

A THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF
BLACK SUFFERING, WHITE SUPREMACY, AND HUMAN RESILIENCE
AFTER THE 1921 TULSA MASSACRE

APPROVED:

Adviser, Dr. Sarah Morice Brubaker

Reader, Dr. Regina Shands Stoltzfus

Director of Doctor of Ministry Program,
Dr. Kathy McCallie

Academic Dean, Dr. Lee H. Butler, Jr.

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by

Gregory Ross Taylor

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DEDICATION

*For Defenders, Victims, Survivors, and Descendants
of the 1921 Tulsa Massacre*

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Stoltzfus offered wisdom and insight that moved me beyond mere survival till completion, toward a new way to use my voice. “This work takes stamina,” she said, “and the forces of oppression depend mightily on individual and collective burnout, resignation, and denial. The church and the world at large need to do better at including resiliency as part of its strategy to deal with social injustices.”

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non-profit to practice reparations through increased home ownership for Black families in Tulsa.

This project is a modest contribution compared to the historic and ongoing work of activists, journalists, civic and faith leaders who have done the historic and current work of calling out and exposing white terrorism, greed, and denial. It took me four years of research and the strong influences of professors Dr. Shands Stoltzfus, Dr. Schwartz, and Dr. Hill to finally learn that I must center narratives, suffering, and resilience of massacre defendants, victims, survivors, and descendants.

ABSTRACT

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A theological anthropology that centers suffering and resilience of Black people in the aftermath of the 1921 Tulsa massacre. How did Black and white Christian communities in 1921 respond to the massacre? A research model of functional change measures how the author's faith community today responds to narratives of the massacre. Exposes and seeks to change systemic and internalized white supremacy that leads to inequities and trauma of Black people. Since no public reparations for the massacre have been performed, the author joins efforts toward reparative justice for Black Tulsans.

INTRODUCTION
CENTERING GREENWOOD

“If the centennial is to mean anything, we must center the stories, the trauma, and the resiliency of victims, survivors, and descendants of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.”

Dr. Karlos K. Hill

On a rainy night May 31, 2021, a few hundred Tulsans gathered for a candlelight vigil at the corner of Greenwood and Archer. One hundred years before, this intersection was the staging grounds for the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, the “deadliest outbreak of white terrorist violence against a Black community” in United States history.¹

We had gathered that night of the massacre centennial to pray for something better for Tulsa. Through the rain, I recognized the embattled Oklahoma Senator Kevin Matthews with his family. Senator Matthews had faced criticism over aligning with City of Tulsa efforts to raise money using Greenwood massacre survivors’ stories and images without adequately

1. Randy Krehbiel, *Tulsa, 1921: Reporting a Massacre* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), xi. Karlos K. Hill, in the foreword, says that while the scale of the 1921 Tulsa massacre is unprecedented, Tulsa’s violence was not exceptional. At least 250 documented acts of collective white violence have occurred in cities such as Washington D.C. and small towns such as Dewey, Oklahoma. I’m particularly curious about the violence in Dewey because I grew up attending the Dewey Church of Christ. White mobs drove twenty Black families out of Dewey by burning their homes. Hill says that these white terrorist acts are attempts at community expulsion of Black people. Calling the massacre “terrorist violence,” is not anachronistic. I find evidence of such language in 1921, in Maurice Willows, *American Red Cross on the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot*, Director (Tulsa, OK: Red Cross, December 31, 1921).

consulting or paying a significant portion of reparations to survivors and descendants. The senator's candle was extinguished by the downpour.

For the rainy centennial vigil, my wife, brother, and sister-in-law had battery operated candles. We gave one of our candles to Senator Matthews as a sign of peace. At the centennial music festival, the same weekend, poet and son of the senator, Sterling Matthews, asked, "Have you ever felt like you were drowning in pain?" Matthews, part of a performing group called "Fire in Little Africa," narrated in one of their songs, "Drowning," the voice of a Black man swallowing his family's tears on Greenwood.

When at last the fight was over
 Might not right had won the day
 Blocks of homes and business places
 Now in ruins and ashes lay
 Through the streets we all were driven
 At the points of swords and gun
 To detention camps provided
 'Ere the massacre begun
 Marched at gunpoint down Archer
 Past my own smoldering home, my life
 My girl and boy sobbing mama's hips wet
 In stifling June hot, heavy as redneck hate
 Marched at gunpoint down Archer
 Past my own smoldering home
 My wife's missus gonna come claim us

Caged coons like stray mutts at the pound
 My spirit walks Greenwood to Pine and back
 Like the grit of Black love then and now²

How deep is this historical trauma for defenders, victims, survivors, and descendants of the massacre that feels—one hundred years later—like drowning? What further trauma has white Tulsa perpetrated in the aftermath that would compel Dr. John Hope Franklin to say that the 1921 Tulsa massacre “robbed the city of its honesty” and sentenced it to a century of denial?³ After much public debate in Black and white publications in the early 1920s, there is little evidence in the next sixty years that Tulsans discussed the massacre publicly.⁴

In the past forty years, however, Black Tulsans have risked their lives to publicly witness Greenwood narratives.⁵ I have been convicted over four years of research to center Greenwood residents and descendants and their suffering, resilience, and power to rebuild and thrive in Tulsa one hundred years later. I am also convicted, conversely, that white narratives must be outed as driven by white supremacy, and de-centered. My research,

2. *Drowning*, written by Am're Ford, Evan Keith Rowland, Matthew Crockett, Parris Hoskins, Sterling Matthews, Motown, *Fire in Little Africa*, 2021.

3. John Hope Franklin, “Tulsa Still Hasn’t Faced the Truth About the Race Riot of 1921,” *History News Network at GW* (n.d.), <http://hnn.us/articles/38175.html>.

4. A number of works document threats of violence for even mentioning the massacre publicly, the conspiracy of silence as early as the week after the massacre till now in Tulsa, including, Hannibal B. Johnson, *Black Wall Street 100: An American City Grapples with Its Historical Racial Trauma* (Forth Worth, Texas: Eakin Press, 2020), 16-18, 259-60.

5. Risking her life in relentlessly documenting survivor narratives Mary E. Jones Parrish published the seminal history for the 1921 Greenwood massacre; see Mary E. Jones Parrish, *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*, Limited Edition. (Tulsa, OK: John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation, 2009). See also Scott Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land: The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921* (Baton Rouge; London: Louisiana State University Press, 1982); John Hope Franklin et al., *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report by the Oklahoma Commission to Study the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921*, Commission (Tulsa, OK, February 28, 2001); Johnson, *Black Wall Street 100*.

therefore, centers narratives of Greenwood residents while also exposing white supremacy in white religious and civic communities in the aftermath of the massacre, and one century later. I am developing in this project a theological anthropology to change how white people see Black people's suffering and resilience in the aftermath of the 1921 Tulsa massacre.

Greenwood, May 30-June 1, 1921

The story of Greenwood District in Tulsa, Oklahoma, according to attorney and historian Hannibal B. Johnson, “is fundamentally about the human spirit—about African American pioneers who built something magical, weathered its calamitous destruction, and shepherded its unlikely rebirth.”⁶ Most of the Greenwood District of Tulsa was built on federal land allotments for Cherokee and Muscogee citizens and Black freedmen who had been forcibly removed from their Eastern lands in the 1800s.⁷

African American pioneers who founded Greenwood arrived in the early 1900s. In 1906, Emma and O.W. Gurley migrated from Mississippi, bought land, and later built the first all-Black hotel on what would become Greenwood Avenue. J.B. Stradford and his wife, Bertie Eleanor Wiley, bought land from Muscogee and Cherokee citizens, platted lots, and sold them mostly to Black people to build businesses and homes.⁸ John and Loula Williams built and operated a multi-story brick building with a rooming house, Loula's Confectionary, and the famous Dreamland Theatre. Other property owners and businesspeople include Barney Cleaver, who was on the Tulsa police force and later a sheriff's deputy; Jim Cherry was a plumber from Texas who became one of the most successful Greenwood property owners;

6. Johnson, *Black Wall Street 100*, 31.

7. Johnson, *Black Wall Street 100*, 26-27.

8. Johnson, *Black Wall Street 100*, 29, 325.

Andrew J. Smitherman moved to Tulsa in 1913 and operated the *Tulsa Star* newspaper, “a feisty weekly that did not hesitate to throw darts at both white and Black leadership,” according to Randy Krehbiel.⁹

By 1921, a district with Greenwood Avenue as its North-South spine, grew to eleven thousand Black residents hoping to find land, liberty, and opportunity. North of Tulsa’s central business district, across the Frisco rails, Black residents had built more than two hundred businesses. Greenwood District pulsed with energy and entrepreneurship of its own. There was Huff’s Cafe on the corner of Cincinnati and Archer, and thirty other restaurants in the district. J.D. Mann had a grocery store and so did about a dozen others. J.B. Stradford built a hotel near the Gurley’s hotel, making five total hotels to host Black travelers who were not welcome in whites only hotels in Tulsa. There were four drugstores, two theaters, fifteen doctor’s offices, several attorney offices, two dozen churches, including Vernon AME and Mt. Zion Baptist, two hospitals, a public library, a post office, and a Y.M.C.A.

“In the residential section there were homes of beauty and splendor which would please the most critical eye,”¹⁰ according to the preeminent journalist Mary E. Jones Parrish. Kenny I. Booker lived in Greenwood with his parents and four brothers and sisters at 320 N. Hartford Avenue. “We had a lovely home, filled with beautiful furniture, including a grand piano,” Mr. Booker said. By 1921, approximately 1,300 homes had been built and owned by Black people in the Greenwood District.

9. Important in the work of historians, journalists, photographers are the acts of naming and lifting up the stories, exact addresses, businesses, and agency of Greenwood businesses, churches, and property owners. Mary E. Jones Parrish, Scott Ellsworth, Hannibal B. Johnson, Randy Krehbiel, and Karlos K. Hill in particular do this very well. For a more extensive narrative of the names of property and business owners by name, address, and types of businesses, see Krehbiel, *Tulsa, 1921*, 20-24.

10. Parrish, *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*, 7.

Despite the City of Tulsa neglecting to build adequate roads, electric, water, and sewer services in these thirty-five city blocks, the Black population in Greenwood thrived anyhow. Greenwood was so successful that Booker T. Washington referred to the neighborhood as “Black Wall Street.” White Tulsans became jealous and scandalized by Black success, as if what Blacks had made for themselves was too good for them. This white incredulity, land lust, and white supremacy bubbled in a toxic brew that would erupt in unprecedented violence in early summer 1921.

Tulsa in 1921 was largely segregated. White people crossed North of the Frisco tracks for entertainment. Black people crossed South of the Frisco tracks to work as domestics and laborers for white people. One Black laborer was a shoeshine man named Dick Rowland.

On May 30, 1921, according to a story reported in the *Tulsa Tribune*, 19-year-old Rowland entered the Drexel building elevator operated by a 17-year-old white woman named Sarah Page. The news story included fabrications and claimed an unnamed witness heard Page scream. The headline read, “Nab Negro for Attacking Girl in Elevator,” and the salacious news copy claimed Rowland “assaulted” Page, an insinuation of rape.¹¹

Rowland was arrested May 31. A white mob gathered at the Tulsa County courthouse and jail, where he was being held. The mobs demanded Rowland’s release so they could lynch him.¹² This motive of white mobs is not conjecture. Black Tulsans in 1921 were fully

11. According to Krehbiel, 65, this *Tulsa Tribune* report was described by the *Oklahoma City Black Dispatch* as “the false story that set Tulsa on fire.” The story appeared in the *Tribune* May 31 and the “state” or mailed edition dated June 1, 1921. Karlos K. Hill, *The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre: A Photographic History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021), 3-17. See also Ann Snitnow, Christine Stansell, and Sharon Thompson, eds., “The Mind That Burns in Each Body: Women, Rape, and Racial Violence by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall,” in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality* (New York, NY: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 328–349.

12. Page did not accuse Rowland of rape, and no charges or conviction was rendered in the case. Franklin et al., *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report*, 22.

aware of the possibility of a white mob lynching Rowland. Between 1907 and 1920, thirty-three lynchings had occurred in Oklahoma and twenty-seven of those were Black persons.¹³

Black veterans, meanwhile, returned from World War I, having seen a world freer for Black people than the “legal segregation,” cruel discrimination, and violent lynchings that Black people in the United States endured. These veterans who had risked their lives for a nation that did not value theirs, were joined by other Black men and women to defend Dick Rowland. In fact, Smitherman had written that it is the legal right and duty of Black citizens to arm themselves and march on the courthouse, take life if needed, to uphold the law and protect the prisoner. “The lynching of Roy Belton,” Smitherman wrote in the *Tulsa Star*, in reference to lynching of a white man for murder during a carjacking less than a year before the massacre, “explodes the theory that a prisoner is safe on the top of the court house from mob violence.”¹⁴ If a white man was broken from the jail and lynched by a white mob, Black Tulsans had every reason to believe a white mob would not spare Dick Rowland’s life.

Following Smitherman’s call, seventy-five Black men, many veterans armed and in uniform, marched on the courthouse “like men of war” to uphold the law.¹⁵ When they availed themselves to Sheriff Bill McCullough to protect Rowland from lynching, they were told to return to Greenwood.

13. Franklin et al., *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report*, quotes Mary Elizabeth Estes, “An Historical Survey of Lynchings in Oklahoma and Texas” (Masters, University of Oklahoma, 1942), saying that “between the declaration of statehood on November 16, 1907, and the Tulsa race riot some thirteen years later, thirty-two individuals—twenty-six of whom were Black—were lynched in Oklahoma. But during the twenty years following the riot, the number of lynchings statewide fell to two. Although they paid a terrible price for their efforts, there is little doubt except by their actions on May 31, 1921, that Black Tulsans helped to bring the barbaric practice of lynching in Oklahoma to an end.”

14. Franklin et al., *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report*, 53.

15. Kimberly C. Ellis, “We Look Like Men of War: Africana Male Narratives and the Tulsa Race Riot, War and Massacre of 1921” (Purdue University, 2002), 3.

Around 10 p.m. May 31, one of the Greenwood defenders, a Black veteran named Johnny Cole, armed with an army issue .45 caliber, was confronted by a man from the white mob. A white failed candidate for sheriff, E.S. MacQueen accosted Cole for being armed.

“N - - - -, what are you doing with that pistol?” MacQueen said.

“I’m going to use it if I need to,” Cole replied.

“No, you give it to me!”

“Like hell I will,” Cole said.

Krehbiel describes what happens next. “MacQueen grabbed for the gun; Cole resisted. The pistol discharged. All hell broke loose.”¹⁶ A gun battle erupted on the streets of downtown Tulsa.

What happened next is astounding as it is damningly clear evidence of complicity of the City of Tulsa facilitating a white pogrom of Black Tulsans. Police Chief John A. Gustafson commissioned hundreds of white men to be “Special Deputies,” issuing them firearms and ammunition. They were no peacekeeping force. A white bricklayer named Laurel Buck later testified that he went to the police station seeking a commission and a gun. All the guns had been distributed, but he was told to go home, “get a gun and get busy trying to get a n - - - - - .”¹⁷

Meanwhile in Greenwood, guns and ammo were distributed to Black residents at the Dreamland Theatre. Gun battles continued for two hours on the streets of Tulsa until Black residents retreated into Greenwood to protect their homes from attack. No one could have

16. Krehbiel, *1921*, 42.

17. Franklin et al., *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report*, 159.

ever imagined, however, just how thoroughly calculated and heinous the attack by white terrorists would be in the hours ahead.

Between the hours of midnight and dawn, gunfire continued from both sides; local National Guard units were deployed to patrol a western line along Detroit Avenue, to protect white homes and families; more National Guard troops were deployed from Oklahoma City to Tulsa by train.

At dawn June 1, 1921, white terrorists gathered at the corner of Greenwood and Archer. A whistle or bell signaled the white terrorists to enter Greenwood. City of Tulsa “Special Deputies” and mobs of men and women, even children, forcibly removed at gunpoint Black residents from their homes. White men hoisted a machine gun to the top of a nearby grain elevator and fired down on Greenwood residents.

Meanwhile, Kenny I. Booker, a young Black boy, was awakened by his father in the family’s home at 320 N. Hartford. Hearing gun shots and smelling smoke, Booker’s father quickly took Kenny, his brothers, sisters, and mother to the attic to hide.

“We heard the white men ordering Dad to come with them; he was being taken to detention. We could hear Dad pleading with the mobsters. He was begging them, ‘please don’t set my house on fire.’ Of course, that is exactly what they did. They got preoccupied splashing gasoline or kerosene on the outside of the house to speed up the burning. Meanwhile, Dad slipped away from them and rushed to the attic and rescued us. We escaped into the crowd of fleeing Black refugees. Thank God we did not burn up in that attic. Our clothes and personal belongings—everything—were burned up during the riot.”¹⁸

18. Greenwood Cultural Center, “Meet the Survivors,” *John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation*, <https://www.jhfccenter.org/1921-race-massacre-survivors>.

Many Black Tulsans did not escape as the Booker family did. A group of white rioters broken into the home of a Black elderly couple and found them kneeling in prayer. White men shot the praying man and woman in the back of the head.

“Of all the wanton mayhem during these hours,” Randy Krehbiel said, the murders of this elderly couple and the murder of Dr. A.C. Jackson are the “most craven.”

“A noted physician and surgeon, unarmed and absolutely no threat to anyone, Jackson was shot dead in front of his house, hands raised in surrender, Krehbiel said.”¹⁹

Dr. Jackson’s white neighbor, John Oliphant, witnessed about eight men looting then burning Dr. Jackson’s home to the ground. Oliphant testified later that he tried to stop them, admitting his concern was not for his neighbor but that the fire would spread to his Detroit Avenue house close by.

White mobs looted more than a thousand Black owned homes, carrying off furniture, jewelry, and housewares. To cover evidence of looting, greed, and brutal murders, white mobs and deputized men set homes and buildings on fire. “Thirty-five city blocks were looted systematically, then burned to a cinder,” according to Red Cross Director Maurice Willows, “and twelve thousand population thereof scattered like chaff before the wind. All evidence shows that most of the methods used were, first, to pile bedding, furniture, and other burnable material together, then apply matches. Eyewitnesses also claim that many houses were set afire from aero planes.”²⁰

19. Krehbiel, *1921*, 79.

20. Willows, *American Red Cross on the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot*.

Genevieve Elizabeth Tillman Jackson experienced the trauma of the massacre as a young girl. At first, she thought she was seeing birds in the sky, but they were incendiaries being dropped on Greenwood from World War I era planes.²¹

According to the Red Cross Report, 1,256 Black owned homes—with their family Bibles, family albums, and toys—were reduced to rubble and ash in a few hours June 1, 1921. More than one hundred businesses were also summarily looted and destroyed by white mobs setting them ablaze.

Eyewitnesses reported that firefighters responded to fires but were repelled at gunpoint by white rioters.²² White mobs torched offices of Black doctors and attorneys, Black owned grocery stores, a hospital, a school, a Y.M.C.A, and the Dreamland Theatre. Churches were not spared. Mount Zion Baptist Church, “an impressive brick tabernacle which had been dedicated only seven weeks earlier,” along with several other churches were torched by the white mobs.²³

Oklahoma Guard troops from Oklahoma City arrived by mid-morning, ostensibly to keep order. After disembarking from the train and having a meal, troops detained innocent Black people, leaving their homes vulnerable to attack, looting, and burning. Thousands of Black Tulsans who were not killed and did not flee the city were rounded up and marched to makeshift detention camps at the Convention Center, still standing in Tulsa in 2021, and McNulty Ball Park, the present-day site of Home Depot at 901 S. Elgin Ave.

21. Krehbiel, *1921*, 75-77; See also Richard S. Warner, “Airplanes and the Riot,” in John Hope Franklin et al., *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report*.

22. Franklin et al., *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report*, 77-78.

23. Greenwood Cultural Center, “Meet the Survivors.”

Architect and contractor J. C. Latimer was robbed of money and marched with hands up at gunpoint for three miles. “On the way my arms got tired and, too, the sun was baking my brains, as I was not permitted to get my hat. I lowered my hands to keep off the sun and was struck on the hands with a gun and told to ‘Put them up.’ While riding through the streets, women, and children, and very often men, would laugh and make merry.”²⁴

Red Cross Director Maurice Willows said, “All that fire, rifles, revolvers, shot guns, machine guns and organized inhuman passion could do with thirty-five city blocks with its twelve thousand negro population, was done.”

Willows continued, “The number of dead is a matter of conjecture. Some knowing ones estimate the number killed as high as 300, other estimates being as low as 55. The bodies were hurriedly rushed to burial.”²⁵ Scott Ellsworth quotes reporter Walter White, who wrote in late June 1921 that Black massacre victims were buried in mass graves.

In an article in the *Nation* under a headline, “The Eruption of Tulsa,” White revealed what City of Tulsa officials tried to hide. “O.T. Johnson, commandant of the Tulsa Citadel of the Salvation Army, stated that on Wednesday, June 1 and Thursday, June 2, the Salvation Army fed thirty-seven Black men employed as grave diggers and twenty on Friday and Saturday. During the first two days these men dug 120 graves in each of which a dead Negro was buried. No coffins were used. The bodies were dumped into the holes and covered with dirt.”²⁶

24. Parrish, *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*, 44.

25. The most comprehensive and detailed account of the “time of war,” as Black people often referred to the events, is diagrammed hour by hour May 31 through June 1, 1921 in the maps and appendix of 25. John Hope Franklin et al., *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report*.

26. Quoting from Scott Ellsworth, *The Ground Breaking: The Tulsa Race Massacre and an American City’s Search for Justice* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2021), 129-30, 284. See Walter White, “The Eruption of Tulsa,” *Nation*, June 29, 1921.

City of Tulsa officials have historically downplayed high death toll estimates and denied that mass graves existed. Nearly a century later, however, Tulsa Councilor Vanessa Hall-Harper and Mayor G.T. Bynum called for and were granted an investigation and search for mass graves from the massacre. Nineteen bodies were found in Oaklawn Cemetery.²⁷ Since the early days of Tulsa's history, Black lives have not been valued equally with white lives. Valuing life includes valuing those who died in the 1921 Tulsa massacre. The exact number of Black lives, their names, where they are buried all matters. The exact amount of property destroyed, the addresses, the businesses, the churches, all matter to the finest detail.

“Property losses including household goods will easily reach the four million mark,” Willows wrote in his December 1921 Red Cross report. “This must be a conservative figure in view of the fact that lawsuits covering claims of over \$4,000,000 were filed up to July 30th. Many property owners were not at the time heard from.” Willows asks plaintively, “Where were the police? Where was the fire department? Why the temporary breakdown of City and County governments?”

In the days following the massacre, City of Tulsa administrators fabricated “fire codes” to prevent Black Tulsans from rebuilding on their own land. White Tulsans were jealous of Black success and wanted their land to build a railway station and industrial district. Insurance claims by Black home and business owners were denied because of “riot” clauses in the policies. Courts upheld this fraud of insurance companies not paying for any Black

27. Randy Krehbiel, “Oaklawn Remains Exhumed in Search of Race Massacre Burials to Be Reburied,” July 27, 2021, https://tulsa-world.com/news/local/racemassacre/oaklawn-remains-exhumed-in-search-of-race-massacre-burials-to-be-reburied/article_d0d4cb6e-ee4e-11eb-a329-6f2936558dea.html.

losses. Meanwhile, white shop owners where whites looted and broke in to steal guns and ammunition, were compensated for their losses.

Black Greenwood residents showed resilience in the face of devastation and cruelty by white Tulsans. Attorney B.C. Franklin and colleagues set up a tent in Greenwood—complete with law books and typewriter—to represent legal claims by Black residents. One of the most famous victories of the father of John Hope Franklin, was a case he filed against the city’s “fire codes.” The court ruled in Franklin’s clients’ favor, and building permits were finally issued by the city starting in September 1921. White owned lumberyards, meanwhile, refused to sell building materials to Black people. The Red Cross and the NAACP donated some of the lumber to rebuild Greenwood.

One of Mary E. Jones Parrish’s eyewitness survivors and rebuilders of Greenwood, C. L. Netherland, stands out for his resilience and vivid description of what was lost and what was not lost in the massacre.²⁸

On the morning of June 1st, I met the mob of Whites at the door where I was. They marched me to Convention Hall with my hands up. From there I was taken to the Ball Park and saw many men and women who were homeless. There I slept on two benches.

I left the park the next morning and looked up my wife who was stopping with some friends. Then I purchased a folding chair, a strop and razor and went down on Greenwood amid the ashes and ruins and started a barber shop.

28. Parrish, *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*, 42.

From a 10-room and basement modern brick home, I am now living in what was my coal barn. From a five-chair white enamel barber shop, four baths, electric clippers, electric fan, two lavatories and shampoo stands, four workmen, double marble shine stand, a porter, and an income of over \$500 or \$600 per month, to a razor, strop, and folding chair on the sidewalk.

I feel that corrupt politics is the cause of the whole affair, for if authorities had taken the proper steps in time the whole matter could have been prevented.

Summary

This introduction has centered narratives of Greenwood massacre defenders, victims, survivors, and descendants. In the next chapter, I define my project and examine responses to the massacre by white and Black church and community leaders in 1921.

CHAPTER ONE
PROJECT DEFINITION
CHURCH RESPONSES IN 1921 TO THE TULSA MASSACRE

White people coveted Greenwood, as “Ahab did Naboth’s vineyard.”²⁹

H. T. S. Johnson, as witnessed to Mary E. Jones Parrish

My project is defined primarily by centering stories, suffering, and resilience of massacre defenders, victims, survivors, and descendants, as Dr. Karlos K. Hill has urged.³⁰ My project is defined secondarily by what happens because of learning these narratives. Hill adds, moreover, that the credible and accountable historian today reveals one’s own “positionality” to Tulsa’s history. My positionality to the Tulsa massacre history is this: I am white, born in the 1960s, forty miles from Greenwood. I had Oklahoma history in ninth grade but never learned about the city’s secrets until I was nearly fifty years old. From surveys I reveal in this project, my positionality and ignorance of the history of the Tulsa massacre is paradigmatic for many white and Black Tulsans.

29. Parrish, *Events of the Tulsa Disaster*, 51.

30. Hill, *The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre: A Photographic History*. I have added “defenders” of Greenwood to emphasize agency of Greenwood residents. They rightly defended their neighborhood, but the full force of the state was brought against Greenwood, including state guards and deputized men by the City of Tulsa police department. So, they were victims of state sponsored and vigilante white terrorism, but they were also defenders of Greenwood.

I became more curious about the massacre history when Phillips Theological Seminary Doctoral Program Director Dr. Kathy McCallie asked who would be interested in project research around the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. I decided in 2018 to join a study group researching responses of white churches to the massacre. The timing of the research was intentional to land near the centennial of the race massacre in 2021.

I thought discussions about racism in my ministry context and an act of ministry could be accomplished with a cursory knowledge of the massacre. After I submitted my project proposal, however, I realized I needed to learn Black and white narratives much more deeply. In addition, tracking with the global movement for justice and equality that would arise in 2020, the magnitude of suffering and resilience of Black people in Tulsa during and since the massacre became my focus. Thus, I employed Dr. Hill's ideas about positionality as a parallel academic discipline of the historian. Alongside questions of positionality, my formulation of constructive theology honors yet critiques my own theological and social traditions.³¹ For example, a question that has prompted me to keep learning and growing is, "How are you related to this history and theology, and what are you going to do about it?" My project describes not just my response but also my faith community's response to this question.

The project definition expanded and deepened with questions about Black suffering and white ways of viewing suffering of Black people. Is there evidence in Christian communities in 1921 of a kind of white way of knowing that attempted to justify these horrific actions by

31. Constructive theology is a way of taking seriously both traditions *and* critiques of systematic and dogmatic theologies. Ethics are not separated from theology as in many systematic and dogmatic theological works. In the place of attempted comprehensive finality, constructive theology accepts an open-ended conversation with dialogical partners and fallibility not eternity or essentialism about theological matters. Lived experiences and thick descriptions are favored in place of discursive, disembodied words. See Jason A. Wyman, *Constructing Constructive Theology: An Introductory Sketch* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017).

white people? This chapter addresses evidence of white supremacy in sermons preached in Tulsa churches June 5, 1921.

Working from specific evidence of white supremacy embedded in Tulsa Christian thought, I developed an act of ministry in my ministry context, and an anthropological theology to change how white Tulsans see suffering and resilience of Black people. I define many project terms in Appendix One. Working definitions of systemic racism and white supremacy follow.

I use Ibram X. Kendi's definition for my project. "Systemic racism is a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities."³² Kendi's three major ways racism has been conceived in the United States are segregationist, assimilationist, and anti-racist. Segregationist, or essentialist racism views people of color as inferior based in creation and biology. Assimilationist racism commonly claims "color blindness," and views people of color with behavioral problems that explain inequities. Anti-racism views race as socially constructed. What we call races of humanity are all equal in creation and biology. Nothing is intrinsically wrong with any group of people.

I agree with Kendi when he says that systemic racism is not primarily rooted in hate. Racism is rooted in greed. This greed for land, money, and power requires racist policies to maintain. These racist policies result in policies of discrimination of Black people or any race threatening white power. Slavery, Jim Crow laws, lynchings, mass incarceration, ongoing discrimination are the hateful, harmful results of human greed, pride, and every other deadly sin.

32. Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, First edition (New York: One World, 2019); Ibram X. Kendi, *Stamped from the Beginning: The Definitive History of Racist Ideas in America* (New York: Nation Books, 2016), 20-24.

White supremacy refers to any belief, policy, or action that enacts a supposed superiority of white people over people of color. These beliefs, policies, and actions enact sinfully acquired benefits for white people to the harm and destruction of people of color.

Misconstruing white supremacy with white supremacist individuals or organizations, white people often fail to realize how much white supremacy has been systematically infused in public life, policies, courts, businesses, health care, housing, churches, neighborhood HOAs, home life, and in themselves.³³

In this chapter, I survey and critique sermons by white church pastors on June 5, 1921, the Sunday after the massacre. In so doing, I expose white ways of knowing in Tulsa that resulted in crimes against humanity, mass murder, theft of property, and livelihoods. This white way of knowing then attempted to justify these atrocities morally, biblically, and socially against Black people.

A Survey of White Church Sermons June 5, 1921

Until recently, very little has been published about what white pastors preached in churches June 5, 1921, the Sunday after the massacre. *Tulsa World* and *Tulsa Tribune* both

33. In 2004 I wrote a *Christianity Today* review of Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*. See Greg Taylor, "Mythical Proportions," *Christianity Today*, December 2004. Hughes names five American myths: Chosen Nation – the myth that God chose the United States for a special mission; Nature's Nation – the myth that American ideals are part of the natural created order; Millennial Nation – the myth that because of these first two myths, a final golden age will be ushered in with America's dominance; Christian Nation – the myth that the United States is a Christian nation and guided always by Christian principles; Innocent Nation – the myth that while other nations have blood on their hands, the nobility of the American cause always redeems and renders it innocent. These myths together are what is often referred to as a "doctrine of discovery" or "manifest destiny." See glossary for more definitions.

Years later, after Hughes presented these five myths at a conference, Dr. James Noel said to Hughes, "Professor, you left out the most important of all the American myths." Though Hughes had based his research in seeing the myth through the eyes of people of color, he'd failed to see the overarching myth of white supremacy. See his revision to reconcile this omission: Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By: White Supremacy and the Stories That Give Us Meaning* (University of Illinois Press, 2018), Kindle, 31. In his revision, Hughes writes, "the Myth of White Supremacy is the primal American myth that informs all the others." These five myths all serve to protect, obscure and re-inscribe the big lie of white supremacy generation after generation.

carried stories in their Monday, June 6, 1921, editions about what was said in Christian churches in Tulsa the day before. One thread ran throughout the sermons, according to *Tulsa World* reporter and historian Randy Krehbiel. This theme is summarized by Rev. C.W. Kerr of the First Presbyterian Church. “The colored people must understand they started it,” Kerr said. “The fact of their arming and coming up through the city was an outrage to the citizenship of Tulsa.”³⁴ What is an outrage is the rhetoric of Kerr and other clergy on the Sunday after the massacre. No amount of contextualizing history can justify what pastors were saying the Sunday after the massacre.³⁵

Rev. J.W. Abel at First Methodist laid down a perverse logic that sounds like a precursor to today’s neo-liberal and white nationalist rhetoric.³⁶ Abel said, “how much more respect we would have had for the leaders of the race had they presented themselves to the authorities and asked for the privilege of meting out their wrath on the criminal who had disgraced their race.”³⁷ Abel betrays a sinful pride that claims a god-like benevolence of white people upon Black people. “We tax ourselves to educate him; we help him to build churches, we are careful to keep him supplied with work at a good wage, and trust him with a ballot, and all we ask of him is to behave himself and prove himself worthy of our trust.”³⁸

34. Krehbiel, *1921*, 121.

35. In the foreword to *Death in a Promised Land*, John Hope Franklin praised Scott Ellsworth and his book for “resisting the temptation to be pretentiously maudlin or excessively moral.” Likewise, while moral imagination is a prophetic task, I want to steer clear of moralizing, which means to “comment with an air of unfounded superiority.”

36. For more on neo-liberalism and the harmful impact of capitalism or any totalizing political, economic, and religious system, see Adam Kotsko, *Neoliberalism’s Demons: On the Political Theology of Late Capital* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2018).

37. Krehbiel, *1921*, 124.

38. Krehbiel, *1921*, 123.

Edwin D. Mouzon

From the evidence of what is printed in *The Sanctuary*, it appears that the dean of Southern Methodist University, Edwin D. Mouzon, traveled from Dallas, Texas to Tulsa, Oklahoma to preach at Boston Avenue Methodist Church “on the Sunday following the race riot.”³⁹ Mouzon claims to look at the massacre through the teachings and the eyes of Jesus. What Mouzon proceeds to do instead is fix what W. E. B. Du Bois calls “the white gaze” on already traumatized victims of white terror.⁴⁰ Mouzon blamed Black Tulsans for starting a riot in Tulsa. He calls the *Tulsa Star* office a “rallying point” and prominent national leader W. E. B. Du Bois “the most vicious negro man in America.”⁴¹

Referring to Greenwood pejoratively as “Little Africa,” Mouzon claims white self-defense to justify the massacre. “If it is true that our wives, our children and the people of Tulsa were threatened with being at the mercy of armed negroes, then the white man who got his gun and went out in defense with it did the only thing a decent white man could have done,” Mouzon said.⁴²

39. Bishop Edwin D. Mouzon, “Tulsa’s Race Riot and the Teachings of Jesus,” *The Christian Advocate* (July 14, 1921): 911–14. I noticed the editor’s note made a point to distance and claim non-alignment with Mouzon. Churches that are not mentioned in newspapers or denominational journals in 1921, may have addressed the massacre, but there is no indication that my church of origin, Stone-Campbell Churches of Christ, addressed the issue on June 5, 1921, or anytime afterward. Churches of Christ not addressing social and political issues has been an ongoing tension I have had with the so-called apolitical denomination for decades. Rev. Kara Farrow, pastor of Fellowship Lutheran in Tulsa, at an event with massacre survivors September 27, 2021, said a prominent Lutheran church held a meeting five days after the massacre. Nothing was recorded in the meeting minutes to address the massacre. How is this silence in churches connected to the larger conspiracy of silence in Tulsa?

40. W. E. B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Millwood, N.Y., Kraus-Thomson Organization Ltd., 1903).

41. Du Bois had visited Tulsa in April 1921. See Krehbiel, *1921*, 122.

42. Krehbiel, *1921*, 122.

For the burning he blames “white trash” who mix races. Mouzon calls white Christians to take responsibility only for the disgrace of permitting lawless men to make Tulsa immoral and unsafe. “Let us repent of our sins and resolve to make this fair city safe for men and women to live in.”⁴³

Five days after the 1921 Tulsa Massacre, Mouzon sees the suffering of Black people through essentialist, segregationist eyes. Looking upon Black suffering, Mouzon centers white innocence. Mouzon’s white way of race thinking may be described as having one foot in a long epoch of “essentialism,” and one foot in an epoch of “assimilationist” race thinking that emerged in the 1920s. According to Ruth Frankenberg, “essentialism” race thinking was common from the modern period to the 1920s.⁴⁴ Essentialism claims a biological inferiority of people of color. Mouzon perpetuates forms of essentialist segregation in his sermon, while promoting assimilationist ideas such as Black and white people being brothers and sisters. Assimilationism thinking in 1920s Tulsa is a form of “color blindness” that evades perceptions of difference and realities of power. Frankenberg’s insights and Mouzon’s sermon were surprising to me, since I had thought color blindness was a relatively newer development of race thinking.

Another example of Mouzon straddling two ways of race thinking includes his reference to Jesus’ teachings on anger and murder, then saying, “racial contempt is not only hurtful to man; it dishonors God.” Yet he claims racial segregation is God’s will. Quoting Bishop E.E. Hoss, Mouzon says, “God Almighty has drawn the color line in indelible ink.”⁴⁵ He then

43. Mouzon, “Tulsa’s Race Riot and the Teachings of Jesus,” 912.

44. James W. Perkinson, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* (Springer, 2004), 77, references Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

45. Mouzon, “Tulsa’s Race Riot and the Teachings of Jesus,” 912.

insists race mixing and violence may be remedied with segregated neighborhoods, hotels, schools, and churches in Tulsa, citing alleged social failures of race mixing in Brazil.

A third epoch would come in the 1960s that Frankenberg calls “race cognizance,” emerging as a reassertion of difference in anti-racism movements like Black Power. These epochs are generalizations, and given the complexity of human history, need not be overlaid onto everyone in a particular epoch. For example, there is evidence of anti-racism thinking in the epoch of essentialism, described in a section below. These categories may also mislead one to believe that race cognizance and anti-racism became pervasive when civil rights laws were passed. People continuing with essentialist and assimilationist white race thinking, however, have doubled down to resist race cognizance.

Like Mouzon standing between epochs, my research for this project has also entered into what may be a fourth epoch of race thinking begun in 2020, after police brutality protests globally and locally. It seems too soon to know what this epoch will be called and all the ways it may be characterized, but one consistent thing is happening as it has for centuries. Almost like a law of physics, it seems where there is progress in race equality thinking, there is an “equal” but opposite resistance to the same.

Reading Mouzon’s sermon—introduced to me by Dr. Kathy McCallie and librarian Katherine Casey in 2018—was the leading reason for my project beginning with white responses to the 1921 Tulsa massacre. This led to asking, how does white theological reasoning continue to re-inscribe white supremacy and Black trauma? I wanted to understand what kind of twisted white greed and theology could be behind the eyes of this “white gaze.” Thanks to the work of Randy Krehbiel, who read every issue of Tulsa newspapers in 1921-22, we now have concrete evidence that Mouzon’s sermon is representative of widely held

views of white supremacy upheld by white preachers in 1921 Tulsa. The preaching Krehbiel exposes, described next, is even worse than Mouzon's sermon.

Harold Cooke

One of the harshest responses the Sunday after the massacre was delivered by Harold Cooke, from a church across the street from Tate Brady's mansion, the Centenary Methodist Church. He shuts down talk of white people being equally to blame. Cooke blamed the riot squarely on "armed and liquor-frenzied n - - - - -."⁴⁶ Cooke blamed race mixing as the root, those do-gooders who "would allow the negro to come up and mingle with them on the plane of the white." Cooke said these do-gooders "through their shallow-brained ignorance, are plunging this country into wreck and ruin."

Cooke also blamed whites who "permit themselves to mingle with the Black on his plane" and says all who mingle in this way "forfeit his claims to membership in the human family."

Cooke made clear that "Little Africa should never be rebuilt . . . it has been a festering sore in the heart of this city. . . . The property rights of the colored people should be preserved, and they should receive all their property is worth. But the most absurd thing in the world would be to rebuild it where it has stood." Cooke voiced what one of the prominent members of his church, Tate Brady, believed, that the "Black district" should be relocated.

Tulsa Ministerial Alliance

One way to get at what some other churches and pastors were saying is to read a statement published by the all-white Tulsa Ministerial Alliance about the events of May 31-June 1, 1921. While there are no signatories, no addressee, the statement would represent the

46. Krehbiel, *1921*, 124.

views of member churches. The statement opens with concern for Tulsa's reputation, lamenting the condemnation of the world. Though the blame is placed on a "bad element" in Greenwood, concern is expressed that Black people have been "despoiled of all their earthly possessions."

Most of the letter involves cultural critiques, remedies, and a call for investigating, bringing to trial, and punishing the perpetrators of the riots, murders, and burning of property. Public officials are called to account for complicity in lynchings. The alliance critiques officials for turning a blind eye to debauchery and bribery in bonding out criminals, while focusing on technicalities of parking tickets. Returning to teaching the Bible in schools, reserving Sunday for worship, making gun possession a felony, and joining churches are all offered as reforms for wayward Tulsans.

Black citizens of Tulsa, with family members murdered, homeless because white people destroyed their homes, trying to survive, were welcomed "to associate themselves with the Ministerial Alliance." There is no hint in the letter of apology or irony for why Greenwood residents would want to associate with an all-white society after the massacre.

Anti-Racist Responses to the 1921 Tulsa Massacre

It is important for me as a white person to clearly name that, contrary to what white preachers said June 5, 1921, Black residents of Greenwood were not to blame for rioting. They were defending Dick Rowland from being lynched. Black and white Tulsans defended their lives and property, for which both had this right. It is morally wrong, however, and the fault of white Tulsans, the City of Tulsa, Tulsa County, the Oklahoma State Guard for these individuals and entities to enter Greenwood, remove Black people from their homes, take prisoners, murder Black people, loot and burn property, then claim these acts were self-

defense. To suggest that Black victims of a pogrom were themselves somehow to blame, then with unrelenting greed steal the very properties white mobs and city officials burned to the ground is nothing short of sinful, evil, and demonic.

Black citizens of Tulsa had every right to defend Greenwood, to seek restitution, to rebuild without aggression and hinderance by white Tulsans. None of these rights, however, were guarantees from white Tulsans influenced by white racist preaching in churches and policies in local government.

Cyril Biggs, a 1920s national leader of the African Blood Brotherhood for African Liberation and Redemption (ABB), lifts up these rights of Greenwood residents. Biggs did not claim direct involvement in the defense of Greenwood but made clear “the whites were the aggressors.” Biggs names several important notions about the responses first of Black anti-racists and then white anti-racists in Tulsa. Biggs said in a *New York Times* article, “Haven’t negroes the right to defend their lives and property when they are menaced, or is this the exclusive prerogative of the white man?” He went on to say that Black people defending Rowland were upholding law and order and the prisoner’s constitutional right to a legal trial by his peers and with due process of the law.⁴⁷

Black Church Gatherings June 5, 1921

Church services for Black Tulsans were held June 5, 1921, the Sunday after the massacre, at the fairgrounds and in a tent next to Booker T. Washington high school. Whether by members of the Ministerial Alliance or otherwise, those who led services were of similar mind of those white clergymen who had belittled and condemned Black Tulsans the same

47. Krehbiel, *1921*, 136-37.

day in white churches. Krehbiel notes that the *Tribune* reported nothing about these two worship services, but the *World* allotted one long paragraph.

“The *World* assured its readers,” says Krehbiel, “that the ‘negroes seemed responsive and attentive’ and ‘fairly shouted the negro songs.’ In this service, only ‘simple gospel sermons, with no allusion to the events of the last week, were preached,’ with no pontification on the inherent waywardness of the Black race and the blame they bore for their own destruction.”⁴⁸

East End Relief Board

In a letter of thanks from the East End Relief Board (EERB), Black members thanked Red Cross director, Maurice Willows. Agency of the Black Tulsans flows alongside a remarkable gratitude, given the horrors Greenwood residents experienced. The EERB speaks of the courage of Black leaders to repel city administration’s efforts to deliver the “burned area” over to land grafters. As Willows wrote in his report, quoting Black citizens, “Pay us for what we’ve lost, and we will talk to you about selling what is left.”⁴⁹ The EERB thanks Willows, dubbing him the “apostle of the square deal for every man.”

O.W. Gurley and Red Cross Director Maurice Willows

O.W. Gurley worked directly between Red Cross Director Maurice Willows, the City of Tulsa, NAACP, and any organization that could provide the resources necessary to rebuild Greenwood. The relationship between Gurley and Willows is exemplary of Black race thinking, resilience in response to the massacre, and rebuilding in solidarity with white anti-racism thinking and response. The following evidence in Willow’s report illustrates that in

48. Krehbiel, *1921*, 126.

49. Willows, *American Red Cross on the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot*.

1921, voices like that of Willows flowed from a tradition of anti-racism that has existed alongside white supremacy.

One example of Willows' anti-racism is that he refused in his report dated December 31, 1921, to refer to the "riot" unless in quotes. Insurance companies refused to pay claims of Black home and business owners, because of "riot clauses." This is the reason the event had been called "riot" by white Tulsans for nearly a century. In Red Cross documents, Willows calls the events of May 31-June 1, 1921, a "short-lived civil war," and "wholesale destruction of property—life and limb," a "one-sided battle."

Another example of anti-racism is Willows refusing to accept "innocent bystander" as medical status for some known white perpetrators. For example, when in ongoing medical treatment, one white man claimed his bullet wound was attained by being an "innocent bystander," the medical worker produced a photo of the man during the massacre, with a shotgun slung over his shoulder.

In the roughly one hundred pages of Red Cross reports, Willows is careful to document non-discrimination of those served by the Red Cross, which located at several sites, including Booker T. Washington school grounds, adjacent to the "burned area." Willows even cautions in the report against the Red Cross serving police workers and state guard troops. He confirms disputed details of the June 1 attacks on Greenwood, saying planes were indeed used to drop kerosene bombs.

The word "reparations" was already in use immediately after the massacre. For example, Willows estimates loss of property at \$4 million, equivalent by one estimate to \$60 million dollars in 2019 dollars. Red Cross Director Willows challenges arguments that claim innocence of white people or patting one another on the back for at least caring about Black

property rights. Willows critiques the presence of influential, wealthy land developers on reconstruction committees and building codes that made rebuilding inside city limits in Greenwood's own neighborhoods a violation of city ordinance. This was a further unsuccessful attempt to run Black people out of Tulsa. For decades after the massacre and burning of Greenwood, relentless and concerted white Tulsa efforts at expulsion have been matched by Black Tulsan's resilience and reconstruction. One result in a century of Tulsa history is a city still very divided racially.⁵⁰ Is this segregation any wonder when white people hold such racist views and Black people have decided to make their own ways and spaces where there was no other way?

Inter-Racial Commission

Mary E. Jones Parrish includes a letter from H. T. S. Johnson who describes two separate committees, one white and one Black, composing the "Inter-Racial Commission." In the first thirty days after the massacre, both committees met and faced public sentiment of hatred, sympathy, suspicion, and distrust. Johnson said "the leverage with which the White inter-racial committee lifted the lid of Negro oppression upon which the city administration sat with all the weight that politics and graft courts command. In other words, to prevent Negroes from building back their homes and business places, the city commissioners, two days after their district was burned, passed an ordinance extending fire limits far enough north and west to include all the land which certain interests coveted, as Ahab did Naboth's vineyard."

50. See Alfred L. Brophy, *Reconstructing the Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot of 1921: Race, Reparations, and Reconciliation* (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Hannibal B. Johnson, *Black Wall Street: From Riot to Renaissance in Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District* (Austin, Tex.: Eakin Press, 1998); Majorie Ann Tracy, "The Tulsa Race Riot of 1921: The Politics of Lawlessness" (University of Tulsa, 1996); Krehbiel, *Tulsa, 1921*; Ellsworth, *Death in a Promised Land*.

Johnson credits Judge Mather E. Eakes, chairman of the Tulsa County Commission on Inter-Racial Cooperation (White), for declaring the fire codes unconstitutional, leaving Greenwood property owners free to get building permits and rebuild. Johnson said in 1921 that an infrastructure of sanitation, paved streets, lights, schools, playgrounds, swimming pool, and library is necessary to rise up “from the blood and ashes of June 1.” He concludes, “Truly inter-racial co-operation is the way to peace in race relations.”

While white preachers were preaching God-ordained segregation and white supremacy, twin white and Black committees of the Inter-Racial Commission were opting for lawful and unhindered rebuilding, better infrastructure, and peaceful co-operation.

Rebuilding Greenwood

Against so much terror and resistance, Black Greenwood residents rallied to rebuild homes, businesses, and schools. Mt. Zion Baptist Church and Mt. Vernon African Methodist Episcopal Church had been burned to rubble in 1921. In the decades to follow, Greenwood featured more businesses, churches, and homes than ever before. Today, both church edifices and living bodies of believers have excelled beyond surviving. Zion and AME have thrived as pillars of Greenwood for more than a century. From the 1920s till the 2020s, however, infrastructure in North Tulsa has been inadequate and inequitable compared to any other part of Tulsa.

Calls for reparations exist from anti-racism activists such as Willows in 1921 but subsided for decades until in 2001, The Race Riot Commission called for reparations to survivors and descendants of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. Reparations included several categories: direct compensation to survivors for property losses, Black student scholarship funding, economic development zones in Greenwood, and a memorial for reburial of human

remains. No direct payment reparations for survivors or descendants of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre have ever been paid with public funds in one hundred years since the massacre. What does it say about Tulsa that such a devastating event has never been treated by city or state government with reparations?⁵¹

Summary

In the Introduction, I center stories of historical trauma, resilience, and rebuilding by massacre defenders, victims, survivors, and descendants. In this chapter, I have surveyed, and critiqued sermons delivered by white pastors the Sunday after the massacre. I have included Black parallel responses and activities in the aftermath.

The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre was a pogrom of jealous murderous white rage, a failed expulsion of Black people, to subjugate and destroy perceived threats to white land, power, money, and bodies. The survival and resilience of 75,000 Black descendants and residents living in Tulsa one century later suggests that Black people will not be run out of Tulsa nor quietly denied equity and dignity, then or now.

In chapter two, I describe how white people in my own church responded to discussions about the history of the massacre and racism today.

51. Franklin et al., *Tulsa Race Riot: A Report*, 20a.

CHAPTER TWO
MINISTRY CONTEXT
CHURCH RESPONSES ONE CENTURY AFTER THE 1921 TULSA MASSACRE

“Insofar as this country is seeking to make whiteness the dominating power throughout the world, whiteness is the symbol of the Antichrist.”⁵²

James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*

My Introduction centers narratives of Greenwood massacre defenders, victims, survivors, and descendants. In chapter one, I describe attempts by white Tulsans to justify the massacre and expulsion of Black Tulsans. It did not work. A century later, Black Tulsans remain a powerful life force in the City of Tulsa.

In this chapter, I describe dialogue in my ministry context around issues of racism and how people in my congregation responded to the 1921 Tulsa massacre a century later. The following brief examples frame local, state, and national events surrounding my ministry context in 2018-20. Locally, as the 2021 centennial of the massacre approached, Tulsa historians, attorneys, and pastors lifted up massacre survivors and their stories to global media attention. Viola Fletcher, 107-year-old massacre survivor, testified May 19, 2021 before the United States House Judiciary Subcommittee. She spoke about one hundred years

52. James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Fiftieth anniversary edition. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2020), 22.

of racial trauma caused by the worst white terrorist action in U.S. history. She spoke of economic opportunity lost and horrific memories. Meanwhile, no living white person admits to being part of the massacre in 1921.

At the state level, the Oklahoma legislature passed a law that instills fear of teachers losing their jobs if they teach tenants of Critical Race Theory (CRT) or history such as the 1921 Tulsa massacre that makes white children feel guilt.⁵³ Nationally, even globally, protests broke out over the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Ahmaud Arbery. The president of the United States visited Tulsa on Juneteenth weekend 2020, not to comfort the city or nation, but to promote himself and stoke racism. Consequently, awareness about the massacre and racial justice was heightened in Tulsa and globally.

What's Wrong with White People?

How did these local, state, and national issues around racism play out in my ministry context?⁵⁴ As I began dialogue on racism informally in conversations, I watched the eyes of

53. Robby Korth, "What Oklahoma Teachers Need to Know About the State's So-Called Critical Race Theory Ban," *State Impact*, n.d., <https://stateimpact.npr.org/oklahoma/2021/07/08/what-oklahoma-teachers-need-to-know-about-the-states-so-called-critical-race-theory-ban/>.

Few scholars I've interacted in four years of study on racism ever mention Critical Race Theory (CRT), but since it is in the national and state spotlight, some brief explanation of CRT may be helpful. CRT originated by several key legal scholars as a philosophy of defense for race based civil rights cases. CRT scholar Khiara Bridges says race is not biological but socially constructed. CRT rejects "popular understandings about racism, such as arguments that confine racism to a few 'bad apples.'" CRT recognizes that racism is codified in law, embedded in structures, and woven into public policy. CRT rejects claims of meritocracy or 'color blindness.' CRT recognizes that it is the systemic nature of racism that bears primary responsibility for reproducing racial inequality. CRT embraces lived experiences of people of color, including those preserved through storytelling, and rejects "deficit-informed research that excludes the epistemologies of people of color." See Janel George, "A Lesson on Critical Race Theory," *American Bar Association*, https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/civil-rights-reimagining-policing/a-lesson-on-critical-race-theory/.

54. I served fifteen years in a Church of Christ in East Tulsa. In 2020 the church closed. Since I wrote much of the project while the church still existed, some segments may speak of the church in present tense. The Journey Church's self-description of race follows closely with the population in the church's East Tulsa zip code: 12.5 percent African American, 4.6 percent American Indian, 5.8 percent Asian, 25.9 percent Hispanic, and 54.8 percent White. Staff includes people from three nations, one who is bilingual in English and Spanish from Honduras, another from Zimbabwe, and four from the United States. See Appendix One for more data.

white people deaden or harden. One white man asked why I was “scratching at the scab” of Tulsa history; wouldn’t this just bring disharmony? A white woman did not like me wearing a “Black Lives Matter” t-shirt while I preached on racism because she had been told BLM was a socialist organization. A white man grew exasperated with discussion of racism, saying he was tired of talking about it. A church leader cautioned me against a whole project on racism, saying he thought it would be too controversial and divisive for the church. Many people were interested in dialogues on racism but expressed anxiety about it, and I wanted to explore that emotion in my research. I wondered, do white people in my church think racism is not their problem? What is beneath all this resistance?

In 2019-20, as I shared Black narratives of the massacre, I noticed increasing white defiance. I documented responses such as these but also became fearful that I was stepping into a white racial space full of landmines.

White Fragility

One of the first works that helped me discern this friction I was feeling and hearing in white people in my church was Robin DiAngelo’s *White Fragility*. I’m thankful to a PTS fellow student who recommended the book at a critical time in my development of these ideas. DiAngelo gave me language to grasp what I was hearing in my church. “White fragility,” says DiAngelo, is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress in the habitus becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves.”⁵⁵

55. Robin J. DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), 2.

DiAngelo had given me very useful concepts and language for a quality of dialogue I wished to have in my context: white people discussing racism and the Tulsa 1921 massacre without freaking out. It didn't work so well.

In 2018, I asked church leaders to read and discuss *White Fragility*. Two church elders, however, refused to read the book. One elder started the book, felt DiAngelo was implicating a sickness onto all white people. "I did my own research," which I took to mean that he did a couple of google searches and found the inevitable online critiques of any author taking on centers of power.

After the murder May 25, 2020, of George Floyd by former police worker Derek Chauvin, global protests broke out and another racial reckoning rose up. Millions of white people like me read *White Fragility*. One critique I have is less for the book and more for white people who read at a cursory level and conclude that, *ok, I feel uncomfortable talking about racism, and yes, I have white privilege*. I remember in a class discussion at PTS, Black students telling white students to please not start sentences with "I know I have white privilege." Black people already know, because to verbalize "I have white privilege" is another way of saying, *"I cheat and Black people suffer because my rules allow me to have land, homes, health care, and I can stay off hot pavements and out of prison."* The realization of white privilege, while important, is not much progress for white people and there is a desperate need to go much deeper.

DiAngelo modeled impressive moxie in descriptions of confronting white people in race and diversity trainings. DiAngelo's rejection of a cultural good/bad binary that oversimplifies good non-racists and bad racists has been a useful idea in my ministry context to interrupt white dismissive attempts to shortcut and cheapen conversations on race.

Even after reading and absorbing these principles from DiAngelo, after hearing concerns about racism discussions dividing our church, forces of white solidarity and white fragility were at work in me. I confessed this tension about my project with Dr. Regina Shands Stoltzfus, a Black adjunct professor teaching a course I was taking at PTS on African American studies. I'm embarrassed to tell this, but it is an important part of digging beneath the surface and discovering much deeper white problems. I can only imagine unspoken thoughts a Black woman might have for a whining white man, but here is what Dr. Shands Stoltzfus more tactfully said to me in an email: "We humans develop a number of strategies to contend with [the weight of racism history], some of them healthy, some of them not. I urge you to think about what it means to do the hard work of facing history, dialoguing about race in ways that care for you and for those around you. This work takes stamina, and the forces of oppression depend mightily on individual and collective burnout, resignation, and denial. The church and the world at large need to do better at including resiliency as part of its strategy to deal with social injustices."

This was a turning point for my project, for which I am so grateful to Dr. Shands Stoltzfus. I learned I was not using my white agency and positionality for the sake of racial justice. I resolved to re-commit to the project and followed curiosities and concerns in my context. Further, I began looking for ways to excavate white thinking that has led to violence, silence, and oppression of Black people. I drew no boundaries for this, including critique of myself, my theologies, social location, family, church, and education.

One example of excavating white thinking is critiquing my own education. During my undergraduate degree and Master of Divinity from 1985-2000, I learned biblical studies and theology from white males exclusively. I am a white cisgender male whose theological

education and library has been mostly white male influenced. My hope in joining PTS was to interrupt my own white patriarchal education and ministry practices. In contrast from my M.Div. course work, my entire PTS doctoral course work has been instructed by professors who identify more diversely in categories such as gender, race, and theological focus. During my time at PTS, I had no white male instructors. This was an important and intentional—and communally facilitated—decision for me. Critique of my whiteness and hearing voices much different from my own does not have to lead me to countermeasures or despair. I am hopeful as I learn from seeing faces of theologians and scholars and hearing voices with different gender, religious, and racial concerns from mine. These voices include professors and classmates and extends to authors who become dialogue partners for this project, such as Thandeka.

White Shame

I couldn't resist the title of her book. Thandeka's *Learning to be White* blew a fuse in my white brain. First, Thandeka's "Race Game" caught my attention.⁵⁶ The Black author, activist, theologian advises white people to refer to their white friends, family, and work associates as white. *My white wife said yesterday that . . . My boss, he's white, is out of town. My mechanic is white, but I trust him.* She reifies in this "game" that white people believe their race is the default and most often name race when referring to a person of color. I tried it for a day and couldn't do it. Thandeka's point was made, and my brain was re-programmed one fraction of a degree. Not long after, I noticed when a preacher came to PTS chapel and spoke several times in a week. His demeanor and stories created an uproar. One thing he did

⁵⁶ Thandeka, *Learning to Be White: Money, Race, and God in America* (New York, New York; London: Continuum, 1999), 3.

was to use language that exposed this white-as-default thinking, because he only referred to race when telling stories about people of color.

Another of Thandeka's social location questions took me down a path I would later ask as part of my project survey. She asks, "When did you first learn that racism is a thing?" I noted this question as one I would later include in my ministry context racism survey.

Thandeka surveys or interviews white people and reports their stories of a white code they learned as children. *You cannot spend the night at her house. You cannot date that boy. Don't go on that side of town.* Thandeka says white children receive the code, internally reject it as morally wrong, then later become complicit in the white supremacy of the code. For example, Thandeka cites a story about a white fraternity member who tells his Black friend he can join. When the fraternity rejects the Black student without even calling for a vote, the white student must reveal this discrimination to his friend. The Black student lives with racist rejection and trauma. The white student lives with what Thandeka calls "white shame." When racial coding is silently rejected but the white person fails to speak or act against racism, white shame occurs.

Church dialogue on racism and the massacre brought signs of this white shame to the surface. White people in my church wanted to know if I was targeting white people for some reason. Citing how white people were being targeted for being racists, one white elder in my ministry context said, "I'm so tired of feeling like a piece of shit."

I wonder if white shame for harm to Black people could be like moral injury when racial codes lead to violence. One aspect of moral injury is used in military psychiatry as a clinical condition of those who suffer from trauma of exercising a morally wrong violence on another

human being. How has moral injury and white shame worked in the white conspiracy of silence and victim blaming after the 1921 Tulsa massacre?

White Sin

My primary definition of sin is any act of bodily, psychological-emotional, economic, and/or spiritual harm to another human being. Sin against humanity is also sin against the divine creator of humanity. Continuing to excavate whiteness, I wanted to know if somehow whiteness is sinful. Jennifer Harvey said, as far as whiteness is tied to past and ongoing white supremacy, “whiteness is sin.”⁵⁷

Specifically, white people have sinned by establishing a racial and economic caste system and perpetuated it. Isabel Wilkerson names systemic racism in the United States as a caste system.⁵⁸ The sin of whiteness is more serious than white people being fragile or having privilege. This inequality is bad enough, but the problem is even deeper in the psyche of white people. The problem is worse than white shame because there is sin beneath the shame. White sin, moral injury to Black people, is ongoing if not named, confessed, and repaired.

White Greed

Many white people hoard land, property, and wealth, yet are poor in spirit. A Pew Research poll found that about half of white people surveyed worry at some level that they one day will be a minority in the United States.⁵⁹ White supremacy and derivatives in

57. Jennifer Harvey, *Whiteness and Morality: Pursuing Racial Justice through Reparations and Sovereignty*, First Palgrave Macmillan paperback edition (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) 141-42.

58. Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, First edition (New York: Random House, 2020).

59. “Pew Survey: Whites Apprehensive on USA Becoming Majority-Minority,” <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2019/03/21/pew-survey-whites-fearful-minority-country-will-weaken-american-culture/3217218002/>.

politics, religion, and marketing brutally play on this primary fear that white people will one day lose dominion. White people driven by fear of losing dominion, make policies that harm Black people they fear.⁶⁰ In order to further comprehend these white ways of knowing, I mapped white racial thinking I was hearing in my ministry context in response to dialogues about racism and the massacre.

Color Blind White Gaze

In tracing white fragility, white shame, white sin, white greed, I am moving into what Kelly Brown Douglas calls a “corrupt moral imaginary” that blinds white people from seeing Black suffering or valuing Black lives.⁶¹ What is the white theology that continually devalues Black life and refuses to understand why it is important to say that Black Lives Matter? I began to map white ways of knowing, which alerted me to even deeper layers of the problem of whiteness. Through the following mapping, I began to see further connections in theological, social, economic, and political white race thinking. The following is a composite mapping of white responses to racism dialogue and the 1921 Tulsa massacre. Wording is partly from a text I received from a white man in my church. These words reveal the white gaze, a “corrupt moral imaginary,” a composite mapping of what I heard from many white

60. One result of policies driving by fear, for example, is incarcerating Black people disproportionately. My son, Jacob Taylor, wrote a paper about mass incarceration that opened my eyes to how Oklahoma incarcerates more people per capita than anywhere else in the world. What further disturbed me is disproportionate prison population of women and people of color. Around the same time, I heard one of the best speeches in my lifetime, by Bryan Stevenson, author of *Just Mercy*, who has literally taken up the mission of Jesus to release the captives from death row.

Because of new understandings about the suffering of prisoners and their families, I joined a group called Allied Communities of Tulsa Inspiring Our Neighborhoods (ACTION). The activist group joins the oppressed people Jesus names in Luke 4:18-19: poor, disabled, prisoners. I joined a sub-committee on criminal justice reform with a goal of reducing incarceration in Oklahoma by fifty percent in ten years.

61. Kelly Brown Douglas, *Resurrecting Hope: A Future Where Black Lives Matter* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2021).

people in my surveys in my ministry context. Lines are numbered so I can reference them for later critique.

- 1 I was raised right, taught to treat everyone the same.
- 2 People are no different than me, therefore I do not see color.
- 3 Everyone has opportunities; I earned my own way.
- 4 You got to pull yourself up by your own bootstraps.
- 5 Therefore, anyone who prospers has worked hard.
- 6 Those who fail have made bad choices.
- 7 You get what you deserve when you don't comply.
- 8 On the field or at the job, race does not matter.
- 9 We hire the best qualified person for the job, period.
- 10 Affirmative Action is reverse discrimination.
- 11 I don't care if you are red, yellow, Black, or purple, we all bleed red.
- 12 America is the greatest country on the planet.
- 13 Liberal media and whiners need to stop fanning flames of racial hate.
- 14 I stand tall as a white man who loves people of all races and cultures.

Line 1 contains residual essentialist racism, superiority of origin. Essentialist racism claims a biological inferiority of people of color. I have shown evidence of how this essentialist racism justifies racial violence such as the 1921 Tulsa massacre. In this essentialist racism is a claim of innocence, rooted in an origin story of being taught right, to treat everyone the same.

Line 2 betrays an assimilationist or color blind racism. Assimilationist racism attempts to evade perceptions of difference and realities of power. An impossible claim of color blindness also assumes white as default without admitting it.

Line 3 denies systemic inequities, advantages for white people and disadvantages for Black people.

Lines 4-6 assume everyone has the same opportunities and that inequality can be explained by people of color not working as hard as white people, parents not doing their job, or being in the home, or spending money on the wrong things.

Line 7 refers to white males claiming they always comply when stopped by a police worker. Years ago, I was riding in a vehicle with a white church member who was driving, when he was stopped by police for speeding through a small town. No ticket was issued. As the church member drove off, he said, "That's favor." He explained not getting a ticket for breaking the law as God favoring him. His religious belief belied the fact of the police implicit bias of innocence of white people and guilt of Black people at traffic stops. In multiple conversations about police brutality of Black people, white males mostly engage in reductionism that assumes Black people do not comply as needed, and that is why they get shot and killed.

Lines 8-9 compacts a short line that may be expanded with a story about playing sports or serving in the military with Black people, a Black friend at work. The implication is that everything is cool, that there was never any racial prejudice in those environments.

Line 10 is not reality. After research into the historic and ongoing experiences of suffering and resilience of Black people by the oppression of white people in the United States for four centuries, I cannot agree that white people in the United States experience reverse racism that ever approximates the experiences of Black people. White supremacy and systemic racism in the United States, DiAngelo and Kendi note, is a one-way street, with white people as oppressors and Black and people of color as the oppressed.

Line 11 is often said with a little smirk, as if our skin color can be purple and no one would notice and no one would try to explain differences with harmful effects.

Line 12 makes a claim that America is the best country in the world with little or no experience elsewhere, except for military, and without having experienced the inequities and brutality of systemic racism in United States.

Line 13 portrays an ignorance of the role of free press to critique corrupt governments, and lack of understanding that protest is the language of the oppressed.

Line 14 stakes a claim for resistance of non-white progress while claiming there is no prejudice but love for all.

Summary

I am tracing a deeper and deeper path into the depths of the white soul, beginning with white fragility, and moving into white shame, sin, greed, and the color blind white gaze that KBD calls a “corrupt moral imaginary.” There is further, deeper, and wider to dig into the problem of whiteness. So, in chapter three, I outline my project to show how I use qualitative research to measure and analyze white ways of thinking and seeing Black suffering and resilience. How will these ways of seeing and thinking change in response to hearing narratives and seeing images of Greenwood’s trauma and resilience?

CHAPTER THREE
PROJECT OUTLINE

“If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, there’s no progress. If you pull it all the way out that’s not progress. Progress is healing the wound that the blow made. And they haven’t even pulled the knife out, much less heal the wound. They won’t even admit the knife is there.”⁶²

Malcolm X, Television Interview, 1964

I’m working toward a historical-theological anthropology on how white eyes see Black people’s suffering and resilience in the aftermath of the 1921 Tulsa massacre. I want to better understand the roots of racial inequality in Tulsa and nationally. How do white ways of knowing lead to such horrific white terror and ongoing discrimination? To that end, I designed an educational event in my ministry context, an admittedly small beginning effort in face of such a tragic history.

Uncovering white supremacy in Tulsa, however, will require steps such as white communities hearing authentic narratives about the massacre. This is particularly important because of the countermeasures at work at all levels of society. One hundred years later, for

62. William A. Darity and A. Kirsten Mullen, *Resurrecting the Promise of 40 Acres: The Imperative of Reparations for Black Americans* (Roosevelt Institute, 2020), https://rooseveltinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/RI_Report_ResurrectingthePromiseof40Acres_202005.pdf.

example, there are still active state legislative attempts to reverse progress of teaching massacre history. Lawmakers and parents claim that children will be traumatized to hear history of events such as the Tulsa massacre. They don't want white children to feel guilty or take any responsibility by virtue of their skin color for horrific things white people have done to Black people. I've never heard a single white person claim any connections to the massacre, yet the fact is, there must be tens of thousands of descendants of white terrorist actors in Tulsa today. What I hear most often is, "I wasn't there." The question I have put to my ministry context is, "But will you be there now?" The purpose of the educational event, therefore, is for my congregation to be present to the narratives of victims, survivors, defenders, and descendants of the 1921 Tulsa Massacre.

Before and after these narratives, I administer identical surveys on experiences with racism. Surveys and qualitative data analysis serve a project objective to excavate white ways of thinking. As systemic and internalized white supremacy is exposed, a model of functional change is exercised to promote growth in racial attitudes and actions. My hope expressed in this act of ministry is for white people to see Black historical and present trauma and hear the cries and stories of resilience and rebuilding. I want white people to join Black people for racial liberation in Tulsa.

Concern for Historical and Ongoing Racial Trauma

When I submitted my Internal Review Board application, the IRB committee responded with concern for those who may experience historical and ongoing racial trauma. In response to this concern, I exercise caution in using language and methods that care for all those participating in research. The Journey Church is my primary ministry context. I have fifteen years of pastoral experience in this community, "comforting the afflicted, and afflicting the

comfortable.” In Cornel West’s way of saying this, I am guiding myself and other white people to discern whether blessings are from God or sinfully acquired.

Therefore, just as I challenge comfortable white people in their so-called “privilege,” I also care for people of color who may be triggered by massacre narratives and white processing of racial thinking. Together, I am indeed interested in tending to IRB’s concern and the flourishing of all members of my church and community.

Procedures for Carrying Out Survey and Educational Event

While describing the following procedures seems a bit dry, I discovered the need for a strong dialogue structure. Surveys and informal conversation revealed fear and anxiety to discuss racism. Two goals of describing these procedures and dialogue structure are to allay these fears of discussing racism, and to provide direction for other church leaders to replicate this educational event and survey.

Preparing Participants Before the Event

Preparing those participating with lead time and knowledge of what will be happening is very important. Every effort is made to avoid participants entering the exercise cold without knowing that the story of the massacre and dialogue on racism will occur. In the weeks before the educational gathering, an online survey link is distributed to members of the church. Members are asked to sign informed consent in paper or online.

Orientation to the Educational Event

At the gathering, I orient the occasion with a welcome and prayer. To ensure fuller transparency, I introduce my research and pastoral concern to center the stories of historical trauma and resilience of Black people and the white ways of thinking that must change to bring healing, equity, and reparative justice to Tulsa.

First Survey

Printed informed consent and survey forms are distributed. Before and after telling the story of the massacre, I administer identical surveys titled, “A Survey on Experiences with Racism.”⁶³ The survey that includes resources for discussing experiences of racism is distributed to participants. Participants are introduced to my project model for improving white ways of thinking about and discussing racism. My research uses a functional change model.

Narration of the 1921 Tulsa Massacre

A narrative of the 1921 Tulsa massacre and the topic of racism is presented. The act of ministry centers authentic narratives of Greenwood and sets the trajectory of the project. As part of this centering, I partner with those who center stories, suffering, and resilience of Greenwood defenders, victims, survivors, and descendants. Rev. Jean Neal of the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation and Karlos K. Hill have walked with me in this re-centering of my presentations on Greenwood stories without losing a necessary focus on excavating white supremacy in responses to these narratives.

Dialogue on Experiences with Racism

Next, to see one’s own values reflected, a time of dialogue with small groups includes a question posed by Thandeka: “When is the first time you learned that racism is a thing?” The group is instructed to listen with non-judgment to one another’s stories. This time of discussion is guided by a set of fifteen possible questions that are listed on an eight-page

63. Taylor, “Survey on Race.” I offered the survey in print and online. See Appendices for printed version of this survey.

booklet of before and after surveys, discussion questions, resources for next steps, and information about the researcher.

Repeat Survey

Finally, after the first survey, an educational narrative, and dialogue, I administer a second survey that is identical to the first survey. My project hypothesis is that by educating on Tulsa massacre narratives, surveying, and mirroring values back to participants, change in these values will occur. After this repeat survey is complete, I collect all the surveys for analysis and reporting in this project.

Closing the Educational Event and Surveys

To close, I say to congregants, “Thank you for your participation in this survey and discussion on ‘Experiences with Racism.’ My goal in having you take a survey, hear a narrative on the race massacre, dialogue on experiences with racism, then repeat the same survey is to offer you a snapshot of your racial ideas right now. My project belief and hope is that racial ideas can change for the better. No one’s racial ideas are perfect, and we all need to become better human beings, more compassionate, more active in anti-racism. Thank you for attending this educational event on the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre and discussion on experiences with racism. My prayer and desire of this research is that you engage these resources I’ve provided to think more seriously about the steps you need to take personally and in your community. Your racial values are yours, and the responsibility to change is yours.”

Analyzing Data from Surveys

After the educational event and surveys are collected, I compile survey data in a spreadsheet for analysis. I am measuring racial ideas, attitudes, emotions, and actions in

participants before and after an educational event. My goal is to promote change of racial ideas and actions in participants through these exercises and to measure even the smallest change in these ideas and proposed actions. I analyze and report on one hundred race surveys across my own church and one other church.⁶⁴

Summary

I have mentioned three methodologies used in the context of a larger functional change model for the project. The first methodology for functional change is responding to narratives of the race massacre at a facilitated educational event. The second methodology used in the act of ministry is surveying. The third methodology is an exercise in reflecting one's values for change, called "Values Mirroring." In chapter four I describe the functional change model and these three methodologies in more detail, how the overall model and these methodologies fit in the context of the project trajectory, from narratives, to responses, to change.

64. I'm grateful to my son, Jacob Taylor, and my friend Doug Townsdin, who both organized their respective groups for pilots of my educational event, dialogue, and "Survey on Experiences of Racism." Taylor, "Survey on Race."

CHAPTER FOUR
THEORETICAL METHODOLOGY: FUNCTIONAL CHANGE MODEL

“God told Moses I have heard the cry, and I have seen the affliction,
I know what my people are going through.”⁶⁵

Omaleyb

In this chapter I describe my project research model of functional change that I designed for church members in my ministry context. In a functional change model, I gather information about individuals and a group in my ministry context before and after the act of ministry is performed. The purpose of gathering the same information before and after the act of ministry is to gauge effectiveness of my functional change model.

The act of ministry centers narratives of Black suffering and resilience in 1921 and today and promotes compassionate and restorative change in how white people hear and see those stories. I gather information before and after the act of ministry using three methods: preparing to respond to narratives of suffering and resilience; before and after surveys about experiences with racism; observing change in behaviors through a functional change model.

65. OmaleyB, *UNSUNG 1921* (Independent Label, 2021).

Preparing to Respond to Narratives of Suffering and Resilience

Preparing to respond to narratives of suffering and resilience of Greenwood, church leaders facilitated a series of dialogues called, “Courageous Conversations.”⁶⁶ One of these conversations was on racism. Opening this space to share narratives of racism is intended to prepare ears and eyes of congregants in my ministry context to respond compassionately to Greenwood narratives of suffering and resilience.

In his song, “We died in Love,” Omaleyb quotes his father, a Black preacher, who relays his own father’s lesson in compassion. “But you cannot have compassion without somehow in some way becoming a part of that person’s experience, no matter how limited, no matter how indirect. Compassion, my father taught me, and I’m thankful for that lesson, means to suffer with . . . when God told Moses I have heard the cry, and I have seen the affliction, I know what my people are going through.”

A Courageous Conversation on Racism makes space for this divine modeling of compassion by seeing suffering and hearing stories of resilience. In a loving and non-judgmental atmosphere, people can share stories of racism without others commenting or “correcting,” directly or subtly. The conversation opened with a question, “Talk about the first time you learned that racism is a thing?”⁶⁷

The question puzzled many who seemed to be trying to access memories and returning a zero. Several white members spoke first, telling stories about having friends growing up who were Black or an ethnicity other than U.S.-American. I observed the theme of each story was,

66. Courageous Conversations name derived from “Courageous Conversations About Race” (Discipleship Ministries, n.d.), <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/courageous-conversations-about-race>.

67. I had picked up this prompt question from Thandeka. See Thandeka, *Learning to Be White*.

“I was taught to love everyone.” A Black member, on the other hand, told a story about drinking from filthy water fountains and using rest room facilities that were not perpetually maintained. He described the gleaming white porcelain of the whites only drinking fountains and imagined the rest room toilet bowls were the same.

The session was less than one hour, only enough time to allow one brief story from each person who wanted to tell about their first experiences with racism. After the Courageous Conversation on Racism, I felt we had only nicked the skin of racism. I discerned much more lay below the surface. Two results discernible to me occurred after the session.

First, hosting a formal space for sharing one another’s stories opened new possibilities for sharing personal stories after the event. After the event, I listened to a member tell a story about when he was jogging in his neighborhood when a police car stopped him, because a white neighbor had called in a “suspicious Black man” running in the neighborhood. This was before the murders of Ahmaud Arbery and Elijah McClain.

Second, stories like this “suspicious Black man” on the one hand, and pithy reductionism on the other hand, motivated me pursue training in facilitation for change in my ministry context. I am grateful for in person training in facilitation from Kris King and Christy Emig of Allied Communities of Tulsa Inspiring Our Neighborhoods (ACTION); Rev. Sandhya Jha of Oakland Peace Center; and Rev. Jean Neal of John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation.

From facilitation trainers I learned valuable countermeasures to mitigate reductionism—“I was just taught to love everyone”—that de facto shuts down discussion of racism. How do I address fear of offending others in myself and in group participants? How can I foreclose argumentation without arguing? I began to practice in formal and informal settings these

countermeasures to the defensive moves of white fragility. What should I do when someone exempts themselves from the problem, checks out, or attempts to put responsibility on people of color to educate white people about racism?

Beyond being irritating and thoroughly unenjoyable to people of color in the conversation, these defensive moves run deeper than white fragility and serve to reinscribe white supremacy. I have developed responses in my ministry context to these white defensive moves. When a white person was attempting to put the burden of proof on a Black person for the existence of systemic racism today, I responded by saying that it is not the responsibility of Black people to educate white people about racism. After all, racism in the United States was invented and perpetuated by white people to exploit Black people for white profit. White people must engage historic and ongoing realities of racism to bring change in local and national contexts.

To a church member who was claiming systemic reverse racism, I said something like this: “Reverse discrimination is not possible for white people. Systemic racism has been enacted and perpetuated by white male landowners through laws, policies, institutions, churches, systems of education, courts, and prisons that discriminate against Black people. It is not possible for a white person to experience systemic racism because only white people have held the power to enact this discrimination.”

When a person dismissed learning about racism because they “have a Black friend,” I said, “Even with people you love, racism can be embedded and enacted in that relationship. Wouldn’t you like to learn more about how to talk about changing this unfairness in relationships?”

When a person got agitated about discussing racism, I asked, “What is the most important thing to you about this issue we are discussing that brings emotion?”

Having prepared the congregation for seeing and hearing narratives of suffering and resilience in the 1921 Race Massacre, I designed a survey to administer before and after a presentation about the massacre.

A Survey on Experiences with Racism

“A Survey on Experiences with Racism” can be accessed in Appendix Four. I administered dozens of surveys in three pilot groups before the main act of ministry in my church. I learned in these pilot groups that most people would not repeat the survey unless administered in the same event, directly after a presentation. Therefore, identical surveys were administered in my ministry context during a Sunday worship service, before and after a presentation on racism and the 1921 Tulsa massacre. The transcript of this presentation can be accessed in Appendix Three. The purpose of the survey is to hold up a mirror to reflect a person’s racial ideas, to promote compassionate change of those ideas and resulting actions. For purposes of this project, the surveys also measured incremental changes after a presentation on racism and the massacre.

During pilot surveys I learned that many people feel frustration, anxiety, and fear about discussing racism. Those with these emotions reported the reasons ranged from the fear of offending someone to being frustrated with previously unproductive conversations on racism. Because of this, I decided a survey would be an effective way of gathering information about change. The methodology of change in the survey and explanations before and after the survey is called “Values Mirroring.”

Values Mirroring

I learned about using “Values Mirroring” in context for life change from Paul Brent Dybdahl.⁶⁸ Blending a self-reflective question of Jesus (Luke 10:26-28) and a methodology of social scientist Milton Rokeach, Values Mirroring opens a new space for life change. Rather than excoriating a Jewish theologian about a particular issue, Jesus asks, “What does the law say? How do you read it?” The man gives his own interpretation, then Jesus says, “Go and do likewise.” The man is called by Jesus to connect his theology with his actions. This project is exploring connections of theology and action, both terrible justifications of theology that lead to harm of others, and good connections of theology and action that lead to reparative justice.

Values Mirroring is defined as a method of reflecting a person’s beliefs back to them so they may see themselves more accurately as they are and make their own decision to change. In a 1973 study at University of Michigan, Milton Rokeach asked groups of students to rank their values in order of importance. In a control group, Rokeach did not comment on the group’s rankings.

In an experimental group, Rokeach commented that students had ranked “Freedom” much higher than “Equality,” suggesting that MSU students must be more interested in themselves and their own freedoms than the freedoms of others.

Next, the experimenter suggested that the students spend a few moments looking at their own value rankings compared with the composite rankings of MSU students. Finally, the experimenter thanked the students and told them, “Your values are your own private

68. Paul Brent Dybdahl, “The Stairway to Heaven: A Critique of the Evangelical Gospel Presentation in North America” (n.d.): 300.

business. I only hope that I have caused each of you to think seriously about your own values.”

In follow up surveys, the group that heard Rokeach comment on their values, ranked “Equality” higher than previously. The control group in which Rokeach did not comment on values, however, showed little or no change in their ranking of “Equality.” Other values such as “a world at peace” increased in rank and “a comfortable life” decreased in rank in the experimental group.

Finally, months later Rokeach sent a letter to the control and experimental groups, inviting them to join the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). In the study with ninety-seven percent of students identifying as white, students in the experimental group were nearly two and a half times more likely to join the NAACP than the students who had never had their values “mirrored” back to them. Dybdahl applies Rokeach’s findings to how evangelists might approach people for life change, calling on the questioning and mirroring approaches of Jesus and Rokeach. Dybdahl’s application of Rokeach’s research is instructive to me in approaching people about attitudes and actions related to racism and white supremacy. “Rather than approaching Americans as lost, unhappy, and separated from God because of their sin, Christians could let Americans see themselves as most really are—people who hold mutually exclusive positions and who do not live in harmony with their stated beliefs. Rokeach has demonstrated that people respond to observed incongruities in their lives by changing both beliefs and behaviors. The Christian evangelist should learn from this approach, originally modeled by Jesus himself.”⁶⁹

69. Dybdahl, *Stairway*, 229-230.

To apply this learning from Dybdahl, Jesus, and Rokeach, a before survey provides participants in my ministry context with a mirror to measure their own racial ideas and actions. The selfie of racial ideas can be compared with scripture, the values of our own community, and human rights principles of equality, justice, mercy, compassion, and love.

Summary

In this chapter, I have described the model of functional change and three main methodologies to promote growth in racial ideas and actions. The three methodologies are preparing to be present to new more authentic narratives of the massacre; before and after surveys about experiences with racism; and observing change in behaviors through a functional change model.

Half of this project paper has been a build up to the theological work that follows. At this point, it seems in addition to summary of this chapter, a preview of the final three chapters might be helpful.

In chapter five, I build a theo-historical framework using constructive theology to provide a foundation for the possibility of change that is lifted up in the functional change model I tested in the ministry context.

In chapter six, Project Report, I uncover eye problems of white people that prevent them from seeing suffering and resilience of Black people. Further, I describe changes observed in respondents reported in the after surveys.

The final chapter lifts up an historical-theological anthropology of seeing the suffering and resilience of Black people through the suffering and resilience of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER FIVE
THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

“The only way these boundaries can be crossed is by sharing the pain of the sufferers with them, not leaving them alone and making their cry louder.”⁷⁰

Dorothee Sölle

In this chapter, I engage constructive theology to reflect on revelations in my research of white blindness to Black suffering and resilience. I honor and critique my own biblical and theological *traditions*. I *lament* my own positionality to white supremacy. I become *accountable* to change myself and interrupt white oppression. I engage Black *prophetic* witnesses who white people have tried to suppress. I launch from and move outside my original ministry context to shape reparative *practices*.

I am blending Hill’s historical question, “What is my positionality to this history?” and Thandeka’s social location analysis question, “When is the first time you learned race is a thing?” with theological questions such as, “What is my theological positionality to white responses to the 1921 Tulsa massacre, then and now?”

70. Dorothee Sölle, *Suffering* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 178.

Honoring and Critiquing Traditions

Hearing narratives of the massacre and seeing ongoing racial inequities formed the first theological rupture that led me to examine my own traditions. This rupture alerted me to a connection between white supremacy's violence and what James H. Cone calls, "white theology." An oversimplified definition of white theology is white way of "knowing," that white is good and black is evil. White men, said Cone, have for centuries interpreted the Bible as a conquest document that claims God has ordained a caste system and racial violence. Hearing Cone's prophetic call to "do my first works over," I begin again where white theologians like me have failed: to make God's liberation the starting point for theological reflection. Cone critiques white theology that ignores divine liberation as a starting point to approach the problem of evil and suffering. Cone calls the Enlightenment inspired providential claims naïve when suffering becomes mere apologia in a rational argument and when the resolution to the problem of evil and suffering is located individually and internally.

God's action in Jesus Christ has liberated the oppressed to act for further liberation through political action. Cone contends scripture has no interest in theoretical explanations for evil, which it takes for granted. Instead, Black Theology is located in what God has done in Jesus Christ to liberate captives from slavery. God's past and present acts liberate people to fight against oppression.⁷¹

71. I capitalize "Black Theology" and do not capitalize "white theology" because Black Theology is a long-established theological approach. White theology, on the other hand, is mostly unperceived by the purveyors of an approach to scripture and theology that favors conquering, privileging white power, benefits, and space. The late James H. Cone is one of the early theologians critiquing white theology and developing Black Theology. James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2018).

In contrast to Black Theology, my critique of my own theological tradition is that historic and systemic white supremacy is rooted in and upheld by this white theology. The way Eric Weed makes this connection is by naming white supremacy as a religion.⁷² To the extent that this “religion” attempts to wield power that steals, oppresses, and murders human lives, it can further be construed as a *demonic*. The main belief in this demonic religion is that white people are superior, and the organizing principle is by any and all means to wield oppressive power over any non-white people who threaten white power.

White power tries to protect white power at all costs. White power, says Kelly Brown Douglas, “is about safeguarding the illusion of America’s sense of exceptionalism,” or “protecting white space.”⁷³ Exceptionalism begins with the myth of pilgrims of high moral standards and seeking religious freedom. My wife, Jill, often says that many white American Christians seem to believe more in Sir William Wallace than in Jesus Christ. Just as researcher Rokeach noted to his students, these Braveheart-like guttural screams of “Freedom!” seem to be more important for self than for freedom of others.

My critique of whiteness faces limitations of being what I am critiquing, a white American cis gender male. I rely heavily on Black theologians such as Cone, KBD, and M.

72. In addition to Black theologians, my project tracks with works of others who appear to self-identify as white. Weed and Perkinson go much further to pursue in their works what I am using to analyze Tulsa history, a Theo-Historical approach. I believe theology is greatly influenced by history and socially constructed as well as dogmatically and biblically constructed, not to mention the fact that the Bible itself is constructed out of historical and social influences and not purely dropped from heaven or essentially theological. Eric Arden Weed, *The Religion of White Supremacy in the United States* (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, an imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc, 2017).

73. Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ*, The Bishop Henry McNeal Turner Studies in North American Black Religion; vol. 9 (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1994), 155, 193. Hereafter at times I refer to Kelly Brown Douglas, with respect, as KBD.

Shawn Copeland, whose experiences with intersectionality of systemic racism is a profoundly different experience from mine as a confessed oppressor.

Kelly Brown Douglas, for example, helps me trace development of a “social, cultural, epistemological privilege”—a white way of knowing KBD calls a “corrupt moral imaginary” which “fosters death of Black bodies.” What KBD realizes and I learn from is that this “corrupt moral imaginary” of whiteness cannot seem to envision a society where Black lives are equally valued. Why? After all, the whole idea of whiteness was invented to claim biological difference to dominate and subjugate Black bodies for profit. White theology that has justified and upholds white supremacy has locked in a binary where white is good and black is evil.

What I do as a white person about this corrupt moral imaginary is the subject of the rest of this project paper.

One key remedy for my own corrupt moral imaginary is to hear KBD and M. Shawn Copeland’s theological anthropologies linking the suffering body of Christ to Black women’s bodies suffering from slavery to present.⁷⁴ Likewise, the suffering and resilience of Jesus is the suffering and resilience of Black Tulsans. I explore the Black Christ with Cone, KBD, and Copeland in the final theological chapter.

My project is limited to scripture texts and theological themes of human suffering, oppression, and resilience.⁷⁵ I critique my own tradition of interpretation and practice where

74. M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom: Body, Race, and Being*, Innovations (Minneapolis, Minn.) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), x.

75. While my critique and theological anthropology centers on Genesis 1-3, my project has also been shaped by interpretive critique and reflection on a number of other texts, including Genesis 4:1-16 as a new starting place in defining sin; Genesis 6:1-22 as critique of interpretations of “Ham” to dismantle white supremacy tropes on blackness as evil; Leviticus 6:1-7 and Luke 19:1-10 to explore restitution as an ancient, often unpracticed, but necessary, radical response to conviction of moral injury to others; Leviticus 19:18, 33-34 and Luke 4:18-19 as critique of omission of love for those outside a community of faith; Jeremiah 5:1-21, Mark

texts have been used to uphold white supremacy. I honor and critique interpretations of texts where there is a strong connection to Genesis 1-3. Copeland says the central convictions of theological anthropology derive from Christian interpretation of this Genesis 1-3 narrative. Summarized in Genesis 1:27 and narrated in Genesis 1-3, all human beings are created in the image and likeness of God (*imago Dei*), created with a unique place in God's cosmos, and created for communion with other living beings. This may be what the Bible says, but this is not what happened on the planet.⁷⁶

“Slavery deformed these convictions,” says Copeland. “It aimed to deface the *imago Dei* in Black human beings, constrain Black human potential, and debased Black *being-in-communion* with creation. Slavery sought to displace God and, thus, it blasphemed. Its sacrilegious extension in white racist supremacy has had fatal consequences for *all* people—Black people, especially, and Black women.”⁷⁷

“No Christian teaching has been more desecrated by slavery than the doctrine of the human person or theological anthropology,” says Copeland.⁷⁸ The Tulsa massacre in 1921, while different from slavery in many ways, was no less a desecration of Black bodies and spirits and thus the *imago Dei* in Black Tulsans.

4:12, 8:18, Matthew 6:22-23 to reflect on prophetic words of Jeremiah and Jesus about seeing the suffering of others; Acts 8:26-39, 10:34-35, Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:11-22, Colossians 3:1-11 as a reflection on the gracious love of God for all people.

76. This difference between what the Bible seems to be saying and “what happened on the planet” is language used in Richard Elliott Friedman and Shawna Dolansky, *The Bible Now* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

77. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 24.

78. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 23.

Lamenting White Supremacy

I lament what Copeland calls “an anthropological *no* to life for all others.”⁷⁹ This idolatry is continually confronted by the ministry and sacrificial love of Jesus of Nazareth, “whose solidarity with the outcast and poor revealed God’s preferential love.” Jesus is an anthropological yes to the *imago Dei* in all humanity. Because of this, Copeland focuses a new theological anthropology on “exploited, despised, poor women of color.”⁸⁰ Because of oppressive connections to their human suffering, however, I also lament the “theological problem of whiteness.”⁸¹ Jennifer Harvey and J. Kameron Carter name the theological problem of whiteness as the most pressing theological and practical problem of the twenty-first century.

My project theological problem as lament is that this white theology led to, upheld, and justified the 1921 Greenwood massacre. I show from sermons delivered in Tulsa white churches June 5, 1921, and through surveys of my own ministry context, evidence that white supremacy, upheld by white theology, continues to be internalized in white Tulsans and systemic in City of Tulsa ordinances one hundred years after the massacre.

I lament the suffering of Black Tulsans caused by white theology serving white greed and supremacy. The crisis of this lament is not only that white people have been shaped in concrete and material terms by white supremacy. White people benefit in concrete and material terms from white supremacy. White people upholding white supremacy harm people of color in concrete and material terms. This calls for dismantling white supremacy’s

79. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 89.

80. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 89.

81. Jennifer Harvey, Karin A. Case, and Robin Hawley Gorsline, *Disrupting White Supremacy from Within: White People on What We Need to Do* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2004), 7.

theology and structures in concrete and material terms. Finally, it calls for repair in concrete and material terms.

A sticking point today in Tulsa is that white acknowledgement or apologies of Black suffering has never been adequate, sincere, or open to any next steps.⁸² In response to this ongoing rupture and need to hear the cries of suffering Black people and see the stories of resilience of Black people, I have shifted my project questions, from a more general, “How did white churches respond to the massacre?” to “How did white people see historic trauma, suffering, and resilience of Black people and how can white people change?”

As I entered these questions, I began developing a theological anthropology on how white people see suffering and resiliency of Black people.⁸³ I learned not to fear as much entering space of lament and despair that Shelly Rambo and Karen Bray call “Holy Saturday.” This liminal space between the death of Jesus Christ on the cross and the Sunday of resurrection is a place of ongoing pathos with people suffering in ways I may not be currently suffering.⁸⁴ Here on Holy Saturday is where “Blackness is the ongoing making of life in the space of death.”⁸⁵

Dorothee Sölle said, “We can change the social conditions under which people experience suffering. We can change ourselves and learn in suffering instead of becoming

82. Apologies have been made for the massacre by mayors, a police chief, and others noted in Johnson, *Black Wall Street 100*.

83. In summer of 2020, in one of the first COVID-19 era Zoom courses offered at PTS, Dr. Yuki Schwartz focused on suffering. Who wanted to focus on suffering in the middle of a pandemic? Turns out a focus on suffering and resilience was precisely what I needed, what was missing in my project. In early 2021, I took a course with Dr. Karlos H. Hill that deepened this focus on suffering and resilience of Greenwood.

84. Karen Bray, *Grave Attending: A Political Theology for the Unredeemed*, First edition. (New York: Fordham University Press, 2020), 483-84; Shelly. Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma a Theology of Remaining*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 45.

85. Perkinson, *White Theology*, 130-47.

worse. We can gradually beat back and abolish the suffering that still today is produced for the profit of a few.” In death and in brutal, murderous injury such as the 1921 massacre, there are barriers that seem insurmountable. Sölle says, “The only way these boundaries can be crossed is by sharing the pain of the sufferers with them, not leaving them alone and making their cry louder.”⁸⁶

Accountability in Community

In addition to focusing on suffering, I believe it is also necessary to confess the sin of white supremacy. Jennifer Harvey says, “The only point at which white theology may claim a liberator God is through acknowledging, in the same theological moment, that we are in manifestly broken relationship with this God.”⁸⁷ Whiteness must be disrupted as the “only way to become fully human.”⁸⁸

The more I listen to people who look like me insist they are not racist, the more I insist what I am attempting is necessary. If white people are going to save their souls, to become better humans, they need to confess being oppressors. A smaller step toward confessing oppression is for white people to admit immaturity. For white people to mature, says Jim Perkinson, “Blackness can no longer be erected as a buffer against the demands of maturity, a screen against which to play out fear and fantasy, despair and desire—the quintessential sign for what is wrong and the (negative) surety for what is right about ‘America.’”⁸⁹

86. Sölle, *Suffering*, 178.

87. Sölle, *Suffering*, 178.

88. Jennifer Harvey, *Whiteness and Morality: Pursuing Racial Justice through Reparations and Sovereignty*, First Palgrave Macmillan paperback edition., (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 141–42.

86. Perkinson, *White Theology*, 189.

Another smaller step toward fuller confession of being oppressors is for white people to repent of benefiting from whiteness while denying those benefits exceed benefits afforded to people of color. If I am going to move toward confessing being an oppressor, I must learn and confess the concrete ways that I think and act to benefit while others suffer.

Engaging New Prophetic Witnesses

While my project focuses on white ways of knowing, the most important move of my project has been the ongoing new prophetic witness that Black theologians, activists, professors, pastors, and friends have spoken into my life. Taking a cue from Cornel West and James Cone who did not make their influences a footnote, I want to recount many influences on my growing thought and practices in Womanist Theology, Black Theology, and Constructive Theology.

I did not enter friendship or dialogue because I thought Black people should teach me about racism. I am, however, in genuine friendships with Black people in situations where much is at stake in a variety of organizations and in our city. We experience (mis)trust, joy and heartache, denial and truth, sadness and laughter, anger, compassion, love, and frustration with one another. In stark contrast to destructive, grievous terror caused by white people, friendships between white and Black people may build new realities and help make space for healing and reparations.

I met Rev. Sharyn Cosby in class at PTS and our friendship has moved to serving together on the board of a non-profit she founded. She has marched in protests, advocating for civil rights for fifty years. I have come under her leadership as she has led the way to interrupt the school to prison pipeline and disproportionate contact of teens of color with police and disproportionate incarceration of people of color. Sharyn is one of the many Black

activists and pastors who helped cause scales to fall from my blind white eyes. I offer this brief example of Sharyn's friendship as a symbol of many prophetic persons of color who have witnessed truth directly in my community or indirectly to me.

These prophetic voices include Dr. Regina Shands Stolfus, Dr. Karlos K. Hill, and Dr. Yuki Schwartz; fellow PTS students and pastors Sharyn Cosby; community activists Tiffany Crutcher, Greg Robinson, Ricco Wright; business people Sherry Gamble Smith, Chuck and Amber Oputa, Melvin Gilliam, Tyrone Amhara, Leonard Neal, and Wesley Gamble; church friends Nyasha Peters, Bartola Kuruvilla, Carl Lolar, Clarence and Lene Davis; fellow pastors Jean Neal, Jerry Taylor, Robert Turner; Womanist theologians and activists M. Shawn Copeland, Kelly Brown Douglas, Isabell Wilkerson, Angela Y. Davis, Tracy West; Black theologians and activists James Baldwin, Cornel West, James H. Cone, Ibram X. Kendi, Bryan Stevenson, Carol Anderson, Ta Nesi Coates.

In addition to face-to-face friendships, engaging new prophetic witnesses has also looked like this for me: reading *Beloved*. Copeland lifts up Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, saying the novel "recapitulates the fate of the body in the (dis)order of creation as told through slavocracy. What Cone calls "white theology," Copeland calls "slavocracy." Referring to Genesis 1:27, "slavocracy" claims some bodies to have been made in the image and likeness of God; slavocracy says some bodies were not made in the image and likeness of God. Free choice of some humans tore the webs of relationships with one another and God, destroying and desecrating some bodies. "Rituals of healing [found in *Beloved* novel] and (re)sanctification of Black flesh sustain a redemption begun through emancipation."⁹⁰

90. M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 51.

This notion of the white gaze seeing Black bodies as not being the image of God, I claim, is the source of white supremacy still being preached from pulpits in Tulsa on June 5, 1921. Surveys and analysis in my ministry context have revealed elements of this essentialism masked with assimilationism. A new way of reading, interpreting, and living Genesis 1:27, therefore, is important for the dismantling of this white gaze, white theology, and white supremacy. Much of the Bible is not prescriptive but descriptive of what the world may be like.

In creation, summarized in Genesis 1:27, God created all humans with equal worth to commune with God and one another, but men through sinful mechanisms, from philosophy to war, usurped God and lifted themselves as idols and women and people of color as objects of desire, ownership, and utility. While I have long held this view of God's image, I have not long practiced it in concrete, material, and anti-racists terms.

The Bible story keeps holding out opportunity for humans to restore the brokenness of the image of God in humans. Both the characters in the narratives themselves and the characters through two millennium interpreting those texts have repeatedly chosen not just to usurp God but to usurp one another. Texts have been used to explain difference and stray so badly from the path of the *imago Dei* understanding of all humanity as to be completely lost in an endless sea of supremacy.

Forming Reparative Practices in Local Contexts

Copeland lifts up a number of reparative practices for theological anthropology in part because she has experienced the expressions of awareness and pity as inadequate for exorcising demons of white supremacy and "enfleshing freedom." She says, "Awareness and pity must be strengthened, extended, and enriched through personal encounter, responsible

intellectual preparation, and healing and creative action for change in society. We shoulder suffering and oppression; we take up a position beside exploited and despised Black bodies. Further, solidarity involves critique of self, of society, of church. This critique takes on and includes existential reflection, historical scrutiny, presence to memory, social analysis, acknowledgment and confession of sin, authentic repentance—change of heart, change of life, change of living.”⁹¹

Tulsans have been changing over a century. Dorothee Sölle’s stages of changing in suffering include being mute, lamenting, changing. Sölle says, “If people are not to remain unchanged in suffering, if they are not to be blind and deaf to the pain of others, if they are to move from purely passive endurance to suffering that can humanize them in a productive way, then one of the things they need is language.” Black Tulsans have been speaking out and rising up, regardless of white attempts to silence Black narratives and “legally” and “logically” quash reparations.

The problem I am addressing is that white people have sold out their eyes of compassion for Black people to the demons of capitalism, greed, white color blind racism. We as a community in Tulsa are at the point of finally acknowledging the race massacre after one hundred years, according to Hannibal Johnson. Johnson has very publicly laid out a three-prong approach to reconciliation: acknowledgment, apology, and atonement.

Acknowledgment is more than simply being aware or saying the massacre happened. Acknowledgment embraces the fullness of the history, integrating into the regular curriculum in schools’ authentic narratives of Greenwood victims, defenders, survivors, and descendants.

91. M. Shawn Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 126.

Apology folds in this acknowledgement and adds empathy and compassion around the suffering that Black Tulsans have experienced. So, it is not just literally, “I am sorry”—it is apology plus a change in our collective character.

Johnson’s third prong for reconciliation in Tulsa is atonement, which means to make amends or repair damage. “We know that damage has been done through this trauma that occurred one hundred years ago; what can we do and what are we doing to rectify as best we can, the damage. We can see there are disparities based on race in all aspects of life in Tulsa, and in virtually every other community in the United States. Part of the historical racial trauma has to do with events that helped create those very disparities that we want to close. How do we close those disparities? In education, health care, criminal justice, and on and on.”⁹²

So, in addition, before, during and after this process white people must be involved in of acknowledgment, apology, and atonement, white people must also consider how to be free from demonic that has prevented these three things for one hundred years in Tulsa. Therefore, some questions I am considering include, how can I prepare myself for the long haul of struggling against the powers and privileges of whiteness constantly afforded to me at the expense of people of color?⁹³ What are specific names of demonic powers of white supremacy and how can they be exorcised? When they are exorcised how can a new vision of Jesus in solidarity with suffering and resilience lead in re-mantling theology that brings divine healing and human flourishing in forms of reparative justice for Tulsa?

92. Apostle Sharyn Cosby, *Discussion about Race, Community and Police Relations with Hannibal B. Johnson*, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zAH1HSGi8T8>.

93. Perkinson, *White Theology*, 242.

Through this project proposal and discerning my own white theology, I am proposing concrete, material, reparative action. No reparations have ever been paid by white Tulsans for this sinful, evil act of racial terror. Since public money has never been paid for reparations, what are alternative approaches for reparative action? I address this in more detail in chapter seven.

Summary

In this chapter I have exercised a process of constructive theology to set up a theological anthropology on white seeing of Black suffering to change lives in Tulsa through greater solidarity in reparative justice. There is a huge problem standing in the way, and that is the ongoing systemic and internalized white supremacy that has prevented white people from doing these things in the first place. The problem has rarely been addressed, particularly by fellow white people—that problem is a demonic spirit preventing white people from acknowledging, apologizing, and atoning for the race massacre. In chapter six, therefore, I examine the eyes of white people today in my act of ministry report. I look behind the “white gaze” and reverse the question asked by W. E. B. Du Bois of Black people. For white people who have invented white supremacy and justified violence against people of color with white theology, Du Bois’s question may be signified on white people who are descendants and defenders of systemic racism in Tulsa today. “What is it like to be a problem?”

CHAPTER SIX
PROJECT REPORT

“You are lying to yourself, or you are lying to me, or both.”

Dr. Sharyn Cosby, on white claims of color blindness

I introduced leaders and many members of our church to my project by informal conversation. Officially and more formally, I introduced the project to the congregation by delivering a Sunday participation sermon in which I also administered “A Survey on Experiences with Racism.”⁹⁴

In the sermon I asked the question, “How did white churches respond to the 1921 Tulsa massacre and what is racism in Tulsa like one hundred years later?” Because of news where United States Senator James Lankford and State Senator Kevin Matthews had introduced statewide public school curriculum about the massacre, I invoked these two leaders with the question they too asked, “One hundred years later, how has racism changed in Tulsa and what are we going to do about it?” After introducing my project as I have above, I showed a video about the massacre produced by Tulsa Public Schools.

I offered my belief that systemic racism exists but also offered a hopeful idea. We all have racist ideas, but we can change by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We also

94. See appendix for sermon and survey to The Journey church February 23, 2020.

move from perceived innocence to accepting we have racist ideas and moving toward anti-racist ideas.

This focus on changing racist ideas, thoughts, and actions builds on the work of Kendi in a local context as an alternative to political and religious speech that often uses racist tropes, blames previous generations, other religions, or races for the problem of racism but does not adequately address the dual problems of systemic racism and supremacy internalized in white people.

How was the Project Evaluated?

I did qualitative analysis through approximately one hundred surveys in my ministry context. Surveys were compiled in a spreadsheet, giving me an ability to match before and after data, organize according to a particular response in the survey. With this method of organizing the qualitative data, I was also able to compare responses to others in the survey. Each participant filled out an informed consent form. I analyzed more closely about forty surveys where participants repeated the survey after the educational event. Sixty survey respondents did not repeat the survey. I used phone numbers to match before and after data.

In my analysis of the surveys, I looked for hints of racism denial. Most responders said racism existed in the past and exists today. In the after surveys, a quarter of respondents changed their assessment of whether racism is better, worse, or about the same. I'm more interested in the change in assessment than about the content of that assessment. I wonder if this indicates that something is happening in the functional change model that sparks a qualitative, moral assessment in the participant. If there is movement here, I can ask, "Why do you think racism is getting better or worse or is about the same?"

One person's response points to the plasticity of those who have attended to learning more about the issue of racism. The new definition of racism by Ibram X. Kendi was presented, and one respondent mentioned Kendi's definition in the after survey. Like many respondents, this person showed concern for talking about race, but moved from blaming others for rhetoric and not listening, to being concerned for unintentionally hurting someone in the conversation. Emotions expressed moved from "frustrated" and "distant" to "sad," and "hopeful."

From responses to the question, "What concerns do you have with talking about racism?" it's clear something bothers nearly every person. The most common emotions are fear, concern for offending others, frustration, and futility that conversations on racism become polarized easily and quickly.

Some reported emotions changed notably before and after the presentation. I asked what feelings arise when you talk about race, and respondents could choose from happy, sad, frustrated, annoyed, hopeful, mad, distant. In the after surveys, I noted that most of the emotions that were no longer indicated were those emotions rooted in the anxiety over talking about racism. Once the survey, presentation, and discussion were complete, and the after surveys were taken, I wondered if some relief of emotions was felt by those responding. Could a healthy discussion on race reduce annoyed, distant, and angry feelings about discussion on racism?

I asked a question to get a baseline for how much the idea of color blindness has inhabited our community. Sixty percent of the participants in the survey reported they see color. Others said *maybe* or *not sure* and only a few said *no*. This is where we are likely to find a confluence of racism denial, with those who claim color blindness. Rev. Cosby says

plainly when someone claims color blindness: “You are lying to yourself or you are lying to me, or both.” Nyasha is Black and Zimbabwean, and one day I asked her, “What do you think when someone says, ‘I don’t see color’?” Nyasha held out her arms and said, “Well, then they don’t see me.”⁹⁵

I asked, “How much racial prejudice do you have?” The choices were *none*, *some*, *much*, and *not sure*. Only one person said *much* in the after survey. Most said they have *some*, and a few said they were *not sure*. A few persons responded *none*. As I evaluate my own questions and responses, it hits me that there is no un-problematic answer to this question. In a similar vein, I asked if a person is impacted by racial discrimination. Though I did not want to reify that reverse discrimination is a valid claim in the context of systemic racism, I felt this is one of those notions that still needs to be exposed. So, I included, “I have experienced reverse discrimination” as one of the options. At the suggestion of Dr. Regina Shands Stoltzfus, I acknowledged in my presentations that many people believe they experience reverse discrimination, but this is not an accurate description of how systemic racism works.

Next, I surveyed and mirrored racial values back to people within the church and community. I used the idea of taking a “selfie” of our ideas around race and racism.

My hypothesis is that this reflection on racist ideas, attitudes, and actions will increase our awareness of racism within the community and ourselves, leading toward a lifetime of steps toward anti-racist activity. How is change and growth sustainable in myself and in Christian communities? Can one survey and presentation cause a person to become an anti-

95. Nyasha and I worked together on staff at Journey Church for six years. The song, “I Can’t Breathe,” by H.E.R. should be required listening for white people. There is a line at the end of the lyric that says, “Do not say you do not see color / When you see us, see us / We can’t breathe.” See H.E.R., *I Can’t Breathe* (Tiara Thomas Music, Songs Of Universal Inc., 2020). See Acts 10:34-35, which says God shows no partiality across the nations, but it says nothing about pretending to ignore color.

racist activist? No, I don't imagine this process is a quick fix for racism. To the contrary, I consider this look in the mirror to be fleeting.

The metaphor of a selfie lends to a more lasting image that can be referenced for change. In my phone, I have images of my family, friends, and of myself. I can look at an image of myself from a few years ago and remember that I was in good or bad shape, for example. Likewise, a survey can be seen as a selfie of racial values that marks a point in time and referenced later for progress. We can revisit our experiences with racism and continue to reflect as we have further experiences with racism and anti-racism.

Theological Reflection on Functional Change Model

After analyzing one hundred surveys from my ministry context, I began to see evidence of the “the white gaze” in responses of white people. I'll return to this after offering a brief background for “the white gaze” that W. E. B. Du Bois wrote about a century ago, and I'll conclude this chapter with a story about my own white gaze.

Du Bois writes about when he was a young boy in school. One day students were to exchange greeting cards with each of the other students. When he tried to exchange cards with a classmate, she refused his card, “peremptorily, with a glance.” This for Du Bois was “when the shadow first swept over me.” He describes being shut out of “their world.” Though Du Bois never mentions race in his story, the “white gaze” and “double consciousness” is a recurring theme in his writing.⁹⁶

Double consciousness is a notion that because of ongoing white supremacy in the United States, Black people deal in life-or-death terms with how they view themselves and how white people see Black people. For example, “The talk” for a white teenager is about sex.

96. H.E.R., *I Can't Breathe* (Tiara Thomas Music, Songs of Universal Inc., n.d.).

“The talk” for a Black teenager is about how to act when a white police worker pulls them over. The Black person must deal with this double consciousness in daily, concrete, life and death ways. Double consciousness also imbues Black people with powers that have been accessed to change the world in so many ways, including a demand that our nation live up to its ideals, not by revenge and war but through the long prophetic arc of justice.

Many white people gaze upon Black people and pretend not to see color, not to see the suffering white people have caused Black people, and thus contend that Black people have life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness as much as white people. Thus, the protest “I am a man,” and “Black Lives Matter” and the continued white insistence that “All Lives Matter” marks the perpetual nature of white supremacy’s countermeasures against Black liberation.

Returning to the surveys, I asked, “What is the first time you can remember when you learned race exists?” to examine this question’s implications on this topic of white seeing of Black suffering. Many people surveyed reported a formative experience when they were a child, as the girl who dismissed Du Bois “peremptorily, with a glance.” In many of the stories I heard white people tell, however, they *were* the girl dismissing Black people, “peremptorily, with a glance.”

For example, one woman in her late sixties said this:

We only had one Black family in the small town I was raised in. They were treated no differently—they were just one of us. However, at a small Christian college I attended, Black basketball players were recruited, and they were the ones who made color an issue. My roommate was actually a Black girl . . . and we got along great until the Black basketball players influenced her, and her attitude toward me changed. Very unfortunate divisions began happening campus wide as those were the days of athletes touting ‘Black Power’ with raised fist.⁹⁷

97. Some details changed to safeguard identity.

This response was chosen carefully because it is paradigmatic of many white people responding with stories of a seemingly oblivious white gaze toward people of color. In the woman's response, a white gaze upon Black protest for liberation was viewed as a slight on a white college girl, and this was recounted decades later. There is no look of recognition in the eyes, no mention of wondering why fists were raised other than as a symbol of what so many white people fear, the reversal of dominance. These ways of seeing are formed on playgrounds and college dorm rooms. Perkinson says Du Bois doesn't have to mention skin color in his telling about the girl who dismissed him. Readers fill in the blanks because our eyes are not innocent. The glance that knows is what Perkinson calls the genesis of blackness and whiteness.

In fairness to those I surveyed, I include my own response to this survey question, a formative experience with my own racism. I told my congregation that the first time I learned race exists was when a Black boy was brought by bus to my church in 1975. Tracy Harris and I were the same age, and we played in the church yard and attended Bible classes together. Tracy occasionally came to my parent's house on Sunday afternoons for lunch and to ride our motorcycle. One of those Sundays he ran the motorcycle into a ditch. I don't recall that he had serious injuries, but I remember being at least as concerned about the motorcycle as I was Tracy's well-being. Alex Haley's *Roots* mini-series was popular at the time, and we used the names of the characters to play like we were master and slave.

After evening church service, we would take Tracy home to where he lived with his grandmother. I can still see the single light through a front window on the small house and

feel the sense of difference between Tracy and me as he ran up the walk, onto the porch, and went into the house. I do not remember ever entering his grandmother's house.

Most everything I thought about difference concerned what I *possessed more* than Tracy. My white eyes were trained to see myself as superior in every way and to pity the Other. Do not imagine that this dual sense of superiority and pity stays in childhood, but it follows white people into adulthood. This was Thandeka's theory she backed with story after story. I am not telling this childhood story to say that I had a Black friend. *I am telling a story about the white gaze and how systemic white supremacy is internalized in everyday white Americans.*

The white gaze is a demonic behind the eyes of whiteness that is an internalized white supremacy born—God help us—of white theology, and this “corrupt moral imaginary” imagines chains, “law and order,” Jim Crow laws, lynchings, mass incarceration, and inequity in every possible form. If white people can imagine chains, white people can imagine freedom for Black people, imagine the bonds breaking, imagine reparations for murder and stolen property. This imagining with Black and white theologians, activists, and builders is the subject of my final chapter.

Summary

My project research has exposed my own white supremacy and that of my church. This has prompted intense reflection on my community's white gaze and ability to change how we see suffering and resilience of Black people in our local community of Tulsa, Oklahoma. I have examined the “white gaze” of people in Christian communities in 1921. I surveyed and analyzed the “white gaze” of people in my community in 2020. In the final chapter, I go a level deeper to the demons behind the eyes of the white gaze and propose ways to exorcise

the demons of white supremacy in Tulsa today. Finally, I propose a new way of seeing Jesus in solidarity with Black people who have suffered at the hands of white people. I call for reparative actions and describe some of my own actions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF BLACK SUFFERING, WHITE SUPREMACY, AND HUMAN RESILIENCE

“When we see the crucifixion as a first-century lynching, we are confronted by the re-enactment of Christ’s suffering in the blood-soaked history of African Americans.”

James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*

“Simply put, the way to a new moral imaginary that ‘actually centers Black life’ is not the way of Jesus’s death on the cross, but the way of his resurrected life.”

Kelly Brown Douglas, *Resurrecting Hope*⁹⁸

In previous chapters, I centered stories of historical trauma and resilience of 1921 Tulsa massacre defenders, victims, survivors, and descendants. I surveyed and critiqued sermons delivered by white pastors the Sunday after the massacre and included Black responses and activities in the aftermath. I described how people in my own church responded to discussions about the history of the massacre and racism today. In developing an educational

98. Cone and KBD represent decades of Black Theology and Womanist Theology. I am deeply indebted to Cone and KBD for how they have opened my white gaze to new realities, blown up my white assumptions, and lifted up a Jesus who reflects the colors of God’s humanity, and helped me commit to replace death dealing with life giving and reparation building. See James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2011); Douglas, *Resurrection Hope*.

event and survey of my ministry context, I exposed what Kelly Brown Douglas calls a “corrupt moral imaginary” in white congregants.⁹⁹ In the theological framework chapter, I critiqued and lamented my traditions, opened myself to accountability to change my white theology, revealed new prophetic voices that are helping me change, and claimed that there is no repentance without reparations. I will not attempt to recapitulate what I said in the theological framework chapter but build upon a few questions I left unanswered.

Those questions involve a process emphasized by Dr. Emile Townes and Dr. Shands Stoltzfus: “You can’t dismantle racism until you know how it’s mantled.”¹⁰⁰ I reveal more in this chapter about how whiteness became a religion that is demonic and how it came to be “mantled,” systemic, sacralized, and internalized in white United States Americans. I have already critiqued and lamented how white supremacy has been mantled in me through white theology. I move now to how I’m learning to dismantle whiteness, and I speak of it as an exorcism because of how severe the problem is in America, in Tulsa, and in all white people raised in a pervasive culture of white dominance.

Questions I left open in the theological framework chapter are these: How can I prepare myself for the long haul of struggling against the powers and privileges of whiteness constantly afforded to me at the expense of people of color?¹⁰¹ What are specific names of demonic powers of white supremacy and how can they be exorcised? When these demons of whiteness are exorcised, how can a new vision of Jesus in solidarity with suffering and

99. My doctoral specialization is “Pastoral Leadership in Transformational Leadership in Intercultural Community.” This final project chapter overlays with degree skills listed in my specialization description: “articulating and implementing reparations and reconciliation models.” See Phillips Theological Seminary, “Doctor of Ministry Program in Pastoral Leadership,” 2018, 38-39.

100. Regina Shands Stoltzfus, “Class Notes” (Class Notes, Phillips Theological Seminary, June 17, 2019).

101. Perkinson, *White Theology*, 242.

resilience lead in re-mantling theology that brings divine healing and human flourishing through reparative justice in Tulsa?

I do not have a summary or conclusions at the end of this chapter. This whole chapter is a three-part conclusion to the whole project paper, an anthropological theology for changing how white people see suffering and resilience of Black people in Tulsa. This three-part conclusion is strongly connected but not necessarily sequenced or exactly parallel to the title of my project paper and this chapter. For example, I deal first in this chapter with white supremacy that I have used many names to call out. In part one of this chapter, I out pervasive white supremacy and call for exorcism of demons behind the “white gaze.” In part two, I join calls for identification with a lynched and resurrected Black Jesus. To conclude the chapter with part three, I join with activists in proposing reparations for the Tulsa massacre and ongoing injustices to Black people. I end this third section and the project paper with a proposal for and description of actual practices of a form of local reparations heretofore untried in Tulsa, and as far as I know, the whole United States.

Outing and Exorcising Demons Behind the “White Gaze”

In naming the severity of white supremacy as a demonic that must be exorcised, I had thought I discovered something novel. Each time I would ask a Black person if they thought systemic and individually internalized white supremacy is demonic, however, the reply was often an appropriately sardonic, “Do you think?”

Mostly white people, myself included, have questioned whether I should use extreme language for white supremacy such as “demonic.” The language of demonic might also throw theological red flags for some. I define demonic as a human spiritual possession of an evil that is doing harm to oneself or others. Applying strong language and a broad definition

of demonic to the problem of white supremacy in America signifies that four hundred years of evil white supremacy and black suffering cannot be overstated.

There is a long-standing debate between historic ways of Black people overcoming white supremacy: battle oppressors by their own brutal means; protest oppression; get the vote; change policies and laws; pray for exorcism of white demons. The debate pre-dates the Civil War. For example, in an 1847 speech in Boston, former slave and inspirational anti-racism leader Frederick Douglas passionately claimed slavery will only end by a slave revolt and shedding of blood, Sojourner Truth stood up in the hall and asked in a loud voice, “Frederick, is God dead?” Douglas was momentarily silenced, and the audience reacted in thunderous applause.¹⁰²

What did Sojourner Truth mean by asking, “Is God dead?” Truth believed the oppressor’s means or “by any means necessary” did not befit the Christian response, nor did it fit the severity of the problem. She believed only God Almighty could ultimately overcome white supremacist oppression of Black people. Truth thought the most effective means of overcoming oppressors was to pray for the demons of white people to be exorcised by divine power.¹⁰³ In the spirit of Sojourner Truth calling for demons to be exorcised from oppressors, I join in calling for the demonic of white supremacy to be exorcised. How can white people know whether they are possessed of demonic ideas that lead to sinfully acquired benefits and suffering of Black people?

102. Walter White, “Sojourner Truth: Friend of Freedom,” *The New Republic*, May 24, 1948, <https://newrepublic.com/article/123913/sojourner-truth-friend-of-freedom>.

103. Slaves fought for and won their own freedom along with the events of the Civil War and Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. For extensive research on how Black Americans have won their own freedom, see Darity and Mullen, *From Here to Equality*.

A metaphor about my eye doctor serves to illustrate how white people can scan behind the “white gaze” to detect demons of white supremacy. A college friend is my optometrist who uses cutting edge technology to scan vessels in eyes to detect diabetes or glaucoma. My friend and eye doctor clicks lens and asks me to look through them and read an eye chart. He always says what I see is “good,” but then he tells me I need a new prescription! I’m not even going to mention the air puff machine that doesn’t hurt but startles me.

Likewise, white people have been looking through a stack of white theology lens and telling each other that what they see is “good.” The eyes of whiteness, however, are diseased. Subsequently, no one follows the exam with a diagnosis or prescription to address the corruption behind the eyes. In the following section, I metaphorically scan behind the eyes of whiteness to attempt a diagnosis and prescription for the demonic behind the eyes of whiteness that causes seeing Black people in corrupted moral ways. This scan of eyes is for the purpose of white Tulsans breaking free of demonic white supremacy to see the suffering and resilience of Black Tulsans, to see a new vision of Jesus in solidarity with oppressed and lynched people, and to learn the ways of life-giving reparations instead of death dealing supremacies.

I was first exposed to the idea of white supremacy being exorcised in James Perkinson’s *White Theology*, where I read about Truth interrupting Douglas. “After centuries of operation,” Perkinson said, “white supremacy in action in America has yet to be fully ‘outed’ and exorcised.”¹⁰⁴ I’m going to carry forward a combination of eye examining and exorcising

104. J. Kameron Carter dings Perkinson for appropriating Black theology and culture in syncopated rhythms of hip hop. I think his writing is dope, er uh, artfully and skillfully written. At points Perk’s rhythm is overshadowed by overbaked theologese. I am grateful to Perkinson for taking seriously Cone’s call to “do your first works over.” He does thoroughly what I’m trying to do twenty years later.

that draws from Perkinson but is unique to my understanding and application to problems in Tulsa, in myself, and other white people surveyed. When demons are named and called out, will white people then *see* the suffering of Black people? The idea is that white people are not demons but possessed of idolatrous, demonic notions that become policies and actions, causing Black people to suffer. Because of this, the demons must be called out.

Eye exams date back at least to 700s BCE and the prophet Jeremiah, who challenges inhabitants of Jerusalem to look around the city and see if anyone acts justly and seeks truth. The Lord is trying to “see” into the eyes of Jerusalemites, but their eyes are glass, their faces stone cold (5:1-3, NRSV). Jeremiah marvels at Jerusalem citizens’ lack of reverence and fear of the Lord. “Hear this, O foolish and senseless people, who have eyes, but do not see, who have ears, but do not hear” (5:21, NRSV). I am learning to perceive the cold stares of white people when the topic of race comes up, a hardening of the eyes and closing of the ears that Black people have been perceiving for centuries.

When my son, an Augustine scholar, heard the metaphor of scanning behind white eyes, he opened *The Trinity*. Jacob showed me examples of Augustine’s ideas, that however worn down is the image of God in humans, God can still be found. White people with very worn-down images of God in themselves because of white supremacy can still look for the image of God in self and others.¹⁰⁵ In Augustinian terms, Jeremiah is saying “look for God” in neighbor and stranger alike.¹⁰⁶

Jesus takes up the prophetic mantle, turning Jeremiah’s analogy into a question (Mark 4:12; 8:18). “Do you have eyes but do not see?” In one of the many paradoxes of Jesus’

105. Augustine, *The Trinity*, Second Edition (Hyde Park, New York: New City Press, 2015), 379.

106. Augustine, *The Trinity*, 270.

ministry, he gives sight to the blind, and he judges those who see with severe eye problems that corrupt the whole heart (Matthew 6:22-23, NRSV): “The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!”

Translations or interpretations may violate this text, carelessly demonizing blackness as evil and associating “lightness” with skin color rather than divine illumination into the soul of humans. I’ve previously not understood this text in any meaningful way. Now, however, I am beginning to understand these mysterious words of Jesus in new ways through the lens of how white eyes are trained to racialize and demonize people of color.

Outing these “white eyes that demonize,” for Perkinson, goes back as far as European modernism that articulated a theological and taxonomic white supremacy in service of global capitalism. With Cornel West, Perkinson finds roots of white supremacy in the philosophies of Descartes, Montesquieu, Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Voltaire, Mills, and Jefferson, a fifteenth and sixteenth century “predilection to observation” that “seeks to order all it surveys.”¹⁰⁷ It gets worse.

White supremacist taxonomies were not innocent or objective observations but a surveilling “eye that eats,” seeking to own or consume what it has surveyed.¹⁰⁸ Modernist philosophy and theology privileged whiteness. White Europeans who developed the taxonomies of race ranking, “naturally” topped everyone. These taxonomies enacted a caste system of race ranking, demonizing Black people as evil personified, to be feared, subdued,

107. Perkinson, *White Theology*, 70.

108. Perkinson, *White Theology*, 59, 89.

conquered, enslaved for profit, or killed. They reasoned that the “heart of darkness” was so evil that the skin could only show darkness as well. Justifying slavery was the next heretical and generationally destructive move of modernist white supremacy.

There are demons behind the “white gaze”—white eyes that demonize. This demonizing eye of whiteness judges blackness while itself being possessed of demons. The first demon that must be called out is Christian supremacy that was upheld by white theology, which I have discussed in the theological framework chapter. Perkinson’s claim is that the first modern supremacy is Christian supremacy. Perkinson argues that the “subjectivity produced by white supremacy remains ‘theological’ even when it is secular.” In previous chapters, I have supplied evidence of this claim in sermons from 1921 and surveys in my ministry context. Critiques and lament I have engaged, however, are not enough. White theology that upholds Christian white supremacy must be outed and exorcised.

“Whiteness is, thus far in the structure of modernity, an order of ‘ultimacy’ that supplies the basic code for resource flows and bullet holes, for war and plunder.”¹⁰⁹ Further, what follows are two examples of Christian supremacy in preaching, the vocabulary of a demonic that demonizes Black people.

Mouzon’s June 5, 1921, declaration that “God Almighty has drawn the color line in indelible ink,”¹¹⁰ is echoed in the dismissive way Rev. Robert Jeffress of Dallas First Baptist preached a brief message condemning the murders of Black people, racism, and lawlessness after the murder of George Floyd. Jeffress said his church is open to all races but says

109. Perkinson, *White Theology*, 193.

110. Mouzon, “Tulsa’s Race Riot and the Teachings of Jesus,” 912-13. Quoting Bishop E.E. Hoss. Mouzon condemns the KKK, but he clearly states racial equality will never be realized.

nothing of systemic racism. Looters, arsonists, and protesters are conflated. Rather than speaking to the cries of injustice, he says the problem is not racism but personal sin.¹¹¹ By pre-empting anything in society as a lesser problem than the notion of personal sin, anything, even the outright murder of Black people, can be justified by saying that if we just confess our personal sins, all will be well.

Christian supremacy has silently denied the violence of wars, Jim Crow lynchings, the Holocaust, voter suppression, and systemic racism that is harming human beings. These atrocities are not thought of as sins by white Christian supremacy. To summarize, the demon of Christian supremacy must be outed, exorcised, and replaced with a robust belief in the image of God in every race and nation of people.

The second demon that must be called out is a cousin of Christian supremacy: the demon of white American innocence, otherwise known popularly as “American exceptionalism.”¹¹² This preservation of innocence was a central critique in James Baldwin’s novels and writings.¹¹³ As sermons I surveyed made painfully clear, myths of innocence are connected to Christian, nationalistic, and white supremacies.

Since roughly the time of the 1921 Tulsa massacre white supremacy has existed in the United States “as a color blind fiction of innocence,” says Perkinson, “publicly posturing itself as neutral pursuit of the Dream, wishing well on all sides, intending equality, sorry for

111. Robert Jeffress, “Dr. Robert Jeffress Addresses Racism and Lawlessness in America,” <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=899822887216976>. See also John McArthur, “Who’s to Blame for the Riots?” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2TbhCwBbOg>, for an example of demonizing the Other who is protesting.

112. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*. See earlier note for more on innocence and other myths.

113. Dagmawi Woubshet, “The Imperfect Power of ‘I Am Not Your Negro,’” *The Atlantic*, last modified February 8, 2017, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/02/i-am-not-your-negro-review/515976/>.

poverty, center of the uprightness of its own vision of ascent into the gated bliss of sole proprietorship. What it intends to own, without evil intent, is simply the whole earth.”¹¹⁴

Kelly Brown Douglas says, the very identity of the United States has been “inextricably connected to an Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism myth.”¹¹⁵ Forces of white supremacy protect this myth by demonizing and building a perception of fear of anyone who is not sufficiently white, christian, and american. That’s why I believe—with Carol Anderson and KBD—that the counter movement during and after the presidency of Barack Obama was about white culture fighting back in every way against the offense of a Black man entering the most hallowed white space in the United States, the “White” House. This was “not only to protect the sanctity of whiteness but to remind Black people of their place. That which it could not do to the Black man in the White House, it did to the most vulnerable in the Black community to make clear to them the dogged perseverance of the color line.”¹¹⁶

Outing the demonic ideas of nationalist, Christian and white innocence, and exceptionalism requires a “dogged perseverance” of anti-racism resistance. Flipping the narrative of exceptionalism, the United States has been “exceptional” in brutality of slavery, genocide, imprisonment, and war. To summarize, the demon of American innocence must be outed, exorcised, and replaced with a spirit of confession, humility, and forgiveness.

The third demon that must be outed and exorcised is color blindness that allows avoidance and denial of racism and defaults to whiteness as the standard of worth for people of color. Nyasha’s “they don’t see me” is a white gaze that has “looked its other in the eye

114. Perkinson, *White Theology*, 14.

115. Douglas, *The Black Christ*, Kindle, 155, 193.

116. Douglas, *The Black Christ*, 196; See also Carol Anderson, *White Rage The Unspoken Truth of Our Racial Divide* (New York Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2016).

and met no light of recognition, but only fear born of guilt.”¹¹⁷ Assimilation—spoken of in proud terms by white people as “color blindness”—is the most common form of racism in the United States today.

From my observations of ministry context surveys, most white people are deeply possessed with this demonic idea. The demons behind the white gaze of assimilationist racism expects people of color to blend in, accept that “all lives matter” and just “be American,” which is to say the default of white, without saying it. The first two demons of Christian supremacy and American innocence attempt to conflate salvation and wholeness with White American. Tragically, there is still evidence that the deep twisted root of essentialism grows beneath the public face of assimilationism. Christian author Trillia Newbell, who is Black, had just spoken at a conference about *imago Dei*. Newbell said a man approached her after the presentation, saying, “that I was a different species. And he was trying to use Scripture as proof.”¹¹⁸ She went to her hotel room and wept, again. Because of evidence like this, the demon of color blind white supremacy that hides essentialism must be supplanted with authentic narratives and theology about how God has endowed every human with the image of God and intrinsic worth.

The fourth demon is silence and denial that often comes in the form of calls for unity and peace in the midst of injustice. This galled the prophet Jeremiah. “They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (6:14,

117. Perkinson, *White Theology*, 77. Perkinson’s source for the three race-thinking epochs is Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

118. Daniel Burke, “Black Christians Are Bracing for a ‘Whitelash,’” *CNN*, last modified July 21, 2020, <https://www.cnn.com/2020/07/10/us/white-black-christians-racism-burke/index.html>.

NRSV). Silencing protest with “peace, peace” is also galling to Black prophets today, like KBD.

Frustrated with earnest white people’s prayers and calls for unity, Douglas tells her white friends, “Jesus did not die because he prayed too much. Perhaps because he prayed, he was able to go to the cross, she says, but “Jesus was nailed to the cross because he protested the oppressive political, social, cultural, and religious systems and structures of his day, even as he bore witness to God’s promised just future.”¹¹⁹ Douglas says white theology does not comprehend that the gospel is built on a paradox of a savior dying because of the same kinds of crucifying realities that murder Black people today. What she wants white people to understand is that “peace, peace” and calls for unity tend to be palliatives for Black protest rather than robust rage of the prophets for injustice. White silence or calls for unity and peace during injustice often leads to the same outcome of outright racism: holding systemic white supremacy in place.

By contrast to white concepts of forgiveness as palliatives for protest and calls for unity, Black forgiveness speaks out, voicing prophetic mercy for the voiceless and rage against the merciless. Forgiveness of the magnitude of Charleston AME after a white nationalist brutally and mercilessly murdered nine Black worshipers, says Kelly Brown Douglas, is not palliative for Black rage—no, this kind of Black forgiveness is prophetic. Black forgiveness of this potency calls on God to reign over injustice and release crucifier and crucified from a cycle of hate. Black forgiveness, says Douglas, is a “love that rages,” in the tradition of Amos and Jesus Christ. Generational silence is a demonic that must be outed and exorcised and prophetic “love that rages” must take up residence in its place.

119. Douglas, *Resurrection Hope*, 125.

The demonic behind the eyes has been hiding in Tulsa for one hundred years. The demons of color blindness, innocence, and silent denial ensured that white systemic racism became “invisible,” thought to be “non-existent.” Color blindness and the myth of equal opportunity has been perpetuated. The demon of silent denial must be outed, exorcised, and supplanted with acknowledgement, apology, atonement.¹²⁰

With each of the four demons of Christian supremacy, innocence, color blindness, and denial, I am emphasizing supplanting as well as exorcising because of a story Jesus tells about the space evil may occupy. The story reads, “When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it wanders through waterless regions looking for a resting place, but it finds none. Then it says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ When it comes, it finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then it goes and brings along seven other spirits more evil than itself, and they enter and live there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first. So will it be also with this evil generation” (Matthew 12:43-45, NRSV).

In the past few decades, another myth has emerged of a “post-racial society,” with the belief that civil rights gains had once and for all won justice and equality for Black people. When many thought our national house of racial life was cleaned and swept out, seven demons came to re-possess the house. White racist ideas and policies repossessed the “house” with codes and ideas such as “law and order,” redlining, police brutality, voter suppression, pay discrimination, mass incarceration, control of women’s bodies and reproduction, and death penalties.

120. Readers may go deeper in the works of theologians I have referenced who include sacramental ways such as baptism and table fellowship that become means to outing and exorcising demonic ideas of white supremacy: Cone, KBD, Copeland, and Perkinson.

This teaching of Jesus speaks to the truth that calling out an evil as demonic, outing an injustice, requires a new spirit, new actions, new ways of occupying a house formerly occupied by demonic notions of white supremacy. When demons are named and called out, will white people then truly have eyes to *see* the suffering of Black people? The demons of white supremacy must be outed and exorcised most importantly because demonic notions become policies and actions, causing Black people to suffer. To reduce the suffering of Black people, therefore, white supremacy must be outed and exorcised.

The demons of whiteness that Hughes calls “myths,” Douglas calls a “corrupt moral imaginary” and “crucifying realities” must be outed, exorcised, and supplanted. As hard as it is to do what Perkinson calls “race apostasy,” or race betrayal, I am confessing more than white fragility and privilege. I am confessing to being a white oppressor benefiting when Black people are suffering. Repenting of this sin of whiteness, I also repent of thinking systemic racism is not the business of white people to change. Therefore, I’m calling on people who identify as white to consider whether any of these demons may be behind their eyes as well.

Identifying with a Black Lynched and Resurrected Jesus

When demons of white supremacy are outed and exorcised, will white Tulsans gain new visions of the suffering of Black Tulsans? Will visions of white and Black people converge in solidarity that leads to divine healing and human flourishing in a variety of reparative practices? For white Christians specifically, a new vision of Jesus is a vital step into these reparative practices.

When demonic supremacies are exorcised, I believe the myth of the white Jesus will also begin to be abolished. For many white Christians operating out of white theology, Jesus is

white. Having never considered nor taken the concept seriously, white people have rejected a Black Jesus by default. Could the same Black Jesus that white people have rejected be the person of power to exorcise white demons? Demons behind the eyes of white people resist looking upon a lynched Black Jesus. Demon possessed eyes looking upon a non-white Jesus is precisely who can defeat white supremacy.

J. Kameron Carter traces supersessionist triumphalism that conceives of Jesus as white and divorces Jesus from Judaism.¹²¹ Rather than the Messiah being the fulfillment of Yahweh's ongoing promise to Abraham and Sarah that all peoples would be blessed, the white Jesus starts a new religion over and against the Jews.¹²² Evil is conceived as Black and personified in Satan who tempts individuals to join his side. Human systemic racism conceived by white men gets a pass and Black people suffer when Jesus is portrayed as white and evil or Satan is portrayed as Black. Carter draws the circle wider for all *ethne* to find salvation in a Jesus that is ethnically Jewish and continuously covenantal and messianic, but non-racial, in flesh of a "Mulatto Jesus."¹²³

Carter critiques Cone's Black Jesus for a kind of mirror imaging of white theology's white Jesus. Kelly Brown Douglas was a student of Cone's and helpfully critiques patriarchalism and idolatry embedded in a White or Black Jesus. Douglas says the Black Jesus is inadequate for communities besieged by problems different from white racism. Certainly, this critique would apply to the idolatrous white Jesus. Womanist theologians like

121. J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 192.

122. I was first introduced to this idea by James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, Rev. ed. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1997).

123. See Carter, *Race*. Because Mulatto may be problematic for some, I want to make clear that Carter uses "Mulatto" to signify Jesus identifying with all human flesh and having ethnicity and color but not sinfully structured race.

Douglas are “now engaging in developing a theology and understanding of Jesus Christ that is more reflective of the interest of the entire Black community.”¹²⁴ For Douglas, this includes a global community of women who may not see the Black Christ as redemptive. The redemptive nature of Jesus Christ is not wrapped up in whiteness or blackness.

A Black Jesus is not about Black people getting to appropriate Jesus from whiteness. Jesus was never “white.” White people appropriated Jesus when they painted pictures of him as a white European then as a white American movie star. On a very primary level of a very complex idea, Jesus is at least “not-white.” Still, “not-white” unnecessarily links Jesus to some standard of whiteness. With Cone, Douglas, Copeland, and Carter, I want to attempt to see Jesus as divinely connected to all humanity suffering under the weight of being oppressed and being oppressors. Because of centuries of oppression of Black people by white people, I believe in an unqualified “Black Lives Matter.” For similar reasons and because Jesus has identified with the oppressed and not the oppressors, I believe in an unqualified reversal in how Jesus may be known. With these theologians I am calling on white people to dethrone an idolatrous white Jesus and look upon the Lynched and Resurrected Black Jesus Christ.

My friend and fellow doctoral candidate Rev. Sharyn Cosby has a picture of a Black Jesus on her office wall. She urges that we connect our suffering, the suffering and resilience of Greenwood defenders, victims, survivors, and descendants with the suffering and resilience of this Black Jesus. “The pain and suffering associated with that trauma passes down from generation to generation,” Cosby said. “Still, new subtle layers of suffering are placed on bodies and spirits on present and future generations. Just thinking about and sometimes reliving the trauma is painful. For people of color, their only solace has been in

124. Douglas, *The Black Christ*, Kindle, 155, 2038.

identifying their suffering with the suffering of Christ.”¹²⁵ Copeland, Cone, and Douglas specifically name the lynched body of the Black Jesus identifying with lynched Black bodies.

Cone says a Black Jesus is not simply about skin color but about a “transcendental affirmation that God has not ever, no not ever, left the oppressed alone in struggle.”¹²⁶ Nor should any of us ever leave the oppressed alone in struggle.¹²⁷ For Cone, Copeland, and Douglas, the Black Christ is the ultimate way Black culture *dis*-appropriated the master’s Christianity. While the Black Jesus is *not for white benefit* or salvation, the Black Christ is a powerful antidote for the most severe paradoxical disease: the sin of white people’s pride of thinking themselves highly moral while instigating and participating in slavery, lynching, abuse and control of women’s bodies, mass incarceration, police and military brutality.

This brings me back to the suffering and resilience of Greenwood residents. The Black Jesus on the cross has changed how I view suffering and resilience of Black people in Tulsa. The suffering of Jesus is the suffering of Greenwood. The resilience of Jesus is the resilience of Greenwood. The lynching tree is a tragically real emblem for white Tulsans’ mass lynching of Black Tulsans, as Cone explains.

Cone says texts about being crucified with Christ are not easy for Black people—they are being lynched. Cone discovered in the cross, however, the healing and identification of Jesus with those being lynched. “I believe that the cross placed alongside the lynching tree can help

125. Sharyn Cosby, “Suffering and Resilience,” *The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre: Lessons and Legacies Class Discussion*, 880.13, March 2021.

126. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 137. Perkinson, 27.

127. M. Shawn Copeland, 78. There’s a very important step further that is also so rich an idea, that I can’t fully expound it here, nor can I do it justice either: just as the Black Christ heals the de-creating of Black bodies, the anthropological impoverishment of Black bodies, so also Copeland points out that Jesus marked as “queer” heals the anthropological impoverishment of homosexual bodies.

us to see Jesus in America in a new light, and thereby empower people who claim to follow him to take a stand against white supremacy and every kind of injustice.”

“Until we can see the cross and the lynching tree together, until we can identify Christ with a ‘re-crucified’ Black body hanging from a lynching tree, there can be no genuine understanding of Christian identity in America, and no deliverance from the brutal legacy of slavery and white supremacy,” Cone said.¹²⁸

“The lynching tree frees the cross from the false pieties of well-meaning Christians. When we see the crucifixion as a first-century lynching, we are confronted by the re-enactment of Christ’s suffering in the blood-soaked history of African Americans. Thus, the lynching tree reveals the true religious meaning of the cross for American Christians today. The cross needs the lynching tree to remind Americans of the reality of suffering—to keep the cross from becoming a symbol of abstract, sentimental piety. Before the spectacle of the cross we are called to more than contemplation and adoration. We are faced with a clear challenge: as Latin American liberation theologian Jon Sobrino has put it, ‘to take the crucified down from the cross.’”¹²⁹

The lynching, the massacre, needs the cross, Copeland says. “To place maimed lynched bodies beside the maimed body of Jesus of Nazareth is the condition for a theological anthropology that reinforces the sacramentality of the body, contests objectification of the body, and honors the body as the self-manifestation and self-expression of the free human subject.”¹³⁰

128. James H. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2011) Kindle, 199.

129. Cone, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, Kindle, 4595-4603.

130. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 124.

For Douglas, Jesus is not only liberator but also prophet. This means portrayals of the Black Christ can be seen historically in the work of liberating but also challenging injustice. “Christ can be seen in the face of a Sojourner Truth, a Harriet Tubman, or a Fannie Lou Hammer, as each one struggled to help the entire Black community survive and become whole.”¹³¹

White people who have been oppressors need to become whole for different reasons. While Black Theology has identified with the lynched Black Jesus, white theology has over time identified with a conquering god who triumphs over enemies. A white person who has never considered this may reflect on teachings in school and church that a history of conquering, manifest destiny, and military images are literally deified. My claim is that exorcism and seeing the Black Jesus identifying with victims, survivors, and descendants of the Tulsa massacre leads to growing solidarity between Black people and white people. What will be the results? What I describe in the final section of conclusions is a change this project promotes in Tulsans that brings divine healing and human flourishing in the form of reparations.

Exercising Divine Healing and Human Flourishing through Reparations

In this final section of conclusions, I want to reflect on and describe what I am convicted to do as Christian praxis, a lived experience of a theological anthropology of white solidarity with Black suffering and resilience in Tulsa. Agency and power have always belonged to residents of Greenwood and North Tulsa. The loss of Black lives and property, however, has contributed to a century of struggle for human flourishing. Thus, what I describe is not “empowerment,” because the community is already full of empowerment. What I describe is

131. Douglas, *The Black Christ*, Kindle, 2323, 2340.

not charity, for there is already a spirit of loving charity in Greenwood and North Tulsa.

What I describe is an attempt to do what the community has said repeatedly that is a pathway for divine healing and human flourishing: reparations for the massacre.

After a one-hundred-year rift caused by the massacre of Black lives and theft of Black Tulsans' property by white Tulsans, what are forms of reparation that may bring life in the places of death, healing in place of trauma, ownership in place of theft, apology in place of bowing up, atonement in place of doubling down, flourishing in intercultural relationships between Black and white in place of denial? After one hundred years, is it conceivable to redress property theft and murder of lives and livelihood from Black families, businesses, churches, and organizations?

“Reparations are a program of acknowledgment, redress, and closure for a grievous injustice,” said William A. Darity Jr. and A Kirsten Mullen.¹³² Reparations is closely tied to the biblical idea of restitution, *lex talionis*. The principle of “an eye for an eye” is not meant literally, as the rabbis say, but meant as a restriction on excessive leniency or harshness.¹ In today's parlance, *lex talionis* means the “punishment must fit the crime.” Restitution means monetary compensation to redress harm done to a neighbor, with one fifth or twenty percent added to the valued loss (Leviticus 6:5). Rather than knocking out a tooth for a tooth or returning a slap, Jesus surprises with his mantra, “turn the other cheek.” Jesus calls for a reversal of *lex talionis* (Matthew 5:38-42).

What happens when we humans run out of cheeks to turn? We don't have many. This is not a teaching that is meant to condone repeated abuse, nor is it meant to overturn the law of

132. Darity and Mullen, *From Here to Equality*, 2.

restitution. Jesus turned this teaching on its head, but the spirit of such a teaching is violated when “turn the other cheek” is used as a palliative for tamping down Black protest and rage.

Jesus also taught in the same text, popularly known as the “Sermon on the Mount,” in the context of anger and doing harm to neighbor, “when you are presenting your gift at the altar, if even there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there, before the altar, go and be reconciled to this person first, then come and present your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24).¹³³ There is no reason to create a false dichotomy by saying Jesus is saying reconciling offense of harmful sin is more important than worship, but certainly Jesus continues to lift up the vitality of restitution. Will white brothers and sisters leave their altars, go and be reconciled to Black brothers and sisters? There is no authentic repentance without reparations. This way of Jesus—teachings about restitution and reparations—are difficult enough in personal relationships, and they are even more fraught with difficulty in civic, state, and national discourses.

Reparations scholars Darity and Mullen say a shift is happening as they present on reparations nationally. They have noticed in the past decade that people are moving from challenging the very notion of reparations as a “non-starter,” to people asking questions about the logistics of reparations. For example, how can reparations extend from injustices of slavery to include brutality and grievous wrongs of Jim Crow laws, inequities in housing, education, health care, and legal systems? What Darity and Mullen say is happening on a national level, I have observed is happening on a local level in Tulsa. While it may not feel

133. Quoted from Hal Taussig, *A New Testament: A Bible for the Twenty-First Century, Combining Traditional and Newly Discovered Texts* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013).

like progress, there is a shift in challenging the legitimacy of reparations to asking questions about how reparations would work.¹³⁴

A prominent example of this is how Tulsa Mayor G. T. Bynum publicly resists reparations and in so doing provides a window into how we might approach opposition. While Bynum's positions on reparations for the massacre are emblematic of a century of City of Tulsa stonewalling, his questions may also be a template for addressing the concerns of everyday Tulsans. I'm listing his questions partly to call for future research so that these important questions may be addressed rather than used as further delay tactics without answers. I number lines I transcribed from a press conference for reference in my rebuttals below.¹³⁵

- 1 Where does the money come from?
- 2 Who does it get paid to?
- 3 How do you calculate who it gets paid to?
- 4 Is it money?
- 5 Or is it work from an economic development standpoint?
- 6 No, this is not something with a tremendous track record in our country.
- 7 Should this generation of Tulsans be taxed to pay for something that criminals did a hundred years ago?
- 8 This was not a lawful act that caused our community to be victimized.

Bynum asks several related questions, lines 1-4, then boils it all down in line 7 to a question that appeals to a voter base that resists taxation. In reference to line 1, has this question about funding ever stopped the city from partnering to build any number of existing

134. Darity, Mullen, *From Here to Equality*, 239.

135. This form of critique is meant to parallel the section earlier in this project titled, "Color Blind White Gaze." Both statements are critiqued for the way they posture a logic of lawful, American, even Christian values but tend to result in devaluing Black lives.

The source of Bynum's comments is from an undated video on [Tulsaworld.com](https://tulsaworld.com) that appears as a "related content" item below the following web article: Jacob Factor, "Justice for Greenwood Hosts Prayer Rally, Donates to Churches Damaged or Destroyed during Tulsa Race Massacre," *Tulsa World*, https://tulsaworld.com/news/local/racemassacre/justice-for-greenwood-hosts-prayer-rally-donates-to-churches-damaged-or-destroyed-during-tulsa-race/article_9a193a84-1fbc-11ec-a7a8-bb104b04dbe0.html.

tangible public or private ventures? Funding is an important question in each project, so this is not a mic drop question against reparations.

Mayor Bynum addressing the issue assumes acknowledgment of the role of unlawful acts, but he conflates criminality of mobs with culpability of the City of Tulsa for the massacre. The criminal act was done by city, county, state, and mobs of thousands of white people. Over one hundred years, this mob that went back to their homes and procreated and paid college tuition for their children to attend universities, return to Tulsa and become attorneys for oil companies and work in industries based on lands stolen by acts of the city, and benefiting from a century of wealth accumulation are still in Tulsa today.

Black Tulsans' wealth generation, meanwhile, would have grown from four million in damages in 1921 (60 million equivalent today), exponentially invested over time, wealth passing down from generation to generation and valued at billions of dollars today. Black Tulsans have been robbed by white Tulsans of literally 60 million initially but also billions of dollars of wealth generation that would have been generated from lost businesses and property.

Further, tens of thousands of Tulsans are related to that white mob. The implication in line 7 that future generations of Tulsans bear no responsibility to redress wrongs done in the past is a break from reality. Just laws are expressly for the purpose of redressing crimes of the past.

Bynum claims, line 6, that reparations do not have a good track record in this country, but this is misleading and inaccurate. The United States has paid reparations to Japanese Americans unjustly incarcerated during World War II. The German government paid reparations for victims of the Nazi Holocaust. Canadian and United States governments have

paid reparations for forcible removals of indigenous peoples.¹³⁶ As Rev. Robert Turner said after enumerating many ways the United States has participated in these programs of reparations, “The United States believes in reparations; just not for Black people.”

Finally, Bynum is correct to say, line 8, that this criminal act victimized “our community.” Therefore, Justice for Greenwood lead attorney Solomon Damario Solomon-Simmons filed a public nuisance complaint on behalf of 1921 Tulsa massacre survivors, including Lessie Benningfield Randle, Viola Fletcher, and Hughes Van Ellis against the City of Tulsa, Tulsa Regional Chamber, Tulsa Development Authority, Tulsa Metropolitan Planning Commission, Tulsa County, and an Oklahoma state veteran’s association. I listened all day September 28, 2021, to proceedings as Solomon-Simmons and a team of Justice for Greenwood attorneys argued the case and all-white attorneys for the above-mentioned case argued that the complaint be dismissed. Solomon-Simmons countered arguments to dismiss saying the massacre was a clear attempt “to dispossess Black people of their land and push them out of Tulsa.”

In the history of human relationships between oppressors and the oppressed, the relationship between white and Black in the United States is remarkable for the way that Black people have chosen again and again to live out the radical teaching of Jesus Christ and white people have chosen to keep slapping Black cheeks. The City of Tulsa and white people in Tulsa continually slap Black Tulsans in the face when city, county, and state attorneys argue the statute of limitations to claim damages has passed and that survivors have not shown they have a “special” or “unique” injury to warrant disregarding the length of time that has elapsed. This argument particularly shocked the gallery in the Tulsa County

136. Darity, Mullen, *From Here to Equality*, 2.

courtroom and caused additional trauma to survivors, who all experienced firsthand the massacre, aftermath, and ongoing tragic historical trauma of the event. Speaking for the survivors, Solomon-Simmons said, “the thing that hurt them most was hearing people say they were not injured, that they did not have a specific injury related to the massacre.”¹³⁷

The survivors’ complaint contends that the 1921 Tulsa massacre created a public nuisance that continues today, particularly in Black Tulsans and specifically in their lives, and the nuisance needs abatement. “We would like to see those who are responsible for the massacre unequivocally state their responsibility, that they did this, that it was wrong and that these are the steps specifically they’re going to implement to rebuild and abate the nuisance,” Solomon-Simmons said.¹³⁸

As the ongoing resistance by city, county, and state officials makes clear, legal, and legislative efforts to force these government entities to pay reparations to Greenwood survivors and descendants have failed Black Tulsans many times over. Should Tulsans continue waiting on courts and legislation? I am not suggesting legal, legislative and policy concerns be abandoned. On the contrary, I believe pressure on the city and state should be increased, calling on reparations. In addition, I believe partnerships with faith communities, businesses, both those aligned and those in confrontation with the city, can build a new future for Greenwood and North Tulsa.

This leads me to learn more about faith community or personal reparations in addition to government reparations. I personally asked Rev. Robert Turner how private reparations

137. “Tulsa Race Massacre Survivors Have Day in Court as Judge Weighs Whether Their Case Will Go to Trial.”

138. “Day in Court,” *Tulsaworld.com*.

might impact the legal, political, social, rhetorical challenges to the City of Tulsa by prophetic activists such as Turner and Solomon-Simmons. Reparations through non-profit organizations, churches, and private citizens may inadvertently let the city off the hook, as if the city did something legally, substantially, and materially for reparations when it really has not. Rev. Turner is a “reparations purist,” but he is starting to believe private reparations can be possible and do something to shame, inspire, spark, prime the pump for more formal government scale reparations for the public entities that are responsible for the massacre.

What Rev. Turner said specifically to me is that “you are not the city,” and “you were not around in 1921” but “the city was around in 1921” and the City of Tulsa is complicit in the 1921 Tulsa massacre. This connection to culpability and responsibility for reparations is why it is so important to voice the narratives of white City of Tulsa officials who made policies, did not stop the massacre, police who deputized white men to kill Black people and take Black prisoners, firemen who did not put out fires, national guard that protected white Tulsa, shot at Black Tulsans, and took Black prisoners, leaving Greenwood vulnerable to attack, murder, looting, burning.

A counter point to this viewpoint of Solomon-Simmons and Rev. Turner is something a contractor named Wesley Gamble—pastor, builder, and friend—said to me. He said “trickle down economics” of official public reparations will not work for most Black Tulsans. Private reparations may impact the personal lives of Black Tulsans perhaps in ways city-wide or nation-wide reparations may never impact them.

Reparations Through Reclamation of Property for Black Families

In addition to continuing to pressure the City of Tulsa, Tulsa County, and the State of Oklahoma to do reparative acts in Tulsa, is it also important for white people personally, in

churches, or in non-profit organizations to acknowledge, apologize, and atone for the damages done to generations of Black families in Tulsa? While I agree that only the entities doing harm can do genuine reparations, voices in Tulsa often follow this notion by calling only the city, county, and state to do reparations. I have revealed evidence, however, that in addition to these governmental entities, individuals and churches also did harm and should participate in reparations. There can be governmental, church, non-profit, and individual reparations because all these entities harmed and killed Black people and destroyed property they owned.

With KBD, therefore, I believe reparations are not the province of government alone. Faith communities are also complicit in racial injustice. These faith communities are obligated to practice reparations “because it is what the justice of God demands,” KBD said. The justice of God will be witnessed when those facing the full force of domination, “trapped in historical contexts of crucifying death” experience the healing power of “resurrection reparations” in their communities, KBD said.¹³⁹

As I’ve reflected on doing personal or non-governmental reparations, my thoughts returned to my family’s residential building business. Is there meaning in my family building homes since 1958 beyond making money and beautiful homes for mostly white people? I began to wonder about this and place this history alongside the gross inequities of home ownership in Tulsa and nationally. How much of an impact did the destruction of 1,256 homes by white mobs have on the current environment of housing in North Tulsa today? How did national factors play into these local conditions?

139. Douglas, *Resurrection Hope*, 147-48.

In 2019, according to the Community Service Council Tulsa Equality Indicators, home ownership for Black Tulsans (32%) is roughly half of home ownership for white Tulsans (57.9%). This disproportionately low level of ownership by Black individuals and family is due to historic racism in housing. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor shows in stunning detail how the United States federal housing policy, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has colluded with the banking and real estate industries to undermine Black home ownership.¹⁴⁰

My positionality to the history of the 1921 Tulsa massacre and generations of stolen wealth has come back around to me as a reflection on my own family's wealth and vocation building homes. A combined rupture of being convicted by a causal relationship between the historic actions of white Tulsans and historic trauma of Black Tulsans prompted me to leave the pastorate and return to my family home building business.

My father, Terrel Taylor, and my mother, Charlotte Taylor, started a home building business in Bartlesville in 1958. I grew up cleaning up building sites and swinging a hammer forty-five minutes from Greenwood. I left home when I was 17 to attend university and graduate school. I worked in ministry until I was 52. Then I returned to work with my brother, who now owns and operates the family business.

Having decades of established experience in home building gave me the foundation and context to start a non-profit to practice non-governmental reparations. My wife, Jill, and my brothers, Brent and Toby, started a non-profit to do reparations through increasing Black home ownership in Tulsa. We have been joined by another family, Amber and Chuck Oputa, who are board members and fellow developers and contractors. Amber is also a realtor in

140. Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *Race for Profit* (University of North Carolina Press, 2019).

Tulsa and owns AOG Realty, located on the corner of Greenwood and Archer, where I sublet an office.

The vision that came to me in 2019 during much of what I am exploring in this project report and theological anthropology is this: if white people burned 1,256 homes in one day, why can't white people pay reparations to help build or remodel 1,256 homes in the next ten years? That's the vision question that launched 1256 Movement.

In the process of setting up, launching, and directing the activities of 1256 Movement, of building homes alongside Black families and contractors, I have engaged in practices of solidarity that moved beyond my ministry context into the community of Greenwood and North Tulsa. Concurrent with the work of the non-profit, I engage in practices of solidarity including joining Black Wall Street Chamber of Commerce and attending Black Contractor meetings; working on the board of Oklahoma Family Empowerment Center (OFEC) with Rev. Sharyn Cosby; research in historical trauma, suffering, and resilience; giving reparations to survivors of the massacre; working with Black contractors on homes; sponsoring events during the Race Massacre Centennial; providing some white "diversity" in some mostly Black events and panel discussions; attending lectures, interviews, court cases related to the race massacre; banking activism, talking to bankers about redlining and urging participation in North Tulsa development; subletting an office on Greenwood; leading tours of Greenwood; advocating for Greenwood businesses; opposing ongoing racist discrimination, working with contractors to develop land and homes in North Tulsa for Black individuals and families; applying for private and public grants money for reparations.

After applying for a City of Tulsa Authority for Economic Opportunity (TAEO) Affordable Housing Trust Fund grant, I received a letter from the director stating that after

consulting with City of Tulsa attorneys, it was determined that using public funds to further the goals of the 1256 Movement would violate the provisions of Article II, Section 36A of the Oklahoma Constitution, discriminating on the basis of race.

I find it interesting that they could have denied my request on any number of grounds, such as the fact that 1256 Movement is brand new and barely has a board of directors, one of the requirements of the grant. This position of City of Tulsa attorneys continues in the tradition of one hundred years of denial and refusal to pay reparations for Greenwood survivors and descendants. Greenwood residents have been facing such denials for a century. The letter, dated June 9, 2021, came at a time when the City of Tulsa was missing another opportunity of the city's lifetime to do reparative justice for Greenwood, around the centennial of the massacre, when the whole world was watching. Public funds went toward Greenwood Rising History Center, a great effort at establishing the narratives of survivors and descendants. No public money was committed for reparations during the centennial. What a lost opportunity.

Citizens of Tulsa do not have to keep waiting in the futility for the city, county, and state to act. We can continue to pressure the city, county, and state to act by paying reparations. We can also do non-governmental reparations through organizations like 1256 Movement. The 1256 Movement exists to pay property reparations of approximately \$10,000 each to 1,256 Black families as restitution for land and homes destroyed in the 1921 Tulsa massacre. A total of 12.56 million dollars is the goal for reparation funds raised and paid to those building new and remodeled homes in the next ten years.

As a way of explaining how I feel about this crazy personal commitment to 1256 Movement, I want to close with a story about a short man who made a crazy commitment.

On December 6, 2020, at the invitation of Rev. Dr. Bartheophilus Judge Bailey, I stood in front of St. Andrew Baptist Church in Tulsa and became the first white preacher in the pulpit in the 97-year history of the church. In my sermon titled, “Salvation Has Come to This House,” I related the story of Zacchaeus and his action of restitution, or reparations.

There was once a man named Zacchaeus who lived in Jericho in Israel. He was unpopular because he was a tax collector. And he was short, so one day when Jesus of Nazareth came to his town, he climbed a tree to see him, because he couldn’t see over the crowds. For some reason Jesus singled out Zacchaeus and said, “Come down, for I’m going to your house today.” Luke 19:7-10 narrates what happened next.

All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now, I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:7-10).

What was this crazy commitment of Zacchaeus that prompted Jesus to say, “Salvation has come to this house”? The biblical idea of restitution that I have already explicated, is likely what Zacchaeus was drawing from, except he upped the scale by many times. Zacchaeus committed to giving away half of his wealth to the poor. He also committed to repay four times restitution if he’d defrauded anyone. Today we might call these punitive damages, or reparations.

Zacchaeus made a crazy commitment. I imagine his family biting their knuckles over this. Likewise, Tulsa city officials over time, businesspeople, churches, and non-profits have hesitated to make any punitive or reparative commitments as redress and restitution for the damages to Black families.

Reparations in Tulsa, for me, includes acknowledging the long-standing damages and denial of the truth; apology for the tragic murders and stolen property and generational wealth building from Black families; atonement through reparations—for me these non-governmental, personal, citizen reparations mean working alongside Black families for home ownership. While the disruption or rupture that caused us to start 1256 Movement was hearing authentic narratives of the 1921 massacre, the inspiration to do something to repay for lives and property lost comes from a biblical idea from ancient times.

This Zacchaeus confession seems to me impossible to carry out. But large visions are meant to be overwhelming because they relate to overwhelming, historic problems. The vision of 1256 is for decades from now North Tulsa to no longer bear the visible scars of the race massacre, for reparations to bring prosperity. The future vision is for 1,256 families to have property, homes, equity, and greater hope. This hope in concrete expression will help build new businesses, fund education, and promote human flourishing.

My wife, Jill, and I continue an ongoing friendship and fellowship with St. Andrew Christian as well as In the Spirit Christian Church, which is part of a sharing of the table of fellowship that M. Shawn Copeland presents as a healing and reparative process in sacramental terms. “A Christian praxis of solidarity denotes the humble and complete orientation of ourselves before the lynched Jesus, whose shadow falls across the table of our sacramental meal,” says Copeland. “In his raised body, a compassionate God interrupts the structures of death and sin, of violation and oppression. A divine praxis of solidarity sets the dynamics of love against the dynamics of domination—recreating and regenerating the world, offering us a new way of being in relation to God, to others, to self.”¹⁴¹

141. Copeland, *Enfleshing Freedom*, 126.

Reparations offers Tulsans a new way of being in relation to God, others, and ourselves. One expression of this happened during the sermon I preached at St. Andrew. I said I am sorry for the events of the race massacre and subsequent discrimination by white people of Black people, for the way I have benefited, and others have suffered. After the sermon was over, my brother, Brent, described his perspective of what I preached that day. “One thing Greg said at St. Andrew Church was so incredibly simple yet moving. Greg said, ‘I’ve been a part of the problem of injustice as it relates to the aftermath and institutional unfairness that has continued to exist in Tulsa, and I am sorry.’ Afterwards, one of the St. Andrew congregants said to my brother, ‘Nobody has ever said I’m sorry, to me, for what happened. Thank you.’”

This project and these examples of non-governmental reparations are not about implying any gratitude to white people. White people in Tulsa don’t deserve thanks in relation to a century of denial of brutality and discrimination of Black Tulsans. For me, to practice my theology, “practice what I preach,” the context for this must be in relationships of solidarity in which divine love and healing is expressed and human flourishing is available to all involved. This work is ongoing.

GLOSSARY

Assimilationist Racism evades difference and realities of power and is often called color blindness; impossible claim of color blindness also assumes white as default without admitting it.

Black Theology, as exercised by theologians such as James H. Cone, is the belief that the starting place of theology is not conquering but God's liberation for all people, particularly those unjustly enslaved by white oppressors.

Caste System is a hierarchy of human social power that attempts to order classes of people by their relative value to society.

Constructive Theology is a way of taking seriously both traditions *and* critiques of systematic and dogmatic theologies; ethics are not separated from theology; open-ended conversation with dialogical partners and fallibility not eternity or essentialism about theological matters.

Critical Race Theory originated by several key legal scholars as a philosophy of defense for race based civil rights cases.

Demonic refers to a human spiritual possession of an evil that is doing harm to oneself or others.

Doctrine of Discovery is the notion that God has ordained Christian white Americans to conquer, subdue, and possess the American continent. In political and pseudo-history that has been taught in American schools this false doctrine is often referred to as Manifest Destiny.

Essentialist Racism explains differences in human characteristics as biological or genetic; claims inferiority of non-white people and superiority of white people.

Exorcism refers to the process of calling out and healing persons who are possessed of evil that is harming themselves or others.

Historical Racial Trauma originated by Sitero in 2006, the belief that genocide, mass murder, pogroms, massacres traumatize whole groups of people for many generations.

Lynching is the systemic murder by hanging and mutilation as a means of terrorizing mostly Black people.

Manifest Destiny is the notion that God has ordained Christian white Americans to conquer, subdue, and possess the American continent. In pseudo-religious terms and in theological critiques this is also called a Doctrine of Discovery.

Race Cognizance is a reassertion since the 1960s of difference in anti-racism movements. Ideas such as “melting pot” have been rejected as assimilationist attempts to erase social, cultural, and economic power of people of color and are resisted.

Reparations, according to Darity and Mullen, is a payment by the entity that does harm to the injured that restores equity to a relationship that has been characterized by inequity.

Restitution refers to the biblical idea found first in Leviticus. In Levitical laws of Israel, one fifth is added to a restitution payment for harm done to a neighbor, so that re-payment would be 120 percent of the damages.

Suffering and Resilience refers to a paired set of circumstances in which human beings may face harm and oppression and have within themselves, the community, and the divine, power of healing, re-growth, joy, and reparations.

Systemic Racism in the United States is a caste system that benefits white people and harms people of color.

Womanist Theology originated with Black women who were not finding Black issues addressed in Feminist Theology; M. Shawn Copeland is a Womanist theologian who has widened the circle of divine love to exclude no one.

White Gaze refers to the way that white people demonize Black people with a “corrupt moral imaginary” that does emotional, physical, spiritual, and economic harm to Black people and is a sinful state of white people that requires exorcism of demonic whiteness.

White Supremacy refers to any belief, policy, or action that enacts a supposed superiority of white people over people of color.

White Theology is a belief that white is good and Black is evil, characterized by reading the Bible as a conquering document, God as a conquering god.

APPENDIX ONE: MINISTRY CONTEXT BACKGROUND

Social Context

What is unique about our locale that impacts ministry? “We are located where there are diverse cultures . . . East Tulsa diversity fits and plays into our diversity,” one member said. Reversing this question, another member responded about our impact on the community. “Our presence is impactful because God gives us opportunities to reach out where we are.”

I perceive my role in the social setting as one of pastoral care and leadership among people with diverse religious, social, economic, and racial lives. The space our church, staff, and I inhabit is intended to be welcoming to all people. Yet the congregation is over welcoming and under affirming. What I mean is that people in our social setting have felt rejected and denied a place in our community based on ongoing racial, political, social, or moral biases.

Within the limitations of our welcome and reception of our neighbors, I attempt to transcend deep imperfections in me and the community by praying. I pray for each person as an image bearer of God to feel and discover more deeply the relationship with the divine. In addition, I ask to receive prayer from strangers, neighbors, and church members. I’m taking a cue from Pope Francis, who in response to people saying they are praying for him says, “Thank you, I need your prayers.” Prayer can be a lifter of heads by the words from the mouth of oppressors.

A white minister, I am often prayed over by person of color, both those I know well, and those who I meet for the first time in East Tulsa. While I pray for the love of God to be poured out on daughters, sons, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers,

I also receive prayers from the same women and men as a reversal of the positionality, patriarchy, and racial power that whiteness has trafficked in for centuries.

Another role I serve in the community is to visit homes in East Tulsa. Whenever I'm in the home or within the habitus of a person of color, I try to listen, not occupy space that is theirs, and in the words of one of our sage members, "love without expectation." The following example serves to paint a picture of my role as a white male serving in a diverse neighborhood and what home visits are like from my perspective. I am also curious to know what my home visits are like from the perspective of the persons I'm visiting.

One day I took food to a church family after a mother of six was ill. I could hear through the door the response among the family members about who was at the door. "Some white guy." The mother of the church member answered the door and then recognized me as the pastor of her daughter's church. Her demeanor warmed and she invited me in.

As I sat with the family that day, I wondered what sort of "white guy" am I going to be? Will I be just "some" white guy, or will I be the kind who has been stereotypical in their lives, the historical kind of white guy who oppresses Black people?

As we sat in the living room, the children played the video game, "Mortal Combat." Instead of judging this choice, I chose instead to be aware of my positionality, myself as an evil representation of the primary purveyors of violence upon Black bodies. Further, for this mother of six children who does not have manicured parks, sidewalks, and stores in her neighborhood, video games are a form of safe keeping of children close to guardians in the home.

Therefore, rather than sitting in judgment, rather than saying something parental about video games, I sat on the couch and had a genuine conversation about what's happening in

my life, and I asked about their lives. On this day, I had come from a class at PTS featuring Womanist Theology and activist authors like Angela Y. Davis. By recommending Davis and others, I believe this reinforces the sense of power that each person possesses and can be accessed to help change lives and community.

Religious Context

Which rituals and activities are most predictable and central to The Journey culture?

Nearly all responded with “communion,” and half of respondents said, “Family Time,” a ritual in worship when people share happy and sad news at an open microphone.

Which other activities are most instrumental in shaping how The Journey thinks of itself?

Sixty percent said “missions” shape us. One person described our transition from a large building to the school: “The saga of selling our building, getting out of debt, the revelation not to buy a new property, our discernment that we should invest our funds for missionaries and to bless others.”

What symbols best describe who The Journey is? Sixty percent said the “cross,” and thirty percent said something similar to, “walking together.” Two respondents commented on the lack of symbols in our congregational life, which may also reflect something about lack of iconography in our denomination.

Which routine practices and styles of relationship best capture what The Journey values most? Responses from various people include the following: “prayer, food, family time, singing, welcoming all, humor, learning rather than having all the answers, discipleship, empowering the vulnerable, saying hard things publicly.” Another person mentioned the strong connection of the table of Jesus with our weekly inclusive sharing of communion. “Jesus welcomed all saints and sinners to the table.”

What beliefs and ideas best describe what The Journey thinks a practicing member ought to be like? Words to describe the church include the following: “Forgiving, accepting, loving, growing as disciples taking next steps, and all people becoming missionaries. Our willingness to discover that we are wrong about what we believe scripture says. Freedom to speak and invite all people to come to worship. Peaceful, joyful, loving, tolerant, kind, good and faithful. Leadership has called us to reject condemnation, and to welcome all practicing members ‘ought’ to do that too. How are they welcome if they are not broken, searching, believing, healing? Compassionate, Christ centered in all that we do.”

Theological Context

In context of Christian denominations, The Journey is theologically conservative. In context within the fellowship of Stone-Campbell Churches of Christ, however, The Journey is theologically progressive. Our church polity is congregational, and elders oversee the church. The church’s main activity is discipleship, inviting all people into Christ centered life. We do this by calling each person, including ourselves, to take regular next steps with Jesus. These regular steps may include joining a Bible study, learning to pray, and serving the poor, children, and youth.

We regularly receive people who struggle financially. We share friendship, popcorn, coffee, day pack food, conversation, prayer, Bible reading, financial assistance, and ultimately hope. We receive regular feedback from first time and regular guests and friends about how unique, inviting, and loving our daily approach to ministry is at The Journey Outpost. We find daily occasions to use the name of our church to say to people, “The Journey—we believe following Jesus is a lifetime journey, and we welcome all people to join us in this great adventure.”

Political Context

The Stone-Campbell Movement has leaned toward apolitical, non-participation views. Shepherds of our church and members sometimes request that I keep politics out of preaching. I have resisted this notion, based on two beliefs. First, I believe politics means “public life,” not American two-party politics, so preaching must have something to say about our public life. Second, from start to finish, the story of Israel, Jesus, and the church is political, social, theological.

My wife and I have been concerned and have discussed with some congregation members who seem to think we can be apolitical in preaching but who post social media ideology that is one click away from hate speech. We believe politics can shape our faith but that partisan American power must not shape preaching and the church. We believe that our faith must shape our politics. When our faith shapes our politics, we will be led to public work for change where we see similar kinds of oppressions that God liberated in the story of Israel, Jesus, and the early church.

Nationally, veiled racism has continued to be used for political gain. This must be named and called out for the sinful, immoral, unjust use of power that it is. The rise of Donald Trump and his use of racist slurs and policies for political gain has nearly been my undoing in ministry.¹⁴² Trump, however, did not invent racism but like many politicians like Richard M. Nixon and Ronald Reagan, he used racism for political advantage, developing politics and policies that harmed Black people, immigrants, and many people of color. My sense is that many churches between 2016-2020 have struggled with politics, because of the polarizing

142. Lisa Desjardins, “What Exactly Trump Has Said about Race,” *PBS NewsHour*, last modified August 22, 2017, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/politics/every-moment-donald-trumps-long-complicated-history-race>.

way politics has been framed in the United States. I mention this because the national political context has severely impacted my local ministry context. Not only are immigrants who we employ, who we serve in the community, and who attend our church impacted by national politics, but our leadership is also conflicted about the current state of politics.

As an example of this national politics impact on our local ministry context, on several occasions I have had long and difficult conversations with church leaders about political issues such as immigration, race, police brutality, war, and economics. Several of the leaders of The Journey have supported Trump, leading me to ask, “How do you morally, ethically, biblically support a misogynist, racist, anti-immigrant, self-serving, amoral person like Donald Trump?” Our faith must shape how we act in the world to speak out and stand up for equality and love for immigrants, people of color, women, and children. In other words, faith must shape our politics.

Economic Context

One Journey member noted the economic context more than racial context. “We are in a part of town that is not considered upscale but where we feel our ministry can have the greatest impact.” The Journey does not have the problem of appeasing wealthy members, and for that I am thankful. There are very generous members, and for that I am thankful. In contrast to generous members, we also have members who think they are too financially strapped to give or who have chosen that it is not important for them to give, and that impacts the church body negatively.

One final response by a church member helps to wrap up this congregational self-description. “Our church’s fifty-year history tells a story of next steps: early racial integration, allowing divorced people, women preaching, growing diverse staff, growing

diverse congregation, trying to figure out how to have a diverse political/social congregation.”

APPENDIX TWO: A SERMON AND BIBLE TEXTS ON RACISM

The following is a transcript of the sermon delivered by Greg Taylor February 23, 2020, as partial fulfillment of project act of ministry to administer before survey, deliver narration of the 1921 Tulsa massacre, then administer after survey to The Journey Church.¹⁴³

My doctoral research asks the question, how did white Christian communities in 1921 respond to the 1921 Tulsa massacre?

How did white churches respond after the race massacre?

What was happening among white Christians at that time in 1921 in Tulsa?

How does white supremacy continue to impact communities in Tulsa one hundred years later?

As we approach the centennial, I also originally asked in my research, “What are race relationships like in Tulsa right now?” Since May, this question has become much more visible to us all.

I want to understand the roots of white supremacy, because I want to help white people join people of color in racial liberation. The good news today is that our hearts and minds can continue to change. My research is based on that assumption that we as human beings, particularly through the power of the grace of God and the gospel, can change. And so, as we enter into this, let’s pray our way into it. Lord, I pray particularly as we deal with a sensitive subject of racism that you will help me and pour through me a gift of preaching and then give us good ears to hear and good hearts to receive and understand, and good lives to live the

143. This sermon is available online at (<https://youtu.be/e9uoZ0LLJv8>). See also Taylor, “Survey on Race.”

gospel message. I pray this through the name of Jesus. Amen. There's a Black theologian named James H. Cone, who suggests that white people have read the Bible as a conquest document. There's a lot of evidence that we have used it as a conquest document through history to conquer various peoples, and Cone calls this white theology, at least in generally, calls white theology, and that's a portion of white theology.

Cone says that those who have been doing that white theology, reading scripture for conquest of other people, need to go back to the drawing board, need to do what he calls do our first works over. In other words, we need to read scripture again and reconsider those conquest documents. And for me, doing those first works over, means countering the white theology that I, and many of you have heard in your life with Black Theology, what's called Black Theology, which begins with God's desire to liberate the oppressed, to liberate the slaves. And so, in America, Black people have been reading the Bible through the lens of liberation for 400 years. When you're a slave, you read the Bible differently. And so, if you didn't understand what I meant by white theology versus Black Theology, just understand that at least at the top level of that, it's just the different ways that we read the Bible from the different positions that we come from, oppressor or the oppressed.

And so, learning to read the Bible from, and through the eyes of other people, through the oppressed and not through the oppressors. I've learned to approach scripture differently. And again, not from stories of conquest, but from stories about God liberating the oppressed, liberating the slaves. And wondering if maybe I am really in the position as a white male of the oppressor in the story of Egypt and the slaves, our ancestors, slave owners. I'm learning to find texts and look in stories of God liberating people, as in Jesus's liberation movement that he begins in Luke 4:18 and 19. The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me

to preach good news to the poor, to release the captives, to give sight to the blind, to give new legs to the lame and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. Jesus came to liberates the captives. God is a liberating God.

I wanted to begin with a few scriptures and then I'll read other scriptures as we go along. Doing my first works over as James H. Cone says, also means to me hearing a new text like Leviticus 19:33 and 34, which for years and years, I never noticed. And maybe you've never noticed it, but in the very text and chapter, where Jesus got this text, love your neighbor, farther down in that chapter, it says this, and I'm paraphrasing this. Don't oppress people who are different from you, treat one another like humans. You shall love the person different from you as you love yourself. And so, the same language is used in Leviticus, where it's used for neighbor, now here, it's used for stranger, alien, the other, someone different from you. You shall love the person different from you as you love yourself, you shall love the person of a different color as yourself. You shall love the person of a different nation as yourself.

A most famous Midrash in the Talmud involves a would-be proselyte asking Hillel to teach him the whole of the Torah while he is standing on one leg. Hillel replies, "What is hateful to you do not do to others. That is the Torah. The rest is commentary. Now go and learn." In the history of interpretation, therefore, Lev 19:18 and 19:33-34 are so vital to Jewish thought that reference to it has become encased in one of the most famous of the rabbinic stories. I call this love of the "other," (goy) the "Third Love," after our First Love of God and Second Love of neighbor.

The text is speaking here to Israel. You were strangers in the land of Egypt, you knew what it was like to be oppressed, so don't now become the oppressors. When you come into the land, don't become oppressors. That's exactly what Israel ended up doing, and that's exactly what the United States has done over and over, and that's exactly what people that get released often when they forget that they were oppressed. When white people who were oppressed by kings and queens forgot they were oppressed, they came and oppressed slaves. And it happens. And it's part of being human. But we must call it out and challenge it and not whitewash that history and paint over it but learn to tell the truth about it. White people very specifically, if you want to get even specific to Oklahoma, we've not lived out this text of Leviticus, 19:33 and 34. We've attempted genocide on Indian tribes and formed white mobs to try and run Black people out of Tulsa in 1921.

According to Randy Krehbiel of the *Tulsa World* and Karlos K. Hill in their book, *Tulsa 1921*, "the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre is the deadliest outbreak of white terrorist violence against a Black community in United States history." I'm going to read that again. The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre is the deadliest outbreak of white terrorist violence against the Black community in United States history. John Hope Franklin said the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre not only took lives and property but robbed the city of its honesty and sentenced it to seventy-five years of denial. It's no longer acceptable for me, for Black people only to be telling this narrative about Tulsa. White people like me and like you, many of you, need to be telling this narrative. It's not up to Black people to tell this narrative, it's up to all of us in Tulsa to tell the truth about what happened in 1921.

White people must learn and tell this story, search for the truth, even if it means searching for places where there may have been mass graves. It means repairing broken relationships

that had been broken for one hundred years. And so, the key question of my research is how do white churches respond to the 1921 massacre? One of the reasons that I put this in present tense is because I wondered in 1921 ... And if you want to read my long research paper, which a few of you might, but I'm assuming that most of you don't want to, but I'm going to tell stories about the Methodist Church and about a ministry alliance and about the Red Cross and white Tulsans' responses. There were good responses, but there were a lot of very, very difficult, terrible responses to the race massacre and being part of the race massacre. But my elevator speech for my research is this, the historical part is 1921, but the today part is this, I'm trying to help white people stop freaking out about talking about racism.

And we fear, we fear saying something wrong, we fear that we're going to be challenged on something, we fear we're going to be called racist. There are all kinds of fears that we bring to this. What I'm trying to do is help liberate us from the fear and to help us stop freaking out and redefine racism as something that is changeable, that we can accept and admit in ourselves and start with our hearts and ourselves. And so, the goal of the survey that you just took is ... The metaphor I use is that survey, and if you need to complete it, go ahead while we're talking, that's fine, but the goal of this survey is just to act like a mirror to ourselves. Because with us white people over the years, confronting one another isn't easy and it isn't very effective. And so, my survey is an attempt to just let each one of us hold up a mirror to our own values and just find out what you believe about it. Think about your history, think about your past, think about how you've come to believe racial things, how you define racism.

And as I've done surveys, the last six or seven months, and those surveys have come in and my data, I noticed there's a lot of fear, but there's also a lot of just badly defined racism

definitions. I mean, we just don't have a very good definition of racism as a collective society. The survey helps us to mirror our fears and helps us to see that we do have racist actions and thoughts. The survey mirrors that racism is not just somebody else's problem, but discussions around racism begin with me, they begin with my heart, they begin not by pointing at somebody else. And so, the exercise that I gave you today, the survey aims at this one thing; to ask you to consider this quest, this statement right here. And you may not agree with it, but I've come to believe that we have, all of us, all humans, have racist ideas, but what I'm believing now through this research is that we can change them.

Colossians 3:10-11, having clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge, according to the image of its creator. In that renewal, there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, Black, white, but Christ is all in all. Or as Paul puts it in Galatians 3:28, for all of you are one in Christ Jesus. I would like to show you a video that has been put together by the Tulsa public schools. Listen to this story of the 1921 Tulsa massacre.

[Here the congregation viewed a video used in Tulsa Public Schools featuring Dr. Karlos K. Hill, who emphasizes that this is more than just a history of violence and destruction. It's also a story about courage, persistence, and resilience.]

U.S. Senator James Lankford and Oklahoma State Senator Kevin Matthews, pictured here, announced just this week, maybe some of you have seen it in the news, that a curriculum is now available for the first time in Oklahoma public schools to teach about the 1921 Race Massacre. And so, the video that you just saw may be part of the curriculum, but that's an introduction. There's also curriculum that history teachers can use in the schools. I believe we need to remember and educate Tulsans about the massacre, just as we need to

remember and educate about the Holocaust or about any events with far reaching impact on all of us. One reason that teaching about the massacre and about difficult events, it's difficult because of a resistance that I noticed in doing surveys and research and talking amongst other white people about the massacre in Tulsa.

I found in talking to fellow white people, that there was a resistance to discussing racism, a resistance to bringing up the 1921 Race Massacre. For example, one white man told me that he's tired of feeling like a piece of ... and he used the S word. And so, there's the resistance, there's a backlash of feeling like we're being hit again with something of the past that we've done. But I think it's an important past that we remember. Dr. Robin DiAngelo says in *White Fragility*, why it's hard for white people to talk about racism. She says, white people have an extremely low threshold for enduring any discomfort associated with challenges to our racial worldviews. Anybody want to own that? No? I don't think so. I don't either. Do you believe it? Do you see it? It's not easy, is it? It's not easy looking in the mirror. DiAngelo also names this resistance that I'd felt in talking to some of you, resistance in myself to talking about racism.

Halfway into doing this research, I almost backed out because of that very resistance within myself and from the conversations that I was having. One of my professors, an African American, Dr. Regina Shands Stoltzfus, I told her about this, and I can imagine what was going through her mind as a Black woman, as a white man was complaining about resistance being given to him in researching on racism. She really encouraged me to steel myself and told me, you're going to receive resistance; nobody's going to enjoy this really. It's not something we do because we enjoy, we do it because it is truth and it is history, yes, and it's because we need to learn from that history. And to realize that racism is not

somebody else's problem, is not history's problem, is not another race's problem, it's our problem, it's a perpetual life, humanity problem. It's not something we can just put in the past and wish that it would stay there. We are just as capable as humans today, of the same kind of atrocities that happened in 1921.

And so, DiAngelo names this resistance, I didn't understand, she calls it white fragility. And what can we do about white fragility? What can we do about this feeling that some of us have? Well, one of the things that I started doing was to start listening to people of color and being challenged by their stories, and the counter narratives that that video I just showed gives to us. From what has been hidden or what has been portrayed in the past and challenging our long-held racial ideas. White fragility also identifies things that we think are helpful, but they're not really, such as color blindness. On your survey, maybe you addressed this, and the question, when you see someone, do you see color? Maybe you said, yes, maybe you said no, maybe you said, I don't know. But one day, I asked Nyasha Peters ... she's our Journey administrator, she works in the office. You see her, you hear her voice, she's the happy voice you hear when you call the Journey office.

Nyasha is Zimbabwean, and one day I asked Nyasha, what do you think when someone says, I don't see color, that I'm color blind? And Nyasha held out her hands, her arms and said, "Well, then they don't see me." Color blindness is just an excuse for hiding our racial thoughts. Looking in the mirror of this survey helps us to work through the fact that we do have racial ideas. And we do see color, whether we admit it or not.

Acts 10:34-35, Peter said, "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation, everyone who fears God and does what is right, is acceptable to God." This is "good

news,” gospel, that every person on earth is God’s child. But we are different children, and it’s okay to see difference and to learn from different perspectives.

If you want to see definitions I’m working from, they come from a book by Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Anti-racist*, and here’s his definition. Ibram X. Kendi defines racism as a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequalities.

Racism is a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequalities. A racist idea is something that suggests that one racial group is superior or inferior to another. Racist ideas argue that inferiorities or superiorities of racial groups explain racial inequalities in society. And that’s an idea from the past, but we need to continue to counter that idea. And then finally, anti-racism ... skipping over some of the definitions, but anti-racism is a powerful collection of anti-racist policies that lead to racial equity and are substantiated by anti-racist ideas. I highly recommend Ibram X. Kendi’s book. Now to the survey, if you haven’t had time to complete it, I would just ask that you continue to complete that survey. What we’re going to do is those of you who are willing, after hearing this sermon today, after hearing this presentation, seeing the video, taking the survey for the first time, what I want to ask you to do is to take the survey, the exact same survey again.

The idea of my research is that we have racial ideas, and those racial ideas can change. Even when we hear a story for the first time, it may change us in incremental ways, a step change. When we look at ourselves in a mirror through a survey like this, it may help us to change incrementally. And so, in these surveys, I’m going to be looking for change. Remember a doctor of ministry is all about ministering in a community with a social science idea but looking for life change. That’s the whole point. And so, if you would be willing to

do the survey again, we're not going to take time in the service, but you can go to this website and take that survey again. It's going to be asking you the same questions. I'm just looking for any incremental changes that you might have. If you take it later today, or sometime week, you can go ahead and take it. Now, if you'd like on your phone, you can take it on the piece of paper that is page six.

What I want to ask you to do is in a moment during our family time, the ushers are going to come around and take up these surveys, it doesn't matter what order they're in or anything, just pile them all together. It's page two, three, and then if you do six, go ahead and hand in page six, the after survey. Any questions about that? Is that clear? Go ahead and turn those in during our family time, which will come in just a moment. What now? I want to just always ask this question. Now, is there a step that we can take, what's a next step for you and for me? What I've tried to say very simply today is to boil down what is a lot of different ideas that I've studied, and it's this, that we all have racist ideas, but we can also have anti-racist ideas. I think it's fruitless and futile to name someone a racist, I think it's fruitless and futile to try and self-justify as a non-racist. What we have is racial ideas that lead to racial policies and laws and racial actions.

We can look at someone, whether it's a public figure or someone locally that we know, and we can look at their actions and their ideas and say, those are racist actions, those are racist ideas, those are racist policies, but it doesn't really do any good to call someone a racist because most racists won't admit it. Or they do, and they're so far into that, that it's not going to affect them maybe. But this idea is that we all have racist ideas and can change to anti-racist ideas and activism.

Years ago, I was frustrated with injustices that I saw locally in Oklahoma and nationally, and I was disillusioned with social media and discussions on social media. I wonder if you've ever been disillusioned and frustrated about the way that things get talked about on social media. Am I the only one? Well, at that point a few years ago, I was frustrated and disillusioned about those things, and I decided that I would join face-to-face community action groups, where people met and talked about a different kind of Tulsa, a different kind of world.

It was out of that frustration that led me to do this research, it was out of that frustration that led me to go to those real face-to-face meetings, it was out of that frustration that led me to this research, is going to lead me into some other things that I want to tell you about in March. I want to talk in March more about reparative actions that this has led me to, the Holy spirit I believe is leading me to. But right now, I just want to read Ephesians 2:13-22 again, about how Jesus repairs relationships.

“But now in Christ Jesus is our peace. In his flesh, he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is the hostility between us. So then, you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself, as the cornerstone. In him, the whole structure is joined together and grows into a Holy temple in the Lord. In whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.”

How about you? Are you ready to be built in the dwelling place for God that doesn't have that racial difference, that we're one in Christ, but can accept that we do, we're sinful, that we have racist ideas, but those racist ideas, through the power of the gospel, can change?

And we can learn to go from saying I'm not racist to, well, I do have racial ideas. I want to admit that and accept it, and I want to move toward being anti-racist because that's where the gospel changes us. Would you please stand with me and receive the final blessing? There are no prayer requests that is too small or too great. There is no request that we reject. We want to hear from you.

If something about the sermon has touched your heart, or you've come with a burden on your heart, you want to pray for sick family member or you, yourself need prayers. If you'd like to be baptized today, we have a baptistry ready to go and we'll baptize you today. And so, receive this final blessing and then we're going to sing, and then the shepherds will be ready to hear your prayer requests. If you would bring one of the cards or they will give you one of the books and you can write your prayer requests in your name before having that prayer. And now to the One who can keep you from falling. And present you before God's glorious presence without fault, and with great joy. To the only God through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, be all glory, power, wisdom, authority, and peace for all time, both now, and forevermore.

APPENDIX THREE: A SURVEY ON EXPERIENCES WITH RACISM

Greg Taylor is presenting his doctoral research called, “How White Supremacy Impacts Communities.” Greg will talk about the worst race-related violent massacre in United States history, the 1921 Tulsa massacre.

Greg’s research was sparked by a curiosity about how white churches responded to the 1921 Tulsa massacre and how one hundred years later white churches continue to internalize racism while Black communities and individuals live with the scars of racial violence directed at them. With Senator James Lankford and State Senator Kevin Matthews, Greg asks, “One hundred years later, how has racism changed in Tulsa and what are we going to do about it?”

We all can take steps toward doing something about racism. To this end, Greg is asking Journey members to take five minutes to answer questions on his “Survey on Experiences with Racism.”

Scriptures on racism will be read during the service. Greg will then draw from sources such as Randy Krehbiel’s new book, *Tulsa 1921*, and Greg’s two years of research and deep analysis to present to the congregation. He will also introduce and show an 8-minute video produced by Tulsa Public Schools on the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.

Finally, Greg will ask that Journey members repeat the “Survey on Experiences with Racism.” Thank you in advance if you choose to participate in these surveys.

Greg’s thesis is that we all have racist ideas and that these racist ideas can change. We can move from thinking we are not racist to accepting we have racist ideas and move toward anti-racism activism.

This focus on changing our racial ideas is Greg's alternative to political and religious speech that often blames previous generations, other parties or religions, or races but does not appropriately address the problem of each of our human hearts.

Step 1

Sign This Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Research

Please read the following and sign the agreement by giving your name and email, which will not be connected to your responses, which will be anonymously reported.

Doctor of Ministry Research Project on Race

“Survey on Experiences with Racism”

Director of Project: Greg Taylor, minister of Journey Church

3171 S 129th East Ave, Tulsa, OK 74134

Phone (918) 576-8442

Email: greg@journeytulsa.com

I agree to participate in the research project, “A Survey on Experiences with Racism,” and to have my participation recorded and transcribed.

I understand that my participation may be reported in the written form of the project in print or online as described in the research plan.

I understand that I may stop my participation at any time, and that I may withdraw my consent at any time up to the final publication of project results by contacting the project director in writing at the email or street address listed above. If I have any questions about the project, I may write, email or phone the project director at any time.

When you enter your name and email below, you will be recorded as signing and agreeing to this document. Your name will not be connected to your answers below. The answers will be anonymously reported.

Name

Age

Email

Questions? Write any questions or concerns you may have below.

RETURN pages 2, 3, and 6 to Greg Taylor or take photos of them and send to gregtaylormail@gmail.com.

Step 2**Take This Survey on Experiences with Racism****You May Also Use This Digital Means to Take the Survey**

www.journeytulsa.com/survey-before

Last four digits of phone number (to match data) _____

How do you define racism? (Write one sentence)

_____.

Do you think racism is a problem mostly in the past? (Circle one)

Past Past and present Not sure

How would you self-describe your race? _____

How would you self-describe your gender? _____

How would you self-describe your religion? _____

Is racial life in the United States getting worse, better, or about the same? (Circle one)

Better Worse About the Same

What concerns do you have with talking about racism?

What are feelings you have when you think or talk about race? (Circle all that apply)

Happy Sad Mad Frustrated
Hurt Annoyed Hopeful Distant

Do you see race and/or color when you look at someone? (Circle one)

Yes No Maybe Not sure

How much racial prejudice do you feel or think you have? (Circle one)

None Some Much Not sure

How are you impacted by racism and discrimination? (Check all that apply)

- I have not been impacted by racism and discrimination
- I have been but would rather not say
- I have been impacted by racism and discrimination toward me
- I have been impacted by reverse discrimination
- I have been impacted by race but I'm not sure how
- I am not sure

What is the first time you can remember when you learned race exists?

What are you willing to do about racism? (Check all that apply)

- Nothing
- Discuss racism with people I trust

- Speak up for someone experiencing discrimination
- Contact lawmakers and share my views
- Listen to stories past and present about white supremacy
- Listen to stories past and present about people of color experiencing racism
- Listen to stories of white people experiencing racial bias
- Change the way I think and act in the future

RETURN pages 2, 3, and 6 to Greg Taylor or take photos of pages and send to gregtavormail@gmail.com.

Step 3

Read This Page And/Or Listen to Presentation On 1921 Race Massacre

The 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre is the “deadliest outbreak of white terrorist violence against a Black community” in United States history, according to Randy Krehbiel and Karlos K. Hill, *Tulsa, 1921: Reporting a Massacre* (University of Oklahoma Press, 2019), xi. John Hope Franklin said the massacre not only took lives and property but also “robbed the city of its honesty” and “sentenced it to 75 years of denial,” according to his article, “Tulsa Still Hasn’t Faced the Truth About the Race Riot of 1921,” *History News Network at GW* (n.d.). The key questions that frame this project are, how did white Christian communities respond immediately after the 1921 Tulsa massacre? and how do white Christian communities respond to this history one hundred years later? The hypothesis is that

communities have been impacted by white supremacy, and specifically by events such as the 1921 Tulsa massacre.

My research is trying to show how we all have internalized racist ideas stemming from racial experiences in our public and private histories. Further, when we learn to accept that we do have racist ideas and histories, then we can learn to change racist ideas and actions.

Therefore, the goal of this survey is to act like a mirror that helps you see yourself and others more clearly and may help you change racist attitudes and actions. This mirror will help you overcome fear of racism conversations because you will learn to accept that we each have racist ideas. The core of the problem is that we do not accept responsibility for our own racist thoughts and actions, but only think of racism as someone else's problem. The only course toward changing racist ideas and actions is to accept that we like every human has had racist ideas and actions.

Consider the following definitions of racism by Ibram X. Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*.

Racism is a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities.

A **racist policy** is any measure that produces or sustains racial inequity between racial groups. An antiracist policy is any measure that produces or sustains racial equity between racial groups.

A **racist idea** is any idea that suggests one racial group is inferior or superior to another racial group in any way. Racist ideas argue that the inferiorities and superiorities of racial groups explain racial inequities in society.

Racial inequity is when two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing.

Antiracism is a powerful collection of antiracist **policies** that lead to racial **equity** and are substantiated by antiracist **ideas**.

Individuals have racist or anti-racist ideas that may lead to collective racist or anti-racist policies, and racial equities or inequities. No one born into the United States system of white domination, supremacy and privilege can escape participating in systemic racism. Everyone has biases and prejudices and might discriminate. Racism in the United States has involved the power of institutions to enforce white supremacy. People of color have never been able to enforce institutional and societal racism. White domination has shaped the social, economic, religious, and legal systems and benefited white people disproportionately.

What can we do? My research is trying to show what Kendi is saying, that we all have racist ideas. Further, I'm trying to show through these surveys that we can change these racist ideas. How? Begin where you are, not where you want to be. Be transparent. Notice how you feel. Take responsibility for your part in conflict and misunderstanding. Use "I" statements. Most people say or at least think, "I'm not racist." The bigger step that this exercise is aimed at is moving from just being "not racist" to accepting that we all have racist ideas, then learning how to move those racist ideas to anti-racist ideas and actions. Anti-racism is a lifetime journey and work.

Resources For Next Steps

This research, surveys, and exercises have been developed using the following sources, the content of which also serves as helpful next steps for those wanting to learn how to be anti-racism activists.

DiAngelo, Robin J. *White Fragility: Why It's so Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*. Beacon Press, 2018.

Kendi, Ibram X. *How to Be an Antiracist*. One World, 2019.

Lee, Mun Wah. *Diversity First Aid Kit: A Tool Kit for Group Conversations on Race*. StirFry Seminars, 2009.

Parker, Robin. *The Anti-Racist Cookbook*. Crandall, Dostie & Douglass Books, 2005.

www.robindiangelo.com/resources

<https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/10/13/10-things-you-should-know-about-white-privilege>

https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/ne95dm/how-to-be-a-white-ally-to-people-of-color

<http://citizenshipandsocialjustice.com/2017/10/14/11-step-guide-to-understanding-race-racism-and-white-privilege/>

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/courageous-conversations-about-race>

Consider these Scriptures about justice for all ethnicities. Genesis 1:27; Exodus 12:38; Luke 4:18-19; 10:25-37; Acts 8:26-39; 10:34-35; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 3:1-11.

About The Researcher

These race surveys and conversations were produced by Greg Taylor, a white, male minister and researcher at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma. His research is on the violent and deadly impact of white supremacy on communities in Tulsa and the United States. The exercise has been formed as a way of measuring change in racial attitudes and actions in white people. The goal of Taylor's research and activity is to help white people take next steps from merely claiming to be "not racist" to becoming anti-racist allies with people of color in full equality, liberation, justice, and flourishing in the United States communities.

Step 4:

Repeat The Survey on Experiences with Racism

YOU MAY ALSO USE THIS DIGITAL MEANS TO TAKE THE SURVEY

www.journeytulsa.com/survey-after

Last four digits of phone number (to match data) _____

How do you define racism? (Write one sentence)

_____.

Do you think racism is a problem mostly in the past? (Circle one)

Past Past and present Not sure

How would you self-describe your race? _____

How would you self-describe your gender? _____

How would you self-describe your religion? _____

Is racial life in the United States getting worse, better, or about the same? (Circle one)

Better Worse About the Same

What concerns do you have with talking about racism?

What are feelings you have when you think or talk about race? (Circle all that apply)

Happy Sad Mad Frustrated

Hurt Annoyed Hopeful Distant

Do you see race and/or color when you look at someone? (Circle one)

Yes No Maybe Not sure

How much racial prejudice do you feel or think you have? (Circle one)

None Some Much Not sure

How are you impacted by racism and discrimination? (Check all that apply)

- I have not been impacted by racism and discrimination
- I have been but would rather not say

- I have been impacted by racism and discrimination toward me
- I have been impacted by reverse discrimination
- I have been impacted by race but I'm not sure how
- I am not sure

What is the first time you can remember when you learned race exists?

What are you willing to do about racism? (Check all that apply)

- Nothing
- Discuss racism with people I trust
- Speak up for someone experiencing discrimination
- Contact lawmakers and share my views
- Listen to stories past and present about white supremacy
- Listen to stories past and present about people of color experiencing racism
- Listen to stories of white people experiencing racial bias
- Change the way I think and act in the future

RETURN pages 2, 3, and 6 to Greg Taylor or take photos of them and send to gregtaylormail@gmail.com.

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