

Menakem: *My Grandmother's Hands*
Chapters 10-14

Helsel: *Anxious to Talk About it*
Chapter 4 & 5

REFLECTION

1. Again, pick one or two of the body exercises Menakem lists throughout the reading and give them a try. Journal your experience/response to that exercise.
2. At the end of each chapter, Helsel lists a series of questions for further engagement. Pick one question from each chapter and use them for personal reflection. Journal your experience/response to these two questions.

EXERCISES

After completing the reading and journaling exercises for this section, watch the [Kimberly Latrice Jones video](#).

Journal observations and responses to the following questions:

1. What do you hear her saying?
2. What do you see happening in her body as she speaks?
3. What would you ask her if you could?
4. What questions/feelings/responses are being raised in/for you?
5. How might you respond to a friend/colleague who sees this and says "She just a racist, angry black woman!"

SESSION 4

Understanding Whiteness

Racial Identity Growth

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Explain what traumatic retention is and how it factors into racism.
2. Identify potential cultural practices for anti-racism work within your organization.
3. Recognize white identity apart from white-body supremacy and white privilege.

DISCUSSION

Bring a story of when you became aware that your whiteness was a systemic advantage to you.

READINGS

Menakem: *My Grandmother's Hands*
Chapters 16, 18, 19, 21

Helsel: *Anxious to Talk About it*
Chapter 6 & Conclusion

REFLECTION

1. Again, pick one or two of the body exercises Menakem lists throughout the reading and give them a try. Journal your experience/response to that exercise.
2. Pick two questions from the reflections at the end of Chapter 6 and use them for personal reflection. Journal your experience/response to these two questions.

EXERCISES

After completing the reading and journaling exercises for this section, watch the movie *Rosewood* and note where you see trauma at play in the various characters. Also, pay attention to your body as you watch the movie.

1. What do you notice in yourself?
2. What do you feel and where in your body do you hold those feelings?
3. What characters seemed most impacted by trauma and how did you know?
4. What questions have been raised for you in this exercise? Journal your responses.

Using the worksheets that follow, begin to craft a plan for growth, personally and organizationally. Note three areas of strength you hold in this work, and three areas where you would like to grow in your awareness and practice of engaging systemic racism personally and within your organization. One of your facilitators will review this plan with you following completion of this course.

Understanding Whiteness

IN THE MINISTRY OF
RACIAL RECONCILIATION

Creating a Plan for Growth

Use the prompts to help you create a *plan for personal and professional growth* in the area of racial reconciliation, applying your learning from this course

My Strengths

What strengths do you bring to the work of racial reconciliation?

Areas for Growth

What areas for growth can you identify for yourself to continue your journey?

Organizational Strengths

What strengths can you identify within your organization?

Organizational Growth

What are some areas that need attention w/in your organization?

Create an action plan towards these goals to share for our fourth session. You'll have the opportunity to make changes before submitting a final copy to your facilitator. The two of you will review your plan together after completion of the course.



Growth Plan Worksheet



Name/Organization

3 PERSONAL STRENGTHS

HOW YOU CAN USE THEM TO
HELP YOU MOVE CLOSER TO
YOUR GOALS?

ACTIONS AND STRATEGIC
RELATIONSHIPS TO HELP YOU
GET THERE?

For reflection:

1. Who can *partner with you* in these goals?
2. Who will *hold you accountable* for achieving them?
3. Who *needs to be in the conversation* to make this work?
4. How will you *know you have achieved* your goals?



Growth Plan Worksheet



Name/Organization

3 AREAS FOR PERSONAL GROWTH

WHAT RESOURCES (BOOKS, VIDEOS, TRAINING, ETC.) AND RELATIONSHIPS DO YOU NEED TO HELP MOVE FORWARD?

CREATE A SET OF REASONABLE GOALS TO USE THESE RESOURCES AND RELATIONSHIPS EFFECTIVELY IN THE COMING YEAR

For reflection:

1. Who can *partner with you* in these goals and how?
2. What does *personal accountability* for achieving them look like?
3. What *experiences* might you seek to continue to grow (groups? churches? training events?)
4. How will you *know you have achieved* your goals?



Growth Plan Worksheet



Name/Organization

3 ORGANIZATIONAL STRENGTHS

HOW YOU CAN USE THEM TO HELP YOU MOVE CLOSER TO YOUR ORGANIZATION'S GOALS?

ACTIONS AND STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIPS TO HELP YOU MOVE TOWARDS THESE GOALS?

For reflection:

1. Who within your organization can *partner with you* in these goals?
2. What does organizational accountability for achieving them look like?
3. Who *needs to be in the conversation* to make this work and *how will you get them there*?
4. How will you *know you have achieved* your goals?



Growth Plan Worksheet



Name/Organization

3 AREAS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

WHAT RESOURCES (BOOKS, VIDEOS, TRAINING, RETREATS,, CONFERENCES, ETC.) & RELATIONSHIPS CAN HELP YOU MOVE FORWARD?

CREATE REASONABLE SHORT TERM AND LONG TERMS GOALS UTILIZING THESE RESOURCES AND RELATIONSHIPS EFFECTIVELYOWARDS GROWTH

For reflection:

1. Who can *partner with you* inside and outside your organization towards these goals and how?
2. What does *organizational accountability* for achieving them look like?
3. Who (individual or groups) can be *good conversation partners with your organization* to challenge you?
4. How will you *know you have achieved* your goals?

FOUNDATIONAL RESOURCES

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UNDERSTANDING WHITENESS

COURSE EVALUATION



PLEASE USE THIS QR CODE
TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY



Thank you for your participation in this course. It takes incredible courage to look past the surface to the deeper currents that move the racial dynamics at play in our country, our churches, our communities, our families, and our own stories. By bringing your whole self to this work, you are doing the hard work of bringing about the Kingdom of God in our midst.

*But the end is reconciliation; the end is redemption;
the end is the creation of the beloved community. ~ Martin Luther King*

*There is never time in the future in which we will work out our salvation.
The challenge is in the moment; the time is always now. ~ James Baldwin*

17 So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. ~ 2 Cor. 5:17-19

God bless your ministry of reconciliation!

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