

Why don't we try to approach it from the positive side of investing in people to help them develop their God-given potential? Why don't we discriminate in their favour so that they don't become casualties and thus become a drag on and a charge to the public exchequer? Why don't we try to make them more productive persons who have a dignity that we acknowledge and respect, who have a culture and *Weltanschauung* which are, yes, different, but certainly not inferior, who have a place in the sun and who, if given the chance, will make a wonderful contribution to the body politic?

You in this country have sometimes been castigated for your racist policies, as with your "Whites Only" immigration policy of old, and that has been fully justified. We give thanks to God the many Australians acknowledged that there was something wrong. That is an important step on the way to finding a solution. I want to commend you for your positive efforts to deal justly with the claims of your indigenous peoples. I want to commend you for seeking to let them speak for themselves through their authentic and recognized spokespersons. I want to commend you for being so forthright about their land rights and want to urge you to work for their rehabilitation, for their restitution and compensation so that your wonderful society, which gave us such magnificent support during our struggles against apartheid, will be seen to be based on justice, equity and fairness to all Australians regardless of race, gender or creed.

God bless you richly always.

An Essay on Power and Identity

RACISM IN THE USA - The Mindset That Enslaves Us All

by Louis Stanley Schoen, Minneapolis, MN

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Preface

Mounting hope is often heard in the USA today that issues of “race” are being resolved — or, even, that they no longer exist. Conditions are vastly improved since the 1960s and before. There is growing awareness that science has disclaimed validity for the concept of race, as historically understood. Interracial relationships are more common than in the past, especially among people under 30. The 2008 Presidential campaign set new benchmarks. Enthusiastic crowds were heard chanting, “Race doesn’t matter!” Barack Obama’s election thrilled millions and reflected greatly advanced inter-racial collaboration among political activists and openness among voters. Some commentators claimed that it made us a “post-racial society.”

However, the weight of history is profound. It is still expressed in violence and public bigotry; more than 200 incidents were identified in the USA within a week after the election. Heavier impact is evident in the racial gaps in wealth, education, employment, imprisonment and predominant social relationships, among other conditions. Each of these was generated by past — and some current — public policies and practices favoring people of European ancestry. During the 2008 campaign, polls showed that more than a third of “white” voters still said they could not support a “black” candidate. The American white-supremacist ideology clearly is not a thing of the past.

Most housing and social life remain predominantly segregated by “race.” Memories and symbols associated with patriotic or scriptural teachings and images still often reflect “whiteness” or European heritage as normative. Uncle Sam is a tall Euroamerican relative. These traditions, even when individually denied, remain in collective social consciousness. They can annul wisdom born of contemporary experience, advanced study and higher values, whether currently attained or bequeathed by historic people. Hence, skin color, hair texture and facial features still seem to separate most people, and mark many for prejudice, stereotyping, scapegoating or, even, discrimination and bigotry.

Leadership is urgently needed in all sectors of society to dismantle racism; but nowhere is it needed more than in religious communities. With token exceptions, Christian worship remains predominantly segregated in spite of most denominations’ generally acknowledged call to moral leadership.¹

A “scale” weighing racial history

British colonial policies and the U.S. Constitution defined citizenship and, even, full humanity as limited to “white” people (and, in its full sense, only to men). Among results: People of African descent have known white racism as a major, basic flaw in American culture from its earliest days. Their first generation survived harrowing voyages on slave ships that were fatal to millions of their family members and comrades, and

demeaning, often brutal conditions ashore. Slavery divided their families, prohibited their education and imposed religious dogma affirming their diminished condition.

Even after “emancipation,” the promise of “Reconstruction” was incomplete and short-lived. They were subjected to another century of cultural savagery in the form of “Jim Crow” violence, discrimination and segregation nationwide, often enforced by state and local laws. Even after the mid-20th century Civil Rights Movement, the national culture declined to erase its basic white-supremacist doctrine and reinstated the racist system more subtly, but equally painfully, in what was characterized as “backlash.”

Slavery was a major global phenomenon into the 19th century. Specific victimization of Africans by Europeans began in the 15th century, and served many nations as well as some tribal leaders.² Its economic benefits overwhelmed and twisted political ideals and religious values everywhere. The Western slave trade and American colonists in the 17th century added a new demonic dimension, replacing indentured servitude with the “chattel” concept, redefining enslaved Africans as less-than-human property. Grass roots organizing in Europe and bitter slave revolts in the West Indies prompted British and French authorities to terminate the legal slave trade in 1807, and to end sugar plantation slavery a generation before the U.S. Civil War.³

People indigenous to this land, first friendly to the lighter-skinned newcomers from Europe, soon came to recognize the problem. Their population, likely larger than Europe’s, was decimated by European diseases brought by the Columbus voyage and all that followed.⁴ Survivors resisted the choice of either slavery or expulsion but, through military power and political chicanery, were forced Westward ahead of advancing settlement. They were targeted by many political and military leaders for genocide, as allegedly subhuman “savages.” Treaty commitments to them were repeatedly betrayed.

Church leaders helped to soften the policy somewhat in the mid-19th century but they, too, were slow to accept the full humanity of the tribal people. Several denominations were rewarded with a leading role in implementing the aboriginals’ forced assimilation — effective cultural genocide. Continuing Native resistance movements were eventually overwhelmed by Federal power, and much of the land remaining on their reduced reservations was stolen or claimed through questionable means by “white” settlers.⁵

Mexicans saw a major piece of their land forcefully annexed under the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, then redefined as the states from Texas to California. With other Latino/as, predominantly also of Indigenous descent, they found their lives restricted in El Norte.⁶ Never off limits to many U.S. entrepreneurs and politicians, lands to the South have been perpetual objects of domination and/or exploitation. Corrupt Latin American dictators often have been sustained and democratic reforms resisted by or in behalf of U.S. capital investors and government leaders deeply fearful of representative democratic socialism anywhere in the hemisphere.

People from Asia, drawn — or often forced — to the USA for work, experienced racism, as well, and were denied basic rights. Chinese workers were imported, exploited, then excluded from Frontier industries. Most with Japanese ancestry were incarcerated during World War II — a security measure imposed on very few of us whose German or Italian ancestry should have made us equally suspect. This offense was recent and obvious enough, after the national consciousness had been raised about human rights, to provoke Congress in

the 1980s to authorize reparations for Japanese families affected. Vietnamese and Hmong refugees, since the 1970s, and other Asian emigrants also have experienced discrimination.

Americans of European ancestry, facing this history today, may encounter a sense of “white guilt,” and even confusion about “racial” identity. Unless you resort to extremist “white” supremacist ideology, three principal choices emerge: (1) Disbelief and denial, (2) acknowledgement of history but asserting, “Can’t we just be colorblind, get along and look to the future?” or (3) acceptance of history’s remaining power in today’s culture, with commitment to gain deeper understanding and work for change, to create a more universally free and just society. The first two claims tend to be the most popular among “white” Americans. This essay addresses the growing population considering the third choice.

The Nature of Racism

At its founding, the USA affirmed as formative values freedom and equality for “all men.” That ideal flew in the face of deep-seated class divisions that defined European societies and politics. However, it betrayed the founders’ denial of their own class consciousness and the supremacist doctrine they brought to and nurtured in the “New World,” which favored “whiteness” and wealth defined by land ownership. White-supremacy was used to justify the settlers’ territorial greed and the economic “necessity” of slavery. Consciousness of “color,” understood as “race,” defined class relationships more starkly than economics. It was used to divide working class “white” Americans from the slaves with whom they often shared labor.⁷ That framework was established in colonial law and renewed in the Constitution and the first Congress, controverting stated values. “White supremacy” was the bottom line.

Many thousands — including some “white” people — have given their lives in resisting this bitter contradiction. Yet, American racism has continued and evolved, deeply embedded not only in cultural behavior but in the legal system and institutional practices. Courts have helped it adapt to changing laws, mores and popular expectations.⁸

Racism remains intact in individual, cultural and institutional forms, frequently unpredictable. Its presence contradicts claims that it succumbed to cultural color blindness after Civil Rights reforms or in the 2008 Presidential Election. Disparities attributable to race are still visible in almost every measurable segment of American society.⁹ Closely coupled with the class-based economic system, still shrouded in denial, racism models oppression as a dominant social value. With individual exceptions, mainly grounded in unusual knowledge, talent or mentoring, families that have been victimized intergenerationally by this duplicitous system struggle to survive. In spite of new colors evident in places of power and showmanship, they can find scant hope to aspire fully to “the American dream” of liberty and pursuit of happiness.¹⁰

Most education and popular media in the USA have suppressed these realities. With far too few exceptions, mass media exploit differences and conflict. They use polling and other techniques to maximize demographic stereotyping. Corporate control and journalistic naivete combine to minimize serious social criticism. Their references tend to assume that racism represents only personal attitudes, limited to a few extremists — or even to people “playing the race card” politically or against “white victims.” Social, economic and educational disparities are claimed to reflect inherent differences or lack of effort. Segregation is assumed to reflect preference, grounded in a universal human compulsion to exclusivity,¹¹ not in limitations and expectations imposed by laws, customs

and socio-economic discrimination. Class differences, irrespective of skin color, are interpreted as the victim's fault; and change efforts often are translated by the power structure as "class warfare."

Race is used, often subtly, to divide the lower economic class. Like conjoined oppressive twins,¹² racism and classism continue to serve the social and economic power elite of society.

A psychiatrist has defined racism as "a set of beliefs whose structure arises from the deepest level of our lives," reflecting a long history of "destructive, oppressive, and pathological" fears, myths and fantasies, including some derived from primordial perceptions. In the face of the socio-political vision that defines national pride in the USA, he observes: "Our ideals are nourished by corrupt roots and survive by a continually sustained act of self-deception."¹³ That, in turn, is why efforts to correct this evil have proven socially traumatic and generated profound but often subtly defined opposition. It is illustrative that the election of President Obama has provided encouragement to racist extremists who seek to mobilize the white-supremacist undercurrent in American society to obstruct his Administration.¹⁴

A more obvious motivation is fear — not only "white" people's fear of others who "look different." Many also fear social rejection or retribution by those on whom one depends for such routine advantages of life as family love, social acceptance, employment or business income, source of supply for necessities, or political approval and power. The fear is irrational and sustained by silence, by the popular unwillingness of "white" people to discuss "race" in terms of its realistic impact on them. Perhaps more than any other factor, this fear has nurtured and perpetuated the "white" supremacist system.¹⁵

As it remains in the USA today, racism is a system of oppression grounded in visible physical differences, and is designed to perpetuate the belief that one "race" — defined primarily by its lighter skin tone — is superior to all others.¹⁶ What transforms it from a prejudice into an oppressive system is the reinforcement that it receives from the systemic exercise of collective power, culturally socialized and institutionally organized.

The consistent, defining element of racism is power — not skin color, hair texture or facial features, which vary individually.

The power involved, in a democratic society, does not even depend upon superior numbers. By the early 21st century, "white" racism had survived the population shift to darker majorities in some cities and one or two states. More powerful reinforcement rests in nationally prevailing laws, policies, procedures, cultural norms and in history — the impact of social memory and tradition. Even as a new generation grows with more open relational experiences and ideals, the weight of history retards change.

A simple definition is: "Racism = race prejudice plus power." It incorporates multiple forms of power but, most broadly and decisively, the power of systems and institutions.¹⁷

The Power of Racism

The concept of "race" as a referent for skin color, distinct from ethnicity, contrasts sharply with the understanding of many other cultures in which race and ethnicity are almost synonymous. Some African languages are said to even lack a term for "race." The Euroamerican racial system, embedded early, was fed

by pseudo-scientific mythology and group power differentials that emerged in the era of Western European colonialism and were ratified by “science” in the period called “The Enlightenment.” It was an extension of domestic, class-based systems that served to reinforce European quests for commercial and territorial claims elsewhere —and, more basically, to affirm their own superiority.

Color, Race, Ethnicity and Religion

Cultural assumptions emerge gradually in human experience. As they take root, they are reflected in popular practice and language; then, often later, in laws and institutional policies. The paradigm that centered on the claim of whiteness may have begun emerging during the Middle Ages, when the power of a state or empire often was reinforced by the cultural power of established religion. The frame of reference included prehistoric “light vs. dark” qualitative metaphors, repeated in religious texts and other influential sources. As human imagination developed, the hope and fear inspired by day and night provided common metaphors for many life experiences. Symbolic fantasies extended the metaphor to cleanliness, purity, goodness, health and truth vs. dirt, lechery, evil, disease and falsehood. White and black defined these qualitative extremes even in some biblical references.

To apply the metaphor to skin color was a brief conceptual step for a people needing ego reinforcement, aspiring to power, and seeing themselves as light, if not exactly white. The development of this oppressive consciousness was further fed, in the Christian empires, by the historic anti-Semitism that emerged early in the Gentile church and came to surround the European Jewish Diaspora. These self-proclaimed “Christian” cultures came to associate lighter skin color with Christian “purity.” Thereupon, they modeled institutional sanction for prejudice and systemic oppression, explicitly excluding Jews and Muslims (whatever their skin tones) but also, by implication, all darker skinned peoples, considering most of them “pagan savages.”¹⁸

Church-inspired anti-Semitism emerged as early as the first century C.E., albeit contradicting the message of love prominent in both the New Testament and Hebrew scriptures. During the “Christian Crusades” of the 10th and 12th centuries, Northern Europeans are said to have sometimes killed darker Middle Easterners irrespective of their religious beliefs. In the 14th century, as its racial consciousness evolved, the massive epidemic that ravaged Europe was called “the Black Plague,” and was widely blamed on Jews. The popular characterization of the then-mysterious disease also reinforced popular fears of darkness, even as these nations were on the verge of rapidly growing exposure to dark-skinned Africans and Southern Asians. Coincidentally, in Italy, the term “razza” emerged, its usage emphasizing Jews; then, it was applied in the Spanish Inquisition. French and English explorers adapted the word as “race,” using it in the Age of Exploration to define the people of darker hues and different features increasingly encountered in the nature-friendly cultures of warmer lands.

European ethnicism and nationalism were augmented by emerging racism as tools to inspire patriotic fervor supporting political power, military adventures and economic exploitation at home and abroad. As new lands were colonized, this consciousness anchored the defining social structure of a “white” dominated world. Color consciousness was formally established in colonial Virginia laws soon after the first African indentured slaves arrived in 1619. By mid-century, the slaves were defined as property — distinct from indentured Europeans. Citizenship was legally limited to “white” people in 1690.

The “Age of Enlightenment” spurred deeper, often imaginative inquiry among European and new American academics. Early anthropologists solidified in science the assumption of “white” supremacy. They defined the “races of man” in ways that explicitly elevated “Caucasians” above all others. The premise entered the new U.S. Constitution, and the first Congress adopted it to define citizenship.¹⁹

Today, “race” is acknowledged as purely a social construct, but nevertheless profoundly defines human relationships and mutual assumptions in American culture and public policy. Its global impact mounted, with the USA’s imperialistic reach, inspired by the belief in “Manifest Destiny,” expanded globally by late in the 19th century.

Racist historical concepts became embedded in laws and culture in ways that entrap both victims and change agents in seemingly immutable processes. As an example, official church actions in the 15th and 16th centuries defined a “blood quantum” for identifying Jewishness that became a reference in defining the status of slaves in the American colonies and, later, for segregationist policies in most states. It remains in use today in U.S. laws that define membership in “American Indian” tribes. The tribes, using legal/political systems imposed upon them by the U.S. Government, are dependent upon these rules for cultural and economic sustenance. Similarly, U.S. Census racial designations have defined funding allocations for public services that impose dependency on those not seen as “white.”²⁰

What makes this racial construct so devastating is not the acknowledgement of color-based differences but the enforced group power differentials, grounded in denial of individual color variability. Acknowledging skin color as an individual quality would undermine the system, whose central purpose and defining force remains power for the mostly cream, pink or beige colored descendants of Europe via “white” identity, at some cost to everyone else.

“Race” becomes the primary socio-cultural identity by which every American is known, whether we acknowledge it, deny it or resist it. As a leading example, during the 2008 Presidential campaign, Barack Obama was widely recognized as a native Hawaiian, a Harvard graduate, a former law professor and community organizer, as well as a U.S. Senator. Yet, the leading media focus, when addressing identity rather than issues, was race — and, often, that led to asserting or implying race as an issue.

The Dimensions of Racism’s Power

Although with increasing subtlety in many areas, and notwithstanding the growing presence in positions of power of women and people with other than European roots, ours remains a “white,” predominantly male-supremacist system. Most of those who govern or lead public and private institutions remain “white,” and they tend to manipulate the systems to maintain their capacity to lead. As women and people of darker hues ascend to positions of power, they remain heavily dependent on traditional power brokers. If they stray too far from policies or behaviors affirmed by those accustomed to control, they risk failure, dismissal or even death.

The power of racism in the USA still has at least three dimensions, portrayed as exponential in their relationship to each other, imposing a set of systemic cultural prisons.²¹ Specifically:

Power1: Victimization

The most visible and directly painful dimension of the power of American racism is its oppression and inherent victimization of people whose skin tones and features suggest other than Northern European heritage. The darker their skin and less European-like their facial features, the more intensely do they tend to feel its effects. Although its pervasive, direct impact has lessened since the mid-20th century reforms generated by the Civil Rights Movement, it remains a frustrating, often subtle and unexpected but painful and destructive reality, experienced consciously in the 21st century by most people in the USA who are not defined as “white.”

In some respects, the pain is intensified by surprise: Many institutional and social contexts claim to be free of oppressive behavior and, most of the time, seem true to their word; then comes the unaware or unconsciously racist word or phrase or joke, or a supervisory preference or a choice for service in favor of someone “white,” and another person is reminded of their victimhood — often, more bitterly than if it had been officially prescribed and, therefore, anticipated. However, racism’s destructive impact is most sharply illustrated in the many remaining tragic racial disparities in American society: In educational access and guidance for achievement, in access to affordable housing, in racially targeted emphasis of subprime lending in crisis-intensified foreclosures, in employment opportunities and unemployment and poverty, in arrests and incarceration, in out-of-home placement of children in foster care, and in health care, disease incidence and mortality,

Psychological research has suggested that victims of multi-generational oppression, segregated by racism and poverty, often experience a form of post-traumatic stress disorder and pervasive community-wide depression. Many gain education and strength to resist, move out and/or work to change the system, but many turn in despair to crime or to whatever public assistance may be available.²²

Power2: “White” Empowerment

The second dimension of racism’s power is less visible, but of still greater cultural power than the victimization effect. It is racism’s grant of unmerited power and privilege to those of us considered in American culture to be “white.” It tends to be painful only to those who are aware of it and strongly motivated by concern for social justice. Although many “white” people, learning of these privileges, express surprise, one recent study suggests that most beneficiaries of “white” privilege appreciate and defend it.²³ Either response illustrates the profound dimensions of its power.

The manifestations of “white” power and privilege typically are interpreted by their recipients as either:

- (1) meritorious,
- (2) a product of the failings of those oppressed by the system,
- (3) a right that we cannot believe is denied to others on the basis of skin color,
- (4) a privilege of which we are aware and that we protect, either consciously or subconsciously, or
- (5) a combination of two or more of the above.²⁴

It is a grant that assumes “white” preference in access to economic, social and political power. On the night of November 4, 2008, the global-wide awareness of this American assumption became evident as people everywhere expressed astonishment or extreme delight at the election of a President identified as Black. Its

importance was emphasized by the news that five prior U.S. Presidents had a line of African heritage, publicly unacknowledged.²⁵

Some “white” people, of course, also share other social identities wherein they experience another system of oppression such as classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism or ageism. Prejudice and discrimination under these systems also can be painful and psychologically destructive. Yet, those so targeted still tend to experience preference vis a vis others who share the same additional identity but are not considered “white.”

Power3: The Racial Paradigm

The third, still more powerful dimension of racism is its control of all our minds. To illustrate the three dimensions P1 and P2 constitute a set of cultural prisons:

- P3 The belief that color-based “race” is a normal, factual way to define human beings and that human value and social stature ascend from the darkest to the lightest
- P2 Power and privileges inherently granted by the system to people defined as “white.”
- P1 Effects of the race-based system on people seen as other than white.

Whatever our “racial” hue, we are imprisoned by the racial paradigm.

We are socialized, first, to believe that the concept of racial identity is real, even scientific. This teaching was almost universal in American schools until the late 20th century. New scientific awareness is spreading rapidly,²⁶ but the belief remains widely intact that race, defined by skin-tone, is a real, defining human characteristic. As a social construct, it is popularly believed to shape intelligence, personality and values as well as color and facial features. It typically holds our minds even after we learn that it is a myth. This ideology effectively imprisons people within its assumptions, fomenting discrimination, scapegoating and bigotry. Whatever our “racial group,” we are subject to stereotypes that emerge from others’ prejudices or from their struggle for self-esteem if they’ve been victimized by the system.

The ideology empowering this evil system seems beyond the influence of all of us imprisoned by it. Individually, the struggle for change may seem hopeless; but, collaboratively, major social change is attainable. There are many signs that positive change in our culture has begun.

Racial Identity

The racial paradigm imposes on each of us our primary socio-cultural identity. We’re asked, at least once every decade in the U.S. Census, to choose which race we accept, among the variety it offers. Countless other documents repeat the demand, year by year. With some institutional variability, categories offered have expanded to as many as a dozen or more. Finally, the “multi-racial” option has appeared, a much belated acknowledgement that many people, for many generations, have mated across “racial” lines willingly or by force.

The designations remain derived from what the first anthropologists called “the Three Races of Man,” later expanded to four and, by some scientists, dozens or scores. The basic ones have been described colloquially as the “Oids” — Caucasoid, Mongoloid, Negroid and Australoid. Based on an ancient human skull discovered in the Caucasus Mountains, larger than others previously identified, light-skinned peoples of Europe were designated “Caucasian” and claimed to be intellectually superior. Asians were called “Mongoloid” and

Africans, “Negroid.” Later, Indigenous peoples — first acknowledged by the science in Australia — were called “Australoid.” Some researchers said “races” other than “white” were different, sub-human species.

Laws were based on this pseudo-science, then extended beyond it, incorporating fanciful interpretations. Early in the 20th century, augmenting the 1790 citizenship law, Congress named 45 immigrant groups other than “white,” including Eastern Europeans, Italians and Irish as well as “Hebrews.” Courts interpreting the laws came to prefer “common knowledge” over “science,” and sometimes shifted identities of particular ethnicities over a period of time and variety of cases.²⁷

Biologists began questioning historic teachings on “race” in the 1950s, and the anthropology profession publicly disowned the false “science” in the 1990s.²⁸ Modern DNA studies affirm anthropological findings that suggest we all have common ancestral roots in Africa. Still, the basic assumptions of the racial paradigm remain intact in our culture, where the pink, cream or beige-skinned people of exclusively European descent are called “white,” those of African descent and some others “black,” and many “brown” but most others now usually by a geographic, ethnic, tribal or linguistic reference. Indigenous Americans are rarely called “red” any more. Each group, however, remains commonly described as a “race.”²⁹

Those with mixed heritage that included some European ancestry were limited historically, in effect, to the “one-drop” blood quantum principle. By implication, the “purity” of “whiteness” had to be protected genetically. As one result, “passing for white” became a strategy for some lighter-skinned “people of color” to confuse the system essentially by conforming to it — yet, thereby, reinforcing it. Since the 1960s, many African Americans have asserted “Black pride” as a new cultural dynamic. Inheriting this milieu, no one has questioned identifying a half-Euroamerican President as black.

In varying situations today, people of greater pigment or non-European ancestry continue to experience racial oppression. Even the President is not immune, for Mr. Obama has been an object of published as well as vocalized bigotry since his election. Racism remains embedded in many institutional policies and practices, in economic distribution derived from past injustices, and in legal systems applied to immigrants. Indigenous people, inner city residents and those in extreme poverty.³⁰ It has consistently been reflected in past foreign policies, and elements of our racial paradigm have spread worldwide, mixing with other oppressive systems. It is manifest in governmental, corporate and individual behaviors, generating much of the mounting hostility that the USA has faced globally. Its evidence in the shades of a large share of the poorest Americans — such as those stranded in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005 — betrays the race/class connection and a governing cultural hypocrisy.

Labeling

In the dominant American culture, persons of other than European descent, here and globally, remain characterized mainly by “race.” A geographical base ipso facto implies a racial designation, commonly with value attached consciously or unconsciously. These identities and assumptions confront those migrating to the USA, typically with little or no preparation. They can become an alarming discovery for African or Asian immigrants and for many from nearby Latin American countries.

Immigrants from Europe, including those from lands in the former Soviet Empire, still tend to experience

readier acceptance and be widely viewed as closer to the “American cultural mainstream” than those from anywhere in Africa, Asia or Latin America. They are often seen as closer to the mainstream than even 10th or 12th generation Americans of African descent or people whose ancestors were indigenous to this land for millennia before any “white” people came.

The leading designations in popular use are:³¹

- Black/African American/African Immigrant: It seems generally agreed that the terms, “Negroid” or “Negro,” historically used in the Census and textbooks, are no longer acceptable. The root word was the Latin term for “black,” and Africans were the only group originally defined by anthropologists with reference to skin color. Coupled with the color values Europeans commonly understood, this made it easier to dehumanize those being enslaved and to justify conquest and exploitation of their homelands. African immigrants (and often slave descendants who have identified their roots) tend to prefer to be known by their national or tribal heritage. Still, they remain persistently victimized in most Western cultures in domestic and foreign affairs.³²
- Asian American or Oriental — the former, like “African,” inappropriately generalized, and the latter often perceived as offensive, both are increasingly unacceptable. Still less acceptable are the once popular term, “Yellow,” and the original “scientific” term, “Mongoloid.” Most people of Asian heritage, like most Euroamericans and most immigrants, seem to prefer to be labeled, if they must be, by their national or ethnic identity. Nineteenth century American courts found Asians confusing because it was hard to define a consistent color label, and some were called “white.”³³
- American Indian/Native American — occasionally but increasingly today acknowledged as Indigenous to the Western Hemisphere or Aboriginal. They are no longer described as “Australoid,” as they were in science classes for many years. There are regional, tribal and personal variables in Indigenous preferences for group identity. Most seem to prefer recognition by the word for “people” in their native language or their indigenous nations as recognized in treaties signed but repeatedly violated by the U.S. Government. Many accept the mis-identity imposed by Columbus.
- Hispanic or Latino/a — an adaptation referring to people whose heritage is south of the US border — i.e., from Mexico, Central America, South America, Spanish-speaking Caribbean countries, or in regions forcibly annexed from Mexico to become states, from Texas westward to California. The people’s names, most often, are derived from Spanish, but many resent the lingual-specific designation, “Hispanic,” because of its European roots and the memories it evokes of colonial conquest. Most, of course, have indigenous Western Hemisphere roots, as well. Reflecting this mixed descent, most Mexicans prefer to be known as Mestizaje or Mestizo. Mexican-Americans often prefer the term Chicano and tend to identify collectively as La Raza. The US Census Bureau acknowledges its “Hispanic” classification to include some who are “white” (i.e., presumably of Spanish descent), but offers no guidelines defining that choice. Most Latin American countries also have many citizens with African, Asian, Middle Eastern or even Northern European ancestry — and, of course, “racial” mixtures abound.
- Arabic and other non-Jewish Middle Eastern people, historically in the USA, were lumped culturally into either the Negroid or Mongoloid categories — depending mainly upon the darkness of their skin — or

Caucasoid, if they were light enough. Increasingly, they have been identified as a separate “racial” group as the USA has admitted more immigrants and refugees from the Middle East. Since 9/11/01, many Americans, bent toward racial prejudice, have branded all non-Jewish Middle Easterners as suspect.

- Jewish — an identity ambiguously grounded in religious faith and/or ethnicity. Although also known as Semitic, this is a broader regional/ethnic characterization also shared by Arabs.³⁴ Historically, in Western cultures, Jews became explicitly identified as a race in the Middle Ages. Dictionaries attribute the origin of the term, “race,” to the Italian word, *razza*, in the 14th century, a period following official segregation of Jews in Rome. Most European cultures early in the 21st century still consider Jews a separate “race.”³⁵ In the USA, Jews today are predominantly regarded as “white” — even by those Christians who see them as urgently needing “conversion” — although their “whiteness” was predominantly denied until the late 1940s and, in some locations, into the ’60s. It still is denied by bigots, sometimes organized, in the U.S. and Europe, who memorialize Adolph Hitler and the racial vision of Nazi Germany (1930-45).
- Multi-racial — the category added to some official documents since the 2000 U.S. Census, which first authorized checking multiple options, in reaction to long-repeated complaints about forced unilateral racial self-identification for people of mixed ancestry.
- People of color (sometimes abbreviated “POC”) — a term widely used to encompass all who are not designated “white.” It came into use in preference to “non-white” or “minority” — or the still less acceptable “colored people,” which predominantly referred to “black” Americans before the 1960s. Each of these terms seemed dismissive or disrespectful, and “POC” now is resented by some as a rhetorical equivalent of terms it replaced.
- White or Caucasian — the most questionable of all the “racial” terms. The only truly white people have a rare genetic skin disorder, are called “albinos,” and can occur in every “race.” In truth, we are all people of color. Use of “Caucasian” is no more justified than that of the other pseudoscientific terms derived from the “Oids,” which have virtually disappeared. Its use inherently resists acknowledging the power of the racial paradigm. Indeed, most “white” Americans have always tended to think of their skin tone as normative rather than as a race. When confronted by the subject of “race,” they tend to think first of people with darker skin — a remnant, deep in our subconscious, of the mindset that first applied “race” to those most distinctly considered “other” than ourselves.

Naturally, all of these groups — including “whites” — are highly varied in color shading or pigmentation.³⁶ The power of the racial ideology may be best illustrated in the divisiveness that has emerged among most racially oppressed groups. Jews, for example, identify as Sephardic or Ashkenazi, often with supremacist intent, derived from experiences in the European Diaspora. Tribalism has similar implications among Indigenous Americans, and tribe or nationality among many of Asian descent. “Colorism” has been historically common among African Americans, imposing greater social status or acceptance, within their own segregated community, on those with lighter hues. Sometimes, people were excluded from a gathering — even from some churches or black-owned businesses — if their skin was darker than a brown paper bag. Those who could “pass” as “white,” of course, were variously honored or resented, with envy. Some “people of color,” in fact, have lighter skin than some who are called “white.” Each of these conditions reflected the power of the racial paradigm, grounded in “white” supremacist ideology.

Individual “whites” sometimes claim that they, too, experience racial oppression, based on their fear or, occasionally, experience of discrimination or even violence by a darker-skinned individual or group. However, expressions of bigotry or instances of discrimination by “people of color” against “whites” in the USA must be distinguished from systemic oppression, which is explicitly supported, in various ways, by the dominant culture. Such an episode of personal discrimination can be a specific reaction to what the system has done to the perpetrator(s) and what it has done for the “white” victim.

Relationship to Other Systems of Oppression

Humans experience systems of oppression today and historically in a variety of contexts. Economic class, gender, sexual orientation, physical condition, weight, language or accent and religious beliefs have always been common referents for prejudice and discrimination. In various ways and historical periods, systems have supported such oppression. However, none of these has been embedded in Western — and especially American — cultures as firmly and with as much complexity as “race” in intimate association with economic class. All of the varying systems tend to overlap and interact, so that most people feeling their effects are victimized by more than one. It is therefore incumbent upon those of us seriously engaged in the struggle against racism to be attentive to the other systems at work in society and to stand against them all at every opportunity.

Socio-economic class oppression is the most pervasive system and overlays each of the others consistently, with rare individual exceptions. It must always be engaged when mounting effective reforms. The “War on Poverty” emerged from the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1960s but was undermined by the combined influence of conservative backlash and costly, resource-diverting foreign policy mistakes.³⁷ A number of civil rights and anti-poverty gains of the 1960s were rolled back in a backlash that clearly reflected the cultural influence of the racial paradigm in combination with a class-based economic ideology.³⁸

Class-divisive public policies achieved a new zenith early in the 21st century. The inseparable relationship between class and race was magnified for a global audience as, under watch of remote TV cameras, thousands of poor African Americans tried to find a way out of hurricane-ravaged New Orleans in 2005 or to recover their lives there subsequently; as school segregation patterns intensified in urban centers nationwide; as opportunities for education and jobs leading out of poverty minimized; as victims of mortgage scams lost their homes, and as dark skins, by vast disproportion, dominated jail cells and the crowded corridors and cold streets of the homeless.

The Defining Power of the Racial Paradigm

“Victims”

People who are oppressed by the white racist system are inherently defined by the system as “victims.”³⁹ In response, throughout US history, darker-skinned people have been forced to choose either resistance or compliance. Resistance tends to feed one’s own anger; compliance invites self-hatred and depression unless lighter skin or unusual capabilities open the door to acceptance in the “white” culture. Either way, the “victim” label sticks, in popular consciousness — however strongly they may resent it, however firmly they may fight the system and resist internalizing their oppression, or even however fully they may succeed within the system.

Martin Luther King, Jr. emphasized a need to control anger while resisting, by applying the biblical principle of “Love your enemy.” Those who attain professional or economic success, in spite of oppression, are likely

to resist the “victim” identity, and may take pride in having overcome it. Many “white” Americans, however, view such success as attained primarily because of skin color in an age of “affirmative action.” This belief has both fed and been reinforced by political and legal attacks on equal opportunity laws. Along with popular myths and stereotypes, it helps the system guarantee continued victimization of every dark-skinned person, whatever their achievements. Even the most successful people who have dark skin are not exempt from racial stereotyping, scapegoating or profiling.⁴⁰

Each of the labelled “racial” groups in the USA struggles with these inconsistencies. New populations have been added including refugees, asylees and immigrants from Asia and Africa, and Latina/o people attracted from Southern neighbors to work in agriculture and related industries. Coincidentally, third and fourth generation Americans of Latino/a or Asian descent have become increasingly victimized. People derived from Western Asia, the Middle East and North Africa and religious Muslims from anywhere have experienced bigotry and discrimination.

Poverty-stricken or working class “whites,” victimized by many of the same systems and structures that oppress people of darker hues, are likely to be ignored by media for whom “race” defines the exciting conflict that attracts audience. These “white” victims then tend to identify more readily with other, better-off “whites” than they do with people who share their economic status but not their “race.” Dark-skinned poor people, naturally, are likely to see all “white” people as better off. It’s tough to build low-income political coalitions in this context.

“Racists”

In this American system, of course, anyone considered white is effectively categorized by the racial paradigm as racist — even if they are actively engaged in fighting racism — because they experience some of the benefits of “white” privilege. Following is a portrait of the resulting systemic racial prison:

- P3 Racism = Race Prejudice + the Power of Systems and Institutions
- P2
- P1 The Systemic Portrait

The three exponential dimensions of the power of racism in the USA are:

- (P1) Its victimization of people who are not considered white;
- (P2) its grant of power and privilege — and the inherent stamp of “racist” — to people who are considered white;
- (P3) its entrapment of all in the belief that the social construct of race is real and a valid, visible framework for human identity. Coupled with the belief that it is unalterable, this paradigm is transformed into an ideology that entraps all within the designated social reality.

The benefits of “white” identity include the social entitlement to deny or ignore its reality. Most believe that the country has overcome racism, that they personally and the society at large strongly affirm equality of opportunity, and that inequality is attributable to failings of those less privileged. Many think they are “color blind,” and see this as a “post-racial” society — a claim heard with increasing prominence since the election of President Obama.

Unconscious of the power, privilege and access that racism grants us, many deny that it exists. As noted earlier, others consider these privileges as entitlements or, even, meritorious.⁴¹ Most decline to discuss them. Whether denied or acknowledged, however, the special privileges granted to us by our culturally defined “whiteness” stamp us unavoidably as racist.⁴²

Socializing the Paradigm

None of this can be blamed exclusively on individual judgments, of course. In spite of popular cultural claims celebrating individualism as the ultimate value for identity, we are all products of the socialization that we have experienced as well as our physical, social and economic circumstances. While the choices we make are vitally important, our knowledge, values, ideals, hopes and even prejudices have been shaped predominantly by forces beyond our individual control. As we shall see, however, they are not beyond our capacity to resist and to work for change.

Families are a mighty influence in this process, with extreme variability — but their paradigms, like individuals’, are shaped largely by outside forces — including faith systems, of course, but with results often compromised by errant interpretations or destructive theology.⁴³ Subtly or overtly, the belief system is absorbed from cultural exposure asserting or inferring, if only by implication, that other racial groups are outside one’s own, and of lesser dignity. This begins in the family and extends to the full range of contacts to which we are exposed in school, in community and, yes, even (and often especially and most profoundly) in a religious community.⁴⁴

These influences may or may not directly shape prejudices toward others, but they do, minimally, tend to shape one’s view of self and one’s relationship to the community and the universe. Inherently, they tend to exclude others not part of the same community or institution. Sometimes, they explicitly demean at least some others. Most of these influences strengthen, reinforce or empower the person served.

There is, of course, an extraordinary system of financial rewards that encourages people to identify as “white.” Federal housing policy, beginning in the 1930s and, especially, after World War II, comprised a pervasive program of affirmative action for “white” people which shaped much of the modern “wealth gap.”⁴⁵ More recently, that gap has been widened by continued, albeit formally illegal, discrimination against buyers or owners of housing in predominantly non-“white” neighborhoods, and by predatory lending and subsequent foreclosures that especially targeted those neighborhoods.

The economic manipulation of real estate not only touched off the 2008 financial collapse, but also exposes the racist fears that drive much “white” behavior in the USA. Fears that are unacknowledged and undiscussed are irrational but powerful. Our susceptibility to these fears, as “white” people, illustrates another dimension of “white privilege”: It comes to us at some hidden but definable costs. Since self-interest can help in motivating moral behavior, it is important to review some of these.

The Costs of “Whiteness”⁴⁶

The subtle fears that underlie racism also include these that plague us, consciously or unconsciously, fed by media and associates:

- that what I have is unearned;
- that I might lose it if I don’t protect it;
- that I am in danger of having some of what I have stolen by others less privileged;

- that my safety, even my life, may be in danger at the hands of someone who is not considered “white”;
- that people who are not “white” will attain a majority e’er long and reverse the long American history of privilege and discrimination;
- that people not “white” can see the shallowness of my soul, the ways in which I continue to celebrate my “white” privilege while pretending to openly renounce it, and how I let blatantly racist images, stereotypes and scapegoating periodically drift through my mind.

Some other prices we pay for “white” privilege include:

- However we may disdain it, we are always inseparable from the system of oppression and beneficiaries of it.
- Until we demonstrate otherwise, we are often seen by people who are not “white” as an active, potentially aggressive oppressor.
- We are limited in our capacity to build healthy interracial relationships without explicitly addressing what our culture has done to our social context.
- We are trapped in denial through our normative relationships with other “white” people who resist talking about race.
- In most cities, working with many if not most realtors, I am likely to find it difficult to locate a comfortable home in my price range in a noticeably mixed-race neighborhood.
- My children and I are deprived of a healthy breadth of programming that accurately depicts people whose “racial” identity is other than “white.”
- We are routinely misled by associates, media and other institutions into assumptions that devalue other “racial” groups and inherently define ours as supremacist and racist.
- It is likely that my children will be denied fully accurate interpretations of “American” history and will receive limited and often misleading information about other national and cultural groups throughout the world.
- My comfort with commercial arrangements — at my bank, my barbershop or hairdresser, my regular retail outlets, et al — tends to lead me to doubt stories that I hear about discrimination experienced by people not considered “white” at the hands of these suppliers.
- I am prone to overlook the lack of diversity in resources available from a wide range of suppliers and publishers.
- I am likely to find prejudicial stereotypes about people who are not “white” emerging into my consciousness periodically even if I work hard to be deliberately, actively antiracist.
- If a person who is not “white” acquires a job that I had sought, the possibility of a less-qualified affirmative action choice is very likely to occur to me, and I am highly prone to use it to scapegoat my failure.

Resisting the Racial Paradigm

Perhaps the most privileged of all “white” Americans are those of us whose exposure leads us beyond the dominant paradigm to conscious awareness and some understanding of this evil system. Such knowledge is accompanied by a profound challenge and responsibility whose acceptance, in turn, provides perhaps the only hope for changing the system. It offers the opportunity — indeed, the obligation — to join in the struggle for systemic change with other aware “whites” and with the many people of other designations who work daily to resist the system and its stamp of victimization.

For “racist” and “victim” need not be the sole identities of members of our culture. After owning the reality of how the system defines us, we also can choose to become primarily “anti-racist” resisters of the system.

This is an identity that we can claim together, whatever the shade of our skin or the state of our ethnicity, and whatever “racial” identity has been imposed upon us. We must become, foremost, racial change-agents working together while growing personally within the range of choices available to us.

We have a long history of heroes to turn to for inspiration. People of faith may begin with their human or angelic or Divine spiritual icons, characteristically sources of guidance to behave with love or respect toward others of every corporeal manifestation. Historically, there also have been many “white” resisters of the racist system as well as the multitude among its victims. These heroes are models of resistance from whom we can take inspiration.⁴⁷

A vital, growing movement among “white” anti-racists is building self-awareness of a “double identity” — as “white,” in contemporary cultural terms, acknowledging our inherent racism, but also as anti-racist. This requires our resistance to the racial paradigm and the racist system, and growth in understanding of our roles as allies of people oppressed by the system.⁴⁸ This intentionally parallels the double-identity acknowledged for “black” Americans by W.E.B. duBois early in the 20th century.⁴⁹

Such double-identity is a particularly fitting challenge for faith communities, whose scriptures typically include challenges to faithful, loving counter-cultural action while acknowledging our sinful failures. As people called “white,” in a society that marks us for special privileges, it is impossible to give up that identity or to refuse many of the privileges, which are inherent, not subject to individual choice. We can, however, act out — and, thereby, claim — a new identity as a “white” anti-racist activist ally, sharing in the challenge of working for paradigmatic change.

On Paradigm Change

The process required for systemic change is essentially a reverse socialization. The goal is to dismantle the racist system and the “deconstruction of race, so that biological theories of inferiority and hierarchy cannot ever arise again.”⁵⁰ We must learn to adapt from the modern scientific paradigm an acknowledgement of our common, inter-ethnic roots and celebrate both our unity as humanity and our individuality in facial features, body shape, skin tone, hair texture, etc., rather than accepting a racial identity as inherent. More than most other species, humans symbolize the wondrous diversity of Creation. Even as we acknowledge how history and culture define us, let’s identify our true colors and celebrate!

Paradigm change obviously cannot happen over night, but the movement is under way. The model, as we work for systemic change in relation to the power of racism: P3, P2, P1

The most notable symbol in this model of resistance is that the action transcends the walls of the paradigm that imprisoned us. As a collaboration among all anti-racists, whether identified as racist or victim in the current paradigm, we are breaking free! Such a collaboration, of course, requires persistent, intelligently and collectively planned organizing. It is not a new initiative; we can join work under way.

This multi-generational initiative that has been active since the racist system was founded four centuries ago. As noted above, from the earliest days, there have been resisters to colonization and slavery among oppressing groups as well as victims. The movement has made significant gains since the 1950s, when faith communities began more consistently awakening to the implications for race relations in their belief systems. Cultural/

political backlash to the Civil Rights Movement brought setbacks that began especially in the 1980s and have been reasserted since, intermittently.

But the work continues. Strong leadership, strategic coalitions, and careful planning and execution are vital to the change process. We dare not lose hope or heart or commitment, but must strategize with ever greater clarity, unity and determination.

Our strategies must account for divisions of class as well as “race.” There is a major, complex challenge in the mix of policies and practices that underlie the wealth gap, the deep racial division among economically oppressed people, and the massive economic crisis. Antiracist resistance strategies must account for these complexities.

Past resisters are appropriate role models. Having laid claim to that identity, we must work together, as a leading priority in our lives ñ collaborating, educating and organizing to change the system.⁵¹

CAUTION: Unless affirmed in action, “anti-racist” identity is an empty claim whose net effect intensifies both racism and victimization. “White” anti-racists must accept and learn to understand their accountability, in the struggle, to those victimized by the system. Acting this out is both challenging and rewarding. It requires risk-taking with other “white” people who comprise the predominant action objects. It also demands demonstrations of trust-building commitment in the exercise of listening and dialogue skills, in order to develop the inter-cultural relationships that ground such accountability.

Positive social change comes slowly and tends to encounter resistance of its own. We can take hope from history, however. It is instructive to note that the legal initiative that led to the landmark 1954 school desegregation decision began with formation of the NAACP legal defense initiative soon after the U.S. Supreme Court reaffirmed racial segregation in 1896. Similarly, the movement that ended the legal slave trade and slavery in Great Britain in the early 19th century began at a 1787 meeting in a London print shop.⁵²

Dismantling Racism

The national challenge today is to renew and grow the movement against racism, poverty, classism and the other prevailing oppressive systems. Failure to respond effectively and to dismantle the American racial paradigm during the first half of the 21st century holds immense destructive potential. Its continuance undermines national security in both global and domestic relationships, with severe impact on people both economically and militarily. Failure to complete significant steps toward systemic change during the Obama Administration would intensify disappointment, anger and division. If the racial paradigm prevails amidst growing racial diversity, it is not unlikely to provoke civil war before the century’s end. The manifestations of racism and classism in past foreign policies have ignited many wars.

The special significance of “race” as a focus for deconstruction rests in

- (1) its demonstrably false point of reference for meaningful identity,
- (2) the depth with which it is embedded in our culture and continues to impose explicit racial disadvantage, especially in opportunities for education at all levels, health care, housing, economics and law enforcement,
- (3) the social destruction that it imposes through educational failure, inequitable justice, economic disparities, dysfunctional families and mutual violence,

- (4) the rapidly growing “racial” diversity of the U.S. population,
- (5) the growing global awareness of American racism and the hypocrisy that it mirrors in relation to our claims of systemic freedom and equality, and
- (6) its source and continued empowerment in the lie that people of lighter pigment are “white” and thereby entitled to the blissful metaphorical supremacy embedded in our language. Individual attitudes obviously are important, but racism is maintained most profoundly through cultural habits and the policies and practices of institutions — schools, media, courts, governments, corporations, churches. It is within and through institutions that individuals can work most effectively for systemic change. Dismantling the racial paradigm requires explicit initiatives by the very institutions that historically have perpetuated or even sponsored the racist system. Religious and educational institutions — and, of course, government and media ñ have especially influential roles.

This is, of course, an imposing challenge for individuals. The very high percentage of non-voting Americans demonstrates widespread disbelief in the capacity of individuals to help shape political or social change. This demands continuing focus by educators and religious leaders as well as public officials. The task is, in part, to restore self-confident citizenship; but it must begin with restoring a profound sense of community — an awareness that individual well-being is intimately coupled with the common good.

Religion offers moral leadership for society and, over time, its teachings permeate other institutions and the system of government. Too often, historically and today, religion has allowed itself to be coopted by the culture. It partnered with political structures for most of its history, as it continues to do today in some lands and as some self-styled “Christian” leaders advocate in the USA. Religious teachings have been misrepresented and used to justify policies and behavior that contradict the faith’s core beliefs, as illustrated in daily news about extremists from almost every faith system. Christianity allowed the Bible to be misused to justify anti-Semitism, the violent “Crusades,” chattel slavery of captive Africans, imperialism, indigenous genocide, oppressive paternalism, war and, even today, perpetuating the doctrine of “white” supremacy either overtly or, indirectly, through inaction.

The church in the USA must lead for paradigm change by living and teaching a Gospel of Hope and Love in the 21st Century. A variety of organizing models has developed to initiate such change.⁵³ The United Church of Christ and Unitarian Universalists have been among leaders. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, United Methodist Church, the Presbyterian Church and Quakers also have launched initiatives, as well as ecumenical institutions.

Of central importance in the Episcopal Church is Seeing the Face of God in Each Other, the dialogue model managed by its Office of Antiracism and Gender Equity.⁵⁴ The Episcopal General Convention gave vital direction to that work with a series of resolutions from 1991 through 2006. Since 2000, all dioceses of the church have been obligated to provide Antiracism training for all clergy and lay leaders, and many have begun faithfully to comply. In 2003, the training became a requirement for new ordinands. A commitment was added in 2006 to explore the implications of restorative justice in relation to the church’s role and benefits received from slavery, and its part in forced Indigenous cultural assimilation.⁵⁵

The central emphasis in realistic Antiracism training is that training, alone, is fruitless. Growth in understanding of and response to the dynamics of racism is a lifelong challenge for individuals. To be

effective, it also must lead to organized action for change within and through institutions and a vision for cultural change. The systemic character and grounding of racism must be neutralized. Institutional as well as individual strategies for change are included in most Antiracism training.

Building a New Vision

Jeff Hitchcock offered a practical vision in his 2002 study, *Lifting the White Veil*.⁵⁶ He conceptualized a multiracial society that honors all ethnic origins. This needs to be a fundamental goal for all institutions.

Leadership especially is needed from the church. As faith communities respond to major shifts under way today in institutional structures and practices, this should become a major focus. The “Great Emergence” in Christianity, to be faithful to its promise, must incorporate this multicultural vision.⁵⁷ The process should begin with critical institutional self-analysis.

A vital resource for analysis is a Continuum that charts characteristics, actions and change strategies in institutions moving from a segregated, “exclusive” state through four other phases to a transformed, anti-racist condition. The Continuum acknowledges the historical development of most American institutions to embody and perpetuate “white” supremacy. It facilitates development of an alternative vision for an organization, and conceptualizing practical steps to move toward it. A faith community adaptation is available. This tool is used in each of the trainings noted in this essay. Its application in churches, educational institutions, governmental agencies and businesses can provide an essential referent for action to reshape the system.⁵⁸

At the same time, strong emphasis is needed on individual growth. Institutions change only upon decision-making and action by individuals, then groups. That’s why Antiracism training is so vital. Psychologists identify a variety of stages in individual growth as anti-racists. Individuals and institutions alike must experience change incrementally. Sudden, dramatic change can be profound but, too often, is traumatic and even destructive. The best-planned change tends to encounter resistance; and, when it’s strong enough, the result can be retrogression. Change agents must hold the positive vision before the community and continue work for individual and social growth.

Eventually, racial designations must be supplanted with positive referents for all skin-color shadings. We should affirm and celebrate our common roots and wondrous diversity in individual pigmentation and other human differences — gifts from our Creator that enrich our lives. Living in community, we must simultaneously learn to greatly strengthen equity in opportunities for human growth and development, especially through education. In its internal life and external ministry in society, the church must play a central role in leading the change process.

The Ultimate Resource for Transformation

As we of all pigmentations share resistance to this evil system, lest our strategies be misled, it is well to heed that well-known German resister, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He wrote from a Nazi prison before he was martyred: “I believe that God can and will bring good out of evil. I believe that God will give us all the strength we need to help us to resist in times of distress.”

Our role and imperative commitment, as people of faith, is to function as God’s agents in this world. Some faithful resisters may give their lives in the cause, as many others have, and as Jesus did. True faith begets

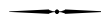
action, and collective action can empower social transformation. This was the power that generated the mid-20th century Civil Rights Movement. Its renewal today holds potential for recovering the agenda interrupted by the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X.

Archbishop Rowan Williams accurately characterized the mental and spiritual challenge in this work in his speech at the Bonhoeffer Memorial in Poland, marking the centennial of Bonhoeffer's birth. "Culture is not to be rejected or given theological legitimacy," he emphasized, but "our engagement as Christians must be determined by the question of who or what the culture is currently forgetting, since it is there that we are likely to find God waiting for us...There is nothing to be recommended except the daily development of the mind of the crucified, what some...have come to call "the intelligence of the victim."⁵⁹

Similarly, James Cone advised white Christian theologians to give up whiteness and take on blackness as "the ontological symbol and visible reality which best describes what oppression means in America." By the same token, we need to take on Indigenous perspectives to understand white American and institutional Christian colonialism — to further reveal (Cone) "what the world means by oppression and what the gospel means by liberation."⁶⁰ This is another way of describing the needed "double-identity," noted earlier, conceptualized by W.E.B. duBois.

The segregation that remains widespread in Christian communities reflects history; but it also reveals the experience of many who are not seen as "white" that predominantly "white" churches tend to retain palpable remnants of the old supremacist system. Identifying and addressing those remnants is a major challenge confronting Christian churches today. It is a challenge shared, with varying dimensions, by other faith communities. Learning to dialogue effectively about it across racial, denominational and faith community lines is the initial step.⁶¹

Let us fully open our hearts and minds to the values and inspiration given us by the God of Love.



"I ask...that they may be one, as we are one..."

— A prayer of Jesus during a final gathering with his disciples, according to John 17:20, 22.

A Prayer

Color-loving, people-loving, almighty Creator, may You guide our responses and initiatives as anti-racist resistance and the struggle for systemic change evolve and grow. Enable us, at last, we pray, to replace the racial paradigm with the doctrine of love, to truly "respect the dignity of every human being,"⁶² truly to love our neighbors and also ourselves, and to learn the joy of unity within the HUMAN race. In Your diversely understood but singular Holy Name, we pray. Amen.

Notes

1. Dwight Hopkins reminded us, more than 42 years after Martin Luther King, Jr. famously observed it, that Sunday worship remains the most segregated hour of the week. Hopkins' paper, "Theological Basis of Ecclesial Anti-Racist Witness," was presented October 27, 2007, at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary and reprinted in *The Anglican Theological Review* (Vol. 90, #1, Winter 2008).
- 2 Portuguese traders were apparently the first to bring African slaves to the Western hemisphere at what is now Brazil. Spanish, Dutch, French and British slave ships soon followed. Arabic slave-gathering raids into Eastern Africa may have begun earlier, and most ancient cultures knew slavery as a loser's price in war. With less official sanction, it remains a major entrepreneurial phenomenon today, as reported by David Batstone, executive editor of *Sojourners*, in *Not for Sale: The Return of the Global Slave Trade and How We Can Fight It* (Harper, San Francisco, 2007), among other sources.
- 3 For an excellent summary of the history of the British dominated slave trade, see Adam Hochschild, *Bury the Chains: Prophets and Rebels in the Fight to Free an Empire's Slaves* (Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, 2005). Some shippers perpetuated the trade for a generation after it was illegal in the USA as well as Europe. The film, *Traces of the Trade*, and the book by Thomas DeWolf, *Inheriting the Trade* (Beacon Press, Boston, 2008), present the story of a family whose forebears in Rhode Island were leading slave traders, shipping from Africa at least as late as the 1830s.
- 4 This disastrous history was documented, with an excellent summary of reliable scientific research, by Charles C. Mann in 1491 (Random House via Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2005; Vintage Books, 2006).
- 5 Numerous resources have documented this history — most notably, books by Vine deLoria, Jr. One of the first that translated an Indigenous perspective, on the closing years of the struggle was John G. Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks* (W. Morrow, New York, and University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, 1932ff).
- 6 For key elements of this history and its implications, see the video documentary, *Viva La Causa: 500 Years of Chicano History* (SouthWest Organizing Project in collaboration with *Collision Course* Video Productions, San Francisco, 2005).
- 7 This dimension of American history was summarized well by David R. Roediger in *Wages of Whiteness*, (Verso, New York and London, 1991).
- 8 The history of legalized racial oppression in the USA was detailed by Ian F. Haney-Lopez in *White By Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York University Press, New York & London, 1996). Another especially revealing account is Mary Frances Berry's *Black Resistance/White Law: A History of Constitutional Racism in America* (Prentice Hall, 1971; revised/updated edition, Penguin Books, New York, 1994).
- 9 These disparities were recently documented in *Segregation: The Rising Costs for America*, James H. Carr & Nandinee K. Kutty, eds. (Routledge, New York, 2008).
- 10 People of color often are placed in visible positions such as TV news anchor, with few if any others in supporting professional positions. The advertising industry has greatly increased exposure especially of African American models in recent years, but its own trade journal reported in late 2008 that the industry had recruited few people of other than European descent in professional positions. The very same journal, *Advertising Age*, had no non-"white" employees, as it published the expose. See "The Minority Report," *Advertising Age*, Dec. 1, 2008; Andrew McMains, "Diversity Study Takes Ad Biz to Task," *New York Times*, Jan. 9, 2009; and "The Ignorance at Adweek, Part 2," *MultiCultClassics*, Dec. 1, 2008. The Obama Administration is being watched for a potential new public model.
- 11 Implications and contradictions in this compulsion in USA race/class relations were analyzed by the late James A. Tillman, Jr. and Mary Norman Tillman in *Why America Needs Racism and Poverty* (self-published, Minneapolis and Atlanta, 1969).
- 12 A characterization attributable to the Rev. James Forbes, pastor-emeritus of Riverside Church, New York City ("No Time for Foolishness," an address before the staff of the Episcopal Church Center in New York on May 23, 2005).
- 13 Joel Kovel, *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (Pantheon Books/Random House, New York, 1970), "Introduction." and p. 4. Dr. Kovel directed undergraduate psychiatry education at Albert Einstein Medical College, New York City.
- 14 The Southern Poverty Law Center has documented a growth of extremist propaganda as well as violent incidents. For resources, including access to its journal, see www.splcenter.org.
- 15 For a modern psychological analysis of this fear, including the importance for psychological therapists to address "white" consciousness in working with their Euroamerican clients, see *Racism and Racial Identity*, Lisa V. Blitz and Mary Pender Greene, eds. (Hayworth Maltreatment & Trauma Press, Binghamton, NY, 2006). Note especially Blitz, "Owning Whiteness: The Reinvention of Self and Practice," pp. 241ff.
- 16 Racism was characterized by the Tillmans (op. cit., p. 40) as a mental illness that pervades "white" society in the USA. Its psychological complexity is transparent even in the process of defining an individual's race; e.g., the physical features commonly described as depicting a race — by legal mandate, in many states in the past — were ignored as any ancestral exception (even "one drop of blood") was used to dismiss one from "the white race." It is true, as sometimes noted defensively by "white" Americans, that racism exists in other cultures, with different patterns and defining characteristics — mostly, ethnic or tribal identity. Many of these today have been influenced by European and American cultures, although they do reflect the exclusivity compulsion, noted earlier with reference to the Tillmans' work.
- 17 This simplified definition may have originated with the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond, based in New Orleans. It has been used since the 1980's by Crossroads Ministry of Chicago/Milwaukee and, since the '90s, in the Episcopal Antiracism training, *Seeing the Face of God in Each Other*, among other models.
- 18 This historical analysis draws upon works of Kovel, op. cit., and James Carroll, Roman Catholic scholar and theologian. See Carroll, *Constantine's Sword* (Houghton-Mifflin, New York, 2001), pp. 318ff. For a scholarly Jewish perspective on the roots of racism, see Paul Kivel, *Uprooting Racism* (New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, BC, 1996).
- 19 Citizenship naturalization was limited to "white" people from 1790 until 1965. See Haney-Lopez, op. cit. Also, Lerone Bennet traced the roots of American slavery in *Before the Mayflower: A History of the Negro in America 1619-1964* (Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1973).

- 20 Applied to Indigenous tribes today, the process equates tribal identity with “Indian” under U.S. law, effectively depriving mixed-marriage descendants of tribal benefits. The term, “Indian,” of course, albeit still in law and common usage, perpetuates Columbus’ original, off-course error. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, in recent rulings, has rejected “race” as a category for restorative justice.
- 21 This concept of three dimensions of the power of racism apparently was first articulated by the Rev. Joseph Barndt, a Lutheran pastor, founder of the Chicago-based Antiracism organizing and training group, Crossroads Ministry, and author of *Dismantling Racism: A Continuing Challenge for White America* (Augsburg Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1991, rev. 2007). He described their relationship as exponential: That is to say, each dimension is more powerful than the last by a multiple of itself. The concept was adapted in training by the Minnesota Collaborative Antiracism Initiative (MCARI). I am deeply indebted both to Barndt and to MCARI’s co-director, James Addington, for much of my understanding of this analysis. The following display of the characterization is inspired by Barndt’s use of the “prison” metaphor.
- 22 See especially Anderson J. Franklin, Nancy Boyd-Franklin & Shalonda Kelly, “Racism and Invisibility: Race-Related Stress, Emotional Abuse and Psychological Trauma for People of Color,” in *Racism and Racial Identity*, op. cit. Also note conditions described as results of the racial paradigm, on page 13, below.
- 23 Study of “white” privilege, reported by Prof. Douglas Hartmann, University of Minnesota Sociology Department, in an interview on Minnesota Public Radio, September 9, 2006. See Hartmann at www.soc.umn.edu/faculty/hartmann.html.
- 24 For an excellent summary of the process of white racial socialization, see Ronice Branding, *Fulfilling the Dream* (Chalice Press, St. Louis, 1998), especially Chapter 1, pages 13-27. For detailed analyses of its impact, personally and socially, see Frances E. Kendall, *Understanding White Privilege* (Taylor & Francis Group, New York, 2006), Tim Wise, *White Like Me* (Soft Skull Press, Brooklyn, NY, 2005), and Robert Jensen, *The Heart of Whiteness* (City Lights, San Francisco, 2005). The economic impact is highlighted by these authors and also detailed by Roediger, op. cit., and others.
- 25 For details, see Google, Amazon.com, or “Know Your Six Black Presidents” at diversityinc.com.
- 26 A 2003 PBS video, *RACE: The Power of an Illusion*, spread awareness of this reality in an in-depth, three-hour exploration. Public reports of recent DNA studies suggest that a tiny variable in genetic coding may be associated with what we call “race,” but without impact on inner qualities or even on physical condition, with limited, environmentally generated exceptions for some disease susceptibility. Genetic variables within each “racial” group are vastly greater than differences between them. The PBS video is available at www.newsreel.org, and resources at www.pbs.org/race.
- 27 Haney-Lopez, op. cit., Chapters 2 & 3.
- 28 The American Anthropological Association now is a lead sponsor of the exhibit, *RACE: Are We So Different?* Which premiered in January, 2007, at the Minnesota Science Museum, and is now in a multi-year national tour.
- 29 The Wikipedia color chart displays 282 shades of which 100 or more appear likely to be identifiable in some human beings. I noted four at different locations on my own skin, none of them among the seven shades shown as “white,” which is my Census identity. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_colors.
- 30 Language, of course, is another variable that subjects people to prejudice and discrimination, in many locations, if their own tongue or accent differs from the dominant one in that setting. Nations and communities vary in the aid that they offer to people who want to learn the culturally dominant language.
- 31 If you feel a need to know how someone identifies themselves within the racial/ethnic paradigm, it’s best to ask.
- 32 A powerful witness to this reality, in foreign affairs, is the film, *Hotel Rwanda*, and associated documentaries (MGM/United Artists, 2005).
- 33 Haney-Lopez, op. cit., Chapter 4.
- 34 The term, “Semite,” derives from the Latin and Greek words for Shem, traditionally identified son of Noah, presumed progenitor of these Middle Eastern tribes.
- 35 Source: Dialogue with members of the Convocation of Episcopal Churches in Europe. Also see Kenneth Leech, *Race* (Church Publishing, New York, 2005).
- 36 One African American internet commentator has referred to “white” people as “pigmentally deprived.”
- 37 An additional, powerful force frustrating progressive change throughout the mid-20th century was the FBI under the extremely racist leadership of J. Edgar Hoover (well documented in published FBI records), whose targets included Martin Luther King, Jr. and Eleanor Roosevelt, among many other progressives.
- 38 The intimate, profoundly destructive relationship between race and class has been well documented. Among vital references are Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White* (W.W. Norton, New York and London, 2005), George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1998), David R. Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness* (Verso, London and New York, 1991, revised and last reprinted in 2002), Also see Ida Hakim, ed., *The Debtors: Whites Respond to the Call for Black Reparations* (Caucasians United for Reparations and Emancipation, Red Oak, GA, 2005).
- 39 Our system’s dominant ideology, of course, denies this victimization — or, under the current Supreme Court, has contended that it applies to anyone of any “race” experiencing “racial discrimination,” even if the action was intended to fulfill a law designed to support restorative justice.
- 40 In one of the more startling instances of being stopped for “driving while black,” during the 1990s, a Minneapolis police officer stopped a car driven by an African American who was chief of police in the twin city of St. Paul.
- 41 Several surveys finding these perspectives are cited in *White Men on Race: Power, Privilege and the Shaping of Cultural Consciousness*, by Joe Feagin and Eileen O’Brien (Beacon Press, Beacon, MA, 2003). Joe Feagin is a professor of sociology at Texas A&M University, and Eileen O’Brien is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Richmond in Virginia. Also see Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory* (NYU Press, 2001).

- 42 The most authoritative, consciousness-raising exposé of white privilege is Peggy McIntosh, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* (Creation Spirituality, January/February 1992, pp. 33-35, originally published at Wellesley College in 1988). An excellent video/DVD resource is *White Privilege 101*, produced by the White Privilege Conference under the leadership of Eddie Moore, Jr. (For details, see a link at www.whiteprivilegeconference.org).
- 43 A brilliant albeit complex theological critique is James W. Perkinson, *White Theology: Outing Supremacy in Modernity* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004). A brief but excellent theological summary is by Dwight Hopkins, *op. cit.* Also see Jennifer Harvey, Karin A. Case and Robin Hawley Gorsline, *Disrupting White Supremacy from Within* (Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, 2004). A collection of essays on racism by Roman Catholic theologians was edited by Laurie M. Cassidy and Alex Mikulich as *Interrupting White Privilege* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2007).
- 44 See Branding, *ibid.*, pp. 22-27. Other excellent analyses of this process appear in previously cited books including those by Kendall and Wise, and in *White Men on Race and Disrupting White Supremacy from Within*.
- 45 A number of resources offer details on this process, including PBS' *RACE: The Power of an Illusion*. Also see Ira Katznelson, *op. cit.* An array of additional systemic advantages for "white" people are enumerated by Lipsitz, *op. cit.*
- 46 In addition to my own experience, I draw heavily, in this list, upon inspiration from most of the works cited previously in this essay, and especially those listed in the five footnotes immediately preceding this one. Special importance, of course, must be noted for the seminal work on "white" privilege by Peggy McIntosh.
- 47 An example of such collaboration, cited during the 2008 Presidential campaign, was President Lyndon Johnson's action in 1964, signing landmark civil rights legislation, inspired by the powerful leadership of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the actions of thousands of other resisters. Several authors and activists have noted the influence of leaders of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the American Indian Movement (AIM) and others. As young, "white" idealists sought to join these groups, they sometimes heard suggestions that they go home and teach or organize other "white" people to become anti-racist activists. A book that celebrates five potent examples of courageous resistance in the 20th century is Cynthia Stokes Brown's *Refusing Racism: White Allies and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Teachers College Press, Columbia University, New York, 2002). Other authors, previously cited, who reported similar inspiration include Joseph Barndt and John G. Neihardt.
- 48 Major resources in this work include the White Privilege Conference (WPC), *op. cit.*, and the Center for the Study of White American Culture, which has sponsored a White Antiracist Summit, in conjunction with WPC, annually since 2005. Details may be accessed directly, after signing in, at the White Antiracist Community Action Network (<http://www.wacan.org>).
- 49 W.E.B. duBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (A.C. McClurg, Chicago, 1903; www.bartleby.com/114/, 1999), Chapter 1.
- 50 Delgado and Stefancic, *op. cit.*, p. 132. Psychiatrist Joel Kovel, in a thoroughly Freudian analysis, describes the required long-term change process as a continuing interaction between culture and personalities that drives positive adaptation and neutralizes "infantile fantasies, desires and discontents." Kovel, *op. cit.*, p. 284. In *What Is Your Exclusivity Quotient?* (self-published, Atlanta, 1977), James A. Tillman, Jr. and Mary Norman Tillman explored strategies for Christians to transcend both the exclusivity compulsion and social structures, through deeper grounding in the teachings of their faith combined with a deeper understanding of racism. Most of the modern works cited in this essay explore facets of the transformation process. An inspiring model of rising above the system to find ways to repair its effects is offered in President Obama's books, published by Random House, New York: *Dreams from My Father* (1995) and *The Audacity of Hope* (2006).
- 51 This adaptation of the racial paradigm reflects understandings attributable to Barndt, Addington, Crossroads Ministry and the Minnesota Collaborative Antiracism Initiative, but also to the Episcopal training model, *Seeing the Face of God in Each Other*. Particular credit is due the Rev. Canon Edward W. Rodman for his leadership in developing the Episcopal model and, especially, in the initiative that led the Church's General Convention to commend such training to all clergy and lay leaders. The challenge and hope affirmed in such training are deeply rooted in the faith and teachings grounded in Christian tradition but are also fully compatible with those of most other major faiths. Notably, numerous other training and organizing models are in action today — both faith-based and secular.
- 52 In his "Source Notes" for timing of the movement's initiative (p. 373), Adam Hochschild, *op. cit.*, cites an 1843 column by Alexis de Tocqueville. Among other strategies, the movement fomented sugar boycotts and engaged diverse leaders including, albeit quite belatedly in his pastoral career, the Rev. John Newton, the former slave ship captain best known as the author of "Amazing Grace." Hochschild notes, however, that — although the movement had influenced some Royals and members of Parliament — the ultimate decisive influence that changed minds in the British power structure was the bitter cost of repeated overt slave rebellions in the West Indies. Without that, the movement would have needed more time.
- 53 A number of church-based anti-racist organizing efforts were described in a book edited by Susan E. Davies and Sister Paul Teresa Hennessee, S.A., *Ending Racism in the Church* (The Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, 1998).
- 54 For information, see www.episcopalchurch.org link to the Advocacy Department and "Antiracism."
- 55 Members of Indigenous descent also initiated a closely related "reconciliation" movement in connection with the 400th anniversary of the Jamestown settlement.
- 56 Jeff Hitchcock, *Lifting the White Veil* (Crandall, Dostie & Douglass Books, Inc., Roselle, NJ, 2002). Hitchcock is director of the Center for White American Culture.
- 57 This characterization of modern changes is described by Phyllis Tickle in *The Great Emergence: How Christianity is Changing and Why* (Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2008).
- 58 Adapted widely, the Continuum was originated by B. Jackson and R. Hardiman in a 1981 unpublished paper, "Organizational Stages of Multicultural Awareness." (cf. Bailey W. Jackson and Evangelina Holvino, "Developing Multicultural Organizations," Brattleboro, VT, 1994.) Versions designed for church use were adapted in the mid '90s for ecumenical application by Joseph Barndt of Crossroads Ministry and, in 2003, by Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook for the Episcopal Church, citing the work of Avazian, Branding, Griffin, Hardiman, Harro, Holvino, Jackson and James. The entry, "Continuum on Anti-