

# Christian Ethics Today

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# Addressing the Structural Causes of America’s Race Problem

By Patrick Anderson, editor

Conservative *New York Times* columnist, David Brooks, recently stated on the *PBS Newshour* that the political divide regarding race in America today is over whether race is an individual issue or a structural issue. He said that if race is to be viewed primarily as an individual issue (he called that the Republican Party’s position), racial inequities can be overcome through individual effort and choices. But if it is to be viewed structurally (he referred to that as the Democratic Party’s position), that would imply a need for significant changes in the construct of American society demonstrating the need for a correction in the fabric of America.

The individual versus structural construction of the race issue is a way white people tend to put the subject. As we express our individualism, who among us cannot celebrate the heroic accomplishments of Frederick Douglass, or Jackie Robinson, or Thurgood Marshall, or any of a long line of African-Americans who have overcome racial obstacles to achieve success? Their accomplishments provide a balm to the white person’s guilt and inspiration to black persons’ aspirations. “See? They did it. So can you.”

But the focus on the exceptional achievements of exceptional persons ignores the untold numbers of persons of color with exemplary talents and gifts who have been systemically denied access to opportunities to cultivate and express their gifts due to the ugly history and legacy of white supremacy and racism. By focusing on individuals we impose the dual judgement of praising the success and blaming the absence of success on individual deficiencies. The fundamental problem with this approach is that we ignore the structural effects of 400 years of enslavement and other forms of bondage inflicted on people based on nothing more than the color of their skin.

Thus, the individualistic approach is fatally flawed. And for the Christian, dividing persons created in the divine image according to race or ability or any other

characteristic is unbiblical. Are we not all members of one body in Christ? Are we not admonished to share each other’s burdens, to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep?

It is no wonder that the individual understanding of race is favored by white people; it is easier than the alternative understanding—the structural defects in our society. The historical facts white folks choose to ignore when talking about racial inequities are legion. We have never quantified or acknowledged the costs of slavery and its aftermath in our national story. The United States of Amnesia (as some have called it) has never fully studied the impact of the human trafficking of Africans, the generations of family disruption by

slave owners, centuries of disenfranchisement and wage theft, Dred Scott, Jim Crow, decades of lynching, segregation, housing discrimination and financial impoverishment.

We white people have never fully owned up to

the hostility in our minds toward people of color. We have been miseducated about the unearned benefits shared by white people and the undeserved disadvantages shared by black people. Never in my public school was I informed about “red lining” practices of mortgage loan providers by which dark-skinned persons were banned from purchasing homes in “better” neighborhoods with access to the schools and other benefits derived therefrom. I was never told about the enormous wealth gained by white slave owners from the free and enforced labors of dark-skinned persons which found its way into the coffers of white universities, banks, churches and insurance companies.

I attended Furman University oblivious to the fact that the establishment of my university was funded largely by wealthy white people who obtained that wealth through the exploited, stolen labor of black persons. It was not until my junior year at Furman that the very first African- American student was admitted. At the same time HBCUs (historical black colleges and universities) struggled to provide educational

opportunities to black persons who were systematically denied access to even publicly funded education. Without endowments, donated property, high tuition and all the other advantages of white Southern society, HBCUs forged ahead to create educational opportunities which should have been automatically available to all Americans.

This is the subject for this special edition of Christian Ethics Today. The content herein is a summons to all Christians seeking to follow Jesus to recognize and acknowledge the structural conditions which have brought our country to this time in history. We cannot understand, much less resolve, the racial divide in America without coming to terms with those structural conditions.

I am encouraged that a relatively large number of Christians, black and white, are working together on these issues. Since 1989, Michigan Rep. John Conyers, a lawyer and ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee, has repeatedly introduced HR. 40, named in part to reference the “40 acres and a mule” unfulfilled promise made to freed slaves in 1865 by the Union, the first effort toward reparations. He re-introduced an updated version of the legislation in January 2017, now titled the “Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act”. It particularly addresses recent expanded legal and societal discourse about the Transatlantic Slave Trade and reparations. His efforts have been largely

ignored by legislative leaders of both political parties. Various protestant denominations have joined the effort to encourage truth and reconciliation efforts between black and white churches. Former President Jimmy Carter began such an effort among Baptists through the New Baptist Covenant, which brings local churches and church leaders, black and white, to work together for mutual reconciliation.

The Angela Project, originating in Louisville, Kentucky is a part of the overall effort to address the structural issues related to race relations in America. This project is named for one of the first African slaves to arrive in America at Point Comfort on the James River in Virginia, during the latter part of the summer of 1619. Simmons College, one of the historic black colleges and universities, is largely responsible for the effort resulting in the essays presented here.

This issue of Christian Ethics Today represents a step in exploring how to understand racism as a system of oppression and how to act in a way to change some aspect of it. Educational inequality, which is the subject of the essays included here, represents one

part of the larger systematic issues of race. The Angela Project is not confined only to educational inequality, but over the next three years will focus on economic inequality and reparations.

Dr. Lewis Brogdon, provost of Simmons College, is the guest editor of this issue of Christian Ethics Today. He has secured the essays included, for which we are greatly indebted.

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# Introduction: What is the Angela Project?

By Lewis Brogdon

On Behalf of Members of Empower West, Louisville KY

The Angela Project is a three-year initiative involving over six million people in three large Baptist denominations: the National Baptist Convention of America, Progressive Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. For the next three years, meetings will be convened in Louisville, KY (2017), Philadelphia, PA (2018) and Birmingham, AL (2019) to discuss issues related to the history of slavery in America. These topics include: public education (2017), economic injustice (2018), and reparations (2019). In a sense, the Angela Project is a three-year national conversation about racism and social justice among faith communities, scholars, activists, politicians and community and national leaders.

However, we are not meeting just to talk about issues. The issues identified are related not only to the history of slavery and legal discrimination, but are very much the reason so many African-Americans continue to suffer significant disadvantages. Therefore, the short term goal of the Angela Project is to educate both the current and a new generation of leaders about historic and systemic racism, to organize like-minded leaders around select issues, and to mobilize them to enact change at the governmental level. While we are meeting to find concrete ways to improve the lives of African-Americans in the areas we identify at each conference, there is also a deeper, more ambitious long-term goal we have in mind.

This long-term goal of the Angela Project is to set a new 400-year trajectory for race relations in the United States. This goal is personal to us as church leaders because, historically, the church played a major role in supporting slavery and segregation ideologically, institutionally and financially. The church was neck-deep in slavery, segregation and racism. In fact, churches modeled how to divide over slavery, segregation and racism for generations to follow. And so, we,

as Baptists and like-minded followers of Jesus Christ, are taking ownership for our part in this painful history and attempting to do something different. Christians from other faith traditions have joined this movement as well—Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Methodists, Pentecostals and Catholics. We want to begin a new chapter, a new trajectory for America not stained by the original sin of racism.

There is a colloquial expression that says, “Those who do not learn from history are destined to repeat it.” As racial polarization and black marginalization continue, it is clear that history is repeating itself. For all the advancements made in America since the 1960s, there is still much to do because families, com-

munities, schools and churches in America are not teaching about this history. We hope that the Angela Project will bring these topics to light—particularly the real-life implications of systemic racism for blacks. We also hope to lay before the nation a new vision of practical ways in which to redress injustices in a way that provides a better world for all to inhabit.

The Angela Project is an attempt to do two things: (1) to address in earnest issues of injustice that have marred this nation for centuries, and (2) to provide proposals of models that demonstrate how communities can act in ways that are fair for African-Americans. We hope you will do two things to support this cause. First, make plans to meet us in Philadelphia next year for this life-changing conference. Second, find ways to support this movement, by hosting study groups to discuss the issues presented in this journal and by sending financial support for the conference and policy work done by Empower West. Together, we can change the direction in which this country is heading and chart a path to a place where we can all thrive as neighbors and friends.

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# The Continuing Miseducation of African-Americans

By Lewis Brogdon

As we begin this three-year journey, I want to frame the focus of this year’s conference and also make some broader connections to themes we will discuss in 2018 and 2019. A good place to begin is with the theme of the 2017 Angela Project, “Public Policy and The Educational Crisis in Black America.” Why is education the first issue the Angela Project chose to address? The reason is that education, in some way or another, has been at the center of the history of slavery, segregation, racism and economic inequality. Education was chosen because in order to set a new 400-year trajectory in America, we must make changes in the educational system.

## Miseducation: A New Word for Structural Racism

As we begin, I want to introduce my readers to an important term that will help us understand the history of racism and its intersection with education. That term is *miseducation*. In fact, miseducation is a word that we should add to our vocabularies of terms related to the study of racism. Other terms have included slavery, prejudice, systemic racism, double-consciousness, black codes, lynching, segregation, black power, redemptive suffering, womanism and nihilism, to name a few. Miseducation is a descriptive word for the intentional ways in which blacks are educated such it results in neither real change nor the “just” re-structuring of a society built upon centuries of slavery.

In my work as an African-American religious scholar, I have identified three constituent elements to the term *miseducation*: (1) the racist assumption that black Americans are not as intelligent as white Americans; (2) classroom spaces and curricula that are culturally incompatible and, more importantly, (3) centuries of depriving educational institutions, communities and families of the economic resources necessary to support their educational aspirations and potential. These elements were all referenced in the conference

and identified as major issues to address. These three elements were built into the American educational system, a system that has both historically and disproportionately marginalized African-Americans and is exactly why many African-Americans today do not perform well in the classroom, why the curricula does not excite the masses of black students, and why black educational institutions continue to struggle.

The sad reality is that this miseducation was intentional, even during the decades when blacks attended segregated schools. In 1933, Carter G. Woodson wrote the classic, *The Miseducation of the Negro*, spelling out in great detail the ways African-Americans were not only grossly undereducated, but how even educat-

ed blacks were not receiving the kind of education that would advance their issues and communities in the difficult decades after slavery. Every advocate for social justice should read this text.

Early in his work, he concluded that “the so-called modern education, with all its defects, how-

ever, does others so much more good than it does the Negro, because it has been worked out in conformity to the needs of those who have enslaved and oppressed weaker peoples” (5).

Woodson’s classic identifies the fundamental problem with the U.S. educational system which is cultural incompatibility. The truth is the educational system was established for white not black Americans, which means two things: The problem was and is structural and to fix the problem will require structural solutions. Woodson explained in painful and rich detail three fundamental problems with the educational system: It is a system of racial control; it gives only a veneer of racial progress; and it leaves blacks in a dependent status.

## Miseducation and Control

During the early years of the Reconstruction era, there was a debate about which model was best for

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freed blacks: The industrial educational model where blacks learned trades or the classical liberal arts educational model where blacks studied the arts and sciences. Regardless of which model was better for former enslaved Africans, Woodson maintained that both the industrial and classic educational models failed to educate the masses of blacks. For example, he found that industrially educated blacks possessed outdated skills and classically trained blacks had no real function in society. The educational system was the problem and blacks were forced early on to learn that the system was not really suited for their advancement.

Miseducation is about control and control is one of the hallmarks of a society built on the physical and psychological enslavement of people. The irony is that control does not stop with the end of legalized slavery. It only takes on a different form. Woodson gave two examples of this. He pointed out the fact that Negroes learned from their oppressors to say to their children that there were certain spheres into which they should not go because they would have no chance therein for development (54). Their choices were clearly limited by a system that controlled their access to knowledge and the ways it should be utilized. He also disclosed that certain subjects like government were off limits so as to conform to the policy of “keeping the Negro in his place” (59). Woodson pointed out that regardless of the educational model, blacks’ access to knowledge was

governed by whites. White Americans with means decided which career fields blacks should occupy. They even controlled the knowledge flowing through black institutions and used societal resources to ensure educated blacks in other fields did not have opportunities to work so as to concretize their preference for certain fields of study. So, in the end, it did not really matter the model of education one pursued—industrial or classical—blacks were still “miseducated” because they lacked both agency as learners and control of how to use knowledge to their benefit. What Woodson did was expose the deeper structural problem with the educational system, a problem that would continue for years to come.

**Miseducation and Pseudo-Progress**

A second and very painful lesson that Woodson provided was that white educational institutions were

more concerned with the veneer of progress than actually educating blacks. Woodson claimed that during the years of segregation, the primary goal of educational institutions was to transform blacks, not to develop them intellectually and socially. This sounds contradictory but he makes a keen observation here. Because the system was already inequitable and changing it was never a real question, educated blacks were left to serve as symbols and props of white educational and societal interests. This meant they were given a kind of education that primarily benefitted the white community. On the surface, white Americans would celebrate blacks who excel in educational institutions or applaud the fact that blacks have their own educational institutions. But in the end, these advancements are only a veneer for deeper problems. I call this pseudo-progress, (*pseudo* meaning false).

What do I mean by the statement “blacks were left to serve as symbols and props of white educational institutions”? The point is this: The educational system was meant to display the progress made by white Americans—as in “we’ve rid ourselves of the demons of slavery and racism”—and not black Americans—as in “we’ve acted justly toward the peoples enslaved for centuries.” This pseudo progress, detected early by Woodson and others, would dominate the landscape of education in the U.S.

Let me give two examples of how the system rests on persons used as props for the majority culture. First, the aim of the educational system was to produce blacks who were experts in white culture and knowledge, but completely ignorant about their own culture and especially their history before enslavement. Second, historically black institutions were governed and led by white presidents. I found this to be one of the most interesting facets of his work. The common practice of white presidents running black schools posed many problems for blacks and illustrates how the system gave a veneer of progress while leaving a deeply racist system firmly in place. Woodson rightly concluded that the Negro will never be able to show all of his originality as long as his efforts are directed from without by those who socially proscribe him (24). Even spaces dedicated to the education of blacks were not free from white influence, oversight and outright control and were conditioned to celebrate progress that

benefitted only those who controlled them.

**Miseducation and Dependent Blacks**

Woodson takes readers deeper into problems with the U.S. education system of his day. He argued that blacks are educated but dependent on and more committed to white interests and institutions than their own. This is probably the most important lesson about miseducation. For Woodson, the greatest indictment of the American educational system during segregation was that African-Americans learned very little about what he called “making a living.” He does not mean they could not work a job, but rather their education did not result in masses of people with a knowledge to imagine and build an infrastructure upon which their own communities stand. They were not taught to imagine and create their own businesses, to understand and address their economic issues, and to build educational institutions. Woodson lamented that Negroes were unable to employ each other (31). Schools in his day did not educate African-Americans to build their own businesses and institutions. They were educated to serve the interests of white Americans and their institutions. This is all the product of miseducation. The educational system did not want blacks to receive the kind of education that leads to self-actualization and black communal uplift, but rather a kind of education that instills a sense of commitment to the perpetuation of white institutions.

In addition, miseducation means gradually experiencing both self and communal estrangement. He observed firsthand this striking feature of miseducation that leaves blacks estranged from their own people—“the very people whom they must eventually count for carrying out a program of progress” (39). A third layer to this is that even in rare cases where there are blacks who own businesses, these owners refuse to hire other blacks. He observed that “the Negro has not yet developed to the point that one is willing to take orders from another of his own race” (83).

Woodson’s *The Miseducation of the Negro* paints a poignant yet painful picture of an educational system that controls blacks and uses them as props for white institutions and interests, a system that alienates blacks from one another and, in the end, further disenfranchises them as a community. The term *miseducation* speaks to a system that instills built-in personal and social inhibitors that set blacks on a path to mediocrity, struggle and failure. His work is a critical part

of the history of education in the U.S. because it sets the stage for the disastrous experiment of integrated schools. I say that because when predominantly white schools integrated with blacks, no attention was given to the myriad of ways the system itself was thoroughly racist and in need of significant change. It is this history that forms the backdrop against the system of education that the presenters sought to address at the Angela Conference this past September.

**The Miseducation of African-Americans Continues**

Educational systems must be built for all persons rather than a single group and, until a system is built that reflects a culturally pluralistic society, American schools will continue the practice of cultural imperialism with the support of too many churches. This was clearly one of the sub-themes from this year’s conference. The American educational system failed to integrate in ways that benefitted African-American communities. So, in a real sense, miseducation continued in the post-segregation era and, sadly, churches have not offered a critique of any kind. Yvette Carnell

highlighted the mistaken approach undergirding integrated schools in her lecture. Instead of integrating only classrooms, we should have integrated school boards, principals, curriculum, and teachers. Instead, schools only forced black kids to attend

predominantly white schools, which, in the long run, set them up to bear the weight of integration and the responsibility for this system’s epic failure. Instead, integration proceeded and for decades African-Americans lived in the shadows of a system that had miseducated them historically and would do so for years to come. Carnell really highlights the deeper issue with the education system in the United States—the issue of cultural incongruity. There is a cultural gap that is too broad in the school system and it affects how African-Americans perform in the classroom and how their education fails to serve the best interests of the broader black community. George Mason exposes the hypocrisy and racist underpinnings of the charter school and voucher program that seek to leave minorities in public schools system miseducated for another generation. Woodson also foreshadowed the continuing decline and early demise of African-American persons and institutions that we witness today. Decades of miseducation coupled with the post-Civil Rights era push to integrate will result in the crippling and

destruction of black institutions, a theme that presenters like Antonio Moore and Jared Ball thoroughly addressed.

Another problem Woodson foreshadowed was a system with such a deep sense of cultural incongruity that it could not adequately educate black Americans. There is an axiom I learned in graduate school from Dr. Ruth Burgess that I believe applies here. “The greater the gap between the school’s culture and that of the pupil the greater the likelihood for failure or low pupil achievement. But, on the other hand, the greater overlap or where there is a greater degree of cultural congruity, student achievement and success are improved.” Carnell pointed this out when mentioning how African-American students perform better in class and tests when they study from African-American teachers. This basic axiom, that was not a part of the philosophy of integration, is both significant and formative because it gives me a better understanding as to why some African-Americans struggle to achieve in the public education system as well as in college and graduate programs in universities.

Statistical or achievement gaps between the predominantly white culture of the public education school and the higher education system from the marginal presence of African-Americans in administration, curricula, and teaching are all significant factors in the achievement gap that have been well-documented as evident by the following statements:

- In a national assessment of student reading ability, black children scored 16 percent lower than white children.
- Only 12 percent of African-American fourth-graders have reached proficient or advancement reading levels, while 61 percent have yet to reach the basic level.
- Many black 17-year-old students graduating high school have the math skills of white eighth-graders.
- In 2000, 31 percent of African-Americans ages 18 to 24 were enrolled in colleges and universities; nearly

two-thirds of these students were female.

- According to the most recent statistics, the nationwide college graduation rate for enrolled black students is only 40 percent, compared to 61 percent of enrolled white students (Smiley 32-33).

Jill Bennet’s work gives an insightful and well-researched treatment of the disparities of the current educational system. So when thinking about issues like the achievement gap between black and white students, more attention needs to be given to the deeper issue of cultural incongruity rooted in an inequitable system. It will certainly be addressed in some way by all the presenters and imagining ways to overhaul this system should occupy the minds of Christian leaders for years to come.

But the truth is the educational system is only one part of a three-fold problem. Historic and systemic racism is a vast and complex network of persons, systems and policies woven into the fabric of this country. The only way to remedy the system is to do it on a systemic level, which means policy changes. Kelly Mikel Williams and Neal Turpin will make some policy suggestions that can

provide helpful ways to begin making changes in America. Going forward, our attention will be on the remaining two major problems— economic inequality and poverty and the devastating effects of slavery and segregation on the direct descendants of enslaved Africans in

America. Poverty and reparations will be the focus of the remaining two conferences in Philadelphia in 2018 and Birmingham in 2019. I invite you to join us on this journey of personal and social transformation.

Carter Woodson, *The Miseducation of the Negro*. Tribeca Books, 2011.

Smiley, Tavis. *The Covenant with Black America*. Third World Press, 2006.

*Changing America: Indicators of Social and Economic Well-Being by Race and Hispanic Origin*. Council of Economic Advisors for the President’s Initiative on Race, 1998.

# Academic Strangers: Introducing My Historically Black and White Colleges

By Chris Caldwell

Consider this conundrum: Most Americans want racial reconciliation. Strangers cannot be reconciled, for one can’t restore a nonexistent relationship. African-Americans and whites in the United State are largely strangers.

As a step toward bridging our divide and opening up paths to reconciliation, I want to introduce two colleges to each other and to you. One, where I teach, is a historically black college, Simmons College of Kentucky. The other, where I graduated, is what I call a historically white college, Rhodes College in Memphis. While both are friends to me, they are strangers to each other. If the colleges were in the same city, the chances of any two of their students knowing each other would be low, and the chances of a Rhodes student and a Simmons student being friends would be abysmally low, even though I know the individuals in my colleges would like to know each other better.

What stands between them? We often speak of the racial “divide” or “chasm,” but these images fall short. My two schools and others like them are not set apart on some level plane, as, say, Republicans and Democrats are in Washington. Neither is there a chasm between them as might exist between feuding families. No. What separates my two colleges is a **cliff**. Rhodes sits at the top, with a \$300 million dollar endowment and annual tuition of \$46,500. Simmons sits at the bottom, with no endowment to speak of and annual tuition of \$5,300.

The cliff between my colleges is just one of many we fail to notice every day. Cliffs separate predominantly black and predominantly white neighborhoods, high schools, businesses, churches and more. The cliff separating my two colleges is as sure as the cliff between the lawyer who gets his morning coffee at McDonalds and the woman who serves it to him. They may smile at each other, may even know each other’s names if he’s a regular. But make no mistake. They are strang-

ers living at drastically different socioeconomic elevations. My colleges are strangers just as whites like me and African-Americans are overwhelmingly strangers. The cliffs between us are built partly of racial animosity, but primarily they arise from prejudiced structures and the sorts of class divisions laid out by Richard Reeves in *The Dream Hoarders* and by Richard Rothstein in *The Color of Law*. In short, we white and black folks seldom really know each other. We may have contact, perhaps even work in the same business. But typically this is what the great Howard Thurman called “contact without fellowship.” We live in the same country but do not know each other’s worlds.

And so, white America, meet Simmons College of Kentucky, a Historic Black College (HBCU), which the Higher Education Act of 1965 defines as any pre-1964 black college or university “whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans.” Most

HBCUs, including Simmons, were established during the educational renaissance among African-Americans after slavery ended, when the literacy rate among African-Americans skyrocketed and African-American schools and colleges were rapidly being birthed. Simmons was founded in 1879 by former slaves, along with a few white allies and blacks who had not been enslaved. The buildings where I teach were built in part by former slaves.

For its first half-century, Simmons College offered a broad liberal arts and sciences curriculum. In 1931, financial pressures brought it under the control of the University of Louisville (U of L), and it became Louisville Municipal College, the black college associated with the then-segregated U of L. When U of L integrated in 1951, Charles Parrish, the star professor of Municipal College, was offered a position on the faculty, thus making U of L the first university in the South to integrate its faculty. This step forward for U of L was a disaster for Simmons, because the remainder of the Municipal College faculty and staff lost their

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jobs. Furthermore, Municipal College was forced to become Simmons Bible College and was permitted to offer degrees only in religion, so as not to compete with U of L for students. For the next half-century the school limped along, ultimately finding itself an unlicensed and unaccredited school with a student body of about 50. Since 2005, under the leadership of President Kevin W. Cosby, Simmons has returned to its liberal arts roots, is now licensed, accredited and, for the first time, has federal HBCU recognition. The present student body of around 200 is tiny, but it is a far cry from the even tinier school of 15 years ago, and we proudly reside once again on the original Simmons campus.

The theme of the Simmons College story is the theme of the African-Americans it serves—survival under oppression. Started with no capital by people who were denied capital, staffed by educators whose parents were denied education, forced to move, forced to change its name and its mission and with its faculty decimated, yet the school soldiers on. Every school and every person has to overcome obstacles, true. But the overcoming of fundamental, life-threatening, and enduring obstacles is uniquely the story of African-Americans and their schools.

Now let’s take a look at the story of Rhodes College. Founded by the Masons during slavery in 1845 in Clarksville, Tennessee, the school later came under the control of the Presbyterian Church and relocated to Memphis, where it existed as Southwestern at Memphis until changing its name to Rhodes in 1984 (my sophomore year).

As I look at my alma mater’s story through the lens of Simmons, three things stand out: Masons, Presbyterians and Memphis. These three words indicate the white privilege that has been the wind at Rhodes’ back from the beginning. I know “white privilege” is a loaded term, synonymous with evil and guilt in the minds of some. But I see it simply as a fact, a reality of one’s story. And this next part is vital: If white and black folks are to move beyond “contact without fellowship,” we whites must acknowledge the wind that has been at our backs. The winds in the face of the Simmons ship have already been made clear. But consider the difference in the Rhodes story. Where would Simmons be today if, instead of being founded

by former slaves, it started with the weight of the Masons and then the Presbyterians behind it? And consider the Memphis cotton money—money inextricably tied to the slavery that made it possible. Rhodes is an “old money” school and, for much of its history, “old money” and “slave economy,”( then “old money” and Jim Crow) were inseparable. Where would Simmons be today if its donors down the years had been the beneficiaries of these systems rather than their victims?

But to paint Rhodes as villain would be too simplistic. Did I see elements of racism at Rhodes in the 1980’s? Yes, but only at the edge of things. At the heart of Rhodes then and now is a progressive spirit. By today’s standards, my curriculum at Rhodes absolutely underrepresented non-white voices. But Rhodes also challenged me to move beyond provincial Southern norms and fully supported me when I brought gay speakers to campus for a symposium on AIDS amid the early, panicky years of the epidemic. Furthermore, Rhodes now is consistently recognized as a model of community involvement and engages the inner city neighborhoods surrounding it in meaningful ways. In

short, I believe the cause of racial reconciliation is moved forward if a young person attends Rhodes.

Even so, consider how radically different the schools are. Here is some data on our students at Simmons: Sixty-seven percent are first-generation students. Thirty-three percent have parents who did not graduate from high school. Seventy-eight percent are living at or below the

poverty line.

Eighty-five percent are eligible for Pell grants.

Thirty-three percent work full-time during the semester.

While I don’t yet have access to the same information for Rhodes, it’s not hard to imagine how different the numbers would be.

Different students necessitate different missions. Rhodes takes well-prepared high school students and challenges them to think more deeply. One’s ideas are nurtured by the roots of history and philosophy, and one’s views are broadened and skills are sharpened. This is education purely and wonderfully for education’s sake. But it must also be admitted that this sort of education arms students to go out into the dominant white culture and thrive. My fellow graduates went to

fine law schools, med schools, and graduate programs. Others stepped into great professional opportunities.

Like Rhodes, Simmons takes bright women and men and sharpens their thinking and skills. But unlike those who enter Rhodes, our students rarely step into college ready to tackle Camus or Erasmus. Many of our students were passed grade to grade by schools that had given up on them. They were not seen as “college material,” and expectations were dumbed down accordingly. Our mission is to first get them to college level, then to move forward from there. A colleague once said, “HBCUs are easy to get into and hard to get out of.” That’s true at Simmons, where our attrition rate is high. If you measure us by the demands of our 100 level courses, you might see us as one of the least challenging schools in the state. But if you look at the academic distance our students travel in four years, measuring from point A to point B, I would maintain we may the *most* challenging school in Kentucky.

Some of our star students will go on to do Master’s level work or take professional jobs. More typically, we are giving our students a shot at moving from poverty to the middle class.

A Rhodes grad who ends up with a middle class job working for the city is, in some ways, a mission failure; for us at Simmons, it is mission success.

One other thing is different about my two schools. Only rarely did anyone talk to me about my whiteness at Rhodes. Why would they? Those of us who are white or, as Baldwin puts it, “who think we are white,” have no reason to consider our whiteness any more than a fish has to consider the water it

swims in. But at Simmons we equip our students with what our college president calls “ethnic armor” to go out into a world that is often hostile. We pass along two traditions here: the intellectual tradition of the dominant white culture, but also the robust intellectual tradition of African-Americans; for Du Bois’ “double consciousness” is no less a requirement today than it was in 1903.

There is much more to tell, and I hope to do so in a book that will include personal interviews and a deeper dive into the stories of my two colleges. For now, I offer these thoughts as an ice breaker between two honorable schools that represent parts of our society who cannot honor each other because they do not know each other. But let’s keep it real. Rhodes is honored in this country, just as all things are honored when they have power and prestige. Simmons, on the other hand, gets little respect. A retired university professor was discussing with me my new position at Simmons. (I joined the full-time faculty in 2017 after teaching at Simmons part-time while I was a pastor.) He asked me my age, and then declared, “You know, you’re still

young enough to get a job at a real college.” We are a faith based college, but at Simmons most would say a man like that, to put it generously, is full of it. Such candor may seem antithetical to friendship. In fact, it is friendship’s prerequisite.

Chris Caldwell is  
Chair of the Sociology

Department at Simmons College of Kentucky, an historic black college.

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*America is only 236 years old, gaining independence in 1776. But America’s African slavery lasted from 1619, to at least the date used by most textbooks, to 1862. But as can be seen in pieces such as PBS’s “Slavery by Another Name,”through the use of convict leasing and vagrancy laws, America kept Blacks subjugated well into the 20th century. Finally, in 1942, government officials made slavery illegal by actually acting to enforce the rights of African American slaves to be free. President Roosevelt signed circular No. 3591 on December 12, 1941, finally, effectively making slavery illegal in the United States in 1942.*



# Education and Racism

By Jill Bennett

It has been said that education is the great equalizer. But what happens when those educations offered different groups of people are unequal themselves? What happens when the mightiest force for closing the disparity gap in the United States is so deeply discriminatory and damaged, that this mighty force is nearly one-sided? We stand as the united, universal church and speak out. We initiate change. As Christians, there is little ambiguity about our role in society. Protect the weak; speak for the voiceless; love one another. It is time to take what we know to be true and put our words into action. It is time to fix the problem that sets certain children up for failure from the start. It is time to reach the world, whether Samaritan, Jew, African American or Latino. But how?

First, we must identify the problem in no uncertain terms. Do we, as Americans, have a racially-based inequality problem? The National Urban League (NUL) has done this exact research and regularly publishes its findings, most recently in a 2017 Equality Index.

Calculating health, education, economics, social justice and civic engagement, the NUL found that black Americans have an equality index of 72.3% and the Hispanic American Index shows 78.4% of the comparable 100% needed for full equality with white Americans (State of Black America, 2017 Report). Looking specifically at education, the study examined teacher quality, course quality, attainment levels, scores, status and risk factors. They continued to find clear and significant disparity. Since education is the precursor to so many of life’s successes and failures, and since it is publicly funded and maintained, this is where our work should begin.

How did this mess get started? Haven’t schools been officially desegregated for decades now? While official and legal segregation was abolished, discrimination sadly lives on. Unfortunately, most practices reflecting discrimination have simply become less

obvious and more underhanded (Smiley 57). While that makes it harder to uproot, expose and correct, it doesn’t make it impossible. The light of Christ shines into the deepest corners, and we can aim that light at these devious practices, exposing their true nature. Furthermore, we can use the light that truth brings to the communities directly through social programs at our institutions.

As things stand right now, the “great equalizer” is unequal. The education that these segregated schools face is so variable, they seem not to be in the same country. Walk into a suburban school in a mostly Caucasian area, and you’ll see motivated teachers, beautiful and clean classrooms, and technology to enhance learning. Do the same in an inner-city school with a minority majority and quite the opposite affronts your senses. This is not to say that mostly white schools are perfect or problem-free; but there is a clear disparity. Our country needs to invest more in all children and educators, but let’s focus on the

inequality here.

According to Congressman Chaka Fattah in his essay on education, African-American children in the US are less likely to have a teacher with experience, less likely to have access to recent technology, and more likely to be in a building that is desperately needing work (Smiley 57-58).

Their curricula are less challenging and engaging; their classrooms have more students; they are less likely to utilize student services (Smiley 57-58). While most of our population is aware of these disparities, I doubt many realize the extent and severity of the inequality of education for students of color.

Isn’t the issue just about geography and not race? This crossed my mind, too, so I dug around. The truth is far worse than I imagined. While geography does play a major role in this segregation, the origins of the geographical disparities are far less innocent than

one might hope. Beverly Tatum, PhD, wrote a fantastic book that addressed this issue called *Why are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria and Other Conversations About Race*. In the prologue, she addressed the way real estate has affected race and education. Since the Supreme Court decisions reducing the effects of school desegregation methods, students are primarily schooled based on where they live. Here is where residential segregation shows up.

Over the decades, practices such as “racially restrictive real estate covenants, racial steering by real estate agents, redlining, and other discriminatory practices by mortgage lenders” have embedded segregation into neighborhoods (Tatum 4-6). Some white homeowners’ associations even used violence or threats of violence to keep their neighborhoods homogenous (Tatum 5). It all started in Chicago, where the Chicago Real Estate Board held a provision in their ethics code that refused to allow brokers to disrupt racial compositions of certain neighborhoods (Tatum 5)! This spread nationwide, thanks to the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) doing the same (Tatum 5). On top of this, Chicago used “racially restrictive covenants” that kept white homeowners from selling or leasing their properties to blacks (Tatum 5). Redlining is even more disheartening. The Federal Housing Authority (FHA), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the federal Home Owners’ Loan Corporation (HOLC)

used a coding system for neighborhoods based on race (Tatum 5-6). Red indicated a black neighborhood and was given a numerical code of four (Tatum 6). Neighborhoods “at risk of becoming black” were dubbed “hazardous” and given a three (Tatum 6). Scores of one and two were reserved for neighborhoods considered “new and homogenous” or “expected to remain stable” (Tatum 6).

The FHA would issue loans only to those buying a house in category one or two (Tatum 6). Even private lenders jumped on the segregation bandwagon (Tatum 6). You can imagine what this did to home values and the ability to pass on wealth to the next generation (Tatum 6). While these policies were declared unconstitutional in 1948 by the Supreme Court, things continue along these lines today (Tatum 6). The National Fair Housing Alliance in 2006 investigated and found that 87% of people were guided to neighborhoods

based on race or national origin, even after matching variables in housing needs, financial qualifications and employment history (2006 (Tatum 6-7). There is even a problem called “hyper-segregated communities” in metropolitan areas, where segregation is even more pronounced and residents are more likely to face disadvantages associated with poverty, regardless of their own income status (Tatum 7).

Now that we have shown that a disparity exists, it is time to discuss what we, in our communities, churches and homes, can do about it. On a macro-scale, we must move forward, implementing policy changes, and legislation to ensure this country stands for opportunity for all. Some of the most amazing and groundbreaking human rights movements have started in the church, and it is time for the church to stand, once again, together in the outcry for those in our society who need us. We must also stand in our own communities, creating direct answers that the children in our care desperately need.

Let’s examine some methods of legislature used and see what has worked. Early in the history of the United

States, we made a stand for education as one of the first industrialized nations that made education compulsory (Jones 61). Since 1944, Roosevelt’s GI Bill increased access to higher education to the tune of a more than a \$72 billion-dollar investment (Jones 61-62). In 1958, student loans became more accessible

as they would henceforth be subsidized by the US Treasury (Jones 62). The familiar Brown vs. Board of Education verdict provided legislation giving equitable educational opportunities to those previously denied (Jones 62). In the 1960’s, The Civil Rights Act and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) increased resources and enforced desegregation (Jones 62). During this time, the black-white achievement gap shrunk with each blow to the racist systems (Jones 62). High school graduation levels increased for black students, college enrollment levels increased for black students, and the southern states experienced greater levels of desegregation (Jones 62). It worked—until opposing forces gained ground. During the 1970s and 80s, multiple federal court decisions challenged and contradicted the Brown decision (Jones 62-63). For example, in 1973, San Antonio vs. Rodriguez led to a verdict displaying the precedent that the federal gov-

*Over the decades, practices such as “racially restrictive real estate covenants, racial steering by real estate agents, redlining, and other discriminatory practices by mortgage lenders” have embedded segregation into neighborhoods (Tatum 4-6).*

ernment was not responsible for protecting Americans’ right to an education (Jones 62-63). Movements along these lines caused the progress previously gained to drop back.

Now, there is a political “false choice” arguing the cause of the injustice our American children of color face (Jones 58). One side claims the children aren’t held to the same standard and we should simply expect more from them (Jones 58). This side of the argument was addressed through legislation like the “No Child Left Behind Act” that expected all children to perform on the same level regardless of race, income, language of birth or disability (Jones 58). While this sounds nice, it leaves out key components and was quickly realized to be flawed. The other side claims that the children lack the resources needed, and remedying that would solve everything (Jones 58-59). This side has been represented by the Student Bill of Rights (S-BOR) that collected data and ensured resource allocation in accordance with need (Jones 59). Neither side gets the entire picture. Reducing a complex, multifactorial issue to simple, one-sided terms isn’t likely to solve anything, as we have seen. On this large scale, we need solutions that involve both sides of this coin, that provide equal resources AND expect all students to rise to the opportunity. We need interventions

that address these factor: the relatively high levels of academic under-productivity seen in children of color; the need to stabilize the social fabric; the inefficiencies and under-utilization of the power of schooling and supplemental education; and that address the necessary nurture and celebration of those whom Du Bois called the “talented tenth” (Gordon 28). These interventions need to be targeted towards schools, homes, communities and in the students themselves (Gordon 28-29).

On a smaller, more intimate scale, there is plenty that we can do to change the circumstances of so many youth right now. While we push for major changes as a church community and as responsible Christian citizens of this country, we can do so much right around us. There are certain areas called “Capital for Effective Education” that all play an important role in successful education (Gordon 29):

- Health Capital
- Financial Capital
- Human Capital
- Social Capital
- Polity Capital

- Personal Capital
- Institutional Capital
- Pedagogical Capital

Each includes areas that we can personally improve in our spheres of influence.

Health capital includes the student’s physical developmental integrity, health, and nutritional condition (Gordon 29). Here, we can create and improve food kitchens, including access for children, free health clinics in correlation with the counties in which we live, co-ops with doctors and hospital for outreach screenings, vaccinations and medications.

Financial capital includes income, wealth, family, community and societal economic resources available for education (Gordon 29). While we rely largely on governments here, there are certain things small communities can do to improve the financial capital available for the students of their neighborhoods. Fundraisers, especially in coordination with large company donations for specific needs, can help plug major holes and fill immediate needs while larger politics are at play. Sponsoring schools by commu-

nity churches can help fill immediate needs as well. Some churches, for example, have each Sunday school class adopt a different school or class to help facilitate personnel or other needs while praying for them

regularly. Scholarships can be set up by the churches and communities to help motivate students to succeed. Financial counselors can be brought in to help prepare the youth in your community on how to take out student loans for college, how to save money, etc.

Human capital includes social competence, tacit knowledge and other education-derived abilities seen as personal or family assets (Gordon 29). Here, we as the church body need to get our church families involved in changing the culture surrounding these children. When multiple sources in their immediate areas are fighting to give children hope, it can change everything. A church can provide families with information on application processes for college, financial aid, and can even have a minister assigned to community outreach, helping families find the information needed to keep children on the right path toward a bright future. Churches have led many social reforms before, and it always starts with community movements and attitude changes about what is possible.

Social capital includes a social network of relationships, social norms, cultural styles and cultural

values (Gordon 29). This is closely tied to the above. Churches can work with families in and near their communities to improve social networks for these children. We have seen this model work in Urban Prep High Schools in Chicago, and we can mimic these ideas using our churches as the center point (Jones 94). Bringing in successful role models for these children to see what options are out there can open horizons. Hosting job and college fairs may take some serious effort and organization, but can give direction where it might otherwise be missed. Mentorship programs are some of my favorite things to see. Giving children a personal relationship with someone who prays for them and encourages them can change their lives (Jones 94). This person doesn’t have to be a rock star—just someone who wants them to succeed.

Polity capital involves societal membership, social concern, public commitment and political economy (Gordon 29). This might be more difficult to cultivate, but that doesn’t mean we don’t try. One example we see of polity capital success is in moms’ groups through churches in the community. By connecting families to each other through the church, we connect opportunities and Christian concern as problems arise. Student-based clubs or organizations can be housed and started within the church community. These outreach programs bring people to the church where they can find both polity capital and evangelical opportunities. Here, also, churches can join in on issues important to the communities and can support candidates or issues for political change.

Personal capital includes disposition, attitudes, aspirations, efficacy and sense of power (Gordon 29). To instill personal capital into these students, church communities need to invest time and resources in individual students. It is up to individual project leaders to ensure that each student is held accountable and appreciated.

Institutional capital includes the quality of and the access to educating and socializing institutions (Gordon 29). Here, the church can excel. As an institution itself, the church can provide access to early childhood education through a pre-school program. The church can open certain rooms for after-school

programs or study rooms. This requires buy-in by the church congregation to staff and support such efforts; but the payoff is enjoyable for the whole church family to get to witness.

Finally, pedagogical capital includes support for appropriate educational treatment in families, schools and the community (Gordon 29). Here, the church can cooperate with schools, government programs and parents within the church to ensure these programs are funded, staffed and encouraged in the community. This is where community buy-in pays off.

There are many more ways churches can individually and uniquely provide for the needs of the youth of the community, depending on specific needs. Universal problems will find universal solutions, and we can learn from each other what works. Denominational fracturing might be a barrier to such solutions but, if we overlook such things, we can work together as the universal church to reach the underserved, undereducated and overlooked populations of children that need our help. We are the body of Christ, and it is our job to look out for those who need help (Proverbs 31:8-9,

NIV). There is no greater witness to the world than to be the arms and legs of Christ.

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*We are the body of Christ, and it is our job to look out for those who need help (Proverbs 31:8-9, NIV). There is no greater witness to the world than to be the arms and legs of Christ.*



# Curriculum Wars and the “Heroification” of White Supremacy

By Jared Ball

Schools and schooling in capitalist America are very marginally different from other institutions and their methodological processes in capitalist America. Institutions operate from a well-programmed blueprint, which is designed to serve the people in an unequal and hierarchical manner. To “serve the people” can be readily translated into “serve the devil.” The heinous nature of capitalist America gives easy rise to a feeling of existing in a living hell for the majority of the exploited. — Gloria Joseph

## Introduction: An Early Start on the Function of Myth and Education

Being asked to comment on the “heroification” of White Supremacy in school curricula is really being asked to offer an analysis of just how and why such a project would be necessary. That is, in other words, the ask is that there be an explanation offered as to why there would be curriculum “wars” or a need teach, justify, propagate the notion of white superiority at all. Where else then but on the issue of white settler colonialism could we begin? The country, the state itself, is a white settler colonial society meant from its uninterrupted “conceptual original sin” to be a place where white people (men mostly) could make money and live free from domination at the hands of other white people, even if that requires imposing the same on a great many others. Schooling in this country, as in any, has forever been situated to explaining that reality so as to not encourage a critique or any significant adjustment in social relationships which may arise from appropriate criticism of the now. “Heroification” is myth-making and myths of origin are essential to societal cohesion and cohesion means adherence to ranges of thought, interpretation and ultimately behavior.

My family came up against this first-hand last year

when my then public school fifth-grader was told that introducing the recently-published work of historian Gerald Horne would be inappropriate. First, we had to note that the teachers were not disputing the argument or claims made by Horne as presented via my daughter. No, the concerns were simply that the teachers were unfamiliar and would therefore narrow the requirements for presentations to the already predetermined, well-known traditional and common sense versions. C. Wright Mills was, once more, right that common sense is more “common than sense” (Mills, 402). And here, secondly, is where the national myth of origin had come to suffer the light of day.

Horne’s central thesis was that the so-called “revolution” of 1776 was, for the enslaved, a “counter-revolution,” one meant to defend the practice of enslaving Africans by claiming a struggle for freedom from slavery only for white colonists and only from the British. As Patricia Bradley has made clear, the “metaphor of slavery” as developed and petitioned by white colonial separatists was not meant as part of an abolitionist struggle, but as a rallying call to arms against and freedom from the British. Enslavement of African people was to continue in perpetuity. The War of 1776, according to Horne, was largely about American colonists wanting to protect their primary economic engine while much of the remaining Western world was reorganizing its soon-to-be-former slaves into newly-formed colonial subjects. But myths of liberty and freedom are more politically advantageous than realities which involve more black people fighting against the British in 1776 (and again in 1812) than with the Americans. And for poorly informed public elementary school teachers, the reality was simply untenable. I assured my daughter that she was getting an early start on learning the power of myth, propaganda and education and

I reminded her that her sister was named after Bob Marley in part because of wisdom he shared like, “I have no education, only inspiration. If I was educated I’d be a damned fool.” Perhaps it is adherence to these mythologies in public education that has led my daughter’s school district to be considered both among the best in the country while also, “...experiencing [a] resegregation that has transformed the core of Howard County over the past two decades...” (Green, 2017).

## Colonialism and Propaganda

I mentioned that this is a white settler colonial state. I have argued previously and elsewhere that this analogy is not original and is often made in some form or fashion but is rarely, at this point, extended far enough as an analytical tool, particularly as it pertains African America. It stands to reason, however, that if understood as such, a settler colonial state, then the U.S. and its claims historically and today about “democracy” and “freedom” need far more scrutiny. Empires and settler states do not create citizens; they create slaves and subjects. Or, as Jack O’dell has explained: In defining the colonial problem, it is the role of the institutional mechanisms of colonial domination which is decisive. Territory is merely the stage upon which these historically developed mechanisms of super-exploitation are organized into a system of oppression (Allen, 8).

This relationship of colonizer/colonized is what continues to drive the experience suffered by black and other “Americans,” but it is also true that where there are claims of democracy more effort has to be made to shape public opinion. As Noam Chomsky has said, “Propaganda is to democracy what violence is to totalitarianism” (Ashraf, Raman, 2010). So, on the one hand, there remains the traditional function of colonial educational models that seek to separate previous cultural knowledge from the newly-created subject or, as Ward Churchill has written, the goal is to “Kill the Indian and Save the Man” (2004). Or, there remains the need, as Donald Spivey once said of Industrial Education and its purpose for post-slavery black America, that the “schoolhouse must replace the stability lost by the demise of the plantation” (1978, ix ). On the other hand, propaganda and, in this case, myths of origin, is of even greater importance when the subjects are told they are citizens, free and with equal

opportunity.

Under a dictator, my daughter would have simply known, been told or reminded that her attempted inquiry was inappropriate and ran counter to established and acceptable narrative. In the “land of the free,” in a “democracy,” she is simply—and politely—told that, given the complete lack of knowledge of the subject among the teaching staff, they would just follow convention for the sake of brevity and ease. This is precisely how the most effective propaganda functions, beyond the scope of one’s immediate conscious recognition or why W.E.B. DuBois spoke once broadly of the “propaganda of History” (1935), the purpose of which was social, to manage public opinion and to develop a “caste... [the] inferior Negro... advertised...” so as to have that “inferiority... publicly acknowledged and submitted to...”

The essential nature of myth of origin to society or, put another way, as John Henrik Clarke said, “The relationship of history to a people is that of a mother to her child,” (Bourne, 1996) is why the world renown Sigmund Freud is discussed widely, save for his

final book, *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). But it is here that he discusses the power, centrality and need of myths of origin to serve the higher purpose of managing public opinion and solidifying order within any society. Specifically, Freud wrote of his finally being able to break through the fear of the subject, that Judaism was indeed an African religion and

*W.E.B. DuBois spoke once broadly of the “propaganda of History” (1935), the purpose of which was social, to manage public opinion and to develop a “caste... [the] inferior Negro... advertised...” so as to have that “inferiority... publicly acknowledged and submitted to...”*

that Moses, the quintessential hero figure was not, in fact, a Jew, but an African. Freud explained “that the man Moses, the liberator and lawgiver of the Jewish people, was not a Jew, but an Egyptian... he was an Egyptian whom a people needed to make into a Jew” (16, emphasis added). It was famed journalist Walter Lippmann who wrote of the core need of whites to negatively stereotype black people in the press as a “self-defense mechanism,” saying that such was the “core of [a white elite] personal tradition, the defenses of our position in society” (63).

Further, any number of academics and activists from Amos Wilson to Assata Shakur to George Jackson have all warned against allowing political enemies to educate your children and many have noted, as had the late Ronald Walters, that education is essential

to plying the population and preparing them for a national set of public policies which he described simply as for the protection and in the interest of “white nationalism” (2003). The late Derrick Bell, going a step further, described the broad set of public policies which institutionalize and organize the extraction of wealth, labor and resources from black people while justifying that community’s denial of access to decent housing, healthcare, education and so on. Bell said of these policies that, “If the nation’s policies towards blacks were revised to require weekly, random round-ups of several hundred blacks who were then taken to a secluded place and shot, that policy would be more dramatic, but hardly different in result, than the policies now in effect, which most of us feel powerless to change” (806).

Conclusion

Bell’s quote is essential here as it reminds of the colonial and, therefore, intentional nature of our arrangement and the outcomes we suffer. To put it another way, as John Taylor Gatto has asked, “What if there is no ‘problem’ with our schools?” Our schools are functionaries of larger political goals and are producing precisely what is necessary. Whiteness must be valorized precisely by producing self-fulfilling narratives and mythologies with matching, concomitant or attendant anti-black ones that pick up any remaining untrammled slack.

Our response can only be a collective and political movement that, as has been born out historically as necessary, must contain a particular internationalist approach as well. That is, black communities cannot seek redress to issues of white supremacist educational narratives absent a political movement that seeks power over policy. This, and other domestic efforts like it, cannot be expected to advance absent international solidarity and external support. As has been exemplified by every major leader and movement produced in the United States by African descended people seeking liberty, there have been calls for international solidarity and support. Enslaved Africans sought support from and were inspired by the Haitian Revolution.

Abolitionists, suffragists, civil and human rights figures from Ida B. Wells to Dr. King, Malcolm X and the Black Panther Party have all seen their struggles as intimately connected to, in need of support from and even indebted to similar struggles, movements and individuals from around the world.

Even today, currently, there are movements in the U.S. and the U.K. seeking the removal of white supremacist figures, symbols and statues from their

university campuses just as there are struggles in each place and elsewhere against police violence committed against black people. Those are the symbols of nascent and rebuilding pan-African, internationalist struggles that need further development and unity if any of the multitude of issues facing black people are to ever be organized out of existence.

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Race and Education: On behalf of Pastors for Texas Children

By George Mason

Racism is not the root of all problems of public education in America, but the problem of racism is rooted in public education in America. It should be the mission of the church of Jesus Christ to call it out and root it out. Public education is under assault in this country. And whom do you think suffers most when it does? Racism has always prevented black Americans and other people of color from fully grasping the promise of prosperity our country says is dangling just within reach of every child who studies and works hard. Black American children have never had equal access to quality education, and yet they have been blamed for not achieving anyway.

The heroic efforts of people who founded schools like Simmons are to be lauded. The example of successful black Americans who had to work twice as hard as people like me to get where they are today is remarkable. But neither is any excuse for our complacency. Cherry-picking African Americans to praise so we have moral license to condemn many others who haven’t, because of unjust and unequal educational systems we continue to defend, is a sin against God.

You know the history. From slavery to Jim Crow segregation, white Americans have been afraid to be exposed as frauds in our assertion that we have God-given intellectual superiority. We have clung to a lie about ourselves; and it is idolatry, not theology. We have to repent of the contrived notion of whiteness as rightness that has become operational policy in our approach to public school education. It’s not enough for us to feel sorry for our history; it’s necessary for us to atone for it.

Pastors for Texas Children was formed in 2011 as a mission and advocacy organization to ensure that every child of God in Texas have access to a quality public education. We match churches with local schools, creating mentoring and tutoring relationships with students, and providing needed material support

to compensate for our state’s failure to fulfill its constitutional duty to fully fund these schools. We advocate for just laws and adequate budgets.

Currently in Texas, and nationwide, we have a privatizing movement underway that wants to peel off taxpayer dollars to private schools through voucher programs. As always, these educational entrepreneurs see themselves as messianic figures, saving disadvantaged students from educrats and bureaucrats who only want to keep their jobs at the expense of the kids. But that argument is bogus. Voucher programs take our tax dollars and give them to private schools without public accountability. Charter schools do a similar runaround. Vouchers are a ruse designed once again to privilege

the privileged and under-privilege the underprivileged.

The people who cry for accountability all the time only want accountability when other people are in charge. And they employ all sorts of negative narratives to support their claims public schools can’t succeed. It’s either

corruption of administrators or mismanagement of funds or the breakdown of the black family that makes education impossible. All these arguments are marshalled to undermine public education in favor of moving money and people toward charter schools and private schools.

The performance data, however, don’t back up the claims of failing public schools and thriving charter schools; nor do state experiments in voucher programs justify the upending of a public education system, which was created to strengthen democracy and reinforce our country’s high ideals of patriotism and citizenship. Something else is going on, and we all know what it is. It’s what it’s always been.

After *Brown vs. Board of Education*, whites fled the public schools for the homogeneity of private schools. When public schools were forcibly integrated, every form of creativity was called upon to maintain white advantage. Black kids and white kids now went to

school together, but black teachers—who were invaluable role models in segregated schools—were let go all over the country. Schools were never ordered by the courts to integrate black teachers. Think of it.

Then consider the code language we use in educational reform. Local control, school-based decision making, and here’s the big one—choice. Sounds good in principle, but so did the lofty notion of states’ rights that was used to justify slavery and segregation. The outcome has hardly been different, because when the people in charge locally only answer to people like them, they choose in their own favor time and again, and nothing changes to equalize opportunity.

In Dallas, 95% of our school district is non-white. 90% of students are on partial or full food subsidy. White flight is rooted in white fright. Yet the one thing proven to improve performance in public schools is real racial and economic integration. Know why? Because children haven’t yet learned how not to love their neighbor. They work together and play together and want each other to succeed. It’s their parents and paid-for politicians who don’t know how to do this.

Cornel West was right when he said that “justice is what love looks like in public.” And public education is a fertile field for justice work. It’s one way white Christians can move from private sorrow over our racist history to public repentance. It’s a beautiful

***Yet the one thing proven to improve performance in public schools is real racial and economic integration. Know why? Because children haven’t yet learned how not to love their neighbor. They work together and play together and want each other to succeed. It’s their parents and paid-for politicians who don’t know how to do this.***

way for us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

Faith and learning, churches and schools, preachers and teachers: all these are organically related. All of us are called to love God and love our neighbor. This is the perfect intersection to keep the Great Commandment. Charlie Johnson leads Pastors for Texas Children. It was Suzii Paynter’s brainchild to start with, when she worked for another organization back in our state. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Fellowship Southwest are working hard to support this work.

Pastors and churches are busy cheering on kids, encouraging teachers and principals and superintendents. We also try to convince politicians of the error of their ways, and when they persist in their perdition, we work to elect new ones who will make good on the promise to all our kids. You ought to have a chapter in your state too. We can help you. Talk to Suzii or me afterward, or email Charlie.

Here’s the thing: 400 years is long enough, dear Lord! The children of Angela must ever be before our eyes and in our hearts, because they are God’s children and our sisters and brothers. All children’s lives matter only if black children’s lives matter. And one way we can prove we believe that is to make sure the public in the public education system means all the public. Pray for us, and join us.

—Gilder Lehrman, American Institute.

# America’s Anti-Religion: The White Christian Church: Reflections on the Angela Project 2017 for Empower West and Simmons College of Kentucky

*By Erica Evans Whitaker*

On September 11, 2017, a gathering of diverse voices united together in one movement called the Angela Project. The Angela Project is a three-year initiative involving over six million people engaged in a national conversation about racism and social justice between faith communities, scholars, activists, politicians, community and national leaders.

As one of many clergy participating in the Angela Project, I sat through the day-long conference listening to the sickening reality of the current racial and economic issues afflicting our country. This reality has been revealed to me over the past year as an active participant and pastor in the Empower West group in Louisville, KY – a group of black and white pastors who come together weekly to empower the impoverished black community in the west end of Louisville through economic growth. Along with other white clergy, I realized that these racial injustices are not new for the black community and clergy who have been fighting systemic racism and poverty that stem all the way back to 1619 when the first African slave named Angela stepped off white European slave ships.

The focus of the 2017 Angela Project was on public policy and the education crisis in Black America. The conference opened with the horrifying truth of public education and policies that continue to oppress black children and black communities. Writer and activist Yvette Carnell and attorney Antonio Moore broke down the myths about education being the great equalizer in America. Jared Ball, a professor at Morgan State University in Baltimore continued the conversation highlighting the “Hero-ification” of white supremacy through the current curriculum in public schools. Then anti-racist writer and educator Tim Wise concluded the event with a call to re-educate white America in public schools.

The well-researched and well-thought out information unloaded by each presenter was so overwhelmingly outrageous that the room of hundreds of black and white

Americans groaned with every fact disclosed about racial wealth gaps, governmental theft of black inheritance and white supremacy indoctrinating children in our current public schools. As a millennial, white clergy member I sat on the edge of my chair, listening and feeling a range of emotions: apathy, denial, anger, guilt and helplessness. I am the senior pastor of a white Baptist congregation in Louisville, Kentucky. How can I see beyond my white lens? What is my role in overturning systemic racism? Where am I called to bring forth change?

As I continue wrestling with these haunting questions, I begin to look deeper into the history of the religious institution I am called to serve and to change. The first step is helping the white church re-educate ourselves on the true purpose of Christian religion, on our own horrifying history and to read-just how we read scripture and see God’s mission in society. Each presenter spoke about educating America about the current systemic racism that is still oppressing the black community. America is often described as a Christian nation with Christian values. The danger comes in realizing that many of our Christian religious values are wrong and have created broken, unjust systems of oppression.

Religion, particularly Christianity, has lost its true place and purpose in the world. The principal foundation of religion is based upon the practice of unification. The word “religion,” or *re-ligio*, means to “rebind” or to “re-ligament” together. At the heart of all religion is a common thread that brings people, individuals or groups, back together. Across the span of two thousand years, the religion of Christianity has often forgotten this foundational truth, giving the word “religion” an unfortunate reputation. The evidence of this truth is seen in horrifying images of fundamentalism and extremism, warring crusades and cult-like practices that indoctrinate with a false theology— a white theology. Throughout history, the Christian religion has created and continues to create rifts, dividing and separating people in groups – those with

power and those without.

In the age of post-Enlightenment, religion has become a derogatory manifestation of anti-religious beliefs and actions which have lost their core principles. The Christian religion is based solely upon a God who sacrifices everything for the sake of the greater good of all. The Christian Church is rooted in the belief that Jesus, the Son of God, lived and died for the sake of reconciliation and redemption of all creation, including humanity. The body of Christ was broken in order to mend together a broken world in order to realign humanity back together.

The Church, also known as the body of Christ, is the very mechanism of this mission to rebind the torn and broken ligaments. However, as a whole, the American Christian church has lost sight of her true religious purpose. Instead of bringing people together, the Church, specifically the white church of America, has divided the country into groups based on race. Peering back into the past few centuries, the white church has used the Bible and tradition as tools to support slavery, segregation and white supremacy. The reality of Christianity as an anti-religion that divides has been illuminated once again in our country.

The racial divisions that continue to plague our country have been perpetuated and propagated by the white Christian church. The crux of this harsh reality stems from the individualistic mentality and privatization of the American church. The “me, me, me” mentality that is worshipped and preached every Sunday in white churches is one of the roots of white supremacy in America. Tim Wise calls this “you, you, you” worship in today’s churches the secular gospel. For, if the end goal for Christians is only a desire to save ourselves and at best the souls of others, there is no point in participating and problem-solving the killer social plague of racism in our country. If opening the Bible and saying a sinner’s prayer was the only purpose of this life, then there is no motivation for white people to leave their white privileged pews. The white church must move from private to public – taking hold of our responsibilities as individuals in the greater community.

In order for the white church of America to participate in reconciliation and social justice movements against racism, we must first begin with our own white theology. God is not created in our own image; therefore God is not a white man. This false truth has led the image of God to take on the form of the oppressor, the white supremacist, slave-whipping, black lives-lynching human being. This is the false image of God that black people carried with them in the cotton fields and continue to carry with them in the urban, impoverished ghettos. When the Church is stripped down to the core of its theology, the image of God and the language used to describe God places white

theology under the microscope. If America is a Christian nation, than the values of this nation—even the corrupt and warped principles such as white theology—have manifested themselves out of the American church.

Tim Wise used an analogy for the broken systems of racism in America. In his lecture, he said that Americans should not be surprised when white supremacist and neo-Nazis march through the streets. America was founded on the backs of black slaves, built upon the oppression of black lives. This system of racism has not changed since the 17th century so why pretend that white men lighting up the streets with their torches of supremacy are anything but what this country still is. Wise says, “America is a sausage factory. We cannot walk in and expect chicken nuggets to pop out of the machine when its sole purpose is to make sausage.”

The American machine that produces the current system of racial injustice must be deconstructed and reconstructed into new systems that are designed for the benefit and equality of all people. Like racist systems in America, the white church needs to embrace death, crucifying false theology and destructive doctrines that have been used to oppress, dehumanize and murder people throughout the centuries. Only if the church is willing to die is it than possible for resurrection and reconciliation to occur in America.

Once these basics of Christian American beliefs are redeemed, the mission of the church sharpens with new purpose and direction that allows all to participate in the ongoing work of ushering God’s justice into the world. The white church will begin to fight against racial injustices that show up in places like public education. The current curriculum being taught to children, the future leaders of America, praises the white men who led the confederate army. Public schools are named after figures like Robert E. Lee, and have sports teams called the “Rebels.” School curriculum condemns the Hitlers of other countries but not the Hitler’s of America. We cannot realistically expect any change or even the notion of unification for the future of our country if history books continue to teach the message of white supremacy.

The original sin of slavery that continues to condemn and oppress this country will never be forgiven if the soul of America is unwilling to repent. If the white church of America were willing to practice the honest, hard, ongoing work of reconciliation, this country would have a greater chance of overthrowing oppressive systems. The Angela Project is an open door for American to bring forth change in white institutions like the white Christian church that created these racial injustices. Today, this is the question for all white churches in America. “Are we ready to practice true religion?”

# Civil Service Employment and Race: Bureaucracy Bashing and the Threat to Economic Growth in Minority Communities

Neal Turpin, Ph.D.

## Introduction

Since at least the mid-1960s, civil service positions have provided minorities in the United States an enormous opportunity for economic mobility. Government positions were seen as stable and served as an equalizing force to expand the black middle class (Laird, 2017; Landry & Marsh, 2011). This was the case until the last decade, when a recession created enormous issues for budgets at all levels of government. As funding tightened, many of these stable, well-paying civil service positions were cut, which in turn hurt a reliable vehicle for economic growth in minority communities. This process was likely aided by a phenomenon called bureaucracy bashing, where the effectiveness or efficiency of civil service workers is called into question, often in a humorous yet unfounded manner. As bureaucracy bashing becomes common, civil service positions are seen as expendable rather than something to be fought for.

## Minorities in the Civil Service

It has been shown that civil service employment affects minorities at much higher rates than whites. Cooper et al. (2012) found that minorities are over-represented in the public sector compared to the private sector, and Pitts (2011) found that public agencies are the single largest employer of black men, and the second largest employer of black women, with over one in five black adults holding a government job. Overall, the federal government workforce is 63.5% white and 18.75% black, while the state and local workforce is 64.8% white and 18.5% black (EEOC, 2014, 2015). At all levels, more white men are employed than white women and more black women are employed than black men. While the gender breakdown is off, the racial breakdown is very similar to the US population as a whole.

As government jobs are perceived as good, secure positions, governments have been led to use their hir-

ing power toward social goals (Kettl, 2015). These goals include redressing past patterns of discrimination, fighting income inequality, and making the bureaucracy more representative of the general population. The economic opportunities presented by the public sector contrast starkly with those in the private sector (Tomaskovic-Devey & Stainback, 2007). While hiring practices did become more equitable following the passage of the Civil Rights Act and the creation of the EEOC, gains made by racial minorities stalled in the 1980s, showing the persistence of racial discrimination in the private sector. Government jobs have offered minorities some level of reprieve from hiring practices in the private sector.

Beyond job attainment, the civil service is also advantaged in terms of wages. Previous work has shown that for minorities, salaries in the public sector are higher than those in the private sector, and the wage gap between black and white work-

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*Public sector employment has specifically offered more opportunity in terms of higher paying managerial positions, increasing the chances of inter-generational transfers of wealth*

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ers is much smaller (Cooper et al., 2012; Pitts, 2011). Public sector employment has specifically offered more opportunity in terms of higher paying managerial positions, increasing the chances of inter-generational transfers of wealth (G. Wilson & Roscigno, 2015; G. Wilson, Roscigno, & Huffman, 2013). Civil service positions are also more likely to be unionized, offering further protections and benefits to workers. In 2016, 34.4% of public sector workers were members of unions, compared to just 6.4% of private sector workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017b). This difference is significant when salaries are considered, as union workers make around \$200 more a week than non-union workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017a). When these workers and their positions are attacked, it’s not just the civil service that is harmed, but also a historic and effective vehicle for economic growth for communities which have typically been excluded. When budget cuts happen, they affect everyone, but they affect minorities more.

Representative Bureaucracy

Civil service positions are a vehicle for economic mobility for minorities. But diversity in the public sector also serves the broader public interest. In this sense, it helps if the civil service mirrors the general population, an idea known as representative bureaucracy. The benefits to diversity in the civil service are well documented (Ricucci & Van Ryzin, 2017). A diverse workforce may put people in position to make better policy and expose policy makers to new viewpoints. Representative bureaucracy can increase citizen cooperation, trust, and accountability, and cause the public to view policy decisions as more legitimate.

This is an international focus, with one OECD report finding that “By improving representation in government of the different social groups, diversity in policy plays a part in maintaining core public values, increasing managerial efficiency, improving policy effectiveness, raising the quality of public services, and enhancing social mobility” (OECD, 2011, p. 168).

Bureaucracy Bashing

Bureaucracy bashing is a phenomenon dealt with by a significant segment of public administration literature. This concept, however, is not new or even American. As Kettl (2015) points out, it is at least as old as the New Testament, where Jesus is criticized for his association with tax collectors (or publicans) such as Matthew and Zacchaeus. In this context, bureaucrats were grouped alongside prostitutes, adulterers, thieves and rogues.

Much of this bashing comes in the form of seemingly harmless jokes. The frequency often picks up during election season, with politicians looking to score easy points by talking about the inefficiency of government (and government workers by extension). However, what sets this idea apart from so many other aspects of administration is that it has very little basis in fact. Much of the fodder for bureaucracy bashing is anecdotal, and one frustrating experience trying to get a pothole fixed can cause citizens to paint the entire civil service with the same inaccurate brush.

Furthermore, bureaucracy bashing is far from harmless. After years of jokes about the DMV or the IRS, people start to believe in the falsehood of inefficiency. This makes it easier for politicians to cut funding and jobs and steers quality applicants away from good

jobs where they can effect real change. And as minorities are employed in the civil service at a disproportionate rate compared to the private sector, any cuts will have a disproportionate effect on the economic strength of the minority community. One route taken by policy makers in making cuts is privatization. It is often believed that the private sector can provide public goods more efficiently than the public sector can. This is true in certain situations. A major concern with privatization, however, is that levels of diversity in private organizations will not be as great as in the public sector (Tomaskovic-Devey & Stainback, 2007). As this private, business model of service provision creeps into the civil service, it reestablished the employment structures which perpetuated inequality in the first place (G. Wilson et al., 2013).

There may be legitimate reasons to criticize a bureaucracy. Corruption, ineffectiveness, or a lack of accountability are all issues that should be addressed, and should cause an agency to rightfully come under additional levels of scrutiny. Bureaucrats, like any other occupation, will occasionally be bad at their job.

But it is not fair to generalize these issues to the broader civil service population. Bureaucracy may also be opposed for philosophical reasons. Some may wish to guard against a large government and its possible effect on personal liberties. Others may feel private sector solutions are more effective

ways to distribute goods and services. Still others may simply wish not to pay taxes.

In public sector bureaucracies, as with private sector bureaucracies, there is always room for improvement. Yet it is illogical to assume that a lack of total efficiency indicates complete inefficiency. Most bureaucrats are competent and effective workers who do their jobs well, and public bureaucracies enable us to have a functioning civil society (J. Q. Wilson, 1989). Regardless of the reason, be it philosophical or political posturing, when bureaucracies are attacked, minorities are hurt. And unfortunately, in American politics, it is all too easy to accept minorities as collateral damage.

Moving Forward and Caution

It should be noted that, despite the benefits, government positions are not a panacea for racial income inequality. Even within the civil service, women and

minorities tend to be concentrated in lower level, lower paying positions (Kettl, 2015; Ricucci, 2009). Furthermore, when government policies are implemented, they do not always have racially equitable effects, even when bureaucracies are representative. There is evidence that demographic trends will naturally alter the level of minorities and women in higher level positions. As older managers begin to retire, they are likely to be replaced by a younger, more diverse generation. Governments should not, however, assume that this transition will happen without any effort. Current managers and officials should actively recruit a more diverse workforce soon so that they have the skills and experience necessary to take the reins when the time comes.

While there is ample research regarding the benefits of civil service employment for minorities, future research should examine how governments at all levels are preparing themselves for the future. Helping government officials plan for a more diverse civil service can help meet the needs of a more diverse citizenry. Studies should include the effect of active recruitment efforts, not just of the hiring process. Giving preference to minority candidates will not be of much use if minority candidates do not apply in the first place.

Further research should also be done to try and quantify the effect of bureaucracy bashing. Researchers should examine to what extent these anecdotes of inefficiency and ineffectiveness affect citizen’s support of government agencies, or if it merely feeds into existing political inclinations.

Conclusion

African-Americans are overrepresented in a sector of the economy that is shrinking (Laird, 2017). Current trends put both economic opportunity and intergenerational wealth in jeopardy. Making the civil service more diverse has long been a goal of government agencies, but managers must also deal with budget cuts and a long-running lack of public support for bureaucrats. Dealing with these issues going forward will be difficult. While admitting that, as organizations, bureaucracies can and should improve, we must understand that they work well, keep society running, and even help to move it forward. Dismissing the civil service outright, whether through sincerely held ideology or through baseless attempts at bureaucracy bashing, is harmful for everyone—especially minorities.

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# Policy Recommendations

By Kelly Mikel Williams

Education has always been seen and touted as the vehicle of equality and the foundation that allows all Americans to achieve their greatest potential. It has at times been described as the “great equalizer,” suggesting that if one just gets an education, their path to success is guaranteed or at least easily attainable. Throughout the sessions of the conference, it was very evident that there were going to be some challenges to that theory. Inequality in education persists in spite of important decisions like *Brown v. Board of Education* and other significant court cases. Inequality persists in the face of the popular belief that, “we (as in American society) have come a long way.” Inequality exists at all levels of education.

Many people want to believe that education levels the playing field of life and society. The presenters challenged this belief, claiming it is a myth. The reality is that since the establishment of Harvard, the first university in America in 1638, education has been a great divider and not the great equalizer we have been led to believe. To this day, September 2017, education has continued to be a source of segregation, division and racial inequality.

## Tentative Proposals and Recommendations for Empower West Chapters

So, what are some of the solutions to achieving this endeavor? First, the chapters of Empower West should embark upon a series of committee sessions to evaluate the state and local laws in Alabama that allow communities to secede from the larger community and establish their own school districts to exclude black and brown students. Secondly, the committee must evaluate whether or not the state has any historical restrictions barring it from segregating its school districts as a result of *Brown v. Board of Education*, other court rulings or the 1965 Civil Rights Act. These laws may certainly be on the books as a result of historic

racial discrimination especially in the school systems. Thirdly, upon finding any such legislation or proposed legislation, the committee must address it head-on with community support and political pressure to reverse legislation or kill proposed legislation. And lastly, the committee must establish its own legislation to protect the future of black students seeking that sliver of opportunity that education is supposed to provide, who hope that completion of their education will help them to stand on the basis for our Declaration of Independence— “..with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

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*The reality is that since the establishment of Harvard, the first university in America in 1638, education has been a great divider and not the great equalizer we have been led to believe.*

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State of Kentucky  
Charter School  
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State of Kentucky  
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Strategic Plan and  
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### PURPOSES

- Maintain an independent prophetic voice for Christian social ethics
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- Support Christian ecumenism by seeking contributors and readers from various denominations and churches
- Work from the deep, broad center of the Christian church
- Address readers at the personal and emotional as well as the intellectual level by including in the Journal narratives, poetry, and cartoons as well as essays
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*Christian Ethics Today* was born in the mind and heart of Foy Valentine in 1995, as an integral part of his dream for a Center for Christian Ethics. In his words, the purpose of the Journal was "to inform, inspire, and unify a lively company of individuals and organizations interested in working for personal morality and public righteousness."

When the Center was transferred to Baylor University in June 2000, the disbanding Board voted to continue the publication of *Christian Ethics Today*, appointing a new editor and a new Board. The Journal will continue to be published four times annually.

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### OUR ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBERS

<b>Pat Anderson</b>	<b>Office:</b> (828) 387-2267
P.O. Box 1238	<b>Cell</b> (863) 207-2050
Banner Elk, NC 28604	<b>E-mail</b> Drpatanderson@gmail.com

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