



Introduction to This Issue

Faith and #BlackLivesMatter: Future Directions

Introduction

In the fall of 2020, I taught a course called #BlackLivesMatter: Faith, Intersectionality, and Democracy at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. So many fractious and un-savory things were happening in the United States, and I wanted my students to have a forum to explore how our faith could teach us a way to proceed in light of (now former) President Trump's

unethical behavior. I put together a course with guest presentations by several professors to discuss this topic. Given this course was happening during the COVID-19 pandemic, the lectures were recorded so students could view them online and talk about them in the online course. Many of the original presentations have been re-worked for this volume considering political developments in the United States since the 2020 election.

When I originally envisioned the course, I did not know there would be a post-Donald Trump United States, beginning 2021. Thus, when Trump lost the election to Joseph R. Biden Jr., I assembled a call for papers from scholars to consider the theme of #BlackLivesSTILLMatter in a Post-Donald Trump U.S. society. The goal was to explore how, even though Trump was no longer president, he and his base still posed, and poses, a threat to the full

flourishing of marginalized bodies of color in the U.S. Thus, the correspondence between Faith, Intersectionality, and Democracy was retained, but examined in light of the changed political situation following the 2020 election.

The set of essays offered in this volume of *Currents in Theology and Mission* brings a variety of perspectives to the topic of race. It is a volume that includes graduate students as well as full professors, BIPOC scholars and White scholars, as well as scholars who span the spectrum of sexual orientation. All the authors here are thus considering the #BlackLivesMatter movement as it pertains to the full flourishing of marginalized bodies of color, as well as what the church's role is in relation to the wider societal struggle for justice for marginalized bodies.

JoAnne Marie Terrell begins the volume by exploring how a trickle-down holocaust of Black lives and relative degrees of privilege have spawned competing claims about whose lives matter in relation to the concept of "demonarchy" (coined by Delores S. Williams). She also explores white resistance to the #BLM movement. **Valerie-Miles Tribble** examines the public implications of the #BlackLivesMatter movement for the church, in order to propose an alternative to a religious rhetoric that falsely comforts when invoked as a default excuse to cloak political agendas or to justify public actions. **Nolan R. Shaw** discusses race, politics, and the judicial system through an intersectional methodology to show how the #BlackLivesMatter movement seeks to restore the humanity of Black lives. His article is a historical survey with contemporary implications for the church's praxis in response to #BLM.

After looking at the present pandemic, including its current impacts on Asian/Americans in light of past history, Chinese American scholar **Tat-siong Benny Liew** argues that the scapegoating of Asian/Americans during public health crises is connected with many of the -isms to which Trump is committed, and shows in the process that the Trumpian regime, if and when considered with a longer view of context and history, is different more in degree than in kind. **Jamie L. Fluker** then uses a methodology of womanist historiography and womanist ethics to uplift lived experiences of Black women as a liberating narrative of the #SayHerName movement in conjunction with the #BlackLivesMatter movement.

Continuing on the theme of intersectionality, **Linda E. Thomas** documents applied Womanist pedagogy surrounding the topic of theological intersectionality. Thomas interlaces constructive proposals for theological intersectionality with reflections on teaching this concept, seeking to be a beginning of the exploration between theology and intersectionality. **Eric J. Kyle** continues examining the relevance of Intersectionality in relation to pedagogy, by exploring the development of Fluid Intersectional approaches for pedagogy through a review of five different social justice education strategies. By so doing, he attempts to develop more adaptive, nuanced, and complex ways of helping students to develop their intersectional capacities for critical analyses and social action.

Cynthia D. Moe-Lobeda poses and pursues the question: *What are some future directions and current directives for White U.S. citizens of relative economic privilege if by our lives we are to assert that Black lives do matter?* She explores why cracking through white blindness, though a necessary first step, is inadequate alone for White people to make the leap into anti-racist living. **Justin Nickel** then argues how the ELCA is called to hear the Blues of Black suffering and respond in just, loving ways, in relation to how Martin Luther defined suffering as an essential trait of the Christian life.

Brach S. Jennings proposes constructive developments for a contemporary Lutheran Barthian *theologia crucis* using Augustine and Malcolm X in solidarity with the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Employing late LSTC professor Vitor Westhelle's *figura* hermeneutic for Lutheran theology, Jennings proposes steps to radicalize theology in a Lutheran key from the perspective of a White, Queer male, in response to, and in solidarity with, the #BlackLivesMatter movement. **Jürgen Moltmann's** "Black Theology for Whites" documents his own personal exposure to Black Theology during his time as a guest lecturer at Duke Divinity School in the late 1960s, the history of Black oppression in the Western world dating back to the late sixteenth century, and the history of the Back to Africa movement of Marcus Garvey, which was important for the philosophy of Malcolm X. He documents the respective approaches to black liberation of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., and then addresses, theological themes in James Cone's Black Theology of Liberation, and what Black theology teaches White people. Originally published in English in 2001, this piece continues to have significance for today's context.

Michael S. Hogue addresses what it means for White people to get free from the matrix of Whiteness. He begins with a personal description of the provocations of #BlackLivesMatter in the context of Christian neighbor love, and then discusses Charles Mill's *The Racial Contract*. Finally, the *Currents FOCUS* article for this issue is written by **Sigrid Elliott**. Using the format of a narrative case study, she seeks to demonstrate the need for inclusive safe spaces to be available to, and utilized by, Black queer individuals, as Black queer individuals may find, and have found, faith-based organizations to be less inclusive of their full selves.

Thanks to Kadi Billman and Craig Nesson for their kind invitation to serve as guest editor for this issue of *Currents in Theology and Mission*. I also wish to acknowledge Brach Jennings and River Needham, whose assistance with and commitment to this project is much appreciated. A Herman Grant made it possible for several scholars who gave lectures in my course "Theological Reflection on Faith, Intersectionality, and Democracy" offered in the fall of 2020 to publish articles in this volume. I hope the volume will be a legacy for those who come after me at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, and the wider theological academy.

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