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Harold Dorrell Briscoe Jr.

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There's a Storm Comin':

How the Evangelical Church Responds to the Fergusons and Charlottesville's that Shake and Shock America's Sociopolitical Landscape

by

Harold Dorrell Briscoe Jr.

Duke Divinity School
Duke University

Date: _____

Approved: _____

Supervisor

D.Min. Director

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in
the Divinity School of Duke University
2018

ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

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By Harold Dorrell Briscoe Jr.

Surveys taken within the last two years have indicated that the majority of Americans believe that race relations are getting worse. This is in stark contrast to what the election of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States seemed to signify. Many people, pundits, and papers hailed this political victory as evidence that the United States was now entering a post-racial period. Eight years later, however, after several racially charged tragedies, many Americans are now wondering whether the country can ever heal from the wounds of its racial past.

During the summer of 2016, churches and faith leaders across America struggled to respond to video footage of a series of police shootings of black men. Alton Sterling died in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, after an altercation with police officers. Within twenty-four hours, a Facebook live video showed Philando Castile (with his girlfriend and her four-year-old daughter in the car) dying from gun wounds suffered after he alerted a police officer that he was legally carrying a gun. The next day, five police officers were gunned down at a peaceful protest in downtown Dallas. The trio of events led to socio-political uproar.

The American evangelical church is unprepared for the current socio-political climate that is generating severe racial strife and tension in American society. Highly publicized killings of unarmed black people presents an intense political issue for individuals and communities. These shootings cause considerable psychological distress in individuals and racial tension in communities and cities. The evangelical church is unprepared and thus vulnerable to division and

strife within its own walls, is hindered in achieving and sustaining ethnic diversity, and typically fails to provide a robust, prophetic message of hope in the midst of socio-political despair.

This thesis will employ qualitative research in the form of literature reviews. Drawing from current sociological, psychological, and political research, I will make the case that the church must take proactive measures to prepare for—using my own coined term—racialized storms. Churches must prepare for these storms to reduce their severity and impact in their communities and cities. I then recommend strategies drawn from the academic and professional fields of climate change adaptation and natural hazard mitigation to reduce the severity of these storms within congregations and communities. I analyze these insights and synthesized them with biblical data to create a framework that gives churches practical steps to prepare for and respond to racially charged events that inflict trauma to the social fabric of America.

There's a Storm Comin:
How the Evangelical Church Responds to the Fergusons and Charlottesville's that Shake and
Shock America's Sociopolitical Landscape

By

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Advisor: Will Willimon, S.T.D.

This work is lovingly dedicated to my wife, Tracy. You are my shining star. I love being on this journey with you.

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On the cover of his 1964 groundbreaking album “A Love Supreme,” world-renowned Jazz artist John Coltrane wrote, “This album is a humble offering to Him. An attempt to say, ‘THANK YOU GOD’ through our work, even as we do in our hearts and with our tongues.” Coltrane couldn’t have said it better. I feel the same about this thesis. It is a humble offering to God, who has inspired me to write, sustained me through the difficult times, and placed key people in my life to see me to the finish line. God has been so gracious and merciful throughout this entire process.

I’m thankful to Duke University and Duke Divinity School for the opportunity to pursue my doctoral studies. It has been a dream come true to attend Duke and I’m proud to forever be a Dukie. I am deeply grateful for the support of my advisor, Bishop Will Willimon. Bishop is literally a living legend. I remember being mesmerized at how he taught during the program. His recent book, “Who Lynched Willie Earle? Preaching to Confront Racism,” was an enormous inspiration as I wrote this thesis. More than Bishop’s timeliness in responding to my numerous inquiries or his vast knowledge from the nearly seventy books he’s written, I’m grateful for his belief in me. He gave me confidence that what I was writing on was critical to the church today.

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When I first enrolled at Duke, I was told that I would learn more from classmates than I would from my professors. That statement proved to be accurate. I have thoroughly enjoyed all the conversations and nuggets of wisdom from my classmates. We come from all over the United States and from different denominational backgrounds. However, we were grounded in three things, a love for Jesus Christ, a love for His church, and a love for one another. Jenn Graffius, Alice Wade, Mark Won, and Tim Mentzer were immensely helpful throughout the program. Honestly, I'm appreciative of all the laughs we have had together during the last two and a half years.

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I sometimes faced. She truly has been a balm for my family. She has always encouraged me, edited my papers, and never has let my head get too big. Love you, sis.

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INTRODUCTION

The first week of July 2016 was tumultuous. The nation was rocked by two killings of black men at the hands of law enforcement officials. On July 5, 2016, Alton Sterling died in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, after an altercation with police officers. Philando Castile was shot and killed the next day after alerting a police officer that he was legally carrying a gun. On July 7, 2016, five Dallas police officers were gunned down at a peaceful protest in downtown Dallas.

The fires of anger and fear burned through social media sites all over the country and in my own congregation. The string of deaths made national and international headlines. Former Presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush spoke at the Dallas Memorial Service for the five Dallas police officers. Both attempted to heal the gaping racial wound—reopened by these events—by reminding Americans of our shared commitment to the nation’s intrinsic values of compassion, empathy, and unity.

The string of racially-charged tragedies was causing enormous psychological and social disruption throughout the nation. This was a racialized storm.¹ There was an eerie silence from many evangelical churches in America. I decided to write a blog in response to the tragedies with the intent to bring healing and to serve as a guide that could potentially help people in my congregation pray and navigate through the racialized storm. As an African American pastor who served in a predominantly white congregation, I had a unique vantage point on the topic of racial tension.

The blog was widely read and shared. I received dozens of encouraging comments. Countless people thanked me for jumping in the fire of frustration and offering hope and direction. I gave myself the proverbial pat on the back and went on my merry way. A couple of

¹ I have coined this term and will use it throughout the paper to describe racially charged events in America. Chapter 2 will discuss this concept in more detail.

days later, I was criticized by a white law enforcement official who attended my church. He contended that I had no right to talk about the concept of racism because not all the “facts” of the case were known and that black youth are far more likely to be killed by other black youth than by the police. This man believed that I was labeling the police officers who shot Alton Sterling and Philando Castile as racists and lashed out with a long post on my social media site. His response was abrupt and shattered my illusion that my blog was inoffensive.

I responded to the police officer in a courteous and respectful way. I explained that my objective wasn't to pit law enforcement against the African American community. My aim was not to discern racism from the officers' actions. I simply wanted to point to and elaborate on the areas followers of Christ should be praying through during this tumultuous and racially charged event. It still stings to read the response from that police officer in my congregation. I only meant to try to douse the flames of racial animosity and tension caused by the shooting. Whether there was intentional or unintentional bias on the part of the police officers doesn't negate the generational and racial pain that many people of color were experiencing.

Several days later, my senior pastor called and said that the police officer that responded to my blog was leaving the church. I was surprised. I proceeded to explain to my senior pastor (who read my blog) that it was never my intent to offend anyone. As a pastor, I merely tried to offer guidance and hope to people in our congregation who were hurting. I realized, through this sad situation, that the American evangelical church is vulnerable to racially-charged events like those that occurred during the summer of 2016 and produce an enormous amount of racial strife and division across the nation.

If the church is to respond to these racially charged tragedies in a way that brings healing and hope to individuals, communities, and cities plagued with despair, it must prepare for them.

The church is meant to proclaim salvation, reconciliation, and equality. Scripture is full of stories and passages that communicate God's heart for justice. Historically, the church (or at least some churches) has boldly taken a stand against slavery, lynching, Jim Crow, and other events, systems, and people that have undercut civil rights. Scripture communicates God's heart for the vulnerable, and people are looking for how the church will respond to these racialized calamities.

Police shootings of unarmed black people and other racially charged issues are intense for individuals and communities. This project will not discuss the debate surrounding their causes or whether such shootings were justified. I aim to study the unrest they generate and recommend strategies to mitigate unrest before the racialized storm occurs. Additionally, I intend to lay out a plan that effectively responds to the racialized storms and the unrest they generate in a community and congregational context.

This thesis will take strategies from the fields of climate change adaptation and natural disaster mitigation and adapt them to a congregational context to create a practical framework that helps faith leaders prepare for and respond to racialized storms in their communities and congregations. The aim in this project is to research and recommend best practices from these scientific disciplines and synthesize these strategies with a prophetic and theological response that give churches a roadmap for reducing the psychological distress in their communities and among their congregants.

American evangelical leaders have a limited toolkit and framework to deal with racialized storms and methods from the field of disaster resilience can be used to assist faith leaders as they weather racialized storms that cause socio-political upheaval. Similar to Brenda Salter-McNeil's statement of intent in her groundbreaking *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, my own

expectation “is that this model will illuminate and energize our imagination for what is possible, so together we can create a new reality of reconciliation in communities around the world.”²

In this thesis, I make the case that faith leaders should think and act from a perspective of mitigation. Mitigation is essentially taking proactive measures to reduce the severity and impact of an event. “It requires a shift of the public policy mindset from post-disaster assistance to pre-disaster planning.... Future vulnerability can be reduced, but...a combination of more extensive adaptation and mitigation is necessary.”³ Mitigation is an important public policy strategy that is used in local, state, and federal governments. The Federal Emergency Management Agency defines mitigation as “actions that involve lasting, often permanent, reduction of, exposure to, probability of, or potential loss from hazard events.”⁴

Kreimer and Arnold write that this attention on prevention “focuses on the hazard that causes disaster and tries to eliminate or drastically reduce its direct effects.”⁵ This can take place by a variety of different methods and practices, including “educating the public, working with volunteers, and creating strong intergovernmental relationships.”⁶

This thesis answers vital questions such as: How should the church respond to these tragedies? What strategies should be implemented to prepare for these tumultuous times? How can the church reduce the psychological distress of its congregants? What steps should the

² Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 17.

³ Nicole Cornell Sadowski, “Mitigation Motivated by Past Experiences,” *Ocean & Coastal Management* 51, no. 4 (2007): 303–313.

⁴ Federal Emergency Management Glossary, <https://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/icsresource/assets/icsglossary.pdf> (accessed August 23, 2017).

⁵ A. Kreimer and M. Arnold, *Managing Disaster Risk in Emerging Economies* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2000), 143.

⁶ F. L. Edwards and D. C. Goodrich, “Non-FEMA mitigation: Local government actions,” in *Natural Hazard Mitigation: A Guidebook for Practitioners and Academics*, ed. A. Jerrolleman and J. J. Kiefer (Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2012).

church take to close the racial gaps that widen when socio-political unrest is generated? What biblical themes should the church prioritize and communicate during these times?

I intend to offer a simultaneous socio-political and prophetic response to these racialized storms to offer faith leaders a framework for preparing their congregations when these events occur. I do so by integrating my prior experience and research in the field of disaster resilience and urban planning with a theological and prophetic response that equips faith leaders for shepherding their flocks during socio-political unrest from racialized storms. This thesis is divided into four parts. Together, these parts make up a framework I have created to help congregations respond to racialized tragedies in America.

The Congregational Resilience Framework consists of four parts. Each part is elaborated on throughout the thesis. The first, Realization, involves an analysis of what is changing America's socio-political climate and why that change is exacerbating racial tension. This section defines the concept of racialized storms and will reveal why they hurt the church. To effectively mitigate the severity of racialized storms, we must understand what they are and what key elements give them intensity. Chapters one, two, and three comprise the Realization section. Chapter one surveys key events and organizations that are changing the socio-political climate in America. To properly understand the composition of a racialized storm, I will examine the cultural, technological, and political elements that have changed America's socio-political climate and subsequently give racialized storms ferocity.

In chapter two, I explore the social, psychological, and physical nature of disruption that emanate from these racialized storms. I highlight examples of social unrest in major American cities including Charlottesville, Ferguson, and Baltimore. Chapter three focuses primarily on the psychological distress and social vulnerability racialized storms produce in individuals. This

chapter examines the profound sociological ramifications of a theology of hyper-individualism and the influence of American exceptionalism for the Body of Christ today.

Part two, Readiness, analyzes the terms adaptation, mitigation, and preparedness. These concepts, if employed by church leadership, can enable congregations to build resilience in the face of a changing climate and worsening race relations. I propose three ways pastors and faith leaders can build readiness in their congregation. The first highlights strategies from the field of climate change adaptation and natural disaster mitigation that can be applicable in a congregational context. The second is to cultivate organizational diversity in the leadership structure of congregations. The third is to invest considerable time, energy, and resources in the outreach of Millennials. In chapter four, I focus on the need for awareness by analyzing the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis

Chapter five highlights multiple frameworks derived from the academic and professional discipline of climate change adaptation and natural disaster mitigation adapted to a congregational context. This model will enable congregational resilience in the face of these racialized storms. Climate adaptation and natural disaster mitigation will be highlighted, defined, and shown in order to explore how it can produce resilience within the church and greater capacity and capability for the church to lead in recovery and healing from the social and psychological disruption that occurs in the community and city it resides in. Preparation is the focus of this chapter.

Proper planning will enable a robust and prophetic response from churches that will produce hope within their own walls and in the surrounding community. Intentional planning for racialized storms is imperative for American evangelical churches. This chapter emphasizes the need for churches to have a plan in the face of a changing racial climate. Ways to prepare for

racialized storms will be discussed through a series of practical steps that churches and faith leaders can implement in their churches and ministries.

The benefits of congregational readiness in the face of these storms will be expressed as an opportunity for the gospel to have a greater platform in cities across America. Chapter six emphasizes the role of organizational diversity in a congregation's leadership structure. I discuss the importance of diversity and radical inclusivity through an exposition of Acts 6:1–7 as a way of mitigating racial tension in a congregational setting.

Chapter seven features a qualitative analysis project that describes what diversity and inclusion looks like to the mind of a religious Millennial. In this chapter, I make the case for why faith leaders should focus their efforts on the Millennial generation to better prepare for racialized storms. Here, I explain the methodology of photo elicitation and offer a snapshot of what Millennials think about diversity and whether the church should actively foster it.

Part three, Responsiveness, highlights how to respond to racialized tragedies. This section involves an analysis of prophetic imagination and leadership as a model that can aid pastors in addressing racialized storms. Sermons will be presented as an example of mitigating racial tension during times of unrest. The Responsiveness will consist of chapter eight and nine. Chapter eight will focus on responsiveness. I will highlight the role of the prophet in the Old Testament and prophetic imagination as way to confront the despair that racialized storms produce in individuals and communities. The significance of prophetic lament and corporate mourning will be examined to create space for individuals and communities to grieve. Prophetic leadership and messaging will be discussed as a tool for faith leaders to instill hope in their congregations, community, and city.

When racialized storms occur, the silence of the American church is deafening. This

chapter will advocate the need for a perspective shift that enables American churches to see these racialized storms as more than insurmountable challenges—that is, as opportunities that can be used as catalytic events for change within the hearts and minds of people in the congregation and in the communities these churches reside in. A comprehensive communication strategy will be created to give churches and faith leaders a template for what, when, and how to communicate while these storms rage.

Chapter nine contains three texts: a sermon I preached in response to the shooting at Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina, a blog that I wrote in response to the racialized storms that struck in the summer of 2016, and a sermon I wrote in response to the vitriol and xenophobia generated during the 2016 Presidential election.

Part four is entitled Renewal. This part focuses on what we can learn from these storms and how we can change as a result of what we learn. Chapter ten explains how racialized storms can be catalytic events that spark needed change in a congregation.

I believe that many faith leaders and pastors desire to speak out and lead their congregations in the mission of racial healing, but many of them don't know where to start. The enormity and complexity of this issue can be daunting. However, it would be wise to remember Jesus's words to the disciples in the book of Matthew: "Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"⁷ It is possible to bridge the racial divide in America. Moreover, as Ralph Watkins suggests, it is unlikely that the church can be an effective witness without seriously confronting racism:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod put out a report in 1994 entitled 'Racism and the Church,' and in this report it raised the question, 'Can the church be an effective witness if it doesn't deal effectively with racism?' The report suggested that, 'if the church is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ effectively to a world that is becoming smaller and smaller at the time being violently torn apart by racial and ethnic differences, the church itself will do well

⁷ Matthew 19:26, NIV.

to pay heed to the counsel of St. James, who said, ‘But be doers of the word, and not just hearers only deceiving yourselves,’ and ‘show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith.’ The implications here are obvious, in a world that suffers from the legacy and persistence of racism. The church, being an integral part of that world, has to step up and do something. It isn’t enough to talk about racism, or have litanies and worship services where we confess that we have been racist and have benefited from racism, while continuing to allow racism to persist. The above quote from the report suggests that we are deceiving ourselves if we don’t work at eradicating racism.⁸

While this thesis will focus a great deal on the intersection of race relations in America and the church, I do not intend to offer here a model for racial reconciliation or a strategy for solving structural and interpersonal racism. There are solid and informative books on those topics. The focus here is narrower: it seeks to lay out a strategy to enable pastors to reduce the severity and disruption of highly publicized and polarized racial tragedies within their congregation and communities.

The church can take the lead in communicating hope to the world in the midst of despair. The church has the potential to be an instrument of healing in a world that is full of pain. This thesis, I hope, will help churches be that instrument and play the sweet music of reconciliation and healing that our country so desperately needs to hear.

⁸ Ralph C. Watkins Anthony Bradley “A Black Church Perspective on Minorities in Evangelicalism,” in *Aliens in the Promise Land* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing Company, 2013), 115-16.

PART ONE

REALIZATION

The Congregational Resilience Framework's first section is, realization. This section focuses on key events and figures that have drastically altered the calculus of America's socio-political climate, breaks down the concept of racialized storms, and elaborates on why these storms are detrimental to the church. The fundamental point in this section is to generate awareness of what a racialized storm is and why they hurt congregations.

Awareness is critical to action. Evangelical leaders must understand the elements that make up a racialized storm and why it is so detrimental to their congregants, especially people of color who attend their church. Realization is the key to unlocking action. This is a journey, an educative process, that exposes church leaders to the painful issues that comprise our present-day racial inequalities. When it comes to preparing for hurricanes, typically action is taken when meteorologist report on the growing strength of a hurricane and the potential devastation it can cause when it makes landfall at that strength.

There are similarities with racialized storms. It is imperative that contemporary Christian leaders ascertain the extent of America's history of racial injustices, present-day structural inequalities and racial disparities. This learning process is critical to leading effectively during racialized crises in America. Many white evangelical pastors simply do not know what to say during these times because they have committed to learn about the cultural issues that black and brown people deal with. They have no context to draw, no knowledge to utilize and thus remain silent during times of racial unrest. Their silence alienates and isolates people of color and hinders the process of racial reconciliation.

Building congregational resilience to racialized storms starts with realizing that there is a storm coming and taking the necessary precautions to prepare your staff and congregations. Times are changing and America's race relations are growing worse. It is time for the American

evangelical church to divert its attention and resources to bridging the racial divide, quelling tension, and being a beacon of healing and hope for the surrounding communities and cities they reside in.

I

[Socio-Political] Climate Change

“America is in trouble – perhaps most of it – has to do with race. Everywhere we turn, there is discord and division, death and destruction. When we survey the land, we see a country full of suffering that cannot fully understand, and a history that we can no longer deny.”

Michael Eric Dyson, *Tears We Cannot Stop*

On December 12, 2015, nearly two hundred nations, led by the United States, came together in Paris to seriously address global climate change by signing the Paris Climate Accords, otherwise known as The Paris Agreement. This agreement’s “central aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.”¹ The Paris Agreement “requires countries to set their own targets for reducing emissions by 2020. The Obama administration committed the U.S. to reducing carbon emissions by 26 to 28 percent by 2025.”² This was an extraordinary moment in world history as nearly every nation on earth came together to mitigate the threat of global climate change.

The U.S., which took the lead in negotiating the deal, signed onto the agreement in April 2016, along with China, the European Union and 171 other nations. China and the U.S. account for nearly 40 percent of global carbon emissions. The agreement took effect in November of that year, after nations accounting for 55 percent of global emissions ratified the treaty. As of May 2017, 147 parties have ratified the agreement, out of 195 who signed onto the accord.³

¹ United Nations, “Framework Convention on Climate Change,” May 31, 2017, http://unfccc.int/paris_agreement/items/9485.php.

² Stefan Becket, “Paris Climate Agreement: What You Need to Know,” *CBS News*, Accessed June 1, 2017, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/paris-climate-agreement-what-you-need-to-know/>

³ Ibid.

On Thursday, June 1, 2017, President Donald J. Trump announced that he would withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement. While the United States' future position with the Paris Agreement is uncertain, climate change is a very real phenomenon and is already having drastic effects on a global scale.

Global Climate Change

When the sun shines, it warms the Earth, but an accumulation of Greenhouse gases like CO₂ and methane prevent the sun's radiation from bouncing back into space. These gases essentially trap heat.

Climate change refers to any significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature, precipitation or wind) lasting for an extended period (decades or longer) (EPA, 2007). While there has been much debate in the past 20 years over the causes of climate change, scientific organizations have documented statistically significant changes that have occurred due to climate change.⁴

According to the U.S. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, "Scientific evidence for warming of the climate system is unequivocal."⁵ Remarkably, there is near universal consensus among climatologists and climate scientists that the Earth's global climate is changing. "Ninety-seven percent of climate scientists agree that climate-warming trends over the past century are very likely due to human activities, and most of the leading scientific organizations worldwide have issued public statements endorsing this position."⁶

In its Fifth Assessment Report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, a group of 1300 independent scientific experts from countries all over the world under the auspices of the United Nations, concluded there's a more than 95 percent probability that human activities over the past 50 years have warmed our planet.⁷

⁴ Harold D. Briscoe, et al., "Adaptation to Climate Change in the Houston-Galveston Area: Perceptions and Prospects" (report presented to the Houston-Galveston Area Council, May 2009).

⁵ "Climate Change: How Do We Know?" Global Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet, last modified November 6, 2017, <https://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "A Blanket Around the Earth?" Global Climate Change: Vital Signs of the Planet, last modified November 6, 2017 <https://climate.nasa.gov/causes/>.

Rapid climate change has compelled industry leaders and government officials to introduce sweeping changes as to how they do business in hopes of mitigating the harmful effects of global climate change. Warming oceans, shrinking ice sheets, glacial retreat, decreased snow cover, sea level rise, declining Arctic sea ice, ocean acidification, extreme weather events, and global temperature rise are all the result of rapid global climate change.⁸ In fact, 16 of the 17 warmest years on record have occurred since 2001.⁹ The following figure “provides a summary of the impacts of increasing temperatures.”¹⁰

Whether it’s a severe drought in California, soaring temperatures in Arizona, massive amounts of precipitation in the Midwest, or powerful hurricanes that strike the Gulf coast, more and more people are becoming aware of the seriousness of climate change. The evidence is simply incontrovertible. The consequences of rapid climate change enormous. Climatologists agree that Hurricanes will become more frequent and more intense.

The intensity, frequency and duration of North Atlantic hurricanes, as well as the frequency of the strongest (Category 4 and 5) hurricanes, have all increased since the early 1980s. The relative contributions of human and natural causes to these increases are still uncertain. Hurricane-associated storm intensity and rainfall rates are projected to increase as the climate continues to warm.¹¹

Judith Rodin writes in *The Resilience Dividend* that, “Climate change is also having an effect on storms. In the North Atlantic, hurricanes have increased in frequency, as well as in intensity and duration, and storms are stronger and more severe in all parts of the world.”¹²

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ “The Consequences of Climate Change” *Global Climate Change*, last modified August 27, 2017, <https://climate.nasa.gov/effects/>

¹² Judith Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend: Managing Disruption, Avoiding Disaster, and Growing Stronger in an Unpredictable World*. (London: Profile Books, 2015), 82.

I studied public administration with an emphasis on urban revitalization and disaster resilience in graduate school at Texas A&M University. My final project, *Adaptation to Climate Change in the Houston-Galveston Area: Perceptions and Prospects*, was inspired by Hurricane Katrina's impact and growing consensus in the scientific community that climate change is a growing threat that is leaving coastal communities increasingly vulnerable. The project focused on climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies in the Houston/Galveston region. I researched and recommended policy initiatives and funding options that could enhance the interoperability of communication between local, state, and federal officials. My research focused on fostering greater collaboration of institutional structures and recommended greater legislative authority to implement transportation infrastructure investments that could build greater resilience in municipalities across the Houston-Galveston region.

The essential goal in this project was to give local and state officials a roadmap to build greater resiliency in their public infrastructure so officials could focus on public safety, coordination, and execution instead of being inefficient and inept due to faulty equipment and poor communication. The project's aim was to give municipalities a plan that would help reduce the vulnerability their communities faced as the risk of powerful hurricanes striking the region increased because of climate change. Innovative and effective mitigation *before* the storm was imperative so officials could focus on public safety, coordination, and execution instead of being hamstrung due to faulty equipment and poor communication.¹³ As I worked with city officials and industry leaders, I saw first-hand how the "ah-ha moment" occurs; a moment of realization, when they understand that are not immune to the harmful consequences of climate change.

It was not the purpose of this study to determine the cause of climate change, but to look at the evidence provided by scientific organizations and determine how the effects of climate change should alter the decision making process among officials with authority

¹³ Briscoe, "Adaptation to Climate Change in the Houston-Galveston Area."

over public infrastructure.¹⁴

While the Earth's climate has undergone profound changes within the last fifty years due to human-made carbon emissions—now leaving millions who live in coastal communities vulnerable—the socio-political climate in America has drastically changed during the last ten years and is (with a constellation of other disparities), producing social vulnerability in individuals, communities, neighborhoods, and cities across the nation.

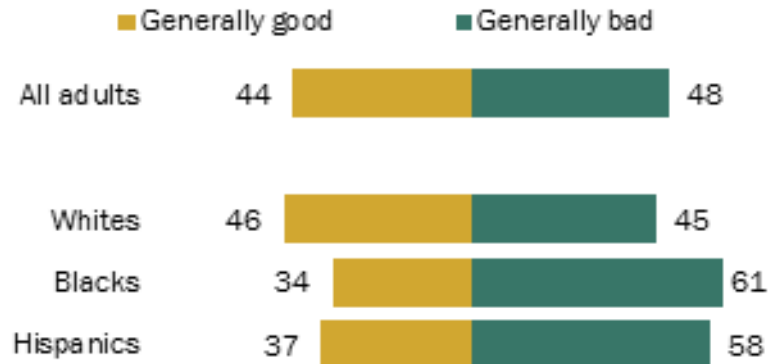
Similar to the greenhouses gases such as carbon dioxide and methane that humans emit and that have contributed to a rise in global temperatures, there have been a number of events and situations that have occurred, as well as political events and people that have played a role, which have led to socio-political climate change. This socio-political climate change is largely responsible for the social unrest and racial tension that Americans experience today. The parallels between actual global climate change and socio-political climate change are strikingly analogous. Both consist of man-made elements that contribute to their exacerbation. Both, if left unchecked, can have enormous consequences on their respective landscapes. Both, if taken seriously, can be mitigated through a serious of proactive measures and strategies that can potentially reduce their severity among individuals and communities.

Today, Americans now believe that race relations are getting worse and believe that these relations will continue to worsen under the President Trump's administration. The following figures from Pew Research Centers show the stark divide between Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics concerning race relations.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Whites divided over the state of race relations; blacks and Hispanics offer negative views

% saying race relations in the U.S. are ...



Note: "All adults" includes adults of all races. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics. Hispanics are of any race. "Don't know/Refused" responses not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 29-May 8, 2016. Q5F1.

"On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart"

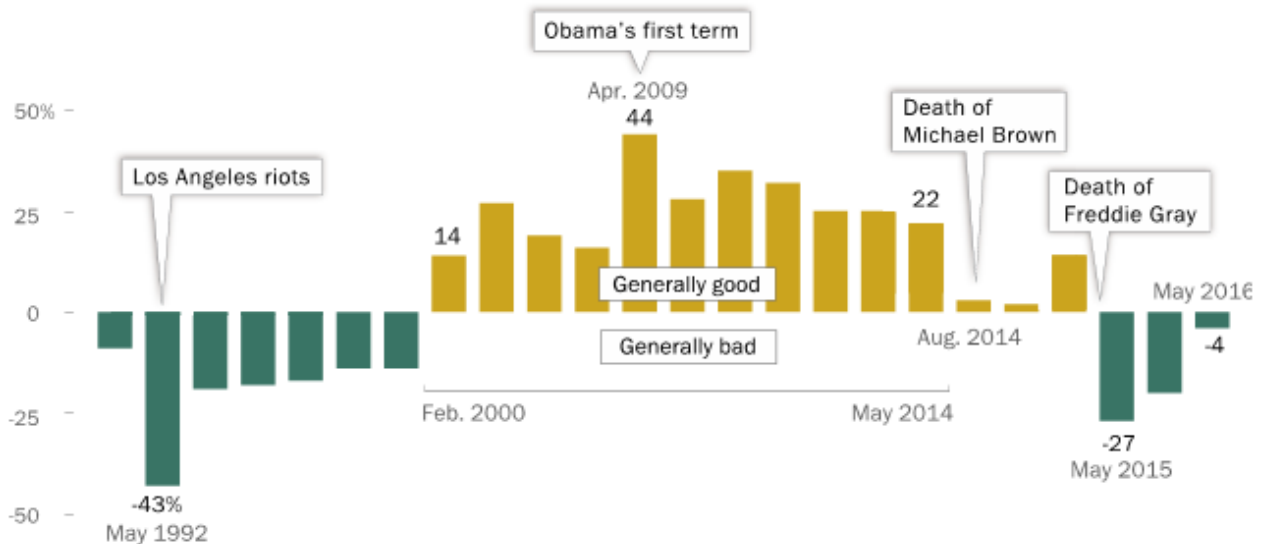
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¹⁵ "Whites Divided Over the State of Race Relations; Blacks and Hispanics Offer Negative Views" Pew Research Center: Social & Demographic Trends, last modified June 21 2016, http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/2-views-of-race-relations/st_2016-06-27_race-inequality-ch2-02/

Views of race relations are more negative now than they have been for much of the 2000s

Percentage point difference between all adults saying race relations are “generally good” and those saying “generally bad”



Note: Trend data from CBS News and CBS News/New York Times surveys.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 29-May 8, 2016. Q5F1.
 “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart”

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Before examining racialized storms—what they are, how they affect the church, and how to prepare and respond to them—I intend to highlight and briefly describe eight factors that have led to a changing socio-political climate. I believe that these factors are converging and are largely responsible for U.S. race relations being at their lowest point in decades. The consequences from these factors that affect America’s socio-political climate are dire. The election of Barack Obama, the rise of the Alt-Right, Census Bureau projections that predict changing racial demographics in America, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement,

¹⁶ “Views of Race Relations are More Negative Now Than They Have Been for Much of the 2000s.” *Pew Research Center: Social & Demographic Trends*, last modified June 21 2016, http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/2-views-of-race-relations/st_2016-06-27_race-inequality-ch2-03/

technological advances in social media platforms, Ferguson and the highly-publicized police shootings of unarmed black men, the election of Donald Trump and Charlottesville and the removal of confederate statues have all had a drastic effect on the socio-political climate in America.

The Election of Barack Obama

Nearly fifty years ago, Bobby Kennedy eerily predicted the ascendancy of a black man to the US presidency. “Things are moving so fast in race relations. A Negro could be President in 40 years. There is no question about it. In the next 40 years, a Negro can achieve that same position that my brother [John F. Kennedy] has.”¹⁷ Kennedy predicted that ascendancy to the exact year. Forty years later, Barack Obama, a charismatic Senator from Illinois, was voted in as the 44th President of the United States.

The election of Barack Obama was a monumental political event in the history of America. As the first person of color to win the presidency, the historical moment could not be disregarded. “For a nation built on a foundation of slavery, disenfranchisement, and white domination, the election of a man of color . . . to the highest office in the land, is of no small import.”¹⁸ President Obama’s ascendancy to the white house was a major change to America’s socio-political climate. His victory made it appear that the United States was finally moving to a post-racial society where racial differences would be a thought of the past—a society where an ideology of colorblindness would be the default lens of how Americans deal with racial progress.

¹⁷ “Robert F. Kennedy Predicted Black Presidency to the Exact Year,” *Rollingout*, last modified December 25, 2008, <https://rollingout.com/2008/12/25/robert-f-kennedy-predicted-black-presidency-to-the-exact-year/>

¹⁸ Tim Wise, *Between Barack and a Hard Place: Racism and White Denial in the Age of Obama*. (San Francisco: City lights Books, 2009), 7.

Numerous political pundits and newspapers joyfully applauded Obama's election as a clear sign that racial progress and equity had been achieved.

To some, this excitement wasn't mere glee at America's journey toward equality. Teasley and Ikard write that many used Obama's election and subsequent optimism of America being a post-racial society to end "all race and ethnicity-centered social policy mechanisms aimed at reducing social inequities."¹⁹ The optimism was short-lived. Early into his first term, President Obama made national news early during the arrest of renowned Harvard Scholar, Henry Louis Gates. Asked to comment on the affair, Obama claimed, "that the Cambridge police acted stupidly in arresting somebody when there was already proof that they were in their own home."²⁰ That comment touched on a deep politically charged issue of the relationship between the African American community and law enforcement. The backlash was swift and it was reported that the president was taken aback by the fallout he received from his comments.

Almost immediately, the Obama presidency unleashed racial furies that have only multiplied over time. From the tea party's racially tinged attacks on the president's policy agenda to the birther movement's more overtly racist fantasies asserting that Obama was not even an American citizen, the national racial climate grew more, and not less, fraught. If racial conflict, in the form of birthers, tea partiers and gnawing resentments, implicitly shadowed Obama's first term, it erupted into open warfare during much of his second. The Supreme Court's 2013 decision in the *Shelby v. Holder* case gutted Voting Rights Act enforcement, throwing into question the signal achievement of the civil rights movement's historic heroic period.²¹

Barack Obama campaigned on change and hope, but his eight years in office was mired by racially tinged rhetoric, an unprecedented level of obstructionism, and hyper-partisanship

¹⁹ Martell Teasley and David Ikard, "Barack Obama and the Politics of Race: The Myth of Postracism in America," *Journal of Black Studies* 40, no. 3 (2010): 414. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40648599>

²⁰ "Disgraceful: Cops Angry After Obama Slams Arrest of Black Scholar," *Fox News*, last modified July 24, 2009, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2009/07/24/disgraceful-cops-angry-after-obama-slams-arrest-black-scholar.html>

²¹ Joseph Peniel, "Obama's Efforts to Heal Racial Divisions and Uplift Black America," *The Washington Post*, last modified April 22, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/obama-legacy/racism-during-presidency.html>.

from Republicans. Furthermore, a string of high-profile deaths of black men consistently reopened the racially wound in this country. “The nation’s difficult history with race relations has been central to the narrative of Barack Obama’s rise to the presidency and has often complicated the ways in which he deals with the issue both as a candidate and as president.”²²

If the president commented on any of these situations his comments would be often followed by a backlash from white conservatives, angry that Obama mentioned race at all. For instance, after seventeen-year-old Trayvon Martin lost his life at the hands of George Zimmerman in an Orlando suburb, a colossal amount social unrest and nation-wide protests was generated.

President Obama, in an unscheduled visit to the White House Press Room, commented on the situation.

You know, when Trayvon Martin was first shot I said that this could have been my son. Another way of saying that is Trayvon Martin could have been me 35 years ago. And when you think about why, in the African American community at least, there’s a lot of pain around what happened here, I think it’s important to recognize that the African American community is looking at this issue through a set of experiences and a history that doesn’t go away.²³

Conservative analysts were highly critical of the President’s comments. However, some conservative commentators criticized Obama for what they called divisiveness by speaking as an African American instead of representing the entire country. Todd Starnes, a Fox News Radio anchor, tweeted “race-baiter in chief.”²⁴

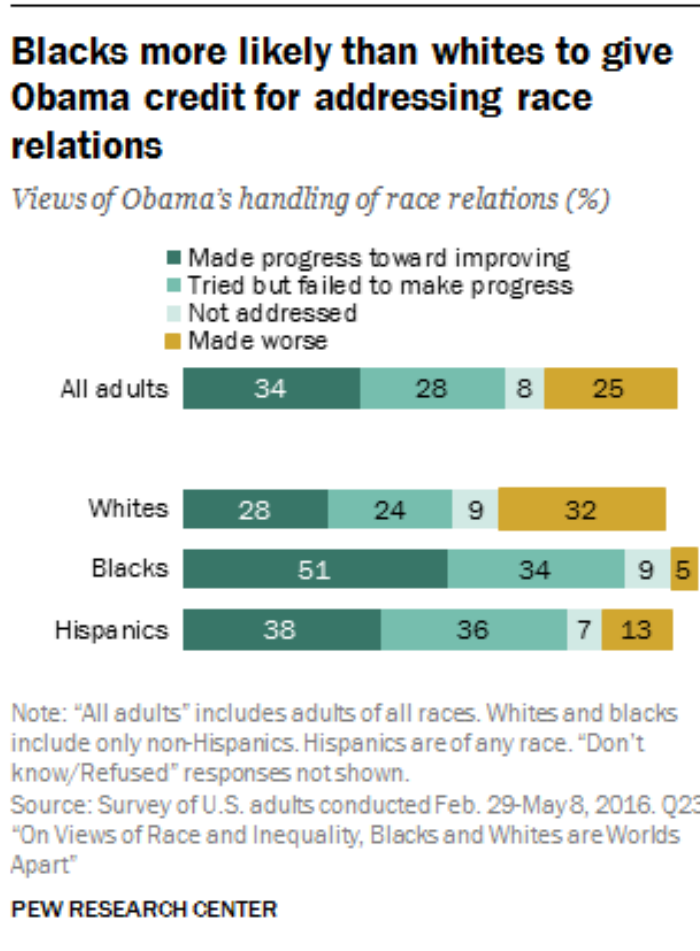
²² Krissah Thompson and Scott Wilson, “Obama on Trayvon Martin: ‘If I Had a Son, He’d Look Like Trayvon,’” *The Washington Post*, last modified March 23, 2012,

https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/obama-if-i-had-a-son-hed-look-like-trayvon/2012/03/23/gIQApKPpVS_story.html?utm_term=.bcf2a5ad62c4

²³ “Remarks By the President on Trayvon Martin,” *The White House: Office of the Press Secretary*, July 19, 2013, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/19/remarks-president-trayvon-martin>

²⁴ Tom Cohen, “Obama: ‘Trayvon Martin Could Have Been Me,’” *CNN Politics*, last modified July 19, 2013, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/07/19/politics/obama-zimmerman/index.html>

The figure below from the Pew Research Center shows the profound differences between races and the credit they give Obama for addressing the issue of race relations in America. Political conservatives hailed the election of Obama as a new era of a post-racial society. After eight years in the white house, many of these same conservatives blamed the president of deteriorating race relations. Whether Barack Obama bears the blame of worsening race relations, his candidacy and presidency was a profound phenomenon in this history of America’s socio-political landscape.



²⁵“Blacks More Likely Than Whites to Give Obama Credit for Addressing Race Relations,” *Pew Research Center: Social & Demographic Trends*, last modified June 21 2016, http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2016/06/27/2-views-of-race-relations/st_2016-06-27_race-inequality-ch2-09/

Census Bureau Projections

America's demographics are rapidly changing. Census Bureau projections show that by 2020 "more than half of the nation's children are expected to be part of a minority race or ethnic group."²⁶ This is an enormous demographic shift from fifty years ago when Caucasians made up nearly 80% of the population. As the country becomes more diverse, churches should reflect these demographic shifts in their congregations. "New population projections released this week by the Census Bureau indicate that the U.S. population will become "majority minority in 2044. At that time, whites will make up 49.7 of the population compared with 25 percent for Hispanics, 12.7 percent for blacks, 7.9 percent for Asians and 3.7 percent for multiracial persons."²⁷

When the Census Bureau came out with these projections, it generated a considerable amount of news. Impending shifts in America's racial composition has contributed to white anxiety and fear. Dr. Jennifer Richeson has recently coauthored two studies on "the effect of changing racial demographic shifts on racial attitudes and political ideology."²⁸ Her research shows that as whites become aware of their potential minority status in the future there is an "increased erosion of progressive race-related social policy."²⁹

A control group was given information on current U.S. demographics, while a test group was given census headlines using "majority-minority" language about the impending shift in racial demographics. White Americans who read about the demographic shift in California to a majority-minority state, for example, became more likely to endorse

²⁶ Noor Wazwaz, "It's Official: The US is Becoming a Minority—Majority Nation," *U.S. News & World Report*, July 6, 2015, <https://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/07/06/its-official-the-us-is-becoming-a-minority-majority-nation>.

²⁷ William Frey, "New Projections Point to a Majority Minority Nation in 2044," *Brookings*, last modified December 12, 2014, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2014/12/12/new-projections-point-to-a-majority-minority-nation-in-2044/>

²⁸ Catherine Woodiwiss, "The Era of White Anxiety Is Just Beginning," *Sojourner*, last modified March 8, 2016, <https://sojo.net/articles/era-white-anxiety-just-beginning>

²⁹ Ibid.

conservative race-related policies than those who did not—including among those who identify as moderate or progressive. Richeson suggested this evidence of shifting political allegiances is a function of “social identity threat”—the idea, she said, that “if racial minorities increase in status, they are likely to reduce the influence of white Americans in society ... Kwon and Richeson agree that the finding suggest not just anxiety about minority groups increasing in size, but a fear that that may also mean corresponding loss of power.³⁰

The concern of impending shifts in American racial demographics and the subsequent resentment and fear that has been produced is one of the reasons behind the rise of the ideology of white nationalism. Amanda Taub writes,

For a long time, he said, white nationalism was less an ideology than the default presumption of American life. Until quite recently, white Americans could easily see the nation as essentially an extension of their own ethnic group. But the country’s changing demographics, the civil rights movement and a push for multiculturalism in many quarters mean that white Americans are now confronting the prospect of a nation that is no longer built solely around their own identity. For many white people, of course, the growing diversity is something to celebrate. But for others it is a source of stress. The white nationalist movement has drawn support from that latter group. Its supporters argue that the United States should protect its white majority by sharply limiting immigration, and perhaps even by compelling nonwhite citizens to leave.³¹

As the news of America becoming browner permeates the socio-political landscape, fear, resentment, and anxiety has pervaded many white people. An ABC News/Washington Post poll conducted last March during the 2016 Presidential campaign revealed that “37 percent of his [Trump] supporters strongly believed that whites are losing out because of preferences for blacks and Hispanics.”³² The issue of white anxiety over changing racial demographics is a significant development in America’s socio-political climate.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Amanda Taub, “White Nationalism, Explained,” *The New York Times*, last modified November 21, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/22/world/americas/white-nationalism-explained.html?mcubz=1>

³² Candice Smith, “Some White Trump Supporters Fear Becoming Minority,” *ABC News*, last modified November 2, 2016, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/white-trump-supporters-fear-minority/story?id=43229203>

Ferguson and Police Shootings of Unarmed Black Men

The highly-publicized killings of unarmed African-Americans have exacerbated racial tension in American society. Michael Brown was shot killed in an altercation with Darren Wilson, a Ferguson police officer, on August 9, 2014. His dead body remained on the street for nearly four hours. He received no medical attention and was eventually taken away in a police van. Dozens of neighborhoods residents watched in horror as his body lay in the hot August sun for hours. The underlying tension that between the African American community and police had reached a boiling point has hundreds of residents burned with rage at the killing of Mike Brown. A deep communal mourning took place because many residents of Ferguson we're intimately familiar with confrontation and unfair treatment by the Ferguson Police Department.

The ensuing days and weeks we're marked with violent "protest and acts of vandalism in Ferguson, as well as widespread calls for an investigation into the incident. After a day of vigils, the looting of businesses, vandalizing vehicles, as well as protestor's clash with policemen occurred."³³ The nation was blindsided by division, frustration, tension, turmoil, and hate. The tectonic plates underlying the erosion in the American criminal justice system and racial inequalities was producing a race quake to shake America to the core. The unrest wasn't limited to a specific geographic locale. Protest and restlessness occurred in hundreds of America cities.

Mark Lamont Hill writes in *Nobody: Casualties on America's War on the Vulnerable*,

For many of the thousands who erupted in protest after Michael Brown's death, and again after the grand jury's subsequent decision not to indict Darren Wilson, the motivating factor for their anger was not shock ... In response to the grand jury's decision not to indict Darren Wilson, crowds of protesters appeared in Oakland, Los Angeles, Dallas, Denver, Washington, Minneapolis, Chicago, Atlanta, and New York to stand in solidarity. They wanted to see justice prevail in the particular instance.³⁴

³³ Cassandra Chaney and Danielle Joy Davis, "No Justice, No Peace: Social Unrest in Ferguson," *The Western Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 4 (2015): 268,

³⁴ Marc Lamont Hill, *Nobody: Casualties of Americas War on the Vulnerable, From Ferguson to Flint and Beyond* (New York: Atria Paperback, 2017), 11-12

The civil unrest that was produced in Ferguson swept through American cities from Hoboken to Spokane; massive protest erupted from coast to coast as young people stood, marched, protested, and disrupted the normal civil rhythms. The psychological trauma that Ferguson produced had a severe impact on the socio-political landscape in America. Nekima Levy-Pounds writes in *Seeking Justice in the Age of Rest*, “not since the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s had we witnessed sustained waves of protests, demonstrations, and outcries against racial injustice in the U.S., young folks in Ferguson marched to the frontlines of the battle for racial equality and forced America to hear their voices demanding justice.”³⁵ Sociologist Lisa Broidy and Wayne Santoro discuss the impact of Michael Brown’s death and the subsequent uprising in, *Race Relations in America and the Case of Ferguson*. They suggested that the reason why this particular shooting received so much media attention was because of how the protest quickly turned to massive violence.

Protests like street marches have become so routinized that at best they get covered in the back pages of the local newspaper. But what no one can ignore are protest that turn violent. Whether we call them riots or rebellions, they are front page news. They are dramatic and unpredictable, threaten life and property, and capture the media’s attention. Policymakers cannot ignore them.³⁶

Indeed, policymakers are unable to ignore the fires that burn from the massive unrest. Governor Jay Nixon activated the National Guard to restore order and immediately created The Ferguson Commission to study the racial strife and inequality in Ferguson and chart “a path

³⁵ Nekima Levy-Pounds, “Seeking Justice in the Age of Unrest,” *The Crisis Magazine* 2015, <https://www.thecrisismagazine.com/>

³⁶ Arne L. Kallenberg, Lisa Broidy, and Wayne Santoro, “Race Relations in America and the Case of Ferguson,” *OUPblog*, last modified October 26, 2014, <https://blog.oup.com/2014/10/race-relations-ferguson-michael-brown/>

toward change”³⁷ The death of Michael Brown and the subsequent verdict ruling officer Darren Wilson not-guilty cut deeply into the heart of the African American community.

The Rise of the Alt-Right

The Alt-Right has its origins in an online publication that Richard Spencer (a prominent white nationalist) debuted in 2010.³⁸ The ideology essentially rejects mainstream conservatism because of a perceived focus on Jews and non-whites by traditional conservatives. This ideology focuses on a “race-infused brand of extreme conservatism” that advocates for white people as a group.³⁹ “There are people with other beliefs who fall under the umbrella of the Alt-Right but all share a fixation on white identity as central to their ideology.”⁴⁰ The movement has gained steam in recent years with Donald Trump’s candidacy and presidency. “In recent months, a number of these Alt-Righters have promoted Donald Trump’s presidential bid, seeing the populist candidate as someone tougher than so called ‘cuckservatives,’ thanks to his controversial stands on issues ranging from immigration to Muslims in America.”⁴¹

The Alt-Right grown in its popularity and influence in recent years. “Their goal is to influence mainstream whites by exposing them to the concept of white identity and racial consciousness.”⁴² This is a movement that is profoundly influencing the socio-political climate in America.

³⁷ “Forward Through Ferguson,” *The Ferguson Commission*, accessed November 8, 2017, <http://forwardthroughferguson.org>

³⁸ “Alt Right: A Primer About the New White Supremacy,” *ADL*, accessed November 8, 2017, <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/alt-right-a-primer-about-the-new-white-supremacy>

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

People drawn to the alt-right have for years operated anonymously in obscure corners of the internet. But when Mr. Trump became the Republican Party's presidential candidate, the movement "was able to really troll its way into mainstream conversation," says George Hawley, an assistant professor of political science at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa. It gained significant attention in August, when Hillary Clinton, the Democratic presidential nominee, denounced Mr. Trump for having ties to the extreme movement, and when Stephen K. Bannon, a former executive of Breitbart News, was tapped to run Mr. Trump's campaign. Mr. Bannon has called Breitbart "the platform for the altright," though he denies that the website is in any way associated with the movement. Mr. Trump stoked new concerns about the movement after the election by naming Mr. Bannon as his chief White House strategist.⁴³

Looking across the socio-political landscape in America, one cannot deny the impact that the Alt-Right is having on conservatism and the discourse of race and identity in America.

Black Lives Matter

Black Lives Matter (BLM) was first used a twitter hashtag following the death of Trayvon Martin in 2012. BLM has been central in the conversation about police brutality in our mainstream political discourse.

Born as a Twitter hashtag, Black Lives Matter has evolved into a potent alternative to the political paralysis and isolation that racial justice proponents have faced since the election of Obama. In just over two years, the young movement has reinvigorated confrontation politics, giving voice to a popular and righteous rage, establishing a new touchstone of grassroots resistance, and ending the acquiescence that has crippled progressive forces in the age of Obama. The upsurge, which has centered on the crucial, galvanizing issue of police misconduct, also shows signs of addressing larger questions of social inequity.⁴⁴

⁴³ Sarah Brown, "Scholarship on 'Alt-Right' Extremism Gains New Currency," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 63, no. 17 (2016): A31, <http://chronicle.com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/section/About-the-Chronicle/83>

⁴⁴ Russell Rickford, "Black Lives Matter," *New Labor Forum* 25. No. 1 (2016): 34–42, DOI: 10.1177/1095796015620171

BLM is a social justice movement that is capturing the hearts of minds of young people of all colors. Critics of the movement have accused it of provoking violence against police.

The organized demonstrations, protests and outrage of a new generation of civil rights activist turned the hashtag #blacklivesmatter into the clarion call for a new social justice movement. Black lives matter activists have forcefully argued that the U.S. criminal justice system represents a gateway to racial oppression, one marked by a drug war that disproportionately targets, punishes and warehouses young men and women of color.⁴⁵

The organization has received a great deal of criticism from conservative circles because of its emphasis on black lives. “All Lives Matter” and “Blue Lives Matter” have been hashtags that have been used to counter the narrative of the group. Today, the hashtag black lives matters is one of the most used social justice hashtags in the world. The movement is primarily made up of young people who demand criminal justice reform in America.

The Political Ascent of Trump

The candidacy and subsequent election of Donald Trump was a titanic political event. His brash rhetoric and strongman persona has captivated the media and drawn voters and supporters to his cause. The question that is often asked regarding President Trump and race relations is, “Will he heal or hurt the racial tension that is pervasive in America today? Donald Trump has made incendiary comments about women, has threatened to “temporarily” ban Muslims from entering the country, desires to build a wall along our southern border, and has replaced deliberation and debate with name-calling, ridicule, and insults. Think “little Marco Rubio, lyin’ Ted, and crooked Hillary.” Trymaine Lee writes in an MSNBC article:

Like a maestro, Trump has time and again whipped his audiences into a frenzy with talk of building a wall along the Mexican border and insults for those who oppose him. Trump’s incendiary, often coded racial language from center stage has done little to boost

⁴⁵The Washington Post, “Obama’s Effort to Heal Racial Divisions and Uplift Black America.”

the spirits of those who've taken umbrage to Trump's anti-everyone-else brand of politics.⁴⁶

Despite his brash style and incendiary comments, Trump bested a field of seventeen successful business and political leaders in the Republican Party. Senators, governors, and Republicans all across the conservative spectrum were beaten fair and square by the billionaire businessman. He defeated Hillary Clinton in the 2016 Presidential election and has indicated that he intends to fulfill all of his campaign promises, including the ones threaten to deepen the racial divide. Using data from a Reuters poll conducted close to Trump's one-hundredth day in office, John Whiteside argues that more Americans believe that race relations are deteriorating under President Trump. He writes:

respondents from both major parties appeared to be more concerned about racism than two years ago as racial, ethnic and religious tensions have flared across the country. A spate of highly publicized police shootings of African Americans has strained community bonds. So have deadly mass killings in Orlando and San Bernardino, California, by assailants inspired at least in part by Islamic extremist groups. Some Trump critics say he stoked the enmity with his incendiary campaign rhetoric, including vows to ban Muslim visitors and deport millions of undocumented immigrants.⁴⁷

The age of colorblindness gave candidate Trump the ability to make incendiary statements about minorities with little electoral penalty. His brash style is a stark difference from the pragmatic and conciliatory President Obama. President Trump boldly claimed to be the "Law and Order" candidate. This oft-repeated phrase during the campaign harkened back to the days of President Nixon who experienced electoral success by stoking the fears and resentments of white voters in America's heartland.

⁴⁶ Trymaine Lee, "Donald Trump's Plan to Solve the Racial Divide," *MSNBC*, last modified March 22, 2016, <http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/donald-trumps-plan-solve-the-racial-divide>

⁴⁷ John Whitesides, "More Americans Say Race Relations Deteriorating: Reuters Poll," *Reuters*, last modified April 28, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-poll-race-idUSKBN17U1JU>

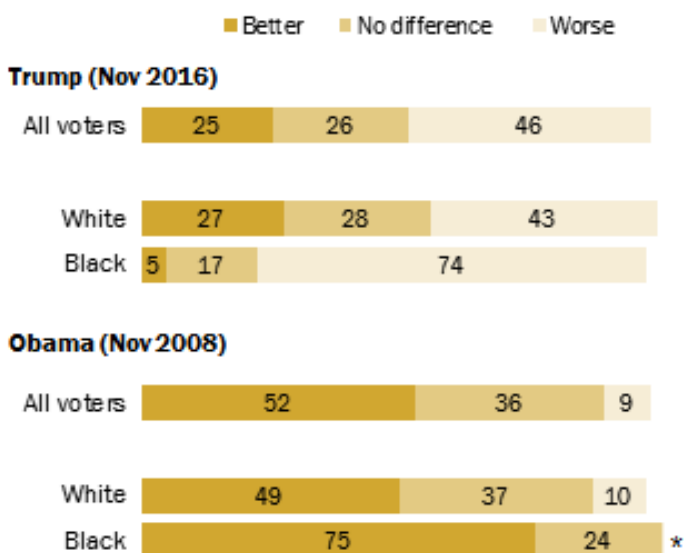
The 2016 Presidential contest has millions of Americans concerned about racism and prejudice. When you compound the heated rhetoric from the Trump campaign with the string of highly publicized killings of unarmed African Americans, you get a nation on edge, highly anxious about matters of race relations. Americans are not optimistic about matters of race under his presidency. According to a McClatchy-Marist survey released on March 13, 2017, “52 percent of Americans think race relations will get worse under the Trump administration, and just 26 percent say they will get better.”⁴⁸ Among minorities, the outlook is bleak. A Pew Research Center survey found that 74 percent of blacks expect that race relations in America will worsen with Donald Trump as president.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Rebecca Savransky, “Poll: Majority Thinks Race Relations Will Deteriorate Under Trump,” *The Hill*, last modified, March 13, 2017, <http://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/323731-poll-majority-thinks-race-relations-will-deteriorate-under-trump>

⁴⁹ Shiva Maniam, “Many Voters, Especially Blacks, Expect Race Relations to Worsen Following Trump’s Election,” *Pew Research Center*, last modified November 21, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/21/race-relations-following-trumps-election/>

Blacks largely expect race relations to worsen with Trump's election

% of voters who say election of (Trump/Obama) as president will lead to _____ race relations



Notes: Whites and blacks include only those who are not Hispanic. Don't know responses not shown. For November 2016, N=96 for black voters.

Source: Voter callback survey conducted Nov. 10-14, 2016.

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Now more than ever, the church must prepare for and respond to racially charged events that significantly affect the socio-political landscape of our country. Eight years of the Obama administration has not healed the America's centuries old racial wound and it would be unwise to think that a President Trump will successfully be able to quell the racial anxiety that exist in America.

⁵⁰ Pew Research Center, "Many Voters, Especially Blacks, Expect Race Relations to Worsen Following Trump's Election."

Digital Interconnection

It is important to recognize how vulnerable churches are in the twenty-first century era of globalization and digital interconnection. Robert Miller writes in *Hurricane Katrina*:

Communication & Infrastructure Impacts:

As the 21st-century goes along we will find ourselves paying more attention to the implications of vulnerabilities in our critical infrastructures. There's a reason for this concern, given the ways in which today's globalized, just in time, interconnected world magnifies the consequences of regional catastrophes. Globalization and interconnections mean that event which once could have been handled locally will have widespread ripple effects, and that these facts can be unexpectedly disruptive.⁵¹

These racialized storms don't merely affect a specific locale—with the advent of social media and other technological and digital advances, the impact of these storms are felt all over the country. Eric Garner's death didn't just affect Staten Island; the shock and dismay was experienced across the country in Spokane. Walter Scott's death didn't merely affect North Charleston, but the pain could be felt as far as North Fort Myers, Florida.

Although Philando Castile was killed in Minnesota, the psychological storm surge disturbed the entire nation. Because of Facebook's feature "Facebook live" millions of Americans were seeing live footage of a man dying in front of his girlfriend and her four-year-old daughter. The technological advances of the mobile/camera phone and the advent of social media have enabled emotional shockwaves to be felt beyond the epicenter where the tragedies occur.

Racialized storms hurt the church because of the magnitude of digital interconnection and the changing public sphere. "Americans are increasingly turning to social media for news and

⁵¹ Robert Miller, "Hurricane Katrina: Communications & Infrastructure Impacts," National Defense University, January 2006, <https://blackboard.angelo.edu/bbcswebdav/institution/LFA/CSS/Course%20Material/BOR4301/Readings/Hurricane%20Katrina%20Communications%20%26%20Infrastructure%20Impacts.pdf> (accessed October 30, 2017).

political information.”⁵² Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and other platforms have drastically changed the public sphere and are making civil discourse difficult to achieve. Monica Anderson and Paul Hitlin write in a Pew Research Center article, *Social Media Conversations about Race*, that “these platforms have provided new arenas for national conversations about race and racial inequality.”⁵³ Hitlin and Anderson describe how Twitter is now a platform that hosts discussions on race immediately after major news events.⁵⁴

Technological advances in media have put a greater spotlight on the issue of police brutality. The beating of Rodney King is a clear example.

The video footage vividly told the story of police brutality on television to a much wider audience. The police officers, who were acquitted of the crime, had hit King more than 50 times with their batons. Today, live streaming, tweets and Facebook posts have blasted the incidents of police brutality, beyond the black community and into the mainstream media. Philando Castile’s fiancée, Diamond Reynolds, who was in the car with her daughter when he was shot, streamed the immediate aftermath of the shooting on her phone using Facebook live. “Modern technology allows, indeed insists, that the white community take notice of these kinds of situations and incidents.”⁵⁵

The digital interconnection that exists today drives news-cycles. The “trending” phenomenon brings events and ideas to the forefront of people’s computers and phone screens.

Today, one can simply click on the home feature of Twitter or Facebook and get a list of the top ten trending items. Before the advent of social media, people could remain in an echo chamber of media outlets—conservatives watching Fox News and reading The Wall Street Journal and liberals watching MSNBC and reading The New York Times. Yes, there would be

⁵² Monica Anderson and Paul Hitlin, “Social Media Conversations about Race,” *Pew Research Center: Internet & Technology*, last modified August 15, 2016, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/08/15/social-media-conversations-about-race/>

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Katie Nodjimbadem, “The Long, Painful History of Police Brutality in the U.S.,” *The Smithsonian.com*, last modified July 27, 2017, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/long-painful-history-police-brutality-in-the-us-180964098/>

opinion pieces from time to time, but for the most part, a particular agenda would be advanced. When a racialized storm occurs it magnifies the issue of racial inequality (particularly in America's criminal justice system) that the African American community faces.

Twitter is a platform that makes civil dialogue especially challenging, especially as Twitter posts are restricted to only 280 characters. Nikita Carney analyzes this phenomenon, noting:

To effectively convey messages in so little space, words must be chosen carefully. To transpose Barthes's explanation about myth, each tweet must be crafted in a way to capture one's attention. Since the Twitter platform does not allow space for a lengthy, nuanced conversation to unfold, the importance of making an immediate impression is a central character of these debates on social media. The practice of "trolling," leaving incendiary comments with the intention of causing offense and eliciting a response, further amplifies the polarity of political conversations that unfold.⁵⁶

When the racialized storm of Ferguson struck America, the images of violence and confrontation were quickly circulated in national and international news.⁵⁷ Hundreds of journalists, from all over the United States and the world, traveled to Ferguson get a clear sense of what was happening on the ground. Social media exploded with "over 3.6 million posts appeared on Twitter documenting and reflecting on the emerging details surrounding Michael Brown's death by the end of the month, '#Ferguson' had appeared more than eight million times on the Twitter platform."⁵⁸ A significant portion of the US population now has video-enabled smartphones that allow individuals to capture footage in real time and instantly post that footage to a social media platform that has the potential to go viral and be seen by millions.

⁵⁶ Nikita Carney, "All Lives Matter, but So Does Race: Black Lives Matter and the Evolving Role of Social Media," *Humanity & Society* 40, no. 2 (2016): 194, DOI: 10.1177/0160597616643868

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*,

The technological advances that America has seen in the last ten years present enormous opportunities, but also significant challenges. While Twitter and other social media platforms have been used to generate interest in activism and engagement in critical social issues; these platforms have sparked negative behavior in communication. Tracy Radosevic writes,

Peruse most any website that offers a “Comments,” “Feedback,” or “Review” section and it won’t be long before you find the “conversation” devolving into catty remarks, at best, and sometimes downright abusive and completely inappropriate comments at worst. Even this phenomenon, Online Disinhibition Effect, has been studied (and has its own Wikipedia page: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Online_disinhibition_effect). The basic premise is that it’s safer to be mean from a distance. According to the site: *“The general feeling is that the average internet user would not make such comments or behave in such ways if not for the invisible smokescreen that online usernames and anonymity provide.”*

The online disinhibition effect has made civil discourse nearly impossible to achieve.

Communication degrades to harsh, calloused responses that make civil dialogue nearly impossible.

Digital interconnection helps and hurts the church. It helps by giving the church a platform to the wider world to spread the message of Jesus Christ. It can potentially hurt the church through calloused and insensitive statements made by those within the congregation about cultural and political issues that are affecting the socio-political landscape of America.

For example, during the series of racialized storms that occurred in the summer of 2016, social media platforms turned into minefields. Dozens of members from my own church took to social media to air out their frustrations with the American criminal justice system and presidential candidate Trump, while others railed against the lazy, disrespectful, and violent black community.

Technology, if not put in its proper place, can rob us of the ability to listen with empathy. It steals intentionality and vulnerability. If the church is to be a vibrant community filled with

flawed people, it must acknowledge the potential pitfalls and perils of taking to social media to air out opinions during heated moments that affect our socio-political landscape.

In *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media*, Swanson writes, “The philosopher Emmanuel Levinas argues that human life is born in the discovery of the face of another.”⁵⁹ Online communication and digital interconnection diminishes face-to-face interaction and emboldens people to make disparaging and demeaning remarks to others that they certainly wouldn’t make if they were face to face. Human contact through face to face interaction generates compassion and a deeper understanding for the other person. Online communication can potentially diminish the sympathy that can be created when two people sit down and listen to voice inflections, see facial expressions, and genuinely seek a civil dialogue.

Charlottesville and the Removal of Confederate Statues

As I write this thesis, another racialized storm is striking America. Charlottesville, Virginia is exploding with violence. Tension has been building for months—ever since the Charlottesville City Council voted to remove the statue of Confederate General Robert E. Lee back in February 2017. There was a small protest of about 100 white nationalists in May 2017 that marched around statue in protest to the City Council’s decision.⁶⁰ In July of 2017 the City Council voted in favor of renaming Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson parks to Emancipation and Justice Park. Soon after the City Council’s decision, an event was organized to protest the removal of the statue of Robert E. Lee by white nationalists entitled, “Unite the Right.”

⁵⁹ Richard W. Swanson, “Taking Place/Taking Up Space,” in *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media*, ed. Holly Hearon and Philip Ruge-Jones (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2009), 135

⁶⁰ “A Timeline of the Deadly Weekend in Charlottesville, Virginia,” *Eyewitness News ABC 7*, last modified August 14, 2017, <http://abc7.com/a-timeline-of-events-in-charlottesville-virginia/2305769/>

Leading up to the event, The Southern Poverty Law Center described it as “the largest hate-gathering of its kind in decades in the United States.”⁶¹ Thousands of white nationalists, members of the KKK, Alt-Right activists, and neo-Nazis we’re expected to take part in the rally. “The looming social chemistry on a hot summer weekend—115 miles from Washington, D.C.—seems to point to the clear possibility of violence.”⁶² The Southern Poverty Law Center’s prediction of violence came true. On Friday, August 11, 2017 hundreds of torch wielding men marched on campus at the University of Virginia, chanting, “you will not replace,” “white lives matter,” and the “Nazi-associated phrase ‘blood and soil.’”⁶³ The photos and videos of furious white men carrying tikki torches (eerily reminiscent of KKK rallies during the Jim Crow era) from the protest soon went viral on major social media platforms. The next morning violence erupted as fights broke out between protesters and counter-protesters.

Around noon, the violence had reached a point where Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe declared a state of emergency. At approximately 1:40pm, “a car plows into a crowd of people. One counter-protester, 32-year-old Heather Heyer, is killed. At least 19 other people were sent to the hospital.”⁶⁴ Two Virginia State Police officers also died in a Helicopter crash shortly after. The man who was behind the wheel of the ISIS style terror tactic was 20-year-old James Alex Fields Jr. His action was a clear act of domestic terrorism. Before the terrorist attack, Charlottesville was generating national and international headlines due to the violence on

⁶¹ Bill Morlin, “Extremist’ Unite the Right Rally: A Possible Historic Alt-Right Showcase?” *Southern Poverty Law Center*, last modified August 7, 2017, <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/08/07/extremists-unite-right-rally-possible-historic-alt-right-showcase>

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Eyewitness News ABC 7, “A Timeline of the Deadly Weekend in Charlottesville, Virginia.”

Saturday morning and the eerie march of hundreds of white nationalists, supremacists, and neo Nazis on the University of Virginia campus.

President Donald J. Trump issued remarks from his private golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey, on Saturday, August 12, 2017: “We’re closely following the terrible events unfolding in Charlottesville, Virginia. We condemn in the strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry, and violence. On many sides ... on many sides.”⁶⁵ He refused to specifically mention the white supremacists, nationalists, KKK sympathizers, and neo-Nazis. Instead, he attempted to generate a moral equivalency between the white supremacists who were protesting the removal of Robert E. Lee’s statue and the counter-protesters who were challenging the ideology of white supremacy. The fallout was swift and brutal. His remarks drew widespread condemnation from the political left and right. Prominent republicans criticized the President and urged him to specifically condemn the white supremacists at the rally. Marco Rubio, US Senator from Florida, posted a series of tweets about the subject:

The organizers of events which inspired [and] led to [the Charlottesville terrorist attack] are 100% to blame for a number of reasons ... They are adherents of an evil ideology which argues certain people are inferior because of race, ethnicity or nation or origin ... When entire movement built on anger [and] hatred towards people different than you, it justifies [and] ultimately leads to violence against them ... These groups today use SAME symbols [and] same arguments of #Nazi & #KKK, groups responsible for some of worst crimes against humanity ever ... Mr. President, you can’t allow [white supremacists] to share only part of blame ... They support [an] idea which cost nation [and] world so much pain.... The [white supremacy] groups will see being assigned only 50% of blame as a win ... We cannot allow this old evil to be resurrected.⁶⁶

Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina stated the day after the event on Fox News:

⁶⁵ Josh Levin, “The Real Meaning of ‘On Many Sides,’” *Slate*, last modified August 12, 2017, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2017/08/in_his_speech_on_charlottesville_donald_trump_told_the_nation_exactly_what.html

⁶⁶ Carlos Garcia, “Marco Rubio Posted an Interesting Response to Trump’s Defiant Statement on Racism,” *The Blaze*, last modified August 16, 2017, <https://www.theblaze.com/news/2017/08/16/marco-rubio-posted-an-interesting-response-to-trumps-defiant-statement-on-racism/>

When it comes to President Trump, I'm with Corey Gardner, he missed an opportunity to be very explicit here. These groups seem to think they have a friend in Donald Trump in the White House ... we need more from our President ... I know the President can be clear when he wants to be, he needs to be here.⁶⁷

After three days of intense media and political pressure, President Trump was forced to make statements that specifically condemned the white supremacists, nationalists, and neo-Nazis who were the perpetrators of the violence that erupted on Saturday. Various political commentators were suspicious of the President's sincerity during that press conference. They felt that his remarks were not what he truly felt. The President proved these commentators right.

The next day, Tuesday August 14, 2017, the President, during a press conference on the administration's infrastructure proposals, unloaded on the situation in Charlottesville. "He simply couldn't help himself. A day after President Donald Trump gave into political pressure and denounced, by name, the white supremacists and neo-Nazis who rallied in Charlottesville this past weekend, he reversed course and again claimed both sides were to blame for the violence in the Virginia city."⁶⁸

At a press conference at Trump Tower in New York City, Trump made several controversial statements. He had received an enormous backlash on the Saturday before for his, "many sides" comment. He doubled down on those statements at the press conference in Trump Tower:

I watched those very closely, much more closely than you people watched it. And you have—you had a group on one side that was bad, and you had a group on the other side that was also very violent, and nobody wants to say that, but I'll say it right now. You

⁶⁷ "Exclusive: Sen. Graham on Charlottesville, North Korea, and the GOP Agenda," *Fox News*, last modified August 13, 2017, <http://www.foxnews.com/transcript/2017/08/13/exclusive-sen-graham-on-charlottesville-north-korea-and-gop-agenda.html>

⁶⁸ Gregory Krieg, "The 14 Most Shocking Comments from Trump's Charlottesville News Conference," *CNN Politics*, last modified August 16, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/08/15/politics/donald-trump-charlottesville-lines/index.html>

had a group—you had a group on the other side that came charging in without a permit, and they were very, very violent.⁶⁹

Several questions came up in regard to why he waited nearly forty-eight hours to condemn the neo-Nazis and white supremacists. His response:

I wanted to make sure, unlike most politicians, that what I said was correct, not make a quick statement. The statement I made on Saturday, the first statement, was a fine statement. But you don't make statements that direct unless you know the facts. It takes a little while to get the facts. ... I want to know the facts.⁷⁰

Like a hurricane drawing strength from warm water in the ocean, Trump's comments on the removal of Confederate monuments and his description that the crowd of protesters who marched with torches screaming "Jews, will not replace us!" were "very fine people," greatly intensified this racial storm:

So this week it's Robert E. Lee. I noticed that Stonewall Jackson's coming down. I wonder, is it George Washington next week? And is it Thomas Jefferson the week after? You know, you all—you really do have to ask yourself, where does it stop? Are we going to take down the statue (of Jefferson)? Because he was a major slave owner. Now, are we going to take down his statue? So you know what? It's fine. You're changing history. You're changing culture. And you had people, and I'm not talking about the neo-Nazis and the white nationalists, because they should be condemned totally. But you had many people in that group other than neo-Nazis and white nationalists.⁷¹

Trump's remarks garnered widespread criticism. US Senator Tim Scott of South Carolina stated, "What we want to see from our president is clarity and moral authority ... And that moral authority was compromised when Tuesday happened. There's no question about that."⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Naomi Lim, "Tim Scott: Trump's Moral Authority is Compromised After Latest Charlottesville Comments," *Washington Examiner*, last modified August 17, 2017, <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/tim-scott-trumps-moral-authority-is-compromised-after-latest-charlottesville-comments/article/2631898>

Charlottesville is a text book definition of a racialized storm and it has been made worse by President Trump's divisive comments and lack of leadership.

The events in Charlottesville have yet again reopened the racial wound in America. America is now at a crossroads; the discourse behind the legacy of the confederacy is dominating national news as city after city and university after university are removing monuments and statues to confederate soldiers and leaders. The violent events occurring in Charlottesville had their roots in the City Council's decision to remove the statue of Robert E. Lee and rename the park that bore his name. However, after white supremacists and neo-Nazis gained permission to protest the removal of the statues, violence was sparked and incited by the supremacists as they deviated from their original plan and met counter protesters.

The violence that occurred in Charlottesville has spurred other cities and universities to remove their confederate memorials. This is a turning point in American history. As a country, America has had an interesting journey reconciling its past with present-day inequalities. The Civil War claimed nearly 600,000 lives and tore the country apart. No other war in American history claimed more lives. Although the Union won, the South's rebellion lived on. Statues to honor Confederate soldiers were erected during the Jim Crow era in a show of defiance against black equality:

Yes, these monuments were put up to honor Confederate leaders and soldiers. But the timing of the monument building makes it pretty clear what the real motivation was: to physically symbolize white terror against blacks. They were mostly built during times when Southern whites were engaged in vicious campaigns of subjugation against blacks, and during those campaigns the message sent by a statue of Robert E. Lee in front of a courthouse was loud and clear. No one should think that these statues were meant to be somber postbellum reminders of a brutal war. They were built much later, and most of them were explicitly created to accompany organized and violent efforts to subdue blacks and maintain white supremacy in the South. I wouldn't be surprised if even a lot of

Southerners don't really understand this, but they should learn. There's a reason blacks consider these statues to be symbols of bigotry and terror. It's because they are.⁷³

What is fascinating about American history is the reconstruction of the Southern narrative that has been allowed to grow over time. The confederacy, instead of being viewed as a rebellious, treasonous government that desired to subjugate and oppress humans for economic profit, is viewed as a valiant and honorable government that simply wanted to govern its affairs locally and independently. Stephen Sawchuk writes,

The monuments themselves tell two stories. On the one hand, it's about Robert E. Lee. It's also about what the people who put up the monument want you to believe about Robert E. Lee...In suggesting history is being erased by removing these statues, what's often missed is that monuments already erase history—by selecting what will be remembered and how it will be remembered. One of the difficulties of approaching the topic of Confederate memorials is that Americans in general have a shaky grasp of Civil War history and an even worse understanding of the Reconstruction, leaving a vacuum that teachers need to be prepared to fill.⁷⁴

What is fascinating about the renewed argument revolving around the place of confederate statues is the comparison to Nazi Germany. Germany has no monuments, statues, or memorials to Adolf Hitler and the Nazi regime. There are no “Hitler High Schools” in Germany. In fact, according to German law it is illegal to display symbols from the Nazi-era.⁷⁵ However, in the United States there are hundreds of memorials, statues, and monuments to the Confederacy. Schools, roads, and parks all over the south bear the names of Confederate generals and leaders.

⁷³ Kevin Drum, “The Real Story Behind All Those Confederate Statues,” *Mother Jones*, last modified August 15, 2017, <http://www.motherjones.com/kevin-drum/2017/08/the-real-story-of-all-those-confederate-statues/>

⁷⁴ Stephen Sawchuk, “Are Confederate-Statue Controversies Teachable Moments? Efforts to remove Confederate statues stoke class discussions,” *Education Week*, 36, no. 36 (2017): 1 <https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/06/21/are-confederate-statue-controversies-teachable-moments.html?qs=Stephen+Sawchuk+Are+Confederate-Statue+Controversies>

⁷⁵ Cameron Abadi, “Despite Banning Nazi Symbols, Germany’s Constitution and Legal Tradition Complicate Cases Against Neo-Nazis,” *MINNPOST*, last modified February 16, 2010, <https://www.minnpost.com/global-post/2010/02/despite-banning-nazi-symbols-germanys-constitution-and-legal-tradition-complicat>

The political winds are blowing in favor of removing Confederate monuments from places of public space. However, this will not be an issue without controversy. I predict that there will be more Charlottesville-like protest from neo Nazis and white supremacists who are angry about their perceived heritage being removed. These events and people have all, in their own unique way, changed the socio-political climate, and one of the results has been that race relations are at their lowest point in decades. Americans now wonder if the race relations will ever get better. The church must act to mitigate the growing tension.

However, if any mitigation and proactive measures are to be undertaken, a greater awareness of America's changing socio-political climate must happen among America's church leaders. Awareness of any issue can be difficult to achieve, as there are always competing priorities in any institution. For example, when working on the issue of climate change for my final project in graduate school, I discovered that:

one of the largest problems...was that a number of respondents did not understand the implications of climate change, felt it was out of their jurisdiction, or were uninterested in discussing it in general. It was discovered that many respondents based their opinion or position on information from television media or from informal sources, rather than scientific ones, with many respondents wary of climate change as a concept. It is therefore the recommendation of this report that H-GAC attempt to remarket or re-brand climate change among both community leaders and citizens. H-GAC should make an effort to change the perception of climate change from one of a strict environmental focus, to a more scientifically-based assessment that is security and safety motivated.⁷⁶

My group interviewed dozens of local government officials in the Houston-Galveston region and found that many of them were un-informed on the issue of climate change. Numerous respondents didn't believe that there would be any ramifications from global climate change that would affect their communities, or were simply ignorant of scientific research that made a clear

⁷⁶ Briscoe, "Adaptation to Climate Change in the Houston-Galveston Area," 26.

and compelling case for climate change. We recognized that without awareness of the ramifications of climate change, communities and organizations would likely not support any adaptation projects or efforts to make their communities more resilient. Creating such awareness, then, would not only,

help different communities have a similar level understanding about the issues, but it would also create an atmosphere where constituents would be more likely to support adaptation projects within their communities. By shifting the emphasis from who is responsible for climate change, greenhouse gases and mitigation issues to instead providing an assessment that is focused on the increased frequency and severity of storms, for example, climate change will become relevant. Rebranding climate change towards adaptation will better enable H-GAC to encourage communities to implement those systems and projects which will establish resiliency to the changes expected for the region.⁷⁷

The goal of the realization phase is to help the congregation grow in their awareness of deteriorating race relations in America. To solve any problem, one must first realize that a problem exists. In this thesis, I argue that church leaders should engage in specific mitigation activities to enable congregations to better respond to help communities recover from racialized storms. However, church leaders must better understand America's cultural fault lines. For white church leaders, this understanding can be elusive. Greg Boyd writes, "I believe most white folks genuinely despise racism, so far as they understand it, and sincerely believe they are anti-racist, so far as they understand it. It's just that they don't understand it very far. Our awareness is stunted because our life experience tends to blind us to racism as a subversive structural issue."⁷⁸ Awareness is pivotal for resiliency to be achieved. There must be a compelling narrative that church leaders use to motivate their congregation to be forward-

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Greg Boyd, "Racism: Why Whites Have Trouble 'Getting It,'" *Evangelicals for Social Action*, last modified February 24, 2016, <http://www.evangelicalsforsocialaction.org/racial-justice/racism-why-whites-have-trouble-getting-it/>

thinking and proactive on closing the racial divide in America. Brenda Salter McNeil's book, *Roadmap to Reconciliation* highlights the importance of realization. "The realization phase of the journey involves more than cognitive understanding... it's a state of awareness that requires a response because it literally changes everything we thought we understood about an experience." Faith leaders must cultivate an awareness that is salient, weighty, and challenges people to respond.

II

What Are Racialized Storms?

“In the months following the eruption in Ferguson, my youngest, then a sophomore in a predominately white public high school, found herself at the center of debates at school dealing with the fallout from the death of Michael Brown ... She was blindsided by the racial division, turmoil, hate, and anger displayed throughout the media and even in her environment. She did not know what to do, how to respond, what to feel.”

- Kimberly Jade Norwood, *Ferguson’s Fault Lines*

On August 29, 2005, America experienced the worst natural disaster in its history. Hurricane Katrina struck South Louisiana, where the Mississippi River enters the Gulf of Mexico as a category four hurricane. Several hours later, Katrina hit the mainland on the border of Mississippi and Louisiana as a very powerful category three storm.⁸⁷ Ironically, Katrina was not the strongest storm to ever hit the continental United States, but due to negligence in the construction of the federal levee system in New Orleans, it was the deadliest and costliest storm in American history.

The deadliest features of a hurricane are not wind and rain, but storm surge. This was certainly the case of Katrina as its powerful storm surge entered Lake Pontchartrain and broke the poorly-designed Army Corp of Engineer levees that were supposed to protect the below sea-level city of New Orleans. As the storm veered east towards the Mississippi-Louisiana state line, numerous people in the Big Easy thought that they had dodged the big one, until the water started to rise. Within hours, eighty percent of New Orleans was flooded and one of America’s most storied and treasured cities was nearly destroyed.

As the floodwaters rose, hope sank and despair set in. Tens of thousands of people desperately hung on to their lives in attics and on top of roofs. Hundreds of people drowned.

⁸⁷ Roger Congleton, “The Story of Katrina: New Orleans and the Political Economy,” *Public Choice* 127, no. 1-2 (April 2006): 5–30, [http:// DOI: 10.1007/s11127-006-7729-9](http://DOI:10.1007/s11127-006-7729-9).

Hundreds died from building collapses and from medical conditions as “dehydration, heat stroke, heart attack, stroke or a lack of needed medical supplies.”⁸⁸ The failure of the levees, storm surge, building collapses, rain, wind, led to more than 1,800 deaths across Louisiana and Mississippi.⁸⁹ Katrina’s devastation amounted to an estimated \$200 billion of damage.⁹⁰ Local, state, and federal officials were caught off guard as the levees failed and New Orleans sank. When Hurricane Katrina struck, the people most impacted by the storm were poor people of color. Sluggish governmental inaction led to outrage among African Americans across the United States. This was a storm that exposed federal, state, and local authorities as being embarrassingly unprepared.⁹¹

The lack of communication, coordination, and ambiguous authority relationships are just a few of the things that caused havoc after the storm hit. For example, few people know that a United States Naval ship, the U.S.S. Bataan, was nearby and could have provided valuable assistance to New Orleans during the aftermath of Katrina. The ship had “doctors, six operating rooms, 600 hospital beds, and the ability to produce 10,000 gallons of water per day.”⁹² The ship received conflicting orders and was forced to abandon the most devastated area of the region.⁹³ The Mayor of New Orleans failed to issue a mandatory evacuation before Katrina hit for fear of

⁸⁸ Mark Schleifstein, “Study of Hurricane Katrina’s Dead Show Most Were Old, Lived Near Levee Breaches,” *The Times-Picayune*, October 8, 2009, http://www.nola.com/hurricane/index.ssf/2009/08/answers_are_scarce_in_study_of.html

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Stacey Mann, “Building Sustainable Cities in a Post-Katrina Nation: HR’s Role in Mitigation and Planning,” *Public Works Management & Policy* 17, no. 1 (2012):36 DOI: 10.1177/1087724X11429392

⁹² Anahita Gheyntanchi, Lisa Joseph, Elaine Gierlach, Satoko Kimpara, Jennider Hously, Zeno E. Franco, and Larry E. Beutler, “The Dirty Dozen: Twelve Failures of the Hurricane Katrina Response and How Psychology Can Help.” *American Psychologist* 62, no. 2 (2007): 120

⁹³ Ibid.

cost and resources associated with that type of command. Federal officials waited too long on local and state officials to request help.

The devastation of New Orleans is a case in point; the vulnerability was well known before the disaster, and therefore the resulting scale of damage from the hurricane was not a surprise—or, rather, should not have been a surprise. These natural disasters have focused attention on the need for forethought and planning in mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery ... The period between disasters presents an opportunity to increase resilience by mitigating against future threats and undertaking recovery that results in a stronger community.⁹⁴

Katrina offers important lessons in leadership. Lessons that can be used and applied to a congregational context when racialized storms occur. Hurricane Katrina taught how important sound preparation and timely response is in the face of natural disasters. While practitioners grapple with the challenges of a changing climate and the powerful storms (like Hurricane Katrina) that they produce, a different type of tempest has struck America with profound intensity during the last several years. These storms aren't created from rising temperatures in the Atlantic Ocean—they are spawned from rising tensions between the police and the African American community, racial inequalities, and social realities that are complex and multifaceted.

These tumultuous disasters aren't derived from active tectonic plates that move and release the potent energy of an earthquake, but emerge from fault lines of inequality and the erosion of public confidence in the American criminal justice system. These storms aren't limited to a certain geographical area, but send intense shockwaves and social reverberations across the socio-political landscape of America through mass and social media.

These catastrophes aren't category five hurricanes or major earthquakes—they are racialized storms that produce socio-political unrest, social and psychological vulnerability

⁹⁴ Jaimie Hicks Masterson, Walter Gillis Peacock, and Shannon Van Zandt, *Planning for Community Resilience A Handbook for Reducing Vulnerability to Disasters* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2015), 2.

among people of color. The 1992 Los Angeles riots, Michael Brown in Ferguson, Alton Sterling in Baton Rouge, Philando Castile in Minneapolis, Eric Garner in New York, Sandra Bland in Texas, Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Keith Lamont Scott in Charlotte, Terrence Crutcher in Tulsa, the removal of confederate flags and statues, and NFL players protest of the national anthem have all generated powerful racialized storms that, like hurricanes devastating coastal landscapes, generate an enormous amount disruption across the socio-political landscape of America.

Socio-political Tension

When these storms strike, they leave a nation reeling from racial division, tension, turmoil, rioting, and hate. Racialized storms are events that aggravate the deep and historic racial wound in America. Michael Eric Dyson writes about the acquittal of O. J. Simpson being a racialized storm that rocked America. In his book, *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America*, he sends a message to white Americans in the form of a sermon:

You must remember, beloved, that this was year after O. J. Simpson had been acquitted of murdering his ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and her friend Ron Goldman. Race relations between black and white folk were tense. The Simpson acquittal was a “racequake” that revealed fault lines that stretched beneath our national life ... The King and Simpson verdicts left America emotionally raw and at a brutal impasse. White folk got a chance to experience the sense of absurdity that black folk routinely feel when a clear case of injustice doesn’t get resolved in court. Many of you were outraged and shocked that Simpson could get away with murder. A lot of you were miffed, even heartbroken, that black folk cheered Simpson’s acquittal like it was Christmas in October. But you must see that the bitter taste left in your mouths was but a small tasted of what black folk have swallowed from our first moments in this nation.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Michael Eric Dyson, *Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America* (New York: St. Martins Press, 2017), 57-58.

The O. J. trial is a clear example of a racialized storm, in the fact that it produced an enormous amount of shock and division across the cultural and socio-political landscape of America.

When it comes to racialized storms, the damage produced can be physical (in the form of physical and infrastructure damage from riots and protesting), but most often is manifested in psychological and sociological ways. The storm surge of division overwhelms schools, churches, government offices, corporations, etc. The winds of hate blow throughout communities inciting violence. The rain of rage drenches social media sites all over America. Videos of these killings trend on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube giving tens of millions instant access to the tragic moments before a life is taken. Like Hurricane Katrina, these racialized storms have produced psychological scars that have Americans wondering if the country's racial divide will ever heal.⁹⁶

Similar to the powerful storm surge that occurs when a hurricane bears down on a coast, racialized storms generate a surge of uproar that can potentially bring a city to a grinding halt. Baltimore was under curfew for several days during the heat of its unrest when twenty-five-year-old Freddie Gray was killed by police officers. It is estimated that over \$9 million of damage was done in the city, with 144 vehicles and 15 buildings burned, and 254 business reporting that they incurred damage and disruption.⁹⁷ As hurricanes typically produce sustained winds in excess of 100 mph, racialized storms generate a sustained rage that disrupts the physical, social, and psychological aspect of individuals and communities in a city.

For many, racialized storms seem insurmountable and overwhelming. They are highly complex, historically rooted, and culturally polarizing events that touch deeply embedded nerves and fears, especially of discrimination and police brutality, particularly in people of color. These

⁹⁷ Sabrina Toppa, "The Baltimore Riots Cost an Estimated \$9 Million in Damages," *TIME*, last modified May 14, 2015, <http://time.com/3858181/baltimore-riots-damages-businesses-homes-freddie-gray/>

storms are compounded with the weight of history. Nearly, fifty-five years ago Dr. Martin Luther King spoke of the terrors that blacks endured at the hands of police.

There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, “When will you be satisfied?” said Martin Luther King, Jr. in his iconic “I Have a Dream” speech at the 1963 march. His words continue to resonate today after a long history of violent confrontations between African-American citizens and the police. “We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality.”⁹⁸

Today, blacks make up close to 13 percent of the US population, but account for “24% of those fatally shot and killed by the police.”⁹⁹ Nearly one hundred years ago, the Illinois Association for Criminal Justice issued the Illinois Crime Survey. This survey, conducted between 1927 and 1928, provided pertinent data on police killings,¹⁰⁰ finding that “although African-Americans made up just five percent of the area’s population, they constituted 30 percent of the victims of police killings.”¹⁰¹ Sadly, history seems to be repeating itself. The long and painful history of police brutality and state-sanctioned violence against African Americans has created a collective stressor among the African American population.

In *Planning for Community Resilience*, the authors discuss how the frequency and intensity of natural disasters are projected to increase over time due to climate change:

The number and severity of natural disasters are expected to increase over the next hundred years because of a changing climate. At the same time, our world’s population continues to expand, and development in high-hazard areas increases. Responding to these changes that are both happening and expected requires communities to become more resilient—better able to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from the impacts of such disasters ... In, short, many of our communities are becoming ever more vulnerable to natural hazards while simultaneously becoming less disaster resilient.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Nodjimbadem, “The Long, Painful History of Police Brutality in the U.S.”

⁹⁹ Wesley Lowery, “Aren’t More White People Than Black People Killed By Police? Yes, but No,” *The Washington Post*, last modified July 14, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/07/11/arent-more-white-people-than-black-people-killed-by-police-yes-but-no/?utm_term=.f65002a14199

¹⁰⁰ Nodjimbadem, “The Long, Painful History of Police Brutality in the U.S.”

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Masterson, Peacock, Van Zandt, *Planning for Community Resilience*, 7.

Due to a changing socio-political in America, I predict that the number and severity of racialized storms will increase drastically in the next five to ten years. The church must prepare for these disasters by engaging in long-term planning that will enable them to be resilient.

III

Why Racialized Storms Hurt the Church

“We need to begin to see our communities right now as trauma patients, as a hurt one lying on the mat. We are in a critical state. We must understand that the initial effort in trauma and in critical care situations is to bring some stability. Protests and street rallies express frustration, grief, a sense of insecurity and fear in the face of recurring practices and systems in which people feel susceptible to victimization. A just society is to be judged by how well it treats the weakest, poorest, and most pained of its members. The church specifically must remain answerable to a similar critique.”

- F. Willis Johnson, *Holding Up Your Corner*

A majority of Americans now believe that America’s race relations have grown worse in the last several years. This perception is ironic given the euphoria around the election of Barack Obama, America’s first Black president in 2008. At that time, pundits, papers, and people everywhere claimed that the election of America’s first black president would usher in a new era of a post-racial society.¹

The Ideology of Colorblindness

This post-racial society would dogmatically adhere to the notion of colorblindness. This colorblindness would essentially be a public sightlessness concerning matters of race. Ian Haney Lopez observes in *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* that colorblindness “holds broad attraction across the political spectrum.”² People who ascribe to this worldview believe that it is critical in solving the

¹ Manning Marable, “Racializing Obama: The Enigma of Post-Black Politics and Leadership,” *Souls* 11 No. 1 (2009): 2 <http://dx.doi.org.proxy.lib.duke.edu/10.1080/10999940902733202> (accessed October 30, 2017).

² Ian Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 10.

persistent and historical problem of racism in America. Acclaimed race theorist, author, and activist, Austin Channing Brown writes:

It seems many still believe colorblindness is the key to solving racism. Believing in the notion of colorblindness sounds like this, “I don't even see color,” or this, “But we are all the same,” or this, “I've never looked at you as a (fill in the blank).” These statements are usually followed by a sugary example of our sameness and end with a quote by Martin Luther King Jr about character not color being what *really* counts. And it all sounds pretty good, until you run into someone who refuses to let you forget their race, “If you can't see color, you can't see me.”³

The ideology of colorblindness seeks to downplay the significance of race in the American consciousness. Kendra Hadiya Barber in “What Happened to All the Protest” identifies three guidelines that inform the ideology of colorblindness: “race is reduced to pigmentation and is removed from social status, history, and power; noticing race is the same as subscribing to biological differences; and racism is a personal problem that is a result of bigoted individuals rather than a system of power.”⁴

Where did colorblind thinking originate? Clearly, the United States has had a long and troubled history in regard to race relations. Robert T. Carter notes that over the last several decades the expression of racism has drastically changed in America and that

over time racism has changed and become more symbolic, subtle, and hidden within the guise of non-prejudicial or nonracist behavior, thought, and justification . . . strong negative feelings toward people of Color operate on the subconscious level of awareness. While they [hostile feelings towards people of Color] are often not communicated as open hostility, such feelings and beliefs exist and manifest themselves in colorblind beliefs and practices, as well as by expressions of discomfort, disgust, and fear.⁵

³ Austin Channing Brown, “CTRL + ALT + DEL,” *Austin Channing Brown*, July 8, 2013, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://austinchanning.com/blog/2013/7/ctrl-alt-delete>

⁴ Kendra Hadiya Barber, “What Happened to All the Protest?” *Journal of African American Studies* 15.2 (2011): 220.

⁵ Robert T. Carter, “Racism and Psychological and Emotional Injury: Recognizing and Assessing Race-Based Traumatic Stress,” *The Counseling Psychologist* 35, no. 1 (2007): 79.

The surprising fact behind the ideology of colorblindness is that it originated in the American Civil Rights Movement—the very movement that challenged America to live up to the ideals of equality, justice, and liberty, clearly written out in its most sacred documents has been used to advance the ideology of colorblindness in the American consciousness to solve racism. Dr. King’s exhortation in his infamous “I Have a Dream” speech, to judge a person “not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character” has been taken out of context. Kendra Hadiya Barber believes that “the language of the Civil Rights Movement is even called upon to justify a colorblind view of society. The goal is to have a society where race is irrelevant and each individual is judged by the content of their character.”⁶

Again, the notion of colorblindness enjoys broad political support. The ideology originated as a post-civil-rights strategy and in liberal political circles is used as part of a move to create a more utopian and just society. Ian Haney Lopez writes that conservatives adopt this notion, but to achieve different ends. He writes,

it’s no surprise that Reagan and other political leaders since have embraced colorblindness. It sounds liberal yet works like a racial cudgel, denying that there’s discrimination against minorities, elevating whites as racial victims, justifying white superiority ... they always hold in reserve the colorblind insistence that race is just a matter of blood. This provides a stock defense of dog whistling, for it allows politicians to demagogue culture and behavior, while insisting that they cannot possibly be engaged in racial pandering because they have not directly referenced biology.⁷

Although the American Civil Rights Movement made significant progress to secure basic legal rights and freedoms for black people, there are still profound inequities in a variety of aspects of American life. Given the long and troubling history of slavery, the failure of reconstruction, racial terrorism, and Jim Crow segregation many across America, the racial wound in America to be healed and the divide to be bridged is severe. However, the dead bodies of Freddie Gray, Mike

⁶ Barber, “What Happened to All the Protest,” 79.

⁷ Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics*, 103.

Brown, Trayvon Martin, Keith Lamont Scott, Alton Sterling, and Philando Castile, as well as the ensuing activism and unrest that has occurred, challenges America's misguided—even if it is sincere—attempt to be post-racial.

Michelle Alexander eloquently writes in *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* that this “narrative that emphasizes the death of slavery and Jim Crow and celebrates the nation’s triumph over race with the election of Barack Obama is dangerously misguided.”⁸ This narrative is not only misguided, but counterproductive. The United States is a highly-racialized society; to ignore the salience of race is to “overlook important aspects of a person’s ability to live wholly and abundantly.”⁹ Adopting this narrative ignores the historical and cultural weight that racism has had in American society. Barber writes that colorblindness “conceals the fact that racism is embedded in social structures and is a system of power and not just personal prejudicial acts and attitudes.”¹⁰

These tragedies produce race quakes that have shaken the nation. Part of the reason why the shaking is so severe is because many Americans have bought into the notion that they are living in a colorblind era. Again, this thinking claims that America’s problem of racial injustice and inequities is largely historical—a line of thought suggesting that progress is made when we ignore color and concentrate on our mutual connection as Americans. When the subject of color is thrust into the national spotlight many people simply don’t know what to do or say. In “Color-Blind Racism, Color-Blind Theology, and Church Practices,” Mark Hearn makes the point that this type of rationale hinders racial progress and equity. He states that such ideology is a

⁸ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 12.

⁹ Mark Hearn, “Color-Blind Racism, Color-Blind Theology, and Church Practices,” *Religious Education* 104, no. 3 (2009): 273.

¹⁰ Barber, “What Happened to all the Protest,” 220.

manifestation of a new type of racism and “it occurs when individuals, institutions, and ideologies perpetuate racial inequality by refusing to recognize color in persons but rather see them as non-colored individuals.”¹¹ He contends that buying into the notion of colorblindness effectively eliminates color and thus a person of color’s experiences “in a society where color has historically mattered in terms of physical, social, economic, and spiritual well-being.”¹²

Unfortunately, many whites see America as a color-blind society. A 2013 NBC/Wall Street Journal poll found a “majority of white Americans believe the United States is a colorblind society, while less than 20 percent of African Americans say the same.”¹³ A significant part of what gives racialized storms such salience is the fact that there are profound differences in dealing with America’s race problem. Dovidio and Gaertner breakdown the philosophical reason of why whites are prone to buy into the narrative of colorblindness:

The problem, in practice, is that Whites are typically motivated to avoid seeing themselves as racially biased and often adopt a colorblind strategy when engaging in interracial interactions, particularly when they anticipate racial tension. However, efforts to be colorblind can sometimes produce ‘rebound effects,’ causing biases to become activated even more.¹⁴

Colorblindness robs us of the important awareness that race continues to be a highly salient issue in America. Julie Park observes that this hinders white evangelicals and leaves them “without tools or language to diagnose and counteract homophilia.”¹⁵

¹¹ Hearn, “Color-Blind Racism,” 277.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ <http://www.mediaite.com/online/poll-majority-of-whites-see-america-as-colorblind-nearly-80-of-african-americans-do-not/>

¹⁴ Adam R. Pearson, John F. Dovidio, and Samuel L. Gaertner, “The Nature of Contemporary Prejudice: Insights from Aversive Racism,” *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 3, no. 3 (2009): 326.

¹⁵ Julie J. Park, *When Diversity Drops: Race, Religion, and Affirmative Action in Higher Education* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 24.

This notion of thinking is unsustainable and creates a philosophical and political conundrum that gives rise to racial tension in America. This conundrum exists because it covers ingrained inequalities and assumes that these vast racial inequities of today are a product and problem of individuals, not embedded in American social structures.¹⁶

Increasingly, people are realizing that race cannot simply be wished away. A CNN poll conducted in 2015 indicated that more Americans believe that racism is a big problem:

In a new nationwide poll conducted by CNN and the Kaiser Family Foundation, roughly half of Americans—49%—say racism is “a big problem” in society today. The figure marks a significant shift from four years ago, when over a quarter described racism that way. The percentage is also higher now than it was two decades ago. In 1995, on the heels of the O. J. Simpson trial and just a few years after the Rodney King case surged into the spotlight, 41% of Americans described racism as “a big problem.”¹⁷

The notion of colorblindness ironically blinds us to the significant issues that people of color have in America, including our criminal justice systems and matters of police brutality.

Colorblindness creates a lack of awareness. This lack of awareness hinders sensitivity and empathy to the racial elements of these tragedies and causes faith leaders and churches to be silent.

Silence is not an option. The church needs to eloquently, robustly, and consistently address matters of racial inequality *before* racialized storms occur. Hearn writes that, “to be silent only perpetuates this new racism; to address it provides better opportunities for abundant life.”¹⁸ Pastors and faith leaders need an alternative to colorblindness to properly

¹⁶ Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres, *The Miner’s Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002)

¹⁷ Catherine E. Shoichet, “Is Racism on the Rise? More in U.S. Say it’s a Big Problem CNN/KFF Poll Finds,” *CNN*, last modified November 25, 2015, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/24/us/racism-problem-cnn-kff-poll/index.html>

¹⁸ Hearn, “Color Blind Racism,” 288.

address racialized storms. Austin Channing Brown argues that an effective alternative to colorblindness is to be color conscious. She states:

Color consciousness is to be aware of race, to no longer disregard it as meaningless or minute. People who are color conscious are comfortable noticing difference without ascribing superiority and inferiority to those differences. They can appreciate cultural differences and the diversity of thought, perspective and experience that race brings to the world. Color conscious people refuse to ignore race because they are too busy exploring it for all its beauty, quirkiness, and yes, messiness.¹⁹

Appreciating cultural differences and the belief that diversity makes an institution, (especially a church) stronger is paramount to rejecting colorblindness and situates evangelical churches in a better position to respond to racialized storms.

Cultural Lens of White Evangelicals

This thesis, so far, has covered key elements that are changing the socio-political climate in America, what racialized storms are, and the social unrest that they generate. However, why do these storms affect the American evangelical church? There are several reasons; chief among them are white evangelical's inability and/or unwillingness to acknowledge the ramifications of centuries of structural racism, the fact that systemic racism is present in today's twenty-first century society, and a historic apathy to work for black equality. I plan to use the terms, institutional racism, systemic racism, and structural inequality interchangeably throughout this chapter. First, a breakdown of the term racism. Joseph R. Barndt gives a succinct description of racism, stating that it "is prejudice with power."²⁰ Expounding on Barndt's definition, Van Gayton writes in *The Good News for Racism: A Dialogue that Makes a Difference* that

[f]rom this definition the white church should understand that although we all can be prejudiced, only White America could be racist. From the inception of America, Whites

¹⁹ Brown, "CTRL + ALT + DEL"

²⁰ Joseph Barndt, *Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1991), 57.

have possessed power over Blacks through slavery, Jim Crowism, segregation, separate but equal, the GI bill and even the Fair Housing Authority, which all demonstrate the systemic racism of White America. Racism comes with the power to withhold resources necessary for survival. Blacks have never been in a superior position in the history of America.²¹

Systemic racism finds its potency in power and this clout is derived from institutional arrangements that have historically put people of color at a disadvantage.²² These institutional measures include the structure of a variety of organizations including: governments, corporation, and social arrangements. History matters when it comes to the effect of institutional racism in America. This “structural racism cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors, including history, culture, ideology of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people.”²³

There are a variety of reasons of why some whites struggle to comprehend the structural side of racism, but two are particularly noteworthy. The first is the linguistic shift in the meaning of ‘racism.’ The second is the cultural lens that whites use to construct their social reality. The legal barriers that were broken during the American Civil Rights movement and changing attitudes on race relations has led many to believe that racism (as it existed during the Jim Crow era) is finished. Frederick Harris and Robert Lieberman write on this false perception of victory in *Racial Inequality after Racism: How Institutions Hold Back African Americans* that “White Americans generally assume that the end of state-sponsored segregation and the legal prohibition

²¹ Van Gayton, “The Good News for Racism: A Dialogue That Makes A Difference,” (DMin Doctoral Thesis, Reformed Theological Seminary, 2014), 78.

²² Rodney Clark, Norman B. Anderson, Vernessa R. Clark, David R. Williams, “Racism as a Stressor for African American: A Biopsychosocial Model,” *American Psychologist* 54, no. 10 (October 1999): 805, accessed November 10, 2017

²³ “Structural Racism Timeline,” *Erase Racism*, accessed November 10, 2017,

<http://eraseracismny.org/component/content/article/17-teaching-tool/436-structural-racism-timeline>

of discrimination removed structural barriers to African American advancement.”²⁴ This perception is coupled with a successful effort on the part of white authorities to redefine the term racism. Carol Anderson writes on the changing meaning of racism:

Confronted with civil rights headlines depicting unflattering portrayals of KKK rallies and jackbooted sheriffs, white authority transformed those damning images of white supremacy into the sole definition of racism. This simple but wickedly brilliant conception and linguistic shift served multiple purposes. First and foremost, it was conscience soothing. The whittling down of racism to sheet-wearing goons allowed a cloud of racial innocence to cover many whites who, although ‘resentful of black progress’ and determined to ensure that racial inequality remained untouched, could see and project themselves as the ‘kind of upstanding white citizen[s]’ who were ‘positively outraged at the tactics of the Ku Klux Klan.’ The focus on the Klan also helped to designate racism as an individual aberration rather than something, systemic, institutional, and pervasive.²⁵

The linguistic shift of the term racism has proved to be exceptionally problematic in securing racial justice and ameliorating the gross racial inequities in our society. How can one seek to solve a problem that a majority of white Americans believe doesn’t exist? It was virtually impossible to deny the structural racism that existed during the Jim Crow era. White supremacy was pervasive and easily observable.

Today, the obvious legal barriers and discrimination that African Americans once encountered have been deemed unconstitutional by the Supreme Court (Brown vs. Board of Education) and have been torn down by the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Still, systemic racial discrimination remains in America. It is important to note that there are white Americans that acknowledge the way racism has been redefined, the structural inequalities that presently exist in America, and the socio-historical context behind these inequities.²⁶

²⁴ Frederick C. Harris and Robert C. Lieberman, “Racial Inequality After Racism: How Institutions Hold Back African Americans,” *Foreign Affairs*, accessed November 10, 2017, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2015-03-01/racial-inequality-after-racism>

²⁵ Carol Anderson, *White Rage: The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York: Bloomsbury 2017), 101.

²⁶ Carter, “Racism and Psychological and Emotional Injury,” 20.

Unfortunately, most white Americans believe that blacks are to blame for the persistent problems that exist in their community. Harris and Lieberman write: “In a 2013 Gallup poll, for instance, 83 percent of white Americans said that factors other than discrimination were to blame for African Americans’ lower levels of employment, lower incomes, and lower-quality housing.”²⁷

The inability of white Americans to acknowledge structural racism is a topic that is covered extensively by sociologists, Michael Emerson and Christian Smith in their book, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*. This groundbreaking work is an extensive ethnographic project that surveys well over two thousand white evangelicals on their perceptions on race. It provides an in-depth analysis into the psychology and philosophy of white evangelicals in America. Emerson and Smith make the claim that white evangelicals further exacerbate the problems of racial inequality because of the cultural lens they use to construct their social reality.²⁸

The cultural lenses that they employ are accountable free will individualism, relationalism, and anti-structuralism—lenses that unfortunately leave them blind to the pervasive problems that the African American community faces and also produce a lack of urgency to intervene to ameliorate the issues the black community faces. The anti-structuralism lens is described as the “ability to perceive or unwillingness to except social structural influences.”²⁹ Emerson and Smith state that whites find systemic justification for inequities wrongheaded and believe that highlighting structural explanations for racial inequalities merely shifts the blame.³⁰

²⁷ Frederick C. Harris and Robert C. Lieberman, “Racial Inequality After Racism.”

²⁸ Emerson and Smith use the term cultural “tool” in place of lens. I think lens is a better term given the direction of this paper.

²⁹ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith. *Divided By Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 76.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 78.

In the American evangelical church, racialized storms hurt because of the widespread adoption of individualism as a tool that remedies inequality. This idol of individualism, which is a strong current in the American socio-political landscape, blinds evangelicals to the ramifications of social structures that produce inequality and encourages them to lay blame at the feet of the marginalized. Barber writes, “With racism allegedly gone, anyone can pull themselves up by their bootstraps, and any racial inequalities that still exist are due to a lack of motivation on behalf of blacks.” Injustice and inequality is rationalized and permitted to continue under the guise of a lack of an individual effort on the part of blacks. Emerson and Smith comment on this pervasive individualism,

As carpenters are limited to building with the tools in their kits (hammers encourage the use of nails, drills encourage the use of screws), so white evangelicals are severely constrained by their religion-cultural tools. Although much in Christian scripture and tradition point to the influence of social structures on individuals, the stress on individualism has been so complete for such a long time in white American evangelical culture that such tools are nearly unavailable.³¹

Individualism is an idol in the American evangelical church that makes good-hearted Christians deaf to the cries of communities on the margins, numb to the communal pain that is generated during racialized tragedies, and blind to the social structures that support and perpetuate inequalities and injustice.

Several churches and faith leaders in America have adopted the popular catch phrase “racism is a sin problem, not a skin problem.” This simple and wrongheaded explanation of racism places the blame on the individual. Law Ware writes on this popular explanation of racism thus: “saying racism is a sin problem that we can solve by being kinder to each other serves the purposes of white supremacy because it does not force white folks to come to terms

³¹ Ibid., 79.

with the way they contribute to institutional racism in the decisions they make at work and the way they vote at the polls.”³²

Psychological, Psychosocial, and Physiological Distress

Like susceptible coastal communities in America’s Gulf region, the church is vulnerable to the severity of racialized storms. During the summer of 2016, I witnessed the pain, confusion, and fear of numerous people within my own congregation (especially minorities), whose souls were being shaken by these storms. Witnessing the psychological distress compelled me to write about the events to provide some context for the collective trauma that people of color were feeling at the time.

In the case of Mike Brown and the subsequent mass social unrest that occurred in America, an enormous amount of emotional injury was experienced throughout the country. Immense psychological stress is often generated simultaneously communally and individually among African Americans from tragedies that have a racial element to them. Faith leaders and the church would be wise to both recognize and act on the psychological element from racialized tragedies. The recognition of such elements must incorporate an illuminated understanding of racism—an understanding that acknowledges that systemic nature of racism.

Terry Keleher in *Racial Justice Leadership* writes about four different definitions of racism that should be grasped to understand how society copes with racial inequity. Internalized racism is comprised of individual and implicit biases within individuals. This can consist of

³² Law Ware, *If Your Pastor Says, ‘Racism isn’t a Skin Problem, It’s A Sin Problem,’ You Need to Find Another Church*, HUFFPOST, last modified September 23, 2016, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/if-your-pastor-says-racism-isnt-a-skin-problem-its_us_57b66dabe4b007f18197780a

belief in the inferiority in another racial group and superiority of one's own ethnic group.³³

Interpersonal racism occurs when those implicit biases of superiority and inferiority manifest themselves in our public interactions. An example of this would be racial slurs that are levied at other individuals.

Both internalized and interpersonal racism occur on an individual level. Keleher then highlights the systemic side of racism with brief definitions of institutional and structural racism. Institutional racism occurs when there are “unfair policies and discriminatory practices of particular institutions (schools, workplaces, government, etc.) that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people.”³⁴ Structural racism in society occurs when biases are embedded not only in institutions, but across society. This is where socio-cultural and historical elements coalesce and intersect among policies, institutions, and systematically place people of color at a disadvantage.³⁵

These different definitions of race contribute to the severity of racialized storms in their own unique way. They produce social vulnerability and psychological distress amongst individuals and communities. It is imperative that evangelical leaders understand the nuances of the term racism and incorporate that recognition into their strategy to mitigate the perilous effects of these racialized storms within their congregation and communities. Mark Lamont Hill advocates for a more robust understanding of racism to effectively fight it in his analysis of the death of Michael Brown:

contemporary understandings of racism cannot be reduced to intentional acts of bigotry, beliefs in biological determinism, or even subconscious prejudice. Instead, we must rely on a thicker analysis, one that accounts for the structural, psychological, and cultural dimensions of racism. With regard to Darren Wilson, even if he had no personal racial

³³ Terry Keleher, *Racial Justice Leadership*, Applied Research Center, last modified June 2011, <http://act.colorlines.com/acton/form/1069/0003:d-0009/0/index.htm> (Accessed November 10, 2017)

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

animus, he nonetheless approached Michael Brown carrying a particular set of assumptions about the world. Wilson's assumptions included socially constructed narratives about black men, Ferguson residence, and even what constituted a lethal threat.³⁶

If the church is to truly be a healing place for a hurting world then it must take the lead in truth finding and reconciliation. It must become a place where deep psychological and emotional wounds that congregants suffer from racialized storms can be addressed, rehabilitated, and healed. Recent scholarship has shown that racism and racial discrimination have physiological and mental health impacts.

According to Robert T. Carter, "Racial stressors have been found, in a variety of studies, to produce physical outcomes such as high blood pressure, risk for heart disease, and increased vulnerability to a variety of negative health outcomes that can contribute to greater psychological and emotional distress."³⁷ These stressors aren't limited to individual racist events, but can be generated from the racialized storms that strike the socio-political landscape in America.

A stressor does not require physical contact for it to be severe or traumatizing. Instead, the case for the concept of race-based trauma is that it provides a more precise description of the psychological consequences of interpersonal or institutional traumas motivated by the devaluing of one's race ... it is theorized that race-based traumatic stressors have the potential to affect victims cognitively, affectively, somatically, relationally, behaviorally, and spiritually (Bryant-Davis & Ocampo, 2005). Cognitive effects may include difficulty concentrating, remembering, and focusing. Affective effects may include numbness, depression, anxiety, grief, and anger. Somatic complaints may include migraines, nausea, and body aches. Relationally, victims may demonstrate distrust of members of the dominant group or, in cases of internalized racism, distrust of members of their racial group. Behaviorally, victims may begin to self-medicate through substance misuse or other self-harming activities. Spiritually, victims may question their faith in God, humanity, or both. There has been evidence of race-based traumatic stress resulting in intrusive thoughts, hyper-vigilance, and avoidance.³⁸

³⁶ Hill, *Nobody*, 10.

³⁷ Carter, "Racism and Psychological and Emotional Injury," 30.

³⁸ Thema Bryant-Davis, "Healing Requires Recognition: The Case for Race-Based Traumatic Stress," *The Counseling Psychologist* 35, no. 1 (January 2007): 140, accessed November 10, 2017, DOI: 10.1177/0011000006295152. Thema Bryant Davis and Carlota Ocampo, "Racist Incident-Based Trauma," *The Counseling Psychologist* 33, no. 4 (July 2005) 479-500 DOI: 10.1177/0011000005276465

When you compound the severity of stress that is produced from racialized storms with the cumulative psychological burden from daily racial mini-traumas the effects can be devastating. Tim Wise, in *Color-Blind: The Rise of Post Racial Politics and the Retreat from Racial Equity*, highlights hundreds of studies that show a connection between racial discrimination and harmful health outcomes that people of color experience. He writes that, “racial discrimination increases stress levels among persons of color, thereby elevating blood pressure and correlating directly with worse health.”³⁹ Why do racialized storms hurt the church? Because these events produce a collective trauma among people of color through self-identification and shared experiences of the discriminatory event.

Thema Bryant-Davis and Carlota Ocampo believe that racism constitutes “cognitive/affective assaults on one’s ethnic self-identification. These assaults can be verbal attacks, physical attacks, or threats to livelihood, but because they are racially motivated, they strike the core of one’s selfhood.”⁴⁰ Self-identification is one the major reasons why racialized storms can be so devastating to individuals and communities of color. There is a strong association to the victimized individual. That association creates a shared psychological distress that communities of color disproportionately carry.

Davis and Ocampo continue in their analysis of racism, noting that “[t]he assaults can be sudden or systematic, intentional or unintentional, or overt or ambiguous and can be perpetrated by an individual (individual racism) or institution (institutional racism) or by cultural hegemony (cultural racism).” Racialized storms can encompass several types of assaults that Davis and Ocampo describe.

³⁹ Wise, *Color-Blind*, 16.

⁴⁰ Thema Bryant Davis and Carlota Ocampo, “Racist Incident-Based Trauma,” *The Counseling Psychologist* 33, no. 4 (July 2005) 479-500 DOI: 10.1177/0011000005276465

These storms often occur when unarmed black men are killed by the police. The killings can be unintentional and ambiguous, as in the case of Mike Brown, or can be intentional and overt, as in the case of the tragedy at Emmanuel AME in Charleston. Dylan Roof's murder of nine unarmed black people was an individually racist-based incident. The tragic death of Eric Garner in Staten Island is widely seen as an institutional racism, due to a criminal justice system that unfairly targets African Americans.

Medical studies have revealed that the “evidence supports the anecdotal notion, that ambiguous interpersonal interactions that are perceived as being racially motivated may confer more profound emotional and physical health consequences.”⁴¹ These racist incidents (which I believe include racialized storms that generate enormous socio-political unrest in the socio-cultural landscape in America) can contribute to “negative psychological, psychosocial, and physiological effects.”⁴²

It is vital that faith leaders recognize that many people of color internalize the racist incidents they experience and acknowledge this. “Healing the wounds of race-based trauma requires acknowledging them nationally and globally.”⁴³ This internalization accumulates over time and can not only lead to negative physiological outcomes, but coupled with the stress of racialized storms can lead to emotional issues such as isolation, depression, and intense anger.

Wise writes on this accumulation by stating:

When these stresses accumulate over time, the impact on the physical, mental and emotional health of those experiencing the stress can be dramatic, and can prime the body for all kinds of debilitating conditions later in life. Indeed, the cumulative effect helps

⁴¹ Gary Bennett, Marcellus M. Merritt, and John J Sollers III, “Perceived Racism and Affective Responses to Ambiguous Interpersonal Interactions Among African American Men,” *American Behavioral Scientist*, 47, no. 7 (March 2004): 964, accessed November 10, 2017, DOI: 10.1177/0002764203261070.

⁴² Bryant-Davis and Ocampo, “Racist Incident-Based Trauma,” 483.

⁴³ Bryant-Davis, “Healing Requires Recognition,” 141.

explain why racial differences in hypertension begin to dramatically emerge after the age of 30.⁴⁴

These racialized stressors are not just limited to a certain locale. Exposure to the unrest can lead to pain anywhere the events can be viewed in the media. Extended viewing can be linked to a variety of psychological outcomes. Contemporary Christian leaders must, think systematically and recognize that people grieve, not because of a singular offense, but because that offense is associated with a whole history of damage. It is the darker side to American history and the present-day trauma of discrimination. Such trauma includes,

being denied promotions, home mortgages, or business loans; being a target of a security guard; or being stopped in traffic ... a pattern of racist events forms across the life domains of minority citizens. This pervasive pattern requires ongoing coping and expenditures of psychic energy.⁴⁵

It is necessary to understand the weight of historical injustice and its socio-political implications on people of color. The historical injustices that have happened in America have produced a generational and tribal pain for many African Americans. The impact of slavery, reconstruction, and Jim Crow are not far removed from the consciousness of our nation. The harmful effects of systemic racism in our society continue to produce immense economic, educational, social inequities.

Racialized storms exacerbate this sense of mourning because of self-identification to the tragedy, shared discriminatory experiences and injustices that African Americans have experienced historically in America. Duke University professor, Christena Cleveland, writes about the phenomena of psychological homelessness that affects people of color in predominately white churches, Christian colleges, and seminaries.

⁴⁴ Wise, *Colorblind*, 119.

⁴⁵ Bryant-Davis, "Racist Incident Based Trauma," 483.

Many people of color who attend predominantly white churches and Christian colleges/seminaries talk about feeling explicitly welcomed by the majority group but implicitly excluded. On the surface (and for the most part), members of the well-intentioned white majority are *really, really* nice to them. People of color are greeted warmly in the hallways, on the bike path, and in the pews. They are explicitly told that they are welcome at the church or school. They are even invited into the homes of colleagues, classmates and fellow church members. However, despite these welcoming individual actions, people of color often report that their experience at these Christian organizations is marked by feelings of loneliness, marginalization, exclusion and misunderstanding. This response both befuddles and discourages the well-intentioned white people and leads people of color to experience a seemingly-unshakeable feeling of what theologian Miroslav Volf calls ‘psychological homelessness.’ They feel out of place, on the edge of the circle, disconnected from the life-giving heartbeat of the community.⁴⁶

I can attest to this feeling. While I grew up in the black church, I have worshipped at predominately white churches since I was a college freshman. I remember the first time I felt psychologically homeless. The election of Barack Obama to the presidency in 2008 elicited a range of emotions among white evangelicals in my context, ranging from elation to despair. There were racial undertones in many conversations. For example, one of my white Christian sisters stated, “I can’t believe we are considering electing a guy with the middle name Hussein to the presidency.” Another white friend who was fearful of the country’s economic outlook said, “I just think that he [Obama] is going to take all the good jobs and give them to black people.” I often remember being befuddled and uncomfortable in these conversations. Because I was the minority in the room and in the conversation, I often felt insecure about giving my opinion.

During President Obama’s second term several racialized storms struck America’s socio-political landscape. Trayvon Martin’s murder in 2012, Michael Brown’s murder in 2014, the rise of the Black Lives Matter social movement, the removal of the Confederate Battle flag on the South Carolina State Grounds, and numerous more. I was exposed to a variety of thoughts and

⁴⁶ Christena Cleveland, “Psychological Homelessness in Your Church,” *Christena Cleveland Blog*, October 16, 2012, accessed November 10, 2017, <http://www.christenacleveland.com/blogarchive/2012/10/psychological-homelessness-in-your-church>

opinions serving as a pastor in a predominantly white church. Rarely, was anything acknowledged on Sunday morning or during church leadership meetings. However, the social media platforms of staff members spewed frustration and anger about the current storm. The feeling of isolation and loneliness intensified for me when racialized storms hit.

One of the privileges of being white is to not have to pay attention to cultural issues that affect black and brown life. Predominantly white churches do not typically talk about systemic racism, because that is an issue that affects primarily black and brown people. Cleveland goes on to write that:

When talking about diversity and reconciliation in the church, American Christians (who tend to be highly individualistic) often focus on the explicit actions that individuals can take to make different others feel welcome. However, a focus on *explicit, individual* actions can easily lead people in the majority group to ignore the *implicit, collective* actions that communicate to people of color that they are not at all welcome. Even though these actions often go unnoticed by the majority group, they sound loud and clear in people of color's ears, like a noisy alarm that you can't turn off.⁴⁷

There has been a historic wounding that people of color have experienced and because of that wounding there is a deep sensitivity when racialized storms occur. The collective psychological trauma and social vulnerability of the black community is derived from the unique history and intensity of what African Americans have experienced in America. Violations of the will, mind spirit, and the body have created real wounds in the individual and in the people groups.

White churches are hard for black people because many people do not understand the black experience to be both corporate and individual. Black people share many common experiences, and these experiences build a unique solidarity among us. This is why a racial injustice in Florida can shake black people in Washington State. But often folks think that means that every black person feels the same way about every issue, which

⁴⁷ Ibid.

isn't the case. As a black individual, it's exhausting to feel as if you're constantly representing all black people.⁴⁸

The pain that people of color feel during racialized storms produces a communal mourning. It's a very real wound that hurts and is tied to systemic and historic injustice. "Documented physical and mental health disparities have been shown to be race based in that people of Color fare poorly regardless of economic resources."⁴⁹ President Barack Obama addressed the nation after a series of racialized storms during the summer of 2016:

I know that Americans are struggling right now with what we've witnessed over the past week [7/5/16 – 7/11/16]. First the shooting in Minnesota and Baton Rouge. . . . the protest. Then the targeting of police by the shooter here an act not just of demented violence but of racial hatred. All of its left us wounded and angry and hurt. It's as if the deepest fault lines of our democracy have suddenly been exposed; perhaps even widened. And although we know that such divisions are not new, though they surely have been worse in even the recent past that offers us little comfort. Faced with this violence we wonder if the divides of race in America can ever be breached; we wonder if an African American community that feels unfairly targeted by police and police departments that feel unfairly maligned for doing their jobs can ever understand each other's experiences. We turn on the tv or surf the internet and we can watch positions harden and lines drawn and people retreat to their respective corners . . . We see all of this and it's hard not to think that the center won't hold and that things might get worse.⁵⁰

Hurricane Katrina has taught scholars and practitioners numerous lessons. In some ways, during Katrina, we rallied together with help pouring in from all over the nation, but in other ways we were deeply divided in our narratives as we tried to explain the causes of the catastrophic conditions that occurred. Kanye West's statement, "George Bush doesn't care about black people," reflected a deep sentiment of people of color across the nation as they watched

⁴⁸ Isaac Adams, "Why White Churches Are Hard for Black People," *9Marks*, last modified September 25, 2016, <https://www.9marks.org/article/why-white-churches-are-hard-for-black-people/>

⁴⁹ Carter, "Racism and Psychological and Emotional Injury," 26.

⁵⁰ Katie Reilly, "Read President Obama's Speech From the Dallas Memorial Service," *TIME*, last modified July 12, 2016, <http://time.com/4403543/president-obama-dallas-shooting-memorial-service-speech-transcript/>

poor black bodies floating in the floodwaters of New Orleans⁵¹—a sentiment that blamed governmental and social inaction for continued pain and hardship. The lesson for churches is the same—there are dead bodies in the water when these racialized storms strike—victims of psychological and emotional trauma—and the church must not be characterized by inaction and ineptitude.

Social Vulnerability

The psychological, physiological, and psychosocial distress that is generated from racialized storms affect all people, but can have a deeper and lasting impact on people of color. Given the socio-historical factors, people of color are bound to experience a greater level of distress than Caucasians. There is an equivalence with the assertion that people of color are disproportionately affected by racialized storms and the political, economic, and environmental factors that contribute to natural disaster vulnerability.

When disasters strike, there are a variety of dynamics that produce social vulnerability. Politics can significantly affect disaster vulnerability. Strategic policy decisions can determine which side of town gets power turned on the fastest and debris removed the quickest. In my hometown of Jacksonville, residents of the Northside (a predominately black and low-income area) frequently complain that resources and personnel are typically the last to be deployed to their area after a storm. Additionally, economics can affect disaster vulnerability. The Central Business District in New Orleans was one of the first areas that was back in business after Hurricane Katrina. There were rumors that the levees surrounding the Ninth Ward were blown

⁵¹ Carroll Doherty, “Remembering Katrina: Wide Racial Divide Over Government’s Response.” *Factank*, last modified August 27, 2015, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/08/27/remembering-katrina-wide-racial-divide-over-governments-response/>

by authorities to save the affluent French Quarter and the economic engine of the Central Business District. These rumors weren't derived from hysteria or trivial conspiracy.

In 1927, The Great Mississippi Flood was threatening to destroy New Orleans, including its crucial downtown regional financial institutions. To avert the threat, and in part to stabilize the financial markets, it was decided to perform a controlled break of the New Orleans levees, thereby selectively flooding poor areas and saving financial institutions. This event lives on in the memories and oral history of the residents of the deliberately flooded areas.⁵²

Economics clearly made a difference in 1927. The built environment is another factor that impacts how a particular segment of a population is afflicted by a disaster.

Disasters are often depicted as great levelers, victimizing rich and poor alike. However, research paints a very different picture, indicating that the effects of disasters on populations are anything but random. A substantial literature indicates that the disaster vulnerability of individuals and groups is associated with a number of socioeconomic factors that include income, poverty, and social class; race, ethnicity, and culture; physical ability and disability; language competency; social networks and social capital ... Put another way, population vulnerability to extreme events is itself socially structured.⁵³

The psychological, psychosocial, and physiological effects from racialized storms are not randomized—whimsically impacting different groups of people—but are socially structured along lines of race. It is imperative that predominately white evangelical churches *realize* the degree of social vulnerability that people of color face during the onslaught of a racialized storm. They are more prone to psychosocial and emotional pain. There is a differential exposure and vulnerability to race-based traumatic events like Charlottesville and Ferguson for people of color. People of all colors and cultures face varying degrees of discrimination and distress.

⁵² Cordasco, et. Al, "They Blew the Levee": Distrust of Authorities Among Hurricane Katrina Evacuees. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Undeserved* 18, no. 2 (May 2007): 277.

⁵³ Kathleen J. Tierney, *The Social Roots of Risk: Producing Disasters, Promoting Resilience*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014), 141.

However, when taking into account America's historical legacy of enslavement and oppression of African Americans, it is logical to deduce that there is an extreme sensitivity that African American possesses in regards to racialized tragedies in America.

I must emphasize again that vulnerability to hazards and disasters is inseparable from more general patterns of oppression and marginalization that play out on a daily basis during nondisaster times and that have pervasive negative consequences for those who are at risk. Blacks in New Orleans experienced a long string of insults and injuries after surviving Katrina.⁵⁴

Racialized storms hurt the church because churches fail to realize how the general patterns of oppression and marginalization of African American communities play out on a daily basis during non-disaster times. The ignorance makes these storms severe, because anger and resentment is stockpiled in the souls of blacks. When racialized storms strike they generate a surge of emotions that spills out as angry rhetoric and divisive language. The flood of rage that flows from daily injustices has the potential to undo any work on racial reconciliation and healing that churches undertake.

It starts with realization. Realizing that there have been and continue to be significant elements in our cultural landscape that are leading to socio-political climate change. It begins with realizing that the death of Michael Brown, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling, and the subsequent uproar that was produced are not isolated events. They are indicative of a changing climate. It begins when we realize that these tragedies are like storms that flood and overwhelm people's lives. The disruption that these events bring is profound and disproportionately affects people of color. It starts with realizing that these racialized storms hurt the church's credibility, hinders racially progress that is achieved.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 147.

Racialized storms produce a profound degree of social vulnerability in people of color due to the communal trauma they generate in the locales where they occur. The social unrest that emanates from these racialized storms dominates news headlines, generates enormous public outcry, and generally disrupts societal norms. Riots, protesting, marching, military involvement and a general state of uneasiness can often characterize these events. Residents of Charlottesville expressed utter shock in the events that were occurring in their hometown. Racialized storms are not new to America; however, our approach to preparing and responding to them can be different.

Michael Eric Dyson makes the case that in order to achieve racial equality, whites must educate themselves on issues that affect black and brown culture. Education on the racial inequities and structural racism that exists today in America is pivotal to bridging the racial divide in America. A better understanding of the disruption that racialized storms cause will compel faith leaders to be more intentional in shepherding their congregations during times of social unrest. I conclude the Realization section with the call to a deeper education in what is causing America's racial divide. When it comes to the area of natural disaster mitigation, local governments need training.⁵⁵ For realization to be achieved, pastors must become more educated and racially literate. A focus on constituent education was another recommendation that was made in my final project on climate change adaptation in the Houston-Galveston region. It was suggested in that report that the Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) equip the leaders and managers in their communities with tools needed to protect their citizens.⁵⁶ The report encouraged the H-GAC to educate the public about measures to adapt to the harmful impacts of

⁵⁵ Mann, "Building Sustainable Cities," 34.

⁵⁶ Briscoe, "Adaptation to Climate Change in the Houston-Galveston Area," 27.

climate change and help them with resilience initiatives to aid in disaster recovery.⁵⁷ Not only must church leaders be educated, but they should help their congregations become more aware of the issues that affect black and brown culture.

Faith leaders will get overwhelmed in the process of mitigation if they are not educated. The Realization section, while not an exhaustive study on race, does give foundational elements to better understand the race quakes that have been shaking America during the last five years. While one cannot predict when an earthquake will come or a hurricane will form in the ocean, we can prepare for these events in a more informed and intentional way by educating ourselves about the destructive elements of these events. It is the same with racialized storms. No one knows when another Ferguson or Charlottesville will happen, but if pastors become educated about race in America, they can put themselves in a better position to respond and lead during times of national crisis.

It's important to remember America's age-old problem of race is, in numerous ways, comparable natural disasters. This point has been made in the last two chapters. However, the storm metaphor, that is used throughout this paper, does have its limitations. First, natural disasters are just that, "natural." Natural disasters are not humanly induced. Humans do not have the ability to spawn tornadoes and hurricanes. The racial division and injustice that America has experienced throughout its existence is the direct result of an ideology of white supremacy. This supremacy is defined by an ascendancy of whiteness and an inferiority of people of color.

Today, racialized storms lead to further racial division and tension. While this division is undesirable, racialize storms can be catalytic events that spur institutional change throughout society (this thought will be fleshed out in chapter ten). As individuals and institutions respond to

⁵⁷ Ibid.

storms in courageous and creative ways, change can come in the hearts and minds of men and women, and decisions that affect the structural make up of key organizations in our society.

IV

The Need for Awareness

“The education of white theologians did not prepare them to deal with Watts, Detroit, and Newark. What was needed was a new way of looking at theology that must emerge out of the dialectic of black history and culture.”

James Cone, *God of the Oppressed*

It starts realizing that there have been and continue to be significant elements in our cultural landscape that are leading to socio-political climate change. It begins with realizing that the death of Michael Brown, Philando Castile, Alton Sterling and the subsequent uproar that was produced are not isolated events. These deaths indicate a changing climate. It begins when we realize that these tragedies are like storms that flood and overwhelm people’s lives. The disruption that these events bring is profound and disproportionately affects people of color. It starts with realizing that these racialized storms hurt the church’s credibility, hindering whatever racial progress it has achieved.

Racialized storms produce a profound degree of social vulnerability in people of color due to the communal trauma they generate. The social unrest that emanates from these racialized storms dominates news headlines, generates enormous public outcry, and generally disrupts societal norms. Riots, protesting, marching, military involvement and a general state of unease can often characterize these events. Residents of Charlottesville expressed utter shock in the events that were occurring in their hometown. Racialized storms are not new to America, but our approach to preparing and responding to them can be different.

Michael Eric Dyson writes about the need for greater racial literacy in his book *Tears We Cannot Stop*.¹ He argues that to achieve racial equality, whites must educate themselves on

¹ Dyson, *Tears We Cannot Stop*, 199.

issues that affect black and brown culture. Education on the racial inequities and structural racism that exists today in America is pivotal to bridging the racial divide in America. A better understanding of the disruption that racialized storms cause will compel faith leaders to be more intentional in shepherding their congregations during times of social unrest. When it comes to natural disaster mitigation, local governments need training.² Church leaders must become more racially literate if they seek to close the racial divide that exists in their congregations and communities. Similarly, one of the major recommendations of my final project on climate change adaptation in the Houston-Galveston region was an emphasis on educating constituents:

Along with rebranding, H-GAC should be involved in providing education, information, and facts to constituents in support of their planning processes. By providing communities with facts, H-GAC will give community leaders and managers the tools and knowledge that is needed to provide the proper protection to their citizens. Included in this should be education about adaptation systems and resiliency projects that communities can implement during disaster recovery.³

Likewise, faith leaders will be overwhelmed by the process of mitigation if they are not educated.

This discussion of realization, while not an exhaustive study on race, does offer foundational elements for better understanding the race quakes that have shaken America during the last five years. While one cannot predict when an earthquake will come or a hurricane will form in the ocean, we can prepare for these events in a more informed and intentional way by educating ourselves on the destructive elements of these events. It is the same with racialized storms. No one knows when another Ferguson or Charlottesville will happen, but if pastors become educated on matters of race in America, they can put themselves in a better position to respond and lead during times of national crisis.

² Mann, "Building Sustainable Cities," 38.

³ Briscoe, "Adaptation to Climate Change in the Houston Galveston Area," 27.

The Story of Joseph

Joseph's ascent to second-in-command of Egypt in the Genesis narrative is a remarkable story of God's providence and unique timing. This popular biblical account is an inspiring tale of perseverance, forgiveness, and patience. In addition to the aforementioned virtues, this narrative illustrates a classical example of climate change adaptation. Genesis 41:17–24 recounts Pharaoh's approaching Joseph with the hopes that he can interpret a harrowing and perplexing dream:

So Pharaoh told Joseph his dream. "In my dream," he said, "I was standing on the bank of the Nile River, and I saw seven fat, healthy cows come up out of the river and begin grazing in the marsh grass. But then I saw seven sick-looking cows, scrawny and thin, come up after them. I've never seen such sorry-looking animals in all the land of Egypt. These thin, scrawny cows ate the seven fat cows. But afterward you wouldn't have known it, for they were still as thin and scrawny as before! Then I woke up. In my dream I also saw seven heads of grain, full and beautiful, growing on a single stalk. Then seven more heads of grain appeared, but these were blighted, shriveled, and withered by the east wind. And the shriveled heads swallowed the seven healthy heads. I told these dreams to the magicians, but no one could tell me what they mean."⁴

Verse 8 gives insight into Pharaoh's emotional state: "The next morning Pharaoh was very disturbed by the dreams." The key word here is "disturbed." Adaptation and mitigation of racialized storms will not be undertaken unless the higher levels of leadership in an organization are disturbed. Action is typically not taken until disruption knocks on our door. Pharaoh quickly acted by calling in magicians and wise men of Egypt to interpret his dreams.

Pharaoh's actions present an example of realization. Pharaoh became aware of a potential problem through the emotional disturbance of a dream and subsequently engaged in sense-making. The authors of *The Politics of Crisis Management* describe sense-making as a way to

⁴ Genesis 41:17–24 NLT.

collect and process information “that will help crisis managers to detect an emerging crisis and understand the significance of what is going on during a crisis.”⁵ While the famine had not yet occurred, the dreams that Pharaoh experienced were significant enough for him to seek help in processing what they meant. Pharaoh’s sense-making resulted in Joseph being summoned and eventually interpreting his dreams. Sense-making is an important part of the realization phase.

It is very difficult to predict crises. But it is possible to detect an emerging crisis in time to shift the course of events in a more favorable direction. Early detection means faster deployment of resources, which, in turn, can save lives. But all too often, escalating crises come as a complete surprise to leaders. . . . Once a crisis becomes manifest, crisis responders will want to understand what is happening in order to take effective measures to deal with the consequences. They must assess how threatening and urgent the events are, to what or whom, and consider how the situation might develop in the period to come.⁶

Joseph detected the crisis and proposed a plan that would reduce the severity of the calamitous famine that was to set to affect Egypt and its neighbors. His plan essentially shifted the course of events in a favorable direction for the inhabitants of Egypt and surrounding regions.

Joseph responded, Both of Pharaoh’s dreams mean the same thing. God is telling Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. The seven healthy cows and the seven healthy heads of grain both represent seven years of prosperity. The seven thin, scrawny cows that came up later and the seven thin heads of grain, withered by the east wind, represent seven years of famine. This will happen just as I have described it, for God has revealed to Pharaoh in advance what he is about to do. The next seven years will be a period of great prosperity throughout the land of Egypt. But afterward there will be seven years of famine so great that all the prosperity will be forgotten in Egypt. Famine will destroy the land. This famine will be so severe that even the memory of the good years will be erased. As for having two similar dreams, it means that these events have been decreed by God, and he will soon make them happen.⁷

⁵ Boin, Arjen, Paul T. Hart, Erik Stern, and Bengt Sundelius. *The Politics of Crisis Management: Public Leadership Under Pressure* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 15.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Genesis 41: 25–32 NLT.

Joseph realized the significance and meaning of Pharaoh's dreams through interpretation. He becomes aware of a potentially catastrophic climatic event. However, Joseph does more than give an interpretation. In Genesis 41:33–36, he proposes a plan to mitigate the effects of the famine:

Therefore, Pharaoh should find an intelligent and wise man and put him in charge of the entire land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh should appoint supervisors over the land and let them collect one-fifth of all the crops during the seven good years. Have them gather all the food produced in the good years that are just ahead and bring it to Pharaoh's storehouses. Store it away, and guard it so there will be food in the cities. That way there will be enough to eat when the seven years of famine come to the land of Egypt. Otherwise this famine will destroy the land.⁸

In this passage, Joseph shifts from realization to readiness. He becomes aware that the climate will drastically change in a few years. He senses the threat and addresses Egypt's vulnerability by utilizing existing assets to minimize the disruption that the famine would bring. Joseph engages in readiness by essentially creating a community action plan that systematically stockpiled resources and a distribution plan to allocate those resources in an orderly fashion.

Joseph's suggestions were well received by Pharaoh and his officials. So Pharaoh asked his officials, "Can we find anyone else like this man so obviously filled with the spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has revealed the meaning of the dreams to you, clearly no one else is as intelligent or wise as you are. You will be in charge of my court, and all my people will take orders from you. Only I, sitting on my throne, will have a rank higher than yours." Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I hereby put you in charge of the entire land of Egypt." Then Pharaoh removed his signet ring from his hand and placed it on Joseph's finger. He dressed him in fine linen clothing and hung a gold chain around his neck. Then he had Joseph ride in the chariot reserved for his second-in-command. And wherever Joseph went, the command was shouted, "Kneel down!" So Pharaoh put Joseph in charge of all Egypt.⁹

⁸ Genesis 41:33–36 NLT.

⁹ Genesis 41:37–43 NLT.

Genesis 41:37–43 describes Joseph’s ascent to power once Pharaoh heard of his wisdom. Joseph saved the Egyptian nation and ensured the survival of the Israelite people through climate change adaptation and natural disaster mitigation. This story illustrates Joseph’s prudence and the significance of readiness.

Chapter 1 in this thesis highlighted eight factors that have had a substantial effect on America’s socio-political climate. The biblical account in Genesis 41 doesn’t specifically mention what caused the change in climate. What it does illustrate is the cataclysmic conditions that the famine had. Part 2, on readiness, will emphasize how faith leaders and congregations can get ahead of the threat of racialized storms, address vulnerabilities in the congregations and communities, and reduce the severity of disruption that these tempests make. As Judith Rodin writes, “what resilience-building actions can be taken to decrease the impact that disruptions will have?”¹⁰ The church must become ready for these storms to properly respond. Salter-McNeil writes:

Readiness is what ensues when we identify what is happening in our context, what historical factors still have influence and what resources and capacities are present to make change possible. For such to come about, the following things are necessary.... The person or group must see a need for change.... The person or group must see the benefit of change.... The person or group must take stock.¹¹

It is imperative to begin to discuss *what* the American Evangelical church can do in the wake of these racialized storms. The church must undergo a paradigm shift that moves beyond the quest for greater numerical diversity in ethnicity, but seeks a radical inclusion that gives people of color a seat at the table and a voice to speak. Racialized storms can make it especially difficult to achieve and sustain diversity. Racialized storms are likely to impede work towards greater

¹⁰ Rodin, *Resilience Dividend*, 143.

¹¹ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 59.

diversity in the Body of Christ. Faith leaders need to look beyond racial percentages in their congregations and seek to give a voice to those on the margins.

Why Realization Matters?

Before an adequate response can be given, sound preparation must be undertaken. Preparation is key. Crises are inevitable in life. “Individuals may suffer the loss of loved ones, health homes, financial stability, social support, sense of stability, and other resources important to daily living. Those impacted demonstrate a wide range of psychological reactivity ranging from brief, transient distress to long-term psychopathology.”¹² Racialized storms are crises that disrupt the socio-political landscape of our country, city, and communities. These storms also cause crises in individuals. These are inevitably accompanied by a degree of psychological distress. Coping with the experience of loss and pressure demands emotional energy.

The term “crisis” refers essentially to an unexpected circumstance. “A crisis marks a phase of disorder in the development of a person, an organization, a community, an ecosystem, a business sector, or a polity.”¹³ While not every crisis can be foreseen, we can learn from the past to become more resilient for the future.

It’s vital that the church fully comprehend the *why* behind resilience building. If congregations don’t realize the necessity of mitigating disruption from racialized storms, they will eventually lose sight and interest in taking proactive measures to reduce the severity of these storms. Simon Sinek explains:

People don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it. The problem is that organizations use the tangible features and benefits to go to a rational argument for why the company,

¹² David M. Abramson, Lynn M. Grattan, Brian Mayer, Craig E. Colten, Farah A. Arosemena, Ariane Bedimo-rung, and Maureen Lichtveld., “The Resilience Activation Framework: A Conceptual Model of How Access to Social Resources Promotes Adaptation and Rapid Recovery in Post-Disaster Settings,” *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research* 42, no. 1 (January 2015): 46, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11414-014-9410-2>.

¹³ Boin, et al., *The Politics of Crisis Management*, 5.

product or idea is better than another.... Why does Apple have such a disproportionate level of success? Why are they more innovative? Why are they consistently more profitable? And how did they manage to build such a cultish loyal following – something very few companies ever are able to achieve?¹⁴

The reason, Sinek argues, is that Apple leads with their *why*. Faith leaders must do the same when it comes to fostering readiness in the face of racialized storms. L. Gregory Jones writes about Sinek in his book, *Christian Social Innovation*:

Sinek delivered a TED talk in 2009 that has been viewed more than twenty-five million times. It is called “Start with Why.” He contends that most people and most organizations start with a rational explanation of what they do and how they do it. People are typically very clear about what they do, and often somewhat clear about how they do it. But they tend to be fuzziest about why they do what they do. The best leaders and organizations, Sinek argues, reverse that order: they are clearest about their purpose, their why, and that leads them to explain how they accomplish their purpose and what they do to further those accomplishments.¹⁵

If congregations truly desire to be more ready and responsive to racialized storms then they must truly grasp the why—which is what the Realization phase attempts to explain. Salter-McNeil writes that “the work of the preparation phase begins with capacity building. This is where we determine what capabilities, resources, strengths, training and so on we need to help us move forward. This phase is about preparing for action that is not based in reaction.”¹⁶ Difficult choices must be made to prepare for these storms. However, the benefits outweigh the initial cost.

Pastors and faith leaders need to foster an awareness of the advantages of preparing for racialized storms. This starts with pastors themselves fully comprehending how significant the issue of race is in America. Once this realization is achieved, pastors need to engage in the work

¹⁴ Sinek, *Start With Your Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2011), 43.

¹⁵ Gregory L. Jones, *Christian Social Innovation: Renewing Wesleyan Witness*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016), 42.

¹⁶ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 84.

of bringing that awareness to their congregations. Doing this enables churches to become resilient in the wake of socio-political unrest from racialized storms. Resilience is Key. Timothy Beatley explains:

Resilience has become the new way of talking about an advocating long-term mitigation. Resilience however, differs from mitigation in at least two aspects: its focus on creative adaptation and learning and its focus on developing an underlying capacity. While, historically, mitigation has meant physical changes (e.g., stronger buildings), resilience is broader, connoting stronger social and community systems, and larger processes and mechanism for facilitating effective response and recovery.... Community resilience must also be about developing supportive community institutions and networks that will help families and individuals to prepare for and respond to disaster events. A philosophy of disaster resilience, on the other hand, implies our belief in our ability to armor or shield coastal communities and residents against the forces of nature.¹⁷

Beatley's book identifies three stages necessary to mitigate disaster: preparedness, response, and recovery. He advocates that practitioners engage in mitigation before preparation and response.

With proper mitigation, institutions and individuals will be better prepared for the next disaster.¹⁸ Judith Rodin writes:

Resilience is the capacity of any entity—an individual, a community, an organization, or a natural system—to prepare for disruptions, to recover from shocks and stresses, and to adapt and grow from a disruptive experience.... As you build resilience, therefore, you become more able to prevent or mitigate stresses and shocks you can identify and better able to respond to those you can't predict or avoid.¹⁹

It is paramount to understand that anyone can engage in the work of resilience through mitigation and adaptation. This concept is not restricted to public policy officials or emergency managers. Everyone can achieve enhanced resilience in some form. Dave Ramsey, the popular Christian financial author and speaker, advocates that individuals and families to have at least \$1,000 saved up for a rainy day. He believes this amount of money helps them to maintain

¹⁷ Timothy Beatley, *Planning for Coastal Resilience: Best Practices for Calamitous Times* (Washington DC: Island Press, 2012), 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend*, 3.

financial freedom. We cannot predict the situations in life that will force us to spend money.

However, we can control how we prepare for uncertainties. The same can be said for enhancing congregational resilience to a changing socio-political climate.

One way to reduce the impacts of disasters on the nation and its communities is to invest in enhancing resilience.... Enhanced resilience allows better anticipation of disasters and better planning to reduce disaster losses—rather than waiting for an event to occur and paying for it afterward. However, building the culture and practice of disaster resilience is not simple or inexpensive. Decisions about how and when to invest in increasing resilience involve short- and long-term planning and investments of time and resources prior to an event. Although the resilience of individuals and communities may be readily recognized after a disaster, resilience is currently rarely acknowledged before a disaster takes a place, making the payoff for resilience investments challenging for individuals, communities.²⁰

Working to enhance resilience in a congregational context will give churches the ability to absorb the shocks and stresses from racialized storms. Resilience building is not a simple task.

The work of prevention is arduous. It requires bringing public awareness to an issue that is often highly polarizing. It requires a rigorous educative process to be conversant about issues that affect race relations in America.

Building resilience creates two aspects of benefits: it enables individuals, communities, and organizations to better withstand a disruption more effectively, and it enables them to improve their current systems and situations. But also enables them to build new relationships, take on new endeavors and initiatives, and reach out for new opportunities, ones that may never have been imagined before.²¹

Resilience building through mitigation and adaptation involves foresight to see the long-term advantages despite the short-term struggles. The goal is for resilience thinking to be a part of an organization's ethos. Institutions and companies often rely on outside experts to give them set strategies on how to become a more resilient organization—but this doesn't have to always be

²⁰ The National Academies, *Disaster Resilience: A National Imperative*. (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2012).

²¹ Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend*, 292.

the case. Organizations can learn, adapt, and incorporate that new knowledge to become more resilient throughout their lifetime.

PART TWO

READINESS

The second stage in the Congregational Resilience Framework is, readiness. Here, I focus on specific actions a church can take to prepare for racialized storms. Salter-McNeil writes that churches and leaders “fail to realize that relational connections cannot be sustained without structural intentionality. Structures to support our efforts toward long-term reconciliation have to be established.”²² Readiness is critical to an effective response. A pastor whose church has taken proactive measures to prepare for racialized storms and is actively engaged in racial reconciliation will be far more adept at navigating socio-political distress generated by a racialized storm than a pastor who has done nothing to combat the prejudice and bigotry that resides in his/her congregation and community.

The key is to become proactive rather than reactive. Unfortunately, evangelical leaders were caught flatfooted when riots broke out in Baltimore after the death of Freddie Gray. When Eric Garner was choked to death in New York City and tens of thousands took to the streets in New York to protest, too many evangelical leaders remained silent. Being proactive, in a state of readiness, is vital to leading your congregation and community through a racialized storm.

Judith Rodin writes about the impact that readiness can play in an institution’s response to a catastrophe. She emphasizes the United States Coast Guard’s successful response to Hurricane Katrina was successful because of key steps that were taken before the storm hit.

When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in 2005 and caused a series of cascading disruptions—flood, collapse, loss of essential services including utilities, sanitation, communication—the US Coast Guard (USCG) was ready. It was one of the Coast Guard’s largest search and rescue missions ever.... Of the 60,000 people who were unable to escape the floodwaters—they fled to their rooftops or were stranded on isolated patches of high ground – the Coast Guard rescued more than 33,500.... The Coast Guard was able to conduct such a successful response for many reasons, among them preparedness and effective governance. Before the storm made landfall, the Coast Guard moved its command and control posts away from the hurricane’s path, so it would not be rendered dysfunctional.... The Coast

²² Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 83.

Guard was highly aware of the danger that official responders face in a crisis and of the fact that they cannot offer an effective response if they have been made dysfunctional themselves.... The actions taken by the Coast Guard before the storm became a crisis were planned and practiced with such regularity that, when it came time to respond, service members from New Orleans to New England knew what they were expected to do, were ready to do it and, in the event, did it.²³

The Coast Guard's effective response to Hurricane Katrina is an key example of how institutional preparedness can make a profound difference in responding to a crisis. In many ways, the church is like a hospital. People who are emotionally devastated and in distress walk through the church's doors every Sunday.

In times of national crisis, people are searching for answers and comfort. The church has the potential to be a healing place for those who are hurting from the pain of racialized storms. However, for this to happen, Christian leaders must first realize how destructive racialized storms are, then ready themselves and their leadership team to rescue those who are drowning in the floodwaters of loneliness, fear, and anxiety.

²³ Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend*, 199–200.

V

Establishing Readiness Through Climate Change Adaptation and Natural Disaster Mitigation Strategies

“Pray if you want, but we need to do something.”

- Will Willimon, *Who Lynched Willie Earle?*

The events of the summer of 2016 alerted me to several thought-provoking dilemmas: How should the church respond to these tragedies? What can the church do to comfort its congregants during these storms? What strategies should be implemented to prepare for these tumultuous times? How can the church reduce the psychological distress of its congregants? What steps should the church take to close the sociological, political, and racial gaps that socio-political unrest widen? What Biblical themes should the church prioritize and communicate during these times?

The purpose of the Congregational Resilience Framework is to enable churches to adapt to a changing socio-political climate and mitigate the unrest and disruption that individuals, congregations, and communities suffer from racialized storms. The Congregational Resilience Framework deploys strategies from the fields of climate change adaptation and natural disaster mitigation. If implemented in a congregational context, these strategies can “reduce the psychological distress among individuals and communities that are exposed to the acute collective stressor” of racialized storms.²⁴ I propose five strategies for mitigating the impact of racialized storms. Together, they provide faith leaders a toolkit to better prepare for and respond to these storms in their congregational context.

²⁴ Abramson et al., “The Resilience Activation Framework,” 42.

Faith leaders can soften the impact of racialized storms in their congregations by gaining a better understanding of the importance for their leadership of planning. There is a type of shock that comes out of naiveté surrounding racialized storms. It is important to prepare for these storms to can minimize the psychological impact of these events in one's congregation. Congregations cannot shy away from the complexities and challenges that our society is facing. It is their responsibility to confront them head-on. Pastors serve an institution that many people look to for stability, meaning, and comfort in times of crisis. Thus, they have a responsibility to lead in times of crises. During times of shock and disorientation, people want to hear the word of the Lord in that troubling situation.

Too often pastors fall silent during these storms due to a lack of knowledge of systemic injustice and the historic wounding in the black community. This lack of knowledge (let alone a plan on how to address the issue) perpetuates inertia in the church when it comes to the task of racial reconciliation. Investing energy, time, and resources toward mitigating the impact of racialized storms will give faith leaders a greater capacity to respond to and shepherd their congregations through great societal distress.

These racialized storms, like hurricanes, are inevitable and will continue; hence, it is necessary to invest energy into mitigation and preparation. It is possible to learn from various methods of natural hazard mitigation and discern parallels and implement strategies in a congregational context when we experience socio-political crises. It is imperative that the faith leaders respond to the particularities of race in America. Johnny Bernard Hill notes in, *The First Black President*, "Even Obama acknowledged that in many of our urban cities, quiet storms and

wars are raging and, if left unattended, will expand to the neatly manicured gated communities of the suburbs and mainstream American life.”²⁵

If we can assimilate and implement strategies from the field of natural hazard mitigation into our congregational context, our churches will remain resilient in the face of socio-political storms, serve as a model to the surrounding community, maintain strong interpersonal relationships across ethnic lines, and sustain diversity.

Climate Change Adaptation and Natural Disaster Mitigation

Climate change adaptation can provide insight on how to address powerful racialized storms. The parallels between climate change and socio-political climate change are striking. “The IPCC (2001) defines CCA as the “adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm and exploits beneficial opportunities.”²⁶

The field of natural disaster mitigation shares similarities with climate change adaptation. In this chapter, I analyze strategies from this field and adapt them to a congregational context to mitigate the disruption from racialized storms. The concept of mitigation essentially means to reduce the severity or impact of something. Natural disaster mitigation (also known as hazard mitigation)

generally refers to efforts undertaken before an event to reduce or eliminate the risks from natural hazards that may affect human life and property. Activities generally focus on preventing disasters or reducing the probability of or severity of impacts, through actions taken before hazard agents strike.... Hazard mitigation encompasses a wide array of planning activities and specific actions that a community can undertake to significantly reduce the impacts of hazard agents.²⁷

²⁵ Johnny Bernard Hill, *The First Black President: Barack Obama, Race, Politics, and the American Dream*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 56.

²⁶ Philip Ireland, “Climate Change Adaptation Business-as-Usual Aid and Development or an Emerging Discourse for Change?,” *International Journal of Development Issues* 11 no. 2 (2012); 92–110.

²⁷ Masterson, Peacock, and Van Zandt, *Planning for Community Resilience*, 41–42, 43–44.

Mitigation occurs when proactive measures are taken before a storm or natural disaster. Getting ahead of these disasters enables leaders and organizations to take inventory of available resources and to conduct vulnerability assessments to determine the areas where they are susceptible to disruption. Whether coastal communities dealing with the potential of deadly storm surge during a hurricane, or communities in the mountain west that frequently suffer from droughts, cities and communities face a variety of threats depending on their geographical location.

Most communities have experienced threats and hazards and have at least some knowledge of the risk to which they are exposed.... Mitigation means moving that common-sense awareness of risk based on historical experience to a systematic assessment of the risks to which communities are exposed, engaging in scientific inquiry into the conditions that generate risk. It includes mapping the interdependencies among the physical environment that gives rise to destructive events; the built environment that may be vulnerable to risk; and the social environment, or populations and their practices that are affected by severe events.²⁸

The goal of mitigation is to provide a systematic assessment of the risks that communities face and implement a systematic plan that addresses those risks. Mitigation goes beyond the mere awareness of the potential disruption from natural disasters to taking active steps to reduce the harmful impacts of that disaster.

The title of this part of the thesis is “Readiness.” It consists of three chapters that highlight methods that congregations can apply to better prepare for and respond to racialized storms. This chapter will feature strategies from the fields of climate change adaptation, natural disaster mitigation and disaster preparedness. For congregations to respond in the right way when racialized storms strike—the focus of part 3—they first must be ready. Preparedness is fundamental to mitigation. Disaster preparedness and response are connected.

²⁸ Arjen Boin, Louise K. Comfort, and Chris C. Demchak. *Designing Resilience: Preparing for Extreme Events* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010), 3.

Preparedness is about doing the things that need to be done to make a community ready to respond when threatened or hit by a disaster. Response is the activation of the plan and preparedness activities in response to the threat or disaster event. Both are vital to help minimize the physical impacts. Disaster or emergency preparedness focuses on pre-impact activities that establish a state of readiness to respond to an extreme event that could affect the community.²⁹

Mitigation is related to preparedness. However, there are differences. While preparedness involves short-term activities that individuals and organizations take to protect against the dangers of natural disaster events, mitigation is a change of mindset that leads to long-term and lasting change in patterns of development in cities and the lifestyle of individuals.

Mitigation is often contrasted with preparedness and response activities. The focus in mitigation is on long-term, proactive steps (such as adopting and implementing building codes or construction standards, or prohibiting buildings in a high-risk coastal hazard zone), whereas preparedness and response actions are usually aimed at addressing fairly immediate health and safety concerns. Preparedness activities are those short-term actions undertaken immediately in advance of a natural disaster (e.g., evacuation in the face of an approaching hurricane); response activities are those actions taken immediately following an event (e.g., search and rescue, debris removal).³⁰

Recent natural disasters, in the past five years, have spurred an emerging interest among individuals and institutions alike to become more resilient. Although “Mitigation is a public policy response,...it is also an effort that individuals, business, and other institutions can undertake.”³¹ Congregations can ready themselves to respond to racialized storms, but the key is to focus on long-term planning, to engage in the work of preparation during peace time.

When a racialized storm strikes, pastors and faith leaders are too often blindsided by the abruptness of anger and the intensity of division that spills out on local and national news and social media platforms. Beverly Cigler comments on the long-term emphasis of mitigation in *Hurricane Katrina: Two Intergovernmental Challenges*: “At the mitigation or prevention stage

²⁹ Masterson, Peacock, Van Zandt, *Planning for Community Resilience*, 44.

³⁰ Beatley, *Planning for Coastal Resilience*, 6.

³¹ Sadowski and Sutter, “Mitigation Motivated By Past Experience,” 304.

of a disaster, responsibility and accountability problems arise long before a hazard creates a disaster event, sometimes making the difference between an emergency and a disaster of major or catastrophic proportion.”³² As the winds of tension blow, Christians are left without a way to pacify the pain in their neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces. Preparation during peace time (on the part of faith leaders) will enable and embolden laypeople to be the peacemakers that God intended them to be in a society that is torn apart by categorizations, misunderstandings, and hostility.

The Challenge of Mitigation

Long-term planning and preparation offer many significant benefits to institutions, including churches. However, despite the advantages afforded by mitigation, few individuals and institutions commit to the process. As Grace Chikoto, A. A. Sadiq, and Erin Fordyce explain,

With regard to the level of disaster mitigation and preparedness among the three sectors, research suggests that organizational disaster mitigation and preparedness remains relatively low across all three sectors. A 2002 global survey of corporate preparedness indicated that, whereas 93% of 140 corporate strategists reported their organizations as being surprised by as many as 3 high-impact events that had occurred in the previous 5 years, 97% reported that their companies did not have early warning systems in place (Fuld, 2003). According to a 2007 survey of the top 50% of executives whose organizations had experienced a crisis such as hurricane, the collapse of infrastructures or armed conflicts, only 25% expected such major occurrences in the next 3 years.³³

Expectation is critical. Leaders who expect major crisis often engage in proactive measures to mitigate the disruption of that crisis. This process begins with awareness, with realizing that bad things can happen to good people (or in this case institutions). Recognizing the disruption that racialized storms bring is critical to proactive measures being taken. Pastors and faith leaders

³² Beverly A. Cigler, “Hurricane Katrina: Two Intergovernmental Challenges,” *Public Manager* 35, no. 4 (Winter 2006/2007): 4.

³³ Chikoto, Sadiq, and Fordyce, “Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness Comparison of Nonprofit, Public, and Private Organizations,” *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 42 no. 2 (2013): 396.

need to be informed of local and national news, particularly of news that can potentially exacerbate race relations in America.

As discussed previously, many local government officials often do not make mitigation a priority and often resort to the belief that disaster will not affect their communities. Many officials see the training needed for an effective emergency management plan as expensive and believe that the costs of training and planning do not produce results that are worth the investment of time and money.³⁴

Pastors who take the time and effort to stay updated on present-day issues that affect our socio-political landscape and who educate themselves in the history of racial injustice will be more apt to engage in the arduous work of mitigation and socio-political adaptation.

Michael Eric Dyson notes the importance of white people educating themselves about black and brown life and culture. He posits that one aspect of white privilege is not ever having to feel the need to be informed about issues that black and brown people face in America.³⁵ He advocates for whites to read books that underscore the depth of pain that blacks have suffered from centuries of oppression and discrimination, including the horrors of slavery, racial terrorism, economic and educational inequality, and voter disenfranchisement.

Anna Taylor notes that issues such as political short-termism often curtail efforts at adaptation. These issues will not magically disappear; they are present in most organizations. She offers several examples that deterred climate change adaptation efforts in Cape Town, South Africa:

The findings show that indeed budgetary constraints, political short-termism, uncertainties associated with future scenarios and the absence of a legislative framework to enforce adaptive measures have all contributed to limiting progress on adaptation in Cape Town. The findings highlight that even with advanced warning of the challenges or barriers, they are extremely difficult to avoid or overcome.³⁶

³⁴ Mann, "Building Sustainable Cities," 45.

³⁵ Dyson, *Tears We Cannot Stop*, 199.

³⁶ Anna Taylor, "Institutional Inertia in a Changing Climate: Climate Adaptation Planning in Cape Town, South Africa," *International Journal of Climate Change Strategies and Management* 8, no. 2, (2016): 205.

The point is to stop waiting until it's too late. There will never be a perfect time to engage in the work of mitigation. Long-term planning is not exciting, but it is vital to an institution's sustainability.

Planning for a disaster and analyzing its possible effects is usually not a concern for individuals until it is too late.... Many times, individuals do not believe a disaster will happen to them, and, therefore, they do not feel insurance is necessary. Coastal residents who have lived to see many evacuations that were called for too early are less likely to evacuate. The result is the belief that if a disaster did occur, the federal government would take care of the damages. Many individuals, then, do not see the importance of mitigation and refuse to take personal responsibility.³⁷

The main challenge to mitigation is that people do not believe that a natural disaster will affect them. Whether they live in tornado alley on the plains of Kansas, on the hurricane-threatened coast of Florida, or along the San Andreas fault-line in California, many people go their entire lives without preparing for the impact of a natural disaster. The same applies to racialized storms. One question I like to ask church leaders is this: If a thousand Neo-Nazis and Ku Klux Klan members march in your city, what will you say to your congregation on Sunday morning? What will you say to your church staff? This is why the Realization phase is so important. To properly ready a congregation for a racialized storm, awareness must be established.

What hazard mitigation strategies can be used in a congregational context? What will be the result of the implementation of these methods? The objective here is to ascertain and explore four key strategies in the fields of climate change adaptation and natural disaster mitigation and examine how these strategies can be applied to enable congregations to properly plan for and robustly respond to racialized storms.

³⁷ S. J. Czerwinski, *Disaster assistance: Information on federal disaster mitigation efforts*. (Washington, DC: U.S. General Accounting Office, 1998), 4.

Cooperation, Collaboration, Coordination with Community Stakeholders

An important strategy to adapt to the harmful ramifications of climate change and to mitigate the disruption and devastation of natural disasters is to foster cooperation, collaboration, and coordination with institutional actors in a city and community. Judith Rodin quotes Rob Dudgeon (Deputy Director of San Francisco's Department of Emergency Management) on working with various actors to prepare for the next major earthquake. "It's about getting people to work together more than it's about authority.... We have to make sure everybody's at the table and work with the various constituencies"³⁸

It is imperative that faith leaders get outside the four walls of the church and build bridges with key community stakeholders in the cities, in order to expose themselves to different opinions and strategies. Congregations need to develop a stronger capacity to cope to an ever-changing socio-political climate. The term *coping capacity* is used frequently in the field of natural disaster mitigation. Virginia Burkett defines this as

The ability of a system (natural or human) to respond to and recover from the effects of stress or perturbations that have the potential to alter the structure or function of the system. The capacity of a system to cope with a natural hazard is determined by the ability of the system to adjust to a disturbance, moderate potential damage, take advantage of opportunities, and adapt to the consequences.³⁹

To develop institutional capacity to cope with extreme events, that institution must engage in cooperation, collaboration, and coordination with other institutions. Faith leaders should first identify like-minded institutions to begin the process of building strategic partnerships. Once

³⁸ Rodin, *Resilience Dividend*, 124.

³⁹ Virginia R. Burkett, *Encyclopedia of Natural Hazards*, ed. Peter T. Bobrowsky (The Netherlands: Springer Netherlands, 2013) 119–121.

these are identified, faith leaders need to initiate a process of association with these various constituencies for the mutual benefit of mitigating the impact of racialized storms.

Cooperation should eventually lead to collaboration and collaboration should eventually lead to coordination. While all three terms are synonymous, there are important nuances to their definitions. According to Merriam Webster, cooperation is an “association of persons for common benefit.”⁴⁰ Collaboration is more integrated. Instead of just a loose association, collaboration fosters an amalgamation of ideas and values.

According to Evan Rosen, author of *The Culture Of Collaboration*, the process of collaboration can be defined as “working together to create value while sharing virtual or physical space.” The Oxford English Dictionary Online defines collaboration as “the process of working jointly on an activity or project.” Engaging in collaboration, then, requires only a couple of people and a plan to work on something of value.⁴¹

John Spencer contrasts cooperative and collaborative groups. He remarks that “collaboration begins with trust and a shared vision for what you want to accomplish.”⁴² He then lays out the differences between collaborative and cooperative groups.

In most cases, we started out as a cooperative group and we shifted into a collaborative group over time. Cooperative groups are more like networks built on respect and shared norms. The work shifts between independence and dependence where the members remain autonomous but agree to share information, tasks, and ideas. By contrast, a collaborative group is interdependent, with a shared vision and values. The mutual respect evolves into trust and the transparency eventually leads to vulnerability.⁴³

⁴⁰ “Cooperation,” *Merriam Webster*, accessed November 10, 2017, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cooperation>.

⁴¹ “Collaboration,” *Library Technology Reports* 45 no. 4 (2009): 7–9, <https://journals.ala.org/index.php/ltr/article/view/4571/5388>.

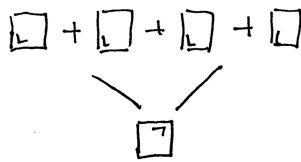
⁴² John Spencer, “The Difference Between Cooperation and Collaboration,” *JS* (blog), June 22, 2016, <http://www.spencerauthor.com/can-you-force-collaboration/>.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Spencer then emphasizes eight points that characterize cooperative groups and eight that characterize collaborative groups. These points are presented in the diagram below, where they are contrasted to illustrate the subtle nuances between the two terms.

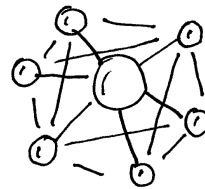
COOPERATIVE V. COLLABORATIVE

By John Spencer @spencerideas



COOPERATION

- Mutual respect
- Transparency
- Shared goals
- Independent and dependent
- Loose network
- Short-term
- Sharing of ideas as a group
- Engagement



COLLABORATION

- Mutual trust
- Vulnerability
- Shared vision and values
- Constant state of interdependence
- Tight culture
- Long-term
- Generation of new ideas as a group
- Empowerment

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Once mutual trust, shared visions and values, and interdependence have been established between organizations, coordination is the inevitable result. Policies and strategies are executed jointly to maximize impact. “Resources are acknowledged and can be made available for a specific project.”⁴⁵ Coordination pools economic, knowledge-based, and material resources

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Paul W. Mattessich and Marta Murray-Close, *Collaboration: What Makes It Work, 2nd Edition: A Review of Research Literature on Factors Influencing Successful Collaboration* (Saint Paul, MN: Wilder Publishing Center, 2001), 61.

toward a “specific project or task.”⁴⁶ The process of cooperation, collaboration, and coordination is an important strategy to mitigate the disruption caused by natural disasters. It is also a process that can benefit congregations looking to adapt a changing socio-political climate.

Focusing on “strategic partnerships” will allow governments and communities the ability to “approach the challenges presented by the preparation of comprehensive disaster mitigation plans in an interdisciplinary fashion” and, as a result, sustain the effects that often come with disaster.⁴⁷

Cooperation

Cooperation is the first step towards effective mitigation. Organizations looking to build strategic partnership towards a shared goal needn’t worry about all their values and interest aligning right off the bat. More important is being exposed to the thought and processes of other groups. That cannot happen if an institution remains within its four walls. Natural disasters force institutional actors to cooperate within one another because no organization (not even the mighty United States Federal Government) is large enough to remedy all the problems that are caused by natural disasters.

When a major hurricane hits a coastal region, a variety of sub-governmental actors are forced to work together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from the storm. Whether the US Coast Guard actively engaged in search and rescue operations or the American Red Cross providing relief through the distribution of food and water to victims, institutions must work together before, during, and after storms.

For practitioners, cooperation between sub governmental units is often viewed as an ideal situation that, if achieved, can generate government efficiency, effectiveness, and mutual

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Mann, “Building Sustainable Cities,” 32. The quoted passages come from P. E. Salkin, “Sustainability at the Edge: The opportunity and responsibility of local governments to most effectively plan for natural disaster mitigation, *Environmental Law Reporter: News & Analysis* 38 (2008): 10158–10170.

beneficial outcomes. When change is needed, or perceived to be needed, better cooperation is usually the clarion call.⁴⁸

Cooperation is prevalent among nation-states and sub governmental units, such as the UN or NATO. The field of Public Administration focuses on how government can be more efficient and effective in managing activities and resources. The book, *Designing Resilience*, describes the view of cooperation dominant among management scholars:

Management scholars focus on cooperation within and among organizations. They see cooperation as the process by which individuals, groups, and organizations come together, interact, and form psychological relationships for mutual gain or benefit.⁴⁹

Again, the focus is how organizations can mutually gain and benefit from forming relationships and loose networks with other organizations. The authors make the case that cooperation leads to trust building, social capital, and greater appreciation for external points of view.⁵⁰

Arjen Boin notes that the focus of leadership (when it comes to the crisis management) should be on creating and sustaining key external relationships with other institutions.

Leaders are important—not only as all powerful deciders but rather as designers, facilitators, and guardians of an institutional arrangement that produces effective decision making and coordination processes at all levels.... They should invest in building trusted relationships across organizations, jurisdictions, and communities that are at risk of crisis and help them to develop the social capital and trust that are so crucial in facilitating the emergent, informal, fast, and inclusive coordination processes needed for effective crisis response and recovery.⁵¹

This inevitably takes the pressure off institutions by enabling them to share the weight of their mission with other entities. The authors of *Designing Resilience* highlight three kinds of factors—interest, institutional, and ideational—that foster cooperation among organizations.

When it comes to mutual interests,

⁴⁸ Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend*, 198.

⁴⁹ Arjen Boin, et al., *Designing Resilience*, 199.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 201.

⁵¹ Arjen Boin, et al., *The Politics of Crisis Management*, 74.

One of the simplest propositions found in the international relations literature is that cooperation takes place only when all partners perceive they can achieve gains.... In essence, states jealously guard their own position and cooperate only when they perceive the possibility to increase their own net benefits.⁵²

The institutional factor is when institutions enter in to technical arrangements and agreements with other organizations.⁵³ The ideational factor focuses on bonds of beliefs between institutions.

The first place to look for ideational lubricants to cooperation is in the epistemological bonds that link networks together. These networks often share belief systems that can have a strong effect on cooperation before and major disturbances. Whereas opposing belief systems may inhibit cooperation, common belief systems have a strong binding effect on those who subscribe to them.⁵⁴

Cooperation is imperative among institutions in the fields of climate change adaptation and natural disaster mitigation. No organization has the capacity and the resources to prepare for and recover from natural disasters. It takes a village.

For churches, cooperation starts with faith leaders talking to other faith leaders in a community and city. Churches can form loose networks with other churches to be exposed to external view points and strategies to mitigate the disruption of racialized storms in their communities. The case must be made that churches working together is mutually beneficial for the city. Salter-McNeil writes that it is important that churches seek to develop partnerships with churches that are comprised of a different race or culture.⁵⁵ A united front is stronger than any individual church. Relationship building is vital in the effort to mitigate disruption from racialized storms. Churches can also form networks and engage with local non-profits in the area. Many non-profits share beliefs and values with churches. Cooperation with non-profits can

⁵² Arjen Boin et al., *Designing Resilience*, 204.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 207.

⁵⁵ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 104.

be a way to engage with other community entities that will inevitably be affected by racialized storms.

Collaboration

Collaboration is the next step in the process by which institutions become interdependent and maximize resources, ideas, and personnel to mitigate disruption from natural disasters.

Collaboration goes beyond cooperation's initial engagement for mutual beneficence.

These community partnerships are vital not only because they generate creative and collaborative solutions to vulnerabilities but also because they unite disparate groups in the community around a common cause of readiness.... Pulling these resources together to build resilience strengthens community, unity, identity, and communication—all of which inevitably increase a community's capacity to work together and problem-solve before, during, and after a disruption occurs.⁵⁶

Collaboration is useful in assessing risk, building resilience, and implementing strategies that enable institutions to plan and prepare for natural disasters. Public-private partnerships are one of many collaborative approaches institutions can take to build resilience in their cities. Rodin writes, “Public-private partnership are those in which groups from the public sector ally with a private entity to develop and fund a project together.”⁵⁷

There are practical ways to prepare for civil unrest. Nancy Rogers argues that leaders can make a difference by joining with other groups to mitigate the harmful effects of socio-political unrest. She writes, “Mediation-wise attorneys can play an effective role in preparing for—and perhaps forestalling violence connected with—community unrest, as well as strengthening their public leaders’ abilities to deal with people’s concerns and building trust among communities within the community.”⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend*, 142.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁵⁸ Nancy Rogers, Grande Lum, William Froehlich, “Planning in Advance of Civil Unrest,” *Dispute Resolution Magazine* 22, no. 4, (Summer 2016): 1.

Similar to mediation-wise attorneys, pastors and faith leaders have a unique opportunity to prepare for civil unrest before it occurs. This can be done through a variety of ways. One way is to collaborate with existing community stakeholders to bring to light the concerns and issues that contribute to racialized storms. Rogers writes that “mediation-wise attorneys can convene representatives of the broader community to develop the antidote to violence and costly destruction by addressing deep community concerns and preparing leaders to act wisely in the early hours and days of civil unrest when it occurs.”⁵⁹ She claims that community leaders desire collaboration with other institutions and are open to new ideas for building resiliency in their respective communities.

As in the era of school desegregation, today’s national narrative about unrest makes most community leaders receptive to suggestions about planning initiatives. Concerned civic leaders are hungry for ideas and conversations to build trust. Following the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing 2015 recommendations to advance policing practices “while building public trust,” organizations such as the Major Cities [Police] Chiefs Association and the International City/County Management Association are actively discussing and implementing best practices that specifically address this goal.⁶⁰

The sociopolitical uproar that racialized storms produce is bigger than one institution can handle. Amidst the unrest following the shooting of Trayvon Martin, local and national civil rights leaders collaborated with “the local US Attorney, FBI, clergy, and law enforcement officials to reduce tension and prevent violence.”⁶¹ Here is an example of a partnership established in the wake of a racialized storm. Churches can replicate the actions of the U.S. Justice Department by collaborating with their local NAACP branches to trouble-shoot community issues and to mitigate the pain and emotional disruption that racialized storms bring.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁶¹ Ibid., 2.

Coordination

Rogers goes on emphasize how U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service (CRS) Conciliators coordinated with community officials to ensure that protests remained peaceful:

Their efforts were not limited to just the days that followed the decisions about prosecution of Zimmerman: CRS conciliators also worked with many of the same stakeholders to ensure a coordinated response to three large marches and demonstrations and negotiated a peaceful resolution to a student-led sit-in at the entrance to Sanford Police Headquarters. Assistance included providing expertise in police practices as well as mediation when the conciliators facilitated discussions between city officials and protesters and suggested best practices for handling confrontations.⁶²

The US Department of Justice’s CRS provides a model that churches can follow to collaborate with communities during times of racial distress.

The Community Relations Service (CRS), a component of the U.S. Department of Justice, is the Federal government’s “peacemaker” for community conflicts and tensions arising from difference of race, color, and national origin. CRS was created by the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and is the only Federal component dedicated to assist State and local units of government, private and public organizations, and community groups with preventing and resolving racial and ethnic tensions, conflicts, and civil disorders, with the intent of restoring racial stability and harmony.... CRS conciliators work with State and local officials and community leaders to provide a wide variety of services to address racial issues and prevent violence. CRS’ services include contributing expertise and guidance on methods and policies that calm racial tensions and conflicts. Enhancing strategies of State and local governments and community groups to prevent and respond to civil disorders. Improving lines of communication between parties experiencing racial tension or conflict, including Federal, State, and local governments and community leaders and residents. Helping schools and universities effectively deal with incidents of racial tensions or violence.⁶³

Rogers highlights Sanford as an example of a city that successfully utilized the CRS to mitigate racial tension and implement change in police practices.

Coincidentally, some months before the shooting, the city of Sanford had employed—for duties independent of potential unrest—Andrew Thomas, a mediator with decades of

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ “Community Relations Service,” *The United States Department of Justice*, accessed November 10, 2017. <https://www.justice.gov/crs/us-doj-community-relations-service>

experience dealing with community conflict in New York. After the shooting, Thomas coordinated with CRS and helped local officials arrange police protocols, develop communications strategies, create stakeholder groups that spanned community divisions, and convene long-term discussions that resulted in changes in law enforcement practices. Though demonstrations sometimes swelled to represent more than 60 percent of Sanford's population, the protests were peaceful, and police did not arrest any demonstrators. Perhaps most important, Thomas continues to facilitate talks that have already led to broadly embraced changes.⁶⁴

The events in Sanford following the shooting pose a powerful example of coordination, “the combination of parts to achieve most effective or harmonious results.”⁶⁵ Coordination results in improved communication because, as different entities work in concord, they must share and disseminate information.⁶⁶

Coordination can lead to converging attitudes and changed behaviors so as to improve decision-making across borders under times of stress. As patterns of regularized policy coordination become widespread, trans-governmental elite networks are created that tie officials together based on common interests, shared goals, and shared knowledge. Even if government officials do not change their official stance or deviate from formal negotiation positions, the process of coordination can generate collegiality and familiarity.⁶⁷

Coordination challenges the silo mentality that plagues organizations. It's far easier to maintain systems and process that work within an institution. However, communication can become complex when you're dealing with a number of different institutions that have different ethos, policies, and processes. Despite the complexity, coordination, in the long run, is better for an organization in the field of natural disaster mitigation. “When facing a major crisis or disturbance, the ability to ensure that decisions are communicated and acted upon down the line can have a major impact on the ability of a social system to bounce back quickly from adversity.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Rogers, Lum, and Froelich, “Planning in Advance of Civil Unrest,” 2.

⁶⁵ Boin, Comfort, and Demchak, *Designing Resilience*, 201.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Boin, Comfort, and Demchak, *Designing Resilience*, 202.

Pastors across a city could coordinate their communication by conducting a city-wide sermon series on racial reconciliation and healing. Before a racialized storm strikes, they could implement a plan to share notes and speak on racial tension the Sunday after the issue has hit. Imagine if several dozen pastors preached same sermon (tailored and adapted to their congregations but essentially the same message) amid racial division and tension.

Cooperation, collaboration, and coordination are all aimed at fostering unity, a major quality Jesus prayed for in his disciples: “May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that you sent me and that you love them as much as you love me.”⁶⁹ Imagine, in a demonstration of unity, if congregations joined with other congregations and rented out a spacious venue in their city to conduct a worship service that would allow for individual and communal lament; a service where people from all colors and backgrounds could pray together and worship together under one roof. Imagine if churches collaborated to host a city-wide forum that brought awareness to the underlying factors that cause massive amounts of unrest when racialized storms strike. The possibilities are endless.

Another important factor that cooperation, collaboration, and coordination foster is hope. Salter-McNeil explains, “There has to be some activity that helps us to return to the hope possibility. Prior to restoration we often feel as if reconciliation is hopeless; we feel helpless in the face of all the evil and injustice of which we are now painfully aware.”⁷⁰ Indeed, when one feels alone in the midst of a seemingly overwhelming situation, it can be difficult to avoid despair. To avoid such despair, pastors can cooperate by getting to know one another, collaborate by working towards shared goals, and coordinate to maximize their communication, resources, and activities.

⁶⁹ John 17:23 NLT.

⁷⁰ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 60.

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.⁷¹

The church I currently pastor at, Hope Community Church (a large, predominantly white, non-denominational church) recently engaged in collaborative work with World Overcomers Church (a large predominantly black church). My lead pastor and the lead pastor of World Overcomers began to the cooperative act of relationship-building by agreeing to have dinner together. Again, cooperation leads to collaboration. Weeks later, the two men spoke at a diversity symposium in downtown Cary, North Carolina. After the symposium, the two men agreed to have a joint worship service on a Wednesday night called *As One*.

Just two months later, a racialized storm broke out in Charlottesville. Andy Thompson, the lead pastor at World Overcomers, asked my lead pastor if he would come and speak with him at their Wednesday night service on the matter of race in America. Coordination took place as the pastors of two of the largest churches in North Carolina jointly condemned racism and offered hope through Jesus Christ. Cooperation began when the two men decided it was important to get to know one another. As time went on, the two men and their churches collaborated on a number of issue, and when a racialized storm struck, the two men had enough relational capital to coordinate their responses and thus maximize their impact. Coordination requires sacrifice and intentionality. Individuals and institutions have to agree to put aside their respective agendas for the sake of the greater good of the communities they reside in.

⁷¹ Ecclesiastes 4:9–12 NLT.

Climate Change Adaptation and Natural Disaster Mitigation Frameworks That Can Be Adapted to a Congregational Context

Anna Taylor investigates how Cape Town’s municipal government prepared and enacted climate change adaptation policies. Its journey into the world of climate change adaptation began in 2006 when city officials partnered with the University of Cape Town to advance a framework that would give Cape Town an approach to adapt to the ramifications of a changing climate.⁷² The framework emphasized potential threats that climate change could bring to a coastal city like Cape Town and gave an eight-step process that the City of Cape Town could implement to adapt. The plan called the City of Cape Town to “assess current climate trends and future projections, undertake a vulnerability assessment, formulate a strategy, develop adaptation options, evaluate priority adaptation strategies, scope and design projects, implement, and monitor and evaluate.”⁷³ The Cape Town climate change adaptation framework provides a model church leaders can apply in preparation of racialized storms.

Assess Current Climate Trends and Future Projections

As chapter 1 outlined, the socio-political climate has changed drastically in the last five years. A constellation of socio-political factors has led race relations to be at their lowest point in decades. Faith leaders would be wise to observe what is changing the political environment and how this affects race relations. To properly prepare for and respond to racialized storms, faith leaders must be informed of the issues that cause unrest and upheaval. There are many ways to assess the current climate trends from a ministerial context.

⁷² Taylor, *Institutional Inertia in a Changing Climate: Climate Change Adaptation Planning in Cape Town, South Africa*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 195.

First, it would be prudent for pastors to study the Pew Research Center to get a sense of what Americans are thinking on issues. The Pew Research Center is a “nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.”⁷⁴ Through “public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and other data-driven social science research”⁷⁵ the Pew Research Center is an informative and excellent source to learn about American policy, attitudes and trends. The Pew Research Center publishes several studies on race relations in America every year. These studies offer a detailed analysis of opinions on a wide variety of matters. Pastors could use these studies in their sermons as a call to action. Learning about social and demographic trends in America will enable pastors to navigate the complexity and variety of attitudes held by black and whites.

The Pew Research Center has a variety of different topics in its online database that one can review to learn more about race relations in America. The category *Race and Ethnicity* houses a plethora of articles on the subject of race in America. For example, Samantha Neal’s article, “Views of Racism as a Major Problem Increase Sharply, Especially Among Democrats,” shows that the number of Americans who think racism is a big problem in our society has “increased 8 percentage points in the past two years—and has roughly doubled since 2011.”⁷⁶ This is a significant finding and should sound the alarm bells in any church. This analysis can assist pastors in assessing the current climate and trends in America’s socio-political landscape and subsequently responding to those shifts.

⁷⁴ “About Pew Research Center,” *Pew Research Center*, last accessed November 11, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/about/>

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Samantha Neal, “Views of Racism as a Major Problem Increase Sharply, Especially Among Democrats,” *Factank*, last modified August 29, 2017, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/08/29/views-of-racism-as-a-major-problem-increase-sharply-especially-among-democrats/>

Another way for pastors to be informed on the current cultural climate in America is to draw on academic expertise. During the 2013–2014 school year, I served as an adjunct professor at the University of North Florida (my alma mater). I found that my time as a university professor helped to inform my pastoral leadership. While I taught public administration and management, I was immersed in the latest trends and attitudes of college students. I also got a front row seat to cutting edge research from my colleagues.

Third, Salter-McNeil urges church leaders to engage in activities that help them to become knowledgeable, like reading books on racial reconciliation, attending educational workshops on race, reading books from authors of a different ethnicity, and taking courses in history, politics at a local university.⁷⁷ Pastors could utilize the knowledge and research from professors to inform them on their leadership when it comes to the issue of race relations. Inviting a professor who specializes in political science or American history to lecture at a church staff or leadership team meeting on race relations would be tremendously informative. Professors who specialize in these areas have a unique vantage point that could be useful to faith leaders. The point is to find different ways to learn about the current political climate in America.

Staying up-to-date on the news is another method faith leaders can employ to properly assess current climate trends in America. One does not have to be a journalist to be appropriately informed on the news of the day. Technology—such as mobile devices, apps, and emails—has made it easy to stay current on the news. In addition to the CNN app that gives me updates throughout the week, I subscribe to five different magazines, *The Economist*, *The Week*, *National Review*, *Foreign Affairs*, and *Relevant*, that give me a balanced perspective on the political issues of the day.

⁷⁷ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 103.

Undertake a Vulnerability Assessment

In the field of natural disaster mitigation, conducting a vulnerability and risk assessment of a city, community, or organization yields insight about potential problematic areas or issues that can arise when a disaster strikes. A vulnerability assessment is an organizational inventory that allows leaders to assess what weaknesses and strengths they have. “A critical piece, and often the most neglected piece, of resilience to disaster is the identification and mapping of a community’s social vulnerabilities.”⁷⁸ A vulnerability assessment “generally focuses on a community’s exposure to hazard agents such as floods, surge, wave action, or winds. Such assessments identify the potential exposure of populations, businesses, and the built environment.”⁷⁹ What are the hazard agents that occur from racialized storms? How do these agents affect the church? Chapter 3 of this thesis has given answers to these questions. However, every church is different, and to properly assess the susceptibility of a church, a survey is a good place to start.

A survey on race relations in America and personal attitudes about race would give faith leaders insight into the opinions and beliefs in their own congregation. While it is helpful to preach about racism, a sermon with a statistical analysis of a congregation’s beliefs on race would be more informative and would help guide the pastor in what to say about race and its impact on that specific congregation. Many people don’t consider themselves racists because the meaning of the term has changed over time. However, a survey might reveal prejudicial attitudes and covert bigotry. In New Orleans, students at Tulane’s Disaster Resilience Leadership Academy are required

to adopt a community in southeast Louisiana and conduct a formal risk assessment based on research, public records, and all manner of available data. They must also develop a

⁷⁸ Masterson, Peacock, Van Zandt, *Planning for Community Resilience*, 97.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

survey tool to take into their community to make a more informal and qualitative assessment of what the risks and vulnerabilities are from the perspective of the people who live and work there.... The community engagement can transform the students' thinking about vulnerabilities and the nature of disaster.... These two forms of assessment together give students a much more complete picture of what needs to be done in any given community to begin or continue resilience-building activities beyond emergency preparedness.⁸⁰

The results of a survey can inform a pastor's decision-making and strategy to build resilience to racialized storms. Another way to assess a congregation's social vulnerability to racialized storms is to identify ministries, personnel, and assets that can be used to mitigate disruption and tension from racialized storms.

Formulate a Strategy

Based on the current climate trends and vulnerability assessment of a congregation, faith leaders can now formulate a strategy to build greater resilience in their congregations and communities. When it comes to formulating a strategy, church leaders should focus on a few measurable activities that could be implemented to mitigate against any potential disruption from a racialized storm. Perhaps it's participating in a Martin Luther King Jr. breakfast put on by a city or organization, or being involved in a diversity symposium during Black History Month. Once that awareness is achieved they must embark and be committed to strategies that, though difficult to implement, are necessary for a congregation to prepare for and respond to racialized storms. A.G. Lafley and Roger L. Martin write,

Really, strategy is about making specific choices to win in the marketplace. Deliberately choosing a different set of activities to deliver unique value. Strategy therefore requires making explicit choices—to do some things and not others—and building a business around those choices. In short, strategy is choice.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend*, 129-130.

⁸¹ Lafley and Martin. *Playing to Win: How Strategy Really Works* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 2013), 3.

Faith leaders need to make specific choices. “There are specific strategies and policies that can increase a community’s robustness, influence the rapidity of recovery, and enhance future conditions.”⁸² Whether it’s a sermon series on race, collaboration with another church whose members comprise a different race, or devoting financial resources to outside organizations that attempt to remedy racial inequities, faith leaders need formulate clear, coherent, and concise strategies.

Develop Adaptation Options

As the church formulates a strategy, a variety of options to mitigate racialized storms will arise. Church leaders should spend time in prayer and reflection to expand on these options and to determine which one is feasible for the congregation to implement. Salter-McNeil offers three important questions that a pastor should ask his or her team: “What existing structures, programs or practices are conducive to implementation of our reconciliation goals? What are some other programs or structures that might be helpful to this initiative but do not yet exist? What should we consider when setting our priorities?”⁸³

Evaluate Priority Adaptation Strategies

Next, churches need to assess and prioritize which strategy should be implemented first. Again, this will depend on what the vulnerability assessment reveals. Mitigation is a process. It takes time and institutional patience to slowly enact the change needed to build resilience to racialized storms. Salter-McNeil distinguishes between immediate, short-term, and long-term strategic-planning. Strategic-planning, she warns, “doesn’t happen overnight! As you strategically plan for the various areas of your group, be mindful of the stages and seasons of

⁸² Masterson, Peacock, Van Zandt, *Planning for Community Resilience*, 63.

⁸³ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 105.

implementation.”⁸⁴ She organizes the timing of strategic planning into three categories, “immediate needs with clear action steps (1–2 years), short-term strategies (3–5 years), long-term strategies (more than 5 years).”⁸⁵ Categorizing initiatives and goals into these three timelines will help church leaders focus on the immediate, while keeping long-term goals at the forefront of their minds.

Implement

The implementation phase should be realistic. Curing racism in a city won’t be achieved overnight. In the book, *The First 90 Days*, Michael C. Watkins writes about the importance of securing early wins. These wins boost morale and have a positive impact overall in the organization.⁸⁶ During the implementation phase, pastors could lay out a couple of small, but impactful goals during the first 3–6 months after the planning phase and systematically work towards those goals. Once a goal is achieved, a celebration of that achievement should occur to boost the perception that progress is occurring.

Monitor and Evaluate

It is vital that church leaders track their progress as they attempt to mitigate the disruption from racialized storms. Faith leaders can assign out projects to different staff. Once those projects have been assigned, there should be some type of accountability system in place to track, measure, and evaluate the progress that is being made. Monthly reports from subordinates is one helpful accountability measure. Incorporating the church’s elder team can be an effective way of ensuring that progress is being monitored and evaluated.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Michael D. Watkins *The First 90 Days: Critical Success Strategies for New Leaders at all levels* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 2003), 24.

The book *Planning for Community Resilience* offers another framework that can be adapted to a congregational context. This book provides a seven-step planning process to guide a community to becoming more resilient. In what follows, I explain how each of these steps can be implemented in a church setting.

Organize

The first step in this process is to “gather together a core team of stakeholders who are likely to have the most capacity, whether in time, interest, ability, resources, or networks.”⁸⁷ Church leaders can implement this step by working to recruit people within their congregations that have a desire for racial justice, healing, and equity. Holding an interest meeting about the subject of race relations is an approach a church leader could take to generate attention toward the subject.

The point of an informational meeting is to provide an overview of the project to potential team members, to discuss roles and responsibilities of team members, and to determine whether others should be actively recruited to join an advisory group or taskforce to provide ongoing feedback to the core team.”⁸⁸ The goal is to develop a core team that will “contribute to the design and execution of a broader community engagement strategy.”⁸⁹ This team essentially becomes an engine of ideation in the congregation.

Kaplan and Donovan write about establishing infrastructure that will support lasting change within an organization. They propose creating a diversity council, which they claim is “a very effective tool for creating a strategy and jump-starting or overseeing implementation.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Masterson, Peacock, and Van Zandt, *Planning for Community Resilience*, 22.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ Mark Kaplan and Mason Donovan, *The Inclusion Dividend Why Investing in Diversity & Inclusion Pays Off* (Brookline, MA: Bibliomotion, 2013), 212.

They define a diversity council's "primary role is to act as a bridge between business case for action and the strategy for implementation."⁹¹ Additional roles of the diversity council include strategy development, change management and communication.⁹²

Connect

The second step is to engage in cooperation, collaboration, and eventually coordination with outside members in the community. Once a team of stakeholders within the congregation is established and has clarified goals and the purpose of engagement, that team should begin to look for outside groups that could meaningfully contribute to the mission of building resilience to racialized storms in the outside community. Cooperating and collaborating with outside groups gives a congregation the chance to maximize the impact of its strategies and affect a group of neighborhoods and possibly an entire city. "Creating partnerships at this stage ensures adequate attention to different analytical perspectives from various stakeholders."⁹³ Working with outside groups gives a congregation the ability to amplify its resources and influence.

Assess

Because the previous framework treated awareness, I will not repeat here how a church can adopt this method. However, it is vital to recognize how important it is to accumulate and synthesize information on a congregation's potential vulnerability. Collecting and synthesizing information about an organization or community's vulnerability is key to fully grasping the reality that organizations lives in. This information helps to improve processes, systems, and individuals within an organization. This improvement enables an institution to be more effective in achieving its mission. Clarifying the congregation's attitudes and beliefs is vital to know

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Masterson, Peacock, Van Zandt, *Planning for Community Resilience*, 70.

where to begin in building resilience to racialized storms. If the topography of a city shows that a certain part of a community lies in a floodplain and is thus susceptible to floods then city planners and local residents can take action to mitigate potential damage in the case of a hurricane or torrential downpour.

However, one must know the contours of one's community to effectively plan and prevent devastation. Evaluating the vulnerability (whether it be having a significant percentage of people with racially prejudiced attitudes or a sizable percentage of people that believe inaccurate racial stereotypes) of a congregation is tantamount to a sustainable strategy. Lovett Weems writes that, "dependable data are needed in an accessible format.... The opinions, perceptions, and ideas people have about the congregation are equally important. Such feedback regarding the current situation and future needs of the church's ministries is essential in visioning."⁹⁴ Pastors need to create feedback loops to determine where their congregations stand on issues.

Envision

Lovett Weems explains the concept of vision as "a picture of a preferred future."⁹⁵ He goes on to quote Rueben P. Job:

Vision is a gift from God. It is the reward of disciplined, faithful, and patient listening to God. Vision allows us to see beyond the barriers and obstacles to our mission. Vision catches us up, captivates and compels us to act. Vision is the gift of eyes of faith to see the invisible, to know the unknowable, to think the unthinkable, to experience the not yet. Vision allows us to see signs of the kingdom now in our midst. Vision gives us focus, energy, the willingness to risk. It is our vision that draws us forward.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Lovett H. Weems, *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture, and Integrity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2010), 36.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 24.

Weems quotes Aristotle, who says that “the soul never thinks without a picture.”⁹⁷ People are not going to move unless they have a picture of what’s possible. It is vital that church leaders, as they journey on the process towards resilience, give a clear picture of what direction they are going in and the potential benefits that direction will yield. The step of envisioning isn’t about generating an arbitrary plan. It requires articulating a picture of where that organization could be and articulating that picture in a way that is compelling so that others will take up the mantle and run with the vision. The process of envisioning should be undertaken with the group of stakeholders after a proper assessment of the congregation’s attitudes on racial issues has been completed.

Prioritize

During the prioritizing phase, the core group begins to list and rank the list of options and strategies that have been generated during the envision step. “The preparation phase is where goals are set and the leaders of the group can clarify the desired outcomes and the benchmarks that will indicate progress along the way. This is where policies, procedures and processes are developed to drive diversity and racial reconciliation change initiatives into the institutional culture.”⁹⁸ The core group that has been organized must take time to pray and discern which strategies from the vision are undertaken first.

Implement

Once strategies are prioritized, churches need to start working towards their goals. The implementation phase is an exciting time as churches embark on the journey of resiliency. The implementation phase “requires groups to define who will do what, and when, with regard to the execution of disaster management plans...it is time to identify manageable tasks and responsible

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 90.

parties. At this stage planners can help participants break strategies down into manageable tasks, effectively converting vision into action.”⁹⁹ The core group team should not have to execute all the tasks.

Monitor and Evaluate

The final step in the process is to implement measures that allow a church to effectively monitor and evaluate its progress in the implementation phases. Whether an elder’s board or the taskforce itself, a strategy is needed to ensure accountability and efficiency in the process.

⁹⁹ Masterson, Peacock, Van Zandt, *Planning for Community Resilience*, 160–161.

VI

Beyond Diversity: A Biblical Approach to Mitigating Racial Tension and Attaining Inclusion

“While more than 8 in 10 churches in the U.S. are made up of predominately one racial group, more than 67 percent say their church has done enough to become racially diverse.”

Catherine Woodiwiss, *The Era of White Anxiety Is Just Beginning*

The Book of Acts demonstrates that diversity, while a noble pursuit, is not enough to sustain biblical community. Such community also requires radical inclusivity. Acts 6:1–7 gives insight into how to achieve radical inclusivity in the Body of Christ. It contains a profound lesson for building a diverse spiritual community that effectively responds to ethnic and cultural conflict. This account shows us the danger of internal division. The early church initially struggled with the drastic influx and diversity of new believers. Aramaic-speaking Jews had always been the majority in Jerusalem. Now as the Gospel message was being preached, thousands of new believers with different customs, practices, and languages were being incorporated into the church. Craig Hill writes:

Some of the most prominent New Testament churches were comprised of an unconventional and unwieldy admixture of slaves and masters, Jews and Gentiles, women and men, educated and illiterate, highborn and lowly. All natural human tendencies toward hierarchy, segregation, and factionalism were encouraged by this diversity and by the fact that these communities were something new, without established structures or clear precedents. What held them together? How were they to regard and to organize themselves, and how were they to behave in each other’s company? These matters had to be resolved, and the resolutions offered were typically grounded in theology. The hoped-for consequence was that the communities would understand themselves as existing in a new reality in which ordinary tendencies to one-upmanship, strife, and division would seem unacceptable and would become aberrant.¹⁰⁰

Rumblings of Discontent

¹⁰⁰ Craig Hill, *Servant of All: Status, Ambition, and the Way of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2016), 2–3.

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.¹⁰¹

The church was facing profound change amidst its rapid growth. “Increasing in number” is translated as πληθύνω (plēthynō, to multiply). meaning that the number of believers was rapidly increasing. Many friends, families, and neighbors were coming to the faith.

The English word “complaint” is translated as γογγυσμός (goggysmos, grumbling, a secret displeasure not openly avowed) in the Greek. This Greek word is defined as murmuring or rumbling. Lange writes, “this evil was more alarming, as it originated in the bosom of the Church itself.¹⁰² This was a secret issue that was spreading throughout the church and causing division. God desires openness and transparency. The story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 is a clear example of this desire. Ananias and Sapphira were not transparent about the full amount of the purchase of their home. Here we see secrecy manifesting in a different way. The first way was through corruption, but now in the Acts 6 passage it manifests through division. Secrecy is the breeding ground of division. Trinitarian love and unity demands openness. Evil thoughts that stay in the dark have the potential to grow and manifest into sin that is far more destructive than we had originally thought it would be.

Despite the believers’ rapid multiplication, serious internal problems required the church’s attention. The passage makes it clear that this wasn't a statistical anomaly. This was a widespread issue. The church numbered in the thousands at that time and it’s logical to deduce that a significant portion of the population had this complaint or had heard of this complaint in the church. It’s important to know that the dispute that developed was between Greek-

¹⁰¹ Acts 6:1.

¹⁰² J. P. Lang, et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 103.

speaking Jewish Christians and Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians. The Greek-speaking Jewish believers were Hellenistic and part of the diaspora. Lange writes,

One part consisted of Hebrews, that is, of Christians who were originally Palestinian Jews, residents of the Holy Land, and who spoke the Hebrew, *i.e.*, the Aramaean [Syro-Chaldaic] language. The other part consisted of Christians who were not natives of Palestine, but came from other countries, *e.g.*, Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, etc., and whose native language was the Greek; these men were termed *Hellenists*.¹⁰³

This passage serves as a watershed for the breaking of cultural barriers in the Church. In Acts 9, Peter has a vision about calling animals unclean. This wasn't new. Discrimination was deeply embedded in first century Aramaic-speaking Jew's psyche. The fact that a complaint arose against the Hebrew-speaking believers indicates that those in charge of the daily distribution of food were Aramaic speakers of Palestinian descent.

“We’re being overlooked” is παραθεωρέω (*paratheōreō*, neglect) in the Greek. The Aramaic-speaking believers were giving little attention to the Hellenistic widows. Why did this occur? Because the Greek speaking widows were thought of as inferior. The attitude of that time was that the native Jews were the most important, and that attitude manifested in the διακονία (*diakonia*, service).

Leadership must be representative and must reflect the figurative “linguistics” of a different people group. It’s important for leaders to have fluency in the politics, history, and culture of different people groups. Faith leaders would be wise to learn about the historical context of the American criminal justice system and its disproportionate targeting of people of color. Fluency in the issues and concerns that affect people of color gives faith leaders a greater level of empathy when racialized storms occur and generate tribal pain among African Americans.

¹⁰³ J. P. Lange, et al., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, 103.

A Suggested Solution

So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, ‘It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.’¹⁰⁴

The secret murmuring eventually ceased as the apostles brought the issue out to the

“congregation” *πληθος* (*plēthos*, multitude). Polhill writes,

To solve the problem, the Twelve gathered all the disciples together. Even though the Hellenists had the main grievance, the problem involved the entire congregation; and the apostles wanted total participation in its resolution. This is not a bad precedent, particularly in matters where money is involved.¹⁰⁵

The twelve brought the issue into the light. They exposed it for what it was by alerting the congregation to the problem that it was experiencing. This is a lesson that would be wise for faith leaders to learn. Bringing racial division and tension out into the light is an important step in mitigating the impact of racialized storms. The apostles recognized the importance of their duties and were adamant at sticking to it. However, they did not neglect a vital need of the church. An oft-repeated phrase during times of socio-cultural unrest produced by racialized storms is, “we’re just called to preach the Bible,” or “we just need to share the Gospel,” or “the main thing needs to be the main thing.”

The goal here is to not become sidetracked by societal issues, but stick to the message of Christ. While that is a noble pursuit, the apostles show that the Church has the capacity to deal with embedded biases and prejudices and to preach and teach the Word of God. In fact, the Word of God speaks directly at inherent beliefs of superiority of one’s own ethnic group and the

¹⁰⁴ Acts 6:2–4.

¹⁰⁵ J.B. Polhill, *Acts*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 180.

inferiority of an outgroup. The apostles used strategic thinking to divide the labor that was needed to take care of the poor in the church. Lange writes,

But they do not proceed to action in an independent manner. They agree among themselves that a change is needed, and that a certain distinctly defined course ought to be adopted, and then communicate the result of their deliberations to the Church. But they do not undertake to nominate the particular individuals who are to be invested with the new office; they ask the Church to select and propose suitable persons, to whom they, the apostles, might assign that office.¹⁰⁶

The apostles faced a dilemma. Leadership and action were needed to mitigate the ethnic tension that was brewing in the church, but to provide that leadership they would have to neglect a key aspect of their job duties and responsibilities. The apostles exercised great wisdom in recognizing the need for greater care to be given to the members of the church. However, they understood their primary objective and how important it was to the advancement and sustainability of their organization. The teaching of the “word” λόγος (logos, word) was necessary to catalyze vision for the church’s continuous speaking discourse.

The church in the book of Acts was constantly shifting as it faced different circumstances. There were major differences in the socio-cultural context of the congregants that composed the church in Jerusalem. Pohill writes,

The context suggests that the seven men were to be Hellenists. The system had broken down with their group, and they would know better who the needy widows were and be better able to communicate with them. The apostles, however, laid down basic qualifications which the seven had to meet. First, they were to be “full of the Spirit,” i.e., they were to have manifested a special degree of allowing the Spirit to work in them. Then they were to be known for their “wisdom,” probably referring to the kind of practical know-how necessary for the proper management of the charitable funds.¹⁰⁷

The seven that were chosen had a superb reputation. The Greek word here is *martyreō*, which means to utter honorable testimony. This quality was vastly different than the requirement for

¹⁰⁶ J. P. Lange, *A Commentary on the Holy Scripture*, 103.

¹⁰⁷ J.B. Polhill, *Acts*, 181.

leadership in Graeco-Roman society. Clarke writes, “In this period we see both the reinvestment of power in the hands of an elite few.... Leadership had become the exclusive domain of the affluent.”¹⁰⁸ This was important because these men had to be trusted to do the right thing in their ministrations to the poor.

The seven that were chosen had to be “full” πλήρης (*plērēs*, covered in every part) of the Holy Spirit. These men’s emotions, attitudes, speech, and actions were thoroughly covered in every way by the Holy Spirit. Their lives fell under the dominion and governance of the Holy Spirit. They were filled with “wisdom” σοφία (*Sophia*, use of the knowledge of very diverse matters). Such wisdom was necessary because these men dealt with the issue of marginalization and ethnic tension. These men were leaders. When it comes to mitigating the psychological and psychosocial impacts of racialized storms, we can learn a great deal from the description of these men. They had a good reputation and were trustworthy. A key aspect to leadership is integrity.

The People Approve

The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.¹⁰⁹

While diversity in an institution is generally regarded as a noble pursuit it can also be a burden. Numerous linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and psychological differences can make unity difficult to achieve. This passage suggests criteria for navigating the potential landmines that a diverse organization brings.

¹⁰⁸ Andrew D. Clarke *Serve the Community of the Church: Christians as Leaders and Ministers* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub., 2000) 26, 32.

¹⁰⁹ Acts 6:5–7.

When it comes to mitigating racialized storms, a diverse congregation and leadership structure is advantageous. Homogenous leadership structures can potentially create echo chamber of ideas, experiences, and strategies. Diversity brings different philosophies and perspectives to the table. These differences are vital to informed decision-making and responsiveness when racialized storms occur. There were many strategies that were employed that led to a successful resolution of this issue. The apostles exercised institutional awareness, strived for transparency, were inclusive in decision-making, utilized the art of delegation, placed a priority on credibility and competency and sought ethnic and linguistic representation of a sizable demographic of their congregation.

Institutional Awareness

As this passage makes clear, the apostles demonstrated institutional awareness. Self-awareness is a prerequisite for institutional awareness. Three years walking with Jesus helped the disciples to remain constantly aware of their motivations and to be sensitive to the needs of others. We can all too often make decisions that are tethered to past events. Growth in self-awareness demands input from others. The apostles were open to the congregants' input. They could have grown defensive and looked to a quick technical fix to the problem, but they were not only aware of the internal division, but of their own limitations.

This is an important lesson that churches can learn to properly prepare for and respond to racialized storms. Diverse input from congregants of color will enable faith leaders to have a new set of experiences and paradigms to inform their decision-making in times of crisis. As Salter-McNeil writes,

Second order change is deciding to do things significantly or fundamentally different from how they have been done before. At this critical level, key assumptions about how

things should work are addressed. It might mean the shifting of operational paradigms and result in structural changes being made within the organization.¹¹⁰

These different perspectives will help faith leaders to be more aware of issues within their own congregation. The paradigm shift to radical inclusivity requires an awareness of one's self-limitations and a realization that collective input is a necessity in dealing with complex issues like race in America. To foster institutional awareness, pastors and faith leaders should create feedback loops, conversation starters, visit cultural institutions, consult dissenters, look to the outside, and spearhead focus groups and interviews. These six measures will enable congregations to become more aware and sensitive to the needs and opinions of members of color.

Feedback Loops

A key to becoming more aware of the attitudes of individuals within a congregation is to create feedback loops that give information about an individual or a group of people. This can take the form of a survey that a church staff or staff member conducts. Kaplan and Donovan write that, "Most large companies regularly survey their employees, taking the pulse of the organization to uncover the challenges that need to be addressed. Companies do this because employees' experience are often correlated with customers' experiences."¹¹¹ As a church journeys through the Congregational Resilience Framework, a survey can be taken at the end of each phase to gauge the effectiveness of the implementation of the framework.

Securing specific data from a demographic group is important and relatively easy. "Measuring the differing opinions, perspectives, and levels of engagement of different groups of employees by gender, race, age, position in the organization, sexual orientation, etc., can provide

¹¹⁰ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 85.

¹¹¹ Kaplan and Donovan, *The Inclusion Dividend*, 193–194.

important insights that might otherwise stay underground.”¹¹² The last two churches I’ve worked for have used Mailchimp to send out information related to the church. “MailChimp is a web-based email marketing service. It helps you design email newsletters, share them on social networks, integrate with services you already use, and track your results.”¹¹³ In addition to mass marketing through emails, one can send a simple poll or survey to MailChimp subscribers. It is possible to include multiple polls within a survey.¹¹⁴

Consult Dissenters

Once a poll has been taken and the data gathered, the information should be analyzed to see who were the dissenters and why they had negative opinions about the initiatives that were implemented. Scott Page comments on the usefulness of interacting with people with differing opinions: “In politics, dissenters identify new policy dimensions, and they force us to abandon our existing predictive models. Dissent is useful. Without it societies would falter.”¹¹⁵ The tendency is to avoid others who challenge what we believe is right. However, pastors should be intentionally interactive with people in their congregation who take issue with the strategies that are implemented and communication that is delivered in mitigating racialized storms. These dissenters’ opinions can be useful in identifying potential miscommunications and misunderstandings. The point is to not be afraid to listen. Valuable things can be learned from the opinions of other.

¹¹² Kaplan and Donovan, *The Inclusion Dividend*, 194.

¹¹³ Selena Juneau-Vogel, “What is MailChimp and Why Should I use it?,” *Knowledge Base*, October 26, 2015, <https://www.fracturedatlas.org/site/knowledgebase/what-is-mailchimp-and-why-should-i-use-it>.

¹¹⁴ “Send a Simple Poll or Survey to Subscribers,” *Knowledge Base*, August 22, 2017, <https://kb.mailchimp.com/campaigns/design/send-a-simple-poll-or-survey-to-subscribers>.

¹¹⁵ Scott E. Page, *The Difference: How the Power of Diversity Creates Better Groups, Firms, Schools, and Societies* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 344.

Look to the Outside

One practical way to ensure greater institutional awareness is to consider hiring outsiders to help create and review strategies to cultivating diversity. Page writes,

For this reason, every so often they need to bring in people from the outside. People from the outside can help us get unstuck by bringing in new perspectives.... Universities periodically invite committees composed of scholars from other schools who work in the same discipline or in closely related ones. These visiting committees provide suggestions for how the department might improve. How do they do this? They gather information, make sense of the current state of the department, and advocate certain changes.¹¹⁶

An outside consultant who specializes in cultivating diversity or organizational change could be brought in to help a church in its journey towards cultivating diversity. This journey starts with intentionality and corporately valuing the power of diversity. Recently, Bill Hybels, pastor of Willow Creek Church, discussed his church's value in diversity. At one point, only 2% of their church were people of color. Today that number stands at 38%.

During my time as a project manager at the East Baton Rouge Redevelopment Authority, several outside architectural firms and consultants were brought in to help create *Plan Baton Rouge: Master Plan Update and Economic Strategic Plan*. These consultants helped to produce the 86-page master plan that laid out a series of steps to making Baton Rouge economically vibrant and culturally attractive. Help from the outside can also consist of educators in the field of academia. Professors from a local university could be brought in to give a series of lectures about history, the political climate, economics, criminal justice reform, etc. The goal here is to seek outside help in formulating a strategy that leads to lasting organizational change.

Conversation Starters

After feedback loops are put into place, church leaders should create forums and other platforms for a conversation about the intersection of race in America, the church, faith, and

¹¹⁶ Page, *The Difference*, 343.

justice. These conversations should be conducted in a safe environment with a seasoned leader moderating the discussion. Dialogue is imperative. Safe dialogue is even more vital. The current church I serve in just screened an hour-long documentary entitled *Six:Eight*, an original film exploring the intersection of race, law enforcement, justice and faith in the Triangle. After the documentary, an hour-long discussion about the film and the topics encompassed in it ensued. The conversation was enlightening, respectful, and profound. The dialogue was moderated by our executive pastor for creative arts and our film director; both worked to produce the film.

Another way to hold a conversation starter is through books. Church leaders could create a book club that allows congregants to read a variety of books on race in America and then discuss them with others.

Visiting Cultural Institutions and Landmarks

During the summer of 2008, I volunteered at the Tony Boselli Youth Life Learning Center. The center is a faith-based, after-school academic enrichment program for at-risk children in traditionally disinvested communities. One day, I asked the executive director if I could organize a field trip to Kingsley Plantation in Jacksonville, Florida. Kingsley Plantation is one of the oldest slave plantation houses in Florida. I thought it would be enlightening for the children, instead of reading about slavery in history books, to visit a slave plantation house.

The executive director agreed and organized a field trip to Kingsley. The children loved it. History became alive as they learned about the slaves' daily task of picking cotton and sugar cane in the 19th century. The children could see restored slave quarters, and learn about the grueling life of slavery in America. Visiting cultural institutions and landmarks can be more than informative, they can be life-changing. They can also be a powerful tool to create meaningful experiences that enable greater awareness in an institution.

Salter-McNeil recounts a story where she led a group of women leaders from the Evangelical Covenant Church on a pilgrimage to important landmarks in the south that were a battleground during the civil rights movement. The purpose of this pilgrimage was to move beyond information toward actual experience. Its goal was for the women to reflect and imagine what it must have been like to be in the place of the brave American men and women who protested and marched for equality. She writes:

One of our first stops was in Birmingham, Alabama, where we visited the church and sat in the Sunday school of classroom where four little girls were killed by a bomb planted by a white supremacist. We also visited a civil rights museum that had an interactive exhibit titled “I Was There,” where people could leave brief notes saying how they participated in or supported the fight for racial equality. After that we went to Selma, Alabama, where we walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge and reenacted what it must have been like to march toward certain doom with each step forward on Bloody Sunday. Our next stop was in the Smithville, Georgia, where we met an African American woman named Sandra, who was close to my age. When she was eleven, she marched with Martin Luther King, was arrested and remained in jail for three weeks—and nobody notified her mother!¹¹⁷

Church leaders can employ a similar method to establish greater institutional awareness and retrace the civil rights movement’s significant cultural landmarks. Another practical step would be to visit museums like the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture in Washington D.C.

Focus Groups

Five years ago, my senior pastor and executive pastor sat down with fifteen black families in our church to ask them a series of questions about how they felt about the church and if it felt like a welcoming place. Their answers were enlightening and my senior pastor still talks about that meeting. One of the families stated, “We just tell our black friends to come visit, and

¹¹⁷ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 125–126.

if you can get past the music you'll do alright here at Hope.” That statement hit home with my senior pastor and within two years he hired an African American to be our lead worship pastor.

Focus groups are another tool that can help church leaders gather and disseminate information about different groups of people. Kaplan and Donovan write,

Focus groups allow a deeper exploration of perspectives and experiences, and can be a critical supplement to other quantitative data about employee experiences. Conducting focus groups of like employees is best because it allows more openness and makes it easier to ascertain patterns that reflect the experiences and perspectives of a particular demographic group. A focus group should concentrate both on broad perceptions of and experiences in the organization and on the specific experiences relating to the particular group identity of each group.¹¹⁸

As patterns emerge in the responses of the focus group, strategies can be employed to remedy and reconcile concerns. Focus groups are an important method of information gathering. Chapter 7 of this thesis analyzes a focus group of Millennials at my previous place of employment.

Transparency

The apostles used transparency as a strategy to ease the ethnic tension that was plaguing the church in Acts 6. They called together the entire congregation to address the matter. They didn't want a quick remedy for the offended party, but decided to expose this internal division to the entire church. Such transparency is what God desires: to bring darkness into the light. Above all, God wants us to be transparent with Him, to communicate our hidden fears, desires, and concerns to Him.

Second, God wants us to be open with people. Secrecy is the breeding ground for division. Evil thoughts that stay in the dark have the potential to grow and manifest into sin that is far more destructive. Jesus is looking at our souls, which are often deaf to truth, and commands us to be open. The apostles exposed the darkness to the light by bringing everyone

¹¹⁸ Kaplan and Donovan, *The Inclusion Dividend*, 196–197.

together to address the situation. Likewise, transparency is key to mitigating the impact of racialized storms. Bringing division into the light allows pastors and faith leaders to share the burden of navigating racial tension.

Here the apostles show great humility by incorporating the congregation into the decision-making instead of unilaterally trying to fix the problem on their own. This type of radical inclusion gave the church in Jerusalem ownership and represented a stark contrast to the authoritarian leadership that was often exercised in the Graeco-Roman world.

Once a year, Hope Community Church hosts a vision night during which church-wide goals are announced and the budget is approved. This night presents an opportunity to talk about the mission, vision, and strategy of the church. It also offers our senior pastor the chance to reinforce the *why* of Hope. To foster greater transparency, churches could do something similar by hosting their own vision night that focuses on the church's journey to becoming more resilient to racialized storms and its efforts to promote reconciliation in its surrounding communities. A vision night could consist of sharing information and potential strategies with lay leaders and can serve as a periodic review of progress on the congregation's resilience framework.

Inclusiveness Through Ethnic Representation

The inclusive decision-making encouraged delegation of work, which fostered the servant leadership of the seven. If leadership is to be effective, leaders must prioritize inclusiveness.

Creating an environment of inclusiveness will result in a better quality of life for communities, and, if residents feel that local officials are aware of cultural issues, they are more likely to accept their warnings and suggestions. "Before local governments can provide the quality of life that their communities require to survive, they will need to change their perceptions of 'community' and translate those new perceptions into practical methods of planning, developing, and rehabilitating those communities". Public officials need to understand how judgment and action can affect their communities.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Mann, *Building Sustainable Cities*, 41.

The apostles made a wise choice by delegating the responsibility of the selection of the seven to the people and the duties of serving the poor to the seven. This delegation was clearly modeled to them by the ministry of Jesus. In Luke's gospel, we see Jesus modeling delegation to the disciples: "One day Jesus called together his twelve disciples and gave them power and authority to cast out all demons and to heal all diseases. Then he sent them out" to tell everyone about the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick."¹²⁰ This passage gives us a clue to the strategy the apostles employed. They had seen the effectiveness of delegation and replicated the model in their own context.

Emphasis on the seven's credibility and competency should not be overlooked. Lovett Weems writes, "Credibility is the foundation upon which all effective leadership is built. It is the operating capital from which a leader draws on to advance the vision."¹²¹ Weems goes on to discuss the power of integrity in leadership. He quotes Richard Baxter, who claims that "leaders of the church must always take care of their own spiritual life before they can offer help to anyone else. Take heed...lest you famish yourselves while you prepare food."¹²² The seven men had to be trustworthy to be effective in their leadership.

While knowledge and intelligence are important to decision-making, integrity is foundational for lasting change in any institution. Weathering racialized storms requires patience and integrity. These tragedies generate an enormous amount of unrest. Voices from pundits, papers, and politicians can be heard constantly during these times. However, voices from those who walk with integrity can offer stability amidst a cacophony of ideas and opinions.

¹²⁰ Luke 9:1-2 NLT.

¹²¹ Weems, *Church Leadership*, 75.

¹²² Ibid.

The apostles achieved Hellenistic representation by appointing the seven. Experts believe that these men were deeply familiar with the Hellenistic culture and could readily cross linguistic and cultural barriers because of their cultural background. Diverse institutions become inclusive when their leadership adequately represent various demographics of the body, and when that representative leadership is given a voice in the organization's strategy and decision-making. Doing so helps the organization consider the distinct worldviews of the people within the institution. Diverse representation gives the institution's leadership the ability to be sensitive to cultural issues that can arise within a diverse group whose members see things from different perspectives.

The first-century church was incredibly diverse. However, there was still a large amount of factionalism and stratification. Acts 6:1–7 should inspire caution in leaders whose institutions are enjoying numerical growth and diversity. While such growth and diversity can point to institutional health, underlying problems can grow and manifest in profound division. David Crosby, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of New Orleans writes,

People of color have seen politics from a different point of view than the white majority, and if we truly want to be diverse in our Convention... We must not only invite people of all ethnicities and cultural backgrounds into our churches, but we also must give them space intellectually and politically and not make these tertiary matters a condition for fellowship.¹²³

Creating diverse organizations is challenging. Sustaining that diversity is another challenge.

Stacey Mann writes about diversity from an emergency management perspective:

One of the duties of local government HR departments is to understand and manage diversity. According to Mathis and Jackson (2006), four approaches to diversity can be

¹²³ Megan Briggs, "Update: Growing SBC Call for Russell Moore's Resignation-African-American Pastors Call for Reconciliation," *Church Leaders*, last modified, March 13, 2017. <https://churchleaders.com/news/300610-growing-sbc-call-russell-moores-resignation-african-american-pastors-call-reconciliation.html>

taken: ignoring diversity, dealing with diversity, building acceptance of diversity, and solving diversity issues and creating an inclusive culture. In relation to emergency management, it is pertinent that local governments follow the last two approaches, which would include realizing that diversity is beneficial to the community, reducing conflict, solving problems internally, and approaching problems proactively.¹²⁴

This doctoral thesis aims to use methods of natural disaster mitigation as a framework for churches and faith leaders to prepare for and respond to racialized tragedies. Mann suggests that to implement mitigation efforts, leaders “must understand the culture of their community.”¹²⁵ Church leaders in mainline Protestant and white evangelical churches would be wise to hire and appoint men and women of color to key positions and give them the authority and platform to lead. Hiring people of color is paramount to cultivating congregational diversity.

The apostles demonstrate how to effectively move beyond diversity towards radical inclusivity. The issue that caused division in the church of Jerusalem was not theological or philosophical in nature, but cultural . Racialized storms are not theological conundrums or philosophical difficulties, but socio-cultural problems that generate enormous racial tension and division.

Mann acknowledges the challenge of sustaining heterogeneous organizations:

In addition, diverse environments have their own sets of problems such as “miscommunication,” “cultural misunderstandings,” and “organizational functionalism,” “opportunities, such as accessibility to a wider array of viewpoints and increased tolerance for different work styles, may lead to greater productivity and improved performance.” Thus, creating an environment of inclusiveness will result in a better quality of life for communities, and, if residents feel that local officials are aware of cultural issues, they are more likely to accept their warnings and suggestions.¹²⁶

The apostles, however, offer key steps to achieving radical inclusivity and thus mitigating against the severity of racialized storms through institutional awareness, organizational

¹²⁴ Mann, “Building Sustainable Cities,” 41.

¹²⁵ Ibid.,

¹²⁶ Mann, “Building Sustainable Cities,” 41.

transparency, inclusiveness in decision-making, utilization of delegation, valuing credibility and competency and sought ethnic and linguistic representation of a sizable demographic of their congregation.

Cultivating diversity within a congregation should not consist of one-off diversity events throughout the calendar year. Cultivating diversity should be connected to a larger strategy and like Willow Creek, should be a key value in a church.

If these one-off diversity events are not connected to a larger strategy and to bigger efforts to create true and sustainable change, the D&I effort may be seen in a cynical light. Employees may begin to see diversity and inclusion as being unconnected to the business. If employees are aware that the company is falling short of its goal to create a level playing field or a meritocracy, and they know there are bigger challenges not being addressed, they may feel cynical or suspicious about the company's intentions. They may eventually believe their employer is using these events as window dressing and is avoiding bigger challenges and opportunities. These kinds of limited diversity events can also be perceived as a way to placate certain group of employees or more vocal individuals. We strongly believe inclusion is a long-term change process that must be deeply and directly connected to the business.¹²⁷

This passage gives the reader key principles that if implemented can yield fruitful results of not only diverse churches, but inclusive churches filled with people that are treated with the same dignity. Like coastal wetlands that protect against destructive storm surges, diverse, inclusive churches can be powerful barriers to division and can enable a church to be a model to its community and city.

¹²⁷ Kaplan and Donovan, "The Inclusion Dividend," 187–188.

VII

Millennials' Proclivity Towards Diversity, Social Justice, and Why Faith Leaders Should Invest in Them

Over the next 20 years, as boomers and even Gen Xers retire. Millennials will take their places as corporate and civic leaders. Their current experiences and attitudes around diversity give a glimpse into a possible future in terms of race relations and the importance of diversity.

-Lynette Cook-Francis, Exploring Millennials Student Views on Diversity

Much commotion has been made surrounding the Millennial generation's openness to social change. To gain further insight into this demographic, I conducted a qualitative analysis on a focus group of religious Millennials. The purpose of the analysis was to survey their perspectives and attitudes on diversity and inclusion. Because this is the most diverse generation in American history, I endeavored to discover Millennials' perspective on the current homogeneity in the American church.

In particular, I desired to know whether Millennials believe the church should play a greater role in fostering diversity in its congregations. As the Millennial generation comes to age and power, what are their perspectives on diversity and inclusion in the church? What changes do they desire to make? The data this project yielded and which I analyzed gives church leaders insight into the perspectives of this generation and how this generation can be enlisted to help build resilience to racialized storms in America.

Church leaders should capitalize on the diversity of the Millennial generation and its desire for social change and use those two factors to help their churches become ready for racialized storms. Effective outreach to Millennials is a key element in establishing congregational readiness to racialized storms. The Millennial generation is optimistic, collaborative, and inclusive. Reaching, growing, and releasing this demographic in the church

can yield enormous benefits. The data this project generated shows a correlation between racial inferiority and racial discrimination, generational influence of prejudicial attitudes, and soteriological inclusion as motivation for the church to be more intentional about fostering greater diversity within its body.

Millennials and Race

The United States is becoming increasingly diverse. One reason for that is the rise in the number of immigrants to the United States. Broido highlights the fact that “millennial students are far more likely to be biracial or multiracial than in previous generations.”¹ The Millennial generation is highly racialized. This group came to age during the Los Angeles riots, the trial of OJ Simpson, Ferguson, and the rise of the Black Lives Matter Movement. Affirmative action has been continually debated and illegal immigration was a hot-button issue in the 2016 U.S.

Presidential election.

When it comes to race and ethnicity, the Millennial generation is the most diverse generation in American history.² As a Millennial, I have been exposed to people with different ethnicities in a way my parents never had growing up. Thom and Jess Rainer describe this phenomenon:

My generation hardly ever saw racial and ethnic diversity as an issue; we rather see it as normative. The Millennials rarely describe someone first by their skin color or by their ethnic origin. That’s not what is at the foremost of our minds. For us ethnic diversity is normative. . . . The Millennials represent the most racially and ethnically diverse nation in America’s history. . . . The diversity is not just about their friends and acquaintances. It is about the family of the Millennials as well. One out of five Millennials has at least one immigrant parent. And one in ten of this generation has at least one noncitizen parent.³

¹ Ellen M. Broido, “Understanding Diversity in Millennial Students,” *New Direction for Student Services* 2004, no. 106 (2004): 73.

² “Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change,” *Pew Research Center: Social & Demographic Trends*, February 24, 2010, <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2010/02/24/millennials-confident-connected-open-to-change/>.

³ Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials: Connecting to America’s Largest Generation* (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2011), 80.

Most Millennials live in places or attend schools that have much higher amounts of diversity than their generational predecessors. “68 percent of the Millennials grew up in places that had significant diversity.”⁴ Rainer and Rainer describe how the proximity to people of different ethnicities breaks down cultural barriers, which leads in turn to cross-cultural friendships.

About 70 percent of the Millennials acknowledged a friendship with someone of a different ethnic or racial background. From our perspective, this response is the true test of crossing barriers. The Boomer generation became the generation of tolerance, but the Millennials do not simply tolerate those of different skin colors or ethnic backgrounds. They are far more likely to embrace them as friends and to make them a part of their world.⁵

Moreover, survey data confirms that the Millennial generation is more “racially tolerant than their elders. More than two decades of Pew Research surveys confirm that assessment. In their views about interracial dating, for example, Millennials are the most open to change of any generation, followed closely by Gen Xers, then Boomers, then Silents.”⁶ Luttrell and McGrath confirm the Millennials’ open views about mixed-race romance in *The Millennial Mindset*:

They are a generation more widely exposed to a broader degree of diversity (e.g. gender, race, and sexual orientation), and subsequently, many are generally more tolerant of differences within the human race. In fact, 60 percent of Millennials between the ages of eighteen and twenty-nine have acknowledged to being in a relationship with members of a different ethnicity, religion, or race, and the same percentage have multiracial friends. This isn’t surprising when we think that, demographically nearly one-third of Millennials belong to a minority group. This doesn’t mean that all Millennials are fully accepting of difference, but it does imply that many have witnessed or experienced diversity in their own lives, or in the media, and may have learned to tolerate differences if not fully accept it.⁷

⁴ Rainer and Rainer, *The Millennials*, 85.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁶ Pew Research Center, “Millennials: Confident. Connected. Open to Change.”

⁷ Regina Luttrell and Karen McGrath, *The Millennial Mindset: Unraveling Fact from Fiction* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 24.

The fact the 60% of Millennials have stated that they have multiracial friends or have been a relationship with someone from another race is significant. For decades, psychologists have researched the contact hypothesis a theory developed by Dr. Gordon Allport suggesting that “contact between two groups can promote tolerance and acceptance, but only under certain conditions, such as equal status among groups and common goals.”⁸

In her book *Disunity in Christ*, Christena Cleveland uses the contact theory to propose fostering positive cross-cultural interactions. Adapting this theory to a congregational context “requires people to see different group members as individuals, rather than nameless, faceless members of the cultural group and it creates a context in which the two different groups are encouraged to form a common identity.”⁹ She states that “contact creates a context in which errors can be challenged and corrected. Without contact, our errors continue to go unchallenged and often begin to take on lives of their own. If we have at least one positive meaningful contact experience we are more likely to desire cross-cultural contact in the future.”¹⁰

According to the contact hypothesis, Millennials should be in a far better position compared to their generational predecessors to bridge cultural divides and seek a common identity. Research shows that many of them desire to work for organizations that have a positive influence in the community and world around them. Deal and Levenson address this proclivity towards social change in *What Millennials Want from Work*:

Millennials truly care about making a contribution to the community, and a majority believe that their organization is doing that. Many Millennials would appreciate the opportunity to do volunteer work in their community as part of their job...Organizations

⁸ T. DeAngelis, “All You Need is Contact,” *American Psychological Association* 32, no. 10 (November 2001) <http://www.apa.org/monitor/nov01/contact.aspx>

⁹ Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ*, 154.

¹⁰ Ibid.

should look for ways to improve how they contribute to the community. Millennials care about their impact on the world.¹¹

While Millennials are increasingly identifying themselves as nonreligious, many consider themselves spiritual and truly want to make a difference in the world around them. Sujansky and Ferri-Reed elaborate on the value of individual differences among Millennials:

Perhaps no other generation in history has been so immersed in the diversity that exists within the global marketplace as Millennials have. Millennials have grown up living the reality that individual differences contribute to team synergy and innovation. They have learned to celebrate and embrace diversity, and they expect that same type of culture to exist in the organizations they join.¹²

Outreach to Millennials is an important step in the Congregational Resilience Framework because the Millennial generation is the most open to social change and would provide needed energy and support to the church's effort to build resiliency to racialized storms. The previous chapter focused on the need to cultivate diversity through organizational change. A strategy that focuses on outreach to Millennials is important to cultivating diversity and inclusion.

The Baby Boomer generation, which lived through the civil rights era, supports the concept of inclusion. Millennials, on the other hand, grew up during a period when diversity was heavily emphasized and deeply valued. They were taught about diverse people and different cultures through their education and through the media so they have come to expect differences as part of the natural order.¹³

I do not claim that Millennials will save us all from the deeply divisive societal issues that plague America. Millennials are not the silver bullet that will miraculously fix the complex and historical problem of race in America.

¹¹ Jennifer J. Deal and Alec Robert Levenson, *What Millennials Want from Work: How to Maximize Engagement in Today's Workforce* (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2016), 76–77.

¹² Joanne G. Sujansky and Jan Ferri-Reed, *Keeping the Millennials: Why Companies are Losing Billions in Turnover to This Generation, and What to Do About It* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2009), 88.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 133.

To the contrary, when it comes to certain attitudes about race, the apples don't fall far from the trees: "Recent polling data also indicate that white Millennials are nearly as likely as their parents (61 percent to 64 percent respectively) to believe that white people are harder working and more intelligent than African-Americans."¹⁴ While it's comforting to know that race relations have improved in some ways, considering that the vast majority of millennials (93%) believe that interracial marriage is okay, racial inequality still is a highly contentious and divisive topic. Brittney Cooper comments on the difference between better race relations and achieving racial justice:

These questions don't really say anything about racial justice: After all, interracial dating and marriage are unlikely to solve deep disparities in criminal justice, wealth, upward mobility, poverty and education—at least not in this century. (Black-white marriages currently make up just 2.2 percent of all marriages.) And when it comes to opinions on more structural issues, such as the role of government in solving social and economic inequality and the need for continued progress, millennials start to split along racial lines. When people are asked, for example, "How much needs to be done in order to achieve Martin Luther King's dream of racial equality?" the gap between white millennials and millennials of color (all those who don't identify as white) are wide.¹⁵

Despite Cooper's diagnosis, church leaders can take comfort that the Millennial generation is the most diverse generation in American history and has been exposed to higher amounts diversity unlike other generational groups. Seven years of experience working with and researching this demographic reveal that by and large, Millennials are open to change. Thus, they present a glimmer of hope for the future of America. As Cooper notes,

Despite this dismal picture, I still think Millennials have a chance to shift the generational narrative on racism. Young black Millennials and Millennials of color have taken to the streets proclaiming a new message—Black Lives Matter. Unbowed by the recalcitrant racial attitudes of their white Millennial counterparts, these young people of color are demanding that America change, demanding a dismantling of the social technologies of

¹⁴ Brittney Cooper, "We Treat Racism Like It's going extinct. It's Not," *PBS News Hour*, March 23, 2015. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/treat-racism-like-going-extinct>.

¹⁵ Ibid.

racism, demanding that black lives be treated with value. And I believe that we will win.¹⁶

It would be prudent for church leaders to begin outreach efforts to this important demographic. No, they do not all think alike, but they do tend to display an openness to change. The Congregational Resilience Framework challenges churches to change their normative ways of “doing church” and wholeheartedly embrace systemic change that will enable them to take the lead on racial reconciliation. Millennials have the potential to play an important part in effecting that reconciliation.

Correct terminology is always the start of good methodology. According to Lehman, “The word diversity is somewhat one-dimensional, connoting mainly racial heterogeneity.”¹⁷

Broido elaborates on the traditional dialogue on race.

Though the dialogue about race in the United States has historically been primarily a discussion about black and white people, the Millennial generation has a much more expansive understanding of race, one that better reflects the demographics of people of color in the United States. This generation no longer sees race as a black-white issue.¹⁸

Millennials have seen major demographic shifts unlike any other generation in history. America is experiencing an incredible influx of immigrants, particularly Hispanics. These major demographic shifts have led to a shift in the meaning in the traditional meaning of diversity, going beyond specifically ethnic understandings of diversity to one that encompasses different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.

Despite an expansive understanding of diversity, the data doesn't show that these Millennials are blind to color or gender. Guinier and Torres summarized three problems with the colorblind approach: “(1) it assumes that racial inequality is a problem of individuals; (2) in so

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Lehman, *The Evolving Language of Diversity and Integration in Discussions of Affirmative Action from Bakke to Grutter*, 62.

¹⁸ Broido, “Understanding Diversity in Millennial Students,” 77.

doing, it masks entrenched racial inequality; and (3) it acts as a brake on grassroots organizing.”¹⁹ Again, Millennials care deeply about race being represented in their church. The findings suggest that race is only part of the equation of diversity, an important part, but not the whole picture. Because of rapid demographic shifts in the U.S., it's not strange to interact with a person of a different race. This shifting has led to Millennials seeing diversity as more of a variation in experiences, perspectives, attitudes, and backgrounds. The Millennials who participated in this study care deeply about diversity and inclusion. They see how valuable these concepts are not just personally, but institutionally.

Mechanics of the Analysis

This project used focus coding as a method to organize and categorize participant responses. Quantitative data on millennial demographics was intersected with the qualitative data on their opinions and values on this topic. Millennials are the future leaders of America, so getting a snapshot of how they feel and what they think should be done is very relevant to all types of institutions. This project ended up being both prescriptive and descriptive. Answering these questions and cataloging the patterns, trends, and themes gave invaluable insight about how the church can better engage with this vital demographic.

The research project was conducted through photo elicitation, a method that inserts a photograph into a research interview. The motivation for this method lies in the way people respond to visual information. Douglas Harper describes the difference between verbal and visual information in: “The parts of the brain that process visual information is evolutionary

¹⁹ Guinier and Torres, *The Miner's Canary*, 43.

older than the parts that process verbal information. Thus, images evoke deeper elements of human consciousness than do words.”²⁰

Roman Williams writes, “From the early days, visual sociology was built upon a conviction that images offer a new way of studying sociology.... Just as the telescope and the microscope provided new kinds of visual information...the still camera...provides a new order of seeing, which in turn, requires a special way of analyzing.”²¹ The photographs enabled the participants to describe their attitudes on diversity and inclusion in a unique way. They essentially served as the participant’s evidence for views espoused during the interview

The images were produced by participants who did not have a shooting script. The participants were simply asked to produce four photos—two images of what they felt epitomized diversity and two that they believed characterized inclusion. In this project, the participants could use photographs and screenshots of images they saw online that they felt represented diversity and inclusion. The participants were interviewed to see why they chose their photographs and why they felt those photographs represented diversity and inclusion. These interviews were audio recorded and averaged around forty-five minutes. The objective behind this methodology was for the participant to drive the research.

The participants were selected from Southpoint Community Church’s Young Professional’s ministry (YP). YP is a ministry for Millennials who are not married. Southpoint was an ideal site to conduct this type of research due to its size, location, and relative diversity. Southpoint is a non-denominational church, planted in 1999, that has an average weekly attendance of over 1700

²⁰ Douglas Harper, “Talking About Pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation,” *Visual Studies* 17, no. 1 (2002): 13.

²¹ Roman Williams, *Seeing Religion: Toward a Visual Sociology of Religion*. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 3.

people. The church is located on the south side of Jacksonville, a region of the city that is renowned for its affluence and entertainment. The church is roughly 70% white, 25% black, and 5% other.

The method of selection was a sample chosen to maximize range. Instead of choosing respondents randomly and risking unwanted duplication in my sample, I selected respondents purposively to obtain a sample that displayed significant variation.

Information about the participants can be seen in the chart below on the next page. Twelve participants were hand-picked for this assignment with the hopes of achieving variation in their responses regarding diversity and inclusion. Six participants were male and six were female. Seven of the participants were people of color (the majority being black), while five were white.

Before the interviews, the participants were asked their ethnicity, occupation, education, political persuasion, whether they had suffered racial discrimination, and whether they had ever discriminated against other individuals. Nearly all the millennials that took part in this project had graduated college or had taken a considerable amount of college courses. There was significant variation in political persuasion, occupation, and whether the participant had experienced racial discrimination on a personal level. The oldest participant was 32 and the youngest was 23. The average age of the participant was 26 years old.

Name	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Occupation	Education	Political Persuasion	Suffered Racial Discrimination	Discriminated Against Others
Female Respondent 1	F	23	White	Teacher	Bachelors	Conservative Republican	NO	NO
Female Respondent 2	F	25	Black	Teacher	Bachelors	Conservative Independent	YES	NO
Female Respondent 3	F	25	Asian	Teacher	Bachelors	Moderate Democrat	YES	NO
Female Respondent 4	F	27	White	Architect	Bachelors	Conservative Republican	NO	NO
Female Respondent 5	F	25	Black	Photographer	Bachelors	Liberal Democrat	NO	NO
Female Respondent 6	F	29	Hispanic	Regulatory Specialist	Bachelors	Liberal Democrat	YES	NO
Male Respondent 1	M	23	White	Teacher	Bachelors	Conservative Republican	NO	YES
Male Respondent 2	M	30	White	Medical Sales	Bachelors	Conservative Republican	YES	NO
Male Respondent 3	M	27	Black	Investment Specialist	Bachelors	Moderate Democrat	YES	NO
Male Respondent 4	M	27	Black	US Navy	Some College	Moderate Democrat	YES	NO
Male Respondent 5	M	27	Black	Retail	Some College	Moderate Republican	YES	NO
Male Respondent 6	M	32	White	Graphic Designer	Bachelors	Conservative Republican	YES	NO

The research project included participants who knew one another, so internal confidentiality was vital. The interviews were digitally recorded and jottings—“a brief written record of events and impressions captured in key words and phrases”—were taken to accurately record the essence of what the participants were trying to say.²² While I conducted the interviews, I took notes to record initial impressions. I marked the minutes where pertinent data appeared on the transcripts and then transcribed selected portions of the interview. I later reviewed the transcripts to take the entire record of the experience.²³ I then coded the interviews,

²² Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 29.

²³ *Ibid.*, 171.

looking for persistent attitudes and beliefs while studying the interview transcripts, analyzing them line-by-line, and labeling any ideas and themes that emerged. Focused coding was the method employed to help categorize all the data from the interviews. As Emerson et al. write, “In focused coding, the fieldworker subjects field notes to fine-grained, line-by-line analysis based on topics that have been identified as being of particular interest.”²⁴

I used focused coding to observe elements in the conversation that related to the following themes: racial inferiority, racial superiority, how the participant’s faith shaped their perspective on diversity and inclusion, and whether the church should play a direct role in fostering greater diversity and inclusion in its congregation. When I reviewed the interviews, those four areas were recorded when they appeared.

As distinct patterns developed, I wrote integrative memos that linked and explored relationships between coded field notes. This provided valuable insight in identifying themes that developed across the coded field notes.²⁵ For example, participants who experienced racial discrimination struggled with racial inferiority for long periods of time.

Photo elicitation is an effective method that yields an immense amount of data by giving participants the ability to use photography to assist in their description on a given topic. The twelve participants in this research project provided great insight on diversity and inclusion. The interview was simple. These participants were asked to take four photographs: two that represented diversity and two that represented inclusion.

Before the discussion, I asked the interviewees a set of questions that centered on the photographs. These questions served to gather valuable demographic data. The objective was to integrate the demographic data with the data from the photo elicitation method employed in the

²⁴ Ibid., 172.

²⁵ Ibid., 193.

interview. The when, where, what, and why of the photo essentially guided the conversation. It was fascinating to see the ways the photos elicited their responses.

As I studied the transcribed sections, I noted several issues and attitudes that emerged repeatedly. Four distinct themes became apparent from the responses elicited from the photos and the predetermined categories (codes): correlation between racial inferiority and racial discrimination, generational influence of prejudicial attitudes, sociological inclusion, and the meaning of diversity beyond the traditional thought of race.

Analysis

My analysis of the data yielded from the interviews from this project shows a correlation between racial inferiority and racial discrimination, generational influence of prejudicial attitudes, and sociological inclusion as motivation for the church to be more intentional about fostering greater diversity within its body.

Correlation Between Racial Inferiority and Racial Discrimination

Five out of the six minority participants had suffered racial discrimination at some point in their life. This discrimination made these participants feel racially inferior. I asked the participants to elaborate on certain instances where they felt discriminated. Their examples ranged from racial profiling by police officers to being followed in a grocery store in a suburban neighborhood in northern Virginia.

The participants described feeling unimportant and devalued because of those experiences. Male respondent 3 started to cry as he recounted a demeaning experience of being racially profiled by police officers:

I remember encountering a police officer in college at FAMU. He pulled me over and said that I looked like I was up to suspicious activity. I was just walking home from class. I gave him my ID and asked him what the problem was. He said to keep your hands where I can see them, move slow and give me your ID. I was shaking because I was upset

and saddened that I was being racially profiled. When he came out he said, 'alright boy go on home.' The way he said it was so demeaning. It was in a degrading tone. Every time he would say boy it would build up anger in me. I would think you know my name because you have my ID.²⁶

Several participants experienced racial discrimination in the form of degrading looks in public. Male respondent 5 is in an interracial relationship, and recounted what it was like when he first started dating his girlfriend:

When I first started dating her. We would be hanging out in different places and you could feel the curious looks. Those 'why are you guys together' type of looks. When I initially met her family, I remember feeling so humiliated during a conversation about race at the dinner table. I literally couldn't do anything. When we go out people still give us weird looks, but I just try to ignore it.²⁷

Male respondent 5 used a photograph of a diverse Christmas Day party as an example of inclusion and contrasted this experience to the time he met his girlfriend's family. Both experiences occurred on Christmas Day. The experience at his girlfriend's parents' house was a degrading for him, because her relatives made several incendiary racial remarks and insinuations over dinner and sought to indirectly embarrass him. Christmas Day in his photo was a completely different experience for him.

There was a Muslim couple there on Christmas Day and everyone was intentional at making them feel included in our Christian celebration. They had an amazing time! Christmas at the Briscoes' was special because if you didn't have family in town you felt like family in their home. It was a place where people could come and feel like family.²⁸

The data shows that minorities are highly sensitive towards racial remarks and can easily feel inferior because of past discrimination. This sensitivity can be an obstacle to building diverse and inclusive communities. Minorities can potentially avoid interracial contact in effort to guard themselves from feeling inferior. One way to overcome this sensitivity is to follow the

²⁶ Male Respondent 3.

²⁷ Male Respondent 5.

²⁸ Male respondent 5.

advice of David Anderson, who writes about the importance of considering others in speech and actions. Considering others (particularly the marginalized and those in the minority) entails concerning oneself with the feelings and dreams of others: “When Christians stop reacting negatively to sociopolitical terminology like affirmative action, special interest, or equal concern, it will change our attitudes from a ‘me and mine’ to a ‘we and ours’ mentality.”²⁹

Several minority participants had a difficult time recounting experiences that were traumatic. Many became emotional in describing what it was like to be discriminated against. Fox-Davis writes, “In *Plessy V Ferguson*, Justice Brown argued that racial segregation ‘stamps the color race with a batch of inferiority.... It is.... But solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it.’”³⁰ Discrimination cuts to the heart of the human individual and the inferiority that sets in leaves a lasting scar. Similarly, Aird asserts that

Slavery and Jim Crow are gone. The civil rights movement has opened many doors of opportunity. But the lie of black inferiority, the most devastating and long-lasting consequence of the enslavement and colonization of African people, remains with us. The lie of black inferiority says that black people are not as beautiful, not as lovable, not as intelligent, not as capable, not as worthy as white people or any other people, for that matter.³¹

The stories of discrimination in this research project were based simply on what a person looked like, yet they produced a persistent attitude of inferiority. Leary uses the sociological term “vacant esteem” to describe the psychological damage done when a person believes they are not as beautiful, intelligent, or valuable as other people.³²

²⁹ David Anderson, *Gracism: The Art of Inclusion*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Press, 2010), 124.

³⁰ Kendra Fox-Davis, “A Badge of Inferiority: One Law Student’s Story of a Racially Hostile Educational Environment,” *National Black Law Journal* 23, no. 1 (2010): 120.

³¹ Enola G. Aird, “Toward a Renaissance for the African American Family: Confronting the Lie of Black Inferiority” *Emory Law Journal* 58, no. 1 (2008): 8.

³² Joy DeGruy Leary, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing*, 1st ed. (Milwaukie, OR: Uptone Press, 2005).

Generational Influence of Prejudicial Attitudes

Four out of the five Caucasian participants shared how their families had a direct influence in them growing up with prejudicial attitudes towards other racial groups. One question I asked before the discussion of the photographs was the political persuasion of the participant. Every Caucasian participant identified as a conservative Republican.

The one Caucasian participant that did not come from a family that made racially discriminatory remarks reported that he had himself discriminated against other racial groups. The Caucasian participants stated that they were influenced by prejudicial attitudes from the older generation of their family. Fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, and grandparents had consistently made racially derogatory statements as these participants were growing up. The interviewees claimed that these remarks and attitudes contributed to a sense of racial superiority in their youth.

Female respondent 4 used a photograph of segregation to describe what diversity meant to her. This is what she had to say about racial superiority:

My dad is very proud. He is proud of where he came from because he did everything himself. He ran away from home at 17, joined the army, has his master's degree in civil engineering and is retired now. He's proud of where he has gotten on his own. He always instilled in us the value of hard work. He was very performance-based growing up. God wasn't completely first growing up and so it wasn't until after college that my faith grew a lot. He used to rail against people that were just laying around and lazy on the welfare system. He would make jokes about lazy people and black people growing up. He would shoot off comments sometimes that would make me think wrong things about people. Oh, that person is fat or that person is black and lazy.³³

Male respondent 6 did not personally know one person of color until he was in college. Here's what he said about his upbringing:

The relatives that I was raised with were very racist and felt superior to Mexicans and blacks. Indirectly, it was imparted to me that other races were inferior to me and that they

³³ Female respondent 4.

were lazy. Most of my family are fairly redneck, southern, country white Americans. When I was younger I might've felt that way.³⁴

Prejudicial attitudes didn't originate from the participants. None of the participants said that they were prejudiced. They reported that these attitudes were handed down from previous generations. Derogatory comments, attitudes, and actions all profoundly influenced their lives and contributed to a feeling of racial superiority. Several of the white participants reported that their families instilled in them a strong work-ethic and a belief that other ethnic groups generally did not possess that same work ethic. The data clearly shows that feelings of racial superiority originate not from the individual, but from the individual's external environment, particularly his or her family. Thomas and Speight describe how racial identity is related to racial socialization attitudes in parents: "The overwhelming majority of parents, when asked directly, indicated the importance of racial socialization and provided different racial socialization messages for both boys and girls."³⁵ Several studies make the case that parents play an exceptionally important role the socialization of race in their children's lives.

Soteriological Inclusion

Soteriology is the systematic study of Jesus Christ's salvific work. Most photographs the participants took were pictures of people in a church setting. One of the preset categories offered during the interview was how faith shaped the participant's perspective of diversity and inclusion. Several of the participants talked about how Jesus's death secured salvation for all who believed and that his salvific work did not yield at cultural and racial boundaries. "Jesus died for everyone" was a clear theme that emerged from the interviews. This soteriological inclusion on Jesus's part was a key theological influence on the psychology of the participants.

³⁴ Male respondent 6.

³⁵ Anita Jones Thomas and Suzette L. Speight, "Racial Identity and Racial Socialization Attitudes of African American Parents," *Journal of Black Psychology* 25, no. 2 (April 1999): 168.

Concerning soteriological inclusion, Female respondent 1 stated:

I teach at a Christian school, and at our school we take kids who are on different grade levels and we take them in with their age group. One of my students works on my third-grade level but he still does work with his age group, with his peers. It definitely makes me see everyone as an equal, everyone as the same. Jesus didn't die for white people, Jesus didn't die for black people. I don't look at anybody off the bat and think oh they're different from me. I just try to see it from Christ's point of view. Nobody is better than the next person and nobody sins worse than that person.³⁶

Male respondent 1 used a picture of members of the University of Georgia Campus Orientation Team. The people in this photo were his friends and were all believers in Jesus Christ. His experience interacting with this team helped diminish the feeling of racial superiority. Below is what he said concerning soteriological inclusion:

Understanding my own weaknesses and shortcomings and the grace that God has for me helped me tremendously in that area. Sometimes I blow my head up thinking that I'm better than other people. But when I understand the depravity we have as human beings, I think, 'who am I to view another person as less than?' I've never had extreme thoughts of discrimination, but I have often thought that some people were less than and that's wrong. Because I realize that we all need that grace.³⁷

Male respondent 5's response again shows how soteriology influenced his perspective on diversity and inclusion. "It is showing me that God is not the God of white, Hispanic, or black, but of all people. Heaven isn't filled with a bunch of black people. There's going to be all types of people in heaven."³⁸

Theological Reflection

One subject that was repeated often as reasoning for greater diversity and inclusion in the church was the desire to replicate the demographics of heaven. This eschatological justification was made by several participants. Female respondent 2 chose the 2015 Young Professionals

³⁶ Female respondent 1.

³⁷ Male respondent 1.

³⁸ Male respondent 5.

Christmas gathering as an example of what inclusion represents. She also gave an eschatological reasoning behind her perspective on diversity and inclusion in the church.

When I think of what heaven looks like I think that heaven is going to be diverse so I want to attend a church that looks more like heaven. At Southpoint, we're able to discuss racial issues. Sometimes it brings about tension because there are different races and they may think a different way but as long as we're addressing the issue, we're able to talk about it and bring it about in a respectful way. We're able to bring it out in the open and talk about it.³⁹

Male respondent 3 echoed a similar sentiment in his response: "I think the church should be the epicenter of community and should exemplify what heaven is supposed to look like."⁴⁰

Revelation 7:9 states: "After this I saw a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands." The eschatological justification for diversity is insightful and theologically accurate. These responses move beyond an exclusively temporal case for diversity by affirming the eternal value with which God esteems all people.

Since many photos were of people in the church, the prudent thing to do was to ask the participants about their perspective on diversity and inclusion in the church. The participants were asked if the church should play a role in fostering greater diversity and inclusion in its own congregation. No specific information was given on this question. It was framed in a general way to ascertain what practices they believed the church should employ to have a more diverse congregation. What emerged from that question wasn't a twelve-point plan on how to have a more diverse church, but a strong conviction that the church should take the lead at changing societal inequities.

³⁹ Female respondent 2.

⁴⁰ Male respondent 3.

Male respondent 3 shared a photograph of a church-related outreach. Of the church taking the leading in racial reconciliation, he said: “We’re the answer to a dying world. We have the solution to problems. Part of the solution is being able to be diverse and inclusive.”⁴¹ In response to the same question, Female respondent 1 answered:

Yes, definitely especially with everything that's going on in the world. There's so much racism going on. I think that it should be the church's goal to get everybody, every skin color, every background to unite. If it doesn't start in the church, if it doesn't start with people who profess to love Christ then where is it going to start? It's not gonna start with people who are making a bunch of racist comments about other people.

Male respondent 4 believed that the church should own the issue of greater diversity and inclusion. “We're the example of Christ. If we're expecting to draw people to Christ and be inclusive then how can we introduce them to God who is inclusive if we're not being an example of inclusivity ourselves? These issues should start with the church.”⁴² Female respondent 4 offered an insightful answer based on the educative role the church plays in the life of the believer: “Yes, the church is already a space where people are listening and learning. Because that space is already designated I think, especially with the congregation that is diverse and working towards inclusiveness, that's a conversation to have.”⁴³

Several of the participants believed that Jesus dying for everyone significantly influenced their perspective on diversity and inclusion. Many of the participants believed that Jesus essentially levels the playing field and diminishes any type of superiority because of His sacrificial death for all mankind. The progressive push for equality in American society was not cited as a reason to have a diverse and inclusive church. There were no quotes from famous politicians, statesmen, or academics. Jesus’s sacrificial death for all humanity was cited as a

⁴¹ Male respondent 3.

⁴² Male respondent 4.

⁴³ Female respondent 4.

reason to strive for greater diversity. The data shows a form of spiritual discernment and maturity in their answers. Burrige writes about the great debate between

Those who want to be ‘biblical’ or ‘scriptural’ and those who want to be ‘inclusive’ or ‘accepting.’ The traditional or conservative group believe that being biblical requires us to resist contemporary norms, even to the extent of excluding others from Christian ministry or church membership. On the other hand, those who want to include certain ‘challenging’ people or groups within the church are accused of giving in to today’s liberal culture.⁴⁴

The Millennials that participated in this project all attended the same church and heard the same teachings on the doctrine of salvation and its ramifications for humanity. Since Christ’s sacrifice is clearly for all, they believed that they should adopt inclusive attitudes similar to Christ’s example. It doesn’t matter if one subscribes to conservative or liberal theology. The overarching narrative of Scripture points to Jesus’s salvific work, which presents a clear example of radical inclusivity.

There is an intentionality that comes with inclusion. Christ was intentional at crossing cultural barriers to save humanity. He gave up his divine privileges to include us in God’s salvific work. Amos 5:24 states, “Instead, I want to see a mighty flood of justice, and endless river of righteous living.” These quotes illustrate how the participants believed that the church is not just a place to congregate and fellowship with other believers, but should play a direct role in remedying the societal ill of racial segregation.

Practical Steps to Reach Millennials

The first step is to invest time, energy, and resources into this demographic. This could look like hiring a young adults pastor or a college pastor who spearheads outreach efforts and conducts catalytic gatherings where young professionals and college students can connect and be

⁴⁴ Richard A. Burrige, “Imitating Mark’s Jesus: Imagination, Scripture, and Inclusion in Biblical Ethics Today,” *Sewanee Theological Review* 50, no. 1 (2006): 11.

on mission together. This is especially important in churches that are in or near their city's urban core or next to a university. Investing in this group takes time and intentionality. Research shows (and my experience confirms) that Millennials, although masters of technology, crave interpersonal community. At my previous position, I served as the young professionals' pastor for nearly six years. In that position, I conducted bi-monthly worship gatherings, creative arts events in the urban core of my city, and was intentional about opening my home to the Millennials in my church.

Mentorship is another method to cultivating a robust millennial presence in a church. Millennials desire to change the world and an overwhelming majority of them think that they will do something great. Establishing a mentorship program that connects Millennials to older generations for relational and career advice is an important way to helping Millennials feel like they belong and keeping them in the church.

Hiring and appointing Millennials to key leadership positions in a church is yet another way to engage with the Millennial generation. Millennials, overall, are a hardworking and ambitious group. Connecting them and giving them a role to accomplish the mission and vision of the church is vital to keeping them involved. Hiring Millennials will give a senior pastor important insight and context into the lifestyle and general attitudes of this demographic.

Finally, it is vital that churches address issues that are important to Millennials. This will enable congregations to recruit and retain them. Discussing matters of sexuality, the workplace, relationships, and social justice will peak the interest of millennials. Being able to communicate these issues in a compelling way will make Millennials feel more at home in a congregation. These few steps can make a significant difference in reaching Millennials.

During the Emmanuel AME massacre, several of our young professionals were concerned about our response and asked what we could do to send a message of unity. Our leadership team designed a service where we sang worship songs that focused on unity and had a time of corporate lament. Nine parishioners perished on that day in Charleston. The leadership team found pictures and information about each person that died. During our service, nine of our young professionals stood in a line holding hands in place for the nine who died during the tragedy.

Each young professional spoke into the microphone and uttered the name of the person that died shared some biographical information about that person. While they were talking, a picture of the parishioner that died flashed on the projector screen behind them. After each had shared, that young professional prayed over that person and their family. One by one, they went down the line and prayed over the families of the victims. Weeping could be heard across the room. Healing took place. Millennials led the way.

This chapter gives a snapshot—a small window—into the mind of religious Millennials. The profile illustrates the desire this group has for greater diversity in their congregation and the expectation that the church do more to foster it within its walls. The Millennials who participated in this project cited more than a youthful penchant for social justice; theological and biblical arguments for ethnic diversity and inclusion were the basis behind their responses. Faith leaders would be wise to include this demographic in strategic planning to promote diversity in the church. Millennials have been exposed to higher levels of integration compared to previous generations and can offer valuable insights into the pursuit of inclusion.

PART THREE

RESPONSIVENESS

The third segment of the Congregational Resilience Framework is Responsiveness. This section emphasizes the need for a timely and dynamic response when a racialized storm occurs and produces profound racial division and tension. The Responsiveness section highlights the role of the prophet in ancient Israel as a model to respond in time of national distress. Contemporary Christian leaders cannot remain silent when racialized storms occur. The proclivity to silence is often the result of not wanting to “rock the boat,” or offend anyone.

However, Evangelical leaders must understand that they are making matters worse by not responding in times of crisis. Responding during times of national crisis is part of the job as a leader. Comforting God’s people is part of the role of being a shepherd. The silence of white Evangelical leaders is deafening and painful to people of color. Jim Wallis recalled a conference call he had with several faith leaders.

On that call, the leader of a nationwide network of black clergy, said even more painful to many black pastors than America’s continuing racism is ‘the silence of white Christians.’ Black pastors still don’t hear very many of their white clergy brothers and sisters in Christ speaking with prophetic clarity about the stark differences in the ways that white and black young men, even in their respective congregations, continue to be treated by police officer. And why the silence, when almost none of the officers involved in the shootings of young African American have yet to be held accountable?¹

Later in the article, Wallis remarks how Martin Luther King greatly admired Bonhoeffer and subsequently goes on to quote Bonhoeffer’s famous line on silence. “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil. God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”²

Chilling words, but painstakingly true. Pastors who do not speak out in times of great racial discord and tension are communicating a great deal about where they are, what they think, and

¹ Jim Wallis, Remembering King: Breaking the Silence, *Sojourners*, April 7, 2016, <https://sojo.net/articles/remembering-king-breaking-silence>.

² Ibid.

where their congregation is on the issue of racism.

This section of the framework directly impacts people in a congregation, community, and city. Pastors who break the silence and speak out will face backlash. King suffered a severe backlash from the Johnson administration when he began to speak out against the Vietnam war in the late 1960s. Jesus's teaching on counting the cost is a crucial lesson for pastors to learn. There is a cost associated with speaking out about racism.

There is a strong chance that church leaders will offend racist whites, or whites who simply desire not to bring "politics" into the pulpit when they speak out about the gross inequities and disparities that we see in America today. That is why the role of the prophet is the focus on this section of the thesis. The prophet was God's spokesman and communicated God's words with clarity and conviction. Contemporary Christian leaders can learn a great deal about how prophets communicated in times of crisis and apply the characteristics of this critical leadership function to their own congregation.

VIII

Insights from the Prophetic Tradition

“I do not do so from a standpoint of arrogance, of being above the fray, pointing the finger without an awareness of my own frailty, my own suffering and need for salvation. And yet I must nevertheless prophesy, not because I’m perfect, but because I’m called.”

- Michael Eric Dyson, *Tears We Cannot Stop*

Arrival, a thrilling cinematic treasure, graced theaters across the country on November 11, 2016. The film is introspective and philosophical. Its existential overtones are felt throughout its hour and fifty-eight-minute duration. The mysterious science fiction movie chronicles the story of twelve extraterrestrial spacecraft that touch down across Earth. The aliens “arrive,” but do not appear to be belligerent. Their ships leave no environmental footprint while maintaining a stationary position where they touched down. The million-dollar question everyone in the world is asking is “Why are they here? What is their purpose?” Amy Adams plays the brilliant but melancholy linguist, Dr. Louise Banks. Banks is recruited by the U.S. government to decipher the strange alien language and to decipher their intent on Earth. Her co-star, Jeremy Renner, plays a quirky astrophysicist, Ian Donnelly, who helps analyze the language of the alien species.

The two characters become acquainted on a helicopter zooming to the alien site. A memorable line from their interaction struck me when I first watched the film. Ian, who is looking amusedly at Banks while reading the first line in her book, says: “Language is the first weapon drawn in a conflict.” Banks replies, “That’s quite a greeting.” To which Ian states, “Yeah, well, you wrote it.”

The movie effectively highlights the importance of linguistics. The words we speak and write have the potential to make an enormous impact on the world around us. The quote is noteworthy: communication can be used to build or tear down. Indeed, dozens of biblical

scriptures bring attention to the power of words. The book of Proverbs is notable for its many verses on the impact of words. Proverbs 15:1 is a classic example: “A gentle answer deflects anger, but harsh words make temper flare.” Proverbs 16:24 states, “Kind words are like honey—sweet to the soul and healthy for the body.” Finally, Proverbs 18:21 gives readers a sobering perspective on the effect of words: “The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences.”

Language can also be misconstrued and thus lead to conflict. In the film, Dr. Banks and her colleague Ian make considerable progress in decrypting the complex language of the Heptapods (extraterrestrial race). As their vocabulary grows, the characters discover a very important message the Heptapods are trying to communicate to humanity, “Offer weapon.” All hell breaks loose after they translate the message in English and believe it to be a credible threat. The governments across the world, already on edge because of the lack of communication on the alien’s intent, ready themselves for war. Dr. Banks is convinced that the translation means more than the concept of a weapon and could have double meaning such as “device, apparatus, or way.”

As Louise immerses herself in the Heptapods’ language structure, she begins to experience time in a non-linear way. She finds herself experiencing events not only in real time, but in the past and future. Nonlinear time is essentially being able to “view the past, present, and future simultaneously.”¹ The Heptapods inform Louise that their intent on Earth is to share their language which also includes their unique perception of time. Except for past people groups like the Mayans, humans traditionally think of time progressing in a linear fashion. We eventually

¹ “What Is Linear Time vs. Nonlinear Time?,” *Big Picture Questions.com*, accessed November 14, 2017. <http://bigpicturequestions.com/what-is-linear-time-vs-nonlinear-time/>.

learn that the Heptapods' purpose on Earth is to offer a "weapon/tool" to help unify humanity, not destroy it.

Arrival highlights a widely debated theory called the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis. This hypothesis basically states that a person's cognitive abilities and differences depend largely on their language.² We see this theory on full display in the film. The Heptapods have significant nonlinguistic cognitive differences. They don't perceive time in a straightforward way. They experience the past, present, and future simultaneously which allows them to affect the present. As Dr. Banks began to grasp the Heptapods' perception of time, she begins to move through the future to extract important information that would affect her present.

What does this have to do with developing a framework that enables faith leaders and churches to properly prepare for and respond to racially charged events that cause upheaval and division in the socio-political landscape of our communities and cities? Everything, because language matters. A robust and substantive response to tragedy matters. When a racialized storm strikes, what will a pastor say the following Sunday morning? If a thousand neo-Nazis march in your city, what words will the pastors utter to their congregations?

The Necessity of Responsiveness

Responsiveness to racialized storms is critical to the resilience and renewal of the American evangelical church. Half-hearted responses about diversity and unity in the world are not enough. People of color are heartbroken when these situations arise. If diversity is truly an important goal in the American evangelical church, a strong and forceful response is crucial. Waiting for the storm to subside is simply unacceptable. Many evangelical leaders resist the

² Josephine Livingstone, "Relatively Speaking: Do Our Words Influence How We Think?" *The Guardian*, last modified January 29, 2014. <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/jan/29/how-words-influence-thought>

impulse to say something in fear that they are placating to the news media's exaggeration of racialized tragedies. They believe that they'll be more informed if they wait until the anger and pain subsides. That is not a wise strategy.

Kevin Clay, a Ph.D. fellow in education theory at Rutgers University, and a black man who attends a predominantly white church, chronicles his experiences with his white pastor, who chose to remain silent after the deaths of Michael Brown and John Crawford. He writes with a perspective that many black members who attend majority-white congregations share:

Ignoring the deaths of Michael Brown, John Crawford, Jordan Davis and others in service of placating white congregants is just as dangerous and problematic as overtly racist responses. Silence inadvertently communicates to the white members that these aren't important matters or that they are not relevant to the faith. The Sundays after the Brown shooting and the release of the video showing Crawford being gunned down in Wal-Mart, my pastor was noticeably silent on both incidents and ambiguously generic in his message. What did come across felt like an empty attempt to satisfy his own conscience by simply acknowledging that there is "division" in the country, without naming the divided parties or directing the church to support any stakeholders. As a black member of a majority-white congregation after the Brown and Crawford incidents, I find it alienating when a pastor ignores these issues or halfheartedly speaks about "diversity."³

Silence is simply not an option in a sociopolitical climate that has grown increasingly, partisan, divisive, and hostile. Race in America has been and will always be a divisive subject. Racism has been woven into the very fabric of America. From its very inception, policies, laws, and decisions have been made to oppress black and brown people. Simply remaining silent, in hopes of not contributing to the division, is imprudent. Silence often reinforces attitudes of racial superiority.

Father Bryan Massingale, writing from the perspective of a priest in the Catholic church, implores pastors to denounce racism as a sin from the pulpit.

For too many Catholic Christians, their racism and that of their friends, neighbors, and family members is abetted by the silence of their pastors and teachers. A permissive silence. A silence that gives comfort to those who harbor resentment, fear, and even

³ Kevin Clay, "The White Church Should Not Be Silent on the Killing of Black Men by Police," *The Root*, last modified October 6, 2014, <https://www.theroot.com/the-white-church-should-not-be-silent-on-the-killing-of-1790877247>

hatred in their hearts. A silence that allows Jesus and racial animosity to coexist in their souls. Such silence allows a young man like Roof to draw a picture of Jesus in a hate-filled journal. He probably never heard anyone tell him this very simple truth: “You cannot be a racist and a Christian at the same time.” The silence of the church’s leadership in the face of continuing injustice is the faith community’s deepest act of complicity in American racism.⁴

Massingale challenges the narrative that many white evangelicals repeat when confronted with matters of systemic racism, that the Dylann Roofs of the world are mere aberrations and thus do not warrant a response or holistic strategy to root out racism in their congregations. His indictment of a “silence that allows Jesus and racial animosity to coexist” in the innermost recesses of their souls is significant.

The white American church, historically, constructed a theology of inferiority of and separation from minorities. This theology, now largely discredited today, still runs through the veins of contemporary Christian. Sean Watkins describes how silence about racial tension and division is theologically irresponsible and wrong because of the example that Christ gives us in the scriptural narrative. Speaking on the Charleston shooting, he writes:

Whether your congregation has responded to the racial tensions in the country previously or not—that does not matter now. As Aslan said to Lucy in *Prince Caspian*, “I cannot tell you what would have happened; I can only tell you what will.” The time is before you now to pastor congregations prophetically like never before. Racism has not only been in the country, it has now—again—reared its ugly head in the church. When Jesus encountered an evil spirit in the Synagogue in Mark 1, He was not silent. He did not ignore it. He addressed it publicly and removed it from His presence.... Whether it is the topic, a point, a sub-point, or a prayer request in your congregation, I urge you to say something. I submit all of our churches are in different places and different degrees of response are warranted. But no response is unacceptable.⁵

⁴ Bryan Massingale, “The Church’s Appalling Silence On Racism,” *U.S. Catholic Faith in Real Life*, January 23, 2017 <http://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201701/churchs-appalling-silence-racism-30911>.

⁵ Watkins, “Do You Know What Your Pastor Will Say Tomorrow?”

Responding to racialized storms is not just socially responsible, but theologically warranted. Church leaders typically are reluctant to speak on these matters for fear that “politics should be left out of the pulpit.” Unfortunately, politics and policies affect the well-being of millions in America. To be silent in hopes of not wading into contentious politics exposes the privilege that many pastors (and their congregations) possess. The policies that fuel racialized storms (both historical and present) affect black and brown communities drastically.

Immediately after the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, Governor Deval Patrick immediately held press conferences to reassure residents of the city, the state of Massachusetts, and the nation. Judith Rodin writes that timeliness was helpful in creating situational awareness during that tragedy and calming a fearful public:

By sharing information you create better situational awareness, which improves responsiveness and builds trust across silos of activity...which makes for better integration.... Governor Patrick held two press conferences on Marathon Monday, not to worry people but to explain what was happening and what officials knew and didn't know. Patrick was also thinking about the bigger picture – how to control the messaging and dialogue around the event and, ultimately how to maintain the social cohesion that would help the city and its people heal once the crisis had passed.⁶

Timeliness is vital to a robust response. Tim Scott, U.S. Senator for the state of South Carolina stated that President Trump's untimely response to the events in Charlottesville was damaging to his presidency and the country. Scott highlighted the fact that Trump's response was weak and late: “I hope this serves as a lesson for all that when a community grieves, when Americans look for guidance after such a crushing and devastating attack like the one that unraveled this weekend in Charlottesville, we must take a firm stance against hate and violence,” he wrote in a statement.⁷ In the wake of President Trump's sluggish and tepid response to Charlottesville, nine CEOs that comprised the President's business and manufacturing advisory council indicated that

⁶ Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend*, 211.

⁷ Lim, “Tim Scott.”

they would no longer serve on the council and immediately stepped down. Responsiveness is essential for the contemporary Christian minister.

The Prophet

Responsiveness is imperative to building congregational resiliency to racialized storms. Nothing can take the place of the Holy Spirit's guidance during times of national crisis. However, the prophetic tradition offers church leaders valuable insights and can inform response in times of national crisis. In biblical times, prophets led, spoke, and comforted Israel in times of national crisis. During periods characterized by uncertainty, prophets boldly spoke on behalf God and challenged the prevailing mindset of the day. Learning from the prophets can help pastors offer a robust and substantive response to racialized tragedies. Gene Tucker notes how important the role of the prophet is for our contemporary society:

I am convinced that we must take seriously a prophetic role for the church in our society. Woe to us—and our nation and our world—if we do not. The model for that role, to some extent at least, must be found in the Old Testament prophets. They cannot, of course, have the last word; that must be found in the gospel. But even Jesus had a prophetic role and called his disciples to be, among other things, prophetic.⁸

John Goldingay in writes that defining prophets can be complex because of the many personalities that occupied the office. These men and women spoke out on a variety of different subjects.

They can be seen as social critics (Amos), political critics (Isaiah), moral critics (Jeremiah) and religious critics (Ezekiel)... A prophet shares God's nightmares and dreams, speaks like a poet and behaves like an actor, is not afraid to be offensive, confronts the confident with rebuke and downcast with hope, mostly speaks to the people of God, is independent of the institutional pressures of church and state, is a scary person mediating the activity of a scary God, intercedes with boldness and praises with freedom, ministers in a way that reflects his or her personality and time.⁹

⁸ Gene M. Tucker, "The Role of the Prophets and the Role of the Church," *Quarterly Review* 5, no. 22 (1981): 159.

⁹ John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology*. (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2003).

The prophet was God's messenger who would pronounce oracles of God's judgement or salvation depending on the time and context. Prophets were called by God and continuously advocated on matters that concerned God and the marginalized in Hebraic society.

Kingdom-Cultural Mentality

The first trait that church leaders need to embrace is a kingdom-cultural mentality that many prophets in ancient Israel possessed. In both speech and deed the prophets were kingdom cultural. The prophet was captivated with God's authority and primacy. This enthrallment with God and His Kingdom informed the prophet. Prophets are often thought of us as counter-cultural. Bruce Birch writes that "people think of a prophet as somewhat counter-cultural antiestablishment figure who might play an important role as an advocate of justice but is not a model for what we seek in church leadership in general."¹⁰ For the prophet, the value that was most imperative was the glory and activity of God.

This kingdom-cultural mentality compelled the prophets to challenge the temporal kingdoms of their day to mirror the reality of the kingdom of heaven. They were wholly concerned with the reign of God advancing in their world. Consider the passage from Ezekiel 1:1-3:

On July 31 of my thirtieth year, while I was with the Judean exiles beside the Kebar River in Babylon, the heavens were opened and I saw visions of God. This happened during the fifth year of King Jehoiachin's captivity. (The Lord gave this message to Ezekiel son of Buzi, a priest, beside the Kebar River in the land of the Babylonians, and he felt the hand of the Lord take hold of him.)¹¹

The nation of Israel was utterly devastated. Ezekiel, along with thousands of Israelites, was exiled from his home, conquered and subjugated by King Nebuchadnezzar. This was a time of

¹⁰ Bruce Birch, "Reclaiming Prophetic Leadership," accessed November 14, 2017.

<https://oimts.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/2007-1-birch.pdf>.

¹¹ Ezekiel 1:1-3 NLT.

great national crisis. Nonetheless, Ezekiel's eyes were opened to see that there was another Kingdom that was far greater than the one the Israelites inhabited. He saw a heavenly Kingdom, a glorious throne, and immediately his outlook changed. Ezekiel experienced a beautiful picture of God's majesty and regality.

Church leaders, like Ezekiel, must be enthralled with the Kingdom of God. Responding to racialized storms isn't so much of identifying with a social justice movement like Black Lives Matter; for the preacher, it's proclaiming the sovereignty and dominion of God despite the dire and divisive circumstances. Pastors should seek to be kingdom-cultural and speak of the rule and reign of God when confronting the unrest and uncertainty of racialized storms.

Faith leaders must grasp this aspect of the prophetic tradition. Prophets weren't overly concerned with their comfort. They were caught up in this otherworldly kingdom and compelled to speak on behalf of a transcendent God. The prophets were unyielding in their communication of God's covenantal promises for Israel. Pastors bring solace to souls by reaffirming God's love and promises to His children. When crafting a message to respond to a racialized storm, pastors must mention the primacy and power of God. Storms can often seem overwhelming. Race relations can often seem intractable. The racial divide can seem insurmountable. However, God is eternal, omnipotent, and has the power to heal our land. Pastors must communicate this.

Truth Telling from Moral Clarity

Prophetic leadership necessitates a moral decisiveness that is both specific and courageous. It must be a conviction derived from God alone. If we do not call the society to account in the name of God, who will? If we do not hold out a vision of a just and righteous society, who will? If we see disaster coming, we should have the courage to say so because we know that, as Peter said to the high priest, we must obey God rather than men.

American culture has become increasingly therapeutic. Pluralism and relativism are becoming the dominant ideology in our post-modern society. Pastoral leadership must not be based solely on charisma, energy, or intelligence. There must be a moral decisiveness that we have that compels us to speak and act on truth whether it feels good or not. The prophets mentioned in the passage above could have died from the message they gave to the kings in their day. In fact, many prophets did die in Scripture because they had spoken a message from God that the king did not take well.

It is easy to accommodate culture by being overly concerned with likability. Pastors must honestly ask themselves if their foundation is in Jesus or the shifting sands of glamor and success? Our celebrity-conscious culture can influence us to say things that people want to hear. Politicians often talk about leading with the heart and not the polls. The reason we often hear this is that, all too often, politicians take stands on policy issues not based on their conviction, but on poll numbers that reflect people's opinions.

What's the parallel? Do pastors lead constantly by looking at the poll numbers of likability and acceptance? Are they enslaved to the desire for celebrity? Or is the word of God burning in their heart as the prophet Jeremiah said, "like a fire shut up in my bones?" To have that moral decisiveness, pastors must have continuous encounters with God where they see, as Isaiah did, God high and lifted up. Higher than the desire to be accepted, lifted over the lust for celebrity and likability. Like Isaiah, God must touch and cleanse church leaders' mouths with His refining fire. Pastors must breathe in the incense of heaven lest they be choked by the smog of a relativistic society.

The prophetic role portrays the importance of telling the truth, even when it's inconvenient to do so. Pastors, in the name peace, often fall silent on matters that need to be

discussed. Prophets were truth tellers. God is truth. They told the truth because they heard from God and spoke what God had commanded them to speak. The next trait from the prophetic tradition that we can be mindful of in our leadership is the power of telling the truth. One thing we can learn from the Old Testament prophetic tradition is a willingness to say what God is calling us to say no matter how it drops in the heart of the people. Consider the example in 2 Samuel 12. This passage relates the story of the prophet Nathan confronting King David's evil during the affair with Bathsheba.

Then Nathan said to David, "You are that man! The Lord, the God of Israel, says: I anointed you king of Israel and saved you from the power of Saul. I gave you your master's house and his wives and the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. And if that had not been enough, I would have given you much, much more. Why, then, have you despised the word of the Lord and done this horrible deed? For you have murdered Uriah the Hittite with the sword of the Ammonites and stolen his wife. From this time on, your family will live by the sword because you have despised me by taking Uriah's wife to be your own."¹²

Nathan could have died for what he said. He took a great risk in confronting the King of Israel with judgement. His willingness to confront David illustrates a key trait in prophetic leadership. Christ calls us to count the cost in following Him. Pastors are no exception. They must realize that there is great risk in their professions as communicators on God's behalf. When racialized storms occur, church leaders must be faithful to tell the truth about America's history of racial injustice and present day structural racism. This is not an easy task because of the strong sense of exceptionalism that runs through the vein of American culture. Walter Brueggemann comments on the pervasive influence of American exceptionalism:

There is no doubt that a society that traffics in violence and exploitation must disguise such policies and practices in order to protect the ideology that gives immunity. It is surely the case that the U.S. church, largely settled into the ideology of U.S. exceptionalism, colludes in denial. Thus we have complete confidence in the American way of life that is much confused with the promises of the Gospel. Across the entire

¹² 2 Samuel 12:7-10.

political spectrum, we imagine our way in the world is the right way and are largely incapable of noticing the trouble and suffering evoked in the world by U.S. practices and policies. More than that, we try not to take with seriousness the unraveling of the human fabric in our society because of greed that very often eventuates in violence, even if covert violence.¹³

Space will not allow for an extensive survey of the origins and present-day ramifications of the ideology of American exceptionalism. However, it should be noted that this ideology is largely responsible for silence that befalls numerous pastors on the Sunday morning following a racialized tragedy in America. “And saying racism is a sin problem that we can solve by being kinder to each other serves the purposes of White supremacy because it does not force White folks to come to terms with the way they may contribute to institutional racism in the decisions they make at work and the way they vote at the polls.”¹⁴ Church leaders must be bold and speak the truth in the face of backlash out of obedience to God rather than maintaining the status-quo.

Grounded in Social Awareness

Social awareness is another trait church leaders can learn from as they endeavor to offer a robust response to racialized storms. The traditional view of prophets as wild vagabonds with radical messages misses the point that these men and women were connected to their community. Despite the common misperception, the prophet was attuned to the important affairs that were affecting their spheres of influence. This is an important trait to consider. Tucker notes the prophet’s communal connectivity:

The prophets were deeply involved in the political, social, and religious affairs of their nation. They addressed not only groups and congregations, but specific individuals – often by name—including kings and princes, and even the nation as a whole.... Moreover, they continue to judge us for our silence in the face of any and all forms of injustice and oppression. It is difficult to place the newspaper and the prophetic books side by side and look away with an easy conscience.¹⁵

¹³ Walter Brueggemann, “Prophetic Leadership: Engagement in Counter-Imagination,” *Journal of Religious Leadership*, 10, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 10.

¹⁴ Ware, “If Your Pastor Says ‘Racism Isn’t A Skin Problem, It’s A Sin Problem,’ Find Another Church,”

¹⁵ Tucker, “The Role of the Prophets and the Role of the Church.”

When it comes to the church, there is a natural proclivity to want to focus on the needs and affairs within the congregation; to withdraw from the world and maintain an insular way of living and thinking. Michael Emerson and Christian Smith write in *Divided By Faith* that American religion is organized in a way that produces churches that are consumed with belonging, harmony, and security for the congregation.¹⁶ We can retreat to our bubbles and be reinforced with people that look like us, think like us, and act like us. But are we attentive to a suffering world or are we enraptured with as Soong-Chan Rah states, “success-centered triumphalism?” The office of the prophet challenges us to be bound to community.

This trait should challenge faith leaders to grow in their awareness of the needs of the communities outside of their congregation. While progress has been made in race relations in America during the last fifty years, numerous gaps remain. There are still vast economic inequalities and racial stratification. These issues demand theological reflection and ministerial action.

Practically, faith leaders can utilize the three C’s (cooperation, collaboration, and coordination) discussed in chapter 5, but instead of working solely with churches, they can begin to build networks and partnerships with nonprofits and city entities. During my time in graduate school at Texas A&M, I took part in a summer internship at the Jacksonville Mayor’s Office. At the time, Jacksonville was plagued with violent crime. At one point, the city had so many homicides that it replaced Miami as the murder capital of Florida. The Mayor’s office, with close coordination with the City Council and Jacksonville Sheriff’s department, came up with a comprehensive criminal justice policy to curb the violence. During this time, I truly engaged in other neighborhoods across Jacksonville. During my undergraduate years in Jacksonville, I

¹⁶ Emerson and Smith, “Divided By Faith,” 164.

typically found myself on the south side of the city, where the university and my place of residence was located.

The internship afforded me the opportunity to travel with the mayor to town hall meetings to sell his policy to the public. Traveling to the north side of the city (where much of the crime was occurring) forced me to confront a different community ethos from what I had been accustomed to living on the south side of the city. The new social awareness informed my attitudes and beliefs about traditionally disinvested communities. Sitting for hours in those town halls, listening to hundreds of fearful and concerned residents talk about the need for the city to do something urgent was life-changing. Pastors would be wise to attend local town hall meetings put on by elected officials, city council meetings, and any event that has a focus on race and justice. This intentionality will enable pastors to be more grounded in the entirety of their community. Becoming more socially aware is especially important in an American culture that stresses radical individualism, often at the expense of community.

Narrative-Driven

The prophet was driven to point the Israelites to God's chosen path through the scriptural narrative. Their radical message was not based on new ideology, but on a return to Yahweh's commands. Terrence Fretheim remarks:

The prophetic word about social justice is often associated with liberal causes. Indeed, the prophets are sometimes depicted as if they were free-floating radicals from the '60s! This may in part explain the not uncommon negative reaction to discussions of social justice and related sociopolitical considerations in the church – especially in the sermon! In the face of such opinions, it must be emphasized: the prophets were fundamentally conservative (and public!) in their approach to these issues. The prophets discerned that social justice was a long-established value, richly embedded in the traditions they inherited, though often neglected.¹⁷

¹⁷ Terrence E. Fretheim, "The Prophets and Social Justice: A Conservative Agenda," *Word & World* 28, no. 2 (Spring 2008): 159.

Church leaders' response to racialized storms must be driven by the scriptural narrative. Similar to the kingdom-cultural trait, prophetic leadership necessitates incorporating what God says in His word. Pastors should fight against the tendency to overly rely on sociological analysis, American civil religion, or secular liberalism. One of the best-known examples of a prophetic leader utilizing the trait of narrative-driven interventionism is the late Martin Luther King Jr.

Richard Lischer writes extensively on King's life, leadership, and ministry in his book *The Preacher King*. He makes the case in his book, that King's leadership during Civil Rights movement in America often utilized scripture. Lischer notes that, "Under [King's] leadership, the quest for equality and justice became a Word of God movement."¹⁸ For King, prophetic leadership was to bear the mantle of the Word—to utter, in the vein of Moses or Isaiah, "Thus says the Lord."¹⁹

King was adamant that the Civil Rights movement was a Word of God movement. Richard Lischer, describing King's philosophy of the Bible, states that King "believed that the preached Word performs a sustaining function for all who are oppressed, and the corrective function for all who know the truth but lead disordered lives. He believed that the Word of God possessed the power to change hearts of stone."²⁰ The theological disposition of the church demands that the body of Christ engage robustly in matters that produce social vulnerability.

King reminds contemporary faith leaders that Scripture is the basis for moral authority. The Civil Rights Movement was a Word of God movement and King narrated the word by projecting those who marched, sat, and protested into the Scriptural narrative. He drew parallels

¹⁸ Lischer, *The Preacher King*, 220.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

²⁰ Lischer, Richard. *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Word That Moved America*. New York: (Oxford University Press, 1997), 6.

to the Israelites exodus of Egypt and march to the promise land and African Americans marching to their promised freedoms enshrined in the declaration of independence and constitution. The task is the same for contemporary Christian leaders.

King, like the prophets in Scripture, was propelled by a narrative-driven interventionism. The Scriptural narrative transcended the discord and disunity of his day and inspired people to change, to overcome, and revolt against the status quo. What America needs now more than ever is a new narrative, one that is hope-driven, that communicates healing, restoration, and reconciliation. Instead of retreating hiding behind the stained-glass windows, faith leaders should dare to wade into the turbulent waters with the sword of the spirit. America needs church leaders to rise up and speak prophetically over the people of God in the nation. Will Willimon writes,

Christian preaching begins, not with astute sociological analysis of the human condition, but rather with scripture. The biblical preacher, in service to the congregation, goes to the biblical text hoping to make a discovery. Then the preacher shares that discovery with the congregation, taking that congregation on much of the same journey as that preacher made in prayerful confrontation with the text.²¹

America needs new Martin Luther Kings who dare to use the Word of God to speak out against racial, economic, and societal ills of our day; to communicate with substance and civility on the problems that American culture faces. America needs new Martin Luther Kings who can transcend racial divides, who can wield the Sword of the Spirit to cut down the entrenched injustices and nihilism that characterize today's society. America needs new Moseses who mobilize congregations to march around the walls of injustice and shout that they would come down. Faith leaders must understand how to apply God's word, specifically in the context of racialized storms. The Word of God must be utilized in the response that pastors give to comfort and challenge their people.

²¹ Will Willimon, *Who Lynched Willie Earle? Preaching to Confront Racism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2017), 99.

Imagination

The final trait from the prophetic tradition reminds us of the significance of engaging in prophetic imagination and communicating salvific hope from the reign of God in the midst of despair. A survey of the great collections of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel elucidate a pattern of prophets speaking in the language of hope as the communities reside in a reality of desolation. The prophets were situated in the exilic period of the Jewish community. God's people had been scattered because of their unfaithfulness to Yahweh. Their world had crumbled and it had seemed that God had abandoned them forever. The prophets, amidst the exile, were consistent in their message of hope to the Hebrew children that their mourning would not last forever.

Walter Brueggemann describes the power of an imaginative picture given from God that the prophets of old possessed and utilized as a tool to speak of redemption and restoration when the people of Israel could not:

The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.... That alternative consciousness to be nurtured, on the one hand, serves to criticize in dismantling the dominant consciousness.... On the other hand, that alternative consciousness to be nurtured serves to energize persons and communities by its promise of another time and situation toward which the community of faith may move. To that extent it attempts to do what the conservative tendency has done, to live in fervent anticipation of the newness that God has promised and will surely give.²²

The prophets implanted an idea fundamentally different from what had been happening to the Hebrew exiles. The dominant thinking was characterized by a sense of abandonment, rejection, and confusion. In that context, the prophetic word—filled with faith that Israel is still Yahweh's possession--promised hope and a better day. Even when the individual or community fails in its faithfulness to God, "hope is possible because the future does not depend on human efforts

²² Walter Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1978), 13.

alone, but the future is under God’s sovereign rule.”²³ Isaiah demonstrates this in chapter forty-three of the book named after him: “But now thus says the Lord, he who created you...do not fear for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine”²⁴

Racialized storms produce similar sentiments that the people of Israel experienced. While Americans don’t have to worry about exile or living under an oppressive foreign regime, there is a sense of emotional abandonment, rejection, and fear that came often afflict individuals and communities. People attend churches, Sunday school classes, small groups, Bible studies, discipleship appointments, and have experienced profound internal pain. Emotionally, they’re living in the strange land of Babylon and don’t know how to return home. Church leaders must articulate the hope that Christians have in a God who time and time again has rescued and provided for them.

Contemporary Christian leaders engage in imaginative work during a racialized storm when they remind their congregations of the reality of another realm, a heavenly reality that is that exhibits an other-worldly love. The prophetic tradition challenges us to remember who we are—a people that are loved by this transcendent, omniscient, and omnipotent God. This takes innovation, imagination, and energy. What made Martin Luther King special was the imaginative picture he possessed of a better America. He had a dream of an America that was fundamentally true to what it said it would be in the Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

Lament

An examination of the role of the prophet calls us recover the powerful function of lament. Soon-Chan Rah makes the case that the American evangelical church avoids the key function of lament and is, for that reason, theologically deficient.

²³ Birch, “Reclaiming Prophetic Leadership.”

²⁴ Isaiah 43:1.

What happens when appreciation of the lament as a form of speech and faith is lost, as I think it is largely lost in contemporary usage? What happens when the speech forms that redress power distribution have been silenced and eliminated? The answer, I believe, is that a theological monopoly is reinforced, docility and submissiveness are engendered, and the outcome in terms of social practice is to reinforce and consolidate in terms of social practice is to reinforce and consolidate the political-economic monopoly of the status quo.²⁵

Prophets in ancient Israel frequently used this function. Rah claims that lament is missing as an essential component of the Christian faith. This missing element makes it especially difficult to respond in times of tragedy because the American evangelical church has embraced a theology of celebration and triumphalism. When faced with the communal suffering and pain that blacks feel from racialized storms, the American evangelical church can often find itself ill-equipped in its response to these storms. Rah states, “A triumphant and success-oriented narrative limits the twenty first-century American evangelical theological imagination. The narrative of triumph silences a narrative of suffering.”²⁶

There is typically no impetus to cry out, no impulse to grieve because many people in the American evangelical church aren’t exposed to issues of inequality and injustice so they have no point of reference. Rah writes, “Many white evangelicals feel helpless when the issue of race comes up. I often hear the refrain from white evangelicals in the midst of a situation like Ferguson, ‘I don’t know what to do!’”

Contemporary Christian leaders should recover the lost ministerial practice of lament and incorporate it either into traditional Sunday service, or host a special service to provide a venue for lament. Church leaders must teach and encourage people in their respective congregations to lament the disparities and inequalities we see in America today.

²⁵ Soong-Chan Rah, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 24.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

After the racialized storm in Charlottesville, I planned a service that would solely focus on lament and give families at my church space to grieve and cry. Church leaders could utilize this template in their respective churches during or after a racialized storm occurs. This service would give congregants an outlet to express the pain and loss that undoubtedly many of them feel.

Worship and Lamentation Service

Welcome and Opening Words

- Excerpts from “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- A Call to Action

Themes

- Lament
- Repentance
- Racism and White Supremacy in America
- Racial Inequality and Communal Pain of People of Color
- Racial Reconciliation
- Healing in our land
- Wisdom for our governing authorities
- Unity

Hymn/Song

- In Christ Alone
- Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen
- Pass Me Not

Reading of Prayers (Each Prayer Addressing Major Themes)

Message/Scripture

- Brief Reflection of 1 Corinthians 12:22–26

Corporate Reading of Scripture Follow by Silent Reflection

- Ephesians 4:32
- John 17:21
- Psalm 133:1
- Micah 6:8
- 1 Peter 3:8
- John 13:34–35
- 1 John 4:20
- Mark 3:25

Lighting of Candles

Closing Words and Song

- “Jesus Paid It All”

Personal Ministry

- Creating a safe space for people expose their pain

At the end of *Prophetic Lament*, offers gives a post-Ferguson lament for America from Lamentations 5. The imagery and emotion is riveting. This lament can serve as a model for Contemporary Cristian leaders struggling to respond to a racialized storm.

Remember, Lord, what happened to Michael Brown and Eric Garner; look, and see the disgraceful way they treated their bodies. Our inheritance of the image of God in every human being has been co-opted and denied by others. The children of Eric Garner have become fatherless, widowed mothers grieve their dead children. We must scrap for our basic human rights; our freedom and our liberty has a great price. Corrupt officers and officials pursue us and are at our heels; we are weary and find no rest. We submitted to uncaring government agencies and to big business to get enough bread. Our ancestors sinned the great sin of instituting slavery; they are no more – but we bear their shame. The system of slavery and institutionalized racism ruled over us, and there is no one to free us from their hands. We get our bread at the risk of our lives because of guns on the streets. Michael Brown’s skin is hot as an oven as his body lay out in the blazing sun. Women have been violated throughout our nation’s history; black women raped by white slave owners on the plantations. Noble black men have been hung, lynched and gunned down; elders and spokesmen are shown no respect. Young men can’t find work because of unjustly applied laws; boys stagger under the expectation that their lives are destined for jail. The elder statesmen and civil rights leaders are gone from the city gate; young people who speak out their protest through music are silenced. Trust in our ultimate triumph has diminished; our triumphant dance has turned to a funeral dirge. Our sense of exceptionalism has been exposed. Woe to us, for we have sinned! Because of this our hearts are faint, because of these things are eyes grow dim for our cities lie desolate while predatory lenders and real estate speculators prowl over them. You, Lord, reign forever; your throne endures from generation to generation. Why do you always forget us? Why do you forsake us so long? Restore us to yourself, Lord, that we may return; renew our days as of old unless you have utterly rejected us and are angry with us beyond measure.¹

The word of God for the people of God.

¹ Rah, *Prophetic Lament*, 212.

IX

Responding in the Midst of the Storm: Two Sermons and a Blog on Racial Reconciliation

“That is our task Sunday. We must speak about the Charleston Shooting. For the sake of the gospel, for the sake of our congregations, for the sake of our immortal souls, for the sake of this generation. The world, yet again, is watching and waiting for our response.”

Sean M. Watkins, *Do You Know What Your Pastor Will Say Tomorrow?*

To conclude this thesis, I offer two sermons and a blog as written pieces that illustrate what it might look like to preach on the subject of racial division. The purpose behind these sermons and blog was to give hope in the midst of despair. My objective was to help individuals navigate through the intense socio-cultural disruption that was being generated from racialized storms.

The first piece, “From the Fatigue of Despair to the Buoyancy of Hope,” was a sermon I gave in response to the horrific tragedy at Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina. I was accepted into the DMin program at Duke a month before and, in a way, this tragedy set the stage for what I wanted to write about in my doctoral thesis. I was distraught after the shooting. I remember pacing, praying, and reflecting in my kitchen two days after the massacre. I was glued to CNN and increasingly getting more and more agitated. I wanted to do something. I wanted to say something, but didn’t know where to begin.

Unanticipatedly, an idea came. I realized, in the spur of the moment, that I needed to be in Charleston. Sure, it was a bit rash, but I felt the need to be on the streets, with the people, to get a sense of what was going on in the city. At the time, news crews from all over the world had descended upon Charleston to capture the story. I told my wife that I felt that I should go to Charleston. Her response was vintage Tracy: “What in the world are you going to do there?” I admittedly had no clue what to do, but I had a strong inclination that I needed to be there. I found

a hotel thirty minutes outside of Charleston (all the hotels in the area were booked at that point), called three friends to come with me, gassed up the car, and left for Charleston only a couple of hours after the idea first came to me.

Being on the streets of Charleston was a rush. It was a hot June day and tens of thousands of people were milling around downtown. News crews were covering the scene live. Jesse Jackson walked right past me on his way to an interview with CNN. President Obama was in town at the time delivering the eulogy of the nine sweet souls who had perished. I started going up to random people and asking if they were from Charleston and why the city was not erupting with anger. Ferguson was still fresh on everyone's mind and Dylann Roof explicitly stated he desired to start a race war with his actions. The streets of Charleston were largely peaceful. I spoke to dozens of people and several of them said that it was the forgiveness of the families that ultimately saved the city. Instead of erupting in rage, the families provided solace to a city on edge, but publicly forgiving Roof.

Eventually, I grew tired from walking around and did something I probably wasn't supposed to do. I snuck around security and walked right into Mother Emmanuel AME Church. I walked around for a little while, took some pictures, and finally sat in the sanctuary. I was overwhelmed by the peace of God in that church. Charleston changed me. I went back home two days later. I decided to tell my group about my experience and preach about racism at our Young Professional's worship service. This sermon not only reflects that worship service, but what I experienced on the streets of Charleston.

The second sermon, while not given in response to a racialized storm, was preached in a proactive way due to the sociopolitical tension of Donald Trump's candidacy. I knew a storm was coming, and so I desired to prepare my ministry for what lay ahead with a brutal presidential

campaign that was laced with racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and islamophobia. This sermon was inspired by David Anderson's book, *Gracism: The Art of Inclusion*. I was captivated by Anderson's writing. I found his book practical, pastoral, and biblical. I was eager to share my insights with my ministry group and thought the material in it would help us navigate through the tension that we were all experiencing from the presidential campaign.

He makes the case, through an exegesis of 1 Corinthians 12:22–26, that racism can be combated through Gracism. Anderson enumerates several elements that comprises a Gracist's behavior. This sermon was particularly effective because it was focused primarily on the Scriptural passage in Corinthians. Communicating what the Word of God says about equality, honor, respect, and empathy is critical to motivating Evangelicals to engage in reconciliation. Evangelicals place an emphasis on Scripture as the primary guide to their Christian experience. Explaining what the Word of God says about racism and the Christian's response to it proved effective to the crowd I as preaching to.

In this sermon, I share a personal story about how I was a victim of racism and a recipient of Gracism on a trip to North Carolina in high school. This sermon was one of my favorite sermons to preach in my six years in Jacksonville.

The final piece, entitled, "My Heart Breaks for Baton Rouge," was written during the racialized storms during the Summer of 2016. Alton Sterling was shot and killed by police in an altercation in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. This tragedy was personal to me. I worked as a project manager, specializing in neighborhood revitalization and economic development in Baton Rouge. The neighborhood where Alton Sterling was shot and killed in was one of the areas my agency focused its revitalization efforts. I worked in that community and knew residents there.

Baton Rouge is a city I have great affection for and once called home. It was devastating to see the city I loved go through such a traumatic event.

A day later, Philando Castile was gunned down in front of his girlfriend and her four-year-old daughter. I found out at church a couple of days later that one of his family members was friend of my wife and I. Talking to his family member, made his death and the subsequent unrest deeply unsettling. The blog piece I wrote was intended to help my friends and congregants navigate through the emotions of this tragedy. I desired for them to help them know what to pray for during that time of national crisis. It was during this time that I began to draw parallels between climate change and natural disaster and the socio-political unrest that is produced from these racialized tragedies.

I have chosen these works to end my thesis because they provided examples of how to mitigate the severity of and respond to racialized storms through the art of preaching. “Listening to God’s Word together not only reorients us, but helps us collectively imagine the Kingdom of God.”¹ My prayer is that these pieces inspire faith leaders to stand up and boldly speak out against injustice and communicate the hope that is in our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Kathrynn A. Davelaar, “Embodied Attention: Learning from the Wisdom of the Desert and Saint Augustine in an Age of Distraction,” (DMin Thesis, Duke Divinity School, 2014), 74.

Fatigue of Despair to the Buoyancy of Hope: A Sermon in Response to the Tragedy in at Emmanuel AME

Tonight, I'm interrupting our series to talk about what happened last week in Charleston South Carolina at Emmanuel AME Church. We cannot respond to every tragedy in the news - The news is a 24/7 cycle of negativity. It's hard to watch and respond to the news. It just seems like so many horrible things are happening in our country and around the world. If you're not careful, you can find yourself getting numb to the pain and tragedy. My daddy was a news anchor. I certainly wasn't numb to what happened in Charleston last week.

Like many of you, when I heard the news of the shooting at Emmanuel AME Church in Charleston, South Carolina I was heartbroken. Nine sweet souls perished in a Bible study at the hands of an evil and hateful human being. I was glued to my iPad and iPhone, constantly checking updates and seeing what pastors, politicians, and businessman were saying about the events. This event was very significant to me personally as an African American and as a Pastor.

It blew my mind that the sweet parishioners of Emmanuel AME welcomed and accepted Dylann Roof and he returned that gift of hospitality and acceptance with violence, malice, and murder. The shooter was methodical with his research. He knew what he wanted to accomplish when he walked inside that church. He said that he hoped to start a race war from his actions. Praise be to God that the Lord has used his hateful action to reignite a much needed dialogue about the reality of race relations in America.

The shooting at Emmanuel AME was horrific, evil, and hateful. We must pray for victim's families. This tragedy has once again elevated the topic of race relations to the forefront of our national attention. During the last couple of years, our nation has experienced a series of

tragic events that have aggravated the wound of racism in our country. There has been an inordinate amount of racially-charged rhetoric, city-wide rioting in major American cities, hundreds of thousands of people marching, academic symposiums, speeches from the president. What happened in Charleston matters. The national discourse it has produced matters. It matters to us right here in Jacksonville, Florida, because racism is alive and well in this country, both interpersonally and institutionally. I feel like a lot of Christians and generally people across America treat racism like it's going extinct. Unfortunately, it's not.

I'm not talking to you tonight as a government official. Though I majored in political science, and worked in government for several years. I believe in the power of judicial, executive and legislative process. I'm not talking to you as a doctoral student at Duke University whose thesis will be on racial reconciliation. I'm talking to you as a pastor. As a shepherd, to encourage you to take the lead on the issue of racial prejudice. I want to encourage you to take the lead in being a voice for inclusivity, dignity, and equality in the face of rhetoric that is divisive and demeaning.

My desire is to equip you with the right perspective to have concerning all of this. I want you to see the big picture. There are no easy answers when it comes to racial division in America. I think we want an easy answer. I think a lot of people thought that Barack Obama's election to the presidency would be the silver bullet that solved racial inequality and prejudice in our country. It's fascinating that during his presidency we've seen a level of rioting and unrest not seen in decades.

Charleston is more than aberration. This tragedy brings up a lot questions and issues, including: greater gun control, confederate flag, inequality in our education system, violent racial history, poverty, crime.

We have come a long way as a country. I lived in Oxford, Mississippi in the early 90s. The scars of the Battle of Ole Miss were still evident nearly thirty years later. In September 1962, James Meredith, an Air Force veteran applied to Ole Miss. The Governor at the time tried to defy the Supreme Court's decision to admit Meredith. This situation triggered a crisis between the state of Mississippi and the federal government. When Meredith arrived at Ole Miss he had to be protected by US marshals who were put in place by the Kennedy administration. A mob of thousands descended on the campus to disrupt Meredith's enrollment at the university.

Two people died and dozens were injured in the ensuing chaos. The Kennedy administration was forced to send in an army of 31,000 troops. Oxford, Mississippi essentially was under military occupation. Can you believe that? Can you imagine that? An entire army descended on a small southern town to force one black man to be a college student.

In what essentially amounted to a military occupation, federal marshals were forced to remain with James Meredith for the entirety of his time at Ole Miss. Thirty years later, I ran around that campus as a wide-eyed eight-year-old boy with a daddy who was an adjunct professor at the university. Twelve years after that, the student body elected Kim Dandridge as the first African American female student body president.

I want to encourage you to take the lead in healing the racial divide in our country. It's up to us as Christ followers to take the lead. Starbucks has tried to lead the charge, government officials are trying to lead the charge, comedians like Jon Stewart have tried to lead the charge, community activist like Al Sharpton and Jesse Jackson are trying to lead the charge, Hollywood is trying to lead the charge. The only way to lead and win on this issue is to diminish the kingdom of darkness by advancing the kingdom of God in the heart and minds of men and women. The kingdom of God must gain ground because as we come under God's dominion we

are confronted with the racism and prejudice in our heart. Jesus and racism cannot coexist. We also must speak out about the structural inequalities that exist in America, particularly in our criminal justice system.

We cannot be silent or ignorant when it comes to this issue. My assignment is to equip you with the right perspective. I don't have a lot of time, but I will do my best because if you are not equipped on how to engage in the proper dialogue with this subject you'll be silent. And your silence can be deafening. It can be easy to stand by in passivity and acquiesce to racially charged language and jokes. We cannot be ignorant either, randomly spouting off our opinions without pausing to reflect, pray, or determine how best to build a bridge.

I remember being in high school and my scheduling got changed in the middle of the year so I couldn't have lunch with my friends who I normally sat with. I had one cross country teammate who sat with his group of friends from the IB program and so I started to sit with them. One guy in the group had a racist grandfather who would rail against black people. He would glowingly talk about how his grandfather would call black people Nigger. He would use the word Nigger to repeat verbatim what his grandpa said. The whole table would simultaneously cringe and laugh. Cringe, because there was a 16-year-old black kid (me) who was at the table, and laugh because they thought that racially insensitive language was funny.

I remember the pain, embarrassment, and shame whenever that kid would use racial epithets. Though, he didn't direct them specifically at me, the fact that he didn't care how I would receive them and the fact that none of the other students spoke up, was telling. The worse part about it is that I didn't say anything. I said nothing because I was embarrassed and I desperately wanted to be accepted. By not saying anything, my silence condoned what was happening and it continued to happen. Some of you have racist family members that love to joke

around about racial matters. And although you may not agree with them your silence or participation in that joking condones that behavior. How many times, growing up, did Dylann Roof hear racist and offensive language about blacks before he started to truly believe it? How many people were around him and heard him spewing racist language, but chose not to say anything? Chose to be silent?

The shooting of those nine sweet souls in Charleston was a tragedy. And people just don't know what to do. The national media questions how this type of thing could happen in 2015. The New York Times claimed that “he touched the wrong nerve in a country struggling to confront racism and hatred in the days after nine black parishioners were killed during a Bible study in a South Carolina church.” Why is it a struggle to confront racism and hatred? Because they do not have the right perspective. Because they adhere to a worldview called advancement thinking.

Advancement Thinking is the idea that our cultural, political, and intellectual landscape will flourish through the inevitable progress of human reason and achievement. We are now living in an age of advancement. L. Russ Bush, the author of *The Advancement: Keeping the Faith in an Evolutionary Age* writes that “Our contemporary generation believes that it is living in an age of progress in every aspect of life. In a similar way, many today accept the notion that the modern world is on the move, not only with advancements in technology, but that in spite of terrorism and other threats, we are progressing toward world peace and intellectual freedom and political tolerance.” This worldview believes that as long as time progresses people will be more civil, or intelligent, and accepting. Unfortunately, it takes about 30 seconds of viewing CNN to see that worldview does not seem to be true. Despite our advancement, we still live in a world of war, famine, poverty, and disease. This advancement thinking seeps into our culture and can cloud and dilute the filter of the gospel by thinking that human reason and achievement will

ultimately drive progress. So the Charleston Church Massacre doesn't fit into the mold of inevitable progress and we wonder why horrific events like this happen?

This type of thinking is incorrect because it falsely assumes that if time passes mankind will progress. Advancement thinking does not consider what we, who ascribe to the Christian worldview know so well, that is the power of sin that leads to a broken world. Humanity is fallen. It is in a state of total depravity. Corrupted. Decadent. Perverted. Deteriorating. This affects the individual heart and as it does the culture and society we live in. Racial prejudice is just one manifestation of the corruption of our souls.

We must realize our responsibility and take the offensive. We cannot be reactionary or defensive. We must take the lead. The church leads on this issue and other societal ills through the proclamation of the Gospel and the advancement of the kingdom of God in the hearts and minds of men. It's when we see everything through the filter of Jesus.

It happens on a micro level, like a virus that sweeps through a physical body. The dominion and authority of Christ must break through the walls of sin in our soul. Before we can ever see macro-level change in a city, region, state, nation we must look inwardly to see if our relationship with Jesus is transformational or if we simply adhering to institutional religion that lacks the power to change one's heart.

This is the Christ follower's ultimate weapon. While the congressman has legislation, the comedian has jokes, the President has executive authority, the Christ follower has the gospel! I was so impacted by the shooting at Emmanuel AME that I drove up to Charleston two days after the shooting to get a sense of what was going on there. I felt God calling me to go to there to walk the streets and pray and love on people in the community. Three guys from our group joined me. Once we got there we spent several hours outside the church. There were literally

thousands of people on the streets, holding signs, being interviewed by the news, and engaging in peaceful protest.

I was amazed at the peace, forgiveness, and love that was in Charleston. The sense of resilience in the people of Charleston was inspiring. I talked to several residents of the city and asked each of them the same set of questions. One of the questions I asked was: what is your explanation for the peace and unity that the city is experiencing right now? Person after person said that the forgiveness that was shown by the victim's families towards the shooter was one of the main reasons for the harmony that settled over the city.

I got the opportunity to go inside the church and sit down for half an hour. It was a bit surreal as I sat silently in a pew and prayed that God would wipe the tears from the people of Charleston's eyes. I prayed that His great love would penetrate hardened hearts and unleash a powerful resolve throughout the city; a resolve to not be overcome by hate, but instead be full of love. What the enemy meant for destruction and division, God turned it into healing and unity. I'm grateful for the opportunity to have witnessed such a powerful example of love.

The gospel change is about change of the heart. As you are reconciled with a just and holy God, that just and holy God calls you to reconcile with your fellow man. See at the end of the day it's a heart issue: "But the words you speak come from the heart—that's what defiles you. For from the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, all sexual immorality, theft, lying, and slander" (Matthew 15:18–19 NLT).

If we do not check our hearts. And if wrong perspectives, attitudes, thoughts that have not been touched by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit persist, they will be handed down to the next generation. The enemy of our soul is not just focused on your destruction, he is interested in handicapping the next generation with the sin you never received deliverance

from...He desires for the next generation to be plagued with the same racism that this generation is plagued with.

SO HOW DO WE LEAD IN THIS TIME OF CRISIS?

By not standing by passively or silently when prejudicial words are uttered or jokes are made.

By praying fervently for our nation. Specifically, that racial wounds from the past would be heal.

By listening emphatically. The Bible says that “spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish. The tongue can bring death or life; those who love to talk will reap the consequences (Proverbs 18:13, 21 NLT).

By making this ministry radically inclusive. Practicing exceptional hospitality to those who are ethnically and culturally different than you. Also, I think it’s important to use and adopt inclusive language. Instead of they, them, those, it's we and us...

By following in Jesus’s example of crossing cultural boundaries and connecting with people that are different than us.

By being a thermostat instead of a thermometer. When I walk into a room and I can tell that it is not a welcoming environment, I choose to turn up the temperature of acceptance and grace.

By advancing the Kingdom of God through the preaching of the gospel.

I truly believe this type of leadership produces:

Acceptance of over rejection.

Trust over mistrust.

Love over hate.

Cognitive generosity over cognitive categorization.

Peace over anxiety.

Godly action over passivity

Light over darkness

Peace over hostility.

Kindness over malice.

Connection over division.

Inclusivity over exclusivity.

We lead by understanding the strategy of Satan which is to divide and conquer. Satan is real and he wants to steal trust, destroy relationships, and kill any chance of unity and harmony. But I thank God for his Word, because His Word reminds us that *the Son of God came to destroy the works of the devil* (1 John 3:8).

We must model our lives after Jesus. Jesus was cross-cultural. He broke down cultural barriers. He was a deity and yet became human and identified with our weaknesses. He walked several miles in our shoes. Philippians 2:7 says that “Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.” He was God, but crossed boundaries to become humans and identify with us to save us. Jesus cared about the people at the margins. He spent time with women, tax collectors, and the infirmed. He blessed children and spoke of the kingdom of God and how that kingdom was so alternative to the kingdom Israel had previously experienced.

We should follow Jesus’ example. Jesus said he was going to send his spirit and when his spirit came what was the first thing that happened? Racial, ethnic, and cultural barriers were broken. Look at this passage in Acts 2:5–11:

At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem. When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers. They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia,

Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!

Instead of living with the scarcity mentality, pigeonholed in a homogenous world, surrounded by people who are like us. We generously invest in friendships with people that are not like us. The gospel gives us the power to bridge divides, break down barriers, invest, encourage, and build with people who look differently; act differently; think differently are from different cultures and neighborhoods and ethnicities.

Jesus gave us the ability to bridge the divide with God and with our fellow man through the cross. The good news about Jesus is that He is the bridge. Look what they said in Acts they were declaring the wonderful things God had done!

The power of the gospel is its ability to be radically inclusive. Jesus was radically exclusive. He said I am the only way to the Father, but in the same breath he was radically inclusive. And in his great love, a great exchange takes place.

THE GREAT EXCHANGE

When you give God your heart, He fills it with love instead of hate.

When you hand God regrets, He will hand you back hope.

When you hand God transgressions, He will hand you back forgiveness.

When you hand God rebellion, He will hand you back peace.

When you hand God restlessness, He will hand you back tranquility.

When you hand God fear, He will hand you back courage.

When you hand God your insecurity, He will hand you confidence.

When you hand God your prejudice, He will hand you a desire for unity/harmony.

The power of the gospel gives us grace to take the wrongs we experienced, those horrific events that happened to us, and instead of letting them ruin our image and turn us into something ugly and full of pain, can instead transform us into a beautiful tapestry that like a renowned artist so proudly renders to the world, God proudly shows to a deteriorating culture, to a fallen world, not to show off but to inspire and stir and urge and convince and convict the lost and people living in darkness to turn and be found to live in the light

That's what grace does. It is resilient, rising, buoyant, an upward force! And it cancels the weight and gravity of sin that would otherwise drown us. Seeing the love of God in the glory of Christ is what restructures our hearts and we ordered our desires. The size and beauty of God breaks the power of sin over our hearts. Remember, my friends, one heart can cause tremendous devastation or great healing. It matters what happens in one heart and in one mind. We will not curse the darkness in our society we will instead declare the light.

To repeat what Dr. Martin Luther King said on September 18, 1963 in response to four little girls that died in from a bomb planted at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church: “Now I say to you in conclusion, life is hard, at times as hard as crucible steel. It has its bleak and difficult moments. Like the ever-flowing waters of the river, life has its moments of drought and its moments of flood. Like the ever-changing cycle of the seasons, life has the soothing warmth of its summers in the piercing chill of its winters. And one will hold on, you will discover that God walks with him and that God is able to lift you from the fatigue of despair to the buoyancy of hope, and transform dark and desolate valleys into sunlight passive inner peace.”

Targeted Love: 1 Corinthians 12:22-26

We're in the middle of a presidential election, the likes of which we haven't seen in decades. Donald Trump increasingly looks like he will be the Republican nominee for president of the United States. He started his campaign disparaging Mexicans, has called for ban on Muslims entering the country, and has made derogatory statements about his fellow Republican presidential candidates. I'm not going to spend my time disparaging politicians tonight. Ain't nobody got time for that. But a lot of people are concerned. A lot of people of color are concerned with what is going on in this presidential race.

There's a lot of talk about racism being on the rise in America. Racism is more than just prejudicial feelings and the bigoted actions of individuals against others. Racism manifests in structural and institutional decisions that disproportionately affect people of color. Unfortunately, America has had a long and horrible history of some of the vilest policies and actions that were sanctioned by local, state, and national governments.

Consider what William Van Amberg Sullivan, a former United States Senator from Mississippi, a state I lived in, said about the lynching of Nelse Patton, "I led the mob which lynched Nelse Patton, and I am proud of it. I directed every movement of the mob and I did everything I could to see that he was lynched." This was a United States Senator who led a murderous mob of people that strung up a black man and burned him alive. James Cone writes that even Theodore Roosevelt said, "the greatest existing cause of lynching is the perpetration, especially by black men, of the hideous crime of rape—the most abominable in all the category of crimes, even worse than murder."

These are just a few examples. There are thousands, tens of thousands more like this. You can brush it all off and say well that happened so long ago, it doesn't have any bearing on today,

but it does. America's past perpetually haunts its present and will continue to haunt its future unless we do something radical.

People are on edge. A lot of you are on edge tonight. You hear the heated rhetoric in the news and see the reports of the anger and violence that is spilling out into the streets and you wonder what is going on in our country. America is in trouble. There's no doubt about that. But that trouble shouldn't drive us to despair. We must realize that we cannot attempt to overcome the division in our country with anger and frustration on our end. Martin Luther King said it best, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."²

What we need is targeted love. Intentional love that focuses attention on those who are marginalized and oppressed. I've heard Christians give a variety of proposed solutions to the race problem in America. A common answer is that we just need to be better Christians and be a lot nicer to one another. If this happens than we won't act on our prejudicial impulses and say and do things that hurts the other. I think this answer is flat wrong. Or rather, it's not enough. We still live in a very segregated society. Are there signs up on water fountains and bathrooms that say, "colored only?" No. But if we think that a couple of legal victories in the mid 1960s magically cured America's nearly four-hundred-year-old race problem, we're sadly mistaken. If we think we can suddenly just start being nice to people that look different than us and that's going to fix everything we have another thing coming.

David Anderson wrote a phenomenal book called *Gracism: The Art of Inclusion*. The book provided a lot of inspiration behind what I'm sharing with you tonight. We're in desperate times. And I think it's fitting that during this black history month we talk what needs to be done

² Wolfgang Mieder, *Making a Way Out of No Way: Martin Luther King's Sermonic Proverbial Rhetoric* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2010), 293.

to eradicate racism. Before we can even think about making a dent in the world around us we have to get some things straight in our own theology and interactions with others. We must be intentional about what we do to heal the racial divide in America.

Anderson dissects 1 Corinthians 12:22-26 and highlights several things Gracists do to make sure that the marginalized are valued. I would encourage you to pick up the book on Amazon and read it for yourself. Tonight, we're going to explore the principles of a Gracist and see how we can practically apply them to our life. Let's read 1 Corinthians 12:22-26:

In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

Targeted Love Focuses on Lifting Others Up

Anderson describes a Gracist as someone who is determined to lift those who are down. This is a person who is actively looking for opportunities to elevate those are in need or who are in the minority. This isn't an easy thing to do, is it? It's because we are always so focused on ourselves. We are self-centered people. This is why the gospel is so important. Jesus sitting on the throne of our hearts is so vital to our quest to eradicate racism. Why? Because you have to die to yourself.

I love Anderson's elevator metaphor. The purpose of an elevator is to lift a person or a group from one floor to the next. I went to the George Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. I remember walking into the presidential library often and being in awe of President Bush's accomplishments and life. There is a section of the library that focuses on the President's signature domestic policy, the American Disabilities Act (ADA). On

July 26, 1990, the U.S. took a huge step toward becoming more inclusive. Before this signature piece of legislation, many disabled people that couldn't access certain public buildings and floors. The ADA mission is to protect against discrimination based on disability. The ADA is very similar to the civil rights act of 1964 which made discrimination based on race, religion, sex, national origin illegal. The ADA requires employers and public facilities to provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities and imposes accessibility requirements on public accommodations.

We should be like elevators in the lives of other people, especially those on the fringes. How wonderful would it be for believers to picture themselves as uplifters: people who are dedicated to helping others move to another floor...another level in life so they can soar above their circumstances. There are vast economic, educational, and communal disparities that remain in America today. Black people are on the bottom of nearly every economic level in the U.S. And I know the arguments from both liberals and conservatives. Liberals claim it's because of policies that have put in place structural impediments to black advancement. Many conservatives blame black cultural pathologies for the place that black folks find themselves in. I think we get too caught up in the reasons and don't focus enough on the solutions.

Can you imagine what would happen if those on the sidelines of popularity were valued and included. What would happen to their spirits of discouragement, depression and disillusionment?

Targeted Love Focuses on Covering Others

Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each

other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others - Colossians 3:12–13 NLT

Anderson argues that we need to cover what we say with godly speech and a righteous attitude. He calls us to express godly attitudes before we jump and judge other people. How often do we rush to judgement when we look at someone? How quick are we to expose a weak area in another because that area rubs us the wrong way? I love what Colossians 4:12–13 says: When we are hurt by the body we should handle that situation attitudes and language that is laced with forgiveness and humility. Patience is not easy, but God commands that we have it.

I may have the right to criticize another believer or group, but I must frame that language and beliefs with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. This is part of having a respectful dialogue and will help up in the reconciliation process. As a predominantly white, majority culture church, we should recognize that people of color often have been shaped by personal and structural discriminatory experiences. There is a collective trauma that many of these people share. When people of color share their experiences, there is a tendency to get defensive, guilty, and experience a range of emotions. I implore you tonight to start conversations with people who look differently than you. When you do listen, ask God to break your heart for their experience. Ask God to fill you with compassion and empathy.

Anderson writes that the call to cover is to have a special sensitivity toward minorities in whatever form they may come—white, black, visitors, foreigners, religious, marginalized, disabled, nonassertive—to ensure that their reputations and dignity are taken into account. My question for you tonight is how different would your life be if you lived each day committed to the dignity of those around you? Black dignity matters. Hispanic dignity Matters. Asian dignity matters.

Targeted Love Compels Us to Share with Others

Targeted Love says that, as the stronger or privileged person, I have the power and opportunity to give up my privilege in the face of those who do not have privilege. Consider the example of Jesus in the Scripture narrative: “You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form” (Philippians 2:5–7 NLT).

I am so privileged. I have a nice car. I have healthy children. I live in a safe neighborhood. I have money in the bank. I have a great job. I have good friends and come from a good family. I have a multiple college degrees. And by and large (if the Lord allows) the future looks bright. Now I have a choice to make. I can hoard my privileges and work to accumulate them or I can use my privilege and share with others what I have. Again, this is not an easy thing to do. Why? Because it cuts to the heart of our insatiable appetite for entitlement and the expression of individual freedom. Anderson writes that the concept of downshifting and downgrading for others is antithetical to Western individualism. America is meritocratic. It’s a universal value in this country that if you work hard you can experience the American dream. Well what about the people who do work hard, but don’t get to experience the privileges I enjoy.

The Bible commands us to give to those in need; to share our belongings for the benefit of others. Check out Deuteronomy 15:7-11: But if there are any poor Israelites in your towns when you arrive in the land the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tightfisted toward them. Instead, be generous and lend them whatever they need. Do not be mean-spirited and refuse someone a loan because the year for canceling debts is close at hand. If you refuse to make the loan and the needy person cries out to the Lord, you will be considered guilty of

sin. Give generously to the poor, not grudgingly, for the Lord your God will bless you in everything you do. There will always be some in the land who are poor. That is why I am commanding you to share freely with the poor and with other Israelites in need.

God's heart breaks for the needy. We see this truth throughout Scripture. We live in a world of individualism and meritocracy. We blame others for the situations they are in. Instead we should be sharing with others. Today in America, whites are twenty times wealthier than blacks. I have heard, too many times to count, how lazy black people are. That they just want things handed to them. That they just want to stay on welfare, have babies, and collect a check.

Former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich used racially coded language by claiming that President Obama was a food stamp president. Conservative commentators have stated that President Obama's signature domestic policy, Obamacare, is essentially reparations for black people. This is the world we live in. This is why we need target our love by sharing freely with others.

Targeted Love Seeks to Honor Others

Who lacks honor in our society? It is the poor, crippled, blind, and lame. The outcast. The marginalized. Hebrews commands us: Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it" (13:2). We need to do a better job of honoring each other. We're so quick to be territorial. We want to air our accomplishments and achievements. What would happen if we collectively focused on honoring those who are typically at the bottom. What if we moved outside of our self-centeredness and focused placing others in high esteem? Our work places, schools, and other spheres would drastically change. Targeted Love says, "I Will Stand with You."

It is not a natural human instinct to gravitate towards the least, lonely, last and left out, but it is godly. Anderson writes, how we place such an emphasis in trivial things like teams and materials because it bolsters our identity. I love the Duke Blue Devils. I will hoot and holler for the basketball team any day of the week. When they are on top I feel on top. And its trivial. Standing up for the least of these is not a popular thing to do, but it's the godly thing to do.

Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit. Standing with people sometimes means standing up for people, and God will gives us opportunities to apply what we learn. Racism is rooted in the belief in the superiority of one's ethnic identity and the inferiority of another group. Racist stand for their own identity and the power that that identity brings. In 1 Corinthians 12, God challenges us to stand for others who are different.

Targeted Love Challenges Us to Truly Consider One Another

I knew a guy who advocated for white identity. He would always share statistics about people of color to show that they were a problem in America. I talked to a friend about this guy and he gave me some wise advice: When it comes to the problem of race in America, sociological analysis is important, but not everything. Implementing governmental policies is imperative and the church should engage with nonprofits, government entities, and other churches to secure justice and equality of people of color in this country. Especially in our criminal justice system.

But this work starts with awareness that others may feel differently from me and it is my duty as a Christ follower to consider how the other person feels. The term white privilege has been thrown around out a lot. This concept has many meanings, but the one that I think is the most accurate is that white privilege is benefit of never having to concern oneself with issues of inequity that black and brown people deal with. Targeted love that considers others says, "I will

concern myself with your feelings and your dreams. I should be thinking about your interest and you should be thinking about mine. I should consider your thoughts, perspectives and feelings rather than making a unilateral decision that might adversely affect you.”

Think about it.... When was the last time we paused to consider others’ feelings and perspectives? Consideration. This is a powerful concept. It is even more powerful if we live it in relation with other people who look different from us. I implore you tonight, consider the feelings and perspectives of the others in your life. This is something that historically we, as a nation, have not done well. In the 1960s Gallup conducted several polls among whites in America and the feelings regarding the Civil Rights movement.

This was in the early 1960s, a time when structural racism was as clear as an Arizona sky. This was a time when blacks had to sit in the back of buses, and colored signs hung all over public facilities from Texas to South Carolina. The results of this poll were shocking: 61% of whites disapproved of the Freedom Riders and Sit-Ins. Eighteen percent had no opinion. Sixty percent of whites had an unfavorable view of the mass civil rights rally that culminated in Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech. A question in an October 1966 poll asked, “All in all, do you feel the demonstrations by Negroes on civil rights have helped more or hurt more in the advancement of Negro rights?” A whopping 85% of whites stated that the demonstrations of black people ultimately hurt their advancement. Again, this was in the 1960s, when civil rights leaders and activist were being gunned down in the south. When the south was essentially an anti-black police state.

Again, I say all of this because, as a country, we have not done a good job of considering other people. Especially people of color. We have got to do better. We have got to be radical in

our concern for the other. Jesus demonstrates this commitment in the story of the Good Samaritan. Let's read that story together in Luke 10:25-37:

One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: "Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?" The man answered, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!" The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied with a story: "A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road. "By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side. "Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.' "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked. The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy. Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same."

Now go and do the same.... Jesus tells us to go and do the same. There was so much ethnic tension and animosity between Jews and Samaritan. This animosity had been going on for centuries. This was not a recent dispute between two different groups of people. This was centuries old. This Good Samaritan exhibited a care and concern that cut across ethnic and cultural barriers. He truly considered the Jewish man's welfare by giving his time, energy, and resources to aide in the Jewish man's recovery.

We must take an honest assessment of our lives and ask ourselves what are we doing on an interpersonal level and what are we doing on a broader systemic level to tear down racial barriers? How, as white people, are we being Good Samaritans to people of color personally and systemically? If you're not doing anything, you shouldn't feel condemned, but you should feel convicted. It's not enough to simply say, "I'm not a racist." You must join hands with your

brothers and sisters in Christ who look different from you, and work towards justice, equality, and reconciliation.

Finally, Targeted Love Seeks to Celebrate with Others

We need to start rejoicing in others' success. I think we do a good job as young professionals of rallying around each other when we go through hard times. But we need to do a better job of rejoicing with one another. Rejoicing with others when I am desiring my own achievement can be even harder. We need to be incredible at celebrating others success and achievements. That is vital to building and maintain a strong spiritual community.

All of this happens on a micro level, but has macro level implications. You start by taking what is in your hands and living out the principles stated earlier in a practical way. You integrate these principles in your daily action. I love how Anderson writes that Gracism is what fights racism.

Racism, according to Jim Wallis, is America's original sin. It can really seem overwhelming. But we can make a difference. We need to do several things individually:

1. Spirit Led

- Andrew Young (former Mayor of Atlanta and friend of Dr. Martin Luther King) said that Dr. King was a man that was filled with the Holy Spirit. We need to be filled with the Holy Spirit. We need to be led by the Spirit of God when it comes to breaking down the entrenched individual and structural racism in this country. God's spirit will guide us in the conversations we have and what organizations to get involved in.

2. Reach over the color line by inviting someone to your home.

- The first step to overcoming cultural and ethnic differences is to engage in cross cultural contact. We should interact with people that are different than us. Opening your home is a powerful way to show hospitality. You don't have to have some hard-hitting discussion on race right off the bat. Take time and pay some relational rent. Get to know that person for who he or she is. They need to know that you care about them before they trust you with a sensitive topic and conversation about racism and their experience with it.

3. Read about America's racial history

- Educating yourself about America's history of racial injustice and inequality is an important step toward understanding how we got where we are. It's tedious, it takes time, and you might not like what you dig up when you study the extent of white supremacy and its ramifications for people of color. But you'll be better off knowing what has happened and what continues to happen today. I want to encourage you tonight to learn. Learn about the issues that black and brown people have dealt with and are continuing to deal with.

4. Link up with an organization that relates to the poor

- Plenty of nonprofits right here in Jacksonville are doing important work to remedy today's societal inequities in our city. Whether afterschool programs in the inner city or Habitat for Humanity, there are several places to get involved and make a difference. As a church (and particularly as a young professionals' group) we are committed to partnering with organizations that are making a difference in the areas of equality, poverty, criminal justice reform, etc.

5. Receive the grace of God in your life first

- To be a Gracist, you must receive the grace of God yourself. It will be hard as you journey down the path of reconciliation. What sustains us on this journey is the grace of God. As we receive God's grace we are more apt to give it, lavish it, on people, undeserving or not, because we are an undeserving and unworthy people and God chose to lavish his grace on us.

To the people of color in this room tonight, I want to let you know that God has not forgotten about you. He has not overlooked your pain. Scripture shows us a God who is sensitive to the cry of the oppressed. Look at the story of Hagar in Genesis:

So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. Then Sarai said to Abram, "This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she's pregnant she treats me with contempt. The Lord will show who's wrong—you or me!" Abram replied, "Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit." Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away. The angel of the Lord found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai," she replied. The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority." Then he added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count." And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means 'God hears'), for the Lord has heard your cry of distress. This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives." Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me." She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?" So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means "well of the Living One who sees me"). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered.³

Look at how God gives special attention to Hagar. She was a victim of Abram and Sarai's failure to believe God's promise that they would have a child. After the conversation with the angel of the Lord, Hagar was convinced that God truly saw her. He paid attention to her. She knew it, and it changed her forever.

³ Genesis 16:4-14

God hears and sees those who are marginalized and misused. Even when others don't notice you, God notices you. When others don't see you, God sees you. When others don't listen to you, God is paying attention. I saw this in a powerful way in my life during the summer of 2000. That summer, I traveled to Brevard, North Carolina for a cross country camp with my high school teammates. I lived in Sarasota, which is in an hour south of Tampa. Needless to say, a trip to North Carolina wasn't a quick drive. Our coach decided to spend the night in Macon, Georgia as a halfway point on the trip. Ten restless teenagers in a fifteen-passenger van were wearing him out. We stopped at a hotel in Macon and my teammates and I went out to a local close to where we were staying. Coach stayed behind in his hotel.

My parents told me not to go out at night on this trip, but I didn't listen. I thought, "What's the worse that could happen?" I was with my teammates, so I thought I would be safe. After dinner, we walked back to the hotel and this red truck with two white guys in it started following us down the road. I knew something was wrong. I was walking close to the road at first, but instinctively moved to the middle of the pack of my teammates. When I did, those two white guys started yelling, "Hey nigger!" "What are you doing around these parts little nigger!?" They followed us down the road and repeatedly yelled "nigger" at me. I was the only black person in the group.

I'll never forget how I felt that night. My innocence was stolen by two racists in a red pick-up truck. I had been called a nigger before, but this was something different. There was hatred and anger in their voices. I saw the look in their eyes. I shudder to think what would have happened if my teammates hadn't surrounded me. We got back to the hotel room and I laid in my bed, tears streaming down my eyes. No one said a word. We all just silently turned the lights off and got in bed. In that moment, I felt so alone. I was angry that I didn't listen to my parents. I

was angry that my teammates didn't come to my defense. I was angry at those two racists. I laid down literally pulsing with fear and anger, when I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was Corbin. He didn't go to my school. He was a junior at Booker High School, a predominantly black school across town from my high school. Corbin was a 16-year-old nerdy white kid. His school didn't have the resources to send his team up to the camp, so my coach paid for him to come with our group.

Corbin put his hand on my shoulder, looked me right in my eye, and simply said, "Dorrell, are you ok? What happened out there was wrong, and I want to let you know that I'm with you." I got up, hugged him, and thanked him. It meant the world to me that he would say something. It was as if, in that moment, in a tiny hotel room in Macon, Georgia, God heard my cry and reassured me that He saw my tears. In that moment, emotional bones that had been broken by that racist event were being set in place by the love of God through that nerdy white kid (who, by the way, was a Christian).

The one who hears, sees and pays attention to those on the margins is a person who targets His love in a specific way. God shows us through His actions with Hagar what the heart and art of inclusion looks like.

I encourage you tonight not to give into despair about the problem of race in America. Yes, we have a lot of work to do in our country and in our community. We have a wound of racial injustice and oppression that has lasted for several centuries, but do we not serve a big God? Do we not serve a God that hears the cry of those on the margins? Last time I checked, He delivered the Israelites from the hands of the Egyptians. He released the captives who were living as exiles in Babylon to return home from Jerusalem. He rescued the Hezekiah from the hand of the Assyrians. He delivered the Israelites from the subjugation of the Philistines. And

most important, He bankrupted heaven by sending His son Jesus to die for us so that we could be reconciled to a holy God. We serve a big, powerful, compassionate God who is near to the brokenhearted. John Wesley got it right when he said, “the best of all is that God is with us.”

Let’s pray.

My Heart Breaks for Baton Rouge

It was eerie to wake up and see Baton Rouge in the national spotlight yesterday, making headlines on all the major news outlets and trending as the number one topic on Twitter. The story? Alton Sterling, a 37-year-old black man, was fatally shot at point-blank range by two Baton Rouge police officers. I was going to post this blog late last night, but I decided to wait and post it this morning. I was shocked and devastated to wake up this morning with more headline news - a livestream Facebook video of Philando Castile, shot by a police officer and dying on the scene, was on the home page of CNN. What happened in Baton Rouge hits pretty close to home - as a former resident and city employee, my heart grieves for the Capitol city. I spent years working to revitalize many of Baton Rouge's traditionally disinvested communities (including the neighborhood where Sterling was killed).

Second, as an African American pastor ministering in a predominantly white congregation, I'm often asked questions on race relations in America. People are genuinely searching for answers on this exceptionally sensitive subject and are looking for someone to help them navigate their thoughts and subsequent response as a Christ follower. Finally, as a doctoral student at Duke University, tragedies like Alton Sterling and Philando Castile's death have compelled me to write my doctoral thesis on racial reconciliation in America. It's important to thoughtfully, constructively, and civilly address issues that affect the social, political, and religious landscape of America and give direction on how we can pray and act in the wake of this tragedy. What happened in Baton Rouge and Minneapolis has, yet again, aggravated the deep wound of racial conflict and misunderstanding in America. So where do we go from here? America is reeling from these tragedies.

Below is a list of practical things you can do to be a part of the arduous task of racial reconciliation in America.

It's Imperative that we empathize with the pain of Sterling and Castile's Family. We need to stop for a second and imagine the pain they are going through. Empathy involves you being aware of, sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another of either the past or present without having the feelings, thoughts, and experience fully communicated in an objective manner. You may not be able to articulate the pain of these families, but it's necessary that you seek to put yourself in their shoes.

My eyes were blurred with tears as I watched Alton Sterling's 15-year-old son sob during a press conference on the death of his father. Can you imagine what he's going through? Can you put yourself in his shoes? He lost his father. Tracy and I watched the video of Castile's death this morning and I had to leave the room because I was completely overwhelmed with emotion. Can you feel the level of loss that their families are experiencing, knowing that the death of their loved ones is now in the national spotlight with millions of people venting their frustrations and opinions?

There is an immense amount of pain that is being felt among family and friends. Before we pray for healing, I think it would be prudent to take a time and reflect on how deep this wound is for their family, friends, and community.

Pray for the Pastors in Baton Rouge and Minneapolis

Let us pray specifically that God will give them wisdom in addressing their congregations and grace to lead in the weeks, months, and years to come. There will undoubtedly be confusion and questions that arise in congregations across Minneapolis and Baton Rouge.

We need to pray for the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation to infuse pastors' hearts and minds. I love Walter Brueggemann's line: "nurture, nourish and evoke a consciousness that is alternative to the perception of the dominant culture around us."⁴ My prayer is that pastors would speak with conviction and authority on God's salvific hope and healing power and that what they would stand in stark contrast to what is presently happening in the hearts and minds of the people in Baton Rouge and Minneapolis. That hope, faith, and healing would replace confusion, strife, and division.

We Need to Pray for the Police Officers in Baton Rouge and Minneapolis

Day after day, thousands of police officers put their life on the line to protect the citizens in Baton Rouge and Minneapolis. A majority of them are good men and women. We need to pray against any retaliation against them. We need to pray that God would use them as agents of healing and that God would supernaturally move in the hearts and minds of men and women who harbor bitterness or resentment against them.

There's nothing wrong with being angry at what has happened and seeking reformation in the police department, but we need to remember that a majority of law enforcement officers are good people, with good hearts, and want to do the right thing.

Pray for the Churches in Baton Rouge and Minneapolis

We need to pray for the churches all across these two cities, that from their hallowed halls would spring an outpouring of the love and grace of God. I pray that the church would rise and lead the process of restoration and reconciliation in these cities. That ministries across Baton Rouge and Minneapolis would find a new source of strength to be the hands and feet of Jesus in this dark time.

⁴ Brueggemann, *The Prophetic Imagination*, 13.

Pray that God will use these Tragedies to Bring about a Renewed Effort of Racial Reconciliation

We know the typical narrative that two sides of this issue espouse. One that emphasizes consistent police brutality towards minorities in major metropolitan areas. The other side highlights the systemic violence that plagues African-American neighborhoods, that “all lives matter,” and that this culture of violence is not addressed with the same amount of energy as police brutality. Why can't we believe that God can use this tragedy to ignite a whole new level of restoration and healing in the cities? Why do we have to resort to strife and division when events like this happen? Why do we use heated rhetoric and drive-by social media posts to demonize others who don't hold up our opinion? We need to pray and fast that God would break through calloused hearts and mend racial wounds in Baton Rouge, Minneapolis and America. Why can't we choose to be an instrument of healing, peace and love not strife and confusion?

Engage in Cross-Cultural Interaction

There are many barriers that divide us: age, appearance, intelligence, political persuasion, economic status, race, theological perspective. One of the best ways to stifle Christ's Love is to be friendly with only those people that we like. We tend to befriend and connect with people who are culturally similar to us. This creates and maintains a homogenous lifestyle where one fails to have a diverse set of friends and voices in their life. Connect with people that are different from you. Particularly, ethnically different from you. If you are white, talk to a black person about police brutality. If you are black, develop relationships with your white brothers and sisters and don't be afraid to talk about the political and cultural issues that are important to you.

Listen Actively

If we're going to experience true racial reconciliation in this country, we're going to have to resolve to listen well to the "other" side. To listen well, you have to be transparent. Being honest in your communication is essential to creating trust. Vulnerability and transparency break down barriers. We don't communicate effectively because of fear; we don't open up out of trepidation of rejection or apprehension from getting hurt. But when you're transparent and vulnerable, you go a long way to alleviate the concerns and fears of that other person you're communicating with. Be intentional in your conversation. Ask questions. If you want to cultivate a healthy relationship, you must be conscientious in your dialogue.

Be Willing to Yield on Some of Your Views

Arrogance breeds dogmatism. It is important to stand up for what you believe in. We must be a people of deep conviction, but don't be so dogmatic in your position that you can never see or seek to understand a contrasting opinion. When we are overly dogmatic in the defense of our position we tend to cause another person's defensive walls to go up. Once those walls are up, it can be quite difficult to really hear the other's point of view.

Personally Acknowledge and Embrace the Arduous Task of Reconciliation

Let's not put a band aid on this issue. Pray for wisdom for city leaders and for justice to prevail in the federal investigation. We need to recognize that this issue is not going to be fixed overnight. It's going to take many conversations, prayers, and active outreach. It's going to take changes in government policy. It's going to take forgiveness. Please don't move on after a couple of days or weeks. Actively participate in racial reconciliation. Ask your pastors and mentors what you can do to be a part of the solution.

Reject Color Blindness

There is a dominant ideology that many believe solves racism. I categorically reject color blindness...and you should too. Austin Channing helpfully diagnoses this attitude: “Believing in the notion of colorblindness sounds like this, ‘I don't even see color,’ or this, ‘But we are all the same,’ or this, ‘I've never looked at you as a (fill in the blank)’ . These statements are usually followed by a sugary example of our sameness and ends with a quote by Martin Luther King Jr about character not color being what really counts.”⁵

One can be pro-black lives *and* pro-humanity. Why do we have to rush and quote #AllLivesMatter when we see a #BlackLivesMatter on a social media post? You can notice my race and still acknowledge my humanity. I acknowledge that my wife is a white woman. She clearly knows that I am a black man. And we have embraced our cultural and ethnic differences. “Too many people have bought into the myth that to see color is to erase my humanity, my character, my individuality. When actually my race can give you clues into who I am, if I am given the chance to explain why my race matters.”⁶

I encourage you to reject colorblindness and become color conscious. Colorblindness disregards ethnic differences, but such disregard doesn't make these differences go away. Color consciousness makes one aware of race and celebrates the differences. This ideology compels us to acknowledge, embrace, and celebrate ethnic differences. It appreciates diverse thoughts, perspectives, and regularly seeks them out. I love what Cleveland writes about color-conscious people: “They refuse to ignore race because they are too busy exploring it for all its beauty, quirkiness, and yes, messiness.”

⁵ Austin Channing Brown “CTRL + ALT + DEL,” *Austin Channing Brown*, July 8, 2013. accessed November 10, 2017, <http://austinchanning.com/blog/2013/7/ctrl-alt-delete>

⁶ Austin Channing Brown “CTRL + ALT + DEL,” *Austin Channing Brown*, July 8, 2013. accessed November 10, 2017, <http://austinchanning.com/blog/2013/7/ctrl-alt-delete>

Read Dr. Martin Luther King's "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

This is perhaps the most powerful piece of literature I have read besides the Bible. I would encourage you to take twenty minutes to read and reflect on King's passionate plea to fight racism in America. It will give you great insight into the problem of race in America. Let's take the lead on this issue, folks. I'll leave you with this inspiring quote: "If there are those who fuel the fire, there are also those who douse the flames."

PART FOUR

RENEWAL

The final part of the Congregational Resilience Framework is Renewal. Here, I focus on how racialized storms can be catalytic events that spur needed organizational reorientation and change. Renewal challenges faith leaders and congregations to radically reorient who they are and how they do church after a racialized storm. Renewal is all about learning and implementing changes so that churches can become resilient institutions in the face of a changing socio-political climate.

Church leaders must harness the energy that racialized storms bring and use it to their advantage. What is the advantage to racial discord and division? The advantage is that millions of people across America are talking about the issue. Whether the removal of the confederate flag, confederate statues, NFL players kneeling during the national anthem, or an unarmed black man being gunned down by police, these situations force the nation to talk about race.

Discussion about race are typically difficult because blacks and whites often come from opposite perspectives. America has a problem with racism, but it also has a problem of amnesia. Americans tend to forget how severe and pervasive racism (both interpersonal and systemic) was and continues to be in this country. Michael Eric Dyson comments on the proclivity of whites to forget about how prevalent racism is in America. He writes,

It seems impossible to pull off, but many of you appear to live in what the late writer and cultural critic Gore Vidal called “The United States of Amnesia.” When black folk get in your face, or even just expect you to know a little about black life, to take the past into account when speaking about black life, your reaction is often, simply, to forget it. It is a willful refusal to know.... White America, you deliberately forget how whiteness caused black suffering. And it shows in the strangest ways. You forget how you kept black folk poor as sharecroppers. You forget how you kept us out of your classrooms and in subpar schools. You forget how you denied us jobs, and when we got them, how you denied us promotions. You forget how you kept us out of the suburbs, and now that you’re gentrifying our inner city neighborhoods, you’re pushing us out to the suburbs. You forget that you kept us from voting, and then blamed us for being lackadaisical at the polls. Although it sounds delusional, perhaps more than a few of you feel the way Donald Trump’s former campaign chair in Mahoning County, Ohio, Kathy Miller, does. ‘If you’re black and you haven’t been successful in the last 50 years, it’s your own fault,’

Miller said. “You’ve had every opportunity, it was given to you. You’ve had the same schools everybody else went to. You had benefits to go to college that white kids didn’t have. You had all the advantages and didn’t take advantage of it. It’s not our fault, certainly.” She also said, “I don’t think there was any racism until Obama got elected.”¹

Dyson goes on to argue that this amnesia isn’t limited to conservative white politicians, but is pervasive in our culture. The concept of collective amnesia applies to racialized storms. An event captures and captivates news media and social media outlets, a public outcry is made, but the event and subsequent issues it brings up eventually fades into the background amid the noise of a 24-hour news cycle. Church leaders must realize they have small window of time to respond to a racialized storm. That is why a strong and clear response is so critical for churches to make when navigating through the tension and discord of racialized storms. The Renewal section makes the case that these storms are actually opportunities for leaders to challenge prevailing prejudicial attitudes in our congregation and communities.

¹ Dyson, *Tears We Cannot Stop*, 75, 76–77.

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Racialized Storms as Catalytic Events

That is the resilience dividend. It means more than effectively returning to normal functioning after a disruption, although that is critical. It is about achieving significant transformation that yields benefits even when disruptions are not.

Judith Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend*

This thesis has repeatedly emphasized the points that racialized storms are disruptive, generate unrest, and lead to division and tension within congregations and communities. Racialized storms have plagued the U.S. since its inception and are not going away any time soon. While there are policies, that if implemented, could reduce the severity, frequency, and intensity of these storms, Americans will always have to deal with racialized storms in a multi-ethnic, pluralistic democracy. However, instead of collectively wringing our hands and resorting to cynicism and fatalism, institutions and individuals can choose to do something about these storms.

Climatologists and emergency management officials do not give up and resign themselves to inaction in the face of rising sea levels and intense hurricanes. They plan, strategize, assess, organize, implement, monitor, evaluate, and prepare. Church leaders must do the same. We must change our perspective about racialized storms. Instead of seeing them through the lens of despair and helplessness, we must begin to see them as catalytic events that can potentially lead to needed organizational change and renewal. Storms have the potential to lead to revitalization, to clear the individual or institution's canvas. Judith Rodin argues that revitalization after a disruption is a positive for an organization:

Revitalization is the process of bringing new life and vigor to an individual, an organization, or a community after it has been through a disruption, a crisis, a disaster. Revitalization goes beyond the achievement of bouncing forward. It suggests that natural systems surge toward greater robustness than ever, that infrastructure performs to high

expectations, that communities gain strength, people are energized, identity is enriched, and a shared vision, takes shape.²

It is common to hear the phrase “bounce back” when talking about recovery from a major storm. As I write this thesis, the Houston region, Florida, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico have all experienced substantial devastation from hurricanes. Public discourse has focused on how to get these communities to bounce back from the storms. However, what would it look like (instead of bouncing back) if these communities bounced forward? What have these communities learned about planning, vulnerability, storm readiness, and recovery? What resilience measures would be implemented now by city officials, having experienced devastation from major hurricanes? Change is not easy. It often takes a major disruption to generate the transformation needed to make individuals and institutions stronger, buoyant, and resistant to storms. That is why it is vital for church leaders to look at these racialized storms as change agents that can potentially propel a church forward by years in a few months’ time.

The weight and pull of the status quo is always a powerful force in the life of any institution. Salter-McNeil comments on how social and cultural enclaves lead to institutional inertia when it comes to organizational change that focuses on racial reconciliation. These social and ethnic enclaves essentially become echo chambers that reaffirm and reinforce the positions and attitudes that have shaped our constructed social reality. She writes:

These social and cultural enclaves to which we cling are our places of refuge. The world makes sense to us there, and our identity is affirmed when we are in close proximity with those who are most like us and share our values. The other people in our group mirror who we are and socialize us to believe certain things about ourselves and others. We see ourselves reflected there, and the rituals and customs that bond us together make us feel safe and comfortable.³

² Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend*, 247.

³ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 43.

McNeil-Salter suggests that all of us are predisposed to ethnocentrism, a sociological term that “denotes belief in the inherent superiority of one’s own ethnic group or culture.”⁴ The proclivity to ethnocentrism prevents congregations from engaging in the work of racial inclusion, justice, equity, and reconciliation. “The pull of our human tendencies toward self-focus and preservation is too strong and ultimately, albeit slowly, draws us from the refining process of becoming reconcilers.”⁵ Catalytic events can lead individuals and institutions down the road to isolation and preservation, or on the path to reconciliation and organizational transformation.

The aim for church leaders is to harness the disruption caused by racialized storms for needed organizational and communal change: the anger, fear, tension, division, are all catalysts. A catalyst is something that has enormous amount of energy. That energy can be used to disrupt the long-standing systems, process, cultural norms that have made organizations susceptible and vulnerable to racialized storms.

This is what catalytic events have the potential to do us. Catalytic events allow us to move from the isolation and stagnation of life in homogenous groups and break through into a new reality that introduces us to something we have never experienced before.⁶ The word catalyst comes from the Greek words *katalysis* and *katalyein*, which literally mean to dissolve and loosen. Considering these terms scientifically, if we want to bring about the chemical reaction required for dissolution, it is necessary to decrease or loosen strength of a chemical bond, or to increase the energy to overcome that bond.... A catalyst can work by altering the activation energy of a reaction or the amount of energy needed for a reaction. It agitates the atoms, encouraging them to bump into each other more often and thus to form new molecular arrangements or relationships.... A catalyst is used to initiate or increase the rate of a chemical reaction but is not consumed or altered by the chemical reaction itself.... Without the help of a catalyst, chemical reactions might never occur; then there can be no new arrangement of molecules.⁷

⁴ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 44.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, 46–47.

The goal is to find balance in the disruption. Too much, and the organization suffers from irreparable damage; too little, and the organization does not get the necessary jumpstart needed to spur change in entrenched ways.

Adaptive Leadership

Ronald Heifetz addresses this balance in his book, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*. Heifetz defines leadership as an activity rather than a set of personality traits or a position of authority.⁸ It is imperative, he argues, that leaders engage in what he calls “adaptive work,” which “consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values people stand for and the reality they face.”⁹ Heifetz writes that typically, society reacts to issues in three different ways. The first way is to utilize a response that has worked well in the past. The second is to meet new challenges by using familiar solutions. The third response is to engage in adaptive work where individuals and institutions learn new methods to tackle issues.

Heifetz distinguishes between technical solutions and adaptive solutions. A technical solution is quick, expedient work that quickly resolves an issue. In times of crises, people look to leaders for technical solutions. We often want “experts” to give us fast and accurate answers when confronted with complex challenges. When it comes to racialized storms, however, the solution will not be quick. Mitigating the disruption caused by racialized storms requires comprehensive, holistic, and adaptive changes. Salter-McNeil comments on how pain can lead to lasting change:

Change can be painful and coercive because we cannot control or manage it. Conversion and comprehensive change is arduous, difficult and often very slow, because it requires us to give up long-held beliefs and assumptions. That is why it often takes a catalytic

⁸ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 22.

⁹ Ibid.

event in our lives to force us out of our space of comfort and into new spaces of growth and transformation.¹⁰

It is vital that faith leaders understand and make the appropriate distinction between technical solutions and adaptive work. Faith leaders must engage in adaptive work to truly confront the complexity and reality of deteriorating race relations in America.

Heifetz gives an example of leadership exercised during a racialized storm twenty-five years ago, the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

On April 29, 1992 Los Angeles exploded in the most violent and destructive American urban riots of the century. The acquittal of four white policemen for criminal assault in the widely televised beating of a black motorist Rodney King unleashed a fury of looting, arson, and killing painfully reminiscent of the 1960s. Thousands of federal troops helped to restore order, but not before fifty-two people were dead, hundreds were wounded, and more than one billion dollars' worth of property was destroyed. Two days later, President George H.W. Bush, in a nationally televised speech, focused on the immediate source of distress, condemning the violence and promising a swift restoration while suggesting federal action to ensure justice for King.¹¹

Heifetz points out that President Bush failed to use his authority to resolve the issues that fueled the riot in the first place. Issues like racism, long-term economic disparity, crime-ridden neighborhoods, and decades-long frustration were never addressed or even mentioned. The dilemma that President Bush faced was how much attention should be focused on the symptoms of the crisis as opposed to how much attention should be given to the long-term strategy of addressing the underlying issues of the riot.

Adaptive leadership compels people to tackle tough challenges, to change as new circumstances and problems arise, and to tackle those issues with new strategies and abilities.

Transformation requires disruption and a degree of chaos to increase the sense of urgency that change must happen. However, there must also be enough psychological safety that the chaos does not completely overwhelm our ability to reflect and reorganize ourselves. A catalytic event will either push us forward toward transformation or tighten our tether

¹⁰ Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 46.

¹¹ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 1.

to preservation. I have seen strategies that were stressful enough to create change but ultimately were not safe enough to allow people to form new patterns. On the other hand, I've also seen educational strategies that allowed for safe spaces for open dialogue but did not create enough discomfort to push a group's members beyond their old patterns of relating. There must be both!¹²

Adaptive leadership must be exercised to mitigate the disruption from racialized storms. Faith leaders must understand that exercising leadership in this area is risky and difficult. Instead of providing every answer, leaders would be wise to provide questions, or enable their congregation to face the hard facts about racialized storms. Churches need to be confronted with reality, but not overwhelmed by it.

One key principle of adaptive leadership, Heifetz explains, is to keep levels of distress within a tolerable range. He draws on the concept of "holding environment," a method to keep levels of distress within an endurable range. The term

originated in psychoanalysis to describe the relationship between the therapist and the patient. The therapist 'holds' the patient in a process of developmental learning in a way that has some similarities to the way a mother and father hold their newborn and maturing children.... To be effective, therapists have to empathize and understand their patients' struggles so that the patients can begin to see more clearly the nature of their problems.¹³

The point is to introduce stress in measurable ways to introduce incremental change in the people's attitudes and beliefs. Adaptive leadership involves telling people what they don't want to hear to engage in the work that they desperately need in their lives and organizations. The holding environment "consists of any relationship in which one party has the power to hold the attention of another party and facilitate adaptive work."¹⁴ Whatever strategies faith leaders implement to

¹² Salter-McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation*, 52.

¹³ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 104.

¹⁴ Heifetz, *Leadership Without Easy Answers*, 104.

prepare their churches for racialized storms, they must take into account the process of incremental change. Attitudes, beliefs, and ways of living do not change overnight. A balance must be attained.

Heifetz uses the example of a pressure cooker to show that the point of the holding environment is not to eliminate the stress. The stress of implementing these strategies is needed for a congregation to build resilience to racialized storms. The goal is to bring greater awareness to the ways that racialized storms disrupt churches, communities, and cities.

People cannot learn new ways when they are overwhelmed. But eliminating stress altogether eliminates the impetus for adaptive work. The strategic task is to maintain a level of tension that mobilizes people. To return to our pressure-cooker metaphor, the cook regulates the pressure of the holding environment by turning the heat up or down, while the relief valve lets off steam to keep the pressure within a safe limit. If the pressure goes beyond the carrying capacity of the vessel, the pressure cooker can blow up. On the other hand, with no heat nothing cooks.¹⁵

The point, in fact, is to turn up the heat. When it comes to the work of racial reconciliation, too often, faith leaders abandon the process because the issue inevitably brings up tension.

Discomfort is a natural part of change. People in positions of authority have an inherent advantage in generating the distress. They have control over the decision-making process and have the power to direct the attention of their congregation towards a specific issue.

I have always appreciated the definition Nan Keohane (Professor at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University) offers in her magisterial book, *Thinking About Leadership*. She defines leadership as “providing solutions to common problems or offering ideas about how to accomplish collective purposes, and mobilizing the energies of others to follow these courses of action.”¹⁶ Her definition reminds us that leadership is essentially communal and relies upon marshaling the resources and energy of other people to achieve certain outcomes.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Nannerl O. Keohane, *Thinking About Leadership* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 19.

Renewal is a key component of the congregational resilience framework. There is a proclivity, on the part of many church leaders, to avoid the adaptive work that congregations and communities desperately need. However, to gather the energy and momentum needed to sustain the journey along the framework, church leaders need to see how their organizations can renew and revitalize from these storms. “Resilient entities—those with high levels of awareness sufficient readiness, and the capacity to effectively respond—move on. Not only do they bounce back to a functioning state, they bounce forward.”¹⁷ Bouncing forward is key to a resilient church.

Learning and reflecting in the aftermath of a racialized storm enables church leaders to lead better when the next racialized crisis occurs. Too often, church leaders want to move quickly past the disruption and unrest that these storms bring. Understandably, racialized storms produce anger, tension, division, civil unrest, and threaten the fabric of social cohesion in any organization. Nevertheless, when church leaders adopt the strategy of bouncing back quickly, congregations miss a moment to teach individuals and churches about the pain that people on the margins are feeling when these storms strike.

Natural disasters have a peculiar way of getting people’s attention and forcing them to face the reality of how they live. Once a racialized storm strikes, church leaders should look at the event to help their congregations understand the hard historical and present-day truths about race in America. Renewal leads to realization. Realization leads to readiness. Readiness leads to responsiveness. Responsiveness leads to renewal. The Congregational Resilience Framework is a cyclical model that helps congregations better engage in socio-political matters and circumstances that aggravate America’s age old racial wound.

¹⁷ Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend*, 224.

Church leaders need to manage the holding environment and resist the proclivity of wanting to get back to normal. The renewal section challenges this philosophy of “getting back to normal” and encourages pastors to utilize the disruption to accomplish significant organizational change in their churches and communities. Kathleen Tierney observes:

Learning and changes do sometimes take place in the aftermath of disasters, often because disasters open policy windows, by forcing key actors to acknowledge long-standing problems, by revealing unanticipated threats, and by temporarily suppressing forces that support the status quo. For example, after the 1933 Long Beach earthquake, which caused severe damage to school buildings, the state of California passed the Field Act, which mandated seismically safe construction for public school.... Some communities do learn from disasters, even if many do not. After experiencing a series of severe floods, the city of Tulsa, Oklahoma, embarked in the 1980s on an ambitious flood mitigation program that is now recognized as a model of its kind.¹⁸

Renewal looks at a racialized storm as an opportunity to grow from and seek lasting change.

These storms give church leaders an opportunity to challenge long-standing and false narratives about people of color and America’s innocence in matters of race.

Julie J. Park writes about an Intervarsity Christian Fellowship Chapter’s (IVCF) unique experience of intentionally prioritizing racial reconciliation in their ministry. She describes how this IVCF chapter was at a university in southern California and was heavily influenced by the 1992 LA Riots.

Racial tensions in Los Angeles exploded in the aftermath of the verdict, and the CU community watched as the city burned. As an external influence on the campus IVCF, the Los Angeles riots stand out for two reasons: not only how the group reacted but how it did not. Both Doug and Sandy identified the riots as a watershed event in Doug’s recognition of the importance of race. He recalled: ‘The riots hit...[and] I thought, this is just really serious and I didn’t understand the anger and I didn’t understand the division. I was also reading a book at the time, *More than Equals* [Perkins and Rice 1993], and so it was the riots and just the intensity of the problem. *More than Equals* says if you are not part of the racial healing you are re-enforcing the racial divide. I looked at my life and I realized I am sort of down with the cause in theory but I am not doing anything that people could look at and say, Doug is helping the racial problem. So through the conviction and through prayer and conversation with my wife, I just got to a point where

¹⁸ Tierney, *The Social Roots of Risk*, 121.

I thought I have to get my life working proactively on the multiethnic racial reconciliation issues or I'll just go back to being the nice white guy who got a lot of nice ideas but didn't really bring them out. So that was the turning point in my life on this subject. Although Doug identified the riots as a key turning point in his commitment to pursuing racial reconciliation, changing the culture of IVCF took some time...He admitted that he still did not fully grasp the issue of race and how deeply it would affect the organizational identity of IVCF. Nonetheless, the riots were a catalyst in his understanding of the importance of race and where he was going to lead the fellowship on the issue.¹⁹

Racialized storms give church leaders an opening to mobilize their congregations to tackle the tough adaptive work in communities instead of remaining in their safe walls. American will always have racialized tension, division, and disruption. However, we can choose to respond. We can choose to engage in work that helps heal our land. Rodin writes:

The worldwide news is filled with accounts of air and sea disasters, disease outbreaks, political unrest, cyber threats, food and energy insecurities, mass violence, business failure, natural calamities. Many of these disruptions were foreseeable and could have been prevented or their effects reduced. What if we could reduce the incidence of disruptions by even a fraction? We could shift our attention away from the immediate demands of responding to the more positive efforts of readiness and revitalization...ask yourself: what have I done to build resilience for the people and places I care about? What more can I do?²⁰

The 1992 riots in Los Angeles motivated this college ministry to place racial reconciliation at the top of their institutional priorities. This storm provided a spark for a dialogue and subsequent action to breakdown cultural barriers and close the racial divide in a ministry.

What can contemporary American Christian leaders do in the face of deteriorating race relations in America? How can they respond to the socio-political unrest? Church leaders must be Kingdom-cultural truth-tellers who are grounded in moral clarity and conviction, grounded in social awareness, narrative-driven, engage in prophetic imagination, and effectively deploy

¹⁹ Park. *When Diversity Drops: Race, Religion, and Affirmative Action in Higher Education*. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 33.

²⁰ Rodin, *The Resilience Dividend*, 298-299.

lament. Pastors must mobilize their congregations to be beacons of justice, equality, reconciliation in a dark and divisive world.

Conclusion

Fifty-two years ago, future United States Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote a report on the conditions of the black family in America. Moynihan, then an aide in the Department of Labor, was suspicious about the progress of black advancement in the civil rights era. Though a proponent of the civil rights movement, Moynihan didn't feel that the legislation of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and federal policy was enough to alleviate the pain and suffering that black families faced as a result of hundreds of years of white oppression. Coates writes,

Moynihan began searching for a way to press the point within the Johnson administration. 'I felt like I had to write a paper about the Negro family,' Moynihan later recalled, 'to explain to the fellows how there was a problem more difficult than they knew.' In March 1965, Moynihan printed up one hundred copies of a report he and a small staff had labored over for only a few months. The report was called *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. . . . Running against the tide of optimism around the civil rights, 'The Negro Family' argued that the federal government was underestimating the damage done to black families by 'three centuries of sometimes unimaginable mistreatment' as well as a 'racist virus in the American blood stream,' which would continue to plague blacks in the future.¹

Moynihan's report was received with enthusiasm among President Lyndon Johnson's advisors. He was soon recruited to write President Johnson's major speech on race relations to Howard University graduating class in June of 1965.² Moynihan's rise continued throughout the 1960s. Additionally, several racialized storms, in the mid and late 1960s, contributed to Moynihan's ascent. The 1965 Watts riots in Los Angeles occurred just months after Moynihan's report. Los Angeles burned for nearly a week. Nearly three dozen people died and the area sustained tens of millions of damages.³ The Watts riot, like Ferguson nearly fifty years later, fundamentally shook America's socio-political landscape.

¹ Ta-Nehisi Coates, *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* (New York: One World Publishing, 2017), 225–226.

² *Ibid.*, 227.

³ Livia Gershon, "Did the 1965 Watts Riots Change Anything," *JStor Daily*, July 13, 2016, <https://daily.jstor.org/did-the-1965-watts-riots-change-anything/>.

While Moynihan's report was heavily criticized for being too patriarchal and condescending to black families, he nonetheless continued to occupy high posts in both the Johnson and Nixon administrations. He soon ran for U.S. Senator and won, representing the state of New York for decades. What launched Moynihan into political stardom was his groundbreaking report, which, interestingly enough, gave no policy recommendations. Coates writes, "Despite its alarming predictions, 'The Negro Family' was a curious government report in that it advocated no specific policies to address the crisis it described."⁴

James Patterson concurs with Coates on Moynihan's report: "His report was diagnostic, not a blueprint for cure. Seeking to stimulate the formation of carefully planned and well-informed governmental policies, Moynihan did not provide a wish list of proposed solutions."⁵ Moynihan wanted his work to stimulate a national conversation about the socioeconomic conditions of the black family. Could we really expect, as a country, for black families to truly be equal to white families after several hundred years of oppression and discrimination?

This doctoral thesis—while grounded in sociological analysis, psychological concepts, theories of climate change adaptation, natural disaster mitigation policies, presidential politics, theological inquiry, and biblical exegesis—aims at more than simply stimulating a conversation about race relations (though a robust and honest dialogue about the condition of race in America is needed in institutions across America). This thesis endeavors to provide faith leaders with a toolkit that mitigates racial tension and division in their own congregations and subsequently in their own communities and cities. Each part of the Congregational Resilience Framework—Realization, Readiness, Responsiveness, and Renewal—must first be implemented in a church's

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ James T. Patterson, "Moynihan and the Single-Parent Family: The 1965 Report and its Backlash," *Education Next* 15, no. 2 (Spring 2015): 6.

own backyard. Church leaders cannot hope to lead effectively during times of racialized crisis that divide America if their own organizations are riddled with ethnic strife, division, or are bastions of homogeneity. The Congregational Resilience Framework seeks to aid pastors in raising awareness, preparing for, responding to, and renewing from the next racialized storm by actively working toward racial equality and reconciliation before the storm hits.

The overarching methods in the framework are broad and that is intentional. Every church is unique, positioned in a community for “such a time as this.” This thesis aims not to hold contemporary Christian leaders’ hands, but to make the case, like Moynihan’s report did over fifty years ago, that urgent action is required to close the racial divide that endures today. Church leaders must make the framework an institutional priority in their congregation. Intentionally prioritizing the framework, as a value of the church, is critical to the framework’s sustainability and effectiveness.

Moynihan’s report placed faith “in the marriage of government and social science to formulate policy” that would solve America’s generational legacy of racial inequality.⁶ I’ve worked in the government arena and, like Moynihan, believe in the power of national policy action. However, the church is unlike any institution in America. The church bears witness to the Good News about Jesus Christ. The Good News is that the almighty, transcendent God, creator of the Heavens and the Earth, sent His son, the God-man, into the world. This man, who was fully divine and fully human, lived a perfect life while He was here on Earth. He fulfilled the whole law and died in the place of sinners. That death absorbed all the wrath of God against those who believe in Him. Jesus takes away the guilt and forgives all the sins of those who put their trust in Him. He rose again from the dead, triumphant over death, hell, and Satan. He

⁶ Coates, *We Were Eight Years in Power*, 225.

promises to return and give eternal life and raise from the dead all those who have put their faith in Him.

This Good News has the power to transform the human heart. It has the power to transform entire communities, cities, and nations. The church has been entrusted with the task of communicating this glorious news to others. This doctoral thesis is aimed primarily at the church, because I believe in the church as a conduit for God's mercy, love, compassion, and justice to flow to a broken and dark society. The church has the potential to be a healing place for the hurting and is worth fighting for.

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Biography

Harold Dorrell Briscoe Jr. is a pastor, writer, professor, public theologian, husband to Tracy, and father to Luke, Noah, Amelia, and Ella. Born on August 23rd, 1985 in Carbondale, Illinois (but is now a proud son of the south), Dorrell is a 2007 graduate of the University of North Florida, where he earned his bachelor's degree in Political Science and History. He is a 2009 graduate of the George Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University. There he earned a master's degree in Public Administration with a concentration in Urban Planning. Dorrell was inspired to work in government after Hurricane Katrina and worked in local and state government for five years, across Florida, Texas, and Louisiana.

In 2011, Dorrell became a pastor at Southpoint Community Church in Jacksonville, Florida, specifically focused on outreach to millennials. In that position, Dorrell led a young professionals group of over 200, oversaw the church's social media and marketing platforms, and was the director of the church's local outreach ministry. In 2013, Dorrell became an adjunct professor at his alma mater, teaching public administration, management, and leadership to undergraduate students. While teaching, Dorrell pursued and was awarded a master's degree in Theological Studies at Liberty University in 2015.

In 2016, Dorrell took a position as the Raleigh Campus Pastor at Hope Community Church. Hope Community Church is a non-denominational church with four locations across the triangle and one in Haiti. Dorrell oversees the 5,000-member Raleigh campus. In addition to serving the campus pastor, Dorrell leads the church's young professionals group and oversees all of the small groups in the North Raleigh area. Dorrell recently finished his Doctor of Ministry

degree at Duke University with a doctoral thesis that focuses on the intersection of race, faith, and institutional resiliency. Dorrell has a strong passion for the local church, politics, racial justice, equality and international affairs.