

Conversations

On Jesuit Higher Education

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Ignatian
Antiracism
and
Enhancing
US Civic
Life

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Conversations

On Jesuit Higher Education



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Cover: "Filipino American" by Saint Peter's University graduate Athena Serrano.

Work that matters

The phrase “work that matters” came up during a recent gathering of campus leaders from across the network of Jesuit institutions.

It is one of the Jesuits’ guiding principles and those in attendance were reminded it should drive all we do at our schools.

Perhaps the “work that matters” most right now is the work of confronting systemic racism in this country both personally and through civil engagement. This work is both internal and external, and may change the course of our history.

It is the work we explore in this edition of *Conversations*. There is much desolation on these pages and we thank the authors who have contributed their own personal stories to this issue. And, importantly, there are consolations to be found, too.

One of those consolations can be found in the artwork that fills this issue. Much of it is by students at Jesuit institutions and offers thoughtful and unique perspectives on the subjects in this issue.

We urge you to read this magazine, pass it on to colleagues, neighbors or family members. Leave it in a place where others can find it and read it themselves.

Spread the word because doing work that matters begins with an understanding that there is work to be done.

Following in this theme of work that matters, I wanted to tell you of some exciting plans for the future of *Conversations*.

For more than 30 years, this magazine has presented stories about good works being done by Jesuit institutions both here and abroad written by many of the leaders – both longstanding and emerging – in Jesuit education. We know, because we hear from our readers, that our content has been inspiring and that it has led to connections across AJCU institutions who are addressing similar issues. We are thankful to the people on campuses who use this magazine in training of faculty and staff, and for in-service discussions.

But we also hear other things. We hear that people don’t have the time to read *Conversations*, let alone re-

flect upon it. We hear that people can’t find our magazine on their campuses. We hear that only those who already understand the mission of Jesuit education are reading this magazine and that those without a strong understanding of mission are not necessarily looking to learn. Sadly, we heard from one university that a large majority of our issues are thrown out unread.

Seminar members have spent much time discussing whether this magazine is relevant to the administration, faculty and staff who are finding much of their time is spent putting out fires instead of thoughtfully integrating the Jesuit mission into their institutions.

We believe strongly there is a need for the types of stories we include in *Conversations* and find enough support from our institutions to support that belief. But we also understand times have changed, people get their information in different ways than they used to. We realized that if our work is to matter, we need to do it differently.

To that end, under the leadership of Seminar Chair James McCartin of Fordham University, we are making some exciting changes. We will publish just one print issue of *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education* each year – in late summer, just in time to be a resource for back-to-school meetings and development.

At the same time, conversationsmagazine.org will become a more vibrant site, with articles posted more regularly and in reaction to the times. We did this last summer and fall, creating a series of stories focusing on the social unrest and the election. What we heard from readers was overwhelmingly positive and urged us to make these changes.

In addition, *Conversations* will be creating more digital content in the form of roundtable discussions, podcasts, mini-seminars and more in partnership with other Jesuit-centered organizations including the AJCU, *Jesuit Higher Education: A Journal*, and America Media.

We believe this decision is a good one for this magazine and our institutions – and maybe even potential students – who will have new, more relevant ways of understanding Jesuit education.

Ron Bernas, editor

Never postpone a good work

*A conversation
between Patrick
Saint-Jean, S.J., and
Karsonya Wise
Whitehead on the
intersection of
Ignatian spirituality
and antiracism*

Patrick Saint-Jean, S.J.: Since Europeans arrived in the Americas and the seeds of racial injustice began to be planted, there has been a need for conversion. Our nation was built on this racial injustice and continues to exist as a land known for the division, separation, exclusion, and elimination of Black and Indigenous people.

But Ignatian spirituality, which emerged from a conversion experience that St. Ignatius himself had 500 years ago, invites us to work toward changing, converting this ailing system that we've inherited from our past.

Perhaps we have Ignatius' disappointment to thank for the moments of his conversion and for his spirituality. He was the son of a wealthy nobleman and a military man, until he suffered a career ending injury, his leg being shattered by a cannonball in battle in 1521. During his lonely hours of suffering and convalescence, he found a new spiritual perspective from which to view his life and his calling, a perspective which would develop into his Spiritual Exercises.

In the Exercises, Ignatius explains that people were all born to help build the kingdom of God, and as he says: "God created all other things on the face of the earth to help fulfill this purpose."

So, in this way of seeing things, we are all charged with taking responsibility to convert our troubled system, which is the product of hundreds of years of sin and the stain of slavery. Since the basis of Ignatian spirituality is about change, reconciliation, and healing, we can find tools for antiracism in the Spiritual Exercises, and we must use these tools to act now to heal our nation.



Photo courtesy of University of San Francisco.

Karsonya Wise Whitehead: The way I see it, here is our reality: after 400 years, we still have to prove to both the world and to some within our community that our lives—Black lives—matter. This is both a toxic reality and a painful realization. But at the same time, we have survived. We have had four hundred years of white nationalism and white supremacy, of racism and oppression. But we have also had four hundred years of Black resilience and Black joy, of Black family and Black love. It is a burden that is made more onerous by the years of injustice, the tears shed, and the protests

mounted. In August 1619 when the first 20 Africans landed here in English North America, they did so, not knowing what the future held for them or whether they were going to survive and thrive in this new world. That the information was recorded is astonishing, that it has survived is a miracle because it provides us with a small window that opens up our history on these native shores. Among the “20 and odd Negroes” were Antony and Isabell, a couple who would later marry and give birth to William, the first documented African baby baptized in this new world. Their story, which is

pieced together by fading documents and a vibrant oral history, shows that they were captured, enslaved, and later freed, building their family and eventually amassing a small fortune. There is a story of white supremacy and Black resilience.

And now, I think we are now at a “middle passage moment,” a passage between the past and the future, where we must recognize that we have survived Black bodies being lynched and terrorized, choked and beaten, and shot and killed, over and over again, and we are choosing, once again, to go forward rather than backward.

We have survived, and so I think this recognition must be a part of our awakening today, remembering that power, like Frederick Douglass taught us, never concedes without a struggle. This survival instinct must become our rallying cry. I believe that we must continue to push for justice, equity, and reconciliation—which to me, means reparations. We must find a way to get there before more people—and I am really thinking about the next generation—suffer, struggle, and die within this system.

PS-J: I agree, and I'm hopeful that if we continue to put pressure on the system and continue to teach the truth, most of us will not need to experience physical agony like Ignatius's shattered leg to transform our perspectives and set us on the path forward. I think, in place of this kind of wounding, we all can, instead, benefit from quiet times in which we retreat from our super-charged routines, when we clear out the noise and clutter of our daily lives, when we open up space for God to enter and for change to happen within us.

I would remind people that for the past five centuries, Ignatius' Spiritual Exercises have helped people reflect and transform, and they can serve as a guidebook for stepping back and viewing our situation in new ways.

KWW: But this moment right here, is a crucial one. As we must remember that, despite our

best intentions and our work to make this country a more perfect union in the past, there are still some spaces in this country where our lives do not matter. It's not a new moment, but we need to see it as new.

For so many of us, who cannot trace and document the beginning of our lives in this country, Antony and Isabell are a beacon of hope, an example of what it looks like to choose to survive in this country. The history of this country was written with our blood. We are the reason America became America. We tilled the soil, raised the crops, tamed the underbrush, but we were not supposed to survive. Yet, we did not die. We are the descendants of men and women who chose survival as an act of rebellion.

On top of everything else that is happening, maybe what we need is a moment to reflect and this is where the Spiritual Exercises might help us. I just need to understand how someone who is not a Jesuit can engage with the Spiritual Exercises in a way that can make an antiracist difference today.

PS-J: Well, the Spiritual Exercises were not written as spiritual stories for healing and reconciliation. Still, the *experience* of these exercises helps offer new perspectives and helps us determine how to make a difference in the world around us, and so in this way they can guide us in our antiracism today. For example, Ignatius' Exercises emphasize the importance of consistency, continuity,

community, and prayer with action. So, we can learn from him, for example, how our action for justice can actually be considered a way of "praying."

And he emphasizes proaction, not reaction. In fact, Ignatius cautioned against reactive behavior, which he considered the movement of an "evil spirit," while he saw proactive behavior—a human response that can lead to hope, love, and charity—as the fruit of a "good spirit." As Jesuits, the glue that holds us together in our spiritual formation is the discernment between the evil spirit of reaction and the good spirit which prompts actions of hope, love, and charity.

In terms of advancing antiracism, it's time for us to truly learn to be proactive creatures who are participating, and seeing our purpose as participating, with the work of creation alongside our Creator, who is manifested in actions of hope, love, and charity.

KWW: My sense is that it's a time first to remember, then to be converted, and then go forward in action. In some ways, we were at this kind of pivotal moment in the colonies when slavery was legalized. We were at this moment during Reconstruction when the rise of white domestic terrorism slowed the wave of Black progress and change. We were at this moment when they murdered Emmett Till, when they shot Medgar Evers and Malcolm X and Martin Luther King, Jr., when they blew up the 16th Street Baptist Church in

Birmingham, when they burned down Black Wall Street in Tulsa and Rosewood in rural Florida. We have been at this moment before, and because we remember, we know what we need to do. I have been thinking a lot about this moment particularly when someone tries to tell us that all of this happened 400 years ago but let us not forget that the year Harriet Tubman died, Rosa Parks was born. Our history, as James Baldwin once said, is not the past but the present.

So, in light of this, it's important to remember what you say about action being a fundamental concept of Ignatian spirituality and that this can serve as a tool in antiracism work.

PS-J: Also, remembering Ignatius' conversion, we might ask for the grace of conversion in our own lives, to change our attitudes of reluctance and inaction with the gift of a "good spirit" that leads us forward in progress, what you call doing the work of creation alongside the Creator.

KWW: This type of conversion will not be a sprint, but a marathon, and our individual work will not conclude until our last breaths. Frederick Douglass argued that after 230 years of being chained and lashed, hunted with bloodhounds, and surrounded with utter insecurity, we had learned how to live on and how to smile under it all. We learned how to sing through our pain and laugh through our tears.

And even when we thought we made it over, we were reminded time and time again that America—the land of the free and the home of the brave, the place that opens its arms to the poor huddled masses yearning to be free, the country that guarantees life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—had never been America to us. I think the work to make America *America* continues.

PS-J: You're right. The work will take a long time, but the time for conversion is now. In a letter sent to some younger Jesuits studying in Spain, Ignatius insisted, "We should never postpone a good work, no matter how small it may be, with the thought of later doing something greater."

Today, every member of the Ignatian family—Jesuits, teachers, students, staff—as well as every American with a conscience and a beating heart, is called to engage in an Ignatian fashion with prayer for complete conversion toward antiracist healing and reconciliation.

I believe that if Americans truly want to move forward, to put an end to the centuries-long system of racism and injustice, we must embrace this vision—"never postpone a good work"—that Ignatius furnished centuries ago. I'm also thinking of writer James Baldwin, who said, "You always told me 'It takes time.' It's taken my father's time, my mother's time, my uncle's time, my brothers', and my sisters' time. How much time do you want for your progress?"

The time for conversion is now. The time to pray for the grace of conversion is now.

KWW: I think it is much more complicated than simply praying for the grace of conversion. It definitely can entail embracing the gift of Ignatius's spirituality, and it should start with self-transformation. But it must also include embracing that spirituality for the purpose of developing our willingness to confront white supremacy, racism, and whiteness and work to dismantle them. It is difficult to do anything else in terms of antiracism unless we start there.

Angela Davis reminds us that we have to act as if it were possible to radically transform the world, and we must act that way every day. Radically transforming the world, in my opinion, starts with radically transforming ourselves and then radically reimagining the world that we want to live in and that we want to leave our children.

Patrick Saint-Jean, S.J., is a Jesuit regent teaching psychology and counseling at Creighton University and is the author of The Spiritual Work of Racial Justice: A Month of Meditations with Saint Ignatius of Loyola. Karsonya Wise Whitehead is associate professor of communication and African and African American studies and the founding director of the Karson Institute for Race, Peace, and Social Justice at Loyola University of Maryland. She is the author of Letters to My Black Sons: Raising Boys in a Post-Racial America.

Honor those who do the work, but also those who inspire it

By Ken Homan, S.J.

U.S. Jesuits often celebrate their history of support for racial justice over the past century by spotlighting the boldness of individual white men and their courageous rejection of the status quo. But telling the story this way obscures an important fact: We Jesuits have generally taken important steps in this area only when urged by non-Jesuit collaborators, many of them people of color.

If Jesuits and Jesuit institutions aim to become truly antiracist today, we must correct the old misleading and self-serving narratives and replace them with a more honest accounting that centers those who have boldly challenged us to do better. Further, we must see in these narratives about the past an invitation to recognize and appreciate the leadership of those today, especially students of color, who tirelessly prod us to take greater responsibility for building a more just future.

The truth that must be acknowledged is that we are at least a decade behind in our antiracist work because Jesuits and Jesuit institutions have failed to heed the voices of conscience among us. Across U.S. Jesuit campuses, undergraduate and graduate students and their faculty and staff allies have advocated, organized, developed alliances, and created programs to make our institutions more racially just. When they succeed, we applaud ourselves for enlightened attitudes. But those who have challenged us have regularly faced punishment and retribution before they have won success. Yes, Jesuit colleges and universities have certainly

supported new programs with millions of dollars, making headlines for doing so.

Still, how often do our institutions follow the model of corporations—embracing racial justice when it makes for good advertising, but never choosing to relinquish the trappings of white supremacy, never choosing to commit to authentic conversion and deep systemic change.

Ultimately, if Jesuits and Jesuit institutions truly wish to be antiracist, we must recognize and respect the power, authority, inspiration, and gift of our non-Jesuit collaborators. It is with and among them that we will find the *magis*, the more, the future rooted in a justice we can now only dream about, but one we can choose to cultivate, if only we are open to sharing the work and the acclaim.

Toward that end, I offer here three anecdotes that highlight the crucial contributions of non-Jesuit collaborators, some examples of recent progress, and several possibilities to pursue future antiracist work.

In 1929, during an era of profound and widespread racism within the U.S. Catholic community, Thomas Wyatt Turner, a Black layman, founded the Federated Colored Catholics (FCC), an organization that lobbied for expanded ministerial support and educational opportunities, as well as greater Black representation among priests and religious sisters and brothers. Soon, white Jesuits William Markoe and John LaFarge took an interest in Turner's groundbreaking work and even successfully co-

opted it. Markoe and LaFarge felt the term “colored” was exclusionary and preferred “interracial.” Moreover, LaFarge insisted that the well-being of Black Catholics was best ensured with a priest in charge. In an age when there were very few Black priests, this meant white leadership for a Black-founded organization designed to empower Black people. Indeed, the pair eventually pushed Turner out of his own organization. It is undeniable that, in their advocacy for Black Catholics during the decades before the civil rights movement, Markoe and LaFarge made valuable strides forward—strides that were frankly shocking to many of their fellow white Catholics. But in doing so, they took not only inspiration, but also power from Turner and other Black lay leaders in the FCC.

In the mid-1940s, white Jesuits Claude Heithaus and John Markoe (William’s brother) became central protagonists in the effort to integrate St. Louis University. Taking to the pulpit at a student Mass, Heithaus declared: “I am horrified to find that some Catholics have been infected with this diabolical prejudice against the Negro. Self-deluded fools that they are, they cling with blind obstinacy to the idea that the time has not yet come to give justice to the Colored children of God.” That same day, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* published Heithaus’s homily. A week later, John Markoe publicly embarrassed the university by leaking documents about efforts to defer integration on campus. Thus, Heithaus and Markoe earned fame and acclamation for their coordinated efforts for racial justice. But the fuller truth is that students and local Catholics had been organizing and agitating for years to integrate the university. It was these lay collaborators who laid the necessary foundations for change and invited Jesuits to accompany their efforts. Rather than a celebration of take-charge, do-gooder Jesuits, the more honest narrative is a broader story of community organizing of which these celebrated figures were only one part.

Following the long, hot summer of racial uprisings in 1967, Jesuit Superior General Pedro Arrupe addressed a notable letter on interracial work to U.S. Jesuits. While commending a few men for work in this area, Arrupe’s letter chided Jesuits for their

inaction on racial justice. Robert McEwen, a white Jesuit at Boston College, subsequently lamented the timing of Arrupe’s letter. “The proper time,” he wrote, “to have alerted [Jesuits] to prepare themselves and their institutions to play a leading and effective part in the fight for decent race relations was 10 years ago. In one sense the battle has almost moved beyond us and without us.” In fact, McEwen was right: Things had moved beyond him and his fellow Jesuits by that point, and thereafter they were tasked with catching up. But the deeper and unacknowledged truth was that the invitations had been coming from non-Jesuit friends and critics in the United States for well over a decade.

More recently, Jesuit colleges and universities have taken important steps to advance racial justice—opening Arrupe College of Loyola University Chicago; introducing the Advancing Racial Justice dashboard at Santa Clara University; St. Louis University joining the “Universities Studying Slavery” consortium; launching the new Racial Justice Institute at Georgetown University; supporting the integration of antiracism across the curriculum at Xavier University; and honestly reporting the findings of campus climate surveys at numerous institutions.

It must be remembered, though, that these successes are all the result of community stakeholders organizing for particular outcomes. In the future, Jesuit institutions can build upon these racial justice advances by undertaking good faith bargaining with on-campus unions; implementing mandatory antiracist training and audits conducted by outside groups; connecting implementation of inclusive pedagogy to tenure and promotion standards; and openly engaging with student and community groups to ensure the ongoing advancement of antiracist initiatives.

We may be 10 years behind, but choosing a faith that does justice is always timely.

Ken Homan, S.J., has studied at Creighton University, Fordham University, and Boston College, and is currently undertaking graduate studies in U.S. history at Georgetown University.

This time, we must choose to make it different

By Valerie Irick Rainford

It has been a cycle for as long as I can remember. Americans battle over racism. We make some incremental progress as a society. We hit devastating setbacks. Then, some new manifestations of racial injustice put us back where we started, kicking off another round, another push to move forward.

But it feels different this time. It is different this time. It must be different this time.

In generations past, racism was embodied in the disdain of the powerful, cloaked under hoods, a cowardly group assembled in the dark of night. But today, it manifests more as the fear of the powerful—the fear of losing control, of letting go of privilege. It is a fear that hides in suits in the halls of every big business in America. Unhooded for sure, but still masked by oppressive systems never designed to enable racial and ethnic minorities to thrive. Still, it is a fear that is impossible not to see, one that is entrenched at all levels of government today and outwardly displayed even on the U.S. Capitol steps.

The difference today is that a growing number of people are recognizing the fear for what it is: a fear of losing power, a fear that infects both individuals and institutions.

And in this context, Jesuit higher education stands to play a pivotal role—if we choose it. We can use the fact that this time is different as a foundation for a truly different and distinctive course of action. We can become the vanguard. We can set the standard for higher education when it comes to racial justice.

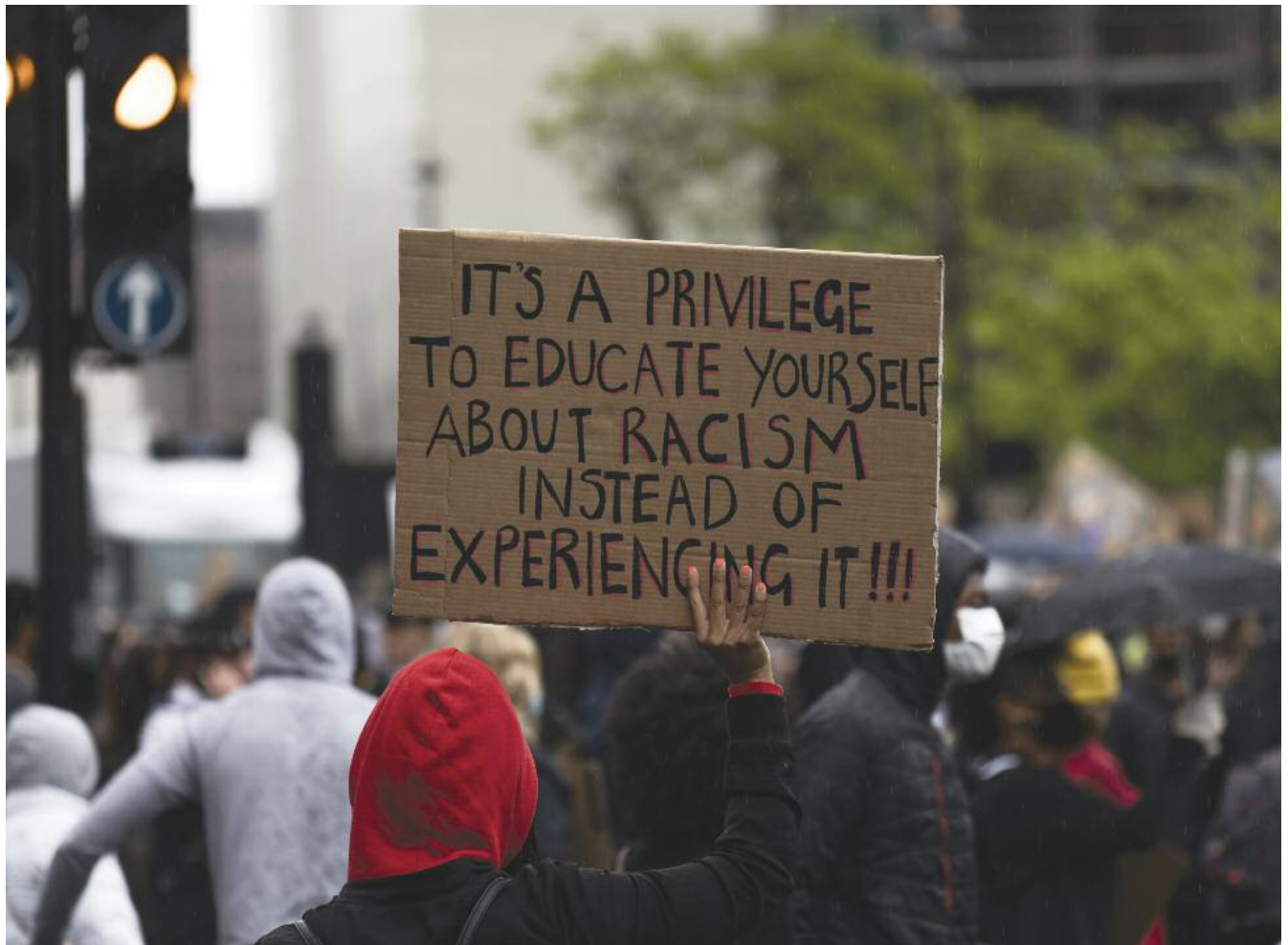
True, at one level, it falls to each of us individually to choose to be fearless in our antiracism. But we must also make some fearless choices at the level of our institutions. We can choose to make antiracism a part of all curricula, graduate

and undergraduate. We can choose to recruit and support diverse talent in academic departments and in institutional leadership roles. We can choose to admit and cultivate a student body that looks more like the general population, in the process overcoming racial barriers that prevent many from sharing the benefits of a quality education. We can choose to make known to as many people as possible the adverse effects of institutional racism, such as the widening wealth gap and the fact that our systems too often stop people from progressing beyond stereotypes about their capabilities.

And we can choose to do these things not out of guilt or pity, not as handouts, but instead because they reflect and manifest what and who we say we are as Jesuit institutions.

There is currently a chasm between Jesuit mission and ideals on the one hand, and how we respond institutionally to racial inequity on the other. But as leaders in higher education and as institutions grounded in a faith tradition, Jesuit colleges and universities can and must do better. We can and must commit ourselves to an excellence that is grounded in the core belief and conviction that all people are beloved by God and that power and privilege are meant to be shared, not guarded. We can and must strive, therefore, to commit our institutional resources to ensure that the knowledge our research advances, the understanding our courses cultivate, and the wisdom our spiritual tradition promotes are tied to a vision of a beloved humanity that is equal before God.

To do this at the institutional level, we must accept that silence and willful aloofness about race and racism violate our principles. If we accept our mission, such silence is not an acceptable choice,



Protesters across the country called for changes and acknowledgement of the racism at the base of so many issues in the United States.

such willful aloofness is not authentic to what and who we say we are. If we accept our mission, then we cannot afford to pretend that color does not exist or that racism will end itself.

If we accept our mission, we must choose to be fearlessly antiracist in every aspect of institutional life because doing so is the best way to communicate our vision of humanity and our vision for the future. Being who we say we are thus requires that we embody a proactive, vocal, non-negotiable commitment to antiracism. It requires that we accept institutional responsibility for lifting up racial and ethnic minorities.

By virtue of our mission, Jesuit institutions have a distinctive moral calling to respond to the fact that this time is different and that this time we must

name the fear of losing power for what it is—a barrier to true justice, a threat to American democracy, and a stumbling block that prevents us from being the communities of love, compassion, empathy, and service that our mission says we are.

Valerie Irick Rainford is a trustee and alumna of Fordham University. She is founder and CEO of Ellore Talent Strategies, a leadership consulting firm specializing in advancing diverse talent in C-suite executive contexts, and is the author of the award-winning memoir, Until the Brighter Tomorrow: One Woman's Courageous Climb from the Projects to the Podium.

‘Birth of a Movement’ is a call to a better Church

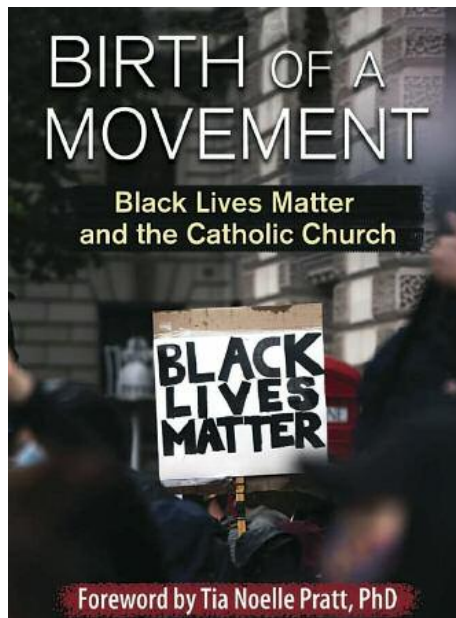
By Kim R. Harris

Book Review: Birth of a Movement Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church, by Olga M. Segura

The quick action and bravery of 17-year-old Darnella Frazier allowed the “trouble” that Black, Brown and Indigenous people have known for generations finally to be seen and believed by many from outside of their communities.

Frazier’s widely broadcast filming of the public lynching of George Floyd, brought diverse crowds all over the world to the streets. They protested police violence against people of color, accompanied by shouts and signs proclaiming that “Black Lives Matter.” Activist leaders and crowds recited a growing litany of the names of those unjustly murdered: Breonna Taylor, Rekia Boyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Philando Castile, Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, and so many more who should be alive today. Say their names!

While journalist Olga M. Segura joined in protests for law enforcement reform amid the devastation of the COVID-19 pandemic on



communities of color, she also began to write *Birth of a Movement: Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church*. For readers who may be familiar with little more than the names of those people named above, Segura’s book illuminates the circumstances both of their deaths and of the resulting activism that inspires the Black Lives Matter movement (BLM).

Intertwined with these accounts, Segura narrates her own racial and cultural heritage as a young Afro-Dominican immigrant and a Catholic-educated woman living in New York City.

Acknowledging the shaping of her Catholic identity primarily by Black women scholars and activists such as Shannen Dee Williams, M. Shawn Copeland, and Tia Noelle Pratt, Segura recounts her own activist awakening. She also highlights her need to unlearn the Catholic history she received in school and openly engages in self-critique, admitting her own privilege as she becomes aware

of the colorism and sexual identity prejudices within her intersectional communities of color.

With a goal of helping Catholic Christians to “liberate” and “resurrect” their Church from collusion in death-dealing systems of white supremacy, Segura aims her sharpest critique at the majority-white Roman Catholic bishops in the United States. She particularly calls out the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) for refusing, as a body, to directly engage the Black Lives Matter Movement, its founders, or its principles. Segura observes this “disconnect” in

official USCCB statements on racism, such as “Open Wide Our Hearts” (2018). Noting both the bishops’ invitation for public interest lawyer Bryan Stevenson to speak to them about racism, as well as the numerous platforms afforded to controversial anti-abortion activist Abby Johnson, Segura goes on to insist that similar “space” be offered to BLM founders Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi.

By challenging the bishops, and by implication white Catholics, Segura calls for an acknowledgement of the Church’s complicity in chattel slavery in the Western hemisphere. She also recounts the history of white supremacist policies in the United States after legal slavery ended and chronicles the development of law enforcement in the United States. With regard to the latter, Segura outlines the manner in which the slave catcher networks of southern states, repression against northern labor strikers, and Jim Crow segregation laws and their enforcement provide the history and background for policing today. Bringing to bear her knowledge of Catholic Social Teaching and the work of contemporary Catholic abolitionists such as Dwayne David Paul, Segura calls for the shrinking of the current scope and system of policing and the redirection of funds

toward addressing the root causes of poverty, domestic abuse and mental health issues.

Birth of a Movement is a Womanist text, one that cites and centers the experience, research, and work of women of color. It further highlights Black transgender women and queer activists of color from inside and beyond the Catholic Church. In detailing the founding of BLM, Segura features the biographies of Garza, Cullors, and Tometi and draws on her own conversations with them. Mirroring the words and intent of Garza’s original social media posts surrounding the

**Nobody knows the
trouble I’ve seen, nobody
knows, but Jesus**

—*Traditional Black Spiritual*

origins of BLM, Segura fashions this book as her “love letter” to the women who encouraged and challenged her.

Unjustified police-involved violence against people of color is reported almost daily. Within this context, *Birth of a Movement* serves as a brief guide to a frontline movement seeking accountability, abolition and transformative justice. In university classrooms, faith communities, and discussion groups, reading this work in conjunction with Bryan Massingale’s iconic *Racial Justice and the Catholic Church* (2010) and in tandem with other thoughtful accounts would assist in countering misconceptions and misunderstandings about racism, white supremacy, modern policing, and BLM proffered in the media.

Remarking on the similarities between the focus of Pope Francis’ encyclical *Laudato Si’* and the BLM’s mission, Segura’s personal and particular call is especially for young Catholic activists, but also more seasoned ones, to become educated, energized, and ready to demand a better Church.

Kim R. Harris is assistant professor of African American thought and practice in the theological studies department at Loyola Marymount University.

Exploring the sins of racism in religions

By Francis X. Clooney, S.J.

Book Review: Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson

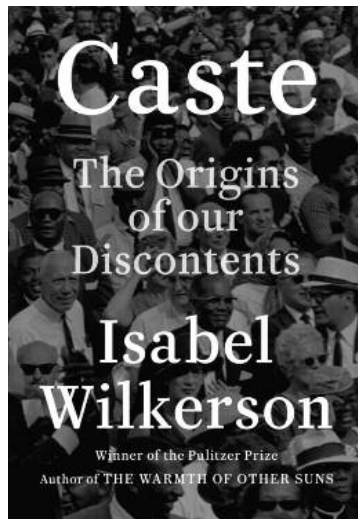
For my entire adult life I have been engaged in the study of India's Hindu traditions. I taught in Kathmandu (1973-75), did doctoral studies in South Asian Languages and Civilizations (1979-84), undertook two longer research stays in India, a year-plus at a time, and took many shorter trips to India over the years. Most of my writing has been perched on the border between my own Catholic tradition and Hindu traditions, and so, too, my nearly 37 years of teaching have been almost entirely given over to Hindu-Christian themes, or simply to the close reading of Hindu texts.

As a Jesuit—baptized Francis Xavier in honor of the first Jesuit to arrive in India in 1542—I have also been mindful of the very long history of Western Jesuits in India (thus my recent collection of essays, *Western Jesuit Scholars in India*, 2020) and the mixed history of our efforts to convert Hindus, refute Hindu beliefs, shape a truly Indian Christianity and, of course, educate India's Hindu and Muslim populations in our many institutions of higher and secondary education. The era of Western Jesuits in India is largely over, and the Society has robustly entered a new era there, the 4,000-plus Indian Jesuits meeting the challenges of interreligious encounter in ways appropriate to India, 75 years after Independence, and as an ever-changing civilization of over one billion people.

I am a scholar of Hindu traditions who loves much of what I have learned, who has many Hindu

friends, and who is a better Catholic and Jesuit because of my indebtedness to Hinduism. Unsurprisingly, I have always been disposed to make the case for learning from Hinduism, encouraging students and colleagues and the wider audience of readers of my blogs, to be open to what can be learned, receptive to accepting these elements into their lives, and ready to reshape their view of Catholicism and other home faith traditions in light of Hinduism. Don't be quick to judge, to condemn, I urge them, avoid the bad habits of more than 500 years of demeaning Hinduism in order to present the Christian faith and the Gospel in a better light. Sometimes people ask me why I am not more critical of Hinduism since, certainly, I am in a position to know the faults, blindnesses, and dead-ends of India's religions. But I usually plead that my vocation has been to open doors and facilitate learning. Let others study Hinduism in depth and for decades, and then take upon themselves the work of criticism, hopefully in the shadow of the sins of Western civilization and religion.

All of this is a lead-up to my experience in reading Isabel Wilkerson's best-selling *Caste: the Origins of Our Discontents*. Wilkerson is a thoughtful and perceptive writer, gifted with an accessible style that invites the reader into her reflections on the deep-seated, systemic nature of bias in human societies, with India's caste system serving as a sad paradigm of bias that is passed down from generation to generation. From the opening recollection of Martin Luther King's surprise, when visiting



tions on the deep-seated, systemic nature of bias in human societies, with India's caste system serving as a sad paradigm of bias that is passed down from generation to generation. From the opening recollection of Martin Luther King's surprise, when visiting

India, at being addressed as a “brother untouchable,” Wilkerson again and again tells stories that make us link the excluded untouchables of India—the Dalits (crushed)—and the systematically marginalized and dishonored Black community in the United States. She is by no means the first to draw the parallel between castism and racism. As I write this reflection, I have on my desk John Dollard’s *Caste and Class in a Southern Town* (1937), Oliver Cromwell Cox’s *Caste, Class, and Race: A Study in Social Dynamics* (1948), and Gyanendra Pandey’s *A History of Prejudice: Race, Caste, and Difference in India and the United States* (2013). My friend Anantanand Rambachan, a prominent Hindu theologian and a leader in the Hindu community in the United States, addresses the sin of casteism in the final chapter of his *A Hindu Theology of Liberation* (2015). In my judgment (as a beginner in this particular field), such works are far more informative about caste than Wilkerson’s work. Her book is, however, a good starting point for delving into the issues more complexly presented in these and other books.

Writing with sensitivity, insight and real passion, Wilkerson tells us stories of great suffering fueled by the appalling cruelty, ignorance and indifference of white people. She gets us—all Americans, but particularly white Americans—to realize just how privileged we are, and how ignorant we are about the systemic cruelties that infuse our society and ways of life. Despite its title, caste is not at the heart of Wilkerson’s book—go to Cox or many an Indological book for more insight into Hinduism’s ancient systems of classes (*varna*) and caste (*jati*) as theoretical but ever-evolving realities—but Wilkerson brilliantly draws analogies with caste to remind us, again and again, how deep-rooted racism is, and how pathetic, in the face of what is to be done, are good intentions that address individual responsibility but overlook systems of oppression. This was indeed a timely book to have read, as I did, during Lent, during a pandemic, in the months after the violence against George Floyd and a host of other Black Americans, their suffering now set in the sad frame of the sufferings of Dalits in India.

But all of this leaves us with a problem, and people like me with a particular problem: Isn’t there a danger of yet again using India, Hinduism and caste, as props in a drama largely about ourselves in the United States? Other religions have been made foils

to Christian and American virtue for a very long time, and Hinduism has been exposed by missionaries and Western scholars as deeply flawed, only a stopping point on the way to religiosity and culture curiously much like our own. Wilkerson does not intend mere reductionism, I am sure, but many people who know the book may come away with a sense that caste = racism. With gratitude to Wilkerson, I find myself fairly accused, as a privileged white American who is also secured in the priestly hierarchy of the Catholic Church and who is implicitly reminded, as a scholar of Hinduism, not to commit the other old sin of romanticizing a spiritual East that is always better than us. But there is more to be said, and the Hindu traditions of over a billion people, flourishing everywhere in the world and affecting us all, still have much to teach us by their intelligent, imaginative, and deeply moral and spiritual ways of life.

All these issues are ones that can, and should, be explored in depth while teaching world religions and when planning interfaith and intercultural discussions and events on campus.

We ought no more think of Hinduism only in terms of the sin of castism than we think of American history only in terms of the sin of racism, or Christianity only in terms of the sin of anti-Semitism. Every just critique must be accompanied by serious efforts to get readers also to appreciate the important good aspects of the flawed religions and institutions in which we and our religious neighbors live. As a scholar in the Society of Jesus, which has struggled with issues of caste in India for nearly 500 years, I cannot plead immunity or hide myself in an academic ivory tower. But neither can I forget what I have learned over the past 50 years of the many, many goods of Hindu traditions. I cannot simply accede to the easy tendency, to an extent encouraged by Wilkerson’s book, to use Hinduism merely as a tool in an important ongoing argument among ourselves, Black and white. New and harsh light on oppression in our society, and urgent attention to the cries of the poor and excluded, ought not be cemented by the bad habit of relying on sporadic and piecemeal knowledge of our sisters and brothers in other parts of the world.

Francis X. Clooney, S.J., is the Parkman Professor of Divinity at Harvard Divinity School and vice president of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

Slavery's legacy continues to shape our lives

By Marcia Chatelain

A group of Georgetown University students in 2019 began wearing buttons that read *For Elizabeth*, or *For Isaac*, or *For* any array of other names. These adornments could have been mistaken for student government campaign buttons. But instead they pointed to a pivotal moment in Georgetown's history: these were the names on the inventory of a bill of sale from 1838.

That transaction, facilitated by Jesuits Thomas Mulledy and William McSherry, wrought the sale of 272 people in order to raise funds to meet Georgetown's financial obligations. The product of a long, complex history of Jesuit slaveholding and of intramural U.S. Catholic debates about slavery, the sale became a constant topic of campus interest. It was brought to light after the 2015 convening of the Working Group on Slavery, Memory, and Reconciliation, which researched and shared Georgetown's history with slavery, developed ideas for memorializing the legacies of slaveholding, and recommended ways the University could uplift racial justice today.

By the time students began wearing their buttons in 2019, there was evidence of small strides forward. Georgetown began infusing the history of slavery into its narrative. Networks of descendants of the 1838 sale reconstituted family trees and organized for their collective interests. Some descendants enrolled in Georgetown and eventually became alums. Residence halls that once honored Mulledy and McSherry were renamed. The University's Special Collections Library became the source for an array of scholarly and creative pieces produced by committed students.

Yet for some, the progress was too slow, too confined to the campus community. And it overlooked a key question: What is *owed* to the descendants of the 272?

For students who created and wore those buttons, the answer to that question was simple: Reparations. In fact, they organized a successful student referendum that, if implemented, would have collected a \$27.20 fee per semester per student to build a reconciliation fund that would allow descendent-beneficiaries to use as they saw fit. University leadership ultimately rejected the result of the referendum, however, and the fund never materialized, leaving student activists deeply disappointed.

Still, this student effort did inspire people at Georgetown and beyond not only to ask what is owed, but to also to imagine a debt that can never actually be repaid.

So, what is owed? That's a difficult question. Georgetown answered it partially by granting legacy admissions status to descendants. Further, the Jesuit Conference of Canada and the United States has committed \$100 million for a foundation that will devote resources to racial justice initiatives, education, and elder care. For their part, though they have not yet succeeded in attaining their goal, students have continued to argue that a portion of their tuition dollars should be earmarked for these efforts.

But the still more difficult question is this: Can the debt accrued by slavery ever really be repaid? As a faculty member, I've thought a lot about questions around the cost of college, about how much debt is too much, and how young people's lives are often hampered and weighed down by the imperatives of dollars, cents, interest rates, fines, and penalties. But on this side of my involvement in Georgetown's Working Group, and with special thanks to student activists, I now think about debt differently. Unlike a student loan, the debt that emanates from slavery cannot be retired, no matter how dutifully we may attend to repaying it.

Another thing I have realized is that confronting the legacy of slavery at a university, within a church, or really within any community can be so difficult, in part, because slavery's afterlives can appear to be both brutal and beautiful. Most people recognize the horrific pain caused by the traffic in human persons. But people also experience a disorienting dissonance when they try to imagine that their beloved and well-manicured alma mater, the place they often credit with some of their greatest successes in life, has also been the site of inhuman suffering. This dissonance makes the work of racial justice much more challenging.

Furthermore, today we tend to orient our work, in and outside the university, toward the attainment of specific goals—degrees earned, promotions secured, accounts resolved. In this context, gathering momentum behind the radical possibility of reparations for slavery is difficult because it does not comfortably fit with our preference for goal-oriented courses of action. After all, if our debt can never really be repaid, how can this debt represent a clear goal for us to conquer?

Finally, discomfort with confronting slavery's legacy today, including the ongoing devaluation of

Black life and the race-based economic exploitation of capitalism, can tempt us—maybe especially those of us in higher education—to see our endeavors around slavery as assignments that can be completed. Reports drafted and published. Money redistributed. Programs managed and evaluated.

Yet the substantive grappling with slavery's legacies—whether in the pursuit of reparations, or the paying of reparations, or both—requires a sober recognition that a zero balance on this debt is simply not a possibility, certainly not in a lifetime.

Instead of a goal, then, what we need is a grace. A grace that sustains people today in the challenging work that goes beyond achieving specific goals. A grace that honors those 272 whose names are known to us, and honors their progeny, too. A grace that allows people today to see their lives as deeply intertwined both with the lives of those who lived so long ago and those who are yet to live so far into the future.

Marcia Chatelain is professor of history at Georgetown University. She won the 2021 Pulitzer Prize in history for her book, Franchise: The Golden Arches in Black America.

Seminar welcomes new secretary-treasurer

The Seminar on Jesuit Higher Education has named Alice V. Clark its next secretary-treasurer. Clark is Professor of Music History at Loyola University New Orleans. Her teaching ranges widely, from a first-year seminar on Music and Politics to seminars on opera for advanced majors. Her scholarship on the motet in fourteenth-century France appears most recently in *Plainsong and Medieval Music, The Cambridge History of Medieval Music, and Music and*

Instruments of the Middle Ages: Essays in Honour of Christopher Page. Other publications include "Carissimi's Jephthe and Jesuit Spirituality" and "Uncovering a Diverse Early Music" (In the most recent issue of *Journal of Music History Pedagogy*). She is a member of Cohort 7 of the Ignatian Colleagues Program.



The problem is white supremacy, not the minorities



The diversity of Muslims

By Irfan Omar

The acronym BIPOC may be new, but the reality it denotes is not. The grouping of “Black, Indigenous, and people of color” in a single reference can be helpful. It is inclusive and more specific than just “people of color” (POC). Yet it still leaves something to be desired.

To an extent, Black and Indigenous communities have had similar experiences as others who are not passable as “white.” However, it would be wrong to even try to compare centuries of oppression, discrimination, displacement, and structural racism faced by Black and Indigenous communities with the challenges people of color have endured and continue to endure.

People of color face challenges and exclusion with varying degrees and on a different scale than Black and Indigenous communities. There are several reasons for this difference including historical, economic, and representational. The last of these may be significant

See Muslims, Page 18

Sovereign nations

By Wendy Thompson

Racism against Indigenous peoples in the Americas pre-dates the United States. Because we stood between Euro-Christian settlers and the lands they planned to occupy, Indians were perceived as a problem to be solved. Our bodies were racialized as non-white, and our beliefs defined as non-Christian. We were thus dehumanized to the point where white settlers felt justified in the acts of domination and violence committed against us.

Each of the 574 tribes recognized by the U.S. government, as well as those without federal recognition, has its own story of U.S. attempts to solve the “Indian problem.” Here is one.

The Bitterroot Salish and Pend d’Oreille people were part of the landscape in what is now western Montana and extended into parts of Idaho, British Columbia, and Wyoming since time immemorial. Our creation

See Sovereign nations, Page 19

The United States calls itself a melting pot, but many groups experience something else



The 'model minority'

By Hye-Kyung Kang

Asians first settled in North America in the 18th Century, but white supremacy and coloniality have made Asian Americans perpetual foreigners subject to erasure, exclusion, and violence.

A telling 1854 ruling of the California Supreme Court, referred to Chinese people as “a race of people whom nature has marked as inferior... differing in language, opinions, color, and physical conformation; between whom and ourselves nature has placed an impassable difference,” positioning whites—*ourselves*—as the norm and Asians as *other*. Still, Asian Americans whose families emigrated generations ago are asked where they are really from, ridiculed for their physical features and names, and jeered to “go back to where you come from.” The persistent message is that Asians are not real Americans and do not belong here, thus denying Asian American legitimacy and erasing their history and contributions.

See Model Minority, Page 19

New era, same story

By Nicki Gonzales

Latinx is the latest label for individuals with roots in Latin American countries—from Mexican Americans to Puerto Ricans to Dominican and Cuban Americans and to Central and South Americans.

Despite distinct historical contexts, we have all, at one time or another, been characterized as cheap labor, as a “problem,” as un-American, and as intellectually and physically inferior to white Americans. White supremacy has profoundly shaped the lives and histories of U.S. Latinx communities.

When the Mexican American War ended in 1848 and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo added 525,000 square miles to the United States—land that became the southwest and California—Mexicans found themselves strangers in their own land. Despite provisions in the treaty preserving the new citizens’ property rights, they lost their lands to swindlers and

See New Era, Page 21

The diversity of Muslims (continued)

because it concerns how images about certain groups and communities are systematically produced and widely disseminated by the media-industrial complex, a process that unwittingly leads to social engineering.

Take Muslims, for example. Most Muslims in the United States are either African American or belong to South/Southeast Asian heritage. Less than a fourth of all U.S. Muslims may be classified as Middle Eastern.

Thus Muslims are a diverse bunch, but the cultural production about them remains largely focused on select stereotypes. Much of the typecasting of, and hate directed at, Muslims has focused on their supposed connections with terrorism—allegedly inspired by Islam. But it would be difficult not to see the racial undertones folded within the vitriol, given that the vast majority of Muslims are BIPOC.

While Muslims fit comfortably inside the BIPOC tent, their immense diversity may also undermine a sense of their common experience. This is perhaps just as it should be,

except in one respect: discrimination based on religion. Islamophobia is an additional layer of challenge common to Muslims. Because of the visibility of some people as Muslims, especially women who chose to wear a headscarf, the harm is often compounded. Further, many Muslims also identify as being an immigrant or a descendant of one, which attracts the wrath of white nationalists and supporters of the far-right ideologies.

Consider U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, an example of a visible Muslim. She is an immigrant of Somali heritage, the first Muslim lawmaker with a hijab, and

Most Muslims in the United States are either African American or belong to South/Southeast Asian heritage.

politically more progressive than most Democrats. She clearly does not conform to the trope of an “acceptable” Muslim, which has made her a target for many, including

some members of Congress. Such attacks against her often associate her faith (and her choice to be visible about it) with criminality because she challenges the far-right view of America as a Christian nation. Furthermore, being Muslim is already a problem; but being vocal about issues that disrupt white privilege is going too far. Attacks on Omar and others like her suggest that Islamophobia is often used to conceal the deep-rooted racism and the discomfort of having to contend with, in this case, an outspoken woman of color who is not afraid to speak truth to power.

Within the context of a

racial injustice and discrimination. Toward the end of his life, he was inspired by the message of Islam, separate from the ideology of the Nation of Islam. Malcolm had just returned from the *hajj* pilgrimage in Arabia where he also visited the city of Medina. There, at the burial site of Prophet Muhammad, Malcolm must have reflected on Muhammad’s words spoken just days before his death in 632 CE: “All humans are descendants of Adam and Eve. An Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab nor a non-Arab over an Arab; a white has no superiority over a black nor a black has any over white except in matters of piety and good deeds.”

Both Ilhan Omar and Malcolm X appear to have embodied the truths expressed in this Muslim perspective. Following their example, Muslims should not be content with just being a part of BIPOC but rather they should play an integral role in the struggle that defines BIPOC communities.

Irfan Omar is associate professor of theology at Marquette University. He is no relation to U.S. Rep. Ilhan Omar.

Sovereign nations (continued)

stories were specific to these places, and place was central to our identity. We referred to ourselves as *sqelix*^w, derived from the words “flesh” and “earth.” We lived cyclically—gathering, fishing, hunting.

But our ways of life changed forever as the young United States expanded west and treaty-making removed us from our vast homelands.

In 1855, federal representatives met with chiefs and other tribal leaders of the Bitterroot Salish, Pend d’Oreille, and Kootenai to engage in treaty negotiations. Ultimately, the tribes ceded more than 20 million acres of aboriginal territory and reserved 1.2 million acres, which became the Flathead Reservation, for our exclusive use and benefit. Within decades, in violation of our treaty, Congress passed the Flathead Allotment Act, which set the stage for a 60% reduction of the reservation land base. Tribal lands were divided into individual Indian allotments, and in 1910 “surplus” land was made available for non-Indian ownership.

Unsurprisingly, there remains an undercurrent of racial tension on the

How might our worlds change if Indigenous peoples were no longer perceived as a problem?

Flathead Reservation where “white” is now the racial majority. Out of a total population of 29,926, only about 8,000 identify as American Indian (all tribes)/Alaska Native, while nearly 20,000 identify as white. Most non-Indians co-exist with the Tribes, but there are groups on and around the Reservation that advocate for the abolishment of tribal rights and tribal sovereignty.

Our treaty with the United States is an agreement between sovereign nations. This provides a legal and political—not racial—status. It is fundamental to our ability to govern and protect our relationships with people, animals, and land. When we are recognized only as a racial group, our status, rights and responsibilities as sovereign tribal nations and tribal citizens become invisible. Racism is one expression of the settler colonial logic that seeks to eliminate us.

Settler mindsets and Native futures cannot co-exist because one requires the elimination of the other.

How might our worlds change if Indigenous peoples were no longer

perceived as a problem? Consider the implications of historian Lorenzo Veracini’s declaration: “I am a settler, but indigenous resurgence is my interest. It will make me a better human being and a worse settler.”

Wendy Thompson (Qlispe/Ksanka) is director of tribal relations at Gonzaga University. She lives and works on the unceded homelands of the Spokane Tribe of Indians.

The ‘model minority’ (continued)

Further, the monolithic “Asian model minority” stereotype is not only used against other minority groups to uphold white supremacy, but it also invalidates real Asian American experiences of marginalization, erasing the vast diversity and complexity within Asian American populations and hiding structural inequity. If one actually looks at the data, Asian Americans experience significant economic, educational, and health inequalities by ethnicity, gender, and immigration status—a reality papered over by the model minority myth.

Of course, white supremacist narratives have also fed physical violence and systemic exclusion. Anti-Asian riots and massacres in the 19th Century emerged from a context in which Asians were vilified as the “yellow peril,” people who “stole” white men’s jobs, spread diseases, and corrupted white morality. Such vilification was institutionalized through exclusionary immigration laws such as the 1875 Page Act, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, and the 1917 Asiatic Barred Zone Act. This history paved the way for later developments, such as

The 'model minority' (continued)

President Franklin Roosevelt's 1942 executive order incarcerating 120,000 Japanese Americans solely based on their ethnicity and the widespread anti-Asian harassment, culminating in the murder of Vincent Chin, in 1982. Though the men who murdered Chin denied racial motives, Japanese imports were widely blamed for causing unemployment in the U.S. auto industry.

Unsurprisingly, during the SARS epidemic in the early 2000s, U.S. officials erroneously focused on Chinatowns as the epicenters of the disease, reinforcing the white supremacist narrative of Asians as dirty, dangerous, perilous foreign bodies. During the current COVID-19 crisis, the former president himself rendered Asian Americans the personification of the virus, helping pave the way for more than 3,800 anti-Asian hate incidents in one year.

Additionally, U.S. colonialism and militarism in Asia has produced popular media images (see *Miss Saigon*,



New era, same story (continued)

Full Metal Jacket, Madama Butterfly) that render Asian American women expandable sexualized objects, erasing their humanity and putting them at risk for racialized misogyny. For devastating evidence of this, one need look no further back than the March 2021 mass murder of Asian American women in Atlanta.

Asian Americans are not “quiet.” White supremacy silences them. Anti-Asian racism is perpetuated every time lived experiences and voices of Asian Americans are erased, and the erasure perpetuates anti-Asian exclusion and violence.

Hye-Kyung Kang is associate professor and chair of the department of social work at Seattle University.

Page 20, “Hate is a Virus” by Saint Peter’s University graduate Athena Serrano.

to a U.S. court system that refused to validate Mexican law and custom.

Having lost land and status, Mexican Americans became second-class citizens, subject to discrimination in education, health care, politics, housing, and in treatment by officers of the law. And other Latinx groups found themselves in the same situation.

Adhering to mid-20th Century redlining policies, banks denied mortgages to Latinx individuals, thus depriving them of the opportunity to build wealth and relegating them to substandard rentals in the least desirable areas. Segregated schools that developed alongside segregated housing lacked the funding and the will to educate Latinx students on par with white peers.

In the 1950s, the U.S. government conducted “studies” that justified this second-class treatment, arguing that Puerto Rican and Mexican-American youth had a propensity toward violence because of their “Indian blood” and that Mexicans were biologically suited to stoop labor in the

agricultural fields. That same mid-century belief that young Latino men were inherently dangerous has not disappeared. Journalist Gustavo Arellano recently reported that between 2015 and 2020, Latinx individuals “died at a rate of 23 per million residents after encounters with police, second only to Black people, at 31 per million residents.”

But the most persistent stereotypes that have marginalized the Latinx community have come from U.S. immigration laws and the attitudes of white American reflected in them. Since the early 20th Century, the United States’ immigration policies have alternated between welcoming Latinx immigrants during labor shortages and systematically deporting them when it was no longer profitable or politically palatable. Further, labeling Latinx immigrants as “rapists,” “criminals,” and “animals” in order to scapegoat them for the ills of society is certainly nothing new.

Historically, the dehumanization of Latinx immigrants has been used to justify regular

government-sponsored deportations. Notably, a large percentage of those deported in the 1930s were actually U.S. citizens who were caught up in a wave of anti-Latinx hysteria, demonstrating that these deportation raids were less about immigration status than about expelling an inferior race of people. Today, such rhetoric is used to justify the increased militarization of our southern border, the inhumane detainment of unaccompanied migrants, and to distract a segment of American society from examining the real problems of our society.

White supremacy remains the default setting in our society, where the majority of Latinx people find themselves grappling with the same inequities that have long relegated them to the margins of opportunity, social mobility, and full recognition and inclusion in U.S. society.

Nicki Gonzales is professor of history and vice provost for diversity and inclusion at Regis University.

Tradeoffs come with the struggle

By timone davis

When the racial unrest volcano erupted once again in the summer of 2020, the full-time faculty of the Institute of Pastoral Studies (IPS) at Loyola University Chicago gathered and said, “We must do something that addresses this situation and it can’t be another statement.” Though the details of the exact moment have melted under the lava of protests, the message was clear: We must do more than talk.

The IPS full-time faculty consists of nine people—two of color. I am one of the two.

As the volcano of unrest continued to pump out lava, we wrestled, like the biblical Jacob in the Book of Genesis, against a strong adversary—white supremacy and systemic racism. The urgency of the racial eruptions moved us to have truth-filled conversations that laid bare the white supremacist underpinnings of our department and our institution. We complained, cried, and cursed our way through conversations that allowed us to hear each other for real, for real.

By the end of the summer, we had decided we would teach a course that would prepare our students for antiracist ministry, a course in which each full-time faculty member would teach at least one week. This would be on top of each person’s normal teaching load. As the faculty member of record, I was responsible for course design, structure, assignments and grading. Thus was born the course *Doing Liturgy in a Racially Violent America*. Thirty students eagerly signed up.

The point I want to make is about wrestling with a strong adversary until one prevails. This is what I want to call the cost of a blessing.

In Genesis 32:23-33 we read about Jacob wrestling all night long with a strong and mysterious adversary. Is the adversary God? An angel? A man? We do not know. But we do know that before the adversary departs, he leaves Jacob with three things: a blessing, a limp, and a new name, Israel.

It may be an imperfect, maybe even an uncomfortable, metaphor, but I think to advance antiracist teaching, we have something to learn from

Jacob’s wrestling. First, Jacob doesn’t give in. He continues wrestling and struggling until the adversary finally asks him to stop, but Jacob isn’t about to stop, at least not without a blessing from the adversary. What Jacob teaches us is that even in the midst of struggle, even in the midst of hardship, even when things don’t look promising, there is a blessing to be received.

But beyond the blessing, he also gets two unexpected things—a new walk and a new name. As the scripture tells us, he “contended with human and divine beings and prevailed.” In prevailing, he came out different than he was before.

In a racially violent America, antiracist teaching is the commitment to wrestling with white supremacy so there will be a new walk and a new name.

Knowing there will be a cost, many of us seek the blessing without the wrestling. We want the blessing without the new walk because the new walk hurts. We want the blessing without the new name because the new name tells everybody that we had to change.

At IPS we seek to assist our students in wrestling with white supremacy so that they are able to deal with the racist magma that strengthens with silence, complacency, and inaction.

So what have I learned about antiracist teaching from *Doing Liturgy in a Racially Violent America*? I’ve learned that it is important to keep things real, honest, truthful. To create a space where each person’s voice is heard and valued. Requiring students to engage in action/praxis was key to understanding how beliefs and values become embedded in society. It is important to know that our wrestling is not without gain, and that the blessing itself might be a new walk and a new name.

timone davis is assistant professor of pastoral theology at the Institute for Pastoral Studies at Loyola University of Chicago.

Voices of experience from across our campuses

Staff and student tell of racism's toll

Q: How have you or people you know experienced racism on your campus?

Patricio Meneses, associate professor of biological sciences, Fordham University: Here's an overt example: I'm tenured faculty, a scientist walking into a lab, and I'm asked by a senior colleague, a person with whom I had been in meetings, if I was with the moving company. Despite the fact

that I had the key to the lab and exchanged friendly greetings with another faculty member also there, this person could not imagine a Hispanic in jeans could be a professor.

A more subtle example is being asked to be on many, many committees, which takes up valuable research time. There are so few of us and so many invites. Of course, this stems from the good intention of making

committees diverse. But I walk into each group thinking, Who here, besides me, thinks I'm the token minority? Knowing that I add to conversations, that my input as a BIPOC professor is necessary, I have said "yes" again and again. But now I am retreating and saying "no" because my career suffers.

Luella Loseille, program coordinator at the Cross Cultural Center and alumna (BA, 2017 and MA, 2019), Saint Louis University: As a Black former student now working on campus, I've experienced racism in the overwhelming structures of whiteness that have influenced the curriculum and even the items available in dining halls and campus stores. I've experienced stares directed at me simply for my presence on campus and, whenever I was the only Black person in a class, the sense that no one wanted to sit next to me.

Being told that I was too emotional when sharing my personal experiences with racism is another example, and the subtle racism of having to live up to the impossible expectation so that I wouldn't fit negative stereotypes.

I sometimes teach first-year courses, and there I've dealt with



"Free Me" by Natalie Wilkie, while a student at Loyola Marymount University

attacks on my identity, having to spin them into a “learning experience” for students who denied racism and white supremacy to my face.

Lily Swan, director of the international services office, University of Detroit Mercy: Pre-Covid, our Chinese students sometimes heard other students comment about their race or tell them to “Go home!” After the pandemic began, but before lockdown, these students started to notice things like dining hall staff changing the serving utensils after they used them. It’s things like this that make it clear to me that we have to work harder to educate everyone on campus about cultural and ethnic diversity and how we can communicate everyday human respect.

Le Xuan Hy, associate professor of psychology, Seattle University: Too often, I think groups on campus may feel that they have addressed the issue of racism just because they have invited someone who identifies as a racial minority to the table. I’ve found myself as the lone person at the table who has the impossible task of naming unpleasant points that touch on a large number of vastly different racial groups. When I am in such a position, I sometimes end up holding my tongue because naming the difficulties may harm relationships that I will need to nurture for future collaboration.

LaShaunda Reese, theology doctoral student, Loyola University of Chicago: I am a Black woman, and among the several instances of racism I’ve experienced is one involving being blocked from re-entering a building for an important meeting after I left for lunch. A campus security officer standing outside the doors stopped me and claimed the building was on lock down, but that didn’t appear to be so and he would provide no further details. He simply refused to let me in. So I called a fellow student inside to say that I might need help entering. In the end, the officer directed me to another entrance, and I had no problem entering there.

What do leaders in Jesuit higher education need to know in order for Jesuit institutions to be more effectively antiracist?

Patricio Meneses: BIPOC students and faculty frequently feel excluded, except maybe in athletics—and don’t get me started on the racism athletes encounter and how faculty can view athletics and athletes. So, the only way forward is to embrace and recruit for real inclusion at all levels of leadership, including all the top leadership positions. I’m talking about not just contributing to decisions, but making them. Until we have visible BIPOC leaders making decisions, we’ll continue to be the tokens.

Luella Loseille: There is no longer patience for white leaders on campus who haven’t recognized and understood their own privilege and internalized racism, and the non-BIPOC leaders who are weighed down by a sense of guilt and feel discouraged about engaging in antiracist work, they need to push through the guilt.

Moreover, leaders need to understand that antiracist work must be intersectional. With this in mind, since we each hold a fluency when it comes to experiences of our own identities, it’s our duty when engaging in antiracist work to develop the fluencies we lack. We can’t really uphold Jesuit values without recognizing the glory of God visible in the faces and experiences of all races.

Finally, leaders must stop tapping BIPOC faculty and staff to lead racial justice initiatives and then failing to provide appropriate funding and support. For true systemic change to happen, everyone must be willing to do the work, not just the BIPOC folks, and the right funding and support must be provided.

Lily Swan: Leaders need to know that people, especially white people, are going to have to feel uncomfortable, and they must be willing both to be uncomfortable themselves and to support others in being uncomfortable. One way of doing this is through mindful and purposeful

exercises, things like the “Privilege Walk” exercises that can be found online, that get people beyond conversing to actually having some experience of what people of another race go through.

They also have to get beyond addressing issues as they pop up in the media or on campus. Too often, these kinds of ad hoc efforts start strong, but get overshadowed and nothing really comes of them. It irks me that, in lots of institutions, we talk so much about diversity and race, but little comes to fruition. And I know that this inconsistency drives students away because they are made to feel like their feelings and experiences aren’t valid.

Finally, leaders need to create plans for accountability and ask, “What is our institutional plan to keep students, faculty, and staff accountable for racism? How do we stand with affected parties to show we will not tolerate racist behavior, and how do we do this in a way that resonates with our mission?”

Le Xuan Hy: I think it’s important for leaders to always ask, “What are the consequences of my actions, even those with good intentions, on disadvantaged racial minorities?” Racially advantaged leaders often esteem individual freedom and self-reliance, but these values are often not as central among racially disadvantaged groups, and so it ends up that “noble” initiatives



University of Detroit Mercy.

designed to “help” actually alienate these groups. It’s key to remember that people come with differing values systems and to let this guide leaders’ actions in their antiracist work.

Also, I’m a Vietnamese immigrant who’s had people shout at me, “Go home!” But I have to realize that I have much to learn from the suffering of Indigenous people, African Americans, and other groups. In the end, I think leaders need to know that antiracism can only really be advanced when each of us de-centers ourselves and asks, “In every action, do I always put disadvantaged racial minorities

first, regardless of my discomfort and suffering?”

LaShaunda Reese: Leaders in privileged and often entitled positions must connect with the experiences of those on the margins. They must know that the stories of the underrepresented, the disadvantaged, the minority creatively express survival and excellence, resilience and resistance and that their voices will have to become the center of the narrative of transformation if we are all to overcome the racism built into the fabric of American identity.

Ignatian examen for white allies

By Madelyn Murphy

Ignatian spirituality invites us to become contemplatives in action. It's an invitation to view the way in which we can be in this world. It asks us to be aware not only of the world around us, but how we move, act, and love within it.

Being a white person and an ally for racial justice asks us to do the very same thing—that is, to reflect and be aware of the systemic racial oppression our society is built upon, and not only on how we benefit from it, but on how we can use our power and privilege to dismantle it and support people of color. In short, it asks us to be present and put in the work.

It is not only important for me civilly, it is morally and spiritually imperative that I reflect on the ways my whiteness supports or challenges racism—in my daily thoughts, words, and actions. Thus, I have reworked the traditional Ignatian Examen to be used as a tool for white people hoping to act as racial allies. A common version of the Examen is as follows:

1. Become aware of God's presence.
2. Review the day with gratitude.
3. Pay attention to your emotions.
4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.
5. Look forward to tomorrow.

Below is my adaptation of an Examen for white allies in our Ignatian family. Hopefully, this Examen will serve as a foundation for white people who are in the early stages of exploring their roles in racism.

1. Become aware of God's presence.

Think about the God of the oppressed, the true and loving God—think about the people God called Her own. Remember the people She sought to protect, the people She pulled prophets from, were the marginalized of society.

Reflect on the marginalized of today's society, those who experience social and systemic

oppression—who do you see? Remember God's love for them by seeing them, and how you are called into God's love by loving them and resisting the systems, thoughts, and institutions that seek to prevent love and community. Remember that there is no room for racism in love.

Reflect on the systems that seek to keep us from loving one another. Recognize that God's own face is reflected in the faces of the marginalized of our society. God's face is in a brown, Jewish carpenter's face just as much as it is in the Black American man's, or in the forgotten Indigneous woman's, or in the faces of the migrant family of color seeking asylum from violence and political unrest.

Find God in all things and all people—especially those racism seeks to divide us from through hate, discrimination, and systemic institutionalized oppression.

2. Review how you used your white privilege today.

If a person of color was telling you their experience, did you listen with openness, humility, and compassion? Or did you argue, ignore, or interrupt?

In your place of work/service, did you use all available resources to make things culturally sensitive for your coworkers or clients, or did you assume American Western whiteness as the status quo?

Did you reflect on the stolen land you stand on, or the rights you have that our justice system sees as racial privileges?

Did you speak up when a white friend/relative/coworker said or acted in a problematic way, or did you choose silence over action?

Allow yourself to remain present in all reflection—in the moments when you are grateful for your actions, but especially in the moments when you are not. Do not shy away from examples of your need and capacity for humility, growth, and love.

3. Pay attention to your emotions.

In reflecting on how you utilized your privilege today, what are your feelings? Is there shame, anger, discomfort, fear, or hatred? Are you becoming aware of prejudices that you hold? Are there parts of your day where you felt confused, not sure whether something you said, did, or heard was problematic or oppressive?

Sit with the discomfort, however uncomfortable; lean into it and begin to educate yourself from the actions of the day. Write down things you wish to learn more about, or journal about the challenges of allyship. Do not push away from your emotions—they are key in addressing white privilege and white supremacy.

4. Choose one moment of the day where you used your privilege to either take space from or make space for people of color—reflect on that moment.

Find one moment from the day in which you can find your white privilege at work in either an oppressive or just way. If it was something you can recognize as a just action (i.e. using your privilege to make space for people of color, or engaging in a tough conversation with a racist friend or family member), recognize and be grateful for the improvement and the opportunity you took to choose love and unity over divisiveness.

Pray for the courage, insight, humility, and self-awareness to continue to grow as a white ally for racial justice.

Recognize the need and call for more growth and education. If it is a moment where you abused your privilege, focus on what prejudices, notions, or structures were influential in your action. Approach this reflection with radical honesty and extreme humility.

Reflect on how that moment was harmful and divisive. Brainstorm ways to work toward

restorative racial healing in the future. Make plans for future education; do not rely on the emotional labor of your friends of color to educate you on how to be better. Put in plans to do the work.

Pray for guidance, perseverance, and awareness for the future.

5. Look forward to tomorrow.

Reflect on ways you can move closer toward allyship. Are there social justice groups or organizations asking for white allies that you can join or give support to? Are there books, articles, or other forms of media on race that you can turn to for education? Are there white people in your life with whom you may need to have uncomfortable conversations?

Most importantly, make conscious, practical, and intentional action plans to use your power to help dismantle racism. Reflection not followed up by action is not enough to pursue racial justice. We must be humble, active participants in the fight for social and racial justice in this country. Be prepared to translate this spiritual work into concrete, physical actions. As St. Ignatius says, “Love is shown more in deeds than in words.”

Madelyn Murphy is a Fordham University alumna, a former Jesuit Volunteer, and a social worker. This Examen was originally published by the Ignatian Solidarity Network.



Saint Peter's University at 150: Opportunity for Generations

By Virginia Bender, Mary Kinahan-Ockay,
and Eileen L. Poiani

Established in 1872 as the 14th Jesuit institution of higher education in America, Saint Peter's University is commemorating its sesquicentennial inspired by the theme, Opportunity for Generations.

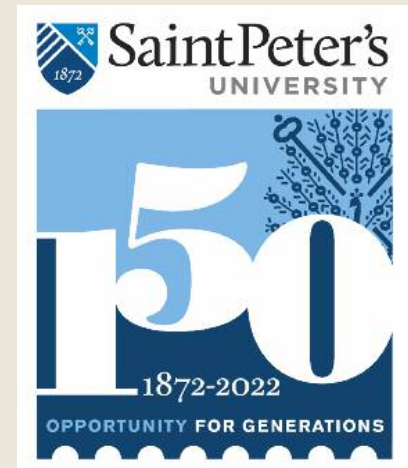
The theme honors the 150-year legacy of providing opportunity to students, engaging them in the enriching learning opportunities of the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area and fostering opportunities for urban revitalization and innovation. At the 125th anniversary in 1997, University President Rev. James N. Loughran, S.J. (1995-2006) highlighted the historical commitment to opportunity, "there has also been a remarkable consistency in St. Peter's College ... trying its best to provide an education which will open opportunities for advancement and service in society."

From its initial downtown Jersey City location less than a mile from the Statue of Liberty, to its current campus since 1936 in the heart of the city, Saint Peter's has welcomed immigrants and their children. In its earliest days, the then College (Saint Peter's became a university in 2012) educated primarily first-generation college students of Irish and German heritage, followed by enrollees from virtually every European country.

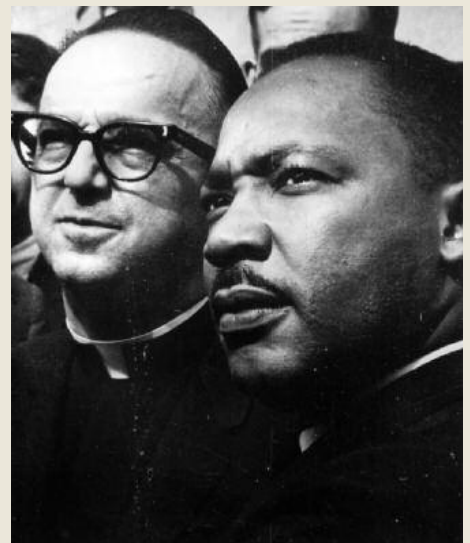
In 1934, the first Black student enrolled, part-time professional students arrived in the '40s, GIs in the '50s, women as full-time students in the '60s, Cuban immigrants in the '70s, and resident and graduate students in the '80s. The Latinx population grew so significantly with students from Puerto Rico, the Caribbean and throughout Latin America that Saint Peter's was

designated a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) in 2000. The 3,200 member student body continues to evolve as the area population changes. Saint Peter's is proud to be the most diverse Jesuit institution of higher education in the United States.

Generations of Saint Peter's students have experienced in-



valuable educational opportunities from the rich resources of the nation's leading metropolitan area. Inspired by Ignatian pedagogy, the university values the integration of learning with meaningful community-based action. Rev. Victor R. Yanitelli, S.J., urban ac-



tivist and president from 1966-78, promoted that, "We must give new direction to the liberal arts so they have meaning in the urban context ... so that human experience can also become a part of the curriculum." The campus boasts nearly 50 years of cooperative education programs and today 75% of graduating students participate in at least one experiential learning program, such as service learning, metropolitan seminars in New York City, faculty-student research, study abroad and a wide variety of field experiences.



Opportunity is manifested in the consistent urban leadership of the university. The Campus Kitchen is a student-led community service project that provides free, healthy meals to local residents by reclaiming food that would otherwise go to waste. The Center for Undocumented Students works with community and educational organizations to create higher education opportunities for undocumented youth. And local entrepreneurs benefit from academic research and direct educational programs through The Ignite Institute. These and dozens of other community partnerships build upon the rich history of urban engagement that continues to expand the outreach and impact of Saint Peter's University.

This opportunity did not always come easily. Staffing by the Jesuits was limited in 1918 and when enrollment dropped due to World War I, the Society of Jesus opted to close the all-male college. Persistent efforts by several Jesuits, and with the support of the Archdiocese of Newark, the college successfully reopened in 1930. At that time the peacock, representing the resurrected Saint Peter's, was selected as the mascot and to this day Saint Peter's is the only Division I institution with that mascot.

Committed to the Jesuit value of social justice, Saint Peter's made the



important decision in 1965 to award Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. the first and only honorary degree from a Catholic college. Rev. Edmund G. Ryan, S.J., then dean of the college, cited Dr. King's "exquisite record in the promotion of Civil Rights."

During this year-long sesquicentennial celebration, Saint Peter's University honors the faculty, administrators and staff who have served its noble mission, as well as the tens of thousands of graduates who have gone on to make a positive impact on society based on the opportunities they were provided, the education they received, the values they

developed and the *cura personalis* and respect they experienced.

In the words of President Eugene J. Cornacchia, Ph.D., who was appointed the first lay president in 2007, "Indeed, we have an extraordinary mission to serve and support students to achieve their dreams. Moreover, we have a successful history of preparing students to be leaders for change in their personal lives and in their communities. Now, more than ever, the purpose and reason for Saint Peter's University is clear and compelling, and with collective strength and resilience, we will continue to advance this great mission."



Virginia Bender is the special assistant to the president for Institutional Planning and chief of staff at Saint Peter's University. Mary Kinahan-Ockay is the university archivist and Eileen L. Poiani is a special assistant to the president. To learn more, visit saintpeters.edu/150.

Far left: Fr. L. Augustin Grady, S.J., with Peter the Peacock. Fr. Victor Yanitelli, S.J., and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 1965.

Above: Students gather around the statue of Saint Ignatius.

Left: Statue of Saint Peter the fisherman, casting his net.

Photos courtesy of Saint Peter's University.

The price of injustice

U.S., South Africa continue to suffer ills of racist governing

By Ricardo da Silva, S.J.

The line stretched out the door, onto the soccer field, and beyond the gates of my elementary school, wending through the streets of my neighborhood, until only a silhouette of thousands could be seen against the horizon.

It was April 27, 1994. I was 10, and on that day, millions of South Africans stood in lines like this to cast their vote in South Africa's first democratic election. This was also the first election that allowed Black and mixed-race citizens to appear on the ballot and enjoy equal political rights. It was the first time most people of color had been allowed to choose their president.

Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first-ever Black president was elected that day and inaugurated on May 10, 1994. Convicted for conspiring to overthrow the apartheid government, Mandela, a human rights lawyer and freedom fighter was incarcerated from 1964 to 1990.

Throughout his adult life, though, Mandela was undeterred in his struggle for racial justice.

Standing in the Rivonia trial dock in 1964, confessing to sabotage but justifying his actions against a racist and immoral government, he testified:

"I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

On the day he was set free 27 years later, he declared, "Apartheid has no future. It has to be ended by our own decisive mass action in order to build peace and security."

In his inaugural address four years later, Mandela condemned the white-led apartheid regime that enabled the wanton abuse of millions of Black people: "Out of the experience of an extraordinary human

disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud."

Two black presidents

While it is simplistic to suggest the social, economic and political realities of the United States and South Africa bear even remote similarities, as a white South African living in the United States for two years, I have begun to appreciate common contours in our struggles for racial justice and equity.

Mandela continued in his inaugural address: "We enter into a covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both Black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity—a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world."

Almost 15 years later, 1.8 million people descended on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., to witness the swearing-in of Barack Obama as the first Black president of the United States.

"The time has come to set aside childish things," said Obama, invoking the apostle Paul's advice to the Corinthians: "The time has come to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free, and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness." The work and courage of Mandela and Obama to right some of the historic wrongs of racism ought not be dismissed. Yet systemic racism continues to fester—even after years of protests and bloodshed for freedom from oppression by people of all skin colors, even after serious legal and social reforms.

Policing's legacy

Andries Tatane, a 33-year-old Black South African activist, was killed by police during a service delivery protest in 2011. Tatane's killing was caught on tape by the media. A shirtless Tatane is seen in the video approaching police officers in full riot gear and brandishing batons and plastic shields. Tatane, after exchanging a few words, is pummeled to the ground by police officers and shot at close range with two rubber bullets. Seven police officers were charged for Tatane's murder but all were acquitted at trial, it was argued in court that it was difficult to rule who was responsible for the crime because officers were wearing helmets and could not be conclusively identified.

Though news of Tatane's killing traveled around the world, it didn't spark anywhere near the outrage seen in the United States following the 2020 murder of George Floyd by a police officer. Perhaps this was because developing countries seldom receive even a fraction of the media attention of their "first world" counterparts or maybe it was because those responsible for Tatane's death were men of color—not white, as in the case of Floyd's killer.

Isy India Thusi, a legal scholar at the University of Delaware, and a graduate of Fordham Law, examines how even a predominantly Black police service, such as is the case in South Africa, still suffers the wounds of its racist history, that often results in fatal outcomes, especially for Black members of the community. "Diversifying the police department won't eliminate police violence because white supremacy may permeate an institution even when the faces within it are not white," writes Thusi in an opinion piece for *The Hill*. "In my own interviews with Black police officers in South Africa, I was surprised to learn that many of them look back at apartheid with nostalgia, as a time when police had more absolute power to use force and 'be police.'" The enduring systemic oppression of people of color arises out of a long history of systemic injustice deliberately designed to exclude people of color from a white-dominated world.

More vivid and chilling, still, is an observation by Tanya Magaisa of Human Rights Watch. "Even the German Shepherd, a dog ubiquitous in police forces throughout the world, to many Black South Africans,

remains a relic of the apartheid regime," she said. "Like the police themselves, formerly white and now predominantly black, these dogs are still trained to attack Black bodies."

But these critiques can too often end the conversation.

"Many point to apartheid, others to the gun and violent culture of that system," writes South African political commentator Justice Malala, reflecting for CNN on the weight of history. "Others point to its effects: the dehumanization of the Black man and the dehumanization of the white man too."

While Malala emphasizes the historical roots of present challenges, the problem today, he says, is that "we are not doing enough to push back against our historical problems."

Education by segregation

The uprising in the United States following the murder of George Floyd and the murder of Tatane are but two flashpoints in a protracted history of the enslavement, subjugation and oppression of people of color, in both "the land of the free" and South Africa's post-apartheid "Rainbow Nation."

The injustices experienced in these two countries extend beyond their shared histories of militant policing. Both countries have also suffered the ills bred by separatist systems of education. Nearly 70 years after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in the United States and 30 years beyond the introduction of the first racially integrated South African public schools, this history continues to bear its weight.

It was 1991 when Mum and I emigrated from Portugal to South Africa; my school was one of the first 33 integrated schools in the nation. Unbeknown to me then, I was part of an experiment that sought to challenge an educational system that Hendrik Verwoerd, the white Afrikaner minister of native affairs in the 1950s who would later become prime minister, said was designed to teach Black children "from an early age that equality with Europeans is not for them."

This educational system triggered violent protests; the importance of which I only came to appreciate in my mid-20s. On June 16, 1976, for

example, thousands of students, the majority of whom were Black, took to the streets of Soweto, Johannesburg, in protest of the inferior system of education and rebel against instruction in Afrikaans, the preferred language of their white oppressors. In a fog of tear gas and bullets, thousands were injured and a reported 176 people were killed—two whites and 174 Blacks.

Continued challenges of the discriminatory education system over nearly two decades led to incremental reforms and eventually to the South African Schools Act of 1996, which abolished mandatory segregation in schools.

And yet, the legacy of segregation in South

Revisionist history

While South Africa's Black middle class appears to have thrived over the past 25 years compared to whites, a study of South Africa's class divisions conducted between 2008 and 2017 show less than 10 percent of Black people can be classified as "non-poor."

"Half of the population lives in chronic, persistent poverty" in South Africa, University of Cape Town economics professor Murray Leibbrandt writes in *New Frame*. "South Africa's elite is almost three-quarters white," he says, which means 60 percent of Black South Africans live in poverty for most of their life.

For this reason, among others, sizable discontent has grown among South Africans since Mandela ushered in what was called a New South Africa in 1994. Many of the so-called born-frees—those born in South Africa after the demise of apartheid laws—have come to blame South Africa's growing inequalities and poverty on the revered former president. They argue Mandela didn't go far enough and was



far too compromising in seeking reconciliation over effective reparations of social and economic reform.

African schools remains. The majority of schools in Black towns are still under-resourced and overcrowded compared to their counterparts in whiter, more affluent neighborhoods. As in the United States, the legacy of residential race-based segregation beyond the fall of apartheid, meant many South African schools in historically white areas still had a predominantly white student body. With the influx of a growing Black middle class the tendency toward greater integration brings fresh challenges. In these areas, social class is the new segregation and only exacerbates existing racial division seen also in the alarming advent of fatal xenophobic violence.

Truth and progress

During Mandela's first year as president, he created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. It was established with a threefold purpose, explains Anthony Egan, S.J., a Johannesburg-based priest, political scientist and historian. Two of its purposes are given in its title: to establish the truth of apartheid, says Egan, and "to see if reconciliation could be effected between perpetrators and victims of gross human rights abuses." The third objective,

he adds, “where possible (and with limited budget) to provide reparations to victims.”

The commission, after less than two years of work, produced a seven-volume final report spanning more than 3,000 pages, which, Egan says, offered only a “sketchy, account of gross human rights violations.” Over 2,000 survivors and perpetrators came forward to tell their truth about what happened during the apartheid years, but also during “the chaotic process of democratic transition from 1990 to 1994,” which, Egan says was “a period in which more people died than in the 1980s.”

“Some cases of remorse and reconciliation were recorded during the hearings,” explains Egan summarizing his view of the commission, “Reparations, such as they were, were paid out to some victims.” Still, he says, “the most the Truth and Reconciliation Commission could get from the former National Party government was that apartheid was an error of judgment and that unfortunate things happened.”

As a result, the problems of South Africa remain. “What was left untouched,” Egan concludes, “was the legacy of inequality and disadvantage suffered by South Africa’s Black majority during the apartheid era.”

A complex land

Mandela and his successors attempted to address South Africa’s legacy of racism through the reallocation of resources for education, healthcare, housing and welfare. The shift in resources was intended to redress the inequalities non-whites felt under the evil of apartheid. But, Egan says: “It was an attempt at social engineering that had mixed outcomes.”

South Africa’s 2018 General Household Survey, which measures the country’s living circumstances, reveals that despite the fact that the percentage of households receiving a government housing subsidy increased from about six percent in 2002 to about 14 percent by 2018, over 13 percent of households still live in makeshift dwellings. Black South Africans represent the vast majority in this statistic as they make up about 81 percent of the population.

The question of housing and land reform is vital if South Africa is ever to defeat the unjust legacies of its past. Land redistribution is further complicated by

inadequate oversight and support for those who acquire, for example, commercial farming enterprises without the requisite skills to manage the operation. Three decades after declaring its democracy, it would appear that South Africa has reached a new stalemate in the battle to atone for the sins of its forefathers. Perhaps the way forward is signaled best by Jake Silverstein in his editor’s note for *The New York Times Magazine*’s The 1619 Project. “By acknowledging this shameful history, by trying hard to understand its powerful influence on the present, perhaps we can prepare ourselves for a more just future.”

Egan concludes: “There is no apparent solution to all this—one can only assume that it has to just be lived through.”

Moments after George Floyd’s murder was reported in the media, a deafening and seemingly unceasing hum of helicopters invaded the Manhattan skyline. The sound grew more menacing as #BlackLivesMatter protests erupted around the country and the world. I have seldom been as scared as I was in those weeks.

My fears were heightened when we began to see eyewitness and news reports on social and mainstream media showing law enforcement officials employing aggressive crowd-control tactics. I had witnessed this before in South Africa, though never in quite the same immediate way. And though my fear was exacerbated by the panic of the deadly COVID-19 infections that had already killed hundreds of thousands of people worldwide—and was then at its raging peak in the Big Apple—I quickly realized that not even a deadly pandemic could contain the righteous anger felt by Black people and their marching allies.

It is the cry of a people who have had enough of empty promises. Like Obama, Mandela and the students in Soweto before them, racial justice and equality is an ideal which they not only live for and hope to achieve. It is an ideal for which they too are prepared to die.

Ricardo da Silva, S.J., is associate editor at America Media. He is an alumnus of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University, New York, and was awarded the 2019-20 Pulitzer African Fellowship.

Jesuit *eloquentia perfecta* for today and the struggle against racism

By Mark DeStephano

One of the great hallmarks of Jesuit education for more than 500 years has been the recognition of the power of the word.

Not only does the Jesuit tradition cherish the Word of God, it has also assigned special significance to the gift of human language, the word with which we communicate on a daily basis. In the Jesuit context, *eloquentia perfecta* is to be understood as the tripartite skill of effectively using language to present one's well-reasoned ideas in the service of the common good. The use of the Latin phrase immediately calls to mind the great classical tradition of Plato, Isocrates, Socrates, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. And while those of us "of a certain age" were raised on a steady diet of the Catilinarian Orations, iambic trimeter, dactylic hexameter, Aeslepiads, Sapphics, and elegiacs, these things mean virtually nothing to the student of today. As students now say, "back in the day," *eloquentia perfecta* was assumed to be based on a mastery of the Latin and Greek languages and literary forms, complemented by an equally rigorous command of vernacular metrical forms and literary devices.

Yet, if we are to keep the great Jesuit tradition of *eloquentia perfecta* relevant and effective, we must help our students to understand that it need not be expressed exclusively in Latin and/or Greek, or even in "proper" English. If we are to bring our message of equality and respect for others to a broad audience, we must find new ways of speaking eloquently in a language that is powerful for today's world.

As rappers and slammers have shown us in their live performances, the use of incorrect grammar and seemingly crude language often powerfully tells the story of those who suffer poverty, oppression, hatred, and derision because of their race, gender, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, and/or status in society. In his acclaimed poem "Game Boy," Filipino-American poet Regie Cabico lashes out at those who wish to take advantage of him just because he is "Asian:" "i am not a korean dragon lady/ running down avenue 'a' with a teapot between my legs/ shoutin' / where's my tip? / gimme my trophy! / you wanna play / with me? / you can / just quit orientalin' / cause i ain't / gonna change my cotton-knit calvins for you or my mother." This poem, which to be sure displays a different form of *eloquentia perfecta* than a Horatian ode or a Shakespearean sonnet, nonetheless employs linguistic virtuosity to create a powerful denunciation of the evils of racism in terms that are very real—perhaps too real.

And thus, we enter into the question of what, precisely, *eloquentia perfecta* is. In today's context, as it always has been, *eloquentia perfecta* is the ability to address challenging, and sometimes discomfiting, issues in an eloquent, i.e., inventive and gripping, way, using God's gift of language to preach the good news of the Gospel in a way that catches people's attention and makes them think. Even better, *eloquentia perfecta* in any context should be a foreshadowing of action—our meditation should lead to activities that contribute to the construction of a better world.

Racism is not the result of logical deduction, and as such it cannot be fought simply with syllogisms and rational arguments. Rather, it is an affliction of the spirit and the soul, which can be conquered by a direct appeal to the emotions. One of the greatest weapons against bigotry and a hatred of the “other” is *eloquentia perfecta*, which speaks to the soul in wrenching ways and moves the heart to true *metanoia*. As the Nuyorican poet Sandra María Esteves demonstrates, Jesuit *eloquentia perfecta*’s first task is to call out racism and hatred: “Half blue, feet first/ she battled her way./ The world did not want another brown,/ another slant-eyed-olive-indian-black-child./ Did not want another rainbow empowered song/ added to repertoire in blue,/ or azure, or indigo,/ or caribbean crystal./ Did not want another mouth to feed,/ especially another rock-the-boat poet,/ another voice opened wide,/ fixed on a global spectrum of defiance.”

And the second task of *eloquentia perfecta*, as important as the first, is to use the wonder of words to bring racial healing, as Chicano poet Rudolfo Anaya sings of the work of Walt Whitman: “Your words caressed my soul, soul meeting soul,/ You opened my mouth and forced me to speak!/ Like a cricket placed on dumb tongue,/ Like the curandera’s healing herbs and/ Touch which taught me to see beauty,/ Your fingers poked and found my words!/ You drew my stories out./ You believed in the Child of the Llano.”

So, we must encourage our students to develop their own form of Jesuit *eloquentia perfecta*, in their unique manner of expression, calling out what must

be changed and bringing their own form of healing. Word!

Mark DeStephano is professor and chair in the department of modern and classical languages and director of the Asian studies program at Saint Peter’s University. For a companion piece featuring the work of students, please visit www.conversationsmagazine.org.



Photo by Melissa Rojas, a graduate of Saint Peter’s University.

Why Jesuit education can lead the way

By Michelle C. Sterk Barrett

Public life in the United States is in a perilous state.

According to the Pew Research Center, trust in government is near an all-time low, and our ability to get along in a diverse society is not faring much better. Gallup polls have found that over half of Americans believe that Black-white race relations are somewhat bad or very bad. Mainstream news media speak of The Big Lie, even as 60 percent of Republicans continue to believe the 2020 election was stolen from the former president. Tensions and distrust have spilled over into families, communities, social media, news media, and our own colleges and universities.

While there are many complex reasons behind all this, it seems to me to be fueled by people in many quarters feeling that they do not matter.

People such as the life-long auto workers in my parents' hometown of Janesville, Wisc., who are still reeling from the 2015 General Motors plant closure. Black Americans who feel helpless and angry as they watch the death of another person who looks like they do at the hands of a person hired to protect them. Police officers who wonder whether the sacrifices they make are appreciated. Undocumented parents who live in fear of separation from the children they love so deeply and for whom they have sacrificed so much. Christians who feel their beliefs are no longer respected. Students and colleagues who feel marginalized on our own campuses. The list could go on and on.

Behind the strong emotions and divisiveness is often a feeling of being treated unjustly or being overlooked—sometimes in life-threatening ways—by our economic, political, or common life. Too

many are wondering if their lives are valued and are hoping for someone or something that can give them reason to believe it is.

How can we begin to heal and reconcile our nation in a time of polarization when too many feel forgotten or treated unfairly? How can we end the years of finger-pointing and blaming and, instead, move forward in constructive ways?

How can we become reconciled to one another?

Pope Paul VI's statement, "If you want peace, work for justice," has much relevance and wisdom for this present moment.

And as we seek a peace grounded in justice, those of us in Jesuit higher education can play a critical role in helping to lead our nation forward. We not only have the privilege of educating future leaders who can have a positive impact on these challenges, but we are also educating them within the context of a rich tradition of wisdom that offers guidance about the pursuit of peace, justice, and reconciliation.

From our Jesuit heritage, we have the concepts of caring for the whole person, of being "people for and with others," of the magis—the goal of seeking to serve the more universal good. We claim a tradition committed to the pursuit of justice and to being more ready to put forth a generous interpretation of another's words and actions rather than a propensity to condemn. Indeed, the Society of Jesus holds up Jesus as the model—the one who embodied radical inclusivity, compassion, faith, mercy, peace, justice, and reconciliation in his actions.

From Catholic Social Teaching, we also have an array of relevant tools: an insistence upon the

inherent dignity of the human person, an emphasis on the common good, a preferential option for the poor, a call to live in solidarity.

These themes, Jesuit and Catholic, resonate throughout the mission statements, the visions, and the strategic plans that guide each of our institutions and are expected to shape the education we provide.

Further, our institutions provide abundant opportunities for engagement with what Fr. Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, former Superior General of the Jesuits, called the “gritty reality of the world.” Such experiences—which provide a foundation for peace, justice, and reconciliation—help our students to develop both compassion and nuanced thinking as they learn to see beyond stereotypes, statistics, and labels to know the challenges faced by real human beings in real situations.

The liberal arts foundation likewise fosters community engagement experiences that can be critically reflected upon from multiple disciplinary perspectives, enabling students to better understand the social and economic complexities that underlie “gritty reality.” Our institutions are therefore particularly prepared to develop “contemplatives in action” who reflect with depth and thoughtfulness about how they might respond to the brokenness of our world.

Caylie Whiteside, a 2021 graduate of the College of the Holy Cross who was highly engaged in her local community during her undergraduate years, offers just one example of our educational potential. She attests to how she was moved beyond “either/or thinking” to “both/and thinking,” recognizing that her education provided her, above all, with “the capacity to empathize with others” and the inspiration to work toward healing “our nation’s divides by recognizing it is not us versus them but both us and them.”

It is just this sort of nuanced thinking that can help our nation to become not only peaceful and just, but also truly reconciled. In the end, both/and thinking, the capacity to empathize, and the practice of solidarity produce the foundation of reconciliation.

How can I help build what Martin Luther King, Jr., called the ‘beloved community,’ a peaceful, just, and reconciled world?

As I think about the relevance of all of this in my daily work, the underlying question that motivates me, a question that I imagine motivates many others too, is this: “How can I help build what Martin Luther King, Jr., called the ‘beloved community,’ a peaceful, just, and reconciled world where everyone is treated with dignity, compassion, love, and respect?”

Greg Boyle, S.J., founder of Homeboy Industries, poignantly describes this type of beloved community as “radical kinship,” a way of living based upon the recognition that “We are one, and we belong to each other.”

Current divisions in our nation may make this vision feel unattainable, but I believe the education we provide, an education grounded in rich Jesuit and Catholic traditions, can play a vital role not only in helping us to build that beloved community, but to gain the wisdom and hope that we need in order to commit to the work before us.

Michelle C. Sterk Barrett is director of the Donelan Office of Community-Based Learning at the College of the Holy Cross and the chair of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities Service-Learning Professionals Conference.

The trouble with civility

By Alex Zamalin

There's nothing wrong with being civil, right?

The truth is more complicated than you think, especially when it comes to the history of race in America.

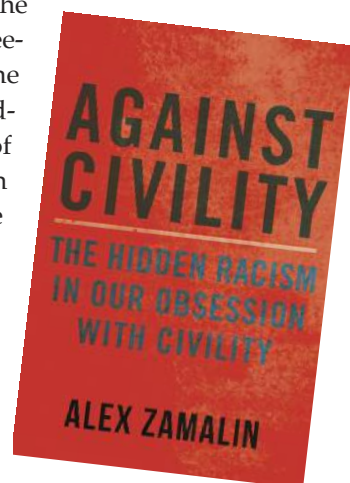
Yes, it's a moral virtue to try to be a decent person, perhaps when you're spending time with your friends, family and neighbors. But everyday life isn't political life. Indeed, throughout U.S. history, civility—the idea of looking to compromise with others when you can, being respectful and polite—has never been a neutral thing. Nor has it been used primarily to promote peace and justice. More often than not, dating back to defenders of slavery to violent vigilantes and mobs, to Jim Crow enthusiasts and some self-described liberals and racists today, civility has been weaponized to silence the very democratic movements trying to achieve racial justice.

In the 1830s, slave holder apologists like South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun in 1837 accused antislavery abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison of being the greatest threat to the stability and prosperity of the Union. What was their uncivil crime? Wanting to end slavery. Over a century later in 1963, Martin Luther King Jr., was famously told to be more patient, and take it easy by eight white clergymen as he was leading the Civil Rights movement, then in its second decade, and on the verge of major legislative victories. That's why King said in his "Letter

from Birmingham Jail," that the greatest threat to the Black freedom movement isn't the Klansmen, but the white moderate, who uses the refrain of "Be civil!" to keep intact an unjust status quo. These are just two of the stories I chronicle in my newest book, *Against Civility: The Hidden Racism in Our Obsession with Civility* (Beacon, 2021).

So, you might wonder, what's to be done? For starters, it's important to recognize that just because antiracists like King—and everyone from Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, T. Thomas Fortune, Fannie Lou Hamer and Audre Lorde—criticized civility doesn't mean they embraced violence. You can eschew civility politics, which is about reaching bipartisan consensus at every turn, and instead do what King did—fight passionately and deliberately with your allies for justice. This is what I call, "civic radicalism."

Civic radicalism isn't just an abstract, philosophical ideal; it's the most successful democratic strategy in U.S. political history. Think of the antilynching activist Ida B. Wells, who in the 1890s was bold in her crit-



civ·il | \ si-vəl \

adequate in courtesy and politeness : MANNERLY

It was hard to be civil when I felt so angry.

icisms that the myth of lynching was based in the lie of black male hypersexuality. Or James Baldwin who, in *The Fire Next Time* (1963), didn't traffic in false equivalencies, but specifically blamed white innocence—a failure to acknowledge the truth of racism—on the catastrophe of racial inequality. Think of the interracial unions marching for better pay in the 1930s, the young civil rights activists in the 1960s sit-ins at boycotting segregated lunch counters, the black feminists defending the importance of intersectional thinking in the 1970s when they're told to be respectable.

What these movements do is put pressure on injustice by putting themselves out there—unabashedly, unapologetically, collectively, defiantly. All of these movements are nonviolent. But the key thing is that they're not looking to reach across the aisle to their opponents, to persuade apathetic moderates or hardened racists, who would rather they get off the streets. They're looking to build a stronger, more durable network of friends who want a better world. The lesson from this history is that hearts and minds only change after public policy change forces them to—when being part of an unpopular minority is untenable.

When we see young people out on the streets protesting the murder of George Floyd throughout the world and chanting "Black Lives Matter!" in the summer 2020, they're being disruptive. But rather than get stuck on this question—are they civil or not? Can they be more moral and upstanding?—we should ask what is the great social service their activism is doing for all of us. When you ask this, it becomes clear that they're pushing the issue of social



Melissa Rojas, a graduate of Saint Peter's University.

justice to the fore. In this way, they're following in the direct footsteps of Martin Luther King, who urged in his Birmingham letter, for all Americans to not shy away from creating a productive, loving tension in society, so the stakes between justice and injustice are as clear as day.

Alex Zamalin is assistant professor of political science and director of the African American studies program at University of Detroit Mercy. He is the author of several books, most recently Antiracism: An Introduction and Against Civility.

Imagine civility as a tool of compassion

By Gwendoline M. Alphonso

Civility, like all social and political practices, is not neutral nor inherently desirable.

As Alex Zamalin and others have rightly pointed out, civility within the American historical experience has largely been a tool to disempower African Americans, silence moral investigation, and preserve inequality.

Civility indeed undergirded the cruel hypocrisy of Southern paternalism that maintained the veneer of gentility while justifying centuries worth of physical, sexual, and mental torture of over four million enslaved people and their descendants. Within the ongoing matrix of domination, as Patricia Hill Collins, Chantal Talpade Mohanty and other intersectional feminists would argue, civility has also meant a blindness to internal inequities and power imbalances among fellow activists—privileging the position of black and brown men and first-world, white women over those of black and third-world women.

The more hopeful news, however, is that civility, much like other democratic practices, need not be a fixed nor inevitable prop for unjust laws, blind majority rule, or social violence.

Far from being a goal in itself, civility is best thought of as a changeable democratic practice that, despite its history, can uphold profoundly liberationist political goals.

The questions are which democratic goals do we want to uphold and why is civility worth reconfiguring in the first place? Much more than mere consensus or compromise, the practice of civility can be re-imagined as a passionate, moral commitment to equality, compassion, open listening and true learning, best exemplified in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), a court-like body established in South Africa to conduct inquiries into all apartheid-related crimes. Its objective was to

mend previously unbridgeable racial disparities. Anybody who felt they had been a victim of violence could come forward and be heard, and perpetrators of violence could also give testimony and request amnesty from prosecution.

The TRC was widely regarded as a crucial component of the transition to full and free democracy in South Africa, and its policy of reconciliation was predicated on the humanist principle that to forgive is not just to be altruistic, but is also the best form of self-interest. (See Ricardo da Silva, piece on page 30 for a view of this imperfect body and what many people see as its negative effects on the country.)

To be meaningful as a liberatory democratic practice, civility must be messy and open to disruption and contestation. Through it all, however, civility requires that we never lose sight of our shared humanity as the basis for our innate human propensity (however circumscribed) to coexist, to care for others, and to live meaningful lives.

In making the case against civility, Zamalin posits a separation between politics and everyday life, between ‘public life’ and the way we are or aspire to be with our friends and neighbors. In a classic Hobbesian and even Madisonian sense, he views politics as a fundamental arena of power and struggle between discrete interests that battle one another. Civility and moral virtue, within this framework, are to be invoked only in the social sphere, a domain separated and distinct from the political world.

Scholars of family and care within political science, including myself, have empirically demonstrated that the divide between public and private spheres is an artificial one, a political construction that has served to uphold, rather than tear down, insidious regimes of

inequality. Feminist care-based theorists such as Joan Tronto, Dorothy Roberts, and Martha Fineman call for a more foundational transformation of politics—as centered on human caring, affection, connectedness, and belonging.

To do this means integrating our social and political (and moral) spheres around the principle of care and advocating for the dismantling of existing racial institutions—such as mass incarceration and child welfare—not merely on grounds of their racism, but because they tear people apart and, in so doing, trivialize care, belonging, and human affection among black and brown families rather than actively support them.

Without a transformational re-envisioning of politics away from a bounded, individualist, gladiatorial arena, all legislative successes, no matter how hard fought and won, will always be open to narrowing and replacement as we see today in the contraction of voting rights, reproductive rights, child and social welfare. Why must we settle only for impermanent legislation when we can and should demand a more radical transformation of our politics?

To achieve a long-lasting anti-racist, just and equitable society, we need to change how we see the polity, intentionally connect it to our human and social sphere, and reimagine what it might take for us to make that vision happen. Balkanized interests, hardened factional divisions into political friends and opponents that exclusively elevate a politics of uncivil disruption and downplay the possibility of interconnectedness and reconciliation, regardless of how historically necessary, cannot be the way.

We can and must hold out for a more civil, radical, transformation of our social compact, where caring and kindness and human connectedness become widespread democratic goals, far more than here-and-now means to challenge Trumpian division, but also vital mechanisms to build solidarity and sustain a more meaningful and just democracy.

Gwendoline M. Alphonso is associate professor of politics, American studies, and women, gender and sexuality studies at Fairfield University. She is the author of Polarized Families, Polarized Parties: Contesting Values and Economics in American Politics.



“Our Roots Say That We’re Sisters,” a mural by artist Mauricio Ramirez, is a side of Marquette University’s Varsity Theater/Holthusen Hall building. It was made motivated by a proposal from the university’s student government.

Public service and activism as vocations of reconciliation

By Angeline Vuong, Jacqueline Ramos, Zoe Baker and Isabel Tayag

Reconciliation is a valuable framework for examining how we embed ourselves in public service and activism. It is a commitment to repairing harm and recovering what is lost. It means holding ourselves and those around us accountable as we work to create a more just world. A true reconciliation develops from the integration of the personal and the political, the contemplative and the active, the intellectual and the affective.

At the University of San Francisco's Leo T. McCarthy Center for Public Service and the Common Good, we design and facilitate programming that prepares students for lives and vocations of public service, advocacy, and activism. Applying a reconciliation framework to these learning experiences calls us to reimagine and rebuild interpersonal and institutional relationships that identify and repair past and current harms, and restore trust so we can move forward in true solidarity with those most affected by injustice. In this conversation, students and staff at the McCarthy Center discuss this framework of reconciliation in our work, lives, and the future as an ethic to build a more socially just and equitable world.

This article is an excerpt of a longer conversation which can be accessed as a podcast using the headline of this article as the search.

What does reconciliation look like on a systemic and institutional level?

Isabel Tayag: The first thing that comes to mind in activist spaces is the role of reconciliation and building solidarity among marginalized groups. Often systems of oppression—white supremacy, racial capitalism, heteronormative patriarchy—pit

groups against each other. It's designed that way. How can we move past our ignorance and our hate in the past, and then also hold each other accountable so that we can move forward together?

Zoe Baker: Reconciliation also means that our public institutions take accountability for the role that they played and what we see today. Recognition and the truth telling from the public institutions will help bring about sustained and longstanding justice and collaboration between public institutions and the communities that they've hurt the most. It also means that we bring communities into these institutions to help set the precedent and guidance for how they should move forward and how we can best create this just, sustainable peace and future.

Angeline Vuong: Local governments have a unique opportunity at this point in time to have a standard, recognized, prioritized and deeply felt definition of racial equity. Through this vision, reconciliation can be achieved tangibly, but it requires transforming our systems to support the collective liberation of Black, Indigenous, and people of color. It's ensuring that institutions respect and trust community wisdom and agency.

What does reconciliation look like on a personal level?

Tayag: When I think of reconciliation and restorative transformative justice, I try to practice it on a micro scale and in my interpersonal relationships, making sure that I stay true to that and holding people accountable in my life. I think the biggest thing for me in moving toward a just world is solidarity—cross racial, cross class. Solidarity, to me, really is

rooted in reconciliation and repairing the historical harm. Having the hard discussions with our elders. Teaching our kids from a young age. [Working] across ages: activism and organizing from babies to grandparents. Honestly, that is where I see the future and how we show up, particularly in the pandemic. It's beautiful to see that, despite consistent government failures.

Baker: I felt called to public service. Growing up in San Francisco and just seeing the disparate realities of all the people that live here and the impacts of economic suffering and how some people weren't really being treated as they belonged. And I really felt that was wrong, that it was on me and something that I wanted to do. I needed to speak up for those people and not just speak up for, but fight alongside and really work toward making sure to build the world I thought was right and that I thought we all deserve to live in.



Portraits of those who work for peace adorn this building at University of San Francisco. Photo courtesy of USF.

Jacqueline Ramos: We have to name the things that are happening, but also understand the root causes as to why there's pain and why there's oppression, which is rooted in capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism. These are weapons of the oppressor—to divide communities of color. If that division is happening, the oppressor is able to achieve what they are striving to achieve day-to-day, which is to exploit and profit off our bodies. We have to be in these spaces where we can talk about it. Listen to folks who are Black, Indigenous, and people of color with a deep understanding, folks who are closest to the pain. They are the real experts in the field, those on

the front lines—holding ourselves accountable and knowing that we are going to make mistakes because we are human. To learn from those opportunities and experiences.

The contributors to this piece are all affiliated with the Leo T. McCarthy Center at the University of San Francisco. Angeline Vuong is the assistant director of public service programs, Jacqueline Ramos is the community-engaged learning program manager and Isabel Tayag is a community empowerment activist. Zoe Baker served as a McCarthy Fellow before graduating in 2021.

Listening and Learning from Community Voices: Considering Co-Learning

By Sean L. Rhiney

“Locked us out. That is what happened!”

The statement was a neighborhood resident’s account of how gentrification had methodically bounced her family from neighborhood to neighborhood. The undergraduates listening intently shook or lowered their heads. After some reflective silence, they began awkwardly, but respectfully, asking their questions.

Gentrification was a concept they understood conceptually from our readings and lectures, but nothing animated the powerlessness a community can feel more than this lived experience. The woman’s vulnerable testimony provided insight into how systems of inequality and the uneven distribution of power—and not necessarily the poor choices of individuals—might increase evictions.

Scholarly research shows that when community experiences and voices are integrated into a course, the learning is more authentic and personal. When preparing students for service and immersive learning in the community, we acknowledge these outcomes and invoke our Jesuit charisms by inviting students to listen and learn from their community companions along the way. Discomfort from the resulting dialogue or disorientation from an immersion in new places can further open a willing participant to a deeper understanding of systemic injustice and the transformative potential of these curricular experiences.

Even before 2020 when Black, brown, and white communities across the country mobilized in solidarity and protest, there was growing student interest at Xavier in the foundations of

community organizing and opportunities to apply activist skills in communities where inequity remains entrenched. This interest prompted the Eigel Center for Community Engaged Learning’s faculty director and me to propose a course on community organizing that paired historical and contemporary organizing strategies with citizen voices and an immersion in community. Coincidentally, one of our valued non-profit partners, Community Matters, inquired about community organizing training for their resident leaders. Collaborating with this Cincinnati-based nonprofit, we formed a cohort of undergraduates and passionate community leaders as students in the course.

Luckily, we were not the first to contemplate the creation of a co-learning course that joined students and community members on a university campus. So-called side-by-side courses are a popular and growing offering at many universities and colleges, with some schools linking certification, academic credit or even degree options for non-traditional community participants. Inside-out programs are an immersive and intensive twist on co-learning, permitting students to travel into a prison to learn in tandem with their incarcerated classmates. Considering the potential pedagogical approaches with our collaborative community nonprofit partner, it was



suggested that we hold the class in their neighborhood about 20 minutes from our own campus.

Locating the class in the community accomplished complementary goals: It promoted ease of access for interested community leaders who were landlocked by limited bus routes across town, and provided our undergraduates a recurring opportunity to be in community each week. The course offered all participants an interdisciplinary examination of historical and contemporary strategies used by community organizers, while focusing on issues of class, race, ethnicity, and gender in organizing. Because of the intersectional scope of organizing, faculty in history, political science, communication, social work, and public policy guided students. Fourteen undergraduates enrolled in this pilot course and shared the classroom with four resident leaders.

Among the community classmates was a neighborhood council president who shared an equal passion for expanding an organizing mindset within her community.

Class sessions explored origins and examples of asset-based community development, coalition building, media engagement, and specific organizing strategies. Students attended a community council meeting chaired by their classmate, completed a community-wide asset inventory with feedback from other resident leaders, researched and presented issue briefs on potential organizing topics, and met with stakeholders and allies to become more versed in community culture.

The final class projects were planned in tandem with community voices, and designed for implementa-



Xavier students went into a community to learn from its residents about their concerns about gentrification.

tion by neighborhood leaders and volunteers with the support of our partner, Community Matters. The issues that informed the projects were discussed and voted on by all participants and designed to organize around real time community concerns: the loss of affordable housing and growing concerns about gentrification, educating property owners on lead abatement, and devising a plan to better leverage the political power that often escapes more marginalized communities.

Though the semester and project plans ended up truncated by the pandemic, students learned to recognize their community classmates as diverse subject matter experts—the subject being the neighborhood and their informed and impactful perspectives. Moreover, community classmates expressed great interest in the students' double majors and asked often about

where their career paths might take them. Our course was imperfect—the logistics and design for a course taught by five faculty and based entirely in the community adds to the growing number of logistical decisions community engaged faculty and staff already experience—but the concept of this co-learning pilot revealed a world of possibilities.

Tania Mitchell, a noted service-learning scholar, says critical community-based learning should interrogate systems and structures of inequality, question the distribution of power, and seek to develop authentic relationships among students, faculty, and community partners. Part of this relationship building can be realized by courses that integrate community voices not just as representatives of a place, time, demographic, or experience, but as co-learners side-by-side with our traditional students.

This experience honors the Jesuit charism to seek solidarity and kinship not just through time or place-based service experiences, but also through authentic, ongoing relationship building. Further, it recognizes knowledge originating from community equally with the diverse knowledge and energy emanating from our very own institutions, offering an equitable distribution of power that elevates traditional models of community engaged learning.

Sean L. Rhiney is the director of the Eigel Center for Community Engaged Learning, and an adjunct instructor in the honors program at Xavier University. Community Matters can be found at cmcincy.org.



After vandals damaged a sign at Xavier University's Bellarmine Chapel, students and the community came together to show their support.

Georgetown University
Washington, DC, 1789

Saint Louis University
Saint Louis, 1818

Spring Hill College
Mobile, 1830

Xavier University
Cincinnati, 1831

Fordham University
New York, 1841

College of the Holy Cross
Worcester, 1843

Saint Joseph's University
Philadelphia, 1851

Santa Clara University
Santa Clara, 1851

Loyola University Maryland
Baltimore, 1852

University of San Francisco
San Francisco, 1855

Boston College
Boston, 1863

Canisius College
Buffalo, 1870

Loyola University Chicago
Chicago, 1870

Saint Peter's University
Jersey City, 1872

University of Detroit Mercy
Detroit, 1877

Regis University
Denver, 1877

Creighton University
Omaha, 1878

Marquette University
Milwaukee, 1881

John Carroll University
Cleveland, 1886

Gonzaga University
Spokane, 1887

St. John's College
Belize, 1887

University of Scranton
Scranton, 1888

Seattle University
Seattle, 1891

Rockhurst University
Kansas City, 1910



Loyola Marymount University
Los Angeles, 1911

Loyola University New Orleans
New Orleans, 1912

Fairfield University
Fairfield, 1942

Le Moyne College
Syracuse, 1946

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