

DISMANTLING RACISM DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE THEOLOGICAL ROOTS OF COLONIALISM AND RACISM

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RELIGION & RACE
The United Methodist Church

OPENING PRAYER

Holy One who creates us All in Your own image.
Help us to believe this.
Help us to remember this.
Help us to fight for this.
May our identities be rooted in you and
the way you have created us.
In Christ's holy name, Emmanuel, we pray. Amen.

INTRODUCING THE DISCUSSION

 [WATCH THE CONVERSATION](#)

Panelists include **Dr. Mai-Anh Le Tran**, the Rev. **Edgardo Colón--Emeric**, and **Dr. Willie James Jennings**.

If we as Christians are called to "love our neighbors," why do we see such racism within our religious communities and structures? Why does racism abound within the United States and across the world? How are our various identities tied up in all of this? Listen as we discuss and explore our true identity.

 [READ THE SUPPORTING ARTICLE](#)

SCRIPTURE

GENESIS 1:27 (THE INCLUSIVE BIBLE)

Humankind was created as God's reflection: in the divine image God created them; female and male, God made them.

DEVOTION/REFLECTION

Standing in the church office where I pastored several years ago, my staff member recounted the racism she experienced growing up in Jamaica. It came from her friends and family who, like her, were of African descent. She was singled out because her skin was too dark. She was treated differently, called names, and excluded from activities.

Growing up with three siblings, I related. I remember comparing our own brown arms to one another. Our comparison game was innocent enough; name calling and exclusion weren't part of it.

However, looking back, I cringe.

At a young age, we had figured out that the darkness of our complexions made a difference in how people treated us. We'd learned the lesson that lighter is better. Therefore, if I'm lighter, I'm better.

It wasn't lost on my siblings nor my staff member that the racism we were experiencing was often perpetrated by fellow Christians.

This is underscored in the panel, "The Theological Roots of Colonialism and Racism." For far too long, whiteness and the systems associated with it and Christianity have been intertwined with one another. From this perspective we have learned our own identity, whatever it might be.

Except our true identity rests not in whiteness, but in God.

From the very first pages of the Bible, we see that humanity (all of it) has been created in the image of God. This is our true identity. This identity, this sacredness, is bestowed upon us without merit simply by being created by God. Our identity (and that of others) must be that we are a person created in the image of God and thus of sacred worth. Are we living that out?

How might my staff member's childhood have been different if so? Mine? Yours?

Let's get to it.

