


REFORMED CHURCH CENTER AT NEW BRUNSWICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



Transcript of key comments/resources from the Chat “How Do We Talk About Racism in Church” —18 July 2020

There were many affirmations, greetings, Amens, et cetera, in the chat. Those are not included here.

01:10:37 Abby Norton-Levering: I don't need to unmute and speak, but here is my question: "talking about racism" seems to me to be only one piece of the work the church must engage. What can we DO about racism? Can the speakers engage the question of reparations? Especially when you consider that many of our older churches in the RCA were founded and grown by people who benefited from slavery, are we called to making reparations, and in other ways taking actions?

01:10:45 Cheryl: let's not keep coming back to eat at the same trough. Isaiah 58. refreshing interpretation

01:10:53 Joanne Van Sant: the disabled

01:13:32 Arlene Wilhelm: we need to talk about systemic racism and how to go about making change there

01:17:32 Rev Ursula Cargill: Greetings panelist, and thank you Rev. James for organizing this much needed discussion. Racism is inextricably woven with imperialism and colonialism that formed the fabric of our nation. By addressing racism without examining its tentacles in the formation of the United States, we will invariably address only one part of the root cause of racism - the impact of violence on people of color, where violence is direct and cultural. How can we, in discussing racism, ensure that the remnants of colonialism and imperialism are also addressed, especially those remnants that has inflicted violence on any group that was not elite white heterosexual males? My opinion is that it is a colonial imperialist culture that perpetuates elite white male heterosexual supremacy at the expense of the middle/poor classes, white women, LGBTQI people, and all people of color. It is this hierarchy that drives the bias that denigrates all people, especially those who are outside of this elite white male heterosexual group.

01:20:57 Abby Norton-Levering: Thank you so much Rev. Karen Georgia, I am grateful for the engagement.

01:21:18 Rebecca Hickok: could you give the name of the reparations document again?

01:22:16 Karen Georgia Thompson: <https://caricomreparations.org/caricom/caricoms-10-point-reparation-plan/>

01:21:50 Tammy Peoples: Rev. Wahl mentioned that someone from her community mentioned that you should not have brought up race in your report and that we should be color blind.... Sadly enough, there are many people in the church who are comfortable in being color blind instead of addressing the issue of racism....

01:24:38 Tammy Peoples: Jesus Christ came to give sight to blind. Color Blindness can not longer be a response to racism especially from the Church....

01:24:44 Shirly Jones Akkabathula: Thank you dear Brothers and sisters. Love of Jesus enables us to overcome racism and diversity.

01:29:20 Rev. Liz Testa: Rev. Thomas spoke about the transformation of the heart, where does discipleship fall in this process of dismantling racism personally and communally?

01:30:31 Benjamin Berman: I am a church musician- at First Reformed Church in New Brunswick. So much has been taken from Black people over the centuries in America, housing and education opportunities, labor, etc. and the church is complicit. Through cultural appropriation, we even take their music without a thought to the painful context it was created in. What do the panelists feel about the singing of Spirituals in a mostly-white church?

01:30:39 Lisa Vander Wal: I wonder if Karen Georgia could speak a bit about the UN statement against racism.

01:32:31 Karen Georgia Thompson: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25927&LangID=E>

01:33:39 Karen Georgia Thompson: <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent>

01:36:53 Karen Georgia Thompson: https://www.ucc.org/news_north_american_global_christians_urge_un_inquiry_into_deadly_acts_of_racism_06192020

01:37:12 Ruth Kent: It has always been my understanding that Reformed theology tells us that we are disciples 24/7 and not just on Sunday morning. That we are called to try to build and model the Kingdom at every moment and in every context of life. To me, that means that the way we participate in the public square and the way we vote should reflect our understanding of what the Kingdom is going to look like, what we are striving toward. I cannot theologically separate our political lives and our religious lives. That doesn't mean we tell people how to vote, but we ask people to try to find leaders whose proposals look like the Kingdom and not like the Empire.

01:40:05 Lisa Vander Wal: I would invite people to google the Accra Confession, which speaks to "empire", another way to say imperialism.

01:42:52 virginia young: Paul told us in scripture to

01:43:44 virginia young: lovingly treat slaves..He did not address the political, sociall

01:44:39 Jo-Ann Tipple: Virginia - are you suggesting that owning a human being is ok? Can you clarify please?

01:44:50 George Montanari: Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide, by George Tinker (Augsburg Fortress, 1993)

01:45:01 virginia young: economic or moral issues of slavery.. what should this mean to our church and us as individuals now?

01:45:02 Rev Ursula Cargill: chattel slaves or indentured servants...was slavery in scripture economic, political, and limited to 7 years?

01:46:30 virginia young: I suggest nothing. I ask question to understand the implications of what Paul has said.

01:46:40 Vivian Campbell: Can you place that confession here?

01:47:10 Rev. Liz Testa: <http://wcrc.ch/accra>

01:47:47 Cynthia Bacon Hammer: Where do we find that confession?

01:47:52 Rev. Liz Testa: Here: <http://wcrc.ch/accra>

01:49:43 Jo-Ann Tipple: Thank you for the clarification. I think we understand that Paul was situated in a particular time and place and speaking to that - but this scripture and others were used specifically to justify slavery.

01:50:39 Jo-Ann Tipple: Interpretation should always have us landing in the way Jesus taught us to live...

01:51:56 Ruth Kent: I left the church for a number of years because of what I saw as its support of systemic racism and lots of other isms. I was brought back by the Black church (I'm White). I was able to come back because I felt that there must be more to Christianity and the Gospel than I had known, if anyone Black in this country was willing to be a Christian after what the church seemed to have done. They were hearing something through the work of the Spirit that I and the White church were missing. On a different note, there is significant Biblical warrant for reparations. Not necessarily what form that takes, but that something has to be done. (I co-chaired a conference on reparations and the Bible). When we try to talk to church members who don't understand, we need to be sure we talk in Biblical and theological terms as the ground of all our justice.

01:52:10 Tammy Peoples: racism has been around for a long time and each generation has a responsibility to eliminate it....Not only do we need to have political and social conversations about race but we must also have theological conversations about race...

01:52:18 Karen Georgia Thompson: Thanks Jo-Ann. And this is why it will be important to talk about this history of theological justification for enslavement and the naming of people as savages in the name of Jesus.

01:52:57 Tammy Peoples: Like Paul, America has a thorn in its flesh...and that thorn is racism...

01:53:17 Rev Ursula Cargill: The slavery of scripture was not chattel slavery. I find it difficult to equate the two. Slavery in America is unprecedented in that it was chattel slavery: black (one drop) babies were born slaves without owing a debt to anyone.

01:54:41 Rev Ursula Cargill: Maybe the thorn is imperialism and colonialism. The thorn that marginalized the Irish and the Italians at the turn of the 20th century legitimized the heinous treatment of black people.

01:54:43 Karen Georgia Thompson: Rev. Ursula you are exegetically right. However, these scriptures were used to justify enslavement of African people and that reality must be interrogated and addressed.

01:55:55 Karen Georgia Thompson: https://www.thriftbooks.com/w/root-and-branch--african-americans-in-new-york-and-east-jersey-1613-1863-graham-russell-hodges/760765/item/8549680/?mkwid=%7cdc&pclid=448915190769&pkw=&pmt=&slid=&plc=&pgrid=104754618896&ptaid=pla-926048762119&gclid=Cj0KCQjwu8r4BRCzARIsAA21i_Dc6XuwOzqTBs51O53Xh7vtw0vOhCnfkDACjju_yMqkDZnqdAdGaRoaAmsJEALw_wcB#isbn=080784778X&idq=8549680

01:55:55 Tammy Peoples: Social Justice needs to be a pronounced aspect of the faith as Mercy, Grace, and Redemption...

01:56:03 Rev Ursula Cargill: Maybe by rejecting the connection between the two, we can begin a dialogue that the ministers who used the Bible to justify slavery used questionable exegesis

01:56:23 James Brumm: The book Julie mentioned: https://smile.amazon.com/Root-Branch-African-Americans-1613-1863/dp/080784778X/ref=sr_1_1?crid=3DQ84AMS378BH&dchild=1&keywords=root+and+branch&qid=1595086290&s=books&prefix=Root+and+Branch%2Caps%2C137&sr=1-1

02:00:04 Philip Bakelaar: Visual notes from Beth Woof

02:00:11 Tammy Peoples: We need to reclaim the Scriptures for liberation....We need undo the narratives that used the Scripture to support colonialism, power structures, and oppression...

02:00:16 David Groeneveld: <https://scarletandblack.rutgers.edu/> <https://www.amazon.com/Scarlet-Black-Slavery-Dispossession-Rutgers-ebook/dp/B01N5OWXLH>The Scarlet and Black project includes stories of Dutch Reformed pastors, including Van Bunschoten (who is celebrated at every classis meeting) who made their fortunes from slave trade.

02:00:44 lorraine young: Thank you to all of the speakers. I feel energized in regards to what I can and should be doing to help in this struggle. One thing I have decided to do is give more of my time to voter registration. Thank you for helping have a response to those who say to me "they are tired of the Sunday black history lessons." to them I will say it is our responsibility to learn what God wants us to do and to learn what He would do.

02:01:05 Tammy Peoples: But first we have to be willing look at the sordid history of Christianity in oppression

02:04:49 Rev Ursula Cargill: Without purging our own sense of superiority, privilege, and silent/tacit support of imperialist/colonialist systems, we will continue to fertilize the seeds that validated cultural and direct violence against people, especially black people.

02:07:59 Micah McCreary: <https://newjimcrow.com/about>

02:10:20 Rev Ursula Cargill: I already have. Extremely impressive and a blessing globally. Your work is a gift from God to grow the kingdom, and I pray for your continued divine favor, in Jesus name. Amen

02:15:45 Regina Brannock: The church was very helpful but also hurtful to Native Americans. They were here to share the Word but they also took the children away from their families to live in boarding schools to "make them civilized." This happened in the U.S. and also in Canada. Our RCA Native churches were started by RCA missionaries and are over 100 years old. But now we are no longer Missions. We are expected to continue to run & grow our church by ourselves. We are talking with each other & the denomination to learn how to do that. And to have a voice in the Denomination. Please keep us in prayer. And remember, we need to follow the path that Jesus laid out for us & taught us.

02:17:37 Rev Ursula Cargill: Yes, I will keep your congregation and you in prayer. Schools, both those sponsored by the church, privately, and otherwise, reinforce the imperialist structure that places elite white heterosexual males above everyone else.

02:19:14 Norma Coleman-James: What are your about continuing our discussion on a monthly or bi-monthly basis?

02:20:36 Jo-Ann Tipple: I would be interested in ongoing conversation Norma.

02:21:45 Rev Ursula Cargill: Translator is a traitor...fascinating. If we factor in the latitude of the translator, there is difficulty in knowing what is truth. And yet, some hang their belief on the words selected by the translator. The implications are mind blowing!

02:31:52 Rev Ursula Cargill: Honest comments related to fragility...what is the motivation to change when the status quo benefits you/me/us?

02:32:35 Jo-Ann Tipple: What then needs to happen is that we make the point that the status quo will/can no longer benefit us.

02:32:44 Jo-Ann Tipple: That is our work I think - or part of it.

02:33:52 Jo-Ann Tipple: And we who are white have to get going with doing the work...there is discussion then action then reflection...

02:33:56 Jo-Ann Tipple: then action again

02:37:03 Rev Ursula Cargill: In my opinion, the price we pay to maintain the status quo is too great - costing us peace, harmony, unconditional love, trust...These are priceless. The tangible costs are loss of lives, dignity, respect, complicity, duplicity, economic depravity...

02:37:34 Jo-Ann Tipple: I very much agree with you Rev. Ursula - we just haven't figured that out well enough yet.

02:42:07 CV Singletary: Where do we go from here? Learn from our resources, education, conversations, experiences, past and present relationship with Christ and live it out according to the word of God and the example of JESUS. Faithful are those who hear the word of GOD and do it (live it out).

02:42:37 Micah McCreary: Sankofa (Ghana) San - to return, Ko - To go, fa to fetch! To seek and take