

ANTI-RACIST IN CHRIST?

Ecumenical Christian Repentance, Reflection and Action on Racial Discrimination and Xenophobia
14-17 June 2021

E-CONFERENCE REPORT**Background**

The Council for World Mission (CWM) and World Council of Churches (WCC) - through its Mission from the Margins and its Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA), co-organised the above-mentioned joint ecumenical online event from 14 to 17 June 2021. The aim was to strengthen and stimulate the ecumenical conversation on racial justice in preparation for the WCC Karlsruhe Assembly in September 2022.

The e-conference was also a contribution to the WCC Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace (PJP) whose 2021 thematic focus are Indigenous Peoples and racism, as well as an opportunity to mark the 75th anniversary of the WCC CCIA.

Four daily thematic areas guided the conversations:

- a. Setting racism within its Colonial and Neo-Imperial context***
- b. Mission Agencies Legacies***
- c. Models for Anti-racist action for White and other dominant racial groups***
- d. Anti-racist markers for churches***

Daily reports for each sessions can be found in the Annex. We are grateful for the Rapporteurs who helped us prepared these summaries: Rev. Abhishek PRABHAKAR JOHN, for the morning sessions, and Ms Quantisha Doll (née Mason), for the afternoon sessions.

Our speakers spoke from these contexts: Aotearoa/New Zealand, Aymara Bolivia, Burundi, Canada, Cuba, Fiji, First Nations: Seminole Nation of Oklahoma and Muscogee Creek nation, Germany, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Lebanon, Malawi/Netherlands, Nigeria, Palestine, Quechua Chanka Peru, Sami-Finland, Samoa, South Africa, UK, USA and West Papua also the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Vice-Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and the Chair of UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent

Below are the key findings on the daily themes:

1. *Setting racism within its Colonial and Neo-Imperial context*

The panellists recognised that the continuing and contemporary issues of colonialism that are prevalent in global regional contexts. Colonialism is embedded in different contexts and manifests itself in politics, institutions, religions, theologies and nationalism. Because of its complex and intersectional nature of racism, the remedies to racism are systemic.

To what extent has decolonization helped to dismantle racism? To date, imperialist views of God are every much present.

As a way to move forward, it is important to understand Whiteness and ways to deal with it. Struggles and challenges are interconnected globally, as they all relate to the legacy of colonialism. The global response to Covid-19 is an example of modern imperialism and institutional racism which influenced the way in which the virus was handled.

Much effort has been placed in decolonizing formally occupied countries yet there has been less effort put forth by former colonizing empires to confront their past as colonizers and this explains in part why systemic racism and xenophobia is so powerful in our world today.

The Church universal was and continues to be complicit in the soulless actions carried out in the name of civilizing the world. If the Church wants to be the driver of moral and racial justice, it must first acknowledge the ways in which it aided the cause of white supremacy and white-male-hetero-hegemonic thinking.

There is a moral obligation to seek ecological justice, because ecological destruction coincided with slavery and subjugation of indigenous/ native populations and climate change is the product of White powered Capitalism and the economies and lifestyles of the Global North.

There is still an unconscious bias towards whiteness as the pinnacle of success and beauty--this can be seen in education, medical, and global leadership.

2. *Mission Agencies Legacies*

This session discussed colonial mission, which contextual theologies and missiologies have not yet fully overthrown.

Although coming from different contexts, all panellists found Harold Copping's painting "The Hope of the world" deeply disturbing, offensive, and something that ought to be discarded or used for pedagogical purposes to expose colonial and racial categories.

The image of the white Jesus has risen to become the icon of white supremacy. Making Jesus brown does not change the theological underpinning. Whatever colour we give to Jesus, if we do not interrogate the underlying assumptions, we are only furthering an anti-life affirming cycle. God and Jesus is a spiritual encounter that should not be shaped by white culture. Collectively there needs to be a drive to dismantle theologies that label god as white yet caution must be paid so the cycles of discrimination and hate are not perpetrated again.

The Church is undeniably reluctant and hesitant in accepting its role through its mission agencies in the white missionary expansionist project. When accountability is sought for colonial missionary practices, it generates denial among the mission agencies. On the other hand, the regional churches hesitate to self-critique, decolonize racial categories found in art, architecture, and stories, and tend to perpetuate a glorified mission history. Also, theological assumptions still remain unchallenged

The discussion on repairing the damages done by the colonial missions is still far-fetched. The present need in the regional contexts was to resist and fight racism and engage in decolonizing practices in the church. Will the church universal want to tackle the colonizing role of its theology? Further to this, calls were made for addressing the ecumenical movements own practices, which need de-colonising.

Colonialism is not white colonialism alone: it comes in different forms and is present in diverse contexts. For instance, Palestine and India are dominated by ethnic and racial hegemonies beyond whiteness, (though buttressed by White systems and power). Furthermore, patriarchy, sexism and ethnocentrism continue to grow as offshoots of colonialism.

Missionaries sent themselves to occupied lands with mindsets of whiteness v. blackness/darkness. Whiteness is a virus that seeks to destroy, and whatever cannot be destroyed for profit will be assimilated into whiteness. Whiteness, as an entity unto itself, has caused more death and harm than any virus or pandemic.

The churches need to be more human in their actions-- global north churches must seek to transform their narrative from service for to service with mentality.

Indigenous speakers raised the concern that indigenous contributions have largely been discredited by whiteness and the global North. The legacy of Whiteness continues in the form of native/indigenous pastors often being looked down upon and their theological understanding questioned. Some indigenous communities still prefer to call a white male pastor rather than their own.

Decolonization cannot begin to exorcise racism until Whiteness itself is decolonized, and its place in our institutions and systems exposed.

We must ask what is the role of confession and repentance given the complex relationships we have and in the structures we have, which have grown out of the colonial past.

3. Models for Anti-racist action for White and other dominant racial groups

In this session speakers explored the different ways whiteness and privilege continue to manifest within churches and communities despite apology statements and growing awareness of racism. There is a need to reflect on whether these public apology statements and policies have transformed into actions. Although the work of WCC to combat racism has led to praise from world leaders like Nelson Mandela, we cannot ignore past achievements. There is a need to reflect upon the presence of Anti-Black racism, Xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Judaism, and other intersectional oppressions within our own ranks. The church must ask itself how far does it want to go to restore power to those it has marginalised? The overriding message was that the church has clearly not done or gone far enough in addressing racism and its various manifestations within the church or in the broader society.

The murder of George Floyd was a tragedy. Speakers agreed that his tragic death became a globally galvanizing movement around racial oppression. It was a Kairos moment that called specific attention to the universality of systematic oppression. There was a caution. When a movement such as Black Lives Matter (BLM) begins, there is an urgency to respond to it by finding a quick solution. Our institutions, including churches, tend to focus on a particular, often headline prevailing issue, at the expense of leaving other marginalised people and concerns out. This raises the question and challenge of how we negotiate the tension of remaining inclusive and representative at the same time. In this instance, West Papua and Dalits were cited examples. For decades Dalit voices in India and among the diaspora have continued their struggle against casteism, a system which operates on the premise of purity and exclusion. A similar argument was made in the case of West Papua whose struggles are also tied to colonialism and racism but it has not received the same coverage as BLM. It is important to find a balance when dealing with all identities without creating competition among them nor a hierarchy of oppressions.

It was recognised that although the stories of racism and oppression differ in each context, the harm caused by whiteness and white supremacy is a common thread linking those whose identities are marginalized. Those at the front lines were young people, LGBTQIA, women, Dalits, Indigenous people, and Black people. These are the groups that have been historically oppressed by the church, and continue to face oppression in church and society. Though the BLM movement requires global

solidarity, humanity, instead of skin colour, should be the reason for this solidarity that has been poured out globally.

A common thread among the speakers was identifying the ongoing resistance by white people, those with privilege and power, and churches to understand and engage with the realities and different manifestations of racism. This resistance often comes in the form of white-splaining or male-splaining. The sin of disinterest was called out as a product of white privilege. It was also noted that the ecumenical movement, including WCC was not innocent of holding onto its power and privilege which manifests in practice, in terms of theology, structure and decision making. The conversation on power, privilege, availability and allocation of resources took place around the metaphor of the table – Whose table is it? Who is represented at the table? Who does the inviting? It was clear that the more space was needed to accommodate diversity without tokenism. Panellists called out the need to decolonize the WCC and the ecumenical movement.

There was recognition that a deep-rooted issue like racism takes time to change and that dismantling systems of power, privilege and oppression requires courage. Courage to affirm that we are all complicit in such life denying structures. Dismantling requires a continuous commitment in everyday actions. There is a need to adopt an intersectional approach that affirms a substantive equality for all. There can be no one model to derive an intersectional approach, because no one size fits all.

Finally, the ongoing work of antiracism will attract a backlash and this is something we must all be prepared for. Racism prompts a difficult and uncomfortable conversation. The call and challenge issued by one of the speakers was the commitment to stay in the struggle for the long term and not to opt in and out when we so desire.

4. *Anti-racist markers for churches*

This session mapped the way forward on what the marks and practices of an antiracist church could look like. The conversation was characterised by deep pain on the one hand and hopefulness on the other. It was acknowledged that the church still a long way from being *antiracist in Christ*. There is still much theological decolonizing, deconstructing and reconstructing work needing to be done. Whiteness and coloniality still lingers on in our institutions, theologies and practices and thereby need ongoing interrogation. The church's role in perpetuating racism was emphasised in the discussions and best captured in the following statement

“the church itself has been used to baptize racism and has been used to further white supremacy. The church covers up racism so well that some people do not realize that they are perpetuating racism. The first thing that needs to happen in churches is the unpacking of all the ways race and racism has affected the church body and those who call that church home.”

The redemptive, restorative work of antiracism is risky and uncomfortable but necessary. As a church we need to confess and own our complicity in the ongoing interlocking and entangled web of racism. There was general agreement that repentance (*metanoia*) by way of the following four areas were necessary and key to antiracist work:

- Theology - racist and exclusionary ideas in theology needed to be critiqued and alternatives proposed and practiced
- History – European, North American and the role of Australian New Zealand churches need to be honest about their complicity in justifying colonialism and profiting from it.
- Structure – awareness of how under-represented groups silenced and intentionality in exploring and putting into practise models of shared power
- Reparations - the call for repentance is linked deeply with reparations

Reparation is an essential part of turning confession into the grounds for change. It is model which offers us action and change at the local, organisational, national and global level. There have been acts of apology, which have been seen as ends in themselves, rather than the entry point into new relationships and further journeying towards justice. Antiracism work is not a short-lived action, a focus for a time for church programmes until the next headline. Reparation thus ensures resource for this work over the long haul. The witness from the activists who joined the conversations was to challenge the churches to resource the struggle rather than structure it. This would be a powerful form of reparation.

Theological institutions were identified as critical places through which reform could be made as this is where ministers are formed and trained. Antiracism education should be an integral part of theological formation and training. It was recognised that theological institutions are also in need of reform. The emphasis on decolonizing the theological curriculum and education was a recurring theme in the conversations.

The conversations emphasised the need to understand the core essence of what it means to be the church, to be the vulnerable body of Christ engaged in God’s mission in the world. An antiracist church was described as Confessional, Transformational, Missional, and Humble, whilst different marks of the church were suggested such as apostolocity or reaffirmed such as the “oneness of the church” whereby diversity, inclusion, and equity are its expressions.

The conversations challenged us to ask how far we are willing to go to press for racial justice? To consider in the light of racial injustice if we are really the people Jesus calls us to be? It is clear that apology is not enough, protest is not enough, our calling is not enough. Only change is enough. We are living with the impact of Mission as declaratory act, proclaiming and asserting Christ through acts of colonisation. We see in this moment an opportunity to reframe mission as a reparatory act, responding to Christ through acts of restoration to those harmed and exploited in his name, through which there can be a regrowth of a world marked by the relatedness of all created life.

Follow up work:

The staff team have identified these areas of follow up to propose to our organisations:

- ✚ Engagement with WCC 11th Assembly preparation processes to ensure anti-racism work features within the Assembly agenda and in the work of the WCC after its Assembly.
- ✚ Further work should consider how to influence praxis, whereby the role of theological education is considered critical to antiracism work as it is a key location for new formation as a result of antiracism critique.

- ✚ Consideration given to staging regular points and places of encounter where we can face together the issues racial injustice poses to our communities, as we develop a praxis and spirituality of truth telling and truth doing.

- ✚ Proposals for the launch of an Ecumenical Antiracism Network which can gather together the wide range of antiracism initiatives within the churches and movements and allow some collaboration with the other ecumenical networks. This may also help to address calls made for de-colonising the ecumenical instruments.

- ✚ **Joint Ecumenical Anti-Racism project**
Racism is a sin. This is widely understood and articulated. Motivated and led by this shared understanding, a joint antiracism project could be coordinated which leads to positive action through all and including within our networks. As an example, WCC, CWM, WCRC, LWF and MWC are working intentionally on an Economic Justice agenda through its work on NIFEA (New International Financial and Economic Architecture). In this project, the organisations commit staff team and financial resources to working together on a common agenda identified with an independent panel of experts. This might offer us a model for work on racial justice.

- ✚ **Ecumenical Commission on Reparations**
Strong and insistent voices are pressing the need for reparation as an integral part of the antiracism work we need, if it is to bring lasting change. Calls were also made showing that antiracism work needs resources not structure. Work is needed on connecting with the Reparations movement and devising reparative ecclesiologies and missiologies, which address the hurts of the people who have been exploited and for the earth which is also in need of reparation.

ANNEX – Reports from sessions

Session 1

Moderator: Philip Vinod Peacock

Nicolas Abou-Mrad

José Francisco CALÍ TZAY

Margit Ernst-Habib

Thandi Soko-de Jong

Tara Tauturi

Dr Fransina Yoteni

Image for Day 1



The joint ecumenical event, organized in the form of a Zoom webinar, started off with its first thematic area of discussion for the day – **“Setting Racism Within Its Colonial and Neo-Imperial Contexts”**. **Peter Cruchley** welcomed participants and highlighted the need of the discussion on racism and the efforts of WCC over the past four decades. **Isabel Apawo Phiri** further explained that the conference was initially planned as a physical meeting in Geneva. She then introduced the moderator for the session – Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock.

Philip Vinod Peacock briefly highlighted recent news worldwide and then introduced the speakers – Prof Dr Nicolas Abou Mrad, Dr. Margit Ernst-Habib, Thandi Soko-de Jong, Tara Tautari, Mr. Cali Tzay, and Dr. Fransina Yoteni.

They key themes were:

- a. Discussion over the historical narratives of the identity of ‘civilization’ and barbarianism’.
- b. Continuing/Contemporary Issues of colonialism prevalent in global regional contexts.
- c. The extent to which decolonization in academia has helped to dismantle racism.
- d. Imperialist views of God.
- e. Understanding whiteness and ways to deal with it.
- f. Interconnected struggles in global regional contexts related to colonialism.

An image was shown to the panelists. It is an image titled “From the Cape to Cairo”. Illustration shows Britannia carrying a large white flag labeled Civilization with British soldiers and colonists behind her, advancing on a horde of natives, one carrying a flag labeled Barbarism [Dated 1902 December 10]. The moderator then asked - **how does this image resonate in the context of your regions?**

Tara Tautari agreed to the contrasting imagery of ‘barbarian’ and ‘civilization’ and how the narrative was being played out in modern times - in politics and daily life of the Maoris - in Aotearoa (New Zealand). **Thandi Soko-de Jong** felt that the image resonates with her Malawi context of slave trade and colonialization and shows the determined faces of ‘civilization’ and faceless mass of ‘barbarians’ bowing in submission. **Nicolas Abou Mrad** highlighted the context of the Middle East, the issue of geo-political hegemony created by Britain, France and the US, and the separations created among communities based upon confessional identities, e.g. Shia and Sunni. On the other hand, **Margit Ernst-Habib** talked about embodying white privilege and how she carries it wherever she goes. **Fransina Yoteni** raised serious concerns about the human rights violations in Papua and the occupation of their land by Indonesian armed forces. **Cali Tzay** talked of how colonial languages had been imposed upon the indigenous people and how he saw himself as a ‘barbarian’ when he reflected on the image.

The moderator then asked another question to the panelists - **What are issues of colonialism that you are struggling within your context?**

Tara Tautari’s answers were - loss and dislocation, and the trauma that the Maori face to the present day owing to loss of power, loss of status, loss of land, loss of identity, etc. which were major impacts of colonialism.

The moderator then moved to a more theoretical question - **to what extent has the decolonization process helped in dismantling colonialism?**

Thandi Soko-de Jong raised a pertinent issue of the relationship between colonization, patriarchy, and sexism, which existed in African societies earlier, but new versions crept in when the colonizers invaded. **Tara Tautari** gave an example of how a WCC meeting at Bahia created a debate among participants when the issue of the need of sovereignty for the Maori people was raised. **Margit Ernst-Habib** felt that a dismantling of colonialism can take place when we decolonize our minds, and that the project of dismantling should start with the question – what does whiteness mean?

The moderator then took a question from the participants: **“should we change the imperialist view of God that came with colonizing power?”**

Tara Tautari opined that there was a need to change this narrative that God came with the invaders, and it was by sharing resources and power that God could be embodied in churches. **Cali Tzay** gave the example of how certain evangelical churches that sprouted in the 1980s were continuing to erode indigenous people’s customs and cultures. **Fransina Yoteni** clarified that the Papua situation was a political one and the indigenous people were withstanding the colonial powers by understanding God in their context and by praying in their local language.

The moderator took a participant’s question for Dr. Margit: **does postcolonialism help in the dialogue between suppressor and the suppressed?**

Margit Ernst-Habib felt that postcolonialism and humanism are keys. And that both the parties need to sit in the same boat and that there was a need for postcolonial encounters.

The next question that the moderator raised was: **How do you name whiteness? How do we deal with it?**

The answers that came from panelists were unique to their distinct contexts. While **Fransina Yoteni** talked of seeing the ‘other’ as oneself and mentioned the atrocities taking place in Papua, **Nicolas**

Abou Mrad spoke of the theological model – white and non-white, suppressor and suppressed – based on the Old Testament story of Cain and Abel was a western theological category and one that had adverse impacts in the Middle East. “Going back to the Bible”, he said, was the answer to the Conference’s important question on “how do we repent?” **Margit Ernst-Habib** spoke of her Palestinian husband and her context in Germany where her own children were being discriminated based on their physical features.

The next question thrown at the panelists was: **what are the interconnected struggles in the context of colonialism?**

Magrit Ernst-Habib said that there was interwovenness and entanglement of issues when we talk of colonialism and that whataboutery is what one often encounters while dealing with these issues. **Thandi Soko-de Jong** talked of how the question – am I good or smart enough? – becomes internalized. **Fransina Yoteni** agreed that trauma and the pain caused by dislocation was an important component in the context of colonialism. **Cali Tzay** suggested that recognizing the autonomy of the indigenous people was the key to dealing with these issues. **Nicolas Abou Mrad** talked of plurality and identity in the context of the Middle East and how a symbiosis was necessary. **Tara Tauri** advised that though theories were good in themselves, relationship-building was an important necessity.

The moderator raised a final question - **since the process of decolonization is different for the victim and the oppressor, how can the church work in this space?**

Cali Tzay appreciated the work of WCC in the 1980s when doors were opened for the indigenous people. He felt that the church has and needs to play an important role in this process of decolonization and the alliance between churches and indigenous people needs to be strengthened.

Finally, the moderator invited the participants for the second session in the afternoon and highlighted the theme of the morning session scheduled for 15th June 2021.

POWERFUL VOICES

*“I would like to see images that we give, to begin **our** discussions on ‘Civilization’... [discussions that do not] start with white Britannia but with brown Maori.”*

- **Tara Tautari** while speaking about the potency of white narratives and images that portray white superiority.

“I see myself as embodied ‘civilization’, I am perceived as ‘civilization’ because I am white, and I am German. I am embodied, I take [embodied civilization] with me, I take this privilege with me. I have not earned this; this is just what bodies bring with them. It is not about systems; it is not about politics and philosophies. It is about bodies”

- **Magrit Ernst-Habib** while talking about white privilege.

“Indigenous people are displaced from their own village, even our pastor is killed, without any proper things to bury them. These are things that we are experiencing in the modern era.”

- **Fransina Yoteni** while talking about the military occupation of West Papua by the Indonesian army.

“The role the church is playing in the colonization of indigenous people is very negative. It is right now taking place in Canada.... We have to remember that racism and racial discrimination, many people thought that [it] fell down with the fall of Apartheid [regime], and racial discrimination disappeared, but now we know that it is not true, and it is still alive, and very very alive. [However] the WCC is playing a very important role in decolonization and also in building democracy in many countries.”

- **Cali Tzay** while talking about his impressions on the image of ‘Civilization’ and ‘Barbarian.’

“The issues of colonialism have to do with issues of loss, dispossession and the historical trauma [associated with] it – something which we are experiencing to this current day.”

- **Tara Tautari**

“Decolonization is an ongoing process in my context. Politically we are decolonized. But economically, culturally, and other aspects, colonization is ongoing. Added to that is the generational trauma that comes with the experience of colonization, even if, politically, colonization, for us, is in the past.”

- **Thandi Soko-de Jong**

“The biggest challenge for us is decolonizing our minds. We don’t know what whiteness mean we don’t what comes with whiteness; we don’t know what white privilege is because we are the norm. So dismantling racism starts with trying to find out what whiteness means...”

- **Magrit Ernst-Habib** on dismantling colonialism and racism.

“If the church in my context is standing with the people, it will have to carry the cross of being called a separatist – this is the cost.”

- **Fransina Yoteni** on showing solidarity with the Papuan struggle against exploitation.

Session 2

Moderator: Adele Halliday

Iva Carruthers

Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth

Verene Sheperd

Dora Arce Valentin

Jose Zarate

Image for Day 1



Prevailing themes and quotes:

- We need to reflect on our missionary from the context of our global history of slavery.
- The Goal of today's panel is to look at the manifestation of the complexity of racism in today's modern world.

Prevailing themes from today's discussion:

- The global response to Covid-19 is an example of modern imperialism and institutional racism which influenced the way in which the virus was handled.
- Much effort has been placed in decolonizing formally occupied countries yet there has been less effort put forth by former colonizing empires to confront their past as colonizers
 - There needs to be means of catharsis
- The church universal was/is complicit in the soulless actions carried out in the name of civilizing the world. If the church universal wants to be the driver of moral and racial justice it must first acknowledge the ways in which it aided the cause of white supremacy and white-male-hetero-hegemonic thinking.
- There is a moral obligation to seek ecological justice seeing as ecological destruction coincided with slavery and subjugation of indigenous/ native populations.
- There is still an unconscious bias towards whiteness as the pinnacle of success--this can be seen in education, medical, and global leadership.

Q&A:

To all panellist: image: From the Cape to Cairo--Where do you see yourself in this image

Iva's response: History acts because images feel and images can react. Violent capture of people of African peoples. Denotes manifest destiny. Weaponized whiteness. Conflates non-white colors being an object of dominances. Reminds of feminization of conquest--mothering. She says that she is on the side of those who are resisting the violence of whiteness. Trying to maintain identity in respects to

Prof Verene: it says to me that white supremacy explains the plight today. This image might be historical but this is still the current reality. Reminds me of the destruction of indigenuss peoples not just their humanity but also their land they live on. Reminds her of why Non-white people are disproportionately affected by Covid-19 and the lack of adequate health care provided for this section of society. Conoloizer because of their belief they are better than those they colonized have destabilized life and livelihood. It is not just bodies that were colonized

Rev. Patricia: Empire is soulless domination. The dominance of white women. Civilizing people that they did not consider people. Dehumanizing people by bringing them to the feed of civilization. In many ways it is still present--the civilizing mission that is brought by the western civilization is still very present in modern missions. How to critically address which side do we stand on when we are

working within the context of western society. Can not expect empire as a focal point of “civilizing” of indigenous people.

Dora: Part of my stance against empire is to reclaim the language that empire forced upon the colonized people. The power of Empire is still present for people living in Cuba. This is the reality for her country. This image is not historical nor imaginary. There is social class created by colonization. In theory she looks white thus she is afforded the privileges that come along with whiteness yet there is a mixture of identity in her background. It is hard to position yourself because her witness allows for the fluid movement between oppressed and oppressor. It is a call to constant reflection on a person's position of power. There needs to be a holistic approach to racial justice.

Jose: History would have us believe that the invaders were the ones in the winning position. Witness and civilization tramples over all aspects of indigenous life and land. A painful reminder of the genocidal actions of conquest. Civilization, within the context of white-ness, is thinly valid destruction. Can not be on the side of barbarism because the definition of the term comes from the agenda of whiteness.

What are the issues of colonialism you are struggling against in your own context?

Jose: Before white western colonization there was flourishing native culture yet with the onset of colonization all of that was destroyed and western colonial ideas were forced upon the colonized people. The indigenous people are the poorest of the poor while the colonizer had been made wealthy from all of the natural resources stolen from the indigenous people. 2007 and the UN Rights of indigenous people has started to shift the agenda yet there is still much work that needs to be done.

Prof. Verene: Empire degrades Earth and its resources. There is 43% of American millennials are non-white. There is a “browning” of the USA which sees the white backlash and anger. Calling for the decolonization of phlanpay. Covid-19 has shown how the whiteness and colonization profits off the suffering of Black and Brown bodies.

To what extent has decolonization helped to dismantle racism?

Dora: Cuba was an important play in Empire. Land was exchanged without consideration for the people that live there. After Empire was forced out post-revolution the people left in Cuba actively tried to combat and bridge the gap of racism and classism but in place by empire. There was a lack of vision that left many gaps. There was the want and need to reject racism because it was a product of colonization.

There is still the reality of institutional racism--black people more specifically black men are the face of violence in the country.

White hegemonic narratives--there is a belittling of African histories and indigenous histories. There is still a favoritism for witness and European histories. There is preference for whiteness--symbolic racism. There has been a widening of racism and race discrimination because of the legacy of empire. There has been a real effort to circumvent racism yet there are still imperialistic mindsets of the ruling powers that striate efforts to combat racism.

Struggling with the fact that they are not totally free from colonialism. Suffering from the lack of education system because it is still very much influenced from the mythical

Reparative justice is critical--racism is still deeply rooted in the rest of the -ism present in the world. Decolorized people are haunted by the failure of the Colonizer.

The Western civilization is still deeply rooted in the mentality of colonialism thus each time efforts can not be made towards dismantling of racist ideology there is push back from white and whiteness. Racism has had a renewal

Iva: The church needs to pick up a mirror and claim its history as a supporter of colonization. There must be acknowledgment of the churches Doctrine and theology of discovery. There must be truth telling before the church universal can be the voice of moral and social justices.

How do you name whiteness?

Iva: whiteness is the color most privileged that benefit from the exploitation of those not afforded the privilege of whiteness. For the world to survive the exploitative nature of whiteness as Empire there must be movements of solidarity that stand against white privilege.

We have to get society to accept equity and equality. We have to get rid of the idea of different racist and hierarchies of racism. Stopping the myth of whiteness is inherently better than other races civCovid 19 show that individualism affects the whole world.

Pat: Within the church and society still has benchmarks that favor whiteness and white maleness. Empire seen as the "Prince" that comes and "saves" Cinderella. Power, domination, and conflict of patriarchy still threatens life and liveliness. The plundering of the Earth continues

How do we stand on the side of life giving action? The church remains the gatekeeper of white heteronormativity--we uphold and maintain aspects of imperialism that lacks soul.

Are there interconnected struggles given your cultural context:

Jose : society is still struggling with the repercussions of a colonial history. There is a fear of racial discrimination because of this there are those who refuse to embrace their indigenous culture.

Session 3

Moderator: Philip Vinod Peacock

Gladson Jathanna

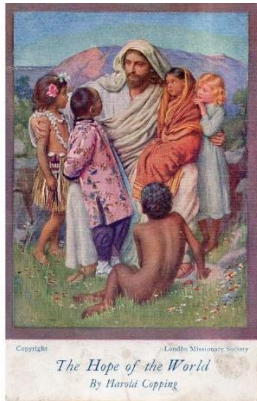
Tore Johnsen

Malebogo Kgalemang

Mitri Raheb

Anthony Reddie

Image of Day 2



MISSION AGENCIES LEGACIES

Peter Cruchley welcomed the participants to Day Two. He also shared some technical information regarding YouTube recording, screen sharing, using of Q&A and Chat. He then welcomed the moderator – Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock.

Philip Vinod Peacock welcomed the participants and attendees, informed that the format of the webinar would have a conversational tone, and highlighted the key questions of the day’s webinar – the relationship between mission agencies and colonialism, and the contribution of mission agencies in perpetuating colonialism in regional contexts. He then introduced the speakers – Dr. Gladson Jathanna, Rev. Dr. Tore Johnsen, Malebogo Kgalemang, Rev. Latu Latai, Rev. Prof. Dr. Mitri Raheb, and Professor Anthony G. Reddie.

A painting from 1915 titled, “The Hope of the World” by Harold Copping, was shown to the panelists. The image depicts Jesus sitting with a group of children from different continents. The moderator then asked the panelists – **what do you identify in this image? What would you like to change?**

Malebogo Kgalemang answered, “The picture is very disturbing”. She could only identify herself as the child on Jesus’ lap and not the child sitting aloof from him. This, for her, represented a racialized discourse ingrained in the racial and colonized image. She felt that such images had no place in today’s day and age and needed to be discarded. **Gladson Jathanna** identified three dimensions – a Jesus painted in white missionary’s ink with a political agenda, a white Jesus shown as the Messiah of the masses, and the marginally solitary hill which acts as a portrayal of the margins as sites of vulnerability. **Tore Johnsen** found the image disturbing and thought-provoking. He narrated his childhood experiences of racism when his family was treated as an object to highlight the success of missions to the Sami people, narratives portraying the overwhelming goodness of white missionaries, and the condescension with which the Sami were deemed to be incapable of leadership in church. For him,

the blonde girl looking at another child instead of looking at the face of Jesus was troubling. **Philip Vinod Peacock** thought of such actions as micro aggressions on the part of the white missionaries.

For **Mitri Raheb**, the image reminded him of the church he was baptized, grew up and served for 30 years; images of blonde Jesus were everywhere and continues to be so up to the present day. He questioned, “Is it a portrait of Jesus or a portrait of the West?” “Why is a middle eastern child missing in the image when Jesus himself was a Palestinian Jew?” The image reminded him of Orientalism – of how the West portrays the powerless children of the rest of the world – who could be colonized and enslaved. **Latu Latai** spoke from the context of the Pacific and the lack of sea bodies in the image. Such images of a glorified history of Christianity can still be seen in many houses in the Pacific, and such racialized ideas have been internalized by people. He, however, did not feel that the image needs to be discarded, but could be used to educate and decolonize the racist ideas among the people. **Anthony G. Reddie** too found the painting disturbing: the blonde Jesus and the naked black child whose face was not visible. This he termed as an **ontological violence**. Unless such images were used in a teaching context, they need to be put in a box and kept away.

“One of the challenges in the Pacific is that our churches are really struggling to critique the colonial history of the church.” **Latu Latai**

The Moderator then raised another question: Images, theology and architecture have been used by church to perpetuate racialized inequalities. **What responsibility does the church hold?**

Tore Johnsen warned that when such questions are asked, they are seen as offensive and met with resistance within the church. Colonization and massive land grabbing are justified, and violence is wrapped up in well-intentioned benevolence.

Malebogo Kgalemang raised concerns of how churches in her region were involved in ownership of vast scathes of land, had not interrogated their roles in land grabbing, and were not accepting their role in the act. The issue is not just racial but that of gender – exclusion of women from ordination.

Anthony G. Reddie felt that the missionary imperative to take land, to colonize it, etc. echo from Old Testament narratives of invading, living aloof from the other to avoid contamination, etc. **Gladson Jathana** brought in another perspective to the discussion by asking – “Is it enough to hold the actors of modern missionary movement alone as accountable?” Beyond colonialism and racist practices of mission agencies, there were multiple hierarchies in indigenous cultures too – e.g. presence of caste system in India prior to the coming of missionaries.

Church and mission agencies are yet to exorcise the history of racial inequality. There exist these sins of silence, apathy, and indifference to working towards racial reconciliation. **Malebogo Kgalemang**

Two questions came up from the chat box – “Can we see the image as a marketing agenda created to share with donors for raising funds?” and “Could the panelist reflect on the colonial desire for ‘capturing, dominating and domesticating’, not only humanity but God?”

Responding to these questions **Mitri Raheb** mentioned that colonization was still a reality today. Palestine is supposed to be the holy land and yet the holy spaces are controlled by the Greeks, Italians, and the Germans, while the local churches are kept on minimal support. **Latu Latai** said that the impact of colonialism in the Pacific region differed from place to place. What disturbed him was the unwillingness of the church to self-critique and break away from the past. This, for him, is a form of neo-colonialism.

For me, colonialism is not a legacy, it is my present reality. **Mitri Raheb**



The Moderator then raised a thought-provoking question: What do we with the white Jesus? Has decolonization exorcised the racist inequality?

Anthony G. Reddie responded by saying that the white Jesus was not Christ. It was anti-Christ, an impostor! There was the need to deconstruct the ways in which Christianity had been distorted. Even if we replace the white Jesus with black Jesus, and yet the black Jesus does what the white Jesus did, the whole exercise goes futile.

Christian theology gave rise to imperialism. Indigenisation of church in its proper sense is necessary. **Anthony G. Reddy**

We need to keep revisiting the legacies of colonialism because it will offer our white friends the opportunity to negotiate with their whiteness and privilege. We need to admit that racism has multiple avatars – casteism, racism that exists among indigenous people, etc. We often create white as an external enemy and we hide our own racist cruelty in our indigenous locations.

Gladson Jathanna

On the question of “what if everyone has their own Jesus?”, **Gladson Jathanna** replied there was a need for Christological reflection – firstly, there was this need for deriving interdependence between Jesus and the most oppressed in the land. Secondly, decolonization had to be an ongoing movement where resistance movement takes place and where subalterns and Jesus help each other. Thirdly, the subalterns should see Jesus and the imperial powers parallel to each other.

Reflecting further **Mitri Raheb** observed that white Jesus was still a source of misery in Palestine. British Protestant politicians and missionaries had orchestrated the movement of European Jews to Palestine as colonizers and as their contractors. Contemporary white American evangelical theology was further promoting settler colonialism. **Latu Latai** felt that from a pacific perspective there was a need to move beyond the colonial representations of Jesus.

Unfortunately, the Palestinians were never able to tell their own stories. Our stories were told by the West that viewed us as savage. We need a contextual theology and decolonial theology. **Mitri Raheb**

Finally, the Moderator asked: **How do we repair the damage done by colonialism and racism?**

Mitri Raheb simply stated that the damage was vast, and it was not easy to repair. He felt that Palestinian Christians were still in the stage of resisting and fighting and not in the stage of repairing. **Latu Latai** felt that in order to heal we must look back in history –

We need to expose colonialism. People do not see colonialism. We need to write our own stories, songs, and disseminate our ideas/theologies. These are the first step. I do not see a way right now towards repair.

Mitri Raheb

Christianity is mostly oral and based in indigenous practices. During my dissertation project, when I talked to people about God, they talked of God in connection to nature. Sami practices are often thought of as magic and superstition. Christian hierarchical worldview usually demonizes this. So, the question rises whether our Christology is a top-down theology.

Tore Johnsen

– firstly, we need to acknowledge that Evangelization and Colonialism worked hand in hand. Churches in the West had not fully acknowledged the damage to indigenous people. **Tore Johnsen** opined that churches should participate in decolonizing practices. **Malebogo**

Kgalemang clearly advised, “Resistance is the way to go. I come from a context where techniques of denial, ethnocentrism, patriarchy, gender, etc. are the order of the day.” For her, the resistance motif would be the way ahead and seeking to repair was still a far-fetched dream.

The Moderator thanked the panelists for the in-depth and passionate discussion. The answer to the question – “What is white Jesus?” was “It is a system that marginalizes”. And therefore, a more Trinitarian understanding of God – perichoresis – might be one of the answers.

Common Themes:

1. **Offensive imagery:** While the contexts of the panellists were distinct, everyone found Harold Copping’s painting deeply disturbing, offensive, and something that ought to be discarded or used for pedagogical purposes to expose colonial and racial categories.
2. **Reluctance and hesitation in accepting the role of church and mission agencies in the white missionary expansionist project:** When accountability is sought for colonial missionary practices, it generates denial among the mission agencies. On the other hand, the regional churches hesitate to self-critique, decolonize racial categories found in art, architecture, and stories, and tend to perpetuate a glorified mission history.
3. **Desire for repair was still far-fetched:** The present need in the regional contexts was to resist and fight racism and engage in decolonizing practices in the church.
4. **Colonialism has a variety of avatars:** Colonialism is not white colonialism alone. It is found in various forms in diverse contexts, e.g. Palestine and India. Furthermore, patriarchy, sexism and ethnocentrism continue to grow as offshoots of colonialism.

Session 4

Moderator: Adele Halliday

Wale Hudson-Roberts

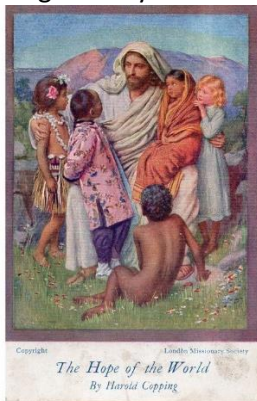
Michael Jagessar

HyeRan KimCragg

Dina Ludeña Cebrian

Yvette Nobel-Bloomfield

Image of Day 2



Prevailing themes and quotes:

- Missionaries sent themselves to occupied lands with mindsets of whiteness v. blackness/darkness.



- Our theological assumptions still remain unchallenged.
- Whiteness is a virus--that seeks destroy and whatever can not be destroyed for profit will assimilate into whiteness.
- The image of the white Jesus has risen to become the icon of white supremacy.
- “Making Jesus brown does not change the theological underpinning” --Michael
- The image of the white Jesus has rose to become the icon of white supremacy
- The image of white Jesus is pervasive so much so that most people do not question the assumption that God is white and male
- Is nakedness the costume of the black body?
- Will the church universal want to tackle the colonization of our theology?
- Whiteness, as an entity unto itself, has caused more death and harm than any virus or pandemic.
- “Are we converted towards God or are we to seek a conversion towards our neighbor?” -- Dina via interpreter
- The churches need to be more human in their actions-- global north churches must seek to transform their narrative from *service for* to *service with* mentality
- Blue-eyed white Jesus is divorced from the earth
- When a pastor is being called there is still a wonder if they can get a white male pastor. Native/indigenous pastors are always looked down upon and their theological understanding questioned
- How can we say that a scholar is racist...yet we remain in the theological practices that formed that person. We must be open to own self critique.
- Whatever color we give to Jesus if we do not interrogate the underlying assumptions we are only furthering an anti-life affirming cycle.
- God and Jesus is a spiritual encounter that should not be shaped by white culture
- “Very little can be done with white Jesus until we deconstruct white theologies”--Hudson
- Indigenous contributions have largely been discredited by whiteness and the global North.
- Decolonization can not begin to exercise racism and white supremacy until itself is decolonized.
- We must ask ourselves why it is that the oppressed must repent and confess their sins when they were/are the victims of colonization.
- Collectively there needs to be a drive to dismantle theologies that label god as white yet caution must be paid so the cycles of discrimination and hate are not perpetrated again.

Q&A main points:

The hope of the World image

Hudson:-- the image conveys a message that reinforces white hegemony and global racism: This speaks to render black and brown people as powerless--whiteness cannot be eclipsed by blackness. Jesus centered in the middle radiates whiteness centering whiteness. This image represents a god that could be racist--constitutes white theology.

Michael: There are still versions of white Jesus that still exist. Missionary propaganda used their whiteness as a stand in for Jesus's constructed white identity. What for and for who is this white Jesus? As children of God we must ask tough questions about love.

HyeRan: We need to interrogate the role of white Jesus in the colonization of minds and bodies.

The color of Christ--the son of God and the saga of race in America-- The image of the white Jesus has risen to become the icon of white supremacy. The image of white Jesus is more than just a photo--it is proracism, pro capitalism, etc.

Cut off--we must remove the white Jesus from house of worship because with white Jesus you are not worshipping God you are worshipping whiteness.

Curate--if the image of white Jesus can not be removed than we must move forward with questioning why that image was placed there in the first place.

Create--new modes of encountering Christ that is rooted in context and culture.

Yvette: The church still perpetrates which does a disservice to our theological understanding. Jesus is preoccupied with something use-- white Jesus is with the crowd but is not present with the crowd.

Responsibility of churches in the history mission

Yvette--the church has been able to justified many things in the Jesus.

We have allowed racism to be deeply embedded in our theological and our education systems. The idea that theology can only come from the North--being black or native you have the feeling that they are not good enough.

Michael:" we Presume that the de facto Christian identity is white. Churches and institutions are stained--their roots are poisoned. How can we say that a scholar is racist...yet we remain in the theological practices that formed that person. We need to engage with meaning making and knowledge theological production that is not rooted in the toxic legacies of mission

What do we do with white Jesus? How do we exercise this person from our churches

Whudson: "Very little can be done with white Jesus until we deconstruct white theologies

Jesus challenges the historical temple practices--this a black/brown Jesus that is not afraid to speak truth to power and offer forth an alternatives to

We have to deconstruct theologies where Jesus stands with the privileged and affords more privilege to them--these are white theologies designed to center whiteness.

HyeRan: preaching is weeping, confessing, and resisting can be helpful in repairing the harm done by colonization. White Christians do not cry because there seems to be a culture of keeping your emotions internal. Emotions are equated with weakness--because whiteness has kept all of their mention internally they can not start the healing process. Whiteness refuses to do actual confessing/repentance--as a community collective name our shortcomings and wrong doing. By naming our collective sins we are prepared to name our future mistakes. Repentance orients us towards god. Resisting can only come from the lived experiences--it is a redemptive work--anti-racism is a redemptive action it is not about destruction.

Yvette: White Jesus codifies the salvific power of Christ to only whiteness. This limits the divine. It is a struggle for POC to come to the table and share the table with white people. We have not overcome the pain and abuse of the past.

Session 5

Moderator: Philip Vinod Peacock

James Bhagwan

Fernando Enns

Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel

Priyanka Samy

Image of Day 3



MODELS FOR ANTI-RACIST ACTION FOR WHITE AND OTHER DOMINANT RACIAL GROUPS

Carroll Seforosa welcomed the participants to Day Three. She also shared some technical information regarding YouTube recording, screen sharing, Q&A and Chat. She then welcomed the moderator – Rev. Dr. Philip Vinod Peacock.

Philip Vinod Peacock welcomed the participants. He briefly summarized the 15 June morning session conversation as – a discussion that started from “How is Christ represented?” to “What Christ represents for us?” Yesterday’s webinar accepted that there was hesitation and reluctance on the part of churches to accept their role in the racial and colonial missionary expansion project. He further highlighted the focus of Session 5 – Models for Anti-Racist Action. He then introduced the speakers – **Rev. James Bhagwan, Rev. Dr. Fernando Enns, Rev. Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel, and Priyanka Samy**. An image was shown to the panelists of a masked Korean young man holding a placard that read “Koreans for Black Lives Matter”.

The major questions around which the webinar revolved were:

1. What was the response of the panelists to the image shown?
2. Has the Church really done enough to address issues of racism?
3. What can the church do?
4. What form of resistance and push-back do the panelists face in their anti-racism efforts?
5. How do we dismantle the presence of systemic structures of colonialism and racism in our churches?

The panelists shared their unique experience and offered their opinions from their contextual realities and ground experiences. The key take-aways from the opinions of the panelists:

“We do not need your tables, but we do need the resources at your table.”

Priyanka Samy



1. **On the Black Lives Matter movement:** The movement reached Western Europe and roped in young activists in many cities. Yet only time will show the extent to which it would sustain and whether it would bring change in our church and society (Fernando Enns). Dalit lives matter: along with black lives, there were Dalit voices in India and among the diaspora that, for decades, have continued their struggle against casteism, a system which operates on the premise of purity and exclusion (Priyanka Samy). Though the BLM movement requires global solidarity, yet humanity, instead of skin color, should be the reason for this solidarity that has poured out globally (Lesmore Gibson). West Papuan lives matter: cultural racism exists in West Papua, a territory under the control of Indonesia (James Bhagwan).
2. **On whether the church has done enough on the issue of racism?** It depends upon the extent to which a church has influence in the society. The church continues to deal with the situation in West Papua where mission enterprise initially had a liberational motif but was very quickly colonized (James Bhagwan). The All Africa Conference of Churches has been active in addressing the issue of racism and xenophobic attacks. Yet there is a need to reflect on whether these public statements and policies have transformed into actions. The question arises, “how can we operationalize our well-written statements and policies into programs” (Lesmore Gibson). In the past, the work of WCC to combat racism has led to praise from world leaders like Nelson Mandela, yet we can get blinded by past achievements. There is a need to reflect upon the presence of Xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Judaism, etc. in our own ranks. The phrase “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace” means that it is a common journey, and not a “pilgrimage for” someone on the periphery (Fernando Enns). The church clearly has not done enough. The political economy of equity and reform needs to take place in the churches. There is a need to adopt an intersectional approach – a substantive equality for all. There can be no one model to derive an intersectional approach, because no one size fits all. Marginalized community deserve a place at the Table (Priyanka Samy).
3. **On what can the church do?** A deep-rooted issue takes time to change. When a movement begins there is a rush to respond to it which leaves people out. The question is, “how do we become inclusive and representative at the same time” (James Bhagwan). One of the main concerns is the challenge of hypocrisy. To say “we are guilty” with a genuine heart is important. In our diversity we are one, and each one brings their unique gifts to the table. Some churches have apologized for their complicity in colonial and racist practices, yet what has been the impact? (Lesmore Gibson) Can we as white and privileged people allow ourselves to question our whiteness? (Fernando Enns).
4. **Table:** The symbolism of Table drew a good amount of discussion. While Priyanka Samy talked of equal place at the Table, Fernando Enns asked, “why should Americans and Europeans invite anyone to the table?” People were interested to sit on a mat or under a tree instead of tables set out by the privileged. Local communities can be our host and they ought to have the power to create spaces and invite the privileged to those spaces. In response, Priyanka Samy brought about the issue of resources – marginalized communities ought to have access to those tables which are loaded with resources. A redistribution of resources was necessary. Fernando Enns agreed and suggested that possibly such tables, mats and tree shaded – wherever you meet – need to be reshaped.
5. **On resistance and pushback** – There is an increased backlash when Dalits, especially women, try to access justice. Those in power use social capital and the network of immunity to maintain impunity. The church has failed. It needs to take cognizance of what the marginalized groups have to say (Priyanka Samy). Pushback comes when the privileged feel that they have not done anything wrong. In Fiji, as mission was colonized, there was this perception that indigenous people were cannibals and not capable. Indigenous people then started marginalizing the migrant communities. The ethnic and religious majority started despising immigrant minority communities. Melanesians, Polynesians, and Micronesian physical features have developed a system that has been internalized for generations (James Bhagwan).



6. **On “non-racist” or “anti-racist”:** White fragility – a defense mechanism – is utilized to make the best argument, use scholarship, publications, etc. to appear as if white folks are against racism. “I am not a racist” is a stupid sentence because everyone is caught in systemic practices of racism. We become anti-racists only when we start changing the life and reality of people (Fernando Enns). Often religious texts have been used to justify sexism, gender supremacy, and racism. The question is – “how can Scriptures be read in a transformative manner to resist all kinds of oppression?” (Lesmore Gibson)
7. **On dismantling systems:** “Who is willing to dismantle the system they belong to?” Churches have Colonialism, Neocolonialism, etc. ingrained in their systems. We ought to see “who tells the stories?”, “who is willing to listen to that story?”, “who is willing to keep that story alive?”, etc. (James Bhagwan). Dismantling requires courage. Courage to affirm that we are complicit in such life denying structures. A metanoia ought to take place. The privileged need to accept that they have benefitted from unjust structures (Lesmore Gibson). In the context of university education, we have started working towards critically reviewing publications that have elements of racism ingrained in their scholarship (Fernando Enns). Dismantling requires a continuous commitment in everyday actions (Priyanka).
8. **On decolonizing the Ecumenical Movement:** WCC’s Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace seeks to listen to communities. The question is whether the WCC Assembly at Karlsruhe will be a pilgrimage? This will determine where we as a movement are going (James Bhagwan).

The moderator thanked the panellists for their participation.

Some strong voices that we can pay heed to:

“You will never hear a white person saying, “I am white, and I am a racist, I repent, and I am born again.””

Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel, Director of Programmes at the All Africa Conference of churches.

“If the Black Lives Matter movement did not come from the United States it would not have picked up everywhere. It has a big following. But what about West Papua? This is an issue tied to colonialism and racism too.”

James Bhagwan, while highlighting the situation in West Papua.

“When we say, “we have to defend our democracy” we are othering the other – that clearly is racism.”
Fernando Enns on the context of Western Europe.

“In the context of Zoom, there is little consideration to people from other parts of the world. Europe and US continue to be at the centre.”

James Bhagwan

“If we do not take time to sit down with communities on the ground and allow them to host us and create space for us, we are only fooling ourselves.”

Fernando Enns on the how participants during the PJP gatherings endeavour to visit communities.

“We do not need your tables, but we do need the resources at your table.”

Priyanka Samy

“Within the ecumenical movement, the politics of time zone and language, can end up marginalizing certain people group?”

Philip Vinod Peacock while responding to James Bhagwan’s opinion on Zoom timings.

Session 6

Moderator: Adele Halliday

Juan Carlos Chavez Quispe

Chebon Kernell

Marjorie Lewis

Seth Wispelwey

Image of Day 3



Prevailing themes and quotes:

- Public protest is a key element in working toward affirming humanity. Our liberation is bound-up together--this movement is a question of life and death.
- Apologizing does not mean the harm has stopped. Apologizing is just the first step towards building a just society.
- The killing of George floyd was a globally galvanizing moment.
- Special attention was paid to the universality of systematic oppression--through the stories might not be the same the harm caused by whiteness and white supremacy is a common thread linking those whose identities are marginalized.
- Systematically communities in the margins have been left out of the conversations.
- Wide spreaded attempt at a modern genocide. This is a fight for the right to see tomorrow.
- Advocating through systems built on white supremacy/ power and privilege is limiting and is designed to disenfranchise non-white people.
- People of faith are starting to understand embracing a diverse world brings a fullness of life.



- How does the white majority show solidarity with non-white communities?
- George Floyd's murder has galvanised more white people to question themselves.
- "His[George Floyd] death was a kairos moment." the rev. Dr. Marjorie
- Need to challenge white colleague to take on an anti-racist life style not just when major event happens.
- We must strive for an embodied solidarity that affirms life.
- "Apologizing does not mean the harm has stopped." --Chebon
- The reduction of harm--its the first steps to dismantling of racist systems.
- "Black lives matter is not just a slogan it is a way of living with gospel specificity." --Seth
- The sin of disinterest is a product of white privilege.
- Those at the front lines were young people, LGBTQIA, women, and black people--these are the groups that have been historically oppressed by the church.
- The church must ask itself how far does it want to go to restore power?
- Statements are just a gathering of words that hold little meaning if your organization does not acknowledge its history
- "An apology without action is just gaslighting" --Seth
- Do we acknowledge the paralleling stories of George floyd and Jesus.
- The rev, Chebon stresses that there is the propensity for the cycle of harm to be continued if those in positions of power do not actively investigate their role in harming marginalized communities past, present, and future.
- The common thread in terms of push back on the anti-racism movement comes from well meaning white people that have not comforted the ways in which they rely on white privilege to keep from having to do hard work or place their lives on the line for change.
 - White privilege proves a kind of grace to white liberals--white guilt is weaponized and used as a scapegoat.
- "When we are asked to jump for liberation our response should be how high?" --Seth
- the rev. Dr. Marjorie advocates for those who do this work to be prepared for backlash. She states backlash is nothing new--that we see this cycle be played out time again when non-white, non-male bodied people are placed in positions of power.
- he rev. Dr. Marjorie also advocates for an Elijah moment (movement?) to combat the emotional and spiritual burn-out that comes along with anti-racism work.
- white-splaining or man-splaining further aids white people's position within white privilege--this happens in all level of society
- Chebon:We are dealing with a colonized version of Christianity that benefits and aids from white supremacy--this limits the true diversity of theological perceptions.
 - We talk freely about decolonization The majority of people that are a part of colonized communities do not even realize that they are colonized--they do realize that there is other ways of encountering God and life
- Seth calls for White churches to move beyond the doctrine of scarcity --that is white supremacy speaking hoarding everything for themselves--Jesus tells us to think and act in from a place of abundance.

Q&A:

Considering the photo, what demonstrations of power have you seen in your work?

Juan: there is a need to pay more attention in the collective

The rule of law is based in racist ethnonationalism. This is a demonstration on the use of power. This image shows that another way is possible. As a community, taking to the streets is the best way to reclaim the rights that have been denied.

Chebon: this image is a witness to the community coming together and standing up for the others living on the margins. The communities in the margins are starting to band together. This is the people on the margins saying we have been suffering in mass and its time to band together and become the majority. Power is coming from becoming a kind of tribal community. the only way our voice can be heard is by going to the streets.

Marjorie: has been able to experience this world from four different contexts. Demonstrations like this are happening even in small rural villages where there are few people of color. We are seeing young people rising up and taking power. This is a global movement that is also a solidarity movement.

Seth: this photo is a moving image of the universality and particularity of a movement. There is not liberation to be found in forms of deadly spirituality (capitalism, racism, sexism) Lives are on the line. We have to ask ourselves how high are we willing to jump in the name of Jesus.

Have existing mechanisms and politics been enough?

Chebon: Words must be followed up by actions. Statements are just a gathering of words that are meaningless if your organization does not acknowledge its history. Statements are starting points that direct any and all following actions. It is important for people of faith to make a covenant that states that they will do no harm from this day forward, acknowledging how deep the harm and violence went. Apologizing is just the first step towards building a just society.

Juan: this has been replicated through-out history. This is one response that is just an act to display globally the actions done internally are not transformative. Recognizing our identity within communities of faith is a transformative action

Marjorie: There has been progress made yet it is not enough--the question comes with is it sustainable. These projects tend to get dismantled relatively quickly. There is a little hope/faith placed in these actions. White people have to deal with white privilege--there is a lack of understanding of white privilege. It is our responsibility to educate the coming generations. The reprieve is only for a season--we must educate every generation.

Seth: statements and policy have not done enough. White privilege holds so much power over us because of the grace white privilege affords well meaning whites people. Until we are ready to move beyond white guilt--white guilt is self serving--we can not enact change.

In anti-racism work where have you found push back?

Marjorie: we have to plan for the backlash--we know that is nothing new thus we must plan for the inevitable. How do we deal with legal push back. There are procedures and provisions that seem to be okay but they disenfranchise people of color. This is because when it was originally created they were created by white people who might not realize how they are putting up boundaries for non-whites.

seth : when being confronted with a call to action their first response is “I don't know what to do.” That is a product of white supremacy that is a lie told to white people to free them from the responsibility of action.

Session 7

Moderator: Philip Vinod Peacock

Frank Chikane

Henrietta Huttabarang-Lebang

Torsten Moritz

Te Aroha Rountree

Sepiuta Sepi Hala'api'api

Image for Day 4



ANTI RACIST MARKERS FOR CHURCHES

Introductory Remarks:

Asfaw Semegnish welcomed the participants to Day Four and shared some technical information regarding YouTube recording, screen sharing, Q&A and Chat. Subsequently, **Philip Vinod Peacock** welcomed the participants. He briefly summarized the discussions of the previous day's webinar – a. A global solidarity to the BLM movement erupted owing to its origin in the US, whilst other issues were silenced – this points to the inherent colonialism in global issues, b. The metaphor of Table: There is an interconnection between various tables and marginalized people need their just share of resources from the table that holds those resources, c. Unusual ending to the previous day's webinar – the question of the decolonization of the ecumenical movement had remained only partially answered. He then introduced the speakers – **Rev. Dr. Frank Chikane, Rev. Sepiuta Hala'api'api, Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, Dr. Torsten Moritz, and Te Aroha Rountree.**

Discussions:

The discussions revolved around the following questions:

1. Who do you see leading the anti-racism work in your context?
2. What does an anti-racist church do?
3. What are the marks of an anti-racist church?
4. In what ways can or has Christian mission been rerouted to be able to embody redemption?
5. Given this image, what is your prayer for the church? Or what would you like the church to demonstrate?



Following are the key themes that emerged during the discussions:

- A. **Leaders in Anti-racism work:** For **Sepiuta Hala'api'api** in New Zealand the anti-racism work was led by communities via a shared leadership approach. Whereas in the context of Europe, **Torsten Moritz** felt that the colonizer and colonized are being brought into increased proximity within the church – while people of color have started to network, white people have started to say, “yes, we need a change”. **Henrietta Hutabarat Lebang** highlighted that the Communion of Churches in Indonesia was working hard on advocacy and on issues related to discrimination based on culture, gender, religion, etc. **Frank Chikane** warned that church in South Africa was a reflection of its broken history, and that church, in general, needs to be critical and be on the side of justice. **Te Aroha Rountree** shared the generational trauma of racism and highlighted the fact that United Nations Human Rights agency had been doing significant work regarding racism; however, the churches are late bloomers on the issues of racism and justice.
- B. **Anti-racist Church:** The Methodist Church in New Zealand, explained **Te Aroha**, worked with the bicultural imperative of shared power. She felt that an anti-racist church should be *Confessional*, in its Word and Deed; *Manifestational*, by being fearless; and *Missional*, the powerful ought to be accountable to the powerless. For **Torsten Moritz**, being an anti-racist church was a far-away destination, however on the way of becoming one, three things were necessary – *Theology*, racist and exclusionary ideas in theology needed to be critiqued, *History*, European churches need to honest about their role in justifying colonialism and profiting from it, and *Structure*, where power is shared. Once we are aware of where we are, we can move towards confessing our failures, and then hope for a reconciliation. **Henrietta Lebang** shared that an anti-racist church recognizes the presence of discrimination in the church, repents, and works towards transformation. **Frank Chikane** felt that an anti-racist church was humble, listened more, and that changing the dynamics of power of the economy could help in getting rid of racism.
- C. **Co-existence:** A question from chat box came up about the coexistence of the colonizer and the colonized. **Te Aroha** reiterated that in the context of New Zealand both the colonizer and the colonized share power and governance, and despite failures, they persist. On the other hand, **Torsten Moritz** felt that there was need to go beyond co-existence and move towards fellowship.
- D. **Situation in West Papua:** On multiple occasions during the four-day webinar the topic of atrocities in West Papua had come up. In this context, **Philip Peacock** asked **Henrietta Lebang** about the efforts of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia. She highlighted that the Communion had been engaging with the churches and people of Papua and had been voicing strong opposition to the Indonesian government regarding human rights abuses, killings, etc. by the Indonesian army.
- E. **Marks of an Anti-Racist Church in the context of “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church”:** Regarding the oneness of the church, when South Africa was under the Apartheid regime, reminisced **Frank Chikane**, the global church leadership descended upon SA in support of the church in SA. Further, ‘Apostolicity’ for him signified becoming the ‘sent ones’ – a missional dimension – instead of ‘succeeding’ and ‘inheriting’. **Henrietta Lebang** highlighted three things as mark of such a church – a. the need for independence in theology, b. the need for different denominations to work together, and c. the need for a spirituality against greed and globalization. For **Sepiuta Hala'api'api** the oneness of the church meant appreciating diversity, being inclusive, and Equity (sharing of resources).
- F. **Christian Mission as Embodiment of Justice:** **Sepiuta Hala'api'api** talked about the evolving of the church in her region – from white missions and white Jesus to the development of contextual theology, emphasis on indigenous identity, use of indigenous liturgy, and composition of indigenous hymns. **Philip Peacock** rephrased it by saying, “the mission of the

church could therefore be to relearn from the diversity of the world”. **Frank Chikane** reminded that mission was not the transformation of individuals alone but that of the world, and that the role of the church had to be global. **Te Aroha** voiced her agreement to Frank Chikane’s opinion and said that we ought to think of a global Christian mission.

- G. **Image of Resistance:** An image of resistance led by the church face to face with the military was shown to the panelists. This prompted some interesting comments. For **Te Aroha** the image showed the church’s capacity to be fearless and daring. **Frank Chikane** saw it as a vulnerable church opposing the white supremacists. However, he warned that as a church we need to go beyond protests and expressing solidarity into the realm of engaging with powers that suppress people. **Philip Peacock** aptly summarized, “Moving from church to the streets to the board rooms where policies are made.” **Henrietta Lebang** saw the image as the boldness of the church to stand for justice. She agreed with Frank that the church needs to move beyond mere protests and engage in dialogue and conversation with the government and the military, as the need be. For **Sepiuta Hala’api’api** the image showed that the church was called to be vulnerable, hold hands, and face challenges. **Torsten Moritz** talked of the influx of refugees in Europe – welcoming them was not enough, a fellowship of equality was necessary. It was not only about diversity in the church; the privileged and powerful in the churches ought to share power and resources.

Concluding Part

As the webinar drew to a close, Asfaw Semegnish thanked everyone and briefly summarized the discussions of the four days. She concluded, “The important conclusion of the day was – “we are not there yet””. Peter Cruchley and Carroll Seforosa took turns to thank everyone for the insightful conversation and active participation. The moderator then called the webinar to an end.

Session 8

Moderator: Adele Halliday

Karen Campbell

Dominique Day

Kathryn Lohre

Ayana McCalman

Evariste Ndikumani

Virginia Quezada Valda

Image for Day 4



Prevailing themes and quotes:

- The call for repentance is linked deeply with reparations



- Centering the right people in conversations about race and racism.
- There seems to be a co-opting of the anti-racism movement by well meaning groups
- It is surprising how quickly racial equality becomes boxes to check--performative actions--virtue signalling.
- “We need to continue the work not repeat it”--Kathryn
- Anti-racism has become a specialized ministry in some context--being pushed to the margins before ultimately being forgotten.
- Stressed the need to cultivate spaces where difficult public conversations can be held moreover these need to be spaces that safeguards BIPOC and POC voices so they can speak without fear of repercussion.
- Evariste noted that some people do not understand who is a victim of racism or they do not realize they are being discriminated against.
- A anti-racist church is one that puts in place concrete practices that are intergenerational that stresses education.
- An anti-racist church needs to take risks and sit in its discomfort.
- It is important for churches to act--prayer can only do so much.
- The church must ask itself how it has been complacent in the mistreatment of people.
- Stressed the churches and other theological institutions need to have a deeper integrity of self and role in the past/ present harm done to those without power and privilege.
- There is a lack of knowledge in the majority of white pastors thus there is a struggle with teaching and doing anti-racism work.
- During theological training anti-racism needs to be woven into every aspect of said training. Anti-racism needs to become default thinking.
- Race and Racism has become such a common place it becomes white noise. Our institutions have been so thoroughly white washed there is a positivity bias where they think the racist is not them.
- There was a common thread of people that are committed to the struggle for an anti-racist society yet they are weary. They have done the work and have seen the cycle of performative actions.
- Maybe the church is not ready to reconnect to the community until the church properly reevaluates the historical trauma brought to a community.
- People are okay with diversity as long as it does not affect their comfort level.
- There is a struggle against seeing those viewed as labor as actual leaders.
- “We are not going to suddenly wake up and be anti-racist..”-- Kathryn
- “Anti-racist work is traumatic work..” Ayana
- Ayana: this work is worthy--to be anti racism means to be pro-love
- “Redemption is a demanding businesses”--Karen
- Christian mission was likened to a flawed beast that was perverted into preserving the earthly empire.
- Virginia: when you want to do something do it so well that you do it with you whole heart and body
- Stay in the struggle--those with power and privilege can opt in and out of the struggle but we have been called to bare the cross of Christ

Q&A:

Who do you see leading the way of anti-racist work in your context?

Kathryn: at time and over time anti-racism work have been envisaged and forgotten back the dominant norms. Public health crisis for BIPOC and POC. Cross-church- borders that need to focus on the repudiation of the doctrine of discovery. We must discern how God has called us to repent. Repertory justice not just for Black people but also indigenous people.

What does an anti-racist church do?

And anti racist church is a church that stands up and says no to racism, no to discrimination. Frosting stronger relationships that is not built of elements of discrimination---reparations are required to move forward.

Karen: needs to do a number of things the first of which is to have its eyes open and see who is in the church who is not and then ask the question why are people missing. The church needs to reflect on why these people are missing from the pews. An anti racist church needs to look at its own body before they can commit to anti-racism.

Ayana: Needs to first build awareness. When it comes to the church there is a lot of silence. The churches are divided over similar conflicts. Actively engaging with the powers that be. Churches must have an internal integrity. Can the church raise their voice on issues if we can not relate to our own history?

What is the role of theological school and training? What part can theological training be used to further anti-racism?

Karen: There are a number of ministers that do not have an understanding of anti-racism themselves.

Dominique: the church itself has been used to baptize racism and has been used to further white supremacy. The church covers up racism so well that some people do not realize that they are perpetuating racism. The first thing that needs to happen in churches is the unpacking of all the ways race and racism has affected the church body and those who call that church home.

Karen: The places that should be safe spaces are exhausted and have seen this cycle before. These people are weary and ground down. The murder of Gorge floyd has opened up new possibilities in people--there are those who might not have cared before yet

Kathryn: white churches are waking up to the reality that anti-racism work has been a life or death struggle for BIPOC POC people. The dominant culture can not opt out when things start to get difficult.

Ayan: It is not an isolated movement, it is one done globally. There is no way for the world to be silent when we can watch the harm of racism in real time. People are starting to acknowledge their power and privilege.

Marks of the church according to ap. creed --so what are the marks of the church?

Virginia: the capacity to be self critical--to recognize the church universal has failed time and again. A church that is committed to humanity and the restoration of life. The church needs to be on the front line--independent of any -isms that would keep them in their comfort zone.

Ayana: a church that is committed to diversity and inclusion-- asking itself what does it mean to be a diverse church? What does that oneness mean? How to we as the church reflect on inclusion and diversity? Acknowledging the power structure within the church. Those in power are afraid to have the diversity conversation because they don't know how to release their hold on power.

In what ways has Christian mission been re-rooted in anti-racism

Karen: Christian mission is radical yet rooted. It meets people where they are yet being unafraid to reach out and touch those society has deemed untouchable or unworthy--Jesus reaches out and touches them. We need to focus on the reality that the well being of the whole is depended on the well being of the parts. God is concerned about our everyday life.

Jesus' kingdom ideal is about raising up the well being of the individual so that the whole is made healthy. It is difficult for the church and the individual to let go--it feels to risky--relinquishing the smallest part of power so that you can have some its

Dominique: keep in mind the way we define the power and the solution. There is hope and promise that can be found in doing this work. There is redemption and peace that can be found in rigorous commitment to anti-racism

This work is profound yet painful...even when you are in the midst of pain does nor mean you can not find love