

Racial Justice and the Role of the Community Church

Saturday, January 9, 2021

Sponsored by the School for Ministry via Zoom Invitation

Saturday Workshops Open to Non-Cohort Participants

Satisfies Clergy Ethics Training Requirement

Dear Friend,

Thank you for registering for the upcoming S4M Retreat: “Racial Justice and the Role of the Community Church.” We are looking forward to examining the issues with an eye toward identifying how churches can contribute to racial justice in their communities.

Part of our discussion will focus on segments of *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson. We’d like you to start reviewing the book and giving consideration to the quotes and resources included in this study guide. As part of your registration fee, you are entitled to a copy of the book; please visit the link below to obtain your copy.

We would like to maximize our time together, so we are sending you materials in advance of the retreat to help you prepare for the workshop. Please take a little time to scan the contents of the book and review the study guide before you arrive. You will receive additional study materials during the session.

We are looking forward to engaging with you on this critical topic. Many blessings as you prepare your hearts and minds for the full-day retreat.

Rev. Lorrie C. Reed, Ph.D.
Executive Director, School for Ministry

Visit this link to obtain your copy of *Caste* by Isabel Wilkerson

Program Schedule

Purpose

Purpose: During this full-day Zoom workshop, participants will learn about racism as a systemic problem and will reflect on their own awareness of racialized realities in the 2020s. The emphasis will be on understanding the powerful, yet insidious, impact of racism in our lives, our communities, and our churches.

Opening Prayer and Overview of the Day:	9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.
Session 1 – Personal Awareness Rev. Dr. Lorrie C. Reed Rev. Dr. Beth Rupe Co-Facilitators Scripture Reference: Mark 8:22-25 Introspective - By the end of the session participants will describe the breadth and subtleties of racism and name examples of racism within their own communities and congregations.	9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
Lunch - On Your Own	11:30 - 12:30 p.m.
Session 2 – Church and Community Rev. Dr. William E. Crowder Facilitator Scripture Reference: Amos 5:21-24 Broader Perspective - By the end of the session, participants will recognize how racism manifests in urban settings and identify the responsibility of the church, if any, in combating racial injustice.	12:30 – 2:30 p.m.
Break	2:30-2:45 p.m.
Session 3 – Planning for Local Change Rev. Dr. John Huxtable Facilitator Scripture Reference: Ephesians 4:1-6 Prospective - By the end of the session, participants will begin to identify actions that must be taken to close the gap between justice and injustice in their respective communities.	2:45 – 4:45 p.m.
Closing Prayers and Dismissal	4:45 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Learning Goals and Objectives

Learning Goal 1: Identify instances of both overt and covert racism.

Objective 1: Participants will distinguish forms of conscious and unconscious bias.

Objective 2: Participants will raise self-awareness of personal bias.

Learning Goal 2: Understand the breadth and subtleties of contemporary racism.

Objective 1: Participants will describe the systemic nature of racism.

Objective 2: Participants will cite examples of how racism manifests in various areas of society (i.e., community, employment, education, criminal justice, etc.).

Learning Goal 3: Recognize and name examples the church’s complicity in racism.

Objective 1: Participants will describe ways the church has enabled racism.

Objective 2: Participants will identify how racism has touched their congregations.

A Few Quotes for Your Consideration

Quote	Chapter, page
<p>“Many people rightly say, “I had nothing to do with how this all started. I had nothing to do with the sins of the past. My ancestors never attacked indigenous people, never owned slaves. And, yes, not one of us was here when this house was built. But here we are, the current occupants of a property with stress and cracks and bowed walls and fissures build into the foundation. We are the heirs of whatever is right or wrong with it. We did not erect the uneven pillars or joints, but they are ours to deal with.”</p>	<p>Chapter 2, pp. 15-16</p>
<p>“A caste system is an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value that sets the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of other groups on the basis of ancestry and often immutable traits, traits that would be neutral in the abstract, but are ascribed life-and-death meaning in a hierarchy favoring the dominant cast whose forebears designed it.”</p>	<p>Chapter 2, p. 17</p>
<p>“It made lords of everyone in the dominant caste, as law and customs stated that ‘submission is required of the Slave, not to the will of the Master only, but to the will of all other White Persons.’ It was merely a torn thread in an ‘otherwise perfect cloth,’ wrote the sociologist Stephen Steinberg. ‘It would be closer to say that slavery provided the fabric out of which the whole cloth was made.’”</p>	<p>Chapter 4, p. 44</p>
<p>“For the dominant caste, the word is radioactive—resented, feared, denied, lobbed back toward anyone who dares to suggest it. Resistance to the word often derails any discussion of the underlying behavior it is meant to describe, thus eroding it of meaning. Social scientists often define racism as the combination of racial bias and systemic power of people or systems with personal or group power over another person or group with less power, as men have power over women, Whites over people of color, and the dominant</p>	<p>Chapter 6, p. 68</p>

<p>over the subordinate. But over time, racism has often been reduced to a feeling, a character flaw, conflated with prejudice, connected to whether one is a good person or not. It has come to mean overt and declared hatred of a person or group because of the race ascribed to them, a perspective few would ever own up to.”</p>	
<p>“Some people from the groups that were said to be inherently inferior managed to make it into the mainstream, a few rising to the level of people in the dominant caste, one of them, in 2008, rising to the highest station in the land. This left some white working-class Americans in particular, those with the least education and the material security that it can confer, to face the question of whether the commodity that they could take for granted—their skin and ascribed race—might be losing value.”</p>	<p>Chapter 11, p. 182</p>
<p>“In the United States, it is a numerical impossibility for African Americans to wreak such havoc in employment and higher education: there are simply not enough African-Americans to take the positions that every member of the dominant cast dreams of holding. Notably, while affirmative action grew out of the civil rights movement by lowest-caste people and their white allies, analysis (sic) show that is white women and white families, who became the prime beneficiaries of a plan intended to redress centuries of injustice against the lowest-caste people.”</p>	<p>Chapter 12, p. 192</p>
<p>“The ancient code for the subordinate cast calls upon them to see the world not with their own eyes but as the dominant cast sees it, demands that they extend compassion even when none is forthcoming in exchange, a fusion of dominant and subordinate that brings to mind the Stockholm Syndrome. Though the syndrome has no universally accepted definition or diagnosis, it is generally seen as a phenomenon of people bonding with those who abuse or hold them hostage.”</p>	<p>Chapter 22, p. 282</p>
<p>“When whites are prompted to think of the black person as an individual, imagine their personal characteristics, the threat level falls. This shows that it is ‘possible to override our worst impulses and reduce these prejudices,’ wrote the psychologist Susan Fiske. But to do so in a meaningful way requires forethought, an awareness of the unconscious biases passed down through the generations, and the chance for people different from one another to work together as equals, on the same team, with shared goals that ‘require cooperation to succeed,’ Fiske said. Outside of sports and the military, American society provides few such opportunities.”</p>	<p>Chapter 24, pp. 304-305</p>
<p>“Anyone who truly believes in a meritocracy would not want to be in a caste system in which certain groups of people are excluded or disqualified by long-standing deprivations. A win is not legitimate if whole sections of humanity are not in the game. Those are victories with an asterisk, as if you were to win the gold medal in hockey the year that the Finns and Canadians were not competing. The full embrace of all humanity lifts the standards of any human endeavor.”</p>	<p>Epilogue, p. 384</p>

Questions for Reflection

1. What did you think of the analogy of America being like an old house built on unstable ground with issues lurking, just hidden from sight?
2. Do you agree with Wilkerson's argument that the US has a racial caste system? Why or why not? What makes it similar or different to India's caste system?
3. You could argue that every society in the history of the world has some form of social hierarchy, even if not as brutal and damaging as the American system of chattel slavery, or as rigid and pervasive as the Indian caste system. Is hierarchy inevitable? Can you think of any exceptions?
4. What did you think of Wilkerson's definitions of casteism vs racism? Do you like this concept of two definitions rather than simply calling both racism? Do you think there's a danger in re-labeling / softening the emotive term "racism" that we sidestep it / absolve ourselves of it?

Study Questions Provided by Publisher

Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. At the beginning of *Caste*, author Isabel Wilkerson compares American racial hierarchy to a dormant Siberian virus. What are the strengths of this metaphor? How does this comparison help combat the pervasive myth that racism has been eradicated in America?
2. Wilkerson begins the book with an image of one lone dissenter amidst a crowd of Germans giving the Nazi salute. What would it mean—and what would it take—to be this man today?
3. What are some of the elements required for a caste system to succeed?
4. Wilkerson uses many different metaphors to explain and help us visualize the concept of the American caste system: the bones inside a body, the beams inside a house, even the computer program in the 1999 film *The Matrix*. Which of these metaphors helped the concept click for you? Why was it successful?
5. Caste and race are not the same thing. What is the difference between the two? How do casteism and racism support each other?
6. Discuss how class is also different from caste.
7. Who does a caste system benefit? Who does it harm?
8. “Before there was a United States of America,” Wilkerson writes, “there was a caste system, born in colonial Virginia.” How can Americans reckon with this fact? What does it mean to you to live in a country whose system of discrimination was cemented before the country itself?
9. Did learning about the lens and language of caste change the way you look at U.S. history and society? How?
10. Wilkerson discusses three major caste systems throughout the book: India, Nazi Germany, and America. What are some of the differences that stood out to you among these three systems? What are the similarities? How did learning about one help you understand the others? For instance, did the fact that the Nazis actually studied America’s segregation practices and Jim Crow laws help underscore the breadth of our own system?
11. Harold Hale, an African-American man, helped his daughter defy the “rules” of their caste in 1970s Texas by naming her Miss. As Wilkerson illustrates throughout the book, the dangers of being seen as defying one’s caste can range from humiliation to death. What do you think of the lengths Mr. Hale felt he needed to go to assure dignity for his daughter? What are the risks he took by doing so? Should Miss have had a say in her father’s quietly revolutionary act? Explain your thinking.

12. Discuss the differences and similarities between how Miss was treated in the South, where racism and casteism have historically been more overt, and in the North, where they still exist, but can be more subtle. Do you think these various forms of racism and casteism must be fought in different ways?

13. Wilkerson quotes the orator Frederick Douglass, who described the gestures that could incite white rage and violence: “in the tone of an answer; in answering at all; in not answering . . .” These contradict each other: One could incite rage by answering and by not answering. Discuss the bind that this contradiction put (and still puts) African-American people in.

14. Wilkerson frequently uses her own experience as an African-American woman to illustrate her points regarding caste—including the experience involving the confusion when someone “rises above” his or her presumed station. What do readers gain from hearing about Wilkerson’s personal experiences in addition to her deep historical research?

15. “Indians will ask one’s surname, the occupation of one’s father, the village one is from, the section of the village that one is from, to suss out the caste of whoever is standing in front of them,” Wilkerson writes. “They will not rest until they have uncovered the person’s rank in the social order.” How is this similar to and different from the process of determining caste in America? Have you ever, for instance, asked someone what they did for work or where they lived or went to school, and been surprised? Did you treat them differently upon hearing their answer?

16. Analyze the process of dehumanization and how it can lead to people justifying great acts of cruelty.

17. “Evil asks little of the dominant caste other than to sit back and do nothing,” Wilkerson writes. Whether in the dominant caste or not, what are some of the ways that each of us, personally, can stand up to the caste system?

18. Wilkerson gives examples that range from the horrifying (lynching) to the absurd (the Indian woman who walked across an office to ask a Dalit to pour her water from the jug next to her desk) to illustrate caste’s influence on behavior. How do both of these types of examples—and everything in between—help cement her points? Why do we need to see this range to clearly understand caste?

19. Discuss how overt racism subtly transforms into unconscious bias. What are the ways that we can work to compensate for the unconscious biases inherent in a caste system?

20. Wilkerson writes about the “construction of whiteness,” describing the way immigrants went from being Czech or Hungarian or Polish to “white”—a political designation that only has meaning when set against something “not white.” Irish and Italian people weren’t “white” until they came to America. What does this “construction of whiteness” tell us about the validity of racial designations and the structure of caste?

21. It is a widely held convention that working-class white Americans may often “act against their own interests” by opposing policies designed to help the working class. Discuss how the logic of caste disproves this concept and redefines that same choice from the perspective of maintaining group dominance.

22. How does the caste system take people who would otherwise be allies and turn them against one other?

23. Wilkerson describes dinner with a white acquaintance who was incensed over the treatment they received from the waitstaff. Why did the acquaintance respond the way that she did, and how did it hurt or help the situation?

24. What do we learn from Albert Einstein’s response to the American caste system upon arrival from Germany?

25. What are some of the steps that society, and each of us, can take toward dismantling the caste system?

Resources

Appendix A: Types of Racism

Source: Types of Racism - Principal Source: (AACL <http://www.aclrc.com/glossary>)

Systemic Racism includes the policies and practices entrenched in established institutions, which result in the exclusion or promotion of designated groups. It differs from overt discrimination in that no individual intent is necessary. (Toronto Mayor's Committee on Community and Race Relations).

Institutional racism occurs within institutions and systems of power. This refers to the unfair policies and discriminatory practices of particular institutions (schools, workplaces, etc.) that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people. Individuals within institutions take on the power of the institution when they reinforce racial inequities. Some forms of this racism may include [Jim Crow Laws](#) in the US or the exclusion of African-American golfers from elite, private golf courses in the US, for example. Benefits are structured to privilege powerful groups at the expense of others.

Structural racism is racial bias among institutions and across society. This involves the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors, including the history, culture, ideology and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color. It refers to the ways in which the joint operation of institutions (i.e., inter-institutional arrangements and interactions) produce racialized outcomes, even in the absence of racist intent. Because these effects are reinforced across multiple institutions, the root causes of structural racism are difficult to isolate. Structural racism is cumulative, pervasive, and durable.

Internalized racism lies within individuals. This type of racism comprises one's private beliefs and biases about race and racism, influenced by one's culture. This can take many different forms including: prejudice towards others of a different race; internalized oppression—the negative beliefs about oneself by people of color; or internalized privilege—beliefs about superiority or entitlement by white people.

Interpersonal racism occurs between individuals. This is the bias that occurs when individuals interact with others and their personal racial beliefs affect their public interactions. It is the holding of negative attitudes towards a different race or culture.

Individual racism refers to an individual's racist assumptions, beliefs or behaviors (AACL <http://www.aclrc.com/glossary>). It is connected to/learned from broader socio-economic histories and processes and is supported and reinforced by systemic racism. Because we live in such a culture of individualism (and with the privilege of freedom of speech), some people argue that their statements/ideas are not racist because they are just "personal opinion." Here, it is important to point out how individualism functions to erase hierarchies of power, and to connect unrecognized personal ideologies to larger racial or systemic ones.

Appendix B: Online Resources

- Alberta Civil Liberties Centre. *CARED glossary*. Retrieved from <http://www.aclrc.com/glossary>
- Annie Casey Foundation. *Equity vs. equality and other racial justice definitions*. Retrieved from <https://www.aecf.org/blog/racial-justice-definitions/?gclid=CjwKCAjwIbr8BRA0EiwAnt4MTpo1AtcRxyOtU5D63kzEOLwimx9ZtFoH-wkGxLFrsUUyHtbKPcENBoCHHMQA vD BwE>
- Anti-Defamation League. *Personal self-assessment of anti-bias behavior*. Retrieved from <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/assets/pdf/education-outreach/Personal-Self-Assessment-of-Anti-Bias-Behavior.pdf>
- Anti-Defamation League. *Race talk: Engaging young people in conversations about race and racism*. Retrieved from <https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/race-talk-engaging-young-people-in-conversations-about>
- Associated Press. *Black Catholics: Words not enough as church decries racism*. Retrieved from <https://www.voanews.com/usa/race-america/black-catholics-words-not-enough-church-decries-racism?amp>
- Center for the Study of Social Policy. *Key equity terms and concepts*. Retrieved from <https://cssp.org/resource/key-equity-terms-and-concepts-a-glossary-for-shared-understanding/>
- Christian Church in Illinois and Wisconsin (CCIW) (Disciples of Christ). *God's shalom. justice and wholeness in today's world transforming the narrative for healing and wholeness, with Rev. David Anderson Hooker*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DrPZZcRI-KQ&feature=youtu.be>
- National Association of School Psychologists. *Understanding race and privilege*. Retrieved from <https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/diversity-and-social-justice/social-justice/understanding-race-and-privilege>
- National Council of Churches. *Anti-racism resources*. Retrieved from <https://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/anti-racism-resources/>
- Slow North. *Journal prompts to help you engage self-reflection & check your white privilege*. Retrieved from <https://www.slownorth.com/blogs/journal/journal-prompts-to-help-you-engage-self-reflection-check-your-white-privilege>
- Stevenson, Bryan. *Changing America's racial narrative*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzPUmQfo3B8>
- Stevenson, Bryan. *There's a direct line from lynching to George Floyd | Amanpour and Company*. Jun 2, 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0xYslfC84I&t=5s>
- UCC Officers: *Lynching justice in America, May 28, 2020*. Retrieved from <https://www.ucc.org/news-commentary-ucc-officers-lynching-justice-in-america-05282020>
- UCC. *Sacred-conversation-on-race-resource-guide*. Retrieved from http://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/unitedchurchofchrist/legacy_url/393/Sacred-Conversation-on-Race-Resource-Guide-NEW-small.pdf?1418423758

- UCC. *Recognizing microaggressions*. Retrieved from <https://www.nhcucc.org/uploads/documents/conference-ministries/justice-witness-ministry/Racial%20Justice/RJMG%20-%20Microaggressions%20Examples.pdf>
- UCC. *video resources for your sacred conversation on race*. Retrieved from https://www.ucc.org/sacred-conversation_video-resources-for-your
- UCC. White privilege – Let’s talk. Retrieved from <http://privilege.uccpages.org/>
- United Methodist Church. North Carolina Conference. *9 things your church can do to fight racism - media center - NC conference*. Retrieved from <https://nccumc.org/mediacenter/9-things-your-church-can-do-to-fight-racism/>
- United Way of Greater Toronto. *Imagineacity*. [4 ways self-reflection can combat racism](https://imagineacity.ca/4-ways-self-reflection-can-combat-racism/?amp)
<https://imagineacity.ca/4-ways-self-reflection-can-combat-racism/?amp>

Appendix C: Selected YouTube Videos

Topic	Presenter	Description/Link
Emotional Emancipation	Cheryl Tawede Grills	Psychologist Dr. Cheryl Tawede Grills, speaks on the crippling image of African and African-American people worldwide and offers solution through Emotion Emancipation. Time 00:19:51 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkXseTHxusw
Equal Justice	Bryan Stevenson	How We Arrived Here. Bryan Stevenson of the Equal Justice Initiative shares his thoughts on how we arrived at this moment and where we go from here. Time 00:04:10 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q65pzBelBlc&feature=youtu.be
History	Brian Stevenson	Bryan Stevenson, the founder and director of the Equal Justice Initiative, talks to Lester Holt about Montgomery's National Memorial for Peace and Justice and remembering the country's painful past, in hopes for a better future. Time: 00.09.42 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlJhvnIkr4&feature=youtu.be
Just Mercy Discussion	Bryan Stevenson	Bryan Stevenson on Why the Criminal Justice System is Favored for the Rich. Time 00:03:00 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lod_Zoc1dQk&feature=youtu.be
National Memorial for Peace	Bryan Stevenson	Bryan Stevenson speaks with Lester Holt about the National Memorial for Peace. Time 00:04:12 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eSnjEGWwJgQ&feature=youtu.be
Policing	Bryan Stevenson	Bryan Stevenson speaks "On 21st Century Policing, Community Relations." from the Lincoln Presidential Library. Time 00:26:52 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3jUYyX38SsA&feature=youtu.be
Race Relations	Michael Eric Dyson	Michael Eric Dyson, professor of sociology at Georgetown University, speaks about George Floyd's death as a wake-up call for the world. Time 00:18:18

		https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJDMARMT1Rg&feature=youtu.be
Racialized Trauma	Dr. Kira (Racial Equity)	Dr. Kira describes her reaction to "My Grandmother's Hands" by Resmaa Menakem. The book tackles what is necessary to metabolize and heal from the trauma of what Menakem frames as White Body Supremacy. Time 00:04:34 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3ZGJ9hpRXo&feature=youtu.be
Narrative on Racism	Brian Stevenson	Bryan Stevenson, the founder and Executive Director of the Equal Justice Initiative, addresses the changing narrative on racism. Time 00:03:26 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jzPUmQfo3B8
Racial Injustice	Bryan Stevenson	Brian Stevenson addresses lynching as one of the root causes of racial injustice in America. Time 00:18:24 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O0xYsIfC84I&feature=youtu.be
Racism and White Privilege	Jim Wallis	Jim Wallis, who is a public theologian, political activist, author, and CEO of Sojourners, describes his views on overcoming racism and white privilege that persists in American society. Time 00:51:15 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gaMChcrhgEk
Racism and the Church	Jackie Hill Perry	Jackie Hill Perry, writer, speaker, and artist, discusses how churches can seek to uproot sins of racism and insensitivity that can persist in a church. Time 00:02:07 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lnss001LbjA
Restorative Justice	Lindsay Pointer	This video seeks to offer a clear explanation of how Restorative Practices, including Restorative Justice, function together to create a Restorative Community. Time: 00:04:26 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHhtnMKfwwM&feature=youtu.be
Restorative Justice	Lindsey Pointer	This video provides an introduction to the philosophy and practice of Restorative Justice with Dr. Lindsey Pointer. Time 00:43:02 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BRP1CJgZszg&feature=youtu.be

Restorative Justice	Marx Gertenbach	Marx Gertenbach provides an explanation of restorative justice. Produced by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) Time 00:57:59 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1_2H_gm4U0&feature=youtu.be
Systemic Racism	ABC News	In this video, ABC News explores “Race in America.” It explains the definition of systemic racism and looks into examples that impact people of color including African Americans. (Time 00:03:26) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GtOOj5YvMyc
Systemic Racism and the Church	CBS News	Race, Religion & Resistance explores the ways in which systemic racism remains at the heart of our nation’s ills and the work people of faith are doing to redeem the soul of America. Time 00:26:55 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTHHWAFSGUM&feature=youtu.be
Truth and Reconciliation	Justice Reconciliation	This course aims to expose learners to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa. Time 00:21:24 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3taLI3moaM

Appendix D: Selected Bibliography

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Reading Guides

[Caste \(Oprah's Book Club\) by Isabel Wilkerson - Reading Guide: 9780593230251 - PenguinRandomHouse.com: Books](#)

Interviews

[Oprah Winfrey hosts conversations around “Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents” by Isabel Wilkerson](#)

[Isabel Wilkerson Opens Up About Caste Being in Oprah's Book Club](#)

[Oprah Discusses Powerful Old House Analogy About Race and Caste in America on Oprah's Book Club](#)