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Counteracting Systemic Racism The Role of the Multiethnic Church

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

COUNTERACTING SYSTEMIC RACISM
THE ROLE OF THE MULTIETHNIC CHURCH

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO

THE FACULTY OF PORTLAND SEMINARY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

JANICE WILSON

PORTLAND, OREGON

MARCH 2022



CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

This certifies that the doctoral Dissertation of

Janice Wilson

has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 28, 2022
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, who always encourage me to stay focused and never give up—no matter what. Also, a special thank you to Dr. Pablo Morales, my former pastor, who prayed with me, and stayed by my side during this process. I appreciate his advice in introducing me to George Fox University and helping me find the path to complete my doctorate. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Tremper and Dr. Harvey who provided me with clarity and support during the difficult days of studying and writing. I appreciate all the employees at George Fox University more than words can say. Thank you, God, for selecting me to answer the call and continue this doctoral path.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AME	African Methodist Episcopal Church
ARC	Awareness, Relationships, and Commitment
BLM	Black Lives Matter
ERC	Evangelical Racial Change Movement
MEC	Multiethnic Church/Multiethnic Church Movement
NOI	Nation of Islam
NPO	Need, Problem, Opportunity
SNCC	Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
US	United States of the United States of America / United States

GLOSSARY

African Methodist Episcopal Church	The African Methodist Episcopal Church is a Methodist denomination founded in the United States to minister to the African American congregation as the first independent Black denomination.
Biological Racism	Biological racism is a social construct of racism based on understanding physical differences between ethnic groups as fundamental in social, cultural, and political contexts. This concept is used to discriminate against minorities to which African Americans belong.
Black Lives Matter	Black Lives Matter is a social justice movement organized in 2013 by Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi. The movement became world-famous after it gained supporters in response to the death of George Floyd in 2020.
Black Nationalism	Black Nationalism is a political, social, and religious movement that appeared within the African American population under the influence of the Black Power and Nation of Islam movements.
Black Power Movement	Black Power is a social movement that supports the interest of the African American population.
Colonization	Colonization is a process of assimilation of an already inhabited territory by another nation. The process often involves economic, political, social, and cultural discrimination and oppression of the native inhabitants of the colonized land.
Colorblind approach	The colorblind approach is the attitude of equality to people of diverse skin color. The ideas of social justice and equality, foundational for this approach, could undermine the value of ethnic differences. For example, this approach taken by the

	church leaders creates an illusion of a homogenous congregation, which is, in fact, multiethnic.
Ecumenism	The idea of the unification of the branches of the Christian church around the world, this concept can also be applied to the unification of the ethnically diverse congregations of the Christian church in the United States.
Enslaved	Enslaved people were deprived of their freedom and human rights by force or by enforcement of legislation in ancient societies.
Ethnic minority	An ethnic or racial minority is a population group that differs from the dominant national population in its ethnic or racial origin.
Evangelical and Reformed Church	The Evangelical and Reformed Church is a social and religious advocacy movement that supports racial equality as its primary principle.
Ecumenical movement	The ecumenical movement is an attempt to unite the Christian church on a global level.
Systemic racism	Systemic racism is a form of ethnically based discrimination embedded into social institutions. In contrast to the general concept of racism, systemic racism describes this attitude's permeation of society on all levels.
Multiethnic Church Movement	The multiethnic church movement (MEC) is a branch of the Evangelical racial change movement (ERC). ERC transitioned to MEC to promote interracial unity through religious means.
Nation of Islam	Nation of Islam is a politically oriented spiritual Muslim organization that promotes Islam through social acts. NOI was founded in the United States in the 1930s.
Post-Black church	The post-Black church is a Christian denomination of a spiritual community based

	on the traditionally Black church but open to the members of other ethnic groups.
Post-White church	The post-White church is a Christian denomination of a spiritual community based on the faithfulness to gospels but openness to the future cooperation with other ethnic groups and readings of the Scriptures.
Prosperity gospel	The prosperity gospel teaching emphasizes personal wealth, which echoes the interests of the White majority.
Racial discrimination	Racial discrimination is a social process of oppression of a specific ethnic population by another ethnic group.
Racial divide	The racial divide is a social concept describing a separation between races in US society. Racial divide occurs on many levels, such as social, economic, cultural, and political. The segregation and oppression on each of these levels augment the others to produce a cumulative negative effect on the welfare of African Americans.
Racism	Racism is prejudice and discrimination of a specific population based on these people's ethnic or racial origin.
Religious racism	Religious racism is a social construct that claims only one specific faith as the best or the right one and rejects all other beliefs as wrong.
Segregation	In the racial context, segregation is a process of separation of ethnically or racially diverse groups of population on social, economic, political, and cultural levels to restrict their interaction.
Slavery	Slavery is a practice of enslaving people by depriving them of their freedom and other human rights and treating them as possession of other people.

Spiritual genocide	The colonizers and the Christian missionaries employed a strategy to integrate the indigenous ethnic groups into Western society by depriving them of the indigenous beliefs and culture. The same strategy was used to assimilate the enslaved of African descent into North American society.
Systemic racism	Systemic racism is an institutionalized expression of ethnically based discrimination through social institutions.
The Black church	The Black church is a branch of Christian denominations found in the US and serves African American communities.
The Black Liberation Theology	The Black liberation theology is a religious and social movement formed based on liberation theology and the Black Power movement.
The Black Power movement	The Black Power was active during the 1960s-1970s and supported the interest of the African American population in the United States.
The Civil Rights Movement	The civil rights movement is a social advocacy movement in the United States from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s. The leaders associated with the civil rights movement were driven by the values of Blackness. Their values were based on the idea of the fight against racism and racial discrimination.
The Liberation Theology	Liberation theology is a movement characteristic, for example, of the Black church. The primary idea of this theology is the active role of Christians in improving their society with special concern for the poor and oppressed. Through this idea, the church becomes actively involved in the social and political activities of its congregation.

Transracial movement

The transracial movement is a spiritual and social trend based on crossing racial borders and uniting ethnic borders.

White fragility

White fragility is perceived by Whites' discomfort in discussing racial issues due to the possibility of being labeled as racist or the absence of desire to support a cause for social activism.

White privilege

White privilege describes a social construct that allows people of light skin color to benefit at the cost of people of color.

White supremacy

White supremacy is an ideology based on the idea that White people are superior to people of other ethnic backgrounds.

ABSTRACT

The study explores how the multiethnic church can be a healing agent to counteract systemic racism in a multiethnic church in Richardson, Texas. Systemic racism is a critical issue confronting human society today. In recent years, the global community has united in condemning any form of racial discrimination, particularly against persons of African heritage.

The multiethnic church encourages ecumenism that transcends the racial barriers that have been inherent in Christian worship in the United States. For one, the study suggests that church officials could ease the advancement of the multiethnic church by increasing awareness of systemic racism to members of their congregations. Aside from this, the progress of this type of church requires intentional efforts within the church to become multiethnic. MacDonald suggests most Christians are unaware of their actions' implicit biases based on the perceived racial differences.¹ Nonetheless, the implicitly existing societal prejudices perpetuate racial separation in the church.

Furthermore, the current worship practices of the modern evangelical churches today create obstacles for the progress of the multiethnic congregations. This is due to White and Black people worshipping in separate churches, a system that continually favors racial segregation in worship. In the fight against systemic racism, the church was employed as a racial reconciling instrument. According to the study's findings, the unity of the multiethnic church will bring diverse races together and a shared approach to

¹ Mark MacDonald, "Systemic Evil and Christian Discipleship," *The Ecumenical Review* 72, no. 1 (2020): 111.

religious belief and practice. The study developed a Hands-Up curriculum to teach six-week lessons to church leaders from churches and other leading organizations. The training program incorporates a biblical understanding of the worth of people, regardless of race. After completing the six-week training program, participants will serve as change agents tasked with spreading the ideas and lessons learned.

SECTION 1: THE NPO

Introduction

The persistent presence of racism in the United States shows the necessity to find innovative solutions for this problem. Racism is prejudice and discrimination of a specific population based on these people's ethnic or racial origin.² Such marginalization of ethnic minorities has existed in this country since its early days. Historically, the Christian church took part in interracial conflicts. During the colonization, the missions and the Christianized education were used to subdue other cultures by absorbing them into the Western mentality.³ More recently, the church became a reconciliation tool in the fight against systemic racism.⁴ One type of Christian church active in this sphere is the multiethnic church. The multiethnic church movement (MEC) is a branch of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. The Evangelical and Reformed Church transitioned to MEC to promote interracial unity through religious means. This dissertation proposes that the role of the multiethnic church is to meet the needs of schools and community populations affected by systemic racism in Richardson, Texas. The multiethnic church has the opportunity to serve as a healing agent to counteract inequality against Black people and non-White Americans. Currently, the student population at

² Gregory A. Spinks, *Overcoming Systemic Racism in Religious Organizations* (Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1996), 25.

³ Steve Talbot, "Spiritual Genocide: The Denial of American Indian Religious Freedom, from Conquest to 1934," *Wicaso Sa Review* 21, no. 2 (Autumn 2006): 7.

⁴ Robbie W. C. Tourse, Johnnie Hamilton-Mason, and Nancy J Wewiorski, *Systemic Racism in the United States: Scaffolding as Social Construction* (Cham: Springer, 2018), 24.

Richardson High School is diverse. The racial makeup is: Hispanic (45.5%), White (27.2%), and African American (17.5%).

The chart below contains recent demographic data for Richardson, Texas. This city is located in Dallas County with a population of 125,658 in 2022. Richardson is growing at an annual rate of 1.16% and has had a population increase by 26.64% since 2010. The following chart shows the percentage of each ethnicity that lives in Richardson, Texas.

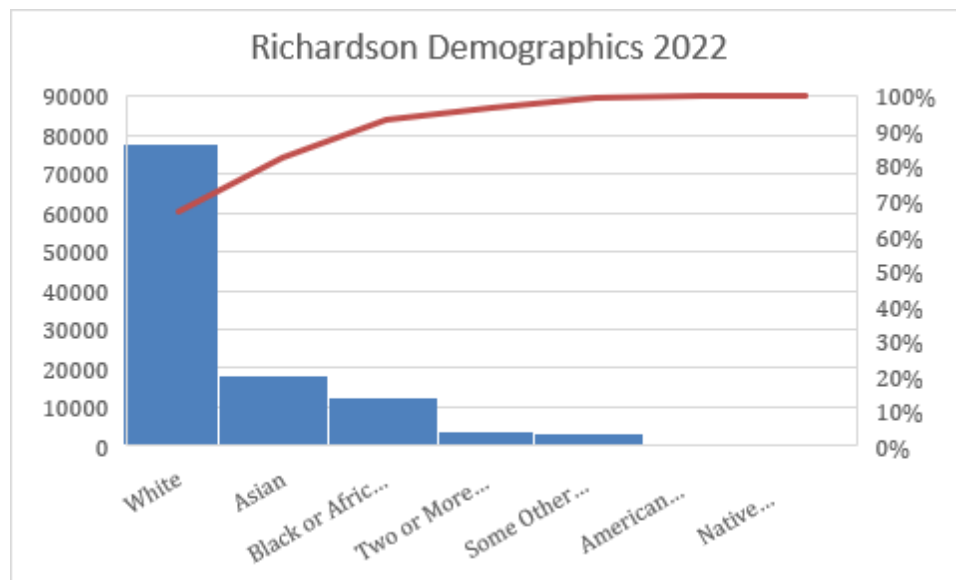


Figure 1 Richardson, Texas Demographics in 2022

Based on the diverse student population and the demographics of Richardson, TX, this research proposes that the multiethnic church can unify different ethnicities through religious belief and practice. An essential research question is the role of the multiethnic church in counteracting systemic racism. Systemic racism is an institutionalized

expression of ethnically based discrimination through social institutions.⁵ In contrast to the general concept of racism, systemic racism describes this attitude's permeation of society on all levels. Section 2 offers other proposed solutions that have been used to serve as a remedy for systemic racism. Section 3 discusses the thesis of research and personal findings included in this study. Section 4 of this research suggests a training program as a way toward ethnic reconciliation under the guidance of the church. Section 5 of the study presents specifications of this training program as a lasting solution for the amendment of systemic racism in Richardson, TX. The program is intended for the implementation of a racial unification program at the multiethnic church. The long-term application of this training program could create positive changes in interracial relations in Richardson, Texas.

The Case Study

The present study began by realizing the persistent racism in the US educational system and the church's role in amending this issue. A single African American student became the object of the case study that initialized this research. Shawn, a Black American teen from Lake Charles, Louisiana, was 15 years old. His family's faith in God and Jesus was not founded on a biblical Christian foundation. However, this had no negative impact on Shawn's social position as a Christian. He merely needed his church's unwavering support to withstand the inequality posed by the educational institution. He was not fortunate enough to have suitable role models in his family to guide him on the path of Christianity's exemplary Christian values and beliefs. He felt abandoned when his

⁵ Spinks, *Overcoming Systemic Racism in Religious Organizations*, 27.

parents decided to separate. Based on Shawn's faith and my religious convictions divorce is not encouraged but allowed. This clearly shows that Shawn's family did not model the ideal choice in terms of biblical teaching. He followed in his father's footsteps and enrolled in Richardson High School. Shawn's first semester at school proved to be a watershed moment for him. He noticed that there were no Advanced Placement classes available for Black male students. As a Black student, Shawn was particularly affected by the policy. The racial discrimination in US society, however, hindered his progress toward his degree. Barrett H. Pitner asserts that this society erroneously believes in "the inevitable progression toward racial equality."⁶ For example, McGee and Danny, asserted that "it was only as I became older and wiser that I realized how important it is for me to serve as an example for underrepresented students of color."⁷ Research findings, such as the marginalization of Black students at domestic schools, prove the opposite. For instance, Ebonics was seen as an attempt to teach students the language via a traditional language school program. African Americans and many whites opposed the resolution, believing it to be an attack on American values and a cynical ploy to keep African American youth in the margins.⁸

However, Richardson High School offered such classes for White students. As an African American, Shawn was negatively affected by this policy. Seanna Leath,

⁶ Barrett H. Pitner, "Viewpoint: US Must Confront Its Original Sin to Move Forward," *BBC News*, June 3, 2020, www.bbc.com/news/world-ud-canada-5291238.

⁷ Ebony O. McGee and Danny B. Martin. "'You would not believe what I have to go through to prove my intellectual value!'" Stereotype management among academically successful Black mathematics and engineering students." *American Educational Research Journal* 48, no. 6 (2011): 1347-1389.

⁸ Nelson Flores and Jonathan Rosa. "Undoing appropriateness: Raciolinguistic ideologies and language diversity in education." *Harvard Educational Review* 85, no. 2 (2015): 149-171.

Channing Mathews, and Asya Harrison show that Black students need an ethnically specialized approach to succeed.⁹ This need arises from the general orientation of the educational system toward the White mentality. Most Black study participants reported, “race was a central part of their identity.”¹⁰ This is particularly true for African American male teenagers, who require specialized coaching to integrate into the White-dominated society. Therefore, the absence of Advanced Preparation classes focused on the needs of Black students were detrimental to Shawn’s educational plans. Alon Ben-Meir explains that such a detrimental approach to minorities is common for the US social structures.¹¹ The White students receive more support for their studies from schools than the Black students are allotted. Such a disparity can negatively affect the education and the future career of African American youths.

The case study development shows that the church’s involvement in educational matters can resolve some issues of racial inequality. The administration suggested an after-school mentoring program led by a volunteer who also was a pastor. The pastor’s involvement in education gives evidence that the research question about the role of the church in counteracting racism is being answered through the actions of volunteers. Julius L. West shows that leaders of the Christian church have been involved in

⁹ Seanna Leath, Channing Mathews, and Asya Harrison, “Racial Identity, Racial Discrimination, and Classroom Engagement Outcomes Among Black Girls and Boys in Predominantly Black and Predominantly White School Districts,” *American Educational Research Journal* 56, no. 4 (2019): 1318.

¹⁰ Leath, Mathews, and Harrison, “Racial Identity,” 1318.

¹¹ Alon Ben-Meir, “The Pandemic of Racism in America,” *ValueWalk*, July 16, 2020, www.valuewalk.com/2020/07/the-pandemic-of-racism-in-america.

interethnic relations since the beginning of the colonization.¹² Historically, general school education included the teaching of biblical knowledge. Consequently, the church was involved in integrating Native Americans and African Americans into the White culture by teaching them the religious foundations. The presence of a pastor working as a volunteer in the modern educational system is a sign that the church's role in mediating interracial relations has not abated.

Alternatively, the involvement of the church in the educational process was and stays a matter of debate. The Christian teaching that formed the foundation for the first North American schools allowed Native Americans and African Americans to integrate into the White mentality. However, the religious officials of the past enforced Christian teaching on these ethnic communities and deprived these people of their own beliefs.¹³ Steve Talbot refers to this process as “spiritual genocide” to underline the destructive effect of such enforced religious education.¹⁴ Youths from ethnic groups other than White have lost their culture because they were deprived of their original religion. The absence of specialized classes for African Americans in modern schools deprives them of their cultural and ethnic identity. These students need a chance to receive knowledge in a racially proper way determined particularly for their way of thinking. In contrast to the early days of colonization, a pastor's involvement in the educational process helped the subject of the case study gain ethnically suited coaching.

¹² Julius L. West, “Creating a Church Culture that Embraces an Evolving Multiethnic Congregation” (D. Min. diss., Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 54.

¹³ West, “Creating a Church,” 55.

¹⁴ Talbot, “Spiritual Genocide,” 7.

The case study reveals racial oppression in the United States on the example of the ethnically biased education at Richardson High School, which supplied a foundation for the present research. Evidence from the time of colonization proves that the present US educational system was created to support the mindset of Whites.¹⁵ The continuation of this approach further increases the gap between educational opportunities of distinct ethnic groups. Without a race-appropriate Advanced Placement practice, Shawn may not be able to prepare for college. Furthermore, the absence of ethnically specialized learning deprives representatives of minorities of their culture.¹⁶ This factor is especially detrimental to the interracial understanding in the United States because of this country's multicultural and multiethnic nature. Consequently, Black students receive a lower quality of educational services and lose their identity, which might have helped them integrate into multiethnic US society. These problems amount to the issue of systemic racism expressed in the educational approach of domestic schools.

History of Racism

This study utilized available sources on racism and the role of Christianity and specifically of the multiethnic church in eradicating racial discrimination. The following will also try to delineate the history of racism and the significance of slavery in the United States. The author will reveal injustices historically done to Black people and the support of systemic racism in the present structure of the US social system. This section will touch on the theme of racial discrimination of the people of African descent in

¹⁵ Ibid.; West, "Creating a Church," 55.

¹⁶ Leath, Mathews, and Harrison, "Racial Identity," 1320.

modern society. The purpose of this section will be the discussion of systemic racism and its negative impact on the welfare of African Americans. The essay takes a theological view on reducing systemic racism, which is deeply ingrained in American culture. This research will build on the existing knowledge around the racial divide and the role of the Christian church in interracial relations to decide strategies necessary to eradicate racism in US society.

The history of racism in the United States has been studied to define past errors and avoid them in the future. In their article on racial debate, Kristen Lavelle and Joe Feagin describe three major historical periods during the late 1700s and early 1800s: slavery, legal segregation, and the White American era.¹⁷ These periods of history were equally important for combining the present concepts of racial divide and White supremacy. White supremacy is an ideology based on the idea that White people are superior to people of other ethnic backgrounds.¹⁸ This ideology served to segregate Anglo-Americans from the people of African descent and to oppress the latter. The racial divide is a social concept describing this separation between the races in US society.¹⁹ Racial divide occurs on many levels—social, economic, cultural, and political—with cumulative negative effects on the welfare of African Americans.

In each of the three eras, significant injustices were committed to the people of African descent. The consistent oppression of this ethnic group has become the primary

¹⁷ Kristen Lavelle and Joe Feagin, “Hurricane Katrina: The Race and Class Debate,” *Monthly Review* 58, no. 3 (2006): 44.

¹⁸ Love L. Sechrest, Johnny Ramírez-Johnson, and Amos Yong, *Can “White” People Be Saved? Triangulating Race, Theology, and Mission* (Westmont: InterVarsity Press, 2018), 14.

¹⁹ Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson and Yong, “Can White,” 21.

cause of the current racial difference between the White and Black populations of the United States. In the era of slavery, such social structures as transatlantic and triangular trade helped White people at the expense of their Black counterparts.²⁰ Whites enslaved many African people, whom they viewed as objects for trade and unpaid work. In the era of segregation, US society has systematically developed a discriminative attitude toward African Americans and created a social system that strengthens this ideology by the practice of systemic racism. These principles and attitudes still exist in the United States, although the practice of slavery has ended.

Slavery

The White enslavers deliberately created a system that viewed people of African descent through a dehumanizing lens. Slavery was a practice of depriving people of their freedom and other basic human rights and treating them as possessions of other people. This approach allowed Whites to handle the African people as slaves due to the Blackness of their skin. Rebecca Cohen uses the term “the cult of purity” to describe the racial hierarchy that historically existed in the United States.²¹ This term shows that the social constraints related to ethnic origin were used to define a person’s place in society according to this individual’s racial background and skin color. The significant difference in the social feeling of Whites and the people of color is still in the United States today. The epoch of segregation further brought about a social disempowerment of Black

²⁰ Ibid., 62.

²¹ Rebecca Cohen, “Framework for Understanding Structural Racism: The Cult of Purity,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 55, no. 1 (2020): 47.

people.²² The ideology of racial divide became the legacy of enslavement and segregation that still affects the democratic values fundamental for the United States. Today, US society is still as White-centered as it was centuries ago.

The persistence of racism in the United States can be explained through the thoroughness with which the enslavers branded the ethnic minorities. Cohen explains that owners developed slave codes that showed to which master they belonged.²³ This practice looked to prevent the opportunity of escape for the slaves and suppress a possibility of a Black revolt. In a psychological context, the branding and coding of Black people also ensured their social disempowerment. Branded as cattle and viewed as inferior, slaves were treated according to their market value and service to the White enslavers. In these conditions, the Black slaves were deprived of basic human rights. In his book *Christian Slavery*, Kelly Gerbner states that slaves were denied education, assembly, movement, and worship.²⁴ All these restrictions intended to minimize the chances of an uprising of the Black people. The White owners judged that uneducated people would not realize their dire fate, while the prohibition on gatherings would prevent them from discussing their situation and concocting a rebellion.

The policies that legalized enslavement ensured the divide between the owners and the oppressed. Protected by their legislative measures and supported by their ideology, Whites continued to practice racism by using Black people as slaves. That

²² Cohen, "Framework for," 49.

²³ Ibid., 51.

²⁴ Kelly Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018), 26.

ideology and policies based on it created the foundation for the division between the two races. In his study on racism in relation to Baptism, Kevin Jones reveals the relation between religion and the perpetuation of oppression of Blacks in the American South.²⁵ During the era of slavery, the Christian church approved of enslavement and perceived the people of African descent as lesser beings. As the Southern economy depended on the cheap agrarian workforce, slavery was essential for the economic and political power of these regions. Consequently, White leaders supported the White planters, who constituted their congregation and made donations.²⁶ The religious power combined the economic and political power of the local governments. As a result, the racial hierarchy was the official order instituted by the church and administration.

The progress of the US consciousness led to a change in the ideology of race in the late 18th century. Cohen shows that an amendment of the US Constitution questioned the morality of the slave trade and the ownership of slaves.²⁷ These practices came to be viewed as immoral, and the movement of abolitionism appeared to rescue the enslaved. In his volume *Clash of Extremes: The Economic Origins of the Civil War*, Marc Egnal explains that political negotiations between the North and the South effectively ended the slave trade.²⁸ After the end of the transatlantic trade, the African Americans became

²⁵ Kevin Jones, "Report on Slavery and Racism in the History of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018, 52, <https://sbts-wordpress-uploads.s3.amazonaws.com/sbts/uploads/2018/12/Racism-and-the-Legacy-of-Slavery-Report-v4.pdf>.

²⁶ Jones, "Report on," 159.

²⁷ Sechrest, Ramirez-Johnson, and Yong, "Can White," 48.

²⁸ Marc Egnal, *Clash of Extremes: The Economic Origins of the Civil War* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013), 10.

members of US society. Nonetheless, Black people remained in enslavement, despite their residential status granted to many of them through their birth on US soil.

However, the development of the relations between the United States, North and South, led to a change of attitude toward slavery. The industrial North needed qualified workers instead of slaves, which is why the northern United States were against slavery. Egnal explains their morally justified reaction to slavery through their economic and political interests.²⁹ The northern United States' position toward this morally deprecated practice originated from the balance of powers within the country. The southern United States gained political might and prosperity through slavery and the slave trade. The northern United States demanded discontinuation of the slavery practices to prevent losing power and control over their position within the Union.³⁰ The Civil War resulting from this political conflict led to the termination of slavery. Therefore, moral injustice and the balance of powers were the primary motivations of the northern states as proponents of abolitionism.

Segregation Era

Thus, the legal segregation that followed the era of slavery perpetuated White supremacy to oppress Blacks in the United States. In the racial context, segregation is a process of separation of ethnically or racially diverse groups of population on social, economic, political, and cultural levels to restrict their interaction. The segregation era began after the Civil War, when slavery ended, and the Reformation of the South ensued.

²⁹ Ibid., "Clash of," 12.

³⁰ Ibid., 25.

A national debate occurred on the regulation of the Black population in conditions of the White country.³¹ Anglo-Americans would have to coexist with Black people, but Whites were not ready to intermingle with African Americans. Several suggestions were made, including the plan to place Black people into segregated areas.³² These territories separated from the rest of the country were like the present reservations for Native Americans. This type of segregation would disallow African Americans to intermingle with White people. However, the economic value of the capable Black population would sharply decline in isolation. The central and the state administrations had to find another solution to keep the two races separated while inhabiting the same territories.

In response to this task, legislators of different states devised multifarious laws that structured the existence of African Americans. In most states, they were not allowed to socially intermix with Whites in any form of interaction. The states provided the new population of Black citizens with education and healthcare. However, they created segregated institutions for these purposes, including segregated schools, housing, and healthcare.³³ African Americans were prohibited from entering White eateries and educational institutions, clinics, and libraries. They were assigned specific seats on public transportation to keep them apart from Whites. The Black people were offered new social terms that had little regard for human rights.

This continued racial discrimination cemented the superiority of Whites and perpetuated the oppression of Black people in new ways. Richard Rotstein's book, *The*

³¹ Lavelle and Feagin, "Hurricane Katrina," 172.

³² *Ibid.*, 173.

³³ *Ibid.*, 51.

Color of Law proves that segregation laid the foundation for the racial wage gap, racist immigration policies, racial profiling, and imagery.³⁴ These novel social constraints widened the gaps in access to health, education, employment, and decent housing for the two races. Thus, segregation became a new tool systematically designed to oppress the people of African descent.

Modern Era

With time, Black people became an integral part of US society, inseparable from its functions. Laws were amended to create an image of the cooperation of the White and Black races in the local social system. Nonetheless, the racial divide continued to exist on other levels with the support of historically developed tools of oppression. This act was an effort to keep the social dominance of Anglo-Americans in US society. The systemic discrimination placed African American citizens in a disadvantaged position in the country's social, political, and economic structure. In her article on systemic racism, Kate Slater builds on Lavelle and Feagin's concept of sequential oppression.³⁵ Such a consistent marginalization of Black people occurred through different eras of the development of the United States.

The historical sequential oppression resulted in the contemporary perpetuated systemic racism. The policies introduced during the segregation era further influenced racial profiling, media imagery, and disparities in health, education, and housing access for African Americans. Slater specifically underlines the impacts of segregation on the

³⁴ Richard Rotstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated the United States of America* (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2012), 27.

³⁵ Kate Slater, "What Is Systemic Racism," *Today*, February 8, 2021, §5, www.today.com/tmrw/what-systemic-racism-t207878.

African American population.³⁶ The Blacks were prohibited from engaging in social gatherings because of White administrations' fear of the possibility of the African American uprising. The governmentally sponsored mass media labeled Black people as violent, poor, and dangerous.³⁷ The media looked to portray African Americans negatively to justify the anti-Black policies and to strengthen the anti-Black attitudes in society. The legislative oppression and the social deprecation had a significant negative impact on the Black minority by undermining their efforts to fully integrate into US society.

The negative stereotyping wrought a strong negative impact on the people of this community, especially on Black women. Because of the bad labeling and racial profiling, officials, including health care workers, are disinclined to aid African American females. As a result, a Black woman is three times more likely to die in birthing due to the negligence of the medical attendants.³⁸ This attitude is due to the false stereotype that Black women have a higher pain tolerance than their White counterparts. The medical personnel misinformed by the racial profiling may subject African American females to extreme pain in the hope that they will bear it well. However, Black patients may continually die from experiencing such pain if they do not receive pain management medicine. Currently, Black women are believed to have a low life expectancy compared to White women.³⁹ Their lower life expectancy is due to the negligence of the healthcare

³⁶ Slater, "What is," §3.

³⁷ Ibid., §7.

³⁸ Ibid., §8.

³⁹ Ibid., §5.

staff, who apply a false stereotype while treating African American females. Thus, the present US medical system is an example of the systemic racism passed from segregation through racial profiling and wrong stereotypes about Black people.

The inseparable integration of racial discrimination against Black people in US society finds different proponents who seek a proper explanation for this phenomenon. Some religious scholars expressed a sincere interest in the topic and tried to perceive the social immorality from a religious point of view. For example, Cohen debates the idea of racism as a social sin.⁴⁰ This author concludes that immorality is not a sin but a structure for a sin. She further argues that racism cannot be viewed from an individual point of view because this is a social phenomenon. In support of her statement, Cohen suggests that not all White people are racist.⁴¹ However, the present social system is structured in such a manner that it always favors them. Therefore, Whites find themselves in a racist position, independently from their perspective on ethnic equality, because of the current social structure. Cohen further argues that no parent teaches a child to be racist against a specific ethnic group.⁴² Instead, society creates the environment for their introduction into the social structures that are innately racist and, therefore, ingrain this attitude into the minds of Whites. This behavior does not excuse racism it simply explains why it is perpetuated.

⁴⁰ Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong, "Can White," 49.

⁴¹ Ibid., 51.

⁴² Ibid.

Slavery, Racism, and the Church

Slavery has existed throughout most of human history, although some cultures practiced enslavement more than others. In his famous book, John Robbins points out that slavery originally started as indentured servitude or forced marriage.⁴³ Indentured servitude usually lasted only a fixed number of years, in contrast to enslavement and forced marriage that could last indefinitely. However, other forms of slavery appeared in the second millennium BC. People were enslaved as prisoners of war or as a punishment for unpaid debts.⁴⁴ Enslavement has slowly substituted indentured servitude, which earlier was used to resolve the debt problem. Thus, in antiquity, slavery was seen as a punishment alternative to death.

Slavery became widespread in antiquity, but the problem of racism persists to date.⁴⁵ Slaves served every purpose, including the labor on plantations and in the mines and the work of household servants, soldiers, and prostitutes. Historical forms of slavery applied to the people of the same race and nation, such as enslavement through debt-induced punishment. Alternatively, racism originated from the need to rationalize one population's superiority over another. Robbins names several types of racism, such as biological racism, ethnocentric racism, or religious racism.⁴⁶ Each type creates prejudices intended at a group of people that differs from those that generate the stereotype.

⁴³ John W. Robbins, *Slavery and Christianity: Paul's Letter to Philemon* (Unicoi: Trinity Foundation, 2007), 29.

⁴⁴ Robbins, "Slavery and," 29.

⁴⁵ McCoskey, Denise Eileen. *Race: Antiquity and its legacy*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.

⁴⁶ Bowser, Benjamin P. "Racism: Origin and Theory." *Journal of Black Studies* 48, no. 6 (2017): 572-90.

Biological racism targets people of other skin colors and of different facial features.⁴⁷

Ethnocentric racism focuses on a specific ethnic group perceived as superior to all other

groups.⁴⁸ Finally, religious racism is a social construct that claims only one specific faith

as the best or the right one and rejects all other beliefs as wrong.⁴⁹ Each of these forms of

racism produces a division between populations based on hatred of other people who

differ from the original group somehow.

Despite the multitude of its forms, the nature of racism has stayed the same throughout history. This hatred for others divides people into groups and prevents them from peaceful cooperation. Today it continues in different, often subtle forms, and has changed since the open racism of the past ceased to exist.⁵⁰ This homogenous nature of racism ensures its lasting character. Gerbner divides the history of racism into four major periods according to the practice of slavery, its economic role, and its legal status.⁵¹

These times are classical antiquity, the early church period, the high church era, and the modern period. Slavery has not always been perceived as morally wrong and was widely practiced in early societies.⁵² The opposition to slavery began later, in the early church period, because of religious moralization of the problem of enslavement.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁵⁰ Jones, "Report on," 30.

⁵¹ Gerbner, "Christian Slavery," 129.

⁵² Ibid.; Robbins, "Slavery and," 30.

The Christian church became one of the first opponents of slavery during the early church period. In the 16th century AD, Christian leaders demanded that slave owners treat their slaves humanely and allow them to be baptized.⁵³ This is an early example of the Christian church's actions that opposed racism and regulated the enslavement of Africans. Alternatively, church leaders eased the slave trade at the church missions set in Africa to bring Africans into Christianity.⁵⁴ Therefore, the role of the missionaries in enslavement and racial divide is equivocal.

Nonetheless, the colonization of Africa led to the interrelated processes of Christianization and enslavement of the local population. The church missions taught the colonized African farmers how to grow cash crops for European markets.⁵⁵ This process required a large workforce that allowed Europeans to create a church network within the workers. The missionaries used this network to convert Africans into Christianity, which alleviated their efforts and made added travel unnecessary. During the church period, Christianity began spreading south of the Sahara Desert with the traveling church missionaries. Earlier, most African slaves were sent to Islamic countries, but after 1650 AD, over half of Africa's population became Christian.⁵⁶ They were imported into Europe and the Americas to work for the Christian masters. Thus, colonization and religious conversion of Africa during the church era ensured the inflow of Black people

⁵³ Gerbner, "Christian Slavery," 131.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 49.

⁵⁵ Robbins, "Slavery and," 27.

⁵⁶ Gerbner, "Christian Slavery," 48.

into the Christian world, not as immigrants coming to a country with opportunity but as slaves and not of their own choosing.

Once Christianity started spreading over the African continent, the question of the moral justification of slavery became persistent. Many church leaders believed that slavery be allowed for criminals and war prisoners.⁵⁷ During early Christianity, slaves had no rights except for some church laws that protected them from cruel treatment by their masters. For example, church law gave slaves the right to marry.⁵⁸ Consequently, some church officials protested the separation of the slaves' families for sale. Nonetheless, church leaders did not interfere when owners broke up a family by selling its members who were not related by blood. The church law also gave slaves the right to be baptized into Christianity.⁵⁹ Some contradictions arose from the regulations that forbade church officials from enslaving Christians, which prevented them from having baptized slaves.⁶⁰ These contradictions led to the doubts that the church leaders bought about the morality of slavery.

This change of mindsets caused church leaders to develop innovative approaches toward the issue of enslavement. An example is the bill issued by Innocent III to regulate the enslavement of Christian Europeans living in Africa.⁶¹ This reform declared the exclusion of any Christian who enslaved another Christian. Some European Christians

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Robbins, "Slavery and," 132.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Gerbner, "Christian Slavery," 51.

⁶¹ Robbins, "Slavery and," 46.

enslaved other Europeans, especially those captured by Arabs and sold to Africa. Several participants in this trade were church representatives.⁶² Their participation shows that church officials did not always follow the church law. Furthermore, the exchange in Christianized Africans was in a gray zone; it was considered immoral but was not explicitly forbidden in every country. Finally, the church law did not prevent Christian Europeans from enslaving non-Christian Africans. Jemar Tisby asserts that church leaders enforced laws against owning Christians, but they saw no problem with owning Africans not part of Christianity.⁶³ Thus, the history of slavery proves a combination of biological racism and religious racism, even when the ethnic form of racism abated.

Recent Racist Events in US Society

Social development toward a greater understanding and implementation of democratic values led to a change of attitude toward the people of African descent. In the new millennium, the ethnic composition of the United States became widely differentiated. The Census Bureau Report shows that in 2020 the US population consisted of 60.1% non-Hispanic Whites, 18.5% Hispanics/Latinos, 13.4% Black people, 5.9% Asians, 1.3% American Indians, and 0.2% native Hawaiians.⁶⁴ These numbers supply evidence that over one-third of the US citizens are of other than White origin. Although the White population continues to have more power in US society, tensions based on racial principles are bound to intensify as the non-White populations grow.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American Church's Complicity in Racism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 12.

⁶⁴ United States Census Bureau, Retrieved from: www.census.gov/ November 31, 2021.

These tensions originate in historical impacts of racial discrimination that continues to haunt the minorities, such as African Americans. The high rate of racist incidents has become a central problem with which various human rights organizations and activists deal. Recently, three major cases became the highlight of the fight against the oppression of Black people. All three of these incidents were caused by the police, viewed as a tool used by specific social systems to reinforce the racial divide. The first incident was the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, a Black jogger, by two armed White men in 2020.⁶⁵ This murder marked the start of the unearthing of the racial issue in US society. The video of the crime circulated on social media, allowing everyone to see the murderers responsible for the act. Surprisingly, the culprits were freed only months after the killing.⁶⁶ This process reveals the negligence of the judicial system that does not serve justice to the murderers of Black people. The process was controversial and was disapproved of by the public, especially with the African American citizens who felt betrayed by the state that was supposed to guarantee their safety.

The following racial conflicts further motivated the social justice advocates to start global protests. The second incident occurred in New York's Central Park in 2020. A White woman, Amy Cooper, called the police on a Black man, Christian Cooper, who approached her in Central Park. The woman released her dog off the leash, and the man

⁶⁵ Evelyn Kenya, "Ahmaud Arbery Killing Remembered One Year On: 'Keep His Name Alive'," *The Guardian*, February 23, 2021, §2, www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/feb/23/ahmaud-arbery-killing-remembered-one-year-on.

⁶⁶ Kenya, "Ahmaud Arbery," §3.

protested this act, prohibited in this part of the park.⁶⁷ The woman perceived his actions as threatening and called the police. This case proves animosity between the two races and the issue of the police as a tool reinforcing White supremacy. The reaction of Amy Cooper to the words of Christian Cooper could be less agitated if he were not an African American. Her anguish can be explained by the wrong racial profiling of Black people historically created in the mass media. The image of a Black man as a threatening and a dangerous person still exists since its creation during the segregation era to aggravate interracial relations in contemporary society.

The third incident was a primary focus in the racial conflict in the country and the issued global protests of racism. This event was the killing of a Black male George Floyd, by the police in the same year as the two earlier cases. Bystanders made a video of three White police officers who suffocated George Floyd when officer Derek Chauvin pressed a knee against his neck for over nine minutes. Mass media circulated this video, showing the police officers restraining a Black man to death.⁶⁸ In this recording, George Floyd can be heard pleading for mercy and claiming that he could not breathe, to which the police officers did not respond. The incident sparked a global protest of the anti-racist movements that condemned racial oppression of Black people in the United States.

Floyd's last words, "I can't breathe," became the motto of a new movement in support of

⁶⁷ Vera Amir and Laura Ly, "White Woman Who Called Police on a Black Man Bird-Watching in Central Park Has Been Fired," *CNN*, May 26, 2020, www.edition/cnn.com/2020/05/26/us/central-park-video-dog-video-arfrican-American-trnd/index.html.

⁶⁸ Evan Hill et al., "How George Floyd Was Killed in Police Custody," *The New York Times*, May 31, 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/05/31/us/george-floyd-investigation.html.

African Americans.⁶⁹ The unified mass protests became a new force in the fight for the rights of Black people.

The intensified efforts of anti-racist organizations and activists led other organizations, including the religious communities, to find ways for interracial amendments. The Presbyterian Church, for example, sees its mission in engaging all races in religious activity.⁷⁰ They use the Matthew 25 section to convey the biblical teachings about racial equality to the congregation. In a modern US public, this section creates a vision of a united society. The aim of this activity is to discuss how systemic racism can be dismantled in the United States.

Systemic Racism in US Society

The primary problem with interracial relations is the systemic character of racism. This problem is especially significant because of the institutionalized negligence of the issue. Kumar Rajagopalan notes the church's colorblindness that highlights the development of a post-racial US society.⁷¹ Religious officials act as if they believe that the issue of racism no longer exists in the United States. This behavior of the church leaders will be justified when the problem of racism is solved. However, systemic racism still exists in this society today because of the persistence of the historical racist behavioral patterns. Ruth Thompson-Miller underlines the occurrence of overt acts of

⁶⁹ Hill, "How George," §3.

⁷⁰ Melody K. Smith, "The Intersectionality of All Three Matthew 25 Focuses," *Presbyterian Mission*, March 10, 2021, www.presbyterianmission.org/story/the-intersectionality-of-all-three-matthew-25-focuses.

⁷¹ Kumar Rajagopalan, "What is the Defining Divide? False Post-Racial Dogmas and the Biblical Affirmation of 'Race'," *Black Theology: An International Journal* 13, no. 2 (2015): 170.

racism that remind one of the eras of segregation.⁷² The three recent incidents described in the earlier section serve as examples of such acts. The lingering effects of racism are perpetuated by the lower social status of Black people, who remain unprotected from the injustice done to them by social systems.

Systemic racism exists today in more subtle forms than in earlier epochs. An example is a racial prejudice that plants discriminatory stereotypes against Black people. R. Albert Mohler explains that prejudices produce no physical injury and even do not consciously mean any harm.⁷³ However, these implicit prejudices may lead White Americans to avoid social relations with Black people, even if they are not aware that their assumptions are racist. Systemic racism also exists in the form of racially segregated neighborhoods, churches, schools, and prisons. Such segregation of social spheres undermines Black opportunities for economic achievement and political empowerment. Nicki L. Cole defines this artificial division of social spheres according to the racial type as systemic racism.⁷⁴ This type of systemic ethnic oppression is rooted in institutions that perpetuate racist attitudes without overt, conscious efforts of the White citizens to discriminate against African Americans.

As the society in this country becomes more ethnically and racially diverse, churches begin to reflect the appearance of the US demographics. However, some

⁷²Ruth Thompson-Miller, *Systemic Racism: Making Liberty, Justice, and Democracy Real* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 28.

⁷³ Albert Mohler, "Systemic Racism, God's Grace, and the Human Heart: What the Bible Teaches About Structural Sin," *Public Discourse*, June 25, 2020, www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2020/06/65536.

⁷⁴ Nicki L. Cole, "Definition of Systemic Racism in Sociology," ThoughtCo, January 21, 2020, §5, <https://www.thoughtco.com/systemic-racism-3026565>.

churches struggle with this multiethnic aspect because of the presence of systemic racism. Racist ideology became ingrained into many social institutions, including the church.⁷⁵ Churches are among the organizations that do not consciously perpetuate systemic racism but still allow it to exist. The absence of multiethnic cooperation within the church is also perpetuating systemic racism.⁷⁶ Love Sechrest, Johnny Ramírez-Johnson, and Amos Yong assert that religious guidance is important to set up opportunities for Black Americans.⁷⁷ To overcome systemic racism, members of the Black community must make intentional efforts. In these efforts, they need guidance and support from the church leaders who are aware of the problem and can confront their own implicit prejudices. The religious leaders could teach their congregations to find systemic racism within educational, legal, and other systems.

However, the problem may lie in an inability of the church officials to recognize systemic racism in US social structures. Mark MacDonald notes that racism occurs today on an individual level.⁷⁸ This new expression of the ethnic divide leaves most people unaware of the racial implications of their actions. MacDonald suggests that Christians are more focused on the theological debate about the role of race in the church.⁷⁹ Besides, theological debate is a religious argument such as between two opposing faiths, or amongst members of the same religion. The theoretical character of this dispute leaves

⁷⁵ Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong, “Can White,” 60.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁸ MacDonald, “Systemic Evil,” 109.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 120.

the practical part, such as identification of systemic racism, outside of their focus. For this reason, many churches have adopted a colorblind approach toward racial reconciliation. Their leaders do not acknowledge the presence of systemic racism, either purposefully inadvertently. Matthew Charlton and Kathryn Armistead show that this approach allows systemic racism to exist because the church leaders do not address this issue directly.⁸⁰ Those in power who are not aware because of white supremacy perpetuate racism because they have a blind spot and make wrong assumptions about what it means to be made in God's image. MacDonald argues that religious officials understand this fact to negotiate the ethnic issues within their congregations.⁸¹ The growth of multiethnic congregations would bring the problem of racial divide to the church, which would help its leaders realize the persevering problem of racism.

Racism as a Theoretical Problem

The persistent interest of the church leaders in the theoretical aspect of racism can be explained in its theological significance. Daniel Hays argues that the Bible offers clear instructions toward interethnic collaboration.⁸² For example, Genesis teaches that every person is made in the image of God.⁸³ This passage sets the value of ethnic equality that unites all races. The Bible also says that God is impartial to everyone.⁸⁴ Consequently,

⁸⁰ Matthew W. Charlton and M. Kathryn Armistead, *The Prophetic Voice and Making Peace* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2016), 45.

⁸¹ MacDonald, "Systemic Evil," 108.

⁸² J. Daniel Hays, *From Every People and Nation: A Biblical Theology of Race* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003); 14.

⁸³ *The New English Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), Genesis 1:26.

⁸⁴ *The New English Bible*, Deuteronomy (10:17).

every person deserves equal respect from all people and can be equally dignified. Hays describes sin as any action that does not adhere to God's will.⁸⁵ In this case, any discriminatory act, including racist behavior, is a sin. Such actions also contradict the commandment to love others as described in the Gospel of Luke.⁸⁶ The Bible indeed offers a range of truths about the unity of ethnic groups, which explains the interest of the church leaders in the theological aspect of racism.

Nonetheless, the theory cannot help the case if it is not set to action. Diane Chandler uses the parable of the Good Samaritan to exemplify such actions.⁸⁷ The good man helps a Jewish man accosted and beaten by thieves at the expense of the Samaritan's time and finances. The biblical example suggests that racism can be fought by a small personal sacrifice that will help others. Chandler defines modern racism as a "preconceived judgment based on the limited information that further leads to misinformation."⁸⁸ Thus, the racial divide is characterized by the perceived superiority of one race over another. This divide is based on a prejudice used to oppress and marginalize the members of a minority group. The Good Samaritan's actions today would include the revelation of such ethnic prejudices.

Therefore, the theological considerations can be applied in action by the church leaders and by the congregations' members. Chandler argues that the Christian doctrine's

⁸⁵ Hays, *From Every*, 74.

⁸⁶ *The New English Bible*, Gospel of Luke (10:27).

⁸⁷ Diane J. Chandler, "Spiritual Formation: Race, Racism, and Racial Reconciliation," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 13, no. 2 (November 2020): 170; *The New English Bible*, Luke 10:25-37.

⁸⁸ Chandler, "Spiritual Formation," 170.

primary principles of spiritual formation are to love God and other people.⁸⁹ This spiritual behavior could produce a positive effect on society by shaping racial reconciliation. Chandler clarifies that racism contracts the basic spiritual formation principle by devaluating the love of one's neighbor. She shows that racism is grossly undermined in US culture.⁹⁰ Such avoidance of the persistent problem leads to a further division within the society and in the church. Chandler explores different eras in US history and their impact on racial relations, including the trauma and reconciliation efforts.⁹¹ Her study further investigates the biblical perspective on spiritual formation and racial understanding. This profound research sheds light on the betterment of racial relations that can be derived from the Bible.

Racial healing is a step toward racial reconciliation in the United States. Interethnic relations can be reinforced by recognition and acceptance of the truth. According to Chandler, the primary factor in these processes is the willingness of all stakeholders to make deliberate efforts.⁹² Representatives of both races would need to learn to listen, repent, and relate to each other. The author recommends visiting the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture.⁹³ Such expositions can offer a perspective on the history of interethnic relations in the United

⁸⁹ Ibid., 158.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 156.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid., 159.

States. This perspective would explain the impact of racism on slavery and the civil rights movements, on segregation, and on modern-day racial profiling.

Exploring the ethnic divide from the Christian perspective results in questioning the church's role in shaping racist attitudes and the racial narrative. Den Dulk perceives the high complicity of the church in shaping the racial divide.⁹⁴ Religious officials did not see gaps in the spiritual formations or ease the establishment of racism through these gaps. Kelly Vasquez, Dane Oswald, and Arnold Hanner question the historical discrepancies in spiritual texts addressing racism.⁹⁵ The authors seek a missing link between the historical Christian leadership and the tendency to insulate the model of a Christian journey from non-White ethnic groups. The Christian church's role in perpetuating racism may be more active than the church leaders realize.

The study of racial history in the United States raises the question of the African American experience in the past and its relation to modern experiences. West lectures that the past shapes modern values, both from the institutional and individual perspectives.⁹⁶ The historically created racial divide thwarts the current efforts toward racial reconciliation. This fact says that the optimization of racial experience for minorities would require new strategies. The Christian study of racial history could become a tool of sensitivity to the effects of racism. This application of religious

⁹⁴ M. Den Dulk, "Origin of Alexandria and the History of Racism as a Theological Problem," *Journal of Theological Studies* 71, no. 1 (2020): 172.

⁹⁵ Kelly Vasquez, Dane Oswald, and Arnold Hanner, "Being Dishonest about Our Prejudices: Moral Dissonance and Self-Justification," *Ethics and Behavior* 29, no. 5 (2019): 389.

⁹⁶ West, "Creating a Church," 34.

teachings toward racial reconciliation would help make amends for the historical role of the church institutions and individuals in shaping the racial divide.

Conclusion

The history of systemic racism shows that the racial divide in present American society has its origins in the country's past. Systemic racism is being studied in stages on US territory, according to the research. This research delves into many periods of racial history to prove how they affected interethnic relations. According to the literature, all domestic social institutions (e.g., Christian ones, church, government, education) took part in creating racial prejudices. Therefore, the role of the church in the development of racism in the United States is controversial but it is present and no point in denying the church's negative contribution.

Recent occurrences revealed the pervasiveness of systemic racism in the United States. Alternatively, the theoretical and theological viewpoints on racial issues may give some Scripture-based suggestions to help heal the nation's racial schism. The churches and Christianity's new role in reconciliation could be to guide interracial interactions. Furthermore, changes in the demographics of the United States suggest that the church accept the growth of multiethnic congregations. The basic idea behind this new religious goal is to achieve ecumenism in the sense of uniting ethnically diverse congregations.

Systemic racism is an issue in America, but my study will focus on Richardson, TX and Ethnos Bible Church which will serve to address the NPO. When I began my research in 2017, I discovered a dissertation written by Dr. Pablo Morales titled, "Key Components of a Culturally Relevant Multiethnic Church." I immediately emailed him to set up a meeting date to discuss my topic. As time passed, I decided to accept his

invitation to attend his church in August of 2018. Dr. Pablo Morales became my pastor and mentor as I continued my research. After several meetings together, and coming across a newspaper article titled, “Richardson ISD Pledges to Dismantle Systemic Racism as Students Demand Change.” The Richardson ISD school board vowed to seek to eliminate institutional racism in order to address performance gaps and hold racists accountable. The school board voted 7-0 in favor of a resolution supporting the district's Racial Equity Committee.⁹⁷ In a resolution, the superintendent and the board of education express their desire to be part of the solution.⁹⁸

The aim of the article was to bring attention to closing achievement gaps and holding individuals accountable for racist acts. This article led to selecting the topic “Counteracting Systemic Racism: The Role of the Multiethnic Church.” The vision for my dissertation is to develop an educational tool that would address the NPO. Although I started with my former pastor, Dr. Pablo Morales as a mentor, in the fall of 2021 he accepted a lead pastoral position in Thailand. Following his acceptance for a new position and relocating to Thailand left a temporary void in my research and guidance process. Fortunately, as of February 1, 2022, Ethnos Bible Church hired Dr. Josh Carroll to serve as lead pastor. His doctoral degree and studies focused on outreach ministry. His experience with outreach ministry has the potential of being an asset to my body of work.

⁹⁷ Teri Webster. “Richardson ISD Pledges to Dismantle Systemic Racism as Students Demand Change.” Dallas News, June 18, 2020. <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/2020/06/17/richardson-isd-pledges-to-dismantle-systemic-racism-as-students-demand-change/>.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

SECTION 2: OTHER PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Introduction

Racial discrimination and intolerance can be dangerous in a country seeking peaceful human interaction and relationships. However, the United States and specifically Richardson, Texas has portrayed prominent levels of ethnicity. Therefore, it is important for the diverse groups in the United States and across the borders to propose and implement strategies needed to promote racial integration and peaceful human interactions. This section continues the dissertation findings by discussing the role of the multiethnic church in fighting ethnicity in Richardson, Texas. Although the main solution proposed by this study is the multiethnic church, this section focuses on other solutions that exist, whether they have been implemented and their success rate.

In the first subsection, the thesis explains the concept and importance, and challenges of racial reconciliation. Although the Biblical teachings support healthy social interactions among different members of the society, the Christian community has shown division in different environments like workplaces, schools, churches, and families. Therefore, this research proposes solutions from the church, family, schools, government, and the international community. Current research found a need to change structures and utilize frameworks that support ethnic integration in the church, schools, government levels, and family structures. The international community has also failed the citizens of the city of Richardson by not applying its resolution and fighting against racism in the city. This study proposes that they apply strict measures to countries that fail to fight against racism. This section also explains the world trend on racism and how social media promotes an increase in the cases of racism, especially against Asian-Americans.

However, the paper also considered social media platforms as the solution since they create a conducive environment for activists and anti-racist.

Racial Reconciliation

The Bible offers some examples of developing reconciliation between races. One of the most notable stories of this type is the parable of how the Samaritans engaged in intermarriages with Assyrians and other Gentile people. Hence, Jews avoided socializing with them. According to Jewish law, the Samaritans are not supposed to interact with the Jews. The good Samaritan decides to offer help to the Jew despite their difference. This happens after a Levite and a fellow Jew leave the helpless man. Thus, the Samaritan cuts across the ethnic divide by helping the Jew. This shows that some care differently about the appearances brought to them by their predecessors. Diane Chandler comments on Saint Paul's explanation of the destruction of the dividing wall in the Jerusalem temple perceives this episode as a symbol of the end of rules that regulate the alienation of Gentiles from Jews.⁹⁹ Thus, the wall's destruction defies religious racism based on spiritual purity. These biblical fables show that the racial divide existed in antiquity and suggest ways to overcome it.

The US nation and the domestic Christian churches have struggled for decades with racial integration and reconciliation. The latter reconciliation became increasingly important because of the changing demographics of US society. Over the past years, racial tension has grown in the United States due to the high-profile interracial incidents described in the beginning of Section 1. These personal sacrifices will align with the

⁹⁹ Chandler, "Spiritual Formation," 161; *The New English Bible*, Ephesians 2:1-1.

spirit of the biblical story of the Good Samaritan. They will help the nation to achieve reconciliation of different ethnic groups. Ed Stetzer suggests that racial reconciliation is a work in progress.¹⁰⁰ The first step toward interethnic understanding is to admit that the problem of racial divide exists. Finally, the individuals and the institutions, such as the churches, could help this process by changing their mindset toward multiethnicity.

The Role of the Church

The area of debate proposed by the case study is the identification of the significant agents that actively contribute to the rise in systemic racism in the country. Systemic racism within such social systems as education and church proves that many institutions contribute to racism in US society. The role of the Christian church in interracial relations is far from equivocal. Historically, the Christian church was one of the centers where racism took place.¹⁰¹ Its role in colonization has shown that the church can serve as a tool of cultural oppression. During this period, the church acted to bring the word of God to other ethnic groups but did this by enforcing a new religion on them and depriving them of their original beliefs. Furthermore, the church became divided into several later denominations claiming to belong to the Christian faith. David E. Stevens proves that many existing religious groups are formed based on ethnic beliefs.¹⁰² These church branches are deprecated and oppressed within the Christian community.

¹⁰⁰ Ed Stetzer, "Southern Baptists, Racism, and the Alt-Right: It's Time to Make This Right, Plain, and Clear," *The Exchange: A Blog by Ed Stetzer*, June 14, 2017, §6, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2017/june/southern-baptists-racism-alt-right-five-things-you-need-to-.html>.

¹⁰¹ Talbot, "Spiritual Genocide," 8; West, "Creating a Church," 55.

¹⁰² Stevens, *God's New*, 135.

Therefore, religion has been and continues to function as an identity tool allowing discriminating between races and ethnicities. This practice is opposed to the definition of the church as an organ of unity and love.

The church directly violates the foundational Christian values of love and unity, supporting this divide. Religious leaders of various religious groups do an essential service by protecting the heritage of their people. However, the practice of division and discrimination by many church leaders leads to segregation between racial entities. To uproot systemic racism from the depths of society, the multiethnic church could act as an agent of peace to unite diverse populations. Instead, Stevens asserts that the church became the critical agent in creating a division between the multiple racial groups in the country.¹⁰³ The existence of many racially biased religious groupings divulges the racial division in this society. When members of specific ethnic communities emphasize the sameness within their groups, they develop a notion of racially based conflict. Such religiously based and ethnically biased groupings start perceiving other people through the lens of their skin color, which is unacceptable under the law of God.

One could conclude from Shawn's experience at Richardson High School, the school and the church supports the concept of White supremacy. Denial for an equal chance to participate in the Advanced Placement program is evident to students of African descent. On the contrary, White students are allowed to enroll in these classes. An implicit expectation of one of the stakeholders in the program is a pastor actively engaged in the school mentoring program. His role as a religious leader would be to

¹⁰³ Ibid., 135.

ensure justice and equality. Included in these duties would be an equal dispensation of educational opportunities to students from all ethnic backgrounds. However, the pastor could not secure access to the Advanced Placement classes for students of all races. Instead, he found an alternative solution by introducing Shawn to a mentoring program to reinstate the justice at Richardson High School.

Nonetheless, the discrimination of Black students is happening under the pastor's involvement with the educational institution. In this context, the pastor stands for the church, the school, and US society. This experience supports that as a church representative and in the nation are an example of insufficient significance to fight racial discrimination within the US educational system. The existence in the United States shows that the church has failed to ensure the nation's progress toward unity. The leaders of the American Christian church did not manage to demolish the construct of systemic racism in their congregations. Therefore, the church did not instill the fundamental principles of love and unity. This failure occurred because the racial affiliation of its congregants drives the contemporary church in the United States. Instead of preaching the biblical gospel, the church is primarily an identity tool, which people from different racial groups use to create a self-image. Many domestic churches are formed based on the congregation's African, Asian, White, or Latinx racial origins. Consequently, these communities keep drifting apart due to the influence of the divisions in the church. However, the church unites the people and reminds them of love and unity, the primary virtues that guide the church. The existing division prevents racial harmony in the institution responsible for its elimination. Nonetheless, the church is a social institution that ensures people of different ethnic backgrounds are treated without ethnic divisions.

The Role of the School

Shawn's experience at Richardson High School shows that the modern US educational system actively propagates racial discrimination against Black students. This factor is unfortunate because the educational system forms the nation's minds early. A study by David Yeager et al. shows that primary and secondary education programs shape the mentality of the students, including their attitudes toward racial differences.¹⁰⁴ They conclude that these learning institutions could successfully play an active role in the fight against systemic racism. However, in my thirty years as a classroom teacher, I have noticed a lower expectation for Black male students to excel in higher level classes differently from other ethnicities. Black students, especially males had been promoted to the next grade with an inability to read. This results in the student becoming a behavior problem which leads to the student being placed in a special education class or becoming a dropout by middle school or high school.

The school structure includes different autonomous racial groupings, similar to US society. This institutional structure prevents the school from achieving its general goal of granting Black students' academic knowledge because the ethnic groups within this educational institution focus on their individual goals. This factor produces an unfavorable social environment in which the school runs. Many occasions of racial discrimination arise against Black students, as the case study shows. According to Teri

¹⁰⁴ Yeager, David S., Paul Hanseman, Gregory Walton, Jared Murray, and Robert Crosnoe. "A National Experiment Reveals Where a Growth Mindset Improves Achievement." *Nature* 573, no. 1 (2019): 364-369.

Webster, racial drift appears among students.¹⁰⁵ Students' socialization in school prepares them to become members of a democratic society. The school is still a key agent in programming the ideological concepts in young minds. If the division of ethnic factions within the educational institutions supports systemic racism, children, and youths will learn racist attitudes toward people of other skin colors.

Racism is a social construct that can be learned and can be unlearned. If the schools support and teach the values of racial equality, students will absorb them at an early age. Reinforcement with ethnic cooperation within the school institution will minimize the menace of systemic racism.¹⁰⁶ The primary role of the school is to help students learn. This role is not limited to reaching academic knowledge but extends toward acquiring social skills and values. In this light, the school has a significant role in forming the students' feelings of society. Therefore, this institution would do best by supplying the necessary factors to promote racial unity within its walls. Consequently, students could learn to appreciate each other as one human race since we are all equal before God and shall be judged equally before Him.

Unfortunately, systemic racism exists in educational institutions, which could be the primary actors promoting racial equality. Historically, the creation of some domestic schools was to instruct White students only. Many of these institutions support the racial divide even today.¹⁰⁷ This attitude divides teachers and students based on their race.

¹⁰⁵ Webster, "Richardson ISD Pledges to Dismantle Systematic Racism as Students Demand Change."

¹⁰⁶ Stevens, *God's New*, 192.

¹⁰⁷ Leath, Mathews, and Harrison, "Racial Identity," 1321.

Students are open to learning new social concepts; if their minds are not affected by systemic racism within their school, they will perceive racial inequality as a norm. However, when based on racial harmony and unity, children's socialization allows peaceful coexistence with other ethnic groups and racial affiliations. The US educational system is not reaching such social and educational goals. The school presently negatively affects interracial relations by programming racism in students' feelings of society.

The Role of the Family

The family is another social institution that directly impacts systemic racism. This essential organ of socialization translates the meaning of society to children. Parents play a significant role in affecting the social values by which their children abide. A study by Yoonsun Choi et al. shows that these social values include the belief in race and its place in society.¹⁰⁸ Children copy the attitudes demonstrated in their immediate environments, including their family, which becomes their primary socialization tool. Other family members, including their parents, siblings, and more distant relatives, have role models for children. In this social environment, the foundational aspects of society are learned, including racism. If parents were to teach their children that differences in skin color create no social differences, this attitude would produce a natural feeling of racial equality in youths. Such an approach to racism in families could significantly reduce systemic racism in society.

Parents also play a significant role in guiding their children's interactions with other social agents. In this case study, Shawn's father became involved in his son's

¹⁰⁸ Yoonsun Choi et al., "Race-Ethnicity and Culture in the Family and Youth Outcomes: Test of a Path Model with Korean American Youth and Parents," *Race and Social Problems* 6, no. 1 (2014): 72.

experience at school. This parent inquired about the discrimination case at school and found an alternative way of coaching his son. Parents and guardians can sometimes solve some problems of racial discrimination. They often take an active role in teaching their offspring to handle social injustice and amending issues that children cannot solve.¹⁰⁹ This parental activity in social education and integration is the key to their children's ability to combat discrimination successfully. Such an approach to the issue of systemic racism could help the young generations better understand the value of ethnic equality, which will alleviate their social relations. Representatives of the minorities would learn to stand for themselves against social injustice, while majority group members could perceive other ethnicities as equals.

The Role of the Government

Federal and state governments also belong to the primary agents in developing and administering social constructs, including race-related ones. The government issues policies that supply the legislative system of the country. This system structures the social institutions that integrate racial disparities into their operation. Desmond King shows that the policies can either allow or disallow the integration of systemic racism in US social structures.¹¹⁰ As citizens of a democratic land, residents of the United States could potentially sway the local and federal governments' decisions toward greater ethnic equality through their votes and social advocacy. These actions of the nation would ensure that the government acts against systemic racism.

¹⁰⁹Choi et al., "Race-Ethnicity," 73.

¹¹⁰Desmond King, "Forceful Federalism against American Racial Inequality." *Government and Opposition* 52, no. 2 (2017): 357.

Historically, Whites dominated the American continent, and in their application of power, oppressed other ethnic groups. They enslaved Black people and marginalized Native Americans, leading to ethnic inequalities. The value of racial equality could become the leading principle of the new governmental candidates. King believed that Federalism could fight against racism in the United States. If governments consist of politicians engaged in combating systemic racism in the future, the new legislative reforms will amend the present disparities.

Disparities in the United States Legal System in the Fight against Racial Superiority

Although the government has been placed as one of the potential stakeholders in fighting against ethnic hatred in the United States, the criminal justice system in the country has portrayed disparity while dealing with different ethnic groups. A report by The Sentencing Project, a non-profitable organization in the United States, found that the laws in the United States do not serve justice equally as the world believes it does.¹¹¹ The report states that the law for the poor, the wealthy, the white, and the people of color is different.¹¹² Although the statement by The Sentencing Project might appear harsh, it has some truth in it. Apart from being a citizen's shield from malicious people, the judicial system could serve justice to the aggrieved groups and individuals. Like in any area in the United States, injustices due to racial discrimination and hatred exist, although in silence. While other scholars state that the disparity in the United States justice system is large,

¹¹¹ The Sentencing Project. "Reducing Racial Disparity in The Criminal Justice System A Manual For Practitioners And Policymakers". Washington, DC, 2008.

¹¹² Ibid.

Rebecca Hetey and Jennifer L. Eberhardt compare the criminal system disparity to other disparities such as health and poverty.¹¹³

African Americans have been more vulnerable to childhood poverty, mortality, and even dropping out of school.¹¹⁴ Hetey and Eberhardt found that the disparity in health and social status is better than the disparity in the criminal justice system in the country. The likelihood of an African American being incarcerated compared to a white perception was 5.1 times greater.¹¹⁵ At traffic stops in several cities, the police were observed using more disrespectful methods while handling the African Americans but used a more respectful language while handling the citizens of European origin. It is also worrying that despite “being only 13% in population, the black race contributes to about 40% of its total inmates in United States prisons.”¹¹⁶ It is also concerning that the existing data indicate that African American males are likely to be imprisoned once arrested while their white counterparts could be easily released. This is five times the rate at which white men are incarcerated while it occurs 1.3 times in Latino Americans. Other studies, however, state racial disparity can be observed in United States cities like Richardson due to the rate of poverty of African Americans and Hispanics being higher than that of the white population.¹¹⁷ Although the reasons for the high cases of arrests and interdiction of

¹¹³ Rebecca Hetey., and Eberhardt, Jennifer. "The numbers don't speak for themselves: Racial disparities and the persistence of inequality in the criminal justice system." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 27, no. 3 (2018): 183-187.

¹¹⁴ Hetey and Eberhardt.

¹¹⁵ Hetey and Eberhardt.

¹¹⁶ Hetey and Eberhardt.

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Hinton, Henderson, L. and Reed Cindy. "An unjust burden: The disparate treatment of Black Americans in the criminal justice system." *Vera Institute of Justice* (2018).

African Americans and Hispanics may be genuine, the factors contributing to this scenario are influenced by racial injustice. The court ruling comparison of different racial cases shows injustice when black people tend to receive lengthy sentences than white people.

The only method to reduce the social injustices motivated by racial differences in United States cities and towns, including Richardson, involves sensitive racial policymaking. The worst mistake of the government and other stakeholders in the judicial system is assuming the country has developed and promoted inclusivity in several sectors of its economy. The best method to create a just society is declaring racism as a national problem that needs to be addressed. It can be hard for the government to admit that the country suffers from systemic racism since it would taint its reputation globally. Frank W. Munger and Carroll Seron argue that the government laws and policies show the efforts to protect minority groups from historical racism and injustices.¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Hinton, LeShae Henderson, and Cindy Reed argue that the criminal laws have targeted certain groups since the time of slavery in the United States.¹¹⁹ From the black codes to the convict leasing, the black people were the prey of the discriminatory criminal laws. The situation has shown no meaningful change as the modern laws do not spare black people, especially men. Some laws, such as drug-free zone laws, have affected African Americans more than the white population. The justice system can contribute to the

¹¹⁸ Frank W. Munger and Carroll Seron. "Race, law, and inequality, 50 years after the Civil Rights Era." *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 13 (2017): 331-350.

¹¹⁹ Elizabeth Hinton, LeShae Henderson, and Cindy Reed. "An unjust burden: The disparate treatment of Black Americans in the criminal justice system." *Vera Institute of Justice* (2018).

reduction of systemic racism when the injustices done to some African Americans are reversed and policies are implemented in the criminal and judicial process.

Social Trends and the Resulting Research Questions

Following the recent intensification of anti-racist activism worldwide, it found the causes of ethnic oppression, and its elimination has become especially urgent. The demise of George Floyd in the hands of US law enforcement caused global unrest.¹²⁰ In this case, the institutionalized police brutality toward the minorities shocked people of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Social movements and advocates have come to condemn racial discrimination in the United States, a country that has been a paragon of democracy for other nations.

Law enforcement is only one example of racial discrimination in the US social institutions. The case study shows the presence of marginalization of ethnic minorities in the domestic educational system, which has resulted in instances of systemic racism and students' protests, such as protests at Richardson, Texas, in 2020.¹²¹ This city, where the subject of the case study attends school, exemplifies the racism-based failings of the US educational system.

This dissertation argues that the present level of social activism allows the application of a new solution for the racial issues in the northern United States. Recently, the anti-racist movement called Black Lives Matter (BLM) that existed since 2013

¹²⁰ Hill et al., "How George," §2.

¹²¹ Webster, "Richardson ISD," §4.

became known globally.¹²² The global uprising under the BLM motto has proven the need for social change. The sheer masses that joined the BLM cause show that people of diverse ethnic origins realize the necessity to combat systemic racism. The BLM movement received thousands of supporters worldwide and conducted many protests in response to the death of George Floyd.¹²³ These events show that the masses and the governments are in discord about the administrative handling of racism.

Social Media and Fight Against Ethnicity

The twenty-first century has experienced industrial and technological growth at an accelerated rate. The communication medium has evolved from the slow wired telephone to the radio frequency mobile phones to smartphones. Computers have also been developed in terms of speed and capacity, enabling complex operations and software developments. With the internet complementing the modern forms of communication, activists have gained a large following on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.¹²⁴

According to Ella McPherson, social media liberates human rights activism by providing a new avenue for publicity.¹²⁵ Activists had only one way to achieve popularity before the social media revolution: through the mainstream media. The fundamental issue with the news media is that it has the ability to persuade elites who are opposed to the

¹²² Chloe Banks, "Disciplining Black Activism: Post-racial Rhetoric, Public Memory and Decorum in New Media Framing of the Black Lives Matter Movement," *Continuum* 32, no. 6 (2018): 710.

¹²³ Hill et al., "How George," §1.

¹²⁴ Anna Spain, Bradley. "Human Rights Racism." *Harv. Hum. Rts. J.* 32 (2019): 1.

¹²⁵ Ella McPherson, 2017 'Social Media and Human Rights Advocacy' in Tumber, H. and Waisbord, S. (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Media and Human Rights*. London, UK: Routledge, pp. 279–288.

reforms that protestors are seeking.¹²⁶ Human rights infractions can now be reported globally and at lightning speed via new social media platforms. Another benefit of social media is that it allows users to upload, share, and even capture live videos from all over the world. Anyone may follow any activism action online, and people can demonstrate their support by promoting, praising, and criticizing it. Zanzoun Mustapha investigated the impact of social media on Moroccan human rights advocacy and discovered that activists gain more by adopting modern technologies, particularly social media platforms, because several people know their issues both inside and outside the country.¹²⁷ As a result, it is critical for human rights activists in Richardson to completely embrace modern technologies while opposing racism. The recent events in the United States, particularly those involving racism, have demonstrated that social media is the new way to fight racial discrimination and other ethnic-based injustices.

However, the current trends in social media have two sides, the negative and the positive. The negative aspects were evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when anti-Semitic sentiments increased in the United States and hate crimes targeting Americans of Asian descent increased. Stephen Croucher, Thao Nguyen, and Diyako Rahmani study found an increase in the cases of hate crimes resulting from tweets and posts against the Asian-Americans.¹²⁸ When influential people or groups campaign for or against a course

¹²⁶ Ella McPherson, 2017, 283.

¹²⁷ Zanzoun Mustapha, "The Use of Social Media In Promoting Human Rights Among Speakers of English In Morocco: The Case of Facebook." *International Journal of Education and Research* 5, no. 9 (2017): 169-184.

¹²⁸ Stephen Croucher, Nguyen Thao, and Rahmani Diyako. "Prejudice toward Asian Americans in the COVID-19 pandemic: the effects of social media use in the United States." *Frontiers in Communication* 5 (2020): 39.

on social media platforms, the trend changes. For example, Donald Trump's sentiments against Muslims on Twitter led to a hate crime against the group.¹²⁹ While the negative side of social media in fighting racism exists, its positive side is also evident. Anti-racism activism has been made strong and efficient through social media platforms. Croucher et al. gave an example of when Barack Obama was elected as the first African American president.¹³⁰ People spread the sentiments of hope and expectations that a new era of tolerant society had arrived. Although the people's hope was high, the situation remained the same, and the fight against racism has never been completely won.

Social media platforms played a significant role in the Black Lives Matter campaign, which started as a single tweet and expanded to a global concern. Modern technology enables people to record video and audio with their smartphones and then post to their works at a minimal internet connection cost. The movement started in 2013 after the police brutally murdered Michael Brown and Eric Garner.¹³¹ They were African Americans, and their murder caused a stir and serious debates by young people on social media. The movement has grown, and in 2020, it fought for justice for George Floyd, another African American murdered by the police.¹³² Social media is highly influential and more powerful for positive as well as negative messaging in society.

¹²⁹ Stephen Croucher, Nguyen Thao, and Rahmani Diyako, 39.

¹³⁰ Stephen Croucher, Nguyen Thao, and Rahmani Diyako, 39.

¹³¹ Olson Reilley, "Roles of Social Media in the Black Lives Matter Movement during COVID-19." (2021).

¹³² Reilley, Olson, 4.

Conclusion

Even though Biblical teachings encourage good social interactions among all parts of society, the Christian community has been divided in various settings such as workplaces, schools, churches, and families. As a result, this study offers suggestions from the church, family, schools, government, and worldwide community. According to the findings, there is a need to modify institutions and implement frameworks that foster ethnic inclusion in the church, schools, government, and family systems. Racial integration and reconciliation have been a long-term struggle for the United States and its Christian churches. The multiethnic church could function as a peacemaker, uniting disparate communities, to eradicate institutional racism from society's depths. Instead, Stevens claims that the church had a key role in dividing the country's many racial groupings.

School socialization educates students to be members of a democratic society. They frequently take an active role in educating their children how to deal with social injustice and resolving situations that children are unable to resolve. This parental involvement in social education and integration is crucial to their children's ability to successfully overcome discrimination. Although the government has been identified as a potential partner in the battle against ethnic hatred in the United States, the country's criminal justice system has shown disparities when dealing with different ethnic groups.

Section 3 proposes and substantiates a theoretical solution to the ministry NPO. Scholarly evidence supports the proposals and theoretical solution that will guide the study. Evidence will show the relevance of the multiethnic church to serving as a healing instrument to counteract systemic racism.

SECTION 3: THESIS

Introduction

This dissertation proposes that the multiethnic church serve as a healing instrument to counteract systemic racism. The earlier sections of the study highlight various aspects of systemic racism present in the church. Stevens confesses that although many leaders preach the gospel of love and unity, the church has still found it difficult to follow the practice of such non-discriminative virtues. White supremacy still prevails in the minds of White people, even in those serving the church.¹³³ The present study also discusses ways in which the multiethnic church can actively contribute to ending racism in US society. New initiatives and social projects can be introduced in the church to ease the accommodation of multiethnic religious groups within the Christian Church. This goal could become the primary operational principle for MEC and for American society. Every social process could be informed by the oneness and unity within the church.

The objective of this process is the stimulation of changes in society toward a greater ethnic unification. The biblical story of humanity's creation tells that people were created in the image and likeness of God. The story of humanity's creation does not occur through God's creation of one race after the other. This is the basic proof that all people are equal as they all belong to one human race before the eyes of God.¹³⁴ God clearly wanted people to be equal in all human aspects. He never intended to create a division among His descendants. Therefore, the followers of the word of God leads in the

¹³³ Stevens, *God's New*, 130.

¹³⁴ Stevens, *God's New*, 17.

showcasing of love to all races. The actualization of biblical teaching in the current social environment leads to positioning the Scriptures in an anti-racist context.

Modern people need the religious guidance of the Christian church to remind them about their likeness to God. However, this likeness bears the basic principle of equality of all ethnicities and nations. The likeness to God creates the human aspect independent from any social factors. The development of social institutions led to the artificial creation of social constructs, such as race. As Caleb Oladipo shows in his article “Construction of Racism,” the racial concept was born in the founding of the United States.¹³⁵ The multiethnic church can remind people of all ethnic origins of their likeness to the Creator to unite them.

Alternatively, the history of US society shows that racial discrimination is a result and a tool of economic development. The enslavement occurred due to the political and economic power of the Whites, who built their colony on the blood and sweat of the imported African slaves, as Robbins shows.¹³⁶ Slavery introduced people of African descent into the society of America. With time, the ideas of human rights and of observance of human dignity were born. Their proponents looked to remind the societies of the world of the basic principles binding their existence. According to Stevens, these abolitionists looked to prove that humanity, oneness, and love prevails in society.¹³⁷

The researcher proposes that the church bears the primary role in the fight against systemic racism in US society. Systematic discrimination became the primary reason for

¹³⁵ Oladipo, “Construction of,” 10.

¹³⁶ Robbins, “Slavery and,” 39.

¹³⁷ Stevens, *God’s New*, 12.

the antagonistic relationship between the two races because Whites were a majority in US society. They used this advantage to develop a system favoring them more than Black people. Oladipo demonstrates that enslavement and a series of other injustices have been committed to the people of African descent in the United States.¹³⁸ In the wake of the racial enlightenment and empowerment of human rights, the church could unite the people to increase their efforts to minimize racial division in US society. The present research focuses on the church as a key part of the fight against racism in the country.

The multiethnic church is viewed as the solution to the issue of systemic racism in Richardson, Texas. A major suggestion in this dissertation is strengthening the multiethnic churches which boost ethnic unity to end systematic racism in the United States. The main idea is that the MEC would unite all races coexisting in this country by teaching them to perceive each other as children of God. The research intends to find the ways through which the multiethnic church can unify ethnicities within Richardson, TX, Stevens suggests intercessory prayer, compassion for the marginalized, and embracing the diverse racial community as preliminary tools of the MEC.¹³⁹ The unity of the multiethnic church can become a way toward racial reconciliation in the domestic society.

The Role the Church has played to Promote Racism in Richardson, Texas

The church can be viewed as complicit in establishing racism. Jemar Tisby perceives the position of the Christian church toward slavery as a compromise.¹⁴⁰ The

¹³⁸ Oladipo, "Construction of," 14.

¹³⁹ Stevens, *God's New*, 29.

¹⁴⁰ Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 127.

church leaders supported members of their congregations, who owned and traded in slaves, and accepted donations, knowing the money collected was from racial oppression. The missionaries followed the goals of biological and religious racism by converting African Americans to Christianity. Their actions toward upholding the institution of slavery also implicate the church in showing racism. Thus, the Christian church, specifically its branches in the United States played a complicated role in generating the racial divide. Stetzer notes that the White evangelical movement was formed around the historically racist mission.¹⁴¹ The missionaries followed the aims of biological and religious racism by converting African Americans to Christianity. Their actions toward upholding the institution of slavery also implicate the church in the establishment of racism.

Furthermore, a part of the conception of Christian denominations took place from the segregationist group in the era of the Reconstruction which also affected Richardson, Texas churches. During this period, many rejected Black Christians were from churches dominated by Whites who supported the Jim Crow laws.¹⁴² These laws became the foundation of segregation and its politics. The Jim Crow laws affected the interethnic relations in the United States for many decades. The segregation affected the interaction of the people therefore limiting their social life such as congregational meetings. Moreover, the following administrative attempts to create a semblance of racial equality often could not be implemented due to the public rejection of these reforms. For example,

¹⁴¹ Stetzer, "Southern Baptists," §5.

¹⁴² Tisby, *The Color of Compromise*, 128.

the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* declared school segregation unconstitutional in 1954.¹⁴³ A mass resistance within the White population of the country was a response to this decision. On the other hand, many White evangelicals argued vociferously for segregation under the guise of Christian education.¹⁴⁴ Thus, the Christian denominations of the United States acted as segregationist groups in favor of the continuation of the racial divide.

However, the church's historical role and recent actions perpetuating racism are questionable. Rajagopalan notes that the 1980s saw a resurgence in the "prosperity gospel" teaching.¹⁴⁵ The latter emphasizes personal wealth, which echoes the majority's interests instead of interethnic cooperation. Furthermore, this resurgence also coincided with the rise of the so-called "moral majority," according to Rajagopalan.¹⁴⁶ This social and religious group preserved White privilege in politics and culture as its primary goal. This social and religious group preserved White privilege in politics and culture as its primary goal.

Foundation of Historical Racism and Systemic Racism in the United States.

Social theorists, Mahzarin Banaji, Susan Fiske, and Douglas Massey confronts systemic racism since it is a theoretically controllable problem.¹⁴⁷ The built-in frameworks limit persons of various ethnicities' life possibilities and outcomes.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 134.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Rajagopalan, "What is," 168.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Mahzarin R. Banaji, Susan T Fiske, and Douglas S Massey. "Systemic Racism: Individuals and Interactions, Institutions and Society." *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications* 6, no. 1 (2021): 82.

Unconscious inferences reveal non-Black Americans' associations with negative valences, criminal stereotypes, and low status.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore, non-Black individuals' frameworks of racist ideas, perceptions, and attitudes are imprinted with unconscious bias preconceptions that predict racialized attitudes.¹⁴⁹ Inter-racial contacts are also fraught with mistrust and disdain. The lack of experience and reliance on societal caricatures among non-Black people contribute to the continuance of these systematic individual and interpersonal practices. Despite institutional challenges, Black Americans are more diverse than they have ever been, thanks to resilience, immigration, and intermarriage. Intergroup contact can serve to emphasize Black diversity while also addressing institutional racism, yet White advantages persist in every economic, political, and social arena.¹⁵⁰

Post-Black and Post-White Church

The Black church is a branch of Christian denominations found in the United States and serves African American communities. Members of its congregation were active in several religious and social movements. The Black church gained prominence in the 1960s in response to the civil rights movement.¹⁵¹ This denomination appeared at once following the abolition of slavery and continues to exist until today. The identification of the Black church is considered the primary institution responsible for giving Black people a voice in American society. This church took a theological

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 194.

approach commonly referred to as liberation theology.¹⁵² This movement proposes the resolution of poverty, racial oppression, and other secular problems through spiritual ideas. The Black church is one of few institutions African Americans have complete control over. This church is also known for its influence on the agenda for African American communities.

However, some authors criticize the Black church for its social and political activities. Criticism of the Black church resulted from the theological approach of liberation theology. Liberation theology was a term coined by Gustavo Gutiérrez, the Archbishop of San Salvador.¹⁵³ The primary idea of this theology is the advocacy of an active role of Christians in the improvement of their society with a particular concern for the poor and oppressed. In Latin America, teleology traveled to the United States to become one of the most influential local Christian denominations. According to Henry Mitchell, this outlook is still taught by many Christian denominations in the United States today.¹⁵⁴ The problem with liberation theology is its active influence on the congregations, through which the church becomes involved in social and political actions.

The Black liberation theology is another important phenomenon within the Black and post-Black church. This movement appeared as an amalgamation of the term's

¹⁵² E. Smith, *The Post-Black*, 110.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 49.

¹⁵⁴ Henry Mitchell, "Black Church Studies: Some of the Roots," in *The Black Church Studies Reader* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 18.

liberation theology and the Black Power movement in the 1960s.¹⁵⁵ The latter is a social movement supporting the interest of the African American population. The term Black Power was first associated with the civil rights movement led by Stokely Carmichael during the 1960s.¹⁵⁶ Carmichael was the organizer and chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the United States. As Mitchell notes, liberation theology gained momentum in conjunction with the civil rights movement.¹⁵⁷ This development also guided many members of the Black church toward the formation of the post-Black church. The post-Black church is a Christian denomination of a spiritual community based on the traditionally Black church but open to the members of other ethnic groups. Thus, the interest in social engagement prompted by liberation theology indirectly led to the organization of the post-Black church. The values of Blackness drove the leaders associated with the civil rights movement. This social advocacy movement took place in the United States from the mid-1950s to the late 1960s.¹⁵⁸ Its values were based on the idea of the fight against racism and racial discrimination. Thus, basing values on the idea of the fight against racism and racial discrimination. The leaders of this movement merged these values with ideas rooted in the Christian and Muslim religious doctrines. The key influences for this merger were

¹⁵⁵ Mitchell, "Black Church," 21.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 18.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 21.

Black Power and the Nation of Islam (NOI).¹⁵⁹ The NOI is a politically oriented spiritual Muslim organization promoting Islam through social acts.

During this period, the rise of Black Nationalism supported the feeling of an integral role of African Americans within US society. Black Nationalism is a political, social, and religious movement that appeared within the African American population. This movement is strongly associated with the congregation of the Black church.¹⁶⁰ Mitchell suggests a categorical division of the Black church into two major branches: The Southern Baptist category refers to the churches founded by Black people who left the Baptist churches organized by Whites. The origin of National Baptists lies in the Free African Society organized in 1787 by Richard Allen.¹⁶¹ Allen was a Methodist preacher at the AME, which is the first independent Black denomination. The AME dates to the events described as the First Great Awakening in the 1730s.¹⁶² At that time, Methodists and Baptists began proselytizing openly among Black people. The Second Great Awakening followed the American Civil War.¹⁶³ The denominations during this period were primarily composed of former slaves who left the White congregations to set up independent Black ones. Thus, the rise of Black Nationalism began with the historical establishment of the Black church in the United States.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 21.

¹⁶⁰ Stevens, *God's New*, 62.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 20.

¹⁶² Stevens, *God's New*, 62.

¹⁶³ Mitchell, "Black Church," 21.

However, the recent development of the Christian church toward a greater ethnic unity led to the shift to post-Black and post-White churches. The latter concept first appeared in a 2009 book, *The Religion of the Future* by Lamin Sanneh. This author defines the post-White church as a spiritual community "shaped by gospel faithfulness but also by openness to the future."¹⁶⁴ The critical principles of this church include the use of non-European expressions, the acceptance of ethnically rooted spiritual formations but not restricted, and the application of moral practices. Smith argues that the post-White church avoids any engagement in identity politics while promoting ecumenical and transracial movements.¹⁶⁵ The ecumenical movement tends to unite the Christian church globally. Alternatively, the transracial movement is a similar spiritual and social trend based on crossing racial borders and uniting diverse ethnicities. The post-White church acknowledges the past mistakes of the Christian church, for example, being White dominated. This approach allows valuing equally all ethnic groups as a part of the post-White church.

However, such Christian denominations based on a multiethnic principle face some challenges. Smith notes that the church leadership has difficulties in ensuring the multiethnicity they encourage.¹⁶⁶ This issue may lie in the resistance of the White part of the congregation to accept these innovative ideas. The problem may also root in the difficulties of preaching to a multiethnic community. However, these challenges may be

¹⁶⁴ Lamin Sanneh, *The Religion of the Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 161.

¹⁶⁵ E. Smith, *The Post-Black*, 23.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

temporary and based on the novelty of the task, the test of which the post-White church strives to overcome.

Alternatively, the effects of the post-White church of ethnically diverse populations may not be equivocal. In his article, J. D. Greear criticizes the post-White church for "pluralism and privatization."¹⁶⁷ This denomination, in the author's perspective, would jeopardize the church by ignoring the Great Commission, which aims to evangelize non-Christian communities. This problem may occur due to the post-White church's emphasis on unifying the presently divided races. Greear points out that Christianity can authentically exist in any context without reclaiming its universal character. This author's critique questions the goals of the post-White church, mainly because denominations that focus on racial diversity may fall behind on the ethnic minority participation in church leadership positions.

The criticism of ideals of the post-White church augments the critique of its intended goals and structure. Smith gives several examples of how racism affects the church.¹⁶⁸ This influence affects the heritage of Black people and their self-perception. The exact impact restricts the ability of African American communities to transfer to another ethnic or cultural group. The author's criticism leads to the idea that the post-White church may not be the only or even the best choice for the Black congregation. According to Smith, this church disregards the Great Commission by prioritizing racial

¹⁶⁷ Dave Greear, "A Creationist Response to Race and Racism, North Carolina," *Triangle Association for the Science of Creation*, August 2020, 91.

¹⁶⁸ E. Smith, *The Post-Black*, 25.

divisions over proselytizing non-Christian cultures.¹⁶⁹ He argues that the post-White church extends its mission to other faith groups but does not reach the population still considered unreached in various parts of the world, especially among Muslims. The author challenges the attitude of the post-White church to diversity. Thus, the primary criticism of this church's ideal is the question of whether a diverse church can keep a practical commitment to evangelism, considering that many members of its congregation have no evangelistic outreach interests.

Many churches in the United States no longer perceive race as an issue because they consider themselves post-Black or post-White. Yet, the Christian church still has challenges related to the ethnic problem. First, the Black and White identities still exist in society, found within evangelical Christianity. Looking at the online directory of denominations, a person can detect many Black denominations, such as the AMC or the National Baptist Convention.¹⁷⁰ A cursory online search for White-majority denominations would bring up the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Presbyterian Church, and United Methodist Church. The latter denominations are commonly known and more powerful than those connected with Black identity. Furthermore, according to Hall, Matz, and Wood, White denominations have a dominant position even among multicultural churches.¹⁷¹ Smith further argues that post-Black and post-White denominations cannot claim they have moved beyond racism.¹⁷² This inability to move forward and out of the

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 23.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 19.

¹⁷¹ Hall, Matz, and Wood, "Why Don't," 17.

¹⁷² E. Smith, *The Post-Black*, 21.

tenets of racism originates in their membership policies, which reflect a desire to maintain the status quo that belongs to a specific identity

However, the racial divide stays intact in many church practices until today. In her book, *Is Your Church Truly Multicultural?* Patricia McAnany documents cases when White clergy fired Black ministers for no reason other than their racial origin.¹⁷³ The author shows that people of color, particularly African Americans, are unwelcome in leadership positions by many churches in the United States. Andrew Ong also notes that racism is a problem both within and outside of church communities.¹⁷⁴ Even if these communities consist of individuals who do not believe in racist doctrines, their attitudes and behaviors are programmed by the concepts of White privilege and by racial profiling. Nonetheless, some churches teach their congregations to acknowledge the problem of systemic racism.¹⁷⁵ The leaders of these churches recognize that racism affects the lives of their spiritual communities. However, their examples are scarce exclusions from the rule of neglect of the racial problem among the clergy. The church officials usually respond to this issue by retreating to defensive arguments, controlling the content, and sidetracking the topic of racism.¹⁷⁶ Thus, the current practices in the churches of the Christian denominations could improve their attitudes toward the challenges posed by the problem of systemic racism within their congregations.

¹⁷³ Patricia McAnany, *Is Your Church Truly Multicultural?* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2003), 35.

¹⁷⁴ Andrew Ong, "Neo-Calvinism and Ethnic Churches in Multiethnic Contexts," *Journal of Reformed Theology* 12, no. 3 (2018): 299.

¹⁷⁵ Caleb O. Oladipo, "Construction of Racism: The Challenges and Opportunities for Promoting Justice and Modeling Race-Transcending Societies," *Review & Expositor* 117, no. 1 (February 2020): 10.

¹⁷⁶ Oladipo, "Construction of," 12.

However, the problem of racial or ethnic identity is the primary issue within the modern tendency to multiethnicity in the church. Smith notes that post-Black or post-White thinking tends to reduce complex identities to a single dimension.¹⁷⁷ In this case, the perception is the skin color as the racial or ethnic background of the person in question. For example, the term Latinx often is used to label a race. Therefore, many Latinos are of African descent rather than European descent, implicated in the word's root.

Furthermore, the issue of a racial divide continues to exist in multiethnic segregations. Cohen points out that many multiethnic churches are still segregated in terms of worship style and leadership.¹⁷⁸ Historically, the US Evangelical Church has never been multiethnic, which is why the task of altering its system into a multiethnic church is difficult. Today, the introduction of racial diversity into the Christian congregation occurs slowly and gradually. Spinks describes a Roman Catholic Church in California with the Latinx majority of attendees and a White clergyman who leads the liturgy.¹⁷⁹ The congregation consisting of one ethnic group cannot be perceived as multiethnic. Furthermore, the attendees experienced physical segregation from the only member of another race, divided from them by the space of the church. This segregation means that the Latinx congregation does not interact with people of other races at church.

¹⁷⁷ E. Smith, *The Post-Black*, 20.

¹⁷⁸ Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong, "Can White," 60.

¹⁷⁹ Spinks, *Overcoming Systemic Racism in Religious Organizations*, 128.

According to Spinks, the knowledge of the approach that other ethnicities take to the spiritual services may be essential for the people.¹⁸⁰

Ethnos Bible Church is located in Richardson, Texas. According to the chart it is one of the many churches that have a small multiethnic membership. The vision of Ethnos Bible Church under the leadership of a new leadership, Pastor Joshua Carroll continues to cultivate a church that is multilingual, transcultural and multigenerational. The chart below, under the leadership of pastor Pablo Morales for 18 years, shows the current ethnic demographic that comprises the congregation. The Latino community shows the largest ethnic group who attends the church. Currently, under the leadership of Pastor Joshua Carroll, efforts are in place to utilizing the outreach ministry to increase the Black American population during the 2022-2023 year.

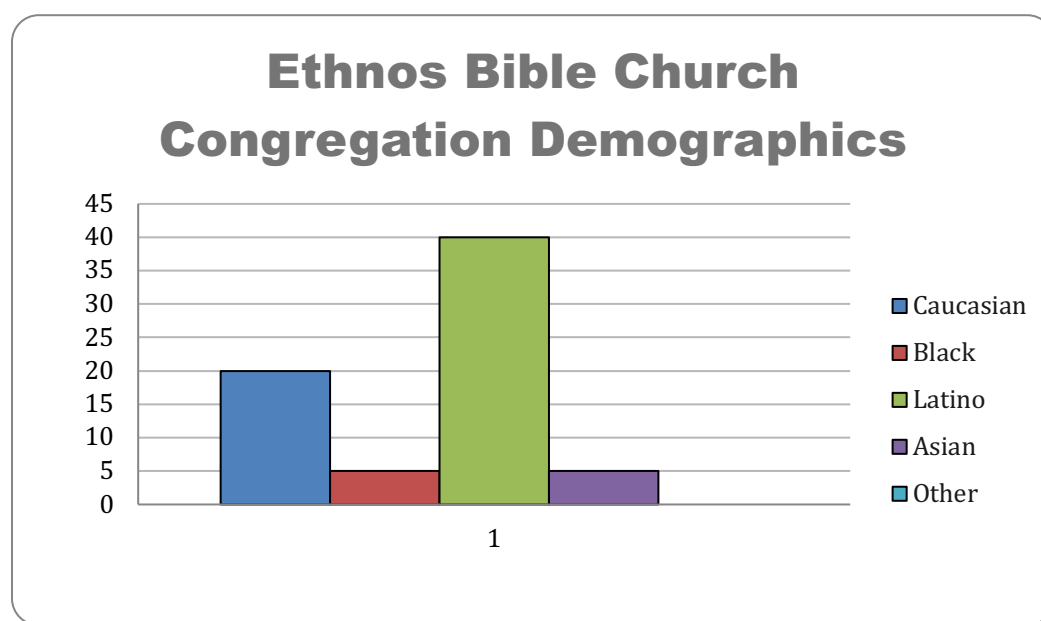


Figure 2 Demographics of Ethnos Bible Church Membership from 2019 to 2022¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 142.

¹⁸¹ Demographics of Ethnos Bible Church Membership from 2019 to 2022.

Multiethnic Church in the United States

Understanding the meaning of multicultural or multiethnic is an essential element for the attainment of a multiethnic church. Pablo Morales argues that including “people of diverse cultures” into one church is an ambiguous enterprise.¹⁸² The ambiguity he means originates in the feeling of inclusiveness. The case of the Californian Roman Catholic Church based on the Latinx congregation led by a White pastor exemplifies a failed attempt at multiethnicity. The absence of the multitude of successful examples of such racial inclusiveness makes the definition of a multiethnic church a complicated task. Most Christian churches in the United States are still predominantly Caucasian.¹⁸³ A trend toward the inclusiveness of diverse ethnicities and cultures exists in some Christian denominations of today. However, their leaders acknowledge and celebrate ethnic differences rather than create an interracial understanding in their congregations.¹⁸⁴ This approach is insufficient for a church to qualify as truly multiethnic because understanding is the primary factor of acceptance and unity.

Coexistence and smooth running of multiethnic congregations is a sign of the church leaders’ recognition of the role of interracial understanding in the modern church. A study by Phillip Amerson and Jackson Carroll evaluates the effects of this project on congregations of the suburban Christian churches.¹⁸⁵ Project Understanding introduced

¹⁸² Pablo Morales, “Key Components of a Culturally Relevant Multiethnic Church Model,” *Seminary Doctoral Programs* 260 (2018): 122.

¹⁸³ Morales, “Key Components,” 129.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁸⁵ Philip A. Amerson and Jackson W. Carroll, “The Suburban Church and Racism: Is Change Possible?” *Review of Religious Research* 20, no. 3 (1979): 337.

the initiative of racial inclusiveness in congregations of six metropolitan areas. The participating church leaders initially had a proclivity to ethnic understanding, which alleviated their work.¹⁸⁶ The gist of multiethnic churches was to alter the church members' attitudes toward race through deliberate efforts to communicate about racial problems in the United States. Amerson and Carroll note that the participants expressed fewer racist attitudes before and after the project than non-participants.¹⁸⁷ The research by Amerson and Carroll shows that efforts to address racial attitudes could lead to positive changes.¹⁸⁸ The success of Project Understanding shows that similar initiatives would reinforce the church's attempts to create multiethnic congregations.

Components of the Multiethnic Church

Kevin Gushiken found in his research, assessing discipleship aims and structures with sensitivity and care for the diverse ethnic aspects within each congregation are essential component of multiethnic church formation.¹⁸⁹ Instead of cultural assimilation, this encourages ethnic accommodation. Multiethnic church education necessitates cultivating a participatory community that includes each ethnic voice represented in the church, egalitarian relationships rather than hierarchical ones, affirmation of ethnic cultures, and taking a perspective on each of them in order to help these dynamics. This develops fluid ethnic identities that cultivate broader and transcultural biblical viewpoints

¹⁸⁶ Amerson and Carroll, "The Suburban," 337.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 338.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 340.

¹⁸⁹ Gushiken, Kevin M. "Cultivating Healthy Discipleship Settings in Multi-Ethnic Churches." *Transformation (Exeter)* 32, no. 1 (2015): 17-26.

when nurtured.¹⁹⁰ As former pastoral leader of Ethnos Bible church, Morales points out, multiethnic churches succeed in uniting racially diverse communities by minimizing the separation between the congregation members.¹⁹¹ According to Spinks, another important aspect of inclusiveness is for the church leaders to encourage dialogue even if it is uncomfortable.¹⁹² The conversation between representatives of distinct races may not be started easily. Nonetheless, Black Americans can have a meaningful dialogue with Whites if the church officials emphasize empowering people of color instead of tolerating them. The dialogue and the spatial conditions are the elements of the church that, along with the service, could produce the effect of racial reconciliation.

Furthermore, a multiethnic church could be effective only if its leadership has and promotes racial awareness. The ethnic sensitivity of the pastor sets the tone for the congregants and their interactions with each other. If the church leader is ignorant of the racial dynamics within a congregation, then these dynamics will remain unchanged. Stevens suggests that the churches focus their attention on evangelism first and cultural issues second.¹⁹³ Despite the popular notions to the contrary, the focus on evangelism could lend the multiethnic congregation an experiential approach. Stevens also argues that the multiethnic church will grow through addressing cultural issues.¹⁹⁴ The people's energy for evangelism will be diffused if they do not actively pursue racial reconciliation

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Morales, "Key Components," 23.

¹⁹² Spinks, *Overcoming Systemic Racism in Religious Organizations*, 96.

¹⁹³ Ibid., 56.

¹⁹⁴ Stevens, *God's New*, 56.

within their congregations. Thus, both evangelism and attention to the cultural aspect are important components of the growth of the multiethnic church.

The Christian churches in the United States increasingly acknowledge that racial dynamics need to change. This process is essential for the establishment of the multiethnic ministry, according to West.¹⁹⁵ An example is the language of service, altered due to the need for a shift in racial dynamics within the congregations. Currently, church officials prefer using the term “intercultural” to the word “multicultural,” as Morales explains.¹⁹⁶ This change occurs because of the emphasis on moving beyond race while appreciating diversity. Multiculturality implies several separate cultures, while interculturality hints at the integrated and interrelated conglomerate of ethnicities. However, this shift stays mostly superficial since many still use the framework of assimilation.¹⁹⁷ Used historically by the missionaries and colonizers, the practice of assimilation is based on the integration of minorities into the majority’s culture. Nowadays, assimilation would be the wrong way to approach racial reconciliation within the church. The changes toward multiethnicity expected from the Christian denominations are based on acknowledging and accepting other cultures.

Nonetheless, many mono-ethnic US churches stay unaware of the racism that permeates their structures. Garrett Trott lectures that low-income Black congregations

¹⁹⁵ West, “Creating a Church,” 157.

¹⁹⁶ Morales, “Key Components,” 98.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

have a keen sense of community and identity.¹⁹⁸ Even though this sense originates from a negative experience, these congregations can support a cultural alternative to the White majority. Potential for the multiethnic ministry in the United States exists, but it requires a new understanding of ethnic inclusiveness. The leaders of the multiethnic churches could reevaluate their power within the congregational communities.¹⁹⁹ The White Christians could rethink their complicity in systemic racism to approach such an understanding. These actions would bring the end of racism present in the church structure and congregation's mindset.

Church officials could ease the advancement of the multiethnic church by increasing awareness of the systemic racism in US society in members of their congregations. The progress of this church requires intentional efforts to become multiethnic. Most Christians are unaware of their actions' implicit bias against Black people.²⁰⁰ The implicitly existing prejudices perpetuate racial separation in the church. The current worship practices of the modern evangelical churches today create obstacles for the progress of the multiethnic congregations because the White and Black people worship in separate churches. The separation of spaces disallows interracial interaction, like the restrictions placed on Black people during the era of segregation. Hall, Matz, and Wood also note a lack of interethnic socialization outside of services.²⁰¹ The scarcity of

¹⁹⁸ Garrett Trott, "The Edward Wimberly Reader: A Black Pastoral Theology," *The Catholic Library World* 91, no. 2 (2020): 116.

¹⁹⁹ Trott, "The Edward," 116.

²⁰⁰ MacDonald, "Systemic Evil," 111.

²⁰¹ Hall, Matz, and Wood, "Why Don't," 131.

contact among the members of different races in the church and outside of its walls prevents the advent of reconciliation. For this reason, the church officials increase their efforts in creating a multiethnic church. The latter could become a place where people of racially different communities learn interethnic understanding of a commune as one body under God.

White Congregation's Resistance to Multiethnicity

Another significant challenge in the propagation of multiethnicity in Christian churches is the resistance of the majority to this trend. Jesse Nelson explains that churches need to be opened to people of all ethnic backgrounds instead of choosing their congregations.²⁰² However, members of the congregations may not be as indiscriminate toward other people who join their church and may not be ready to affiliate with other races within their spiritual community. For this reason, some churches struggle to embrace the multiethnic approach and make steps toward diversity. The more homogeneous a church is about race and socioeconomic status, the more resistance its congregation shows toward multiethnicity.²⁰³ The homogeneity has been formed historically due to the perpetuation of systemic racism, which conditioned the tendency to racial separation in the church. The White churches that want to become multiethnic often face greater challenges because their communities lack personal experience with Black people.²⁰⁴ This deficit of exposure to interracial interaction poses difficulties in

²⁰² Jesse L. Nelson, "No Longer Silent: A Practical Theology for Preaching on Race," *Journal of the Evangelical Homiletics Society* 20, no. 2 (2020): 24-29, 26.

²⁰³ Hall, Matz, and Wood, "Why Don't," 130.

²⁰⁴ Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong, "Can White," 57.

recognizing and understanding the necessary steps in reconciliation. Overcoming systemic racism may take time and effort because this process requires a restructuring of the worldview of members of the congregation.

One of the barriers faced by the Christian congregations that consist of the racial majority is their fear of the outcomes of the multiethnic trend and racial unification.

Many members of such spiritual communities want to support diversity but have no concept of cooperation with the Black members of the congregation. Such people would support the idealistic benefits of race reconciliation but have no practical experience of handling fears associated with it, according to Hall, Matz, and Wood.²⁰⁵ Many White Christians may be afraid of Black people because of the persistent wrong racial profiling mentioned in an earlier section. The psychological problems also include the fear of change and the feeling of a racial intrusion.²⁰⁶ A change is often challenging, and the progress toward the multiethnic church could be a problem for the consistently White congregation that may not want their characteristic community to be altered too much. Some White congregations may perceive African American attendees as intruders who bring strange elements into their historically existing congregation. These issues are because many church members have little experience with diversity, which may challenge their comfort zone of homogeneous Whiteness.

Over the past several decades, many Christian churches with White congregations made attempts to become more diverse. Their efforts remained only partially successful

²⁰⁵ Hall, Matz, and Wood, "Why Don't," 131.

²⁰⁶ Jones, "Report on," 5.

in most cases because of the challenges described above. Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong assert that the lack of dialogue between the church leaders and their White congregations about these problems bases a delay in diversification.²⁰⁷ Therefore, the absence of discussions of the need for diversity, its outcomes, and challenges related to these factors slows the progress of multiethnic integration in Christian denominations.

Unfortunately, many Christians find it challenging to discuss race-related questions in churches. Jones names the fear of a racist label as one of the inhibitors to such dialogues.²⁰⁸ Therefore, the phenomenon of White fragility may be one of the obstacles or opportunities for the growth of diversity in the church. White fragility is perceived by White people's discomfort in discussing racial issues.²⁰⁹ The discomfort occurs because of the possibility of being labeled as racist or because of the absence of desire to support a cause for social activism. In any case, a psychological barrier exists in White congregations to discuss their attitudes toward the development of a multiethnic character of the church.

Alternatively, some church members may not be comfortable with the results of the change toward greater inclusiveness and diversity. A probable reason for this discomfort is a loss of their current privileges. Nelson argues that most Whites enjoy the support they receive from the racial divide created by society.²¹⁰ Even though most White people are not intentionally racist, they still receive the benefits of systemic racism. Some

²⁰⁷ Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong, "Can White," 59.

²⁰⁸ Jones, "Report on," 6.

²⁰⁹ Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong, "Can White," 125.

²¹⁰ Nelson, "No Longer," 28.

of them knowingly receive help from this divide and fear losing White privilege, while others never consciously evaluate the impact of systemic racism and cannot estimate the effects of the changes. Thus, the uncertainty of the social change toward a multiethnic community creates an involuntary resistance to inclusiveness.²¹¹ White people's unwillingness to accept the uncertain future may hamper the progress of the multiethnic church.

The ability to estimate and appreciate the change brought by the development of multiethnic congregations may depend on the racial constitution of these communities. Some churches with Black congregations understand the effects of systemic racism.²¹² Such communities perceive the necessity of a social change and know that it occurs incrementally. As a result, they are more open to the process of diversification than White congregations.²¹³ The latter are more likely to lack an understanding of the racial divide and its effects. They tend to omit the institutionalized nature of racism and the necessity for a change.²¹⁴ Consequently, White congregations perceive no basis to actively support the development of the multiethnic church. This mindset creates barriers to multiethnicity because church members become unwilling or overwhelmed by the transformation needed to make significant changes.

The churches' necessity to have certain strategies that integrate openness to a change toward becoming multiethnic. An essential theological aspect is a belief in a

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid., 28.

²¹³ Jones, "Report on," 37.

²¹⁴ Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong, "Can White," 182.

universal church that unites all Christians irrespective of their racial origins. Historically, White congregations had challenges accepting Black members and vice versa.²¹⁵ Furthermore, Black people may also have psychological barriers in joining White congregations. The reason for these issues is the overarching visibility of racial differences in American society, according to E. Smith.²¹⁶ However, Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong assert that Black people in diversified congregations are less likely to think racially about others.²¹⁷ Nelson notes that White people in multiethnic communities tend to be ethnically open-minded.²¹⁸ Although the demographic culture of Ethnos Bible church is not predominately White, the fear of other diverse cultures and ethnicities is not evident. The main focus of each diverse ethnic group and culture is to cultivate a culture without fear of uncertainty and the racially based feeling of other people.

Conclusion

Although the church has been involved in preaching peace, love, and unity, research has found that it has not practiced the same for many years. After many years of the minority fighting against racism, some people serving in the church are still affected by the white supremacists' mentality. This action towards racism makes the church an avenue of racial bias and hatred. Denominations such as Methodist, Lutheran and others were formed, and most Americans were left to attend the white churches. Therefore, it is essential for the multiethnic church to become a healing agent to counteract racism. The

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ E. Smith, *The Post-Black*, 12.

²¹⁷ Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong, "Can White," 172.

²¹⁸ Nelson, "No Longer," 27.

same way the church oversaw the destruction of a peaceful society is the same but reversed path it follows to create unity in church and community and fight racism. Ethnos Bible Church serves to mend the cracks existing between the Black Americans, Hispanics, and the white membership. This is evident in the mission of the church to serve as one body. Through the vision of the church to cultivate a church that is multilingual, transcultural, and multigenerational. In the subsection, "the components of multiethnic church", this study found that some factors that can promote peaceful coexistence of various groups include promoting inclusiveness in the different churches in Richardson, TX. Other factors that can speed up the fight against racism include the church empowering minority groups, building effective church leadership, and promoting racial awareness in the churches. These factors are mostly influenced by the administration of these churches. Good administration results in an effective fight against racism.

Section 4 will propose an outreach training curriculum comprising six lessons to be taught to participants over six weeks. The initiative will be viewed and utilized as an ethnic reconciliation instrument under the leadership and guidance of the lead pastor and outreach ministry team. The projected outcome for teaching the Hands-Up Outreach curriculum is to empower Ethnos Bible Church to serve as a healing agent through biblical lessons learned and implemented within the church, community, and surrounding interested churches and schools in Richardson, TX.

SECTION 4: ARTIFACT DESCRIPTION

The Hands-Up Program

The proposed solution is a racial sensitivity initiative to be implemented at the Ethnos Bible Church in Richardson, Texas. The initiative will consist of a website, e-brochure, and training program. The Hands-Up Foundation will supply funding for a six-month spiritual developmental training intended for ministry leaders and outreach volunteers within the church and its community. The program will aid in bridging the gap between different ethnic groups among the members of the congregations. African Americans have been affected by systemic racism in their education, housing, employment, and legal issues.²¹⁹ The worldview propagated by the Christian church has not been able to bridge the gap between this minority and the White majority. Therefore, a new potential for fostering ethnic reconciliation exists for ministry leaders and outreach volunteers.

The training offered by the Hands-Up curriculum will occur over the six months in groups of five to ten adults. Each curriculum meeting will take about two hours per day, with training carried out every day of the week. The methods used during the first six-month cycle focus on developing an awareness of self and God through mindfulness of real-life encounters. Hands-Up recognizes systemic racism in Richardson, TX, and sees a unique opportunity to create a healing tool for combating this problem. Consequently, the primary goals of Hands-Up will be to present a training curriculum that include educational strategies and training activities for ministry leaders and

²¹⁹ Oladipo, "Construction of," 7.

community volunteers. These course components increase the racial sensitivity of participants, inform about systemic racism, and introduce the multicultural religious community as a healing instrument that counteracts systemic racism.

Other components of the initiative implement different strategies for the same purpose. The initiative's website, Hands-Up, will become a stage for informational updates, publication of e-brochures, online instructional classes, and a forum to create a social network.²²⁰

Question and answer meetings will be held monthly to allow the participants to reflect on the previous month's events. These meetings will help the trainees become more aware of the biblical perspective on interracial relations and their own experience of the program. Recent studies have shown that social media and online meetings combine the congregations.²²¹ Therefore, there will be added quarterly Zoom meetings to build up the communities and supply feedback on cohort members' progress. The meeting participants will share their experience of the program and their thoughts about the formational objectives presented in the training.

The rationale for the Hands-Up e-brochure will be to supply visual and textual aid explaining the development of the cultural project and the objectives of the organization. The e-book will create a scriptural foundation for the development of a multiethnic community. The recent popularity of e-books and online reading made the church leaders

²²⁰ Hands-Up Outreach Ministry accessed January 15, 2022. <https://handsupoutreach.com>

²²¹ Mookgo S. Kgatle, "Social Media and Religion: Missiological Perspective on the Link between Facebook and the Emergence of Prophetic Churches in Southern Africa," *Verbum et Ecclesia* 39, no. 1 (2018): 5; Derick McKinney, "Social Media in the Church" (PhD Diss., University of Arkansas, 2014), 27.

aware of the necessity of publishing their booklets online.²²² The ubiquitous character of personal mobile devices, such as cell phones and tablets, ensures the accessibility of the e-book to the congregations and the course participants. The Hands-Up e-book will focus on individual opportunities for the training program participants to form a growth continuum. This part of the initiative will supply a link between its three elements: training, website, and e-book. The Hands-Up e-book will include an analysis of White privilege and systemic racism provided from the culturally diverse perspective. This approach would ensure the acknowledgment of the variety of strategies of racism experienced by people of color.

The training curriculum will intend to develop sensitivity to the questions and issues of interracial communication in the United States. The participants will learn about the values and benefits of cooperation within ethnically diverse groups. They will also learn to evaluate the disadvantages of cultural bias, specifically in Christian congregations. Nelson, as well as Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong have shown that racially mixed church members experience fewer racial concerns.²²³ The workshop will help people of different ethnic backgrounds to interact with each other within the church congregation. Government aid could help Hands-Up create a new inclusive workplace by setting up anti-oppressive, transformative leadership values. In the training courses, participants of the curriculum will investigate discriminatory practices and learn about the necessary shift of values required to develop ethnic equality.

²²² McKinney, "Social Media," 31.

²²³ Nelson, "No Longer," 27; Sechrest, Ramírez-Johnson, and Yong, "Can White," 172.

The instructional classes will be internet-based and will consist of several components. The main part of the training is a framework for understanding systemic racism. The White racial identity development model suggested by Janet Helms can supply such a framework.²²⁴ The aim of this course element is to help participants understand the role and functioning of systemic racism in the dominant White culture in the United States. The second part of the program is the examination of the values of the dominant culture. The trainees will learn the operation of these values in US institutions and the patterns of intersectional oppression that disproportionately help White people. The third element of the training is the participants' self-evaluation in the context of interracial relations. The partaking individuals and institutions will be invited to consider how they perpetuate systemic racism through the practices and norms they support, intentionally or unintentionally. Similar self-evaluation strategies have been successfully implemented in other racial sensitization programs.²²⁵ The final part of this curriculum is a discussion of the long-term strategic plan of destroying practices perpetuating systemic racism. The course participants will prepare their assessment of the offered plan and their recommendations for improving future initiatives. The combination of these program constituents would provide the trainees with insights into the multiethnic church.

This dissertation challenges the audience to consider the plight of church history concerning the country's demographics that are changing toward greater ethnic diversity. Stevens proves that the institutional growth of churches complements the transformation

²²⁴ Janet Helms, "An Update of Helm's White and People of Color Identity Models." In *Handbook of Multicultural Counseling*, ed. J.G. Ponterotto, J.M. Casa, L.S. Suzuki, and C.M. Alexander (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1995), 184.

²²⁵ Amerson and Carroll, "The Suburban," 339; Chandler, "Spiritual Formation," 170.

toward a global culture.²²⁶ For this purpose, the Hands-Up curriculum uses biblical teachings, social science, interpretation of the law, and education. The intervention is focused on the understanding of the new demographics and their requirements in the globalized world. The Hands-Up program intends to aid the participating individuals and institutions in understanding the ethnicity-related structural and cultural transformation in a religious context.

Action Plan

Ethnos Bible Church has a unique opportunity to design a healing instrument to counteract systemic racism in US society. The Hands-Up training manual will serve as a healing agent that will provide educational biblical lessons for the outreach ministry and community. Participants will learn about the role of the US church in counteracting systemic racism, as Stevens suggests.²²⁷ Within the context of the Hands-Up initiative, the training will focus on the multiethnic church in combating the racial divide.

The program will intend to teach the trainees ethnic harmony and racial unity. Combining its various components allows achieving the most effective attainment of the project's goals upon its completion. The target audience is viewed as a crucial element of the initiative. These trainees will become agents of implementing and continuing religious values they learn within the Ethnos Bible Church. Church officials and volunteers are the key actors in the propagation of the religious doctrines of their church.²²⁸ For this reason, the strategy of perceiving the participants as a part of the

²²⁶ Stevens, *God's New*, 129.

²²⁷ Ibid., 79.

²²⁸ Ibid., 52.

program resources will succeed. Through them, other church members will learn about the issue of racism in the church and about solutions to this problem.

The outreach ministry will use the SMART goal worksheet to evaluate the progress and effectiveness of the training program. The S in SMART strategy stands for a specifiable goal. The intended goals are the revelation of systemic racism in society and church and consider strategies for combating the racial divide. The M in the SMART strategy stands for the measurability of the goal. For the goal to be measurable, the last session of the training program will be an evaluation of the participants' rate of material absorption and their satisfaction with the course. The A in the SMART strategy is for the attainability of the goal. The Hands-Up training program and the initiative's website will supply material sufficient for the attendees and people interested in the topic to understand the extent of the problem.

The R in the SMART strategy is for realistic or relevant to the achievement of the goal. By interchanging realistic or relevant information can serve the outreach ministry in understanding the need, problem, and opportunity and value during the entire process.

The T in the SMART strategy stands for the time necessary for the achievement of the goal. The time set for each training program is six weeks. During this period, the participants will cover the course of the history of racism, present issues of systemic racism, the role of the church in this problem, and the biblical perspective on ethnic equality. The last lesson is reserved for the students' evaluation, reflection upon the course, and discussion of the anti-racist church-related strategies suggested in the program. The application of the SMART technique will help structure and evaluate the

attainment of the course goals for each of the participants and the organizers of the Hands-Up initiative.



Figure 3 Photo of Official Hands-Up Website²²⁹

The figure above shows Counteracting Systematic Racism from the official Hands-Up website. The following section 5 of the dissertation will discuss and explain the recommended training specifications. The basic goal underlying these specifications is to make the program an effective strategy for counteracting systematic racism in Richardson, Texas.

²²⁹ Photo of Official Hands-Up Website

SECTION 5: ARTIFACT SPECIFICATION

Program Goals and Strategies

Budget

The budget for the entire program is estimated to range between \$2,500 and \$3,000. The sum will be divided into parts to cover the costs of all elements of the project. One of the principal areas of expense is the salary of the training personnel. Their hourly wage is expected to be about \$25.00 dollars per hour of training. The website host fee for the Hands-Up official homepage costs \$110.00 per year that will be funded through the outreach budget established by the Ethnos Bible Church finance committee. The finance committee will buy and keep the right on this domain to continuously manage and deliver information to the audience.

The dissertation focuses on a wide range of audience which could reach as many people as possible. The audience includes all age brackets, races, and genders. Conveying the message to the audience would be done online where it is easier to access it at any time. Churches can access the website to increase awareness of services provided through the Hands-Up Outreach ministry. Even after graduation, the data collected from the survey to ascertain how Ethnos Bible church might serve as a healing instrument and the dissertation information, remains relevant in modern society. This information could be used by guest speakers on racism related talks and in churches. The facts and solution suggestions could influence notable change in the society

The creation of the e-brochure for the course will cost \$400. The creation and maintenance of the online course material would cost about \$500. Finally, the project will need templates for the SMART goals with a monthly estimate of around \$3.25. These

documents help measure the effectiveness of the training program by giving the participants a chance to self-reflect and record their growth parameters. Another budgetary allocation will be paid to the hired coordinators and guest speakers of the program. Working part-time, the program coordinators will receive \$15 hourly wages. The payment to the guest speakers will be made based on individual agreements.

Several human rights organizations and activists had come up to sponsor the program. They were willing to fund the Hands-Up training program to ensure its success in increasing ethnic sensitivity among church leaders and members. The program has also received donations from private individuals interested in the concept of racial reconciliation through the multiethnic church. The organization received \$5,000 in total, the sum of which will support the training curriculum, and the implementation of other program components. As the available resources exceed the essential budget, the funds will allow the smooth operations of the program. The remaining part of the budget will support the post-training programs intended to implement the elements of the Hands-Up training program in Ethnos Bible Church.

Promotion

The outreach ministry of Ethnos Bible Church will promote the Hands-Up program through the website, word of mouth, and connection through other outreach agencies. The official website of the Hands-Up initiative will also serve to promote the project. The webpage will clearly say the functions and goals of the project to engage the visitors with its goals. This webpage supplies a platform for all other interested parties to fight against systemic racism through the unity of the multiethnic church. The website will be key in the promotion and advertisement of the Hands-Up initiative online. The

visitors of the project's webpage can obtain self-guided training through the Hands-Up manual and gain biblical insights on the meaning of race. The cooperating churches could advertise the program by posting links to its webpage on their sites. The participants and supporters of the Hands-Up could advertise the initiative through social media. The overall marketing strategy that the artifact will employ will focus on social media. Studies prove that the present pandemic shifted communication online worldwide.²³⁰ Currently, online forums and blogs have become the safest way of communication, in which one can reach many people. Thus, the official Hands-Up website will be essential in promoting the project on different online platforms.

Standards of Publication

The publication of the Hands-Up outreach materials will include the Ethnos Bible Church website, Facebook, LinkedIn, and other platforms provided by governmental and private agencies. The Hands-Up initiative has two reasons for choosing the Ethnos Bible Church social platforms for publishing the initiative's outreach materials. First, the target audience of the proposed project belongs to the church fraternity, to which the Ethnos Bible Church has a direct connection. Second, the program's goal is to increase racial sensitivity among the church officials and congregations. The multiethnic nature of the Ethnos Bible Church helps its leaders and members understand the existence of racism within its practices. Therefore, the choice of this church's social platforms for the

²³⁰ Adrian Wong, Serene Ho, and Olusegun Olusanya, "The Use of Social Media and Online Communications in Times of Pandemic," *Journal of the Intensive Care Society* 22, no. 3 (2021): 255; Minh Nguyen, Jonathan Gruber, and Jaelle Fuchs, "Changes in Digital Communications during the COVID-19 Global Pandemic: Implications for Digital Inequality and Future Research," *Social Media + Society* 6, no. 3 (2020): 2.

publication of the Hands-Up outreach materials will bring them to the target audience that will understand its context.

The Hands-Up Curriculum

The Hands-Up curriculum outlines the processes and procedures that are followed throughout the six-week period of the training program. The curriculum forms six lessons geared toward the participants' education about systemic racism concerning the Christian church. The participants will be divided into groups of up to ten people. The curriculum will allow these people to share their racial experiences, reassess them, and learn how to use these experiences toward racial reconciliation.

The program's setting will be controlled to ensure that the students of all ethnic backgrounds feel comfortable about taking part and sharing their thoughts. The training is meant to engage different races in an inclusive study and discussion of the questions of race. Each lesson during weeks two to five will cover a new topic. The first lesson during week two will give students insights into the history of racism in US society. Lesson two will reveal the ethnic disparities that arise due to systemic racism in US social systems. The third lesson will be devoted to the topic color of compromise and based on a book by Jemar Tisby.²³¹ The significance of the church in contributing to the rise of racial differentiation will also be discussed.²³² The fourth lesson will teach the biblical perspective on ethnic differences. The last lesson on week six will entail a discussion of

²³¹ Tisby, "The Color of Compromise," 12.

²³² Stevens, *God's New*, 132; Gerbner, "Christian Slavery," 73; Hays, *From Every*, 24.

the participants' experiences of racism. Students will be encouraged to share their thoughts about racial injustice using the course concepts and terminology.

The course conveys knowledge about racism and that of strategies for combating it. The program intends to prepare the trainees to implement the knowledge won during the course in the church communities. Such an implementation will show that the Hands-Up initiative has reached its goals to prepare champions of the social justice cause to work with the church.

Hands-Up Curriculum Content

Week 1: Lesson 1, Introduction to Understanding Systemic Racism's Relationship to the Church

Week 2: Lesson 2, History of Racism in the United States

Week 3: Lesson 3, US Institutions and Racism

Week 4: Lesson 4, The Color of Compromise

Week 5: Lesson 5, The Biblical View on Ethnic Differences

Week 6: Evaluation, Reflection and Discussion; Summary of Lessons 1-6

SECTION 6: POST-SCRIPT

Personal Reflection

While conducting research, I encountered a lived experience on ways a healthy outreach ministry can serve others outside of the Ethnos Bible Church community. Through Ethnos Bible Church outreach ministry, financial assistance, clothing, personal items, medical, temporary housing, and spiritual guidance was provided to a biracial single female parent with two teenage sons. I gained a unique perspective on understanding the critical need for the church to serve the displaced and under-privileged. Also, I learned that no human racial group is superior to any other. Thus, I stand for equality and demand respect from those who treat me as a member of a minority race. Research granted me an understanding of my racial history, which explains the way of life of my ancestors. This knowledge became an eye-opening experience, which enlightened me about my identity as a Black person.

Furthermore, those who engage in racist activities may not be aware that they commit racial discrimination against Black people. They may only follow the rules of the social system and unwillingly perpetuate racist practices. Keeping this point of view in mind, I learned to achieve an understanding of White people. Finally, the Hands-Up lessons offer clear instructions toward interracial cooperation. Furthermore, different racial backgrounds can understand and work together toward racial reconciliation.

Recommendation

The Hands-Up initiative is an example of a reconciliatory project that could help US society make progress in the fight against systemic racism. The multiethnic church functions in this context as an agent of ethnic reconciliation to ensure the end of racial

discrimination. This dissertation assumes that such a program can positively affect the church and improve interracial communication in mixed congregations and spiritual communities. The Hands-Up initiative exemplifies the significant role, which the church can play in the lives of US citizens today.

Nonetheless, several challenges and setbacks could be detected in the Hands-Up program. First, the initiative is centered on the eradication of systemic racism perceived from the Christian perspective. However, the United States has a society with a variety of religions. For this reason, not every citizen can relate to the Christian teachings.

Therefore, some ethnic groups may not find the idea of the multiethnic church and the biblical concepts of race attractive. Therefore, the Hands-Up initiative would not be able to unite all citizens of the United States in the fight against systemic racism. The education of non-Christian citizens based on the provided training and manual of the Hands-Up Foundation may not be possible. The recommendation for the future would be to develop similar initiatives based on other religions represented in the United States.

Furthermore, the Hands-Up training program and e-book are meant for the church members. Consequently, non-believing members of US society would not be involved in this initiative. In the future, the organizers of this project could develop a program suitable for people without a religious affiliation. Then a larger number of US citizens could take part in training that racially sensitizes members of this society. A program that reaches all citizens without creating religious barriers can be more effective in fighting systemic racism.

Another problem of this program is the centering on racism in the context of the United States. People of different ethnic groups can be discriminated against by other

groups, which do not necessarily belong to the White race. For example, some indigenous people of the Philippines still enslave members of other native tribes.²³³ The experience of Black people in the United States could serve to supply similar reconciliation programs for the people of other countries. This development is especially important because slavery still exists in other parts of the world, unlike in the United States, where it ended after the Civil War. New initiatives could supply strategies that would contribute to interracial understanding and reconciliation around the world. Finally, for future study attention can be given to research systemic racism at a global level. Discrimination occurs to people of different skin color on many levels.

Conclusion

This study has shown the importance of church-based programs promoting racial equality. Because of its multiracial makeup, the multiethnic church was chosen as a good change agent. Using historical precedents and theoretical considerations, this dissertation showed that the multiethnic church could contribute to racial reconciliation in the United States. The thesis used the eras of slavery and segregation to show historical injustices perpetrated against Black people. The author then applied the knowledge gained from studying these eras to show manifestations of systemic racism in present US social institutions. The dissertation has also shown that structures such as school, government, the church, and family can help to facilitate beneficial development in interactions.

The dissertation also discussed the history of the Christian church in the United States and its involvement in preserving systemic racism. The author then relayed current

²³³ Michael Salman, "Persisting Slavery in the Philippines: Ambivalent Domestication and the Reversibility of Comparisons," *Slavery & Abolition* 25, no. 2 (2004): 34.

societal changes and the church to show that Christian leaders and congregations can be used as anti-racism weapons. Previously, Christian churches segregated their members based on race; however, the current tendency toward tolerance and diversity opens the door to multiethnic congregations. For such mixed spiritual groups, the multiethnic church might serve as a guide on the route to an ethnic union.

The Hands-Up project serves as a model for effective racial sensitivity training. The project includes a training program, a website with a forum, and a variety of information sources, including an e-book. The project continually creates a community of people involved in racial unity social campaigning. The training takes place in person or online, and it teaches church members how to practice ethnic equality. The instructors use historical examples, biblical teachings, and the participants' individual experiences to give them a new perspective on race and interethnic communication. The purpose of this program is to educate church leaders and congregation members, who will then distribute their newly acquired knowledge throughout their communities. The Hands-Up initiative, for example, shows positive effects in racial sensitization of persons of different ethnic backgrounds. This project is built on these efforts to ensure knowledge on eradication of racism.

Appendix A

Figure 1

Counteracting Systematic Racism from the Hands-Up Foundation Official
Website



Hands-Up website link: <https://handsupoutreach.com>

Hands-Up: email: handsupoutreach@gmail.com

Letter to the Participants

Dear Ministry Leaders, Organizational Leaders, and Outreach Volunteers,

I want to use this opportunity to welcome you to our training program, where we will discuss various experiences, through which our society subjects us to our racial identities. Each of you will be asked to read and sign a letter of confidentiality. I want to ensure that you feel comfortable taking an active voice and participating in all discussions. I hope you will feel represented as a vital entity to this process.

The program will take you from the origins of the racial differences in US society to their current effects on people of diverse racial backgrounds in the community. The program will become an eye-opening tool that will help us embrace our past, reflect on our present, and learn ways to navigate our future. Our discussions within the program will be tied around systemic racism and its expressions in the church as part of US social institutions. The main goal of this course is to find a new role that the church must play in the fight against systemic racism that is slowly demolishing US society. Through the experiences and lessons learned in this program, you will buy an enlightened perspective on our racial differences. This new worldview will help you become positive agents of change who educate society toward the inter-racial cooperation and unity.

I believe that most of you are senior church personnel with either a direct or indirect role in your respective churches' organizations and outreach leadership roles. The program has found you as crucial agents who can help in sensitization of the church toward systemic racism. As participants of the Hands-Up program, we have a mixture of

people coming from diverse ethnic backgrounds. I encourage you to use this opportunity to positively interact with the members of the different ethnic groups. I promise you that you will be surprised to learn that we are all fundamentally the same in behavior and reasoning.

I believe, however, that our experience is the best teacher. Therefore, I encourage you to use the program's materials to reflect upon your ethnic identity and how it relates to others in society. The program may become one of the most remarkable experiences for all of us. You will be able to re-evaluate your earlier experiences of inter-racial communication and reshape your future cooperation with representatives of other ethnic groups. The course program will inform you differently about the people of the other race, than your prior experiences. I encourage you to be open-minded and use this training as an opportunity for reconciliation and interaction with the diverse group of participants. Let us prevail in the mutual understanding and respect for each other's cultural heritage, which can become an essential agent of change in our society.

You are all special people in the fight against this deeply rooted systemic racism. Let us learn together, experience together, and change our narratives together. I wish you all the best of luck with your training. Thank you.

Regards,

Janice Wilson

Hands-Up Curriculum Lessons

Week 1: Lesson 1, Introduction to Understanding Systemic Racism's

Relationship to the Church

Lesson Narrative

The lesson will start with the speaker introducing reproduction of the racialized order which is the meaning of systemic racism and how Ethnos Bible church can be a healing agent to counteract systemic racism. In addition, this reproduction is based on normative, habitual, and frequently unconscious behavior and behaviors. As a result, rather than "racists," systemic racism is the result of everyday White people's behaviors and practices.²³⁴

Week 2: Lesson 2, History of Racism in the USA

Lesson Narrative

The lesson will start with the speaker describing the historical origins of racism in US society. To fully understand the present, the participants will revisit history and learn about momentous events that conditioned the racial divide of today. Cohen states that an understanding of the issue of systemic racism can only be obtained by exploring the

²³⁴Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, "What Makes Systemic Racism Systemic?" *Sociological Inquiry* 91, no. 3 (2021): 513-33.

racial history of US society.²³⁵ The concept of a racial difference between the Black people and the Whites dates to the slavery era. Many people of African descent were held captive and forcefully dragged to Europe and the United States of America to work on the farms of their White masters. Many families were separated, and many social injustices were committed to the enslaved. The economic interests of the Whites conditioned the creation of a social construct of racial divide that positioned Black people socially, politically, and economically below the Whites' level. Thus, enslavement of people of African descent laid the foundations of White supremacy, which still exists in contemporary US society.

The traumas inflicted on the Black people by the periods of slavery and segregation last until today. The dignity of African Americans was violated: they were sold at marketplaces, beaten and raped. The feeling of the Black body as a tool and an object of possession created a stigma that branded these people's psyche.²³⁶ Since this time, racial profiling and labeling exists about the people of color. Lesson one will reveal the depth of trauma that African Americans inherited from their historically oppressed ancestors.

The second part of this lesson will deal with the end of objectification of Black people and the abolition of slavery after the Civil War. The participants would learn to understand the role of former slaves in the structures of US society. These people were

²³⁵ Rebecca Cohen, "Framework for Understanding Structural Racism: The Cult of Purity," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 55, no. 1 (2020): 46-62.

²³⁶ Gerbner, "Christian Slavery," 172.

incorporated into the domestic society as its rightful citizens.²³⁷ However, some White people found it difficult to accept the equality of races. Consequently, they avoided interaction with Black people, which resulted in the era of segregation. In fact, segregation was another tool of oppression of the Black people, who still existed in distinct social spheres than the Whites. This process cemented the discriminative treatment of African Americans in US social systems.

The effect of segregation is still clear in US society in the form of systemic racism. The domestic political, social, and economic systems were historically created to separate the races and to favor the Whites.²³⁸ The White majority had the power to devise this order that supported the construct of White privilege. This system based on racial divide became a key to systemic racism of today. Presently, people of Black descent are in a marginalized position and cannot fully access the social systems, which their White counterparts enjoy.

The aim of this lesson is to think about the results of slavery and segregation based on racial principle. From that angle, the program's participants can understand the true worth of an individual in their personal qualities instead of skin color. The outcome of this lesson is to learn to acknowledge the historical aspects of people and that every ethnic origin is equally worthy.

²³⁷ Austin C. Brown, *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness* (New York: Convergent, 2018), 159.

²³⁸ Oladipo, "Construction of," 14.

Activity One

Participants will be in pairs of two or groups of three, depending on the number present. Turn and talk with your partner or group about your knowledge and experience related to racism in the United States of America. Then, use your journal to reflect on what you said or heard that impacts your life today. How will you use the knowledge you gained during this session to change the narrative in your personal life to become an influential leader of the church, leadership organization, or outreach ministry?

Week 3: Lesson 2, US Institutions and Racism

Lesson Narrative

At the beginning of the second lesson, the instructor will ask each participant to narrate a personal experience of racial discrimination. Either the system has been in favor of the person's race or not, each society member takes part in this process.²³⁹ Therefore, each participant can relate a story about racial bias in contemporary society. These stories will be evaluated with the application of concepts learned in the first lesson. Thereupon, the instructor will supply the narrative of the lesson about systemic racism in the USA. The personal experience stories offered at the start of the lesson will help the participants understand the class material.

Since the era of segregation, US social institutions were built according to the principle of White supremacy. Social structures aimed for a separation of races in all

²³⁹ Rubén Rosario Rodríguez, "Do Black Lives Matter to White Christians?" *Cross Currents* (New Rochelle, N.Y.) 68, no. 1 (2018): 125.

social spheres. Negative stereotypes and racial profiling against the Black people have been developed.²⁴⁰ These methods of oppression based on social rules and legislative policies supported the idea of White supremacy at the expense of the Black people. These stereotypes as well as these oppression methods survived until today to ensure a racial divide in social, economic, and political spheres. All US social structures take part in systemic racism, whether their officials act in a discriminative way or not.

The phenomenon of systemic racism based on prejudices can be explained by examples of stereotypes of biological racism used until today in medicine. African American people are wrongly perceived as more pain-resistant than the Whites.²⁴¹ This prejudice assumes the more robust and savage physical characteristic of the Black race as compared to the Whites. This assumption can negatively affect the wellbeing of African Americans if applied in healthcare institutions. Medical personnel may decline those painkillers because of the belief that they can withstand pain.²⁴² African American women experience challenges in medical institutions, particularly during childbearing, because they are not given the needed amount of pain reducing drugs. As a result, they suffer, and their health deteriorates under the strain of pain. In some cases, birthing Black women may die from the intolerable pain levels. Thus, the prejudice that Black women can withstand pain has led to the negligence of medical personnel in handling their needs. This example shows the negative ways in which racial conditioning affects people in

²⁴⁰ Rajagopalan, "What is," 168.

²⁴¹ Slater, "What is," §8.

²⁴² Ibid., §9.

healthcare institutions. Healthcare institutions are a social sphere, where the issue of racism is deeply rooted. In general, White people enjoy more medical accessibility as compared to African American citizens.

Another institution that acts as an agent of systemic racism is the administration of elementary schools that separates Black students from Hispanic students.²⁴³ The notion that the latter must be contained under the guidance of a Spanish-speaking teacher serves the school to justify this act of systemic racism. However, most Hispanic students of fourth and second grades can understand spoken English, because they already spent at least a few years in an English-speaking school. Therefore, they would be able to study in one class with Black students and interact with them and the teacher to complete their assignments. The Hispanic students are segregated from the immersion in an all-English-speaking environment at school. This action divides the Black students from the Hispanic students, which hinders inter-racial interaction in educational institutions.

Black students, on the other hand, are forced to study within the programs for limited IQ levels. The Special Education program, in which most African American children are placed, degrades their learning achievements.²⁴⁴ Black students have limited learning programs and resources to elevate their learning opportunities compared to students from other ethnic backgrounds. This placement deprives Black students of the opportunities to achieve higher educational performance and to engage with other ethnic groups. Such an approach to education continues and perpetuates the principles set during

²⁴³ Leath, Mathews, and Harrison, "Racial Identity," 1320.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 1332.

the era of segregation. The phenomenon, however, is based on the current policies that support the separation of Black and the White students. The Special Education policies discriminate against the African American students, who try to buy decent education. Thus, the school becomes an agent of systemic racism in the United States of America.

The family can become another institution that supports systemic racism. The family is the primary agent, from which small children learn the ways of socialization. The family pre-programs and dictates the behavior of an individual in society. Parents have an active role in this process by teaching their children to interact with their peers and community. Children can embrace their social differences and treat people from other races with dignity, given a proper social education.²⁴⁵ However, they need the guidance of their parents about the issues of racism. Racial education could begin at an early age to teach ethnic equality from the first stages of socialization. Children, who learn to communicate with people from different racial backgrounds as equals, see no justifiable reason to perceive them as lesser beings. Individuals, who did not have such guidance in their youth, may lament their parents teaching them to use racial stereotypes.

Activity Two

This lesson's activity will consist in a group discussion of subjective experiences of the course participants related to inter-racial communications. Each of the students will in turn share one individual experience of systemic racism or inter-ethnic cooperation. Thereafter, other group members will discuss with the speaker the role that the church could have in the described conflict or cooperation.

²⁴⁵ Choi et al., "Race-Ethnicity," 74.

Week 4: Lesson 3, The Color of Compromise

Lesson Narrative

In this lesson, the teacher will emphasize the significance of the church in combating systemic racism. To bring the end to systemic racism, the church could initialize a change by teaching the congregations about the value of racial equality.²⁴⁶ The unity of races foundational for the Multiethnic Church can help to reach this goal. Religion in the United States is diverse, with Christianity being the faith of the White majority as well as several minority groups. A substantial part of the Black population of the US also belongs to the Christian denominations.²⁴⁷ The religious pluralism appeared during the historical development of this country. Until recently, religious groups were based on the race of the church members.

The book *The Color of Compromise* by Jemar Tisby offers a history of the Christian church's involvement in these processes. During the Jim Crow era, many African American Christians were grouped around predominantly Black congregations.²⁴⁸ This separation of spiritual communities on the ethnic principle marked the beginning of racial division in the church. Churches in the Northern region were ethnically mixed, while those in the South were formed of the White congregants.²⁴⁹ As a result, the Southern preachers held more racist notions than their Northern counterparts.

²⁴⁶Smith, *The Post-Black*, 84.

²⁴⁷Mitchell, "Black Church," 17.

²⁴⁸ Tisby, "The Color of Compromise," 23.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

For example, church leaders of the South believed that integrating the two races into one congregation was impossible. Consequently, segregation laid the foundations of racial divide in the church.

During the modern period, people continued to form religious communities according to their racial backgrounds in US Christian churches. Such a separation allowed them to have the same identity and to speak the same language.²⁵⁰ Nonetheless, contemporary churches experience a different trend toward multiethnic inclusiveness. This tendency shows that the two races can reconcile by accepting their roles in the rise of systemic racism in society. Tisby uses the analogy of three colors to show a way toward such a reconciliation at church.²⁵¹ The green hue is the Black race held as slaves, while the white color stands for White supremacy. The red tone is blood to symbolize violence, through which the White dominators enforced their power over the Black race. This symbolic color scale depicts the discrimination against the Black people. The acceptance of this symbolism could become the first step toward the inter-ethnic understanding and reconciliation.

The lesson will highlight the way toward a racial reconciliation through the church's significance in the fight against systemic racism. In his book, Tisby maintains that "racism never goes away, it adapts."²⁵² Many ways of racist actions exist, because this phenomenon has multiple expressions. People may employ these ethnically biased

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 43.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid., 93.

attitudes and behaviors willingly or unwillingly. However, all of them take part in the process by suffering from discrimination or by enjoying its effects. The policies set up by the social system change, but the newer reforms perpetuate racial divide.

The author suggests that the continuous adaptation of the racist prejudices and discriminative methods could be countered by applying a particular strategy. Tisby calls it the ARC of racial justice, formed of Awareness, Relationships, and Commitment.²⁵³ The application of these three elements of the strategy would ensure the gradual change toward racial justice. To achieve the ethnic awareness, each member of the society would undergo racial sensitization. The relationship element of this triad is based on the improvement of the inter-racial communications and cooperation. Again, every member of US society is supposed to take part in the amendment of inter-ethnic relations. Finally, the commitment part of this strategy requires the consistent and continuous application of the other two elements. This commitment would secure social changes eventually. Social unity of the two races using the ARC strategy will be the best form of fighting against systemic racism.

Activity Three

The activity for this lesson will consist in watching the video and discussing the speaker's ideas. The participants will watch the talk "The Color of Comprise" given by Jemar Tisby at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kWYXXO-Tc4>. They will keep notes of the lessons they learned from the video. The participants will compare the

²⁵³ Ibid., 97.

concepts from the speech to those from chosen selections from the Color of Compromise and those bought in the Hands-Up training.

Week 5: Lesson 4, The Biblical View on Ethnic Differences

Lesson Narrative

The focus of the Hands-Up program is the counteraction of systemic racism through the Multiethnic Church. Therefore, the instructor will discuss with the class the representation of racial differences in the Scriptures. In-Cheol Shin proves that the Biblical point of view allows breaching racial divide.²⁵⁴ The Bible conveys many examples of the unity of different nations and ethnic groups within the church. The Scriptures state that God created humans “male and female” “in the image of God.”²⁵⁵ This passage from the Book of Genesis proposes a fundamental oneness for people of all genders and no race was created as superior to the other. God only created people after his own image, not several races with unique features. These first people, Adam, and Eve are seen as the origin of all existing ethnicities. Consequently, humans have a common descent, which proves that all people are equal in creation and in the eyes of God.

Therefore, the feeling of the White race as superior to the Black race has no Biblical reference. Faithful Christians treat each other according to the Scriptures, which includes the sign of the oneness and equality of all races. The Bible further asserts that “the one who oppresses the poor insults their Maker.”²⁵⁶ This statement can also be

²⁵⁴ In-Cheol Shin, “The Matthean Community’s State of Coexistence between Jews and Gentiles,” *Hervormde Teologiese Studies* 75, no. 4 (2019): 7.

²⁵⁵ The New English Bible, Genesis 1:27.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., Proverbs 14:13.

applied to people who oppress other nations or ethnic groups. Thus, discrimination on the racial basis is in a direct conflict with God's will expressed in the Scriptures.

The Bible, however, proposes that the reconciliation of nations will be possible through peace among all races. The Scriptures state that Jesus "preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near."²⁵⁷ This line shows that God intended, and Jesus brought peace and reconciliation to different nations and ethnic groups, living in distinct lands. The Bible explains that God "might reconcile" different peoples "thereby killing the hostility."²⁵⁸ This passage hints on the role of God as a peacemaker and reconciler of nations. The point of their unity, however, is named in the further lines of this passage. The Scripture maintains that all people "have access in one Spirit to the Father... In him, you also are being built together."²⁵⁹ The passage, therefore, proposes that the faith in God serves to unite the races that have equal access to Him. This passage gives the believers hope that different ethnic groups can be united by the Christian faith. If applied in the setting of the Multiethnic Church, this teaching and the citations offered in the earlier paragraphs could serve as a foundation for the unification of the multi-racial congregation.

This lesson is the last learning activity in the training sessions of the Hands-Up initiative. Lesson five explains the Biblical perspective on the questions of ethnic divide. The cited passages from the Scriptures show that the inter-ethnic conflicts existed in antiquity. These citations reveal the role of Jesus, God, and the church in solving such

²⁵⁷ Ibid., Ephesians 2:15.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., Ephesians 2:18.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., Ephesians 2:19-22.

historical conflicts. The Bible, therefore, supplies hope of the peaceful reconciliation of all races in the US based on the correct understanding of the word of God. This reading of the Bible could be used in multiethnic congregations to improve the inter-racial relations. Thus, the multiethnic church would act as an agent of racial reconciliation using the Scriptures as the foundation of the peaceful communications.

At the end of this lesson, the teacher will ask the participants to reflect on their understanding of the Biblical teachings learned in this session. A part of their reflection could be their individual contribution towards the inter-racial understanding as perceived from the perspective of the Bible. Is there any form of hate towards the opposite ethnic group due to a personal negative experience or a commonly used stereotype? What could be done to amend the wrong attitudes towards people of diverse ethnic backgrounds?

Week 6: Evaluation, Discussion and Reflection; Summary of Lessons 1-6

The last week's meeting forms no lesson but an evaluation of the results of the training course. Firstly, the participants will take a short test to assess the level of their familiarity with the studied material. Secondly, they will reflect in written form on their satisfaction with the course. The participants' feedback will be used to improve or adjust the training program in the future. The coordinator of the program will further use the feedback given by these reflections to decide whether the training has reached its intended goals. Thirdly, the students will join a group discussion of Plans of counteracting practices supporting systemic racism in the church.

Summary of Lessons 1-6

The training program begins with the introduction of the initiative's goals. The program ends with a discussion of the participants' personal reflections and their stories

about their experience of racial divide. All participants will be instructed to describe an experience, in which they contributed to discriminating against representatives of other races, White or Black. Thereafter, the students will discuss these experiences from the point of view they have learned in classes and by applying the newly bought concepts. Their open dialogue will become the starting point of the change towards racial reconciliation in the context of Ethnos Bible Church and in the future the larger audience of the Christian Church. the Christian church.

The fifth lesson will be based on the narrative from the Biblical view on race. At the end of this lesson, the students will discuss their perspective on inter-ethnic communications by applying the Biblical point of view on race. The participants will act as the agents of change toward racial reconciliation in US society. After completing this training, the participants would educate their followers and peers according to the Biblical view on ethnic unity. In this way, the church members will spread the idea of the unity and oneness of all races in God.

The multiethnic church would act as the base for the inter-racial cooperation started by the Hands-Up initiative. The post-graduates of this program will help the members of multiethnic congregations to treat each other with respect and dignity, according to the Scriptures that perceive all nations as partakers in the kingdom of God. The course graduates would actively engage their communities in racial sensitization by spreading this idea on social media platforms. In this way, the gospel of racial change and reconciliation would reach many people on various levels of society. In this process, religion will be viewed as a significant agent of reconciliation. The Multiethnic Church would be able to alter ethnic values of the believers in the way in which they were

represented in the gospel. can go a long way in fighting systemic racism. The sensitization of the spiritual community can actively help in social change toward the racial equality in US society. The participants of the Hands-Up training program will be encouraged to become vigilant in their campaign against systemic racism.

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