
#BlackLives(STILL)Matter after Trump: What Has Changed or Not, and Where Do We Go from Here?

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Introduction: On being change agents in the world

Present generations in the end-of-alphabet categories of Y and Z are coming of age with worldviews conscientized since the 1980s by the widening disparities in the human condition. Young adults are the justice architects of public #hashtag movements, such as the Occupy Wall Street movement to challenge institutional bias favoring wealthy special interests, and the present Black Lives Matter movement to resist a public upsurge of targeted bias against African Americans and other marginalized people of color. A hallmark of movements, it seems to me, is heightened consciousness that often transforms hearts along with the trauma of realizing that many hearts remain closed. Although I came of age as the Civil Rights Era effectively ended with the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, I see the mantle of justice activism shift to leaders in the GenY or Millennial generation, born between 1981-1996, and at the forefront of social change. In this generation, young adults come of age amid trauma that pervades the psyche like a rite-of-passage, except the transition includes a perilous reality of overtly racialized exclusion that assaults the consciousness because White supremacy is a cancer of the soul.

As the mother of a millennial, I see the profoundly deep disappointment in their eyes and hear the rage in their voices. Traumatic rage is evident and, it seems to me, an unavoidable reflex of conscious-raising as innocence erodes upon witnessing societal denial and systemic disregard for Black, Indigeous, and people of color. For some, trauma and rage limit the probability of survival with any semblance of sustaining hope. Yet, I learned to grasp, as an African American, that hope is our DNA from ancestral roots of enslavement and key to our survival as a people whom no one else wants to be. Coming of age, how does one find theological underpinnings to legitimate the sanctity of personhood while daring to hope? This dilemma is one of several that I ponder as I witness how many in younger generations channel visceral rage into a justice movement sparking a Black Lives Matter mantra across the nation between 2012-2016 that continues today. To echo observations of prophetic writer James Baldwin and womanist ethicist Emilie Townes, I contend that uncovering painful

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In my book, *Change Agent Church in Black Lives Matter Times: Urgency for Action* (2020), I discuss issues for faith leaders empathetic to the justice aims, or whose reticence deter involvement in these generational efforts. Whether or not faith leaders and congregants are reticent to address America's societal divisions, some millennial leaders are bold in voicing an ethical challenge: Where is the church? Community activists raise this sentiment

1. Rage is a sensory ethic in James Baldwin's writing and interviews: "To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a state of rage almost all the time" (1961 radio interview). A-1, NPR, June 1, 2020. <https://www.npr.org/2020/06/01/867153918/-to-be-in-a-rage-almost-all-the-time>. Emilie M. Townes, *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), describes "uncovering" as a calling to prophetic life, requiring actions to dismantle the cultural production of evil (161).

amid the pervasive conflation of religion with politics and critique what they view as an absence of churches with leadership presence in the justice charge for collaborative public witness. My 2020 book discusses the ethos of *public witness* as a faith-informed commitment to act in solidarity with marginalized groups to help mobilize change.² An essential ethos of public witness lies in persistent hope and commitment. Cultural trends of secularization and disassociation from communal religious rituals and worship practices, ironically, gave impetus to institutionalized patterns of religiosity that I identify as *evangelicalism*, a coupling of Christian dogma with an ideology of exclusivity.³ One hopes that people of faith would help communities struggling for unity as a nation in dire times, yet, responses are tied to complex religious values. Christians with ultra-conservative values rapidly organized alignments to power structures instituting economic and racialized agendas that further entrench an ideology of *evangelicalism*.

In effect, to address *where is the church?* as more than a rhetorical question, first requires us to acknowledge the complicity of religion in politics, or “religio-politics,” when used for ideological subterfuge.⁴ Religious rhetoric falsely comforts when invoked as a default excuse to cloak political agendas or justify public actions that foster disparities. A conundrum arises for the proverbial church and academy whenever religio-politics conflate God-talk with ideological posturing that polarizes or restrictive policy that marginalizes in the public sphere. Debates over what constitutes a faith response are complicated by what might be deemed appropriate and prophetic action. For instance, we witness that politicians and religious figures denigrate generational fervor and technological prowess to mobilize protests, decried as a millennial thug culture because certain tactics, to block the mundane flow of freeway or street traffic with marches or to interrupt political media moments, are strategies to interject critique about salient issues that otherwise get ignored. Commitment to an embodied theology offers intergenerational and interreligious collaboration options as communal change agents rather than adopt the religio-politics of exclusionary self-interest agendas. *Still, if we share concerns raised by millennial critique about the reluctance of professed people of faith to mobilize as change agents for justice reforms – what, then, can we do about it?*

Millennial voices urge religious leaders to delve into a myriad of factors in a cataclysmic divide. I begin by bracketing the era, Black Lives Matter times, as decades subsequent to the Civil Rights Era. When I examine public implications of #BlackLivesMatter dynamics, I call attention to the urgency while admitting that

2. Valerie Miles-Tribble, *Change Agent Church in Black Lives Matter Times: Urgency for Action* (Lanham: Lexington/ Fortress Academic, 2020), 1-12.

3. Miles-Tribble, *Change Agent Church*, 13-15, 74-75.

4. I examine *evangelicalism* as an ideological cooptation linked to “religio-politics that shift praxis away from the gospel proclamation of an *evangel*, or good news of Christ, as shared evangelism. When examined as an ideological stance, religio-politics fuels the strategies of elitist agendas and threatens to coopt biblical justice messaging” (Miles-Tribble, *Change Agent Church*, 13).

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intergenerational and interreligious collaboration to mobilize is slow. As my book title implies, I adopt the term “change agent” from adaptive change theory to find change agents are catalysts or inducing agents that enable synergistic action to proceed faster or under conditions than otherwise possible. I envision change agents as risk-takers willing to inspire others to innovative work toward transformative change.⁵ Despite critics, a theoethical premise for public witness centers on legalized injustice issues described by professor and lawyer Kimberlé Crenshaw as “overlapping oppressions.”⁶ Crenshaw argues that oppressions overlap to intersect race, class, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, and other factors experienced by the most marginalized in our society. When justice analysis includes identity analysis, we can raise awareness first and then critique how mechanisms of injustice are often ignored. If we reflect deeply and honestly, a dilemma arises when we admit that we all should be enraged to see young adults or youth of any cultural group, orientation, or identity confronted by lived experiences that subject them to daily incidents of violence, death, and urban disenfranchisement. Public witness is change agent ministry.

We still grapple, in my view, with a human tendency to

5. Miles-Tribble, *Change Agent Church*, 70-71.

6. The term “intersectionality” was coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw. See Jane Coaston, *Vox*, May 28, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/5/20/18542843/intersectionality-conservatism-law-race-gender-discrimination>. See also Crenshaw, “Why Intersectionality Can’t Wait.” *The Washington Post*, Sept 15, 2014. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/in-theory/wp/2015/09/24/why-intersectionality-cant-wait/?utm_term=.cf67af4117f6.

avoid or deny what Townes refers to as the “fantastic hegemonic imagination,” the systemic cultural typecasting to vilify groups; moreover, Townes argues that the “cultural production of evil” spreads when churches withdraw from countering the barrage of unjust public agendas entangled with religious exclusions.⁷ Yet, there is power when faith communities collaborate and connect justice demands to strategic data. Technology and social media are immersive realities for Gen Y and Z, taken for granted in the rhythms of daily life and used as effective tools to creatively mobilize action strategies. The speed of technology, and social media in particular, synergize generational perspectives with the rapid dissemination of admittedly conflicting information. Still, millennials exponentially use technology to leverage diverse, multi-node networks for operational capacity instead of easily identifiable hierarchies. What might be consternating for elements of society subscribing to authoritarian power is that these webbed networks enable diverse groups of justice activists to hone their public voices or leadership roles as they mobilize strategies, counter-strategies, and public campaigns. Before civic response to pressure yielded ordinances to require police body cams, millennials wielded cell-phone cameras for nearly instantaneous evidence by documenting the racialized incidences of extrajudicial police violence to call for accountability to grieving families in besieged communities. Such strategic actions have unmasked the lies in political agendas, verified communal suspicions of unjust disparities in organized religion, and challenged the onerous deportation tactics targeting immigrant communities. Public witness moves change agents beyond reticence.

A lived theology of God in the world: Contextualization and conscientization

Millennials now populate theological academies as student-practitioners or professors, whether directly connected with congregational or denominational affiliation. Lived experiences and generational worldviews prompt questions about the moral and spiritual contradictions that threaten a national ethos of freedom. Still, monolithic presumptions about the lived experiences and religious beliefs of Gen Y and Z are misleading because perspectives situate along broad contextual spectrums. Group deliberation invites shared narratives with dialogue re-envisioned to encourage contextualization and conscientization as two modes of learning or meaning-making. First, people derive an understanding of the human condition through *contextualization*, a process requiring authentically critical self-reflection on lived experiences to connect our theology, ethics, and praxis.⁸ In other words, people view the world through the lens of their personal circumstances and the collective. When we share our narratives, we help to foster communal listening and congregational identity as a crucial ethical step

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Second, *conscientization* is a process to raise awareness by scrutinizing tough issues rather than avoidance.⁹ Analysis involves deciphering sometimes coded language to reveal hidden values or agendas in public rhetoric and critically engage textual or biblical messaging to ground our theological and ethical views or practices. While teaching and speaking on *Change Agent Church*, I urge students, pastors, and community leaders to critically reflect in dialogue with shared context and awareness of the issues. I share numerous first-person narratives and direct personal encounters with leaders in our shared community justice work.¹⁰ Collective discourse about hypocritical use of religious language and values of religio-politics to thwart egalitarian efforts might provoke some defensiveness until awareness is raised from shared perspectives about the fallacies. Many who teach in religious academies or serve in community-based practices recognize the need to encourage reflection on the roles of theology in mission building, but it is still questionable if we prepare religious leaders and congregants to share in a lived theology of God in the world?

As an activist pastor and professor with an interdisciplinary focus on religion and practice, I am responsible for reflecting on the socio-critical analysis that I bring to my womanist scholarship. I invite others to consider theological and ethical issues that impede human dignity, self-actualization, and survival. I fully disclose that my womanist scholarship is not anti-White; instead, I reject the supremacist legitimation of *whiteness* as superior in personhood, identity, or access to anyone else. To self-identify as a womanist is confessional because I choose, as a Black Christian woman, to commit to a “communitarian ethos”¹¹ of inclusion exemplified

9. Miles-Tribble, 99-104. Paulo Freire framed conscientization in education to raise awareness with liberation critique of oligarchic structures. See Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th Anniversary ed. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, September 1, 2000).

10. Examples of justice tensions in first-person voices include Tanehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, (New York, Spiegel & Grau, 2015), Patrisse Cullors (Asha Bandele), *When They Call You a Terrorist: Memoir of Black Lives Matter*, (New York: St. Martin Press, 2017), and Marc Lamont Hill, *Nobody* (New York: Atria/Simon Schuster, 2016).

11. Miles-Tribble, *Change Agent Church*, 44-46; 117-119.

7. Townes, *Cultural Production of Evil*, 44-45.

8. Miles-Tribble, *Change Agent Church*, 98-99. See also Ed Stetzer, “What is Contextualization? Presenting the Gospel in Culturally Relevant Ways,” *Christianity Today*, October 2014.

by the Gospel witness of Jesus, a Palestinian Jewish rabbi who ministered across class, gender, and ethnocultural boundaries. Jesus' incarnational ministry, as reported in Luke 4:18, informs my belief that the justice aims of public witness should be life-giving to foster a communitarian ethos of discipleship. Jesus urged all who followed (including us) that communal kin*dom building is a discipleship charge.¹² In practice, Jesus modeled public witness at the margins and urged that silent hypocrisy is not a faith response. From colleagues, I have learned that the prophetic teachings of Jesus have applicable parallels in interreligious traditions about community building. Change agent public witness resonates in God's transcendent justice charge in Ezekiel 6:1-5 of the Hebrew Bible. Rather than toxic silence in religious and public circles, change agent leaders are urged to speak truth in a vast valley of dry bones as in Ezekiel 37, where a transcendent God poses to Ezekiel (and to us) the existential question: *Can dry bones live?*

How can faith leaders increase public witness in solidarity with younger generations whose resistant worldviews are shaped by the systemic violence against their bodies and personhood?

An ethos of inclusivity remains a challenge for some who subscribe to sexism and homophobia in faith traditions that cite scriptural justification to exclude gender and sexual minorities. If we profess a lived theology of God as transcendent Creator is a moral imperative for justice, and if we believe humankind is one family of God, then justice demands for public reform of structural injustices cannot ignore the hypocrisy of unjust practices still existing within organizational systems and structures. In other words, faith voices cannot scream for justice in the public square while ignoring how sexism, misogyny, homophobia, racism, and other -isms are used internally in academia and worship communities to ostracize rather than respect intersectional identities. I cling to a belief that the intersections of our diverse identities are welcomed when social reform activism embodies a discipleship passion for life-giving spiritual restoration and inclusive justice. As a child of the church, I also recognize the term "activism" is uncomfortable for some faith communities, primarily because it gets associated too frequently with politics or a negative view of protest as subversive action. Still, the Civil Rights Movement offers a historical example of disruptive justice when pastors and congregants in ecumenical churches organized marches supported by interreligious leaders that captured the reticent attention of a nation.¹³

When younger generations ask why America is a nation divided, the query is not born out of naïveté; rather, the question mark is more of an exclamation point amplifying an urgent need

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for generative commitments to public justice. Generational probes also underscore that people of faith cannot risk being sidelined by reticence to engage public discourse that might initially prompt more dilemmas than answers. Thus, it is urgent to consider what it takes to overcome a reticence to counteract pervasive hatred and exclusion and what we gain by avoiding the truth while swaths of our communities suffer multiple oppressions. On the one hand, people might feel pressured into comparative silence or inaction when unjust public agendas benefit certain religious factions that hold power for their special interests. While traumatized people tend to distance themselves protectively, they risk becoming inured or desensitized. Denial often results from desensitization with a greater risk of fearful anger as another response. On the other hand, truth-telling should offer constructive critique and strategic preparation to build a groundswell of people seeking justice who intentionally engage as change agents in collaborative, intergenerational public witness.

Critical self-reflection is a crucial element of communal dialogue to appreciate how our lived experiences impact theological and ethical justice responses. As we learn, we grow to enact public witness as change agent discipleship, responding to the urging of Jesus to "go and do likewise." Contextualization and conscientization are also rubrics at the heart of a womanist theoethical method of self-disclosure to integrate what womanist ethicist Stacey Floyd Thomas names as four affirming tenets or principles: (a) radical subjectivity, to claim and speak authentic truth of our selfhood; (b) traditional communalism, to embrace ways of being and doing collectively; (c) redemptive self-love, to forge paths of self-love, acceptance of others through faith in God and movement of the Spirit; and (d) critical engagement, to seek liberation with others through collaborative, interactive praxis.¹⁴

I often reflect on boundaries in my lived experiences. My embrace of public witness as a faith and justice commitment took hold in my formative years as one of seven kids in the narrow two-story row houses of West Philadelphia, where I experienced communal love despite the societal limits confronting my peers

12. Isasi-Diaz coined this term as a communal counter to hierarchical patriarchy. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, "Kin-dom of God: a Mujerista Proposal," in *In Our Own Voices: Latinola Renditions of Theology*, ed. Benjamin Valentin (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2010), 171-190. Smith used *kin*dom* for textual analysis in Mitzi J. Smith and Jayachitra Lalitha, eds. *Teaching of All Nations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014). See Miles-Tribble, *Change Agent Church*, 74-75, 275.

13. Miles-Tribble, *Change Agent Church*. Disruptive justice is conceptualized as an ethos compared to distributive and restorative justice (Miles-Tribble, *Change Agent Church*, 77-80).

14. Stacey Floyd-Thomas, *Mining the Motherlode: Methods in Womanist Ethics*. (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2006). See Miles-Tribble, *Change Agent Church*, 349-350.

and me. Guided by parents and mentoring “angels,” I believed in dreaming dreams with my youthful focus, ranging from a determined race to access the sole bathroom before my siblings to a determined dream to escape the narrow confines of my neighborhood boundaries one day. As a ten-year old, I commuted across the symbolic boundaries of the inner-city sections of Philadelphia that socio-culturists labeled “the ghetto,” using public transit routes of the El (elevated train) and subway systems to and from middle school, because a counselor convinced my mom that I would get a better education. By high school, what I learned were tough lessons of class and racial stigmatization while traversing the city. Gentrification was not a word I knew since urban renewal was not a municipal aim for predominantly Black sectors of the city. Instead, a visual boundary identifier was the urban blight of deterioration from city demolition, leaving blocks of boarded, uninhabitable structures or empty lots. Landscape and passengers changed as the El crossed boundaries. I overheard snippets of excitement when White fingers pointed out the famous American Bandstand broadcast studio where iconic dances appeared on TV and where I was not allowed to enter.

Life educated my consciousness whenever I overheard the N-word more than once as White suburban commuters labeled the people and boundaries confining my group of family and neighbors that I knew and loved as human beings. Spatial boundaries were marked each time I accompanied a parent to hastily retrieve an aunt from her live-in domestic duties to rejoin us for a weekend “curfew” that ended Sunday at 4:30 when she returned to the pristine green lots with large clapboard houses of the suburbs. By the time I graduated high school, Dr. Martin King was dead, and I no longer dreamed of an escape route to the suburbs, discovering it was not open to me, either. Instead, I sojourned to an historically Black college (HBCU) in Virginia, where the affirming learning community within its boundaries instilled wisdom countering racial slurs that persisted beyond campus gates. Experiences ground theoethical convictions to impassion, either complicity in or critique of oppressive dynamics; I chose the latter.

Two pandemics: From lemmings to leaders

The tragic COVID-19 crises in 2020 defies description, yet the chaotic pandemic impacted ethnic and class groups differently. We witnessed a national administration focus contentious attention on an upcoming election while denying the severity of COVID as a disease and, sometimes, the lies. As infection cases increased to nearly 600,000 COVID-related deaths in America, isolation added to trauma of daily survival, and paradigmatic shifts included re-thinking worship. We witnessed the other dis-ease of racialized injustice in disparate health services and racial profiling. In May, the images of the public murder of George Floyd fueled national rage and global public protests as another Black man’s death, caught again by a young woman’s cellphone, bore witness under the knee of the law. Floyd symbolized injustice against unnamed people already under the knee of structural oppression amplified by COVID risks, as enraged family and community protested

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ongoing extrajudicial police violence. By the November election, a deeply polarized nation was frenzied in its zeal to elect or re-elect a president amid voter fraud accusations. While elections are not the focus of this essay, it is impossible to analyze the morass of lies and division in this nation and ignore the religio-politics at its core.

As the year 2021 ushered in change, however tentative, the transition to a new president amid heated accusations of a contested election sparked a deadly nationalist insurrection on January 6 when thousands of Trump supporters attacked the Capitol building. National media replayed the shockingly bold and, some stopped short of saying, treasonous attacks on the Senate electoral process. Still under investigation, the alleged intent of the siege was to thwart the transition of the highest office by preventing the certification of the incoming duly elected president. In the aftermath, comments exemplify the follower fervor that I describe as lemming behavior, driven by the synergy of crowd mentality coupled with an unquestioning need to belong to an ideological stance.¹⁵ Reckless actions to cause mayhem were attributed to emotions flaring to follow others, or “I did what [the incumbent] told us to do.” As the factual revelation continues, insurrectionist identities are sobering to realize that the crowd included active members of the military, teachers, police, business people, and working-class folks with affinity to White nationalist hate groups. When touted as an American exercise of national freedom, violence is paradoxical for my son’s generation, who are often beaten and arrested for peaceful protest. Long before the COVID crisis, media focus on the public justice mantra Black Lives Matter stirred mixed reactions in our nation where an ethos of Black lives mattering is not a freedom but a perceived threat to privileged power.

15. I examine lemming behavior in *Change Agent Church*, 152-63, and find examples of lemming behavior in the January 6 insurrection; see Dina Templeton-Raston, “Lawyers for 18-year old Capitol Rioter Want Him Released to Parents,” *NPR*, February 26, 2021. <https://www.npr.org/sections/insurrection-at-the-capitol/2021/02/26/971848287/lawyers-for-18-year-old-capitol-rioter-want-him-released-to-his-parents>

What has changed and where do we go from here?

What has changed? Not much. Suffice it to say, America is a country in turmoil. Nevertheless, as diverse people of faith, we are called to be change agents by transcendent instruction like the prophet Jeremiah in 29:7, “Seek the welfare of the city, where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.” Can we, in exile amid two life-threatening pandemics that heighten fear and distrust, somehow find hope within our spirit as we seek the welfare of the city to proclaim hope to others? As a person of faith who believes, or at least hopes, in a living and loving God present in human struggles, I quest for spirit-filled freedom that moves people willingly beyond the silos of difference to seek the welfare of our diverse communities with interreligious and intergenerational collaboration. That quest led me to conceptualize a framework of social reform activism as a praxis model to offer an ethical premise for border-crossing engagement as change agents in public witness.¹⁶ As we meditate, pray, or deeply reflect, we might ask: where do we go from here?

As this era of Black Lives Matter times unfolds, there are long-term ramifications for the future. The long-term ramifications are what I analogize as the road to Oz with its obstacles and opportunities along the way. At the heart of our dilemma is contradiction: we live as people believing in a nation professing a credo of liberty and justice for all, whereas elements in the legislative and judicial structures work fervently to limit liberating justice to specific groups. Freedom remains a contentious public debate of human rights. Each side points to “the big lie” as polarized opponents while refusing to acknowledge the bipartisan denial of certain truths.

Media images documented for global viewing of Christian banners, Bibles, and crosses proudly carried with symbols of supremacist nationalism, including the American and confederate flags. Rhetoric and actions to undermine a legal voting process was intended to separate potential voters and foment racialized ideological fears; however, vehement denial of public wrongdoing by certain pundits starkly reminds us that declarations of professed beliefs are not necessarily theological or ethical. From womanist ethicist Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas, we discover the seeds of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism at the root of problematic religious ideology. Brown Douglas’ critical analysis unearths racialized biases infused in Christian nationalism.¹⁷ Obviously, what is “true” is at issue and often a point of debate.

Is it enough to re-envision equitable communities unless we embody public witness as active change agents in the world? A pandemic of racialized trauma and polarizing religio-political stances remain central issues in public debates about moral and spiritual crises undergirding civic unrest. Meanwhile, the largest Christian

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denomination in the United States mislabeled critical race theory as dangerous and issued an edict to prohibit discourse or teaching about race in all affiliated churches and seminaries.¹⁸ Yet, multiple oppressions still exist even if ignored when people of faith refuse to voice the necessity for shared discourse and theoethical analysis. Therefore, we must examine the depth of a cultural divide that threatens theological notions of church, religion, and morality rather than incite a lemming-like following that will continue denying these realities by restricting both discourse and reform. The issues of unjust disparities impact everyone and are not solely “Black people” problems to be addressed by Black churches.

First, I propose that congregations and community partners articulate a shared change agent commitment to peacebuilding that raises urgent approaches for disruptive justice by forming collaborative strategies with a restorative ethos. Our young adults and youth will not stop invoking the motto of Black Lives Matter to spotlight a reality of overlapping oppressions impacting people of color. They critically discern where they stand in the quagmire of debate. To seek the welfare of the city, change agent followers must prophetically disrupt privileged apathy, as in the Gospel when Jesus openly grappled with crises of public dissonance. In contrast to violence, preparation of strategic actions from open

18. Kenneth E. Frantz, “How White Southern Christians Fought to Preserve Segregation,” *Religion & Politics*, June 29, 2021. <https://religionandpolitics.org/2021/06/29/how-white-southern-christians-fought-to-preserve-segregation/>

See also Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2020).

16. See Miles-Tribble, *Change Agent Church*, 249-267 for detailed framework / rationale for discipleship.

17. Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2015).

discourse, shared stories, and reflection affirms the ways we are more connected than divided. Hard truths exposed by the current health crisis reveal disparities of disenfranchisement impacting already at-risk families of color, especially Black, Brown, and Indigeous communities. Our public witness is disruptive justice.

Second, I propose that, as moral advocates, we seek to raise awareness of the issues and attempt to address the disparities in the present landscape of two pandemics. Across our communities, we can share narratives to forge intergenerational and interreligious partnerships by hosting discourse about the religio-political divide, which is necessary, in my view, to learn its traumatic impact on interreligious theological and missional sensibilities. Critical self-reflection examines why we profess to believe in a transcendent creation of justice, as do non-Christian traditions, and in the Gospel teachings of Jesus to discern actions for said creation of justice. Churches and teaching academies have a moral imperative for equitable justice if we seek to embody a lived theology of public witness to emulate the radical hospitality of Jesus. We need to distinguish an exceptionalism-rooted Christianity from a Gospel witness of Jesus not only as incarnated God or *Logos*, but as a rabbinic figure whose actions are depicted within the contextual realities of oppression amid Roman occupation. Our public witness is prophetic. Finally, we have Hebrews 11:1 calling us to envision peace and possibility beyond what we obviously see: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Our public witness is urgent.

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