

# LEARNING TO BE AN ANTIRACIST

## Week 1: The Past

### Resources:

- **Book:** The Color of Compromise - Jemar Tisby
- **Article:** ["What Christians Should Know about Social Justice?"](#)
- **Documentary:** [13th](#)

### Additional Resources:

- **Talk:** ["Intersections of Race and Injustice in America"](#): Jemar Tisby (Formed for Justice Conference)
- **Article:** ["White Flight, Gentrification, + The Church"](#)
- **Podcast:** "The 1619 Project"
- **Books:** *Woke Church* - Eric Mason | *Generous Justice* - Tim Keller | *Unsettling Truths* - Soong Chan Rah | *Stamped from the Beginning* - Ibram Kendi | *White Flight: Making of Modern Conservatism* - Kevin Kruse

## PREPARATION

## NOTES

These 4 considerations will help ensure preparation with this course:

1. The first half of this course (weeks 1 and 2) is foundational and organized to give context for the remaining sessions. The latter half (weeks 3 and 4) present tools for engaging as an anti-racist. This sequence ensures we progress together as we consider engagement.
2. Commit to weekly attendance, as each week builds on the previous week. We had to turn people away for this course so please honor your registration.
3. This class will not and cannot be comprehensive. Consider this class as one resource in your antiracism toolbelt. The more willingly you engage the resources, the better equipped you will be to understand/engage with the issues at hand. You are not expected to finish each book prior to each class; engage with each before each class as you are able and commit to post-class completion. Assigned articles/videos are brief, so plan to complete them before each week's session.
4. Racism, xenophobia, bigotry, and white supremacy are complicated, complex issues that involve far more than binary divides. Though we cannot address any single issue to its fullness in this class, we will focus heavily on white supremacy, which is the core commonality.

**CENTRAL IDEA:** The idolatry of white supremacy is the foundation of American racism and is a pervasive evil woven into the very fabric of our nation, culture, and thinking.

## WHAT IS AN ANTIRACIST?

- **Movement:** Antiracism is not one centralized ideology or organization. Rather, to be an antiracist is to be part of a movement. Within the larger movement, there are numerous ideas with which one might agree or disagree
- **Definition:** One who, as a result of fidelity to all of God's Word and his commitment to justice, is conscious of and committed to working against the injustices and inequalities that exist as a result of our racialized society.

## WHAT IS OUR BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK?

### Theological presuppositions:

1. The rule and throne of God are foundationally those of righteousness and justice (Psalm 89:14)
  - As a result, all injustice is an affront and rejection of God's sovereign rule
2. God has determined that we create culture and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28) (This is called the "cultural mandate")
  - As a result, we are involved in creating all cultures, governments, and structures
3. We have all sinned; no one is righteous (Romans 3)
  - As a result, since we are steeped in inherent sin, that can affect how we create cultures, governments, and structures
4. Biblical history shows us that God's people were blind to idolatry and injustice (read the prophet's messages) and often rejected those who preached against them (Hosea 9:7, Luke 4:24)
  - As a result, we should humbly admit injustices exist today of which we are completely unaware; some injustices we ignore even after we become aware
5. Even after having trusted Christ, we are all still susceptible to the idolatry of racial or ethnic superiority (Galatians 2)
  - As a result, Christians who love Jesus can still be unjust and idolatrous in this area
6. Scripture categorizes people through tribes, nations, and languages (Rev. 7), not White, Black, Gold, Brown, etc. If we try to redraw or reorder God's categories, we attempt to dethrone God.
  - As a result, these are not valid categories, but rather only exist because of the idolatrous desire to subjugate and degrade.

**Summary conclusion on racism and justice:** God in his sovereignty gave us the good task of subduing the earth, but in our sin and idolatry, we rejected his rule by attempting to reorder and create hierarchies in his creation through the institution of new racial categories, which were used to benefit some and degrade others. Like those of biblical history, we too are often blind to the ways we continue to perpetuate idolatrous injustice.

## Psalm 139:

<sup>23</sup> Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

<sup>24</sup> See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.

## WHAT IS OUR HISTORY?

### Exploration

- In 1452, Pope Nicholas V issued a Papal Bull, *Dum Diversas*, which gave theological license for colonization. The decree was issued to Alfonso V of Portugal and stated he had the God-ordained right to,  
*“invade, search out, capture, vanquish, and subdue all Saracens (Muslims) and pagans whatsoever, and other enemies of Christ wheresoever placed, and the kingdoms, dukedoms, principalities, dominions, possessions, and all movable and immovable goods whatsoever held and possessed by them and to reduce their persons to perpetual slavery, and to apply and appropriate to himself and his successors the kingdoms, dukedoms, counties, principalities, dominions, possessions, and goods, and to convert them to his and their use and profit.”*
- The Doctrine of Discovery was used as legal precedence as late as 1823 in the Supreme Court ruling of *Johnson v. McIntosh*.

### Colonization

- In Central and South America, colonizers used ethnic mixing (through marriage, concubines, and rape; see *Galilean Journey* by Virgilio P. Elizondo) to dominate. However, in the North, especially with the English, racial purity was the goal, as opposed to “mixing.”
- Africans were kidnapped and transported to work the newly conquered lands. The theological justification was popularized in 1578 by George Best who propagated the “curse of Ham theory,” which argued that Africans were the descents of Noah’s son, Ham, who had been cursed and were *“...the lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers”* (Gen. 9:25). Their black skin “signified the extent of their curse.”

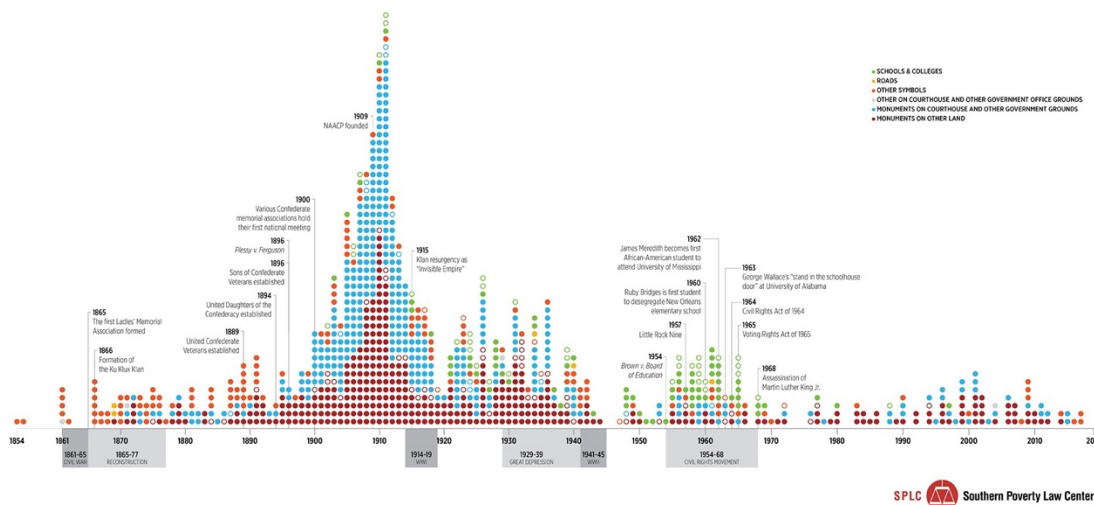
### Establishment

- The hypocrisy of our nation’s founding documents emphasizes the deception of and blindness caused by white supremacy.
  - The Declaration of Independence says, “...all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness” while also calling the natives, “... merciless Indian Savages”
  - The Constitution: Codified the dehumanizing ideology that enslaved Africans were only to be considered  $\frac{3}{5}$  of the population (or as some have interpreted it:  $\frac{3}{5}$  human).
- Governmental heroes like George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, Andrew Jackson and theological heroes like Johnathan Edwards and George Whitfield all owned people (“slaveholders” is a term I do not like to use because it’s sanitizing).

- The economic strength of the United States is the result of stolen land and stolen labor all of which was given erroneous theological justification.

**Development**

- In 1858, Abraham Lincoln [stated](#): *"I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. . . . I have no purpose to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which, in my judgment, will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality, and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a difference, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position."*
- In August 1862, Lincoln [stated](#): *"If I could save the union without freeing any slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that."*
- **Bryan Stevenson:** *"We need to understand the greater evil of American slavery wasn't involuntary servitude and forced labor; it was this idea that black people aren't as good as white people, that they're not fully human. The Supreme Court said we're three-fifths human, and that created this ideology of white supremacy that we never addressed. The North won the Civil War, but the South won the narrative war. They weren't required to repudiate and acknowledge the wrongfulness of bigotry and slavery. They actually glorified that era, and that created a century where black people were pulled out of their homes, beaten, drowned, hanged in this era of terrorism, but we haven't talked about it."*



- The sin of white supremacy and the resulting institution of Slavery was vile; it must truly be acknowledged and accepted as our own "American holocaust."
  - Unlike like the Germans post WWII who paid [\\$89 billion in reparations](#) to Jewish families and were instrumental in building Israel, the U.S. has never sought to repair the damages caused by slavery. (Not that any dollar amount would ever suffice, but there hasn't even been a gesture)

- The 13th amendment set enslaved people free, but included the clause, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted..." which gave basis for a new form of legalized slavery.
- The North found new ways of embedding racism into structures and policies. This happened in through exclusion from the New Deal, GI Bill, and through systematic redlining.
- [Nazi Germany](#) was so intrigued by the U.S. and her ability to write laws that benefited some and marginalized others, they sent their own legal scholar to learn and adapt U.S. law in the service of Nazi Germany's commitment to Aryan racial purity.

## WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

### Confession, Repentance, and Reconciliation

- Jemar Tisby: "History and Scripture teach us that there cannot be reconciliation, without repentance. There can be no repentance without confession. And there can be no confession with truth...yet, too often, Christians and Americans in general, try to circumvent the truth-telling process in their haste to arrive at reconciliation."