Fuller Magazine, Issue 004, 2015 - Reconciling Race

Fuller Theological Seminary

Lauralee Farrer

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“African Americans who speak of being ‘unseen,’ ‘invisible,’ or ‘good as ghosts’ in a dominantly white culture—including Fuller Seminary—are right to demand the deep work of justice. We commit to the work of reconciling race, one day at a time, because we follow the one who rightly orders love, who holds all things together, and who promises authentic reconciliation that God alone can accomplish.”

—MARK LABBERTON, PRESIDENT
The title refers to 100% humanity and 100% divinity of Christ. The artist did a series of paintings using the horizon as a symbol of peace in Christ.

100%/100% by Angelica Sotiriou-Rausch, acrylic on canvas, 8' x 3.5', 2008, angelicasotiriou.com
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June 28, 2015, was a day of two loves and a historic day in the United States. First, it was a day of profound love and grace for the Charleston Nine as people in South Carolina, and online throughout the country, gathered to grieve for brothers and sisters in Christ who were mercilessly murdered just days prior. The forgiveness of their families, the hearts broken the horror, and the grace of many—it was a day of reconciliation.

It was the day when the Supreme Court ruled that same-sex couples who seek to marry must be acknowledged in all 50 states. Much for many, the day was a day of profound love and grace, and a day of history for the United States. It was a day of two loves: the amazing love of God poured out for a racially broken world and Supreme Court recognition of the love of same-sex couples. The flood of media coverage and social media reaction since that historic day prompts me to wonder, “Is the love that desires racial equality the same as the love that desires marriage equality, as some passionately believe? Or are these loves quite different, as Christians have believed for centuries—and still believe in most of the world?”

The center to which Christians turn to acknowledge that this positive affirmation of love and grace is often stifled by supporters of “marriage equality” who assert that love must affirm same-sex relationships. For those advocates, it feels as if conservative Christians are raising a Confederate flag just as the president is singing “I was lost but now I am found.” It was a day lost but now am found, blind but now I see as a searching violation of love and grace. Such an indictment of Christians who accept a traditional definition of marriage is unfair, but it reveals a rift that cannot be ignored. Christians want to share the love of Christ that speaks into the bandera de la Confederación [Confederate Flag] mientras el presidente canta “Fui ciego mas hoy miro yo, perdido y él me halló hoy”: una alabanza violadora del amor y la gracia. Tal acusación punitiva de la Iglesia cristiana que acepta la definición tradicional del matrimonio es injusta, pero si refleja una ruptura que no se puede ignorar. La Iglesia cristiana desea compartir el amor de Cristo que consuela aquel dolor. Para la Iglesia cristiana que afirma el matrimonio como la unión de un hombre y una mujer, tal como se ha hecho y continuará haciendo el Seminario Fuller, es porque la comunidad cristiana entiende que esta es la intención de Dios para que el amor florezca mejor en la familia y en la sociedad. Entendemos claramente que esta afirmación positiva es un mensaje fuerte de la manera más bella de decirlo, reflejo o la negación del amor de las parejas del mismo sexo. Cuando esto sucede, no es de sorprender que el amor pareciera estar fallando.

Fue un día de dos amores: el asombroso amor de Dios derramado por un mundo visto
God’s love for their family, friends, and neighbors. Fuller Seminary testifies in humility to the love of God that seeks the flourishing of all. Therein lies the most transformative and life-giving hope—and we are committed to faithful theological conversation and witness that serve the church in the United States as well as the global church. For me, in times of radical change such as those we live in, the clarion call that resounds in my heart is to faithfully love God and neighbor with humble conviction, distinguishing magnanimity, and the same amazing grace “that saved a wretch like me.”

“Poets, artists, and creative catalysts… (provide) reminders of beauty that present justice in words, images, and songs that draw us in and captivate our imaginations, and gold on Kumohada paper. The original, at 60.25 x 45.25 inches, was inspired by a pear tree on Fujimura’s farm. Ki-Seki Culture Care (2014), left, was painted with mineral pigments, sumi ink, silver, and gold on Gumihwa paper. The original, at 98 x 81 inches...
Walking with Jaday LaMadrid [MAGL student] through the Pasadena campus mall provides the rarest of tours—Fuller Seminary through the eyes of a child who grew up here.

"See there?" The woman who has returned to her childhood haunt as a student motions to the prayer garden at the far end of the mall. She pulls up a photo on her phone: the image is a little blurry, but the prayer garden is still recognizable. Three curly-haired kids stand shoulder to shoulder in front of the building as it was 12 years ago. "That's me," she says, pointing to the far one on the left. The one in denim overalls.

The timestamp reads "2003"—three years after her parents started dropping her and her siblings off on campus as a safe place to entertain themselves whenever work schedules conflicted. She was 14 when it started, a bored teenager without a smartphone, struggling to entertain a 6-year-old brother and 8-year-old sister for hours at a time. "We were immigrant kids," she explains. "It's not like there was really any family here to watch us." Both parents served at the same church, yet studied at different programs—her dad getting his Master of Divinity at Fuller's Hispanic Center (Centro Latino) and her mom studying marriage and family therapy at a local university. They migrated from Mexico to the United States when Jaday was six. "Education was always the reason for being here," says Jaday, and the reason "we always had to be at Fuller just hanging out." On Thursdays and Saturdays, when ministry commitments of one parent overlapped with the class lectures of another, her mom left them, with a goodbye kiss, outside the David Allan Hubbard Library—at that time, the McAlister Library—not too far from their dad's classroom. Though she wasn't gone long, she gave them three commandments:

- "Don't climb the trees."
- "Stay in this area."
- "Don't leave campus!"

Growing Up at Fuller

Caminando con Jaday LaMadrid [estudiante MAGL] a través del campus de Pasadena ofrece la más rara de las visitas al Seminario Fuller a través de los ojos de una niña que creció aquí.

"¿Mira allí?" La mujer que ha regresado como estudiante a su lugar favorito de la niñez señala al jardín de oración en el otro extremo de la plaza. Ella saca una foto en su teléfono: la imagen es un poco borrosa, pero el jardín de oración sigue siendo reconocible. Tres niños con pelo rizado, de pie y hombro con hombro en la parte delantera del edificio tal como fue hace 12 años. "Esa soy yo," dice, señalando el extremo de la izquierda. La que tiene overoles de mezclilla.

La marca de tiempo se lee "2003"—tres años después que sus padres comenzaron a dejarla a ella y a sus hermanos en el campus como un lugar seguro para entretenerse a sí mismos cada vez que los horarios de trabajo de sus padres estaban en conflicto. Ella tenía 14 años cuando empezó, una adolescente aburrida y sin un teléfono inteligente, luchando para entretener a su hermano de 6 años de edad y su hermana de 8 años de edad durante horas. "Nuestros éramos niños inmigrantes," explica. "Realmente no teníamos ninguna familia que nos pudiera vigilar aquí." Ambos padres servían en la misma iglesia, pero estudiaban en diferentes programas. El padre estaba obteniendo su Maestría en Divinidad en el Centro Hispano de Fuller (Centro Latino) y su mamá estudiaba Terapia Matrimonial y Familiar en una universidad local. Ellos emigraron de México a los EE.UU. cuando Jaday tenía seis años. "La educación siempre fue la razón de estar aquí," dice Jaday, y la razón "que siempre tenía que estar en Fuller simplemente pasando el rato." "Los jueves y sábados, cuando los compromisos del ministerio de uno de los padres estaban en conflicto con las conferencias de clase, su mamá los dejaba, con un beso de despedida, fuera del David Allan Hubbard Library—entonces, la Biblioteca McAlister—no muy lejos de la clase de su padre. Aunque ella no se ausentaba por mucho tiempo, les daba tres mandatos:
And, mostly for Jaday, “Don’t talk to strangers.” So the LaMadrids treated the rules as any kids would: they broke them. Jaday acted as lookout while her sister and brother swung from the lowest tree branches outside Payton Hall. They hid among the library’s special collections and chased each other through the prayer garden, startling reflective students with eruptive giggles and the slaps of sneakers hitting concrete. And they sat on the benches waving at passersby—mostly international students. Students who took an interest in the children and started to look after them.

Some days Jaday’s mom would return to find them wrestling over a fork and a plate of bulgogi and kimchi. “There were always random people bringing us Korean food,” laugh Jaday. “I don’t know what Fuller students thought of us, but maybe they felt compassion because they always saw us there.”

These rich moments of a youth spent at Fuller spurred in Jaday a curiosity for other cultures. She grew to be amazed by the different countries, languages, and accents of friends she met on the mall. She developed a hunger to learn more—inspired by the fierce commitment of her mother, who would find her sound asleep at the kitchen table, a pile of translation books for a pillow. “She always had a better GPA than I did—and she didn’t even speak English,” says Jaday. “She’s been our example of what it means to study hard. She’s my hero.”

Such gleaming images, and an intimate knowledge of Fuller’s campus, planted in Jaday the idea of pursuing intercultural studies in college. “I’d go into Fuller’s library and study while waiting for my parents once I got older,” said Jaday, who was working on her own college assignments alongside doctoral candidates wrapping up their dissertations. “There were other people in the library who had their kids there—mostly Latinos. Often they would watch out for my siblings while I studied.”

“Being at Fuller all that time, and listening to my parents have theological conversations with their friends about the world’s needs—all of that led me to where I am now,” says Jaday. “ Fuller has shaped me and, because of “No se suban a los árboles.”
“Permanezcan en esta área.”
Y, sobre todo para Jaday, “No hablen con extraños.”
Así que los mandatos de la familia LaMadrids eran observados como cualquier niño o niña haría: los quebrantaban, Jaday actuaba como vigilante mientras que su hermana y su hermano se balanceaban en el árbol más bajo fuera del pasillo de Payton.
Se escondían entre las colecciones especiales de la biblioteca y se perseguían unos a otros a través del Jardín de oración, sorprendiendo a estudiantes reflexivos con risitas eruptivas y los sonidos de las zapatillas de deporte que golpeaban el concreto. Se sentaban en los bancos saludando especialmente a los estudiantes internacionales y transeúntes. Varios estudiantes tomaron interés en los niños y empezaron a cuidar de ellos.
Algunos días la mamá de Jaday regresaría para encontrarlos luchando sobre un tenedor y una plato de bulgogi y kimchi. “Siempre había gente al azar trayéndonos comida coreana,” ríe Jaday. “No sé lo que los estudiantes de Fuller pensaban de nosotros, pero tal vez sentían compasión porque siempre nos veían allí a los tres.”

Esos momentos maravillosos pasados en Fuller estimularon en la joven Jaday una curiosidad por otras culturas. Ella creció con admiración por los distintos países, idiomas, y acentos de amigos que se reunían en la plaza del campus de Fuller. Ella desarrolló un gran deseo de aprender inspirado especialmente por el fuerte compromiso de su madre, qui a encontraría mañana tras mañana dormida en la mesa de la cocina, sobre un montón de libros de traducción como una almohada. “Ella siempre tuvo un mejor promedio académico (GPA) que yo, y ella ni siquiera hablaba Inglés,” dice Jaday. “Ella ha sido nuestro ejemplo de lo que significa estudiar mucho. Ella es mi héroe.”

Tales imágenes brillantes y un conocimiento íntimo del campus de Fuller, sembraron en Jaday la idea de llevar a cabo estudios interculturales en la universidad. “Yo iba a la biblioteca de Fuller a estudiar ahí mientras esperaba por mis padres cuando yo era más grande,” dijo Jaday, quien estaba trabajando en sus propias asignaciones de la universidad junto a otros candidatos doctorales terminando sus tesis. “Habían otras personas en la biblioteca que tenían sus hijos...”
nos agarramos de las manos y oramos como una familia."”

hermana y se cuidan unos a otros. Y cada vez que oramos, me di cuenta de lo importante que es un padre en de la vida de un niño o niña," dice Jaday. “Los niños tienen esto ahora mientras pastorea una iglesia en Tucson, Arizona.

en junio del 2015. El padre de Jaday, David Lamadrid [MDiv ‘05], también se unirá a su esposa y a su hija en el ministerio siendo formada junto al ministerio de Jaday. Ella se graduó a estudiar en Fuller para pastorear la iglesia que está ahora a través del programa. Quería ir a la universidad, así como lo hizo Jaday para introducir clases en el Centro de Khes’ed para niños de edad preescolar. Ella comenzó a trabajar con los niños pequeños y Jaday con orgullo afirma que el programa de Rosita es “mucho mejor que el que yo fundé.” La organización no lucrativa únicamente sigue mejorando a través de la nueva adición de Jaday al miembro del personal, Genoveva LaMadrid, su propia madre, quien se sintió llamada a través de la nueva adición de Jaday al miembro del personal, Genoveva LaMadrid, su propia madre, quien se sintió llamada a través de la nueva adición de Jaday al miembro del personal, Genoveva LaMadrid, su propia madre, quien se sintió llamada a través de la nueva adición de Jaday al miembro del personal, Genoveva LaMadrid, su propia madre, quien se sintió llamada a través de la nueva adición de Jaday al miembro del personal, Genoveva LaMadrid, su propia madre, quien se sintió llamada a través de la nueva adición de Jaday al miembro del personal, Genoveva LaMadrid, su propia madre, quien se sintió llamada a través de la nueva adición de Jaday al miembro del personal, 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de la nueva adición de Jaday al miembro del personal, Genoveva LaMadrid, su propia madre, quien se sintió llamada a through the great community I have as a Fuller student, it’s still shaping me.”

the nonprofit only continues to improve through the addition of Jaday’s newest staff member, Genoveva LaMadrid—her own mother, who felt called to study at Fuller to pastor the church that’s now forming alongside Jaday’s outreach. She graduated from Centro Latino with her MA in Theology and Ministry in June of 2015. Jaday’s dad, David LaMadrid [MDiv ‘05], will also join his wife and daughter in ministry whilepastoring a church in Tucson, Arizona.

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Her parents’ involvement means everything, a gift she sees awakening in her own ministry. “I never realized how important a parent is for the life of a kid,” says Jaday. “The kids now have that at Centro Khes’ed. They call each other brother and sister; they look out for each other. And whenever we pray, we hold hands and pray like family.”
Hello, My Name Is...

“Hello, my name is Bruce and it’s been three weeks since my last fish—on my honor.”

Hello, Bruce.

Bruce is a shark trying to convince himself that “fish are friends,” parodying an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meeting so familiar it can be found even in a children’s movie like Finding Nemo. It’s very well known, says Dale Ryan, associate professor of recovery ministry at Fuller, explaining that addiction recovery is “the largest explicitly spiritual popular culture movement in America since the second Great Awakening.” That explains why it is recognizable to film audiences young and old, but not why it is largely “off the radar of the evangelical church.”

The recovery movement “is rooted in the soil of American evangelicalism,” Ryan says, “but it’s the bastard child we don’t acknowledge.” Even though self-reliance is explicitly rejected in AA, with people encouraged to turn their lives over to something greater than themselves, fellowships like it are commonly perceived as self-help-driven—a perception that makes some uncomfortable.

Fuller’s Institute for Recovery Ministry provides theological foundations for recovery work when the “higher power” is Jesus: helping pastors not to be afraid of or ignorant about addiction, and encouraging leaders who struggle with it themselves to model the honesty, integrity, forgiveness, and humility that the journey requires. At one time years ago, that included Dale Ryan.

The first AA meeting Ryan attended was for a class, and he arrived with a dose of seminary-fueled arrogance. “I felt pretty sure I was going to know more about God than anyone else;” he recalls, cringing.

Hello, Bill.

A man named Bill stood up and introduced himself. As he testified, a striking moment of clarity came for Ryan: How was it possible that Bill, who admittedly knew next to nothing about God, was having a genuine grace-filled experience when Ryan didn’t feel anything in his relationship with God but shame? “In many ways, Bill was at least half a step ahead of me in spiritual maturity,” Ryan remembers. That evening changed the course of his ministry and his life.

Ryan never imagined in 2004, when the recovery institute was established at Fuller, that ten years later he would host an evening of recovery stories that would include those of a past president of Fuller, the dean of students, and the dean of chapel and spiritual formation [+ their stories follow]. He told the audience that he felt a shift in the willingness of the evangelical community to acknowledge the important work of recovery and its widespread need—especially within its own communities.

It’s intriguing to imagine what might happen if the evangelical community were to reengage such a ubiquitous movement, how churches might be transformed by deeper levels of truth-telling, and how—by being honest about struggles of all kinds—they might provide safe places for people in recovery. It’s especially interesting since addiction, as Ryan defines it, is “anything you do to alter your mood. That might include alcohol, tobacco, cocaine, marijuana, sugar, power, control, heroin—even religion.”

That’s why the institute has a recovery emphasis for most master’s degree programs, a certificate program, intensive think-tank experiences for ministry leaders, and a variety of other programs including a newly forming Fuller Alumni in Recovery group. Because the need is far reaching.

Dean of Students Steve Yamaguchi attended his own initial group meeting more than 20 years ago, and he has enthusiastically invited pastoral colleagues to visit open AA meetings with him since, hoping to expand their imaginations of what spiritual fellowship can be. Most who joined him left awestruck and yearning: “I wish my church could be like that—so honest with each other.” There are millions of people around the world in weekly recovery meetings whose overt desire is to increase a conscious relationship with God, Ryan says. “They are kin to us. We are from the same tribe.” How many in the extended community of Fuller suffer in silence because of addictions they are too ashamed to reveal, Yamaguchi wonders. More, he thinks, than might be suspected. Many more, Ryan says, with a mixture of surety and care. “Many.”

Welcome to our meeting. Please introduce yourself.

For more on recovery ministry, see fullerinstitute.org.

LAURALEE FARRER, storyteller, is corporate storyteller and editor of FULLER magazine. As a filmmaker, she is president of Burning Heart Productions.

NATE HARRISON, photographer, is FULLER magazine’s senior photographer and video storyteller. NateChambers.com
It was the trying not to drink that was killing me more than the drinking, I knew without doubt that drinking again would destroy me, so I lived in fear and dread with severe self-imposed abstinences. It eventually consumed my every bit of energy. I became increasingly demanding and rigid—a monster to those close to me. I was pastor of a growing congregation. Our thriving revitalization gained wide attention. At the same time, my spirit was dying. I could no longer sustain the work by the power of my will and flesh. In the middle of apparent “pastoral success,” I hit bottom—spiritually, emotionally, psychologically.

A deacon in the church welcomed me to his AA meeting. A group of guys whom I immediately judged as low-life losers came to be, over the years, the voice of God in my life. The 12 steps of AA gave me a whole new way to taste and feel Jesus. Truths I had studied and taught became palpable. I discovered a freedom from fear and shame that opens a way to love and joy. It’s life over death. I’m so thankful.

Throughout my life as my pain surfaced, I would numb myself to keep from feeling anything. There wasn’t a week at Fuller that I wasn’t scoring my drug of choice. I would disappear into LA at night and emerge in Fuller housing before dawn. I felt immense shame about it. I was leading worship at a church and All-Seminary Chapel, and I even won a preaching award. I was living such a duplicitous life—I didn’t want to, but I just didn’t know who to talk to.

Later as a pastor in Houston, I reached out to people with addictions, and as I realized how similar our stories were, I wept. I started going to meetings, but I was terrified that I would see someone I knew. Over time, I realized that façade needed to fade. It took some rigorous honesty, but I learned I wasn’t called first to be a pastor—I was called to be a fully alive and vulnerable person. I wouldn’t have learned that without these folks knowing my secrets and allowing me the space to fulfill my calling as a human being.

Steve Yamaguchi is dean of students at Fuller.

Matt Russell is affiliate assistant professor at Fuller Texas.
During my first teaching position, I was blacking out at parties, hiding booze, and lying about it. When my colleagues suspected that I had a problem and asked me to get help, I was furious. A few years later during a post-doc at Princeton, I was supposed to spend a year reading and writing, but I was drinking heavily instead. I realized this could be the year that I died—I just felt so hopeless. One night my wife saw me sneaking a drink, and I told her, “I’m an alcoholic.” She said, “What are you gonna do about it?”

The next morning she prayed with me, and I called the number for Alcoholics Anonymous. As I walked to my first meeting later that night, I sobbed and sang over and over again, “Just as I am without one plea . . .” It was a profound spiritual experience. I went every day for three months. Those AA meetings were just liberating for me, and this September, by God’s grace, I will attain the goal of 40 years of sobriety. I truly believe the 12-step movement is preaching a sermon to the church, and it can expand our sensitivities to ministry and shed light on the realities of the human condition.

Richard J. Mouw is past president of Fuller and current professor of Faith and Public Life.

Laura Robinson Harbert is dean of chapel and spiritual formation at Fuller. Al-Anon is a support group for families.
Hello, My Name is Dale

I didn’t go to my first AA meeting because I thought that I needed to—I went because it was a class assignment in seminary. I was in my last year of an MDiv, and I remember feeling like I had reached the advanced levels of Christianity. I took this spiritual grandiosity to the AA meeting, and I remember wondering why I was asked to be there. I was pretty sure I knew more about God than any of the street drunks who showed up that night. One member was celebrating 30 days of sobriety, and he spoke about his gratitude and eagerness to learn about this Higher Power who was making it possible.

What confused me was this: he was having a transformational experience, but I, so sure of my knowledge of God, was only experiencing shame. I mark that evening as a turning point in the trajectory of my spiritual life. After that night, I began to see that I had made an idol for myself—an idol of impossible expectations—and I began to move away from self-reliance and arrogance to a more graceful place. I’m deeply grateful for that.

— Dale Ryan is associate professor of Recovery Ministry at Fuller

WHY THE CHURCH AND THE ACADEMY NEED RECOVERY MINISTRY
by Dale Ryan

ONE. Addiction is a big problem. According to the World Health Organization, consumption of addictive substances is one of the largest public health problems on the planet. Alcohol, tobacco, and other mood-altering substances contribute roughly 13 percent to the Global Burden of Disease—twice the next largest contributor. It is a bigger public health problem than cancer, AIDS, malaria, or heart disease.

TWO. Christians are not immune to addiction any more than we are immune to the flu, diabetes, optic neuronitis, or heart disease. Any doubts about Christians and addiction should be set aside within the pages of this article. The videos, from which these stories are drawn, share more at fullerinstitute.org.

THREE. Addiction is a systemic problem. In an addicted family system, that “problem” never belongs only to the addicted person. People who love an addicted person often develop lives just as unmanageable as those of the addict they love. There are parents, spouses, children, and siblings of addicted persons in every faith community who come to church hoping to find support for the central struggles of their lives. Being a faithful community requires us to develop practical, helpful resources for all of those impacted.

FOUR. Millions of people participate in 12-step fellowships. In its latest survey, Alcoholics Anonymous [AA] reported 220,000 meetings globally. That’s just AA groups. There are dozens of similar programs for addictions of all kinds. Fellowships that are commonly maligned as “soft-help” groups, though the first of the 12 steps makes it clear that self-reliance cannot solve the problem. AA does not recommend “looking within” for solutions. Rather, it urges people to seek a relationship with God and to engage daily in a set of spiritual practices like self-examination, confession, making amends, prayer, and meditation. These are all spiritual practices with long histories in the Christian tradition, employed by people seeking to improve their conscious contact with God. There is a natural kinship between followers of Jesus and those who participate in 12-step fellowships.

FIVE. Spiritual practices at the core of the 12-step movement have been marginalized, or in some cases abandoned, by the Christian community. There was a time when the Christian community took confession, making amends, and repentance far more personally than we do today. Now, if we want to do these practices in a way that leads to a more faithful and fulfilling life, we can learn from participants in 12-step fellowships, who have a great deal of practical experience. This would require sufficient spiritual humility to be teachable; however, the spiritual benefit could be substantial.

Fuller prepares men and women to function in a global context that is profoundly impacted by addiction. We are committed to recovery ministry because we ourselves and our families are not immune, and we believe that the local church could be part of a solution for addicted people and the ones who love them. We cannot ignore the profound reality of addiction if we hope to be faithful to our calling, because at Fuller, “those people” are us.

Gabriel Qi (PhD student) started reading historical novels in his native Mandarin language when he was six years old, and by the time he reached middle school in Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, he had already graduated to translations of Western literature. "I wasn't intimidated by foreign names like my friends were," he remembers. Over the next five years, he filled his shelves with Chinese translations of Russian novels and his favorite French writer, Balzac, whose works were "an encyclopedia of different kinds of people of his time." Gabe was following a passion for reading, but along the way he was also gaining a cultural education from books like *Fathers and Sons* or *Le Père Goriot* that helped cultivate in him an appreciation for the universal aspects of human experience: "We always stress how different cultures are, but sometimes we forget about our commonality."
empathic understanding of others: “While we all put a lot of emphasis on the differences across cultures,” he says, “there are also a lot of commonalities that we human beings share.”

However, the reading that had exposed him to other cultures soon became a means to escape his own; Gabe was turning inward, preferring silence to relationships: “I didn’t want my relatives or mom or sister to talk to me. I preferred quiet.” It was in this deliberate silence that Gabe discovered poetry, especially the atheist poets writing after China’s Cultural Revolution. While his peers worked with academic tutors on the weekends, he was reading and writing poems with monastic discipline, filling notebooks with poems and shelves with notebooks—words that voiced his inner emotional life and stirred in him a longing for transcendence he could not otherwise name: through his writing and reading he “came to believe that there was a Ruler of creation beyond human intelligence and that humans need salvation.” Looking back, he says, it was an important season in his life—even if he’s embarrassed by the immaturity of his early work. “I just wanted to feel sad, but if I hadn’t written those silly poems, I’d still be naïve now.”

It was during a weekend trip to his cousin’s house when Gabe picked up another book that caught his attention. “There was a Bible in my cousin’s bedroom where I lived on weekends during my time at boarding school,” he recounts—a 1919 Chinese translation gathering dust in a trunk by the bed. He read six chapters of Genesis in that Bible before stopping. Looking back, Gabe calls the契机不止一个。讽刺的是，其中之一是许多小说中，人物的咒骂被直接翻译成“看在上帝的份上”，这让他好奇他们是在冲谁起誓咒骂。另一个则是当时非常流行的《达芬奇密码》中引用了很多福音书中得经文。 “直到两年后我才意识到这本小说所讲的是异端,”他不好意思地笑笑,”但是真的觉得福音书里的文字那么深奥和有力!”

奇巍带着他对文学的热爱和对基督信仰的好奇来到了北京,进入北京大学。 “那时我很焦虑,”他说,”我想做个诗人,但是又觉得背负着撑起我的家庭的负担。”尽管他妈妈当时鼓励他说:”现在你全部的工作就是做个好学生”,他仍然不知道毕业时他回去向何方。踌躇过后他选择了医学英语的专业,经济上比学文学更有保障,文学上比商科工科来的诗意。“看起来是个不错的折中点”他回忆说。

在外教的建议下,奇巍遇到了一位在教堂的外籍牧师。外教觉得她的呼召就是到中国传教。外教给他发了一封邮件,问了一连串的问题,他们就开始了谈话:“当时我不知道犹太人和基督徒的区别,对我来说他们都是外国人,完全不同。我当时甚至问我的老师我需要不需要去行割礼!”他又一次开始读《圣经》,虽然有些古老的和合本译文一开始有些困难:“有时候我看不太懂中文经文的意思,就读对照的英文译文”。

很快,外教邀请奇巍渠道附近一所教会的英文团契,而在定期聚会几个月后,敬拜时的一首歌曲让他深受感动。歌词唱道:“神要开道路,在旷野无路之处,虽未看见祂已看顾,他要为我开道路。”那是顿悟和放下一切重担的体验。他知道歌中所唱的正是他得生的命。神已经为他开好了道路——通过他家庭的供应让他能够每天安心读书,通过作家与诗人的文字让他读到自己的见证,也通过对不同文化的兴趣让他选择去学习那天圣所中高声赞美所用的语言。

那年夏天,奇巍作为志愿者参加了两个夏令营,其中一个的服务对象是所谓的“留守儿童”,他们的父母为了进城打工只能把孩子留在老家由爷爷奶奶抚养。奇巍在孩子们的孤独中看到了自己的童年,他们在进行“深度聆听”的活动——类似心理咨询的一个环节,大家共同分享自己的故事与梦想——时,他听得很认真,和孩子们分享了自己的经历。那时他开始渴望成为一名心理治疗师。与营会辅导以及学校的老师们咨询后,他开始修心理学双学位,也开始准备申请Fuller的心理学项目。毕业后不久,他就来到帕萨迪纳学习。

他仍然一直在阅读,不过现在塞满书架的书变成了帮助他将各种知识融入治疗的专业书籍:“意见和教条没有身体力行的爱和行为重要。”而现在他得写作有了新的形式——他的诗从纸面上移到了治疗室中,在那里他用诗篇帮助来访者把他们的苦难翻译成赞美。
experience an “unexpected trigger,” drawing him out of silence and toward faith. It was the first of many triggers he experienced, and God continued to give Gabe more—often in surprising places: vulgar fictional characters who cursed God and made Gabe wonder whom they were addressing; gospel verses smuggled into the popular novel The Da Vinci Code that resonated far deeper for Gabe than the story on the surface. “Two years later, I realized that book was heretical,” he says with a sheepish grin, “but the verses from the gospel quoted in that book were profound and deep”—and strong enough to provoke his curiosity about the faith they described.

Gabe took his love of literature and his interest in Christianity with him to Beijing, where he attended Peking University. “At that time I was anxious,” he says. “I wanted to be a poet, but I felt burdened to financially support my mom and sister.” While his mother encouraged him—“For now, your job is to be a student,” she told him—he still didn’t have a clear sense of where his studying should take him. He tentatively chose English, a subject that was more financially stable than poetry and more poetic than the hard sciences. “It seemed like a good compromise,” he remembers.

In one of his first English classes, Gabe learned his teacher was also a British missionary who felt called by God to teach English to Chinese students. Gabe sent him an email with a long list of questions, and they began to dialogue. “I didn’t know the difference between Jews and Christians,” he says. “It was all foreign—all different. I was asking my English teacher if I needed a circumcision!” And while he began reading Scripture again, archaic translations only added to the confusion: “Sometimes, when I didn’t understand the Chinese, I would see what the English translation said!”

Soon that professor invited Gabe to an English fellowship at a nearby church, and after he had been visiting for a few months, the congregation sang a song that struck Gabe as autobiographical:

“God will make a way
Where there seems to be no way
He works in ways we cannot see
He will make a way for me.”

It was an epiphany and a moment of deep relief; Gabe knew they were singing his experience. God had made a way for him—through his family who worked every day to give him time to read, through the words of writers and poets who had become his own cloud of witnesses, and through a passion for other cultures that led Gabe to study the very language filling that sanctuary with song.

That summer, Gabe volunteered at a camp for “ leftover children” abandoned by impoverished parents who left to find work in the city. Gabe saw in their loneliness his own solitary childhood, and when they had “deep listening sessions”—a time of sharing stories and hopes—he listened carefully and shared his own experiences with them. It was a moment of empathy that triggered a new conviction: Gabe decided to become a psychotherapist. He declared a second major in psychology and, a few years later, moved from Bejing to Pasadena, where he now studies at Fuller’s School of Psychology.

He still reads all the time, but now he’s filling his shelves with books that help him integrate his wide experience into an approach to therapy: “It’s less about opinions or doctrines and more about the embodiment of love and action.” And now Gabe writes in a new way—the poetry has moved off the page into the therapy room, where he uses psalms with clients to help them translate their suffering into a language of praise.

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It was just after midnight. Hunched in our Uber driver’s little SUV, we told the Austin native how exhausted we were after our first full day of exploring the chaos and excitement of the annual South by Southwest (SXSW) music festival. He listened intently as we talked about pinballing from concert to concert at bars and warehouses scattered throughout downtown.

He smiled, nodding as if he were watching someone discover a new favorite album that he’d known about for years. “By the end of the week, you’ll feel like you’ve been hit by a bus,” he assured us. “But it’ll feel amazing.”

The South by Southwest music and film festival, known simply as “South by” or SXSW, began in Austin, Texas, in the late ’80s when the sleepy capital was hardly a music industry town. Nearly three decades later, it has grown to arguably the world’s leading music destination, where smiley in the heart of downtown Austin. The self-described “premier surf-rock-disco band” blasted tunes that leaked out onto the street as people walked in and out, contributing in their own way to a cacophony of diverse music flooding the main drag where thousands milled about.

I can’t quite say I was a fan of the surf-rock-disco fusion, but the band was a reflection of an idea we talked about extensively in class the next morning: plurality as the order of the day. As Bruce Springsteen explained in his 2012 SXSW keynote speech, “There are so many subgenres and fashions: two-tone, acid rock, alternative dance, alternative metal, alternative rock, art punk, art rock, avant-garde metal, black metal, black and death metal, Christian metal, heavy metal, funk metal, bland metal, medieval metal, indie metal, melodic death metal, melodic black metal, metal core, hard core, electronic hard core, folk punk, folk rock, pop punk, Brit-pop, grunge, sad core, surf music, psychedelic rock, punk rock, hip hop, rap rock, rap-metal, indie pop, indie rock, heartland rock, roots rock, samba rock, screeamo-emo, shoegazing stoner rock, swamp pop, synth pop, rock against communism, garage rock, blues rock, death and roll, lo-fi, jangle pop, folk music. Just add neo- and post- to everything I said, and mention them all again. Yeah, and rock & roll.”

A musician can add any sort of instrumentation to or create any kind of permutation of a given genre and it will not be dismissed. Some may like it, others may not, but it will get a real hearing at SXSW—a rarity in today’s musical landscape. It will get even more than that from students who attend from Fuller in order to think about the nexus of contemporary music and theology.

It is because of that diversity and multiplicity that one of our professors, Barry Taylor, was able to drive home a core message of his class: “This place can help you think about and understand how theology works in the world today.” Theoretically, we have to learn to navigate the multiplicity of theological voices just as we learned to engage the diverse musical voices on display in Austin.

But the music isn’t just a metaphor for multiplicity—it’s also a participation in it. Music doesn’t emerge from a vacuum. It’s organized noise that materializes out of specific contexts and gives us a way of participating in the longings and losses of those contexts. In that way, an Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros concert can be eerily similar to a worship set.

Over a breakfast of coffee and apple-wheat pancakes one morning at Kerbey Lane, an iconic diner in Austin, a few of us chatted with our professors about the Sharpe show. The consensus: it was a concert that made all of us want to make music. It got people standing and moving. It gave us a chance to experience and talk about the way music is much more than just a commodity. The way it can change a person’s consciousness or transform the ambiance of a space. And the way it can emotionally and physically drain us when we’re going to shows from lunchtime to after midnight, day after day.

Even though I was exhausted by the week’s end, the Uber driver was right: it felt amazing.
The SXSW music festival in Austin, Texas, draws musicians of every kind from all over the world who bring the city alive with every kind of music all day and deep into each night of the spring ten-day event. Every year Fuller’s Brehm Center offers an unparalleled immersive experience at this premier gathering of musicians on a citywide stage—with a billing that includes everything from an indie-guitarist at the Starbucks to Bruce Springsteen giving a keynote address and playing “secret” shows around town, and every imaginable musical experience in between.

There are many reasons to immerse in a unique, massive cultural event like “South by.” Primary among them is to think about theology in engagement and action with the diverse worlds where we actually live and minister. Part of the Brehm Center’s vision, and Fuller’s mission, is to equip people to connect the church and the world in vibrant and meaningful ways, to have missional impact. Our commitment to academic excellence is best evidenced when it results in transformative ministry in the real world.

It’s valuable to read about music theory or dissect popular songs in classroom environments, to determine our opinions about the worth and value of music relative to theology and faith in a seminar coffee shop. It’s quite another to engage music where it lives by taking our theological perspectives and letting them interact with performers and their audiences on the streets of a city. At SXSW, we hear music producers, songwriters, performers, artists, and music business people talk about the challenges and meaning of music-making, and we have access to discuss that with them and with each other.

The city of Austin with all its performers and performances becomes the text we examine together in our meeting place as a class, where we discuss what we have seen and heard. This is where we can do the tough and exciting work of making theology come alive. We confront the undeniable reality of pop music as a potent social glue, binding people together in community and experience. We explore ways in which church, faith, and theology can engage meaningfully with a world shaped by much of the content of popular music—not just lyrics, but whole worlds that it creates, fan communities it stimulates, emotional contributions it raises, and the less visible but culture-shaping aspects of this enduring art form.

To be sure, a week in Austin at SXSW is not everyone’s cup of tea—it is demanding—but for any student interested in actively engaging faith and culture who has a favorite rock band, or who loves the blues or gospel, or has questions about music in general, SXSW 2016 is on the calendar.

Barry Taylor is artist-in-residence for the Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts, which takes an intimate cohort of students to SXSW every year. For more, see fullermag.com.
Shortly after its inception in 1839, the city of Sacramento exploded with the discovery of something shiny in the silt-filled waters of a sawmill. Prospectors came by the thousands, people looking for a fresh start or a quick buck in the Wild West. The Gold Rush also brought the attention of Christians concerned with the lawless nature of a town full of the newly and hoping-to-be Newly rich. Pastors began preaching in a grove of oak trees by the Sacramento River, the vital artery of the region, to welcome prospectors with the Good News. These quite literally trailblazing church planters and preachers formed a core of believers who coupled faith and works in a city riddled with disease and destitution. They spoke openly—passionately—against the racist treatment of Chinese immigrants, black migrants, and other disenfranchised groups, and advocated against California becoming a slave state. Though from Baptist, Episcopal, Methodist, and other traditions, these pioneering “founding fathers” looked past their differences for the sake of establishing the spiritual life of Sacramento. Bucking any traditional frameworks for ministry, these collaborators, these friends, did something revolutionary by that river.

Fast forward 150 years, and two contemporary cross-denominational pastors form a similarly revolutionary partnership in the stream of Sacramento’s religious heritage. Joy Johnson, a black woman from the Baptist tradition, came to Sacramento barely out of adolescence. Bret Widman [DMin ’12], a white man from the Evangelical Covenant denomination, made the move to California’s capital five years ago after working in a variety of ministries in the United States. Joy is a graduate from a seminary specializing in African American church traditions. Bret graduated from a more traditional seminary. Joy created and runs a nontraditional ministry for the underserved families of an apartment complex. Bret now leads a multiethnic neighborhood church. Despite their differences, these two share much—the same significant spiritual mentor, the same praise leader, a loud and infectious habit of laughter, and a love for the city of Sacramento.

Marked from an early age by her natural gifts in leadership, Joy was content serving faithfully in the background of the church, ignoring a still, small voice that said she was born for something more visible—an unfortunate reality for many women reared in ministries lacking an abundance of female leaders. Fortunately, that still, small voice also had flesh and bone in the person of Bishop Sherwood Carthen, an influential African American leader in Sacramento. With his persistent prodding for over 15 years, Joy finally embraced her gifts and the future that they implied. From that point of recognition, it was a fast track for her from seminary to ordination to church leadership—all under the care of her unshakable mentor.

The rails of Bret’s ministry were greased in a way that Joy’s were not, though he, too, had to cross many borderlines to complete his
journey to Sacramento. From seminary to church leadership to teaching, Bret came to California’s Central Valley by way of Oak-
lane and Chicago and Canada before docking at River Life Com-
munity Church in Sacramento as lead pastor in 2010. He also
found a meaningful relationship with Bishop Carthen, who served
as the vital bridge between him and Joy. When looking back on
the influence of their shared mentor, Bret muses, “I’m still trying
to figure out why Sherwood invested in me. I only knew him for
five years, and I still can’t figure out why I got grabbed by the
back of the neck!”

Back then, in 2012, Bishop Carthen was coleading one of
Fuller’s Micah Groups for local preachers and invited Joy and
Bret to join. Though each was reluctant to add yet another com-
immitment to their busy schedules, they both took his invitation
seriously and showed up at the first meeting in February. And
much like those founding pastors by the river 150 years prior,
Joy recalls discovering her diverse brothers and sisters in a way
that was undeniably appealing. “A lot of times pastors run past
each other on the surface for years and never really peel into
the backstory, the commonalities, and the things that we share.”
Dr. Howell, director of Fuller Sacramento and witness to
Bret and Joy’s friendship, reflects on the purpose of the Micah
Groups. “Unless we are intentional, we can all be serving the
kingdom, but our efforts are fragmented from each other. The
Micah Groups flip this paradigm.” Designed as formation groups
for preachers through Fuller’s Ogilvie Institute, the Micah
group dictum of seeking justice, loving mercy, and walking
humbly with God shifted Joy and Bret’s learning paradigm from
note-taking to community-building, “working on preachers
instead of on preaching,” Bret recalls.

Naturally then, over time, as the Micah members grew in
relationship, barriers shrank. One Sunday Joy would load up her
congregation into minibuses and cross town to preach at Bret’s
church. Another weekend Bret would teach at a cohort member’s
Korean church retreat. It wasn’t always easy, but it was forma-
tive. “The group took us into conversations that were awkward,
that were challenging, that were uncomfortable, that I really did
not expect. I can’t tell you how many times I left there thinking,
‘next meeting I’m not coming back!’” recalls Joy. “But I know
we would not be who we are today except that our Micah Group
provided us with the opportunity to walk through the most devas-
tating places of loss that I could even imagine.”

One of those unimaginable losses was the sudden passing
of Bishop Carthen in 2013. Leaving a void in both the Micah
Group and the leadership of Sacramento, his loss sent Joy and
the rest of his Micah Group. It quickly galvanized Joy and Bret with a confirmation
that they were on a course that their beloved mentor had charted for
them. That didn’t make it easy, but it confirmed that it was right.

Navigating the turbulence of race and reconciliation has been
too and is still a significant and issue in Sacramento as it is across
the nation. Bret and Joy have chosen, though, to build their bridges
together. When the Ferguson verdict was announced in November
2014, Joy instinctively withdrew to mourn and grieve in private,
but the by-then-completed Micah Group turned to her for leader-
ship. White and black friends felt adrift facing such a tumultuous
season. They told her, “We don’t know how to think about this
until we sit in your space and hear from you. We need to know
what you’re experiencing.” Without the friendships started in
Micah, those leaders would be missing a critical member of the
conversation.

Recently on the mustard-yellow Tower Bridge that spans the
brown waters of the Sacramento River, reflecting on Ferguson,
on Trayvon Martin, on the fractured nation, questions surface
for Joy and Bret. Have we progressed in the past 150 years?

Fallen back? How can we heal as a nation if the very rela-
tionship between black and white was birthed in the curse of
slavery? It is there that Bret returns to the image of those Wild
West mavericks preaching on the banks of the very same river.
He remembers sharing the story of Sacramento’s early religious
life with a fellow community leader. That friend told Bret that,
unlike other regions of America’s divided past, “It was good
here at one point.” Charleston, Selma, Birmingham: there the
path is different. There, the friend continues, “you have to start.
You have to build.”

As Bret and Joy stand together on that bridge, the symbol-
ism is not lost on them. “The thing that is hitting us so hard
right now is we don’t see one another as human,” says Joy. “I
don’t see you in my world. I’m not worshiping with you. I’m not
talking with you. I might talk past you. I’ll see you at the grocery
store, maybe pass by you in the movies, but I’m not talking with
you. You’re not sitting in my space. And the bigger thing is you’re not weeping with me, or suffering
when I suffer.” Relationships, they agree, are the key.

For Joy and Bret, Micah Groups formed the foundation of
the bridge that connected the space between them. Spanning
different zones and preferences, their kinship is evident to anyone
who spends more than a few minutes in conversation with them.
But it isn’t just happenstance. Mining towns don’t become state
capitals by happenstance. Planks don’t become bridges by
happenstance. Intent, collaboration, and perseverance build safe
passage over troubled waters. Joy and Bret know that. They are
ready to lead people across together.
LY, with heartbreak. We choose energy and not violence. FullerAssociates Professor of New Testament Love Sechrest moderated a recent event called “Do Black Lives Really Matter?” She urged, “Everyone has pain. We have to start by bearing it. We should not logs too quickly to the idea of reconciliation,” as if at all that is required is a willingness to hug it out. Sechrest made the convicting observation that evangelicalism is ground zero for racial segregation in the American church, and that Fuller bears the responsi- bility of leadership in addressing this injus-
da con domanada frecuencia, y, últimamente, con angustia. Elegimos energía y no violencia. Love Sechrest, profesora asociada de Nuevo Testamento en Fuller, moderó un evento reciente llamado “¿Las Vidas Negras Realmente Tienen Importancia?” Ella invitó, “Toda persa tiene dolor. Tenemos que empezarnos llevándolo. No deberíamos apresu-
reconciliación. William E. Pannell y Joy J. Moore, guest partners for this section, represent Fuller’s institutional will to con-
tinue on this road together—inaugurate as we all are to the journey. We humbly give speech to our pain and energy to our contri-
butions as allies in this ongoing work at Fuller and the wider world it exists to equip.

The Fuller Forum is available in its entirety online.

Quotes from the “Do Black Lives Really Matter?” panel—sponsored by the ASC Diversity Committee and the Black Seminarians Council—and from the Fuller Forum are scattered throughout this section. The Fuller Forum is available in its entirety online.
Joy J. Moore serves as assistant professor of preaching at Fuller Seminary and an ordained elder in The United Methodist Church. Moore came to Fuller in 2012, providing the vision to establish the William E. Pannell Center for African American Church Studies. When not telling stories with a theological twist, she seeks to understand the impact of various media forms on how we assimilate information and what it does to our religious imagination.

William E. Pannell is professor emeritus of preaching, having joined the Fuller faculty in 1974, taught for 40 years, and received emeritus status in 2014. The seminary recognized his tremendous service to Fuller and the whole church with the January 2015 re-naming and dedication of the William E. Pannell Center for African American Church Studies. His books include My Friend, the Enemy; My Friend, the African American Church Studies. He has been the quintessential exhibit of the effects of perpetuating a false idea. For Christians, it is evidence of allowing a cultural philosophy to be read into a biblical narrative. No human thought, with the exceptions of mathematics and parts of the natural sciences, is immune to the ideologizing influences of its social context, yet knowledge of the construction of the idea of race in modern Western thinking sheds light on these contemporary imaginations. Unaware of how this false ideology originated, we regularly digest well-crafted lies in the guise of channeling entertainment or cultural enlightenment, and communicated education. It then becomes how we read the events recorded in the ancient text. Rather than being called into a different community by Scripture, we see our broken communities as justified by Scripture.

The church is the only institution whose chartering concept requires reconciliation across the most estranged of human chains captive and captor, male and female, our cultural group and others. Yet the most persistent transgression of a nation confident to claim itself founded on biblical principles is cultural fragmentation. Church gatherings perfectly display America’s flagrant stand against division by the socially constructed categories of race. Nowhere is this more evident than the segregation of Blacks and whites.

Tony Evans, in the introduction of his book Overcomer Emancipated, submits that the reason there remains a problem with race in America is because of the church’s failure to understand the issues from a biblical perspective. The lingering reality of racial division offers the quintessential exhibit of the effects of perpetuating a false idea. For Christians, it is evidence of allowing a cultural philosophy to be read into a biblical narrative. No human thought, with the exceptions of mathematics and parts of the natural sciences, is immune to the ideologizing influences of its social context, yet knowledge of the construction of the idea of race in modern Western thinking sheds light on these contemporary imaginations. Unaware of how this false ideology originated, we regularly digest well-crafted lies in the guise of channeling entertainment or cultural enlightenment, and communicated education. It then becomes how we read the events recorded in the ancient text. Rather than being called into a different community by Scripture, we see our broken communities as justified by Scripture.

Unaware of the philosophical narratives that have shaped our theological imaginations, our conversations and actions collapse under the weight of headlines that reveal the racial chaos within the United States. Sanford. Ferguson. Baltimore. Charleston. As the suffering continues, Christians must ask, “If we say we love a wonderful working God whom we have not seen, is it possible to love our neighbors whom we do see?” This question becomes more poignant when we consider the alternative story Jesus told when asked by someone well-intentioned, “Who is my neighbor?” More than the question itself, the answer was accepted. It was to talk ourselves out of the fictions we have told. In this theology section of FULLER magazine, Roggie Williams notes that “concepts like post-racial and color-blindness are inadequate to mobilize people for healthy, genuine soul healing that is capable of moving us past the problems of racializing.” Is providing the world a glimpse of God’s multiracial, multicultural community a mobilizing possibility?

We have inherited a world ripe with wax, dysfunctional families, creating totalitarianism, diminished human rights, and a de-structured system of incarnation. And yet it’s the church that epitomizes the broken-ness of society on Sunday morning when we separate into worshipping communities that demonize those who don’t agree with us, disengage those that don’t act like us, and disregard those who don’t accommodate our systems of organization. The sepa-ration of church and state is a modern mis-γery, suggesting that our beliefs about God do not impact our day-to-day practices. Again, Williams expresses that our under-standing of God “can be a callus for creative resistance to oppression, or a seda-tive for benign acceptance of the dominant racialized depictions of people of color.” Rather than challenge the worldly status quo, religious groups perpetuate stereotypical, sectarian, and schismatic when ac-cepting ethnic denominational identities—invert Pentecost by reading in multiple languages unreconcilable by listeners and offering separate worship services accord-ing to musical preference.

I do believe there exists a genuine desire among many to move beyond the divisions that separate us. I have been encouraged by the students I teach as well as members of the congregations I have served that there are in this generation Christians who de-sire for the work of the Holy Spirit to con-verst us and the communities we inhabit. The difficult thing about biblical reconcili-ation is its requirement that we no longer regard one another from the perspective of human categories. That requires iden-tify the real enemy. What is it that is at-tributable to Harriet Tubman, in Harriet, the Movie of Her Passion, “It was the Underground Railroad to free others from slavery, who should be free also; I would make a home for them in the North, and the Lord helping me, we would put them all there. Oh, how I prayed them, then, lying all alone on the cold, damp ground; ‘Jesus, the Name! Come to my help, Lord, for I’m in trouble!’”

Harriet of Her People, in In the Name of Freedom, Harriet’s Bible testified. In allowing the biblical story to become their story, the enslaved persons began to practice a better religion. It was that witness that enabled African Americans to practice Christianity. This is why, as Christians, who actively involve ourselves in the forefront of social justice civil rights issues as evangelicals, African Americans who intentionally profess to be Christian, as Christians, who actively involve themselves in social justice as God re-quires. These men represent the blacks who migrated across North America in an effort to avoid the disparities of Jim Crow in the South, men and women who fought on the front lines with Martin Luther King Jr. By all those who walked with while evangelicals and dealt with that tension as Christians.

When I was in elementary school, one of the first heroes that captured my attention was a woman named Harriet Tubman. Her story exposed me to an understanding of black Christianity that has sustained me as some question the authenticity of being Christian when so many of the practices of racism have been authorized by the church, quoting biblical texts. Tubman and other enslaved Africans demonstrated what it meant for the enslaved Africans to hear the slave masters’ religion and to sum-marily reject it. What they did next, as a displaced, marginalized, oppressed people, was to turn to Jesus. As Tubman’s testi-fied. In allowing the biblical story to become their story, the enslaved persons began to practice a better religion. It was that witness that enabled African Americans to practice Christianity. This is why, as Christians, who actively involve ourselves in the forefront of social justice civil rights issues as evangelicals, African Americans who intentionally profess to be Christian, as Christians, who actively involve themselves in social justice as God requires. These men represent the blacks who migrated across North America in an effort to avoid the disparities of Jim Crow in the South, men and women who fought on the front lines with Martin Luther King Jr. By all those who walked with while evangelicals and dealt with that tension as Christians.

Historically, the evangelical church has been one of the most closed communi-ties for diversity, particularly for African Americans. This is why men like William E. R. Pannell and James Rallic Silver have been so important—people who were on the forefront of social justice civil rights issues as evangelicals. African Americans who intentionally profess to be Christian, as Christians, who actively involve themselves in social justice as God requires. These men represent the blacks who migrated across North America in an effort to avoid the disparities of Jim Crow in the South, men and women who fought on the front lines with Martin Luther King Jr. By all those who walked with while evangelicals and dealt with that tension as Christians.
As Juan Martínez describes, we, too, must first “realize how deep the divisions” are that exist in our society. Like Martínez, we must never forget that “God had a different dream for his people,” because what the Holy Spirit does is bring reconciliation among the people called Christian, God intends to do with all the world.

Ultimately, our aim is to draw attention to the biblical narrative from which comes the story of becoming a community of reconciliation. The biblical mandate is a reconciliation with God, with each other, and a reconciliation of the divided nations and ethnic groups of Genesis 11. We are living in a post-Genesis 3 reality that is God’s intended good creation turned inside out. At Genesis 11, the story takes a radical shift with a promise of reconciliation.

The biblical story tells of forming a community whose behavior is peculiar because it practices justice, favors mercy, and noticeably honors its God. Do not allow the familiar reference to Micah 6:8 to obscure the key idea: peculiar. Scripture is hauntingly relevant in its description of the idolatrous community that fails to be the peculiar people of God.

As in the ancient text, contemporary society experiences the tragedy of an internal collapse intensified by external assault. We’ve tried various programs, platforms, and promises, but too often in the business of setting things right have not been submitted to the reign of God. Following the same instruction as given to humanity, we, too, must innovate our way out of our current problematic situation and implement solutions that will work on a global scale. On-going clashes around the world remind us that ethnic and national divisions elsewhere are just as volatile as in the United States, the Ukraine, South Sudan, Central African Republic, Yemen, Libya, Mexico, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia, Kenya, Palestine, Israel, and Korea come to mind immediately.

Widen out from there to culture-war skirmishes from abortion to capital punishment, class divisions that span from Appalachian poverty to gated suburban communities, and gender issues that range from chauvinism and feminism to LGBTQ rights. One is tempted to believe that conflicts across professing affiliations, political alliances, and provincial attitudes will outlast our best attempts to refract the way we must become, because, as Pannell says, “This is our work.” The scriptures contain the wisdom to walk this out.

Maybe the work of reconciliation requires the church to be like the “Methodist, mis-sionally minded, multiracial church in North Carolina” described by Love Sechrest. Having made the church a culturally homogenous gathering of folks just like ourselves, few congregations are reported to provide such an impressive “witness . . . to the power of the gospel” that it would be “too hard” to consider that place as a church home. Many growing congregations that attract our youth call for living in such hard places. Reconciliation begins when Christians live out the gospel with such grace-filled welcome that hatred is transformed into love, anger is transformed into forgiveness, and segregation is transformed into community. This is the New Testament vision. And it is no less a terrifying countercultural idea in the 21st century than it was when the apostle wrote: “If you belong to Christ, then you are . . . heirs to the promise” (Gen 11:29).

It is my prayer that every reader of this issue would consider the voices speaking here not as persons of color trying to correct American society out of guilt and shame; but as persons hung up on this whole reconciling race thing because we can’t get the relationship between conversion and ethics straight. Conversion never takes place in an ethical vacuum. We have an inadequate theology of evangelism on the one hand and impotence in the face of human suffering on the other. At stake is the integrity and future usefulness of the global church. Conversion is a profoundly ethical event. The details issuing from it will work themselves out differently in each person, but any conversion truth of the gospel should lead one to accept certain ethical values not supplied by any other source. Those values are uniquely associated with the Holy Spirit, the scriptures, and God’s kingdom purposes.

Reconciliation is the ministry of the church. What we need are models that the Good News works, not some trend that evangelism is passé. Reconciliation is a biblical word, it is our word, and its ministry is our enterprise. The Judeo-Christian tradition is essentially ethical in its demands, the expression of the righteousness of a holy God that calls people to be like Jesus. Fellowship with fidelity to such a God requires obedience, holiness, and justice in human relationships. For this reason conversion is an ever-present demand.

The theme of reconciliation has become a dominant one in our time because of pain. There are underlying grievances. A race thing because we can’t get the relationship between conversion and ethics straight. Conversion never takes place in an ethical vacuum. We have an inadequate theology of evangelism on the one hand and impotence in the face of human suffering on the other. At stake is the integrity and future usefulness of the global church. Conversion is a profoundly ethical event. The details issuing from it will work themselves out differently in each person, but any conversion truth of the gospel should lead one to accept certain ethical values not supplied by any other source. Those values are uniquely associated with the Holy Spirit, the scriptures, and God’s kingdom purposes.
The crossing of the Edmund Pettus Bridge (named for a confederate general and grand dragon of the Ku Klux Klan) in Selma, Alabama, was part of a march to Birmingham in 1965 to secure voting rights for African Americans. It ended with armed policemen attacking peaceful protesters with billy clubs and tear gas, a shameful event that came to be colloquially known as “Bloody Sunday.” The historic gathering on the same bridge fifty years later, marked by a presidential address, was a reaffirmation of a commitment to the reconciliation of race and the sentiment “we shall overcome someday.”

Ethics get short-circuited in evangelism too because the assumptions dictated not so much by cultural biblical exegesis as by certain ideological assumptions within Western culture. Operating out of a hermeneutics of suspicion, many non-Westerners see the divorce of social ethics from evangelism as a product of a bourgeois evangelicalism out of touch with its history and its basic documents, with institutional expressions and prevailing assumptions that are largely racist. The racism I mean is the unconscious acceptance of the ideology of white supremacy, and the institutional racism based on that. In America, when that ideology is unconsciously accepted, the institutions of the majority culture will always be paternalistic in their relations with minority brothers and sisters. For this reason power and control become deeply seated, and neediest mission fields in the world. Change may mean fewer trips to Jerusalem and more attention to struggles for justice in Selma, Charleston, Sacramento, and Pasadena. We have the constant opportunity to be born again, to become everything we should and can be. Recent events have a way of reorienting attitudes and assumptions, of confronting us with realities we have been ignoring. That ought to awaken us.

The issues dividing believers today are deep-seated, going beyond merely existing different theological conclusions: the divisions represent different hermeneutic starting points. Simply put, the Bible is understood one way in a poor neighborhood and quite another in the comfort of wealth. We understand one way in a poor neighborhood and quite another in the comfort of wealth. The issues dividing believers today are deep-seated, going beyond merely existing different theological conclusions: the divisions represent different hermeneutic starting points. Simply put, the Bible is understood one way in a poor neighborhood and quite another in the comfort of wealth.

Going forward means recognizing what many global brothers and sisters already know—that America is one of the toughest places to know—that America is one of the toughest places to know—that America is one of the toughest places to know—that America is one of the toughest places to know that the real issue is the integrity of the church’s calling, and those whose political decisions make it difficult for citizens to live peaceably find their way to these churches only when war breaks out, as it has erupted as violently in recent months.

If the city has any hope, it lies with the church. It is not that the future of the city depends solely on the church, but rather that the glue that holds so much of the city, together, certainly in black communities, is the church. Here the city’s potential leaders come for nourishment. Here its teachers, musicians, scholars and families find inspiration and hope. The urban church is the hub of the community in ways foreign to its suburban counterpart. For this reason, the urban church carries a burden not required of its wealthier brothers and sisters elsewhere.

For prophecy conferences and paying more than lip service to our incoming students are coming for precisely this reason: to know how to engage their lives in the world with deeper theological roots. That privilege has to be made available to all. That’s justice in action.

We have to start with recognition of the issue, confession that it exists, and a willingness to change. The fundamental problem is that white people who own the system as it is now do not allow the absence of black people to bother them. A black man might lead morning devotions or be invited to deliver the keynote address, but he will not be invited to be present in the air-conditioned suite where policy is made and the future course of the church is determined. It has not dawned on enough whites that the real issue is the integrity of the gospel itself and, consequently, the integrity of our witness to the rest of the world—where the majority is blissfully nonwhite.

Readers of the following pages will discover thoughts on that from some of our finest scholars here at Fuller. To broaden that thought a little bit: if we move from a discussion of reconciliation to spirituality, we move a short distance. New Testament scholars regularly make the connection, as Paul did when writing to the fractious community at Corinth. The apostle John makes a similar case in his letters, albeit in different words. Check out Moses and the prophets and you will find they all say the same thing: the professions to know God are empty if justice and mercy do not reign between people. In addition to defining our relationship with God, spirituality also defines the shortest distance between people. Reconciliation, at heart, is a spiritual issue.

For those of us who are not African Americans, our silence on issues of racial justice speaks volumes. Not only have we missed opportunities to stand with the victims of systemic violence, we have shielded our friends and families from the lessons that black lives matter to us, not just in theory, but personally. It’s one thing to condemn the violence, but another thing to confess the inadequacy of our response to it, including our failure to break the cycle. We can’t understand what went wrong, and if we cannot prevent the killing, if we cannot prevent the killing, if we cannot prevent the killing, if we cannot prevent the killing, it’s because we don’t actually know what to do there. It is often ill-equipped intellectually to understand the world of ideas that affect the way people make choices. A trained laity could reinsist Christianity right back into the mainstream from which it has been marginal- ized. It is interesting to note that a major- ity of our incoming students are coming for precisely this reason: to know how to engage their lives in the world with deeper theological roots. That privilege has to be made available to all. That’s justice in action.

In the face of suspicion, many non-Westerners see the divorce of social ethics from evangelism as a product of a bourgeois evangelicalism out of touch with its history and its basic documents, with institutional expressions and prevailing assumptions that are largely racist. The racism I mean is the unconscious acceptance of the ideology of white supremacy, and the institutional racism based on that. In America, when that ideology is unconsciously accepted, the institutions of the majority culture will always be paternalistic in their relations with minority brothers and sisters. For this reason power and control become deeply seated, and neediest mission fields in the world. Change may mean fewer trips to Jerusalem and more attention to struggles for justice in Selma, Charleston, Sacramento, and Pasadena. We have the constant opportunity to be born again, to become everything we should and can be. Recent events have a way of reorienting attitudes and assumptions, of confronting us with realities we have been ignoring. That ought to awaken us.

The issues dividing believers today are deep-seated, going beyond merely existing different theological conclusions: the divisions represent different hermeneutic starting points. Simply put, the Bible is understood one way in a poor neighborhood and quite another in the comfort of wealth. We have to start by acknowledging that we are approaching our shared scriptures with different eyes: one point of view is determined largely by one’s point of viewing.

As black and white churches are distanced from one another along fault lines of ideology and race, the church will continue to live with the bifurcation between evangelism on the one hand and social responsibility on the other. In the one case a faith in the reign of God and reconciliation on the other, between an ec-

There can be no reconciliation without honest conversations. We don’t understand the power of bringing up an issue you have with someone else and then actually talking with about it. Some of my greatest friends are with people to whom I can say, “You hurt me” or “I disagreed with you.” Telling you the truth, though risky and painful, is the mark of a healthy relationship. But if there’s no relationship, there’s nothing to reconcile!

"Conversely, there have been many times when I kept silent about feeling hurt or dis- conversely, there have been many times when I kept silent about feeling hurt or dis- conversely, there have been many times when I kept silent about feeling hurt or dis- conversely, there have been many times when I kept silent about feeling hurt or dis- conversely, there have been many times when I kept silent about feeling hurt or dis-agreeing with people whose opinion matters to me—even though I was hurt and did not disagree. In those situations, my silence communicated that I was fine with whatever had been done or said. My silence sent a message that the risk of conflict outweighed the potential benefits of truth-seeking reconciliation. Avoiding conflict comes natu- avoiding conflict comes natu- avoiding conflict comes natu- avoiding conflict comes naturally to me, but everyone has the privilege of sidestepping conversations about race.

"For those of us who are not African Ameri- for those of us who are not African Ameri- for those of us who are not African Ameri- for those of us who are not African Ameri- for those of us who are not African Americans, our silence on issues of racial justice speaks volumes. Not only have we missed opportunities to stand with the victims of systemic violence, we have shielded our friends and families from the lessons that black lives matter to us, not just in theory, but personally. It’s one thing to condemn the violence, but another thing to confess the inadequacy of our response to it, including our failure to break the cycle. We can’t under- for those of us who are not African Ameri- for those of us who are not African Ameri- for those of us who are not African Ameri- for those of us who are not African Ameri- for those of us who are not African Americans, our silence on issues of racial justice speaks volumes. Not only have we missed opportunities to stand with the victims of systemic violence, we have shielded our friends and families from the lessons that black lives matter to us, not just in theory, but personally. It’s one thing to condemn the violence, but another thing to confess the inadequacy of our response to it, including our failure to break the cycle. We can’t under- understand what went wrong, and if we cannot prevent the killing, if we cannot prevent the killing, if we cannot prevent the killing, if we cannot prevent the killing, it’s because we don’t actually know what to do there. It is often ill-equipped intellectually to understand the world of ideas that affect the way people make choices. A trained laity could reinsist Christianity right back into the mainstream from which it has been marginal- ized. It is interesting to note that a major- ity of our incoming students are coming for precisely this reason: to know how to engage their lives in the world with deeper theological roots. That privilege has to be made available to all. That’s justice in action.

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The Fuller Difference: To Be a Christian Intellectual

Willie James Jennings

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tother Theological Seminary is different. Anyone who has had the pleasure of walking the grounds of the main campus at Grand Rapids, Michigan, nestled there amidst the busy streets and elegant palm trees, or of attending any of its other urban campuses knows the change. In 2015, after several decades after my Fuller days and with many years of involvement in the theological academy, I have an even greater appreciation of that difference. Fuller allowed me the space to think the faith freshly and consider anew what it means to be someone convinced by the gospel. At Fuller I was guided into an expansive terrain where I could redefine what it means to be an evangelical. I think more to the heart of the matter, at Fuller I entered the deep and beautiful struggle of being a Christian intellectual.

Christian intellectual life is by no means the impartial property of those who inhabit the theological academy or those who live in the shadow of the sight lines of pulpit or the comfort of counselor chairs. Christian intellectual life is the inheritance of every Christian and the calling on every believer to reflect deeply about their faith from the sites in this world that matter—where lives are at stake, and hope hangs in the balance. For me one crucial site has always been where race and Christian faith have enfolded one another. Race and Christian faith have always played together in the Western world, woven inside of each other like strands of braided hair. We know this but we do not like to remember this, because remembering the torturous racial past of the modern world is difficult and remembering that remembering obligates us to give an honest account of our- selves and giving an honest account of oneself is serious moral work.

It is a serious and precise moral work that continues to escape the attention of many Christians in this America. We have never unbraided the strands of race and Christian faith, and because of this our Christian faith is deeply diseased. That we are Christians in not in dispute; that we understand what it means to perform our faith, to think as Christians—that is contested terrain. What we are in need of at this crucial moment is women and men who know how to think their faith, perform their faith in ways that untangle the racial imagination from the Christian imagination. What we desperately need at this critical moment are indeed Christian intellectuals.

The great literary theorist and philosopher of culture Edward Said asked what it means to be an intellectual today. His answer was famously that an intellectual was one who had the courage to speak truth to power. The intellectual was one who fearlessly challenged the gods of this age and was (even as a person of faith) a secular critic. The intellectual, he said, always stands between loneliness and alignment. Said was pointing in the right direction for us, because to be a Christian intellectual today is to confront those powers, those principalities, if you will, that continue to distort our Christianity. Allow me to name three powers that a Christian intellectual must confront.

1. We must confront the principality of whiteness.

We must confront the principality of whiteness. We have now reached a point where we can name what has not been adequately named, and that is whiteness as a principality. For a myriad of historical reasons, we have not had the conceptual ability to name whiteness for what it is—not a particular person, not a particular race, but an invitation, a becoming, a transformation, an accomplishment. It was an accomplishment sought after by immigrant group after immigrant group coming to these shores hoping to strip away their ethnic past and claim an American future. Before that it was in the accommodation born of discovery of Europeans—men who discovered their unchecked and unrestrained power over indigenous peoples to claim the place and alter their worlds. Before that it was an accomplishment born of Christian election and supremacism that removed Jewish people from the privileged position of being the people of God and replaced them with people who imagined their flesh (white flesh) to be saved and saving flesh.

Whiteness was and is a way of being in the world and a way of seeing the world at the same time. It was nurtured and grew inside of Christianity, its voice mimicking Christiani- ty, saying sweetly, “What is it means to be Christian.” But now we know that white- ness is not a given. It is a choice. Whiteness is not the equal and opposite of blackness. It is not one racial flavor next to others. White- ness is a way of imagining the world moving around you, flowing around your body with you being at the center. Whiteness is a way of imagining the true, the good, and the beautiful configured around white bodies. Whiteness is a way of imagining oneself as the central facilitating reality of the world, the reality that makes sense of the world, that interprets, organizes, and narrates the world and whiteness is having the power to realize and sustain that imagination.

Whiteness is not a given. It is a goal. Immigrants who come to America now know this. Immigrants that came here in the beginning learned this. But we have forgotten this and have baptized our Christianity in that for- getting. We need Christian intellectuals who will challenge the formal and informal power of whiteness. We need Christian intel- lectuals who will resist the desire to inter- pret, organize, and narrate the world around themselves. We need Christian intellectuals who will listen to their sisters and brothers who live beyond the veil of whiteness and allow themselves to be changed through the listening. A Christian intellectual in this first sense is one who understands that whiteness must be exorcised from the intellectual life.

We who work and live in the academy are at risk to face our spiritual bondage in this regard. The history of Christian institutions of higher education in this country is not simply the history of Christian striving. It is also the history of immigrant longing, longing for survival, for acceptance, for accomplishment, for making good in America. It is the story of uplift, but it is also the story of racial assim- ilation and of a reality of formation that con- sistently reestablishes whiteness. Until Chris- tian educational endeavors in this country have recognized that as ourselves.

2. We must confront the principality of greed.

We must confront the principality of greed. “Confession is somehow about justice,” it’s about our healing but ultimately for the healing of the world. Walter Brueggemann has taught us that as we like the Id, then feel something in bondage to the Empire all around us, living under the power of what calls the royal con- sciousness. This is a consciousness marked by triumphalism and oppression. The Empire shapes our consciousness and defines our reality for us. It wants to coerce us that might makes right and it’s all about us. There’s nothing wrong here, there’s nothing to lose. We are thinking we are thinking we are thinking we are thinking, and we don’t know you yet. Just try to keep up with you that? This is the royal consciousness, and it creates a kind of vanity marked by arrogance, oppressive social policy, and static religion. We are tired of the font of power’s we can no longer use our pain. We can’t hear the cries of the marginal anyone—we hear them as troubleshooters. India, leaders of people in pain standing out wildly like a mouse punching in the dark as enemy as we can’t see. And we can’t be challenged by a holy God, instead we domesticate God and perhaps baptize him in the rivers of national. Often the disciples of the prophet or what might be an angel that leads is the first sign of angels, a significant not all it is all about the right with the world. And in the faith’s confession we begin to discern the madness of the royal consciousness and at the heart of it is light little into some dark and narrow places. Where the grass is green, there is life, in the nation of Christian institutions of higher education in this country is not simply the history of Christian striving. It is also the history of immigrant longing, longing for survival, for acceptance, for accomplishment, for making good in America. It is the story of uplift, but it is also the story of racial assimilation and of a reality of formation that consistently reestablishes whiteness. Until Christian educational endeavors in this country have recognized that as ourselves.

3. We must confront the principality of a world.

We must confront the principality of a world. “The therapy room may have become the new place where we may be serving as secular pastors. We create space for people to speak their truths, to share their stories, to confess what has been done to them and what they have done to others—to learn, to grow, to cry out to others, to say that all is not right with the world. But I believe that an important thing that can be for some people, as a Chris- tian. It is ultimately the work of the church to create space for this kind of truth-telling and confession and substantive obedience. And these confessions are not just about individuals in the church but secrets that the church has kept. We have secrets to tell about what we have done and about what we have left undone. We have confessions about how we have not lived our neighbors as ourselves.”

+ BRAD B. STRAWN is the Earley and Frank Frost Professor of the Integra- tion of Psychology and Theology, the department of clinical psychology at Fuller.

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STORYVOICE THEOLOGY
face this legacy and its ongoing influence on what we imagine an educated person to look and sound like, we will continue to see racial assimilation with Christian formation.

To be a Christian intellectual also requires that we confront the principalities of greed and violence. I have stopped ignoring the truth that the men who surrounded this country were in fact bound by their lust for land, natural resources, black slave labor, and power to control their destiny and that of this world’s indigenous peoples. I have also stopped ignoring the history of the gun in this country and its pride of place in guiding men in the performance of their masculinity. We are a country that has never had the power to resist death or its greatest power, violence. I have stopped ignoring the fact that greed and violence were the midwives of this country. But unlike the biblical Shiphah and Pusah, these midwives did not fear God; they acted like God for us.

We must never forget that the church came to life in this country formed between greed and violence—greed and violence playing off of each other, shouting across land and sky, from sea to shining sea, saying to each other, “This is the way it is, this is the way it should be, this is the way it is given.” The church in this country has grown up in greed and violence. We have become accustomed to it, comfortable with it all around us. But we have reached a moment of crisis in this country. Greed and violence wish to expand their thrones, and the only substantial question in front of us is whether we will allow for that expansion.

It is a Christian question that is not just for Christians. It is a Christian question because we know principalities. Black people and all people of color in this country have experienced brutally felt their power, watched their expansion, and seen them take hold of lives and draw them toward death. But what is necessary at this moment is not to know them but to unmask them. What is necessary at this moment is the unmasking, the exposing, the naming, and the challenging of those who are yielding to the forces of greed and violence.

We are in need of Christian intellectuals who will challenge the economic configurations of this world and challenge those who traffic in the currencies of violence. The very definition of a Christian intellectual is an activist intellectual. Our goal is to change the world where we are, not just doing our individual work but what God has grafted us to do, but because we serve a God who has changed this world and invites us to yoke our personal and perhaps biological formations about bodies, and we are in need of Christian intellectual formation that takes the body seriously, but not just our bodies, or random bodies, but specific bodies. I suggest to you a new test for the character and quality of Christian intellectual work today. What effect does our work have on the bodies of poor women of color in this world? How is their situation helped or hurt by our work? Are we forming students and are we thinking together in ways that will make a difference for them?

Edward Said also said that “the intellectual always has a choice either to side with the weaker, the less well represented, the forgotten or ignored, or to side with the more powerful.” I have found this choice to always be at play in the academy. Despite our endless quest for the intellectual in this country, those in power or those at the margins. I am concerned in this essay in explaining the logic behind civil disobedience. His argument was quite simple but elegant—just people should obey just laws and the processes through which just laws are created, but just people should disobey unjust laws and challenge the processes that create unjust laws. King also answered the question that would naturally arise from this argument. How do you know just from unjust laws? Again his answer was quite simple but profound—unjust laws increase suffering and silence voices, and in this regard such laws are immoral. King marveled at the courage of the women and men (especially the young) who were willing to engage in civil disobedience against unjust laws. He said, “I submit that the individual who disobeys the law, whose conscience tells him that a certain law is unjust, and who, out of that love for his neighbor and the conviction of the certainty of the truth the penalty... of jail... is expressing at the moment the very highest respect for the law.”

If there is anything that the civil rights movement taught us it is that fear normalizes oppression. Fear normalizes the absurd. African Americans and other people of color have always had to face a choice—do I push against the laws of this world and risk what just laws are created, but just people should disobey unjust laws and challenge the processes that create unjust laws. King also answered the question that would naturally arise from this argument. How do you know just from unjust laws? Again his answer was quite simple but profound—unjust laws increase suffering and silence voices, and in this regard such laws are immoral. King marveled at the courage of the women and men (especially the young) who were willing to engage in civil disobedience against unjust laws. He said, “I submit that the individual who disobeys the law, whose conscience tells him that a certain law is unjust, and who, out of that love for his neighbor and the conviction of the certainty of the truth the penalty... of jail... is expressing at the moment the very highest respect for the law.”

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ENDNOTES
4. Fuller’s David Allan Hubbard Library has a special collection of James Washington’s books.

"Praying ‘Come, Lord Jesus’ is a serious prayer, and it is a worrying prayer. If you ask whether we are now in the position of the martyrs in Revelation 6, or in the position of a subordinate nation like the Jewish people in Jesus’ day, more and more people are discounting slavery. But what if they realized that people in the Bible actually talk like us? Then I would want to believe that Jesus came to save and not to destroy. The devil is in those gaps. The devil is in the silences. The evangelical church should have more conversation—not just when something happens in the news and everything is catching fire and everybody feels they have to respond. This should be a constant conversation, especial- ly an institution that is dearer like Fuller.

"I live in a context of having people gener- alize and make assumptions about me all the time. I don’t look and sound like a white man at all! I know some really good white people. I know some really good Latino people. We have to be treated different, that we have to be treated other people the way we want to be treated, so how do I fight the thing that was done to me? I just perpetuate stereotypes.

"We are all a part of the body of Christ, and if part of the body is suffering, we are all suffering. We have the opportunity here as we are functioning well because we are part of this community or that community, but each church has a unique task that speaks about things that make us uncomfortable, and even we need fight each one—we have to bridge these gaps.”

-- DO SHARLETH THOMPSON, currently a student at Fuller in the Master of Divinity program with a concentration in worship, theology, and the arts, is on staff at Fuller processing student applications in the Office of Admissions.

"..."
Reggie Williams is an assistant professor of Christianity at McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, Illinois. His research consists of an analysis of the intersection of race and religion in modernity, with a specific focus on the treatment and global transformation of international identity on the unfavorable side of what W. E. B. Du Bois described as “the color line.” Particularly, he has found Christianity within the Harlem Renaissance literary movement yields evidence of a different Christianity than that present in the dominant Western world’s blending of race, religion, and empire.

Williams is the author of Bonhoeffer’s Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance (Baylor University Press, 2014).

That story illustrates one obvious way that race can be an obstacle to genuine healthy social interaction by what Delores Williams describes as white racial narcissism. I will argue that it can also be a pathway for healthy interaction. The difference between race as obstacle and race as pathway lies complexly in our ability to recognize its presence in our daily lives in a way that promotes justice and validates communion. Racialization is the imaginary process of assigning race, character traits, and human worth according to specific phenotypic features. It informs our narrative, construction and maintenance of a hierarchy of humankind according to an idealized superior human being. Racializing people circumscribes their reception and their role in society. Anything paying attention to the news about black boys and court cases today will recognize that the struggle for equality and cohumanity as racialized America is ongoing. The struggle is informed by language like “color-blind” and “post-racial”—attempts to imagine a less threatening way to engage one another in a society where the complexities of race have negatively impacted everyone’s social identity. These concepts as post-racial and color-blindness are inadequate to mobilize people for healthy, genuine social interaction that is capable of moving us past the problems of racializing. Those terms are nothing more than white supremacist adaptations to changing social dynamics. Race is a grotesque narrative about humanity that works like a virus, unyielding and adapting as it wreaks havoc on the body politic. The notions of post-racial and of color-blindness buttress efforts to refuse acknowledgement of the continuing, powerful presence of racist thinking. These terms racialize and color-blind function only to help the viral narrative of race persuade society that the supremacist notion of white humanity as normative humanity is true. For Christians the problem of racialization includes our language of God and understanding of Christology. We need language to address our racialized society in a way that they will survive the wilderness that is socially and physically death dealing. The Hagar narrative serves as a practice of biblical appropriation to highlight that our ways of knowing God are always informed by our experiences in society. Social location informs our experience of life and shapes our understanding of God in our world.

I n the acknowledgements section of my book about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Bonhoeffer’s Black Jesus: Harlem Renaissance Theology and an Ethic of Resistance, I share a story from a class that I took when I was a master’s student at Fuller that helped inspire me to become a PhD in Christian ethics. I was in a summer intensive with Dr. J. Alfred Smith Sr. learning about African American spiritualities. In an unforgettable conversation one afternoon, one of my fellow students, an African American man, told the class of an encounter he once had as an enlisted soldier on guard duty at his base when a white woman approached. She demanded to speak to an authority figure—someone above him, a superior whom she assumed would be white. Her demands followed an interesting line of thought; she was a Christian; she recognized Jesus as a white man, and equated him with people in power. It followed for her that as a white Christian, she didn’t have to answer to people who were not white. But she found herself sorely disappointed by the color of the military authorities she met that day. My classmate’s superiors on that base were also African American.

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The vertical encounter is theological, and it describes the interpretation of God by the racialized subject. The vertical encounter to be found in the story of Hagar can be the stimulus for creative resistance to oppression, or be a sedative for benign acceptence of the dominant racialized depictions of God. We can only imagine what God thought with God from the perspective of the oppressive power. The oppressed has been one of creative, culturally derived sources for survival and resistance when God is understood to contradict the
In June of 2015, thousands joined hands to form a human chain across Charleston, South Carolina’s iconic Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge. They were a witness of solidarity with the congregation and families of the “Charleston Nine”—murdered at a Wednesday night Bible study at Emanuel AME Church. The demonstration, called the “Bridge to Peace,” was an ambitious plan to make a human chain across the massive cable-stayed bridge spanning the Cooper River. Some 3,000 people were required, and—to the surprise of organizers—many more joined. Signs defining the intentions of the marchers quoted Martin Luther King Jr.: “Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”

Navigating the Black-White Binary

When engaging race and reconciliation, Asian Americans often find themselves navigating the black-white binary—meaning the conversation becomes primarily framed between “white privilege” and “black lives matter.” Put another way, with blacks as the most oppressed and whites as the most privileged, everyone else must find their place somewhere in between. Historically, there are numerous reasons for the relevance of this framing, such as slavery’s being “America’s original sin,” and the long journey of atonement that continues to today.

Navigating this binary reveals at least two things. First, it means advocating for action and supporting the struggle for black lives, as well as acknowledging the privileges that Asian Americans enjoy. Suffering disenfranchisement as perpetual foreigners, many Asian Americans seek to be model minority citizens, which can take the shape of “honorific white status”—with accompanying privileges. In such cases, Asian Americans’ silence about black lives means complicity with the systems of racism. Second, without weakening the first, it means criticizing this binary as restrictive and dated, unable to deal with the complexity of what American identities have become. Can Asian Americans identify as African Americans, with accompanying privileges?

In the case when the horizontal encounter is validated by interpretations of God (as when Jesus is interpreted as a white man), God and society converge upon the racialized inferior subject to affirm a negative self-worth.

Attention to social location keeps the work of racialization invisible and has historically imposed a theological hermeneutic from the dominant white idealized narrative as the sole universal understanding of God. Recognizing one’s social location becomes the “you are here” situating device in a racialized American landscape and helps to highlight the dangers of abstract universal thinking.

With a clearer understanding of cultural context and social location, it becomes evident that race has a historical impact on us, even if it is not a physical reality. We are all the product of complex sources of social experiences, community stories, customs, food, and music that make us who we are and shape what we know. We are contextually embedded within families, cultures, and communities. The intersection of the horizontal and the vertical forms the mental grid that filters knowledge of God and shapes self-perception. If the negative horizontal encounter is deflected by the vertical (as is the case when Jesus is interpreted as identifying with people of color in oppression), the filtering process results in a positive self-perception. The opposite can be said about the self-perception derived from an interpretation of God that reinforces the negative horizontal encounter and yields internalized racism.

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a symbol of freedom of flight and ability to be freed by the virtue of love. Bon-

dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945), in his book, written in a Nazi prison cell while he awaited execution for allegedly the dimensions and affirm it.”

ally dissatisfied. From a higher satisfaction action. But this view from below must not meaning of the world in contemplation and more useful key, a more fruitful principle learn, indeed, that personal suffering is a

Cahill recognizes this process as a universal, language that remains intimately bound to the history and formation of its particular community. Together Cahill and Walzer describe a better, more realistic ethical discourse about universals that provides Christians with the means of reflecting on empathic experiences, moves from the particular to the universal, and corrects the mis-leading—universal to particular—approach of impartial reasoning. 

Cahill’s practice-based approach to justice and peacemaking and Walzer’s moral minimalism, taken together, describe an inductive process that reiterates features of morality formed within the shared life of a community, in a way that other communities can understand. It is open to revisable evaluative judgments in the practice of pursuing the justice we are familiar with, done with fresh awareness of a justice we are intro-
duced to, against the injustice we know and meet in another context. It is a mutually in-

formative process that allows our real entry into other contexts in ways that are both relevant and revolutionary for both contexts in the pursuit of Christianlikeness and justice. 8

This is a cross-cultural language of empathy an empirical realism as opposed to an absolute reality that opera-

us to heal and interact with people who are made capable of loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. An empathic reality becomes the manner in which we

ship by demonstrating the interaction that Christians are to have with one another in

The work of loving our real neighbor means that we also must work to recalibrate what it means to be Christian, away from idealized notions of humanity and human community, towards a real-world experience of our neighbor-as God has presented her to us, in Christ. I am thankful that I studied Christian ethics at Fuller with Glen Stassen, who helped me begin the recalibration process well. 

ENDNOTES

1. Ruggie Williams, “Brother’s Black Jesus: Martin Renais-
sance Theology and an Ethnic of Resistance (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015).

2. Delores S. Williams, Stolen in the Wilderness: The Chal-


3. Cornel West describes the racializing of modernity by refer-

tence to a normative gaze and the idealizing of white European bodies. See Cornel West, Prophesy Deliverance: An Afro-Amer-

ican Revolutionary Christianity Lived and Died (Washington, D.C.: Regen
tree, 2002), 47–60.

4. Williams, Stolen in the Wilderness, 15.

5. Lisa Steele Cahill, Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics, New Studies in Christian Ethics 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univer-
sity Press, 1999), 12.

6. Cahill, Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics, 12.


8. Cahill, Sex, Gender, and Christian Ethics, 11.
YEARNING FOR RECONCILIATION

Mark Labberton

We sat in a circle in the living room of the president’s house at Fuller. Its windows overlook the lighted domes of Pasadena’s City Hall, the sparkling lights of a beautiful town with a complicated and painful racial history. Fuller’s buildings can be seen a block away. The Jackie Robinson memorial statue is just out of sight. Various church spires punctuate the skyline, telling stories of communities of faith. Most black congregations are on the other side of the 210 freeway, where the sounds of faith mostly seem like the blues.

The faces in the circle of the living room were all male, current students. From each of our three schools of theology, intercultural studies, and psychology, I was moved by their stories of being African American young men in Southern California, in Pasadena, and at Fuller Seminary. The personal and spiritual maturity those brothers embodied was significant, but so was their articulate honesty about their own difficult, erratic, and troubling experiences. Their shared bonds were palpable and encouraging, in laughter and tears.

I can’t imagine being in a better circle. Everything about this true, faithful, and courageous community of faith was in that room: living and seeking God in a world of daily need and injustice, together trusting faith and pain to God who, in Christ, is our deepest brother, and yet who is also beyond our comprehension.

Being entranced with one another's stories was a profound and vulnerable grace repeatedly given and received over our long evening together.

As human beings, we were made for this kind of communion, to be in this circle together. We were created by God to live and share in life-giving, honest, loving community. The instigating reason for this particular conversation was our common knowledge that we all live in a world that is a place of fear, insecurity, racism, inequality, poverty, exclusion, and injustice. We were deeply inculcated in the culture, the moral fabric, the common concern that our world is full of broken relationships.

EXCEPT FOR ONE THING

If only we weren’t human, reconciliation wouldn’t be such a problem. That is, if we had no emotions, relationships, memories, hungers, ideas, values, bodies, politics, religion, money, or tongues, conflict wouldn’t occur and reconciliation wouldn’t demand so much of us. But there never has been and never will be a time in human history when reconciliation is less than a primary human need and dilemma. That conversation in our living room left no doubt.

In this world of broken relationships, reconciliation-talk may be essential but it’s also risky. You don’t have to be in Darfur or the West Bank—you can be in the Mall of America or downtown Pasadena. Reconciliation is difficult. First, efforts at reconciliation do not necessarily make things better; especially where damaged relationships are involved. Second, reconciliation-talk can seem naive or impertinent. Victims of violence, for example, are not helped when talk of reconciliation is little more than a cover-up for suffering. Third, talk of reconciliation raises the fear of injustice. Each of us measures our suffering, or that of others, in our own ways, but measure we do. Instead of justice, reconciliation can seem like a declaration of defeat. Fourth, diagnosing the roots of the brokenness is difficult because we are immersed in it, embedded in the context so that we can only imagine it. We do not—and cannot understand what is happening. “What to ‘us’ seems so clear may or may not be so clear to ‘them.’” Fifth, reconciliation means hard work. It involves venturing into what is seen and unseen, it means realizing that we really only experience life in our own terms and the “other” at an alienated distance.

At the root of any Christian understanding of reconciliation is a basic claim: that the jargonour of our relational and systemic brokenness lies a broken relationship with God. Put negatively, in a world made for thriving relationships, our broken relation with God interwinds with our distorted relations with ourselves and with one another which, in turn, further distorts our relationship with God. Put positively, God’s loving capacity to make all things right, and all reconciliation, is the essence of the kingdom of God. When we face the extent of our personal and systemic needs for reconciliation, we may rightly despair.

RECONCILIATION CENTERED IN JESUS CHRIST

“But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ” (Eph 2:4–5). God in Jesus Christ has entered and undone those broken relationships and systems. Herein lies our ultimate reconciliation hope.

When Christians talk this way, we are not suddenly changing the subject from “reconciliation” to “religion.” This is no slight of hand. According to the Bible, no one takes reconciliation more seriously or passionately than does God. No one is more invested in, nor more capable of, addressing the realities of broken relationships than God. The whole narrative of the Bible conveys the vivid and persistent steps Jesus takes to bring about reconciliation for Israel or for the church—for the sake of the world.

Jesus Christ comes as God incarnate to be the primary agent of reconciliation whether or not this is acknowledged and confessed by any of the parties involved. The more those involved seek to be in tune with Jesus—Christ to see, and love as he loves them—the stronger and more hopeful the reconciliation efforts. “The One who alone makes all things new” wins our humanity with the capacities to do good in alignment with our true human identity and in the context of community.

The cross is no sweet epiphany but an act of grace dying for the sake of reconciliation. In the Gospel, Jesus’ story turns toward Jerusalem as the fulfillment of his call from the Father to give his life. When we face broken marriages, families, friendships, churches, towns, cities, and nations, the cross of Christ enables us to do so without naiveté. For the Christian story shows how hard it is to very hard to do, and capacity. In New Testament terms, full reconciliation will only be possible through the mediating sacrifice of the death and resurrection of Jesus. That is the measure of the difficulty and of the hope of reconciliation. All other Christian efforts at reconciliation must center here. In his book The Cost of Discipleship, German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said,

“Jesus stands between us and God, and for that very reason he stands between us and all other men and things. He is the Mediator, not only between God and man, but between man and man, and man and reality. Since the whole world was created through him and unto him (John 1:1, 1st Cor. 8:6, Heb. 1:2), he is the sole Mediator in the world.”

Jesus Christ comes as God incarnate to be the primary agent of reconciliation whether or not this is acknowledged and confessed by any of the parties involved. The more those involved seek to be in tune with Jesus—Christ to see, and love as he loves them—the stronger and more hopeful the reconciliation efforts. “The One who alone makes all things new” wins our humanity with the capacities to do good in alignment with our true human identity and in the context of community.
The African American community has been violated. There are a lot of people hurting. Racism is seeping into the church because the church is an add-on to the black community. The church was the bedrock of the black community, so to lose it would be the destruction of a resource that matters to the community not only right now. It’s a useful tool that is not doing what God said to do. We should be singing that God should be launched from the church! Instead, we are not salt anywhere, we are washed out.

People won’t admit that there’s a problem. We need to be in conversation constantly, admitting that there is a problem when we don’t see each other as individuals, we see each other as others. Once you have one great friend outside your race, you are doomed to never have the love of others again in your life. You can’t say, ‘all white people are …’ anything. I have friends. I can’t say ‘all white people …’ but not Rebecca. And not Tolly. You can’t do it! That’s what is reeducating for me to know white people or white student. And if you exist, maybe two exist.

“We have come together. That’s it. It’s so meaningful. It’s to get people all at the same table to have a conversation who would normally not look at each other on the street. That’s important. You have to have your brother, and to do that, you have to hear your brother. That’s what we have to do, because it’s God first and God last.”

+ Toby Castle graduated with a Master of Arts in Global Leadership in 2015. He is an educator and race consultant. A dominantly white culture or even in Fuller Seminary, those who occupy power and privilege continue to be caught in a toxic circle. Those in power must fulfill the biblical imperative of peacemaking by using their privilege to contend and remold those at the bottom of society. God desires that we use the skills, talents, and abilities he has given us to offer to the other party far more than to us. The African American community has been violated. There are a lot of people hurting. Racism is seeping into the church because the church is an add-on to the black community. The church was the bedrock of the black community, so to lose it would be the destruction of a resource that matters to the community not only right now. It’s a useful tool that is not doing what God said to do. We should be singing that God should be launched from the church! Instead, we are not salt anywhere, we are washed out.

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RACE RELATIONS IN THE CHURCH IN THE AGE OF OBAMA

Love L. Sechrest

A t 12:00 noon on Tuesday, January 20, 2009, the United States inaugurated its first African American as president with great pomp, circumstance, and hope. Those from virtually every corner of the nation looked on in pride at this tangible manifestation of our nation’s promise of opportunity for all citizens. The moment was especially poignant for African Americans who, according to reports, filled the streets of our nation’s capital to give themselves to be members of this country in a way they had never before experienced. Observers described Obama’s gains among non-evangelical religious people as dramat ic, and it may be that he did so well among people of faith because of his message of unity and reconciliation. His vision was one of an America united by our common hopes and aspirations, a nation cocooning across race, region, and political party, where we all affirm, “Yes, we are our brothers’ and sisters’ keepers.” I remember that at one point in early 2010 I thought that the church might not have need of my scholarship at the intersection of race relations and New Testament interpretation since concord and unity were breaking out all over the country. But then came the summer of 2008 and a vicious return to partisan politics with a twist, the usual brew spiked with a not-too-thinly veiled draught of race-baiting from one camp to another. The usual brew spiked with a not-too-thinly veiled draught of race-baiting from one camp to another. But then came the summer of 2008 and a vicious return to partisan politics with a twist, the usual brew spiked with a not-too-thinly veiled draught of race-baiting from one camp to another. But then came the summer of 2008 and a vicious return to partisan politics with a twist, the usual brew spiked with a not-too-thinly veiled draught of race-baiting from one camp to another.

Our political discourse has degenerated into anxieties about whether giving benefits to those people over there will take money out of the pockets of my kind of people over here, even when the changes are those from which we would all benefit. Most recently, cell phone video camera documents institutional disparities in the policing of communities of color, while the attendant media attention and academic analysis for managing the ensuing protests rather than addressing the underlying causes of the hypertensive environment between law enforcement and unarmed blacks themselves.

The Obama presidency has been noteworthy in many respects and will be examined by political scientists for many years to come. But what believer could forget the controversy that exploded during the 2008 campaign over remarks made by Obama’s former pastor Rev. Jeremiah Wright? I was deeply pained by this controversy because I saw the ties to the past exposed within the divides in the church, in the obedience to the message of the gospel that I so longed for us to embrace within the broader church. The controversy over Jeremiah Wright’s preaching was not the way that I wanted to see evangelicals or the broader church engage in a dialogue about race. When Wright’s prophetic voice in the best tradition of the African American pulpit was cavalierly dismissed as an alien, radical, and scarily “black theology,” the denunciation only added insult to injury.

The state of the racial reconciliation movement moves to various places from region to region. In my own experience in the upper Midwest, the Mid-Atlantic, the Southeast, and Southern California, the vast majority of Protestant churches are segregated, and where integration exists it lacks the intimacy that characterizes true reconciliation. Smaller churches that are intentionally working to achieve a vibrant demonstrative union across race and culture struggle numerically and financially. Visitors to a Methodist mission-minded, multicultural church in North Carolina frequently remarked that they were impressed with the witness of that local church to an entire congregation to the power of the gospel, but that the church was “too hard” for them to consider as a church home. It was too uncomfortable for them to sing in Spanish, to deal with the chubby nature of a translated sermon, or to understand cultural differences in childrearing. Here on the West Coast, multiethnic Protestant churches are somewhat less scarce but usually come in a megachurch flavor that often lacks the kind of community that could produce real progress in race relations. Much more common are congregations that are either culturally homogeneous or nearly wholly ethnically homogeneous save for a few hardly souls who align themselves with a given congregation for a variety of reasons. Again, in my experience, the valiant efforts of these few isolated people of color in culturally and/or ethnically white churches are no substitute for a thoughtful and intentional decision by a local body to take up this difficult and painful cross.

Indeed more often these days I find that I want to challenge the whole category of “racial reconciliation,” since I am now profoundly troubled by the phrase. As the earliest generation of evangelical activists articulated it, the concept was complex and nuanced and always included a focus on institutional racism. The activism along with the discussion of interpersonal relationships. However, recent evangelical discourse about racial reconciliation tends to diminish the notion by focusing only on overcoming personal prejudice while turning a sometimes deliberately blind eye to structural matters of inequality like poverty, education, health outcomes, criminal justice issues, and the like. I prefer to talk about “race relations in the church” as a category for this kind of work rather than to focus on “reconciliation” as an overarching theme. The former surely includes the latter and is broad enough to include a topic like restorative justice, a biblical concept that usually receives short shrift in evangelical discussions of race. In other words, the divisions we face today are not going to be healed by weeping for an hour followed by a song.

The truth is, many of our local congregations do not foster the kind of interpersonal interdependence between the races that is at the heart of the New Testament vision for the church. The earliest narrative about the growth of the church in Acts emphasizes this intimacy, describing how believers shared their possessions with each other so that every need in the community would be met (Acts 2:44–47, 43–47). A similar picture emerges from the Pauline epistles, in Paul’s account of the purposes behind his relief project for the Jerusalem church. Invoking the Old Testament tradition of God’s gracious provision of manna for the people during their exodus wanderings in the desert, Paul says (1 Cor 10:1–4): “We lack no spiritual provision for those who lack (1 Cor 8:1–3). Moreover, he urges his readers to mimic the generosity of people who gave while experiencing their own troubles. All for the sake of being a means of grace to others in need (2 Cor 8:1–4).

Indeed, the idea of interdependence is at the very heart of Paul’s gospel. Paul’s discussion of Jewish and Gentile salvation in Romans 11:1 maintains that each group is implicated in the salvation of the other. He believes that Jewish rejection of the gospel opens the door to Gentile salvation and that the riches that Paul describes are available to all people. In my statement that the church is both the most segregated country in America and the most integrated church in the world, I have not said each other, except on the sexual and other. But a narrative on church growth and the project of majoring in reconciliation would not be such a bad idea.”

William E. Pannell, from his book The Coming Race Wars, as quoted in an article by Jesus. The Pannell Center for African American Church Studies was recently named in honor of William E. Pannell, and has been a catalyst for action within our community. He writes a blog to rework today’s America in a blog that has compelled him to be a voice of public leadership.

Love L. Sechrest joined Fuller’s faculty in 2006, after having taught at Duke Divinity School and at the Graduate School at Trinity International University. Prior to earning her MDIV and PhD, she had a career in the aerospace industry at General Electric, eventually functioning as chief information officer for an interdisciplinary project within Lockheed Martin. She has won numerous honors and fellowships, including those from the American Jewish Committee, Shalom Hartman Institute, the Kern Foundation, the Wabash Institute, Duke University, the Fund for Theological Education and the National Institutes of Science/Ford Foundation, as well as the Lockheed Martin President’s Award, and the GE Aerospace General Manager’s Award.

Sechrest is cochair of the African American Biblical Hermeneutics section in the Society of Biblical Literature, and she gives presentations on race, ethnicity, and Christian thought in a variety of academic, business, and church contexts. She is the author of A Former Jew: Paul and the Dialectics of Race (T&T Clark, 2009) and other articles and book chapters in New Testament studies, critical race theory, and ethics. Sechrest is currently working on a book entitled New Testament studies, critical race theory, and ethics. Sechrest is currently working on a book entitled Race Wars in the Church, and has been a catalyst for action within our community. She writes a blog to rework today’s America in a blog that has compelled him to be a voice of public leadership.
of Christ among the Gentiles will in turn provoke the Jews to embrace him (Rom 11:21–25). Paul’s emphasis on interdependence is even better known via the body-of-Christ metaphor in 1 Corinthians 12. In this text, mutual interdependence is integral to life in the Church and is not restricted to the subject of entrance into the community. Each member of the community is gifted with resources and abilities to improve the common good in the context of shared responsibility for each other. Using modesty in clothing private parts as a metaphor, Paul explains that God gives greater honor to those Christians who need it, since the strong have no need for additional salvation (1 Cor 1:22–29). Honoring the weak, according to Paul, preserves the unity of the body of Christ in which each believer is an individually gifted and necessary part of the whole. Further, this practice has the additional benefit of protecting the body from being infected by a spirit of arrogant individualism (1:21–25).

Christians in the United States must recognize how race is inextricably bound up with the history of the birth and growth of the American church. The church is one of the few remaining institutions in the American scene that normalizes the effects of slavery, with most Christians preserving those segregated spaces in the interests of cultural comfort. Racially separate churches violate that ideodence that should characterize authentic Christian communities. Further, this individualism blocks churches from the blessings of gifts preserved in separate traditions. For example, segregated whole churches celebrate the confessions and the riches of the intellectual giants of the faith, but too often preach a weak and disembodied gospel that reduces spirituality to symbolism, and which separates material concerns from moral choices and the pursuit of righteousness. In the black church, the effects of racism not only created intractable social, economic, and political disparities between blacks and whites, but it also subverted black access to the intellectual tradition and history of the church. Hence, while the best of the black church tradition still preserves a full-bodied worship where spirit is real and connected with body in the pursuit of everycomity, the combination of socio-economic hardship and fractured moorings in the intellectual tradi- tion of the church can produce consequences and effects of consolidation and integration of the prosperity gospel now virulently sweeping the church in the two-thirds world and American cities alike. In other words, life in the body of Christ is impoverished because aspects of the transformative effects of the gospel have been preserved in separate seg- ments of the church, each handicapped by the lack of the other.

I maintain that interdependence is critical for authentic, gospel-shaped race relations in the church. There is no doubt that there are any number of homogeneous churches of all colors that fail to embody the kind of inter- dependence that Paul had in mind in 1 Cor- inthians 12: one imagines that this would be especially true of churches whose members are comfortable socioeconomically, where the needs of congregations are focused on personal fulfillment or survival.1 Interdependence is critical for healing racial schisms in the church not because there is a Bible verse that demands it, but because the lingering trouble of our troubled racial past demands the greater sensitivity and comforting patterns of a higher righteousness going forward. We will know that we have finally overcome when local con- gregations are considered among their communities, towns, and neighbor- hoods, when the draw of the Christian family is superior to local identities as cultural factions. We will finally overcome the legacy of de- structive ethnic and racial stereotypes when skin color or speech patterns do not inhibit the affirmation of leadership gifts in these mul-

tifaceted congregations. We will have finally arrived in the territory about which Dr. King dreamed when our best friends in church really are people from other races and ethnic groups, when the people who know our greatest fears and our deepest longings do not look anything like us.

Without a doubt, this is terrifying work. We are here describing an interdependence-based racial healing that exhorts believers to ac-

knowledge and share vulnerabilities and weaknesses with the ethnic Other. That is we are talking about depending on people who look like those who have hurt us in the past, who’ve been insensitive to the pressures or difficulties we face on a daily basis, only raises the stakes in this already risky undertaking. Such risk-taking in relationships would be especially dangerous for people who are already in a weakened position, though we should not underestimate the difficulties in exposing one’s inner life even when done from a seeming position of strength. There is nothing comfortable about building those kinds of relationships. Visitors to mixed con-

gregations speak honestly when they confess that they have no interest in subjecting them-

selves to this degree of discomfort, and their sentiments are completely understandable. Whether the sentiments are also faithful to the presence of Jesus at the margins. We need to make space for the histories of ethnic pain to be shared and revered among whites and all peoples of color, and to be instruct-

ed by them. That is, we need to understand how our past impinges on the present before we can move forward toward our future. We cannot be who we are called to be unless we can gain access to the treasures of the gospel that have been preserved in the separate traditions of new segregated ethnic churches. We are too intimately linked to the glory of God and the manifold riches of his mercy to the nations until we do.

It is not surprising that President Obama was unable to usher in a new era of political unity. The desire to create a convincing victory, striking deep chords in the minds and hearts of so many. I am convinced that multiracial and multifaceted congregations would be just as compelling and winsome, though with far higher stakes.

We will find fresh energy for this task when we recognize that we cannot achieve our destiny as a people of God unless we work together, inasmuch as we are called to demonstrate a supernatural capacity to love one another and to bear one another’s pain. We should not move too quickly to a cheap reconciliation that forgets the past rather than honoring it as a clay vessel that contains a refined treasure bearing witness to the presence of Jesus at the margins. We need to make space for the histories of ethnic pain to be shared and revered among whites and all peoples of color, and to be instruct-

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ENDNOTES
2. For more information on the complexities of the subtle struc-

tures of black and white evangelicals along the disciplinary religious habits of these groups, see Shellen and Emerson, Black and White in Christian America.

“Sabbath has to do not only with rest, but it has to do with ecology, with family, with neighborhood—it’s all included.” Yes, Freddie Gray is included. Freddie Gray’s memory is included. [Palestinian martyr] Deacon Roma- nio’s memory is included. All those who are within your immediate circle are particularly included. It’s so easy to get caught up with justice as outside of the home that we forget the people we sleep next to and stare at on the street. Justice ought to begin at home, but it does not stay there because you cannot keep the fourth commandment in a case. You can keep the Sabbath as long as you are in relationships. God’s command to keep the Sabbath restrains us of the eradicable, inscrutable, and relational nature of God’s demand on Christians and the world—an ecumenical community with a Christian ethic that draws driven Sabbath rest demands of Christians.”

Johnny Ramirez-Johnson is profes-
sor of intercultural studies.

REFERENCES
2. For more information on the complexities of the subtle structures of black and white evangelicals along the disciplinary religious habits of these groups, see Shellen and Emerson, Black and White in Christian America.
The Sacramento Tower Bridge was built to facilitate the entrance of heavy traffic into the capital city of California for commerce and a quick access from it in case of war. Built in 1935, it was a major link in transcontinental highway 40, and was completed with the release of 300 homing pigeons who carried the news throughout California. It spans the Sacramento River, the banks of which were the meeting place of an ecclesiastical coalition of religious leaders in the early “Wild West” days of Sacramento. They gathered together across denominational lines to address the needs of the gold rush boom town, creating a unique heritage of diversity in the area, now being revitalized to address racial reconciliation through Fuller’s Micah Groups. (See story on pg.36.)

Juan Francisco Martínez

M 7 parents were migrant workers when I was born. They later settled in Kettleman City, a rural farming community in Central California, where they became pastors and ministered for over 30 years. They were committed to working among migrant farm workers.

The town had been populated by poor whites and a few African Americans. But by the 1980s it was becoming mostly Mexican and Mexican American. I would grow up, and later serve, in the San Joaquin Valley during a time of significant demographic change.

That change created many social challenges. It was in that valley that I first encountered racial tensions and the power dynamics linked to those tensions. But it was also there that I first began to understand what it meant to believe that it was possible for peoples of different ethnic backgrounds to live together as the people of God.

It was in Kettleman City and Avenal, and later in Fresno and Piru, that I begin to understand that God sought something different among his people than the separations that we tended to live—separations that were ethnic, socioeconomic, and racialized. In my development as a leader, I had occasion to sit on different sides of these separations and realize how deep the division ran. Yet God had a different dream for his people.

In Rev 7:9–10 God presents his vision, his dream for the future of humanity. It is written to encourage us and to challenge us to believe that it was possible for peoples of different ethnic backgrounds to live together as the people of God.

 Revelation is a message of hope in God’s future in the midst of present pain. Specifically, Rev 7:9–10 presents God’s “dream,” the goal toward which the gospel aims. God’s future is presented to motivate believers to continue to live out the gospel in the midst of their present suffering. The current situation facing believers may be complex, but God invites them to be faithful because God is doing something bigger than what can be seen in the suffering.

The Heavenly Vision

After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, “Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!” (Rev 7:9–10 [NRSV])

John’s vision is one in which all the peoples of the earth are represented. He is emphatic about this. He presents a vision of people who are different, speaking different languages, from different ethnicities and from different places. Though those people are different in many ways, they have one thing in common. All of them have known God’s grace through Jesus Christ. Jesus brought victory through his death and gave hope for the future.

The people in Revelation 7 have a common purpose and vision that focuses them. They are worshiping God together. Those who had died as martyrs were now able to fully understand what God had been doing. Evil and human divisions would not have the last word in the community God is creating. The communities of faith that were developing among the various peoples that had accepted the message of the gospel were the sign and sacrament of what God wanted for all of humanity.

This is the message we read throughout Revelation. God’s vision of the future will be fulfilled. Human impositions will not have the final word, no matter how powerful. The

...
kings of this earth, good or bad, will all come to an end. We focus on our Lord Jesus Christ and what God is doing in the world. Humans will not come together by economic, political, or military power, but by the Spirit of God.

LIVING INTO THE VISION TODAY

God’s vision or dream of the future is clear. The preaching of the gospel, the making of disciples, the forming of communities of faith from among all the peoples of the earth, serving others in the name of Jesus, living in light of his dream, is a kingdom— a different way of doing race relations in this world. After the death of Latasha Harlins, the beating of Rodney King, the disturbances, then to beautiful (and profound) insights. The suffering seemed so much more real than the vision of peoples living together.

How does the son of migrant workers dream God’s dream for communities of faith that reflect both the diversity and unity of the community of believers? My own sense of the task has evolved as I have seen the complexities lived out in different contexts. How do we face the reality of racism and live out of the hope of the gospel?

In the racially and socioeconomically divided world of my childhood and early pastoral ministry, the most important part of the task was to empower children. In the United States society, the protection of these children would be Christians that would light the way to end slavery and for women’s rights.

During the civil rights movement in the United States, Martin Luther King Jr. told us about his dream. He had a vision of a different way of doing race relations in this country. Most people that heard the speech were convinced that it was impossible. But his dream had a very significant impact on the United States. We still have a long way to go, but a country could be very different in two years. We have an African American president, and the relationships between the races in the United States are much better than they were 50 years ago when Dr. King made his famous speech.

God’s dream in Revelation 7, embodied in Dr. King’s dream, is the type of dream that has guided my life and ministry. My ministry began in marginalized urban environments, and the riots that ensued when an all-white jury found the police officers involved in the beating guilty were an important agent for reconciliation in such a charged environment? How do the Christians in each of these communities reach out to each other when their ways are so profoundly different? And how can groups of Christians from different communities, who found that it was impossible to meet at the same point. The suffering seemed so much more real than the vision of peoples living together.

Living and ministering in Guatemala for almost nine years brought to the forefront the importance of being willing to speak directly into structural racism. The indigenous peoples of Guatemala are half of the population of the country, yet the vast majority of the wealth of the country is concentrated in the hands of a small group of white extended families. Racism is so overt in Guatemala these days. Racism is not as self-evident as it is in parts of the countryside. However, the sin of racism, how does one survive in a world that empowers the marginalized: what does it mean to be white, and what does it mean to be poor? Those were the questions raised by life and service there. How does one read Revelation 7 when all the “official” interpreters are on one side of this divide and would benefit from a “white” interpretation of this vision?

Returning to Los Angeles a few months before 9-11 and watching how fear defined the new reality feels more like a curse than like a blessing. Many people in the United States, including many Christians, are afraid of God’s new world—of those who are migrating and for our country. (For example, many of those migrants are committed Christians and God is using them to revitalize the faith of many in the United States.)

Seem through the lens of Revelation 7, global migration challenges us to think about what

Global migration, in particular, raises new opportunities and new challenges to living out the dream. And part of that challenge has to do with how we interpret what it means to be a child of God. A key theological question has to do with what we believe about human migration and the way that God is present in that process. Do we see God at work in the midst of global migration? How is God present?

In the Bible, the people of God seemed most attentive to when they were in move- ment, when they were being a blessing to others when he accepted God’s invitation to move. It was during the Exodus. We can see that, even though it does not exist now, it points us in the right direction.

Throughout history, Christians have been able to dream of humas living in better relationships. The early church with hope and Gentiles worked to be the church together. As communities of believers developed in the Roman Empire and beyond, these groups of believers reflected the diversity of their world and demonstrated new ways of intercultural relations. It was those same Christians in the Roman Empire who provided care for childless children. In the United States society, the protection of these children would be Christians that would light the way to end slavery and for women’s rights.

2015 / ISSUE #4 RECONCILING RACE
There are many reasons why it is difficult to live into God’s dream. We interact in varying types of intercultural relations where different types of responses will be needed. Some of these encounters are new, while others reflect continuities of structural injustice. There are also real social and economic differences that affect how communities interact. And the biggest issue of all is the reality of human sin. We are still on this side of the final fulfillment of God’s dream in Revelation 7.

Yet Revelation invites us to live into this dream in our world today. One of the ways I understand my task at Fuller today is to help students dream of becoming a new generation of believers disciplined to serve others, in the name of Christ, in this changing world. Because of the globalized nature of our lives today, living out the Revelation vision includes preparing students to be agents of the transformation of intercultural relations in light of the gospel. The new communities of faith created by the next generation of graduates will be called to live out this vision within their communities, but also as bridges to other Christian communities, being the church so that people of other faiths, and those of non-faith, will be impacted by that vision.

As during the time that John wrote Revelation, there are many reasons today why one can doubt whether God’s dreams will become reality or whether human fears and sin will fundamentally guide our interac-
tions, even among Christians. Will Chris-
tians let Revelation 7 guide their vision of the future and their politics, or will political positional-
ities color their reading of Scripture that visions of God’s dream will merely sound like the political platforms of those in power?

In a sense little has changed, though much has changed. God’s dreams still seem far from the reality we live today. The denominations that formed me and ordained me is still the order of the day, even in countries that like to see themselves as particularly enlightened. And global migration is creating new types of encounters that complexify the task.

Yet this is the place and the time to live into this dream through the power of the Holy Spirit. The dream calls for believers to be evangelists of the message of Jesus Christ, interpreters of the complexities, bridges between people and groups, defend-
ers and protectors of those who are marginalized, spokespeople for the causes of intercultural justice—people who will walk alongside, who will break down boundaries while defending those who are weaker, and who will speak truth to those in power.

God is inviting us to dream his dreams, to serve with the understanding that God’s eschatological future calls us to believe that another future is possible today. And so the son of migrant workers keeps dreaming God’s dreams.
YOU CAN REACH THE OTHER SIDE OF LIFE!

FORGIVENESS AND JUSTICE: TWO KEYS TO RECONCILIATION

Hak Joon Lee

T

the story of Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1–10) is a consistently fascinating read. It embod-

ies many distinctive elements of a great story: intriguing twists, a dramatic build-up,

and a shocking resolution. In the story, a man of

wealth and power cannot find a spot on the

street among the crowds as he endeavors to
got to see a good look at Jesus. This is primarily

because the man is short but also so despised by
people that they would crowd him out. Thus, like a child,
this man of short stature climbs a tree along the street to look down for
Jesus and, to his surprise, Jesus looks up at the despised outcast and calls him by name.

Jesus decides to spend time at the home of the

sinner of sinners. But perhaps the most

shocking element of the story is its climax, as

Zacchaeus pledges to give half of his posses-
sions to the poor and to pay back those he
defrauded four times what he took.

The story of Zacchaeus is a story of reconcilia-
tion. Zacchaeus chose Zacchaeus as his host

because he desires him to be reconciled with
God and people. This is after all the same
Jesus who asserted, “The Son of Man came to
seek and to save the lost” (v. 10). More

importantly, however, the story reveals the

manner in which divine-human reconcilia-
tion is inseparably related to human re-

conciliation. It offers a much-needed cor-
rection to a popular evangelical misunder-
standing of reconciliation that regards rec-

onciliation as a purely personal transaction
between God and individual. Jesus was

accusing of being a friend of sinners by Pharisees, and Jesus’ de-
cision to stay with Zacchaeus alienates him further from the entire community. This

alienation includes Jesus’ own disciples, be-

cause the text notices, “All, who saw it,
began to grumble and said, ‘He has gone to be
the guest of one who is a sinner’” (v. 7). Jesus,

more than likely experienced hostility from
some of his victims. The actual business of

reconciling with others is rooted in the will
of God; thus we should be motivated by God's

costly grace can fully and consistently
achieve. As in the narrative, interpersonal rec-

onciliation is no easy task. Like God’s grace, it is
costly. Imagine with me for a moment how
Zacchaeus would have followed up his pledge for charity and reparations later. How might
Zacchaeus’ wife and children have reacted to
his decision? What was it like for him to come
to face with the victims of his exploita-
tion? Some might have become hopeless,

some might have lost family members (as a
direct or indirect result of his exploitation, as
we saw in the aftermath of the 2008 finan-
cial crisis). For some families, even reparation
would not have been acceptable or sufficient.

To confront the hardship and suffering of
people would have been personally shame-
ful and heartbreakingly for Zacchaeus. He

more than likely experienced hostility from
some of his victims. The actual business of

disentangling his web of past financial abuses
was indeed a shocking resolution. In the story,
Zacchaeus’s wife and children have reacted to
his decision? What was it like for him to come
to face with the victims of his exploitation?

Zacchaeus’s wife and children have reacted to
his decision? What was it like for him to come
to face with the victims of his exploitation?

Repercussions were sure to follow his action.

Social norms by associating with Zacchaeus.

Jesus, a Jewish rabbi, was intentionally break-
ing the Ten Commandments, to her surprise she discovered

that her Rhode Island ancestors had run the
largest slave-trading business in American
history. Over three generations, from 2750 to
1820, the DeWolf family brought more than
than ten thousand slaves across the Atlantic
Ocean, and they accrued an enormous

fortune. And for two hundred years, the
DeWolfs produced many distinguished public
figures, educated respected businesspeople,
and prominent Episcopal clerics. One of her
ancestors, James DeWolf, became a United
States Senator and was reportedly the second
richest man in the nation at the time.

What do you do with this kind of sordid
secret? Do you move on, as if it had never

Hak Joon Lee joined the faculty at Fuller in 2011 and in 2015 was
named Lewis B. Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics. He came with
17 years of teaching experience at New Brunswick Theological
Seminary, Drew University, and New York Theological Seminary. He is
an ordained Minister of Word and Sacrament at the Presbyterian
Church (USA).

Lee’s current research focuses on covenant, trinitarian ethics, and
public theology in the global era. He has also focused much of his
study on the ethics and spirituality of Martin Luther King Jr., and his
work reflects his belief to the celebration of Martin Luther King Jr. Day in
several cities.

Lee has published several books, four in English, including Covenant
and Communication: A Christian Moral Conversation with Jürgen
Habermas (University Press of America, 2006). He Will Get to the
Promised Land: Martin Luther King Jr.’s Communal-Political Spirituality
(Pilgrim Press, 2006), The Great Wall House: Martin Luther King,
Jr. and Global Ethics (Pilgrim Press, 2011), and Shaping Public
Theology: The Max E. Stackhouse Reader (forthcoming), as well as
numerous articles and two books, Korean, Bridge Builders (Dorae
Media, 2007) and A Peacemaker Shift in Korean Churches (Holy Water
Press, 2011), which was awarded one of the most outstanding books
in religion in year 2011 by the Ministry of Culture, Tourism, and

STORYVOICE THEOLOGY

PUBLIC THEOLOGY
happened? Do you ignore it because you personally have had nothing to do with the slave trade? Katrina, as a Christian, chose a difficult route. She decided, in the other half of her family’s shameful history with the public, to explore their family’s past. Only nine came. Together, they retraced the route of slave trade with the result of little white girls and white boys and black skin? Indeed, children, it does; and your on our Maker to despise a part of His children, the same God? Am I to blame, therefore, because “Children, who made your skin white? Was it

The story of Katrina Browne should inspire us all because it dramatically reenacts the core of the Zacchaeus narrative. Katrina’s action offers a small but powerful model for racial reconciliation in our country. Katrina Browne and her cousins chose to engage in the ministry of reconciliation. She understood that redressing the wrongs of her ancestors (particularity she does not know who they are), reconciliation at the minimum requires speaking the truth about slavery and making an authentic acknowledgment of the pain suffered by its victims. This is important because genuine reconciliation is impossible without the restoration of trust and respect is rooted in the truth, including the acknowledgment and confession of past wrongs.

Some evangelicals think forgiveness alone is sufficient in achieving reconciliation because that is what God did in Jesus Christ. Their focus is often interpersonal peace, harmony, and love rather than justice, reparation of wrongs, and restoration of power relations. Marcia Volf warns in his award-winning book Exclusion and Embrace, “forgiveness is not a substitute for justice.” Forgiveness without justice is cheap reconciliation. Genuine and lasting reconciliation is possible only on the basis of both forgiveness and reparation of wrongs. Reconciliation has two locks to open. One might say, if forgiveness is one key, then justice is the other. Forgiveness is the one half of reconciling work that a victim experiences, while the other half of reconciling work that is reserved to the perpetrator. Only after having achieved both goals can true reconciliation occur.

Dr. King’s legendary speech “I Have a Dream” is a compelling example of a national reconciliation. With a moving force, it envisons a new America that is racially integrated and reconciled not only legally but also spiritually and morally. King dreamed: “One day, . . . little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.”

Although reconciliation was the goal of his movement, however, King did not preach a cheap, counterfeit vision of reconciliation. Most Americans do not know that his speech actually starts with a stinging criticism of white hypocrisy that had consistently denied the basic rights of African Americans and other people of color. King firmly rejects the status quo of racial inequality because it is a staggering block to reconciliation, as he solemnly declared: “There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whiteness of the nation’s clay dates back to the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.” As much as his noble vision of the America that is genuine and compelling, his commitment to justice was equally firm and uncompromising. He urged the whole nation to use itself from the quicksands of racial injustice and to the solid rock of brotherhood; now is the time to make justice a reality for all God’s children.”

Reconciliation from a biblical perspective does not refer to passive absence of enmity but active presence of friendship. Hence, reconciliation cannot be forced, just as forgiveness and apology cannot be coerced either. To repair a broken relationship and move toward friendship, each party needs to go an extra mile than what the law requires. Reconciliation requires the courage to be vulnerable (a victim’s forgoing of her rights through forgiveness as well as a perpetrator’s confronting his shames through truthful confession); therefore, the road to reconciliation leads toward Golgotha—denying oneself and carrying one’s cross, as Jesus did. And it is possible only through God’s grace.

Engaging in the ministry of reconciliation will likely reward us infinitely. We may run the risk of being extracized by our own community while receiving unfair anger and animosity from others. However, we should not be discouraged because we are saved not by cheap grace, but costly grace—the grace that moved Zacchaeus and Katrina Browne. Jesus said, “Those things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace in you. In the world you will have trouble. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33NASB). And this assuring promise of Jesus Christ will always live with us as we engage in the ministry of reconciliation as God’s ambassadors in this world that is hungry for God’s grace and thirsting for friendship.

**The author wishes to thank Jason Falin for his assistance with a stylistic revision of this article.**
BRIDGES AND MARCHERS: SYMBOLS OF MOVEMENT FROM SUFFERING TO HOPE

The power of a march is based in unity of purposeful action. Whether composed of a mob, an invading army, or nonviolent neighborly activists, a march—as opposed to a panel, a classroom, or a conference—is a collective intention to put feet to words. It is a potent symbol in the Christian tradition, old as Jericho, where impenetrable walls of injustice were toppled by obedient marchers armed with silent prayers, trumpet blasts, a few well-timed shouts, and the Lord God Jehovah in their midst.

Bridges are often chosen as staging points for marches because they are architectural icons and they symbolize change. Those we’ve chosen to illustrate throughout the previous theology section are characteristic to each city: Selma, Charleston, Sacramento, and Pasadena. We’ve used these images to imply a narrative arc: from suffering to hope, as Romans 5:4 describes. Bridges have deep, multifaceted meanings in many cultures, and are often chosen as locations for symbolic actions from suicides to proposals of marriage.

Our marchers on page 40—William E. Pannell, Harriet Tubman, James Earl Massey, Martin Luther King Jr., Susan Torr, Rosa Parks, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer—never linked arms or crossed the same bridge. They have, however, gone before us in the faith, embodying Christ. In this way, they marched together every day of their lives. This great cloud of witnesses are too many to include here, growing daily: William Wilberforce, Yuri Kochiyama, Clementa Pinckney, Oscar Romero, Kim Dae-jung, Richard Wurmbrand, Pope Francis, Brenda Safer McNeil, Liu Xiaobo, José Arreguín—all are hinted at by the unfinished drawings at the left and right of our marchers. The lives of these leaders, living and past, teach us when to be silent, when to pray, when to lock arms, when to stand firm, and when to march. They are among the council of many, from whom the Scriptures say we are to derive wisdom in the day of trouble.

The Colorado Street Bridge (1912) was built to ease the arduous crossing of the Arroyo Seco from Pasadena to Eagle Rock and is within walking distance of Fuller’s Pasadena campus. Its unique, pedestrian-friendly design attracts artists, lovers, and the melancholy—with over 150 suicides since it was built. (Charlie Chaplin’s film City Lights begins with the Little Tramp taking a melancholic walk along the bridge.) This illustration imagines all that Fuller has worked toward in the 70 years of its history in Pasadena, as well as our hopes for promoting future reconciling work of the gospel. Whether we march in Pasadena, Phoenix, or Atlanta, we take steps toward justice with every choice to see the invisible person, hear the imprisoned voice, or feel the undercurrent of sorrow that, by ignoring, undermines reconciliation.
Lord Brian Griffiths of Goldman Sachs discusses the relationships between faith and global economic contexts with Mary Vermeer Andringa, the CEO of Vermeer Corporation, during “Faith, Leadership, and the Global Marketplace”—an event hosted by the De Pree Center in 2015. (Left to right: Griffiths, Andringa, President Mark Labberton, and Mark Roberts. Hear full audio recording online at fullermag.com.)

“In the very first chapter of the Bible, God is revealed as the Creator, indeed, as a worker. Yes, in Genesis 1, God works. Now, to be sure, God’s work has a unique character. God works by speaking all things into existence. Yet this is work, real work. This truth is clarified in the last part of the first creation story where it says, ‘And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work he had done’ (Gen 2:2). If the notion of God as a worker seems strange to you, remember what Jesus said in John 5:17, ‘My Father is still working, and I also am working.’ . . . God is a worker, the first worker, the one who shows us the essential value of work.

“If God is a worker, indeed, the Worker, then we have the opportunity to be like God as we work. What we do today may be less glorious than speaking creation into existence, but, nevertheless, our work can be a conscious and worshipful imitation of God’s own work. Through our work, we can live into our calling as God’s people, sharing with God in the good work of helping creation to be fruitful and beautiful.”

VOICES ON Work

“For many of us who work, there exists an exasperating discontinuity between how we see ourselves as persons and how we see ourselves as workers. We need to eliminate that sense of discontinuity and to restore a sense of coherence in our lives. Work should be and can be rewarding, meaningful and maturing, enriching and fulfilling, healing and joyful. Work is one of our greatest privileges. Work can even be poetic.”

—from Max De Pree, in Leadership is an Art. De Pree was for many years the CEO of Herman Miller Inc., whose iconic business furniture graces many Fuller offices. A sought-after lecturer and writer on work culture and organizational leadership, De Pree is a Fuller senior trustee. The Fuller Max De Pree Center for Leadership was established in his honor in 1996.

—Mark D. Roberts is the new executive director for the Max De Pree Center for Leadership at Fuller. This reflection is quoted from Life for Leaders, a daily devotional blog of which he is the principal writer and editor.

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“Business has a vital role in seeking the well-being of human society, and in the God-ordained stewardship of all of creation. In fact, businesses have opportunities to contribute to this in ways that impact different dimensions of life than can be touched by churches, mission agencies, or other non-profit organizations. In other words, business activity is at the heart of the purposes of God—if it takes God’s purposes to heart.”


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Max De Pree (Crown Business, 2004)

Business as a Holy Calling? A Workbook for Christians in Business and Their Pastors
Tim Dearborn (CreateSpace Independent Publishing, 2014)

Life Is Not Work/Work Is Not Life: Simple Reminders for Finding Balance in a 24/7 World

Christians at Play
Robert K. Johnston (Wipf & Stock, 1997)

Available Classes

Spiritual Formation and Discipleship in a Postmodern World (DMin)
Spiritual Traditions and Practices with Richard Peace (and other faculty)
Integration of Spirituality and Urban Ministry with Joseph H. Cutler
The Spiritual Disciplines with Richard Peace
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“Christian worship as a peculiar culture can be defined as a patterned relationship between God and humans and its embodiment in a liturgical manner and form. Moreover, this patterned relationship between God and humans and its embodiment does not have a fixed form, but is rather a process—an ongoing creative work of human beings. Christian worship is not a ready-made fixed form, but is rather a creative process, a holy conversation in a patterned relationship between God and God’s people. In this way, the poetic approach to worship assumes that worship can be understood as a specific culture in itself and a creative process for each congregation of embodying the holy encounter between God and God’s people.”

+ Jonghun Joo (PhD ’11), teaches at Africa International University in Kenya. In summer he co-taught “Practice of Worship and Prayer” with Ed Willmington in Fuller’s Korean Studies Program. The photo is of a dancer interpreting hymns at the Brehm Center’s Festival of Worship.

“...I believe that where God desires for us to go as believers is that place where we can do all of the music... there’s nothing wrong with having a hymn and a worship song and something that’s salsa-like, and then something with Jewish popular beats. It might not happen in your church in one service. Maybe you do have to have a couple of different services, but the issue is that the hearts of the people are saying, ‘We understand that our coming together is about God and not about our tastes. ...’ What we do when we get together, in order for God to be glorified, the flesh has to be brought down.”

+ (at left) Diane White-Clayton, choral conductor of Faithful Central Bible Church in LA, sang and spoke at “An Evening of Worship and Liturgy in the African American Tradition,” sponsored by the William E. Pannell Center for African American Church Studies as part of its dedication gala. Pictured below (top to bottom) is a Centro Latino worship service, a panel about art and justice with Jars of Clay at Fuller Northwest, and a Korean Studies worship service—all examples of worship expressions at our campuses.

VOICES ON Worship

This content is curated from resources and ongoing conversations taking place throughout the Fuller community. Check online for full videos, articles, and more.
“Worship is this time when we are weaving all of our human stories—as individuals, as a community, as a world—into a divine story of redemption through Christ. It is in that interweaving, that entering into a narrative, that we can find hope and healing.

It can bring people from different places together as we recognize that we’re all part of one story, but if we don’t think about how we are participating or how we’re facilitating participation, it can just be a presentation.”

Nicholas Zirk (MAT ’09), a lay leader and worship leader, in an interview with Seventh-day Adventist news magazine Adventist Review about planning services and creativity in worship.

“Perhaps sacred space is found by praying the Hours behind the wheel of your car as you inch through the traffic of your morning commute. Or perhaps it is found by considering the Psalms as the primary resource for Christian worship and prayer. Recently our professor said that Psalms 4 and 5 are a pair: one an evening Psalm and the other a morning Psalm. Exalted and intrigued, I asked, ‘How do we know that?’ There are no special titles or footnotes, adverbs or big arrows in the text that would alert the reader to this kind of information. The response to my question was equally brief: ‘You read the Psalms!’ Which of course is exactly the point of this class. If the Psalms are our best resource for prayer, we still engage them well by reading them often and especially by doing so in community.”

William A. Dyewas in his book A Primer on Christian Worship: Where We’ve Been, Where We Are, Where We Can Go. Council for Christian Colleges and Universities

“The heart of the battle over worship is this: our worship practices are separated from our call to justice, and, worse, foster the self-indulgent tendencies of our culture rather than nurturing the self-sacrificing life of the kingdom of God. We are asleep. Nothing is more important than for us to wake up and practice the dangerous act of worship, living God’s call to justice.”

Mark Labberton, in his book The Dangerous Act of Worship.

A Primer on Christian Worship: Where We’ve Been, Where We Are, Where We Can Go.

Perhaps sacred space is found by praying the Hours behind the wheel of your car as you inch through the traffic of your morning commute. God will meet you there. Even there, we can take time to reflect, to manage the space for prayer. Your car is no longer just a metal box with switches and gears controlled by the human hand. It is a space overflowing with the presence of the Spirit of God, the very One who moved over the face of the waters at the earth’s inception.”

TIME

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Nate Riskin (MDiv ’07), associate director of the Brehm Center, from his reflections on liturgical prayer in the book Praying the Hours in Ordinary Life.

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Mark Labberton, in his book The Dangerous Act of Worship.

PSALMS

“In Practice of Worship and Prayer, we have spent a lot of time considering the Psalms as the primary resource for Christian worship and prayer. Recently our professor said that Psalms 4 and 5 are a pair: one an evening Psalm and the other a morning Psalm. Exalted and intrigued, I asked: ‘How do we know that?’ There are no special titles or footnotes, adverbs or big arrows in the text that would alert the reader to this kind of information. The response to my question was equally brief: ‘You read the Psalms!’ Which of course is exactly the point of this class. If the Psalms are our best resource for prayer, we still engage them well by reading them often and especially by doing so in community.”

Andrew Herbert (MDiv student), reflecting on the class Practice of Worship and Prayer on the Touchstone Blog—stories from students taking Fuller’s new ecclesiology and formation classes.

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Nate Riskin (MDiv ’07), associate director of the Brehm Center, from his reflections on liturgical prayer in the book Praying the Hours in Ordinary Life.
LEADER: As we gather in this place, remind us that Christ’s prayer of oneness is still a dream that lies ahead of us. Forgive us for the energies we put into denominationalism, factionalism, and nationalism that draw your body in the world asunder.

ALL: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: For the churches represented in this congregation and in this choir, grant peace and continued hope for their ministries, and draw us together in your mercy, in your hope, and in your love.

ALL: Lord, have mercy.

LEADER: The prayers of your children, the triumphant dancing, the shouts of praise will never ring as loudly, and move as rhythmically, or speak as poetically as when we will all gather together on that final day. Prepare our hearts for that joy and grant us glimpses of the blessed kingdom to come.

ALL: Lord, have mercy.

* A prayer from the 2016 Festival of Worship, sponsored by the Brehm Center’s Fred Bock Institute of Music and the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels. Bock Institute Director Ed Willmington is pictured conducting a choir of over 800 voices representing 40 different congregations.
“Forgiveness is the mutual recognition that repentance is genuine and that right relationships have either been restored or achieved. It is not denial of the injury, avoidance of the conversation, pretense that it does not matter, generosity that overlooks the reality of actual wrongdoing, tolerance that permissively sidesteps the hard work to be done, superiority that rises above the other in magnanimous perfectionism. It is the hard, painful, vulnerable risking of sharing in the conversation on repentance.”


“The persecuted church puts a primary focus on the victim's healing and restoration while also pursuing the restoration of the aggressor and the community as a whole. I believe that Jesus’ cross is a clear example of this kind of ‘restorative justice,’ and this process has touched me deeply. We as victims and as aggressors are to carry out the ministry of reconciliation through repentance and forgiveness. This is why I think ‘restorative justice’ is an important concept for the ministry of reconciliation.”

Kyung Lan Suh, adjunct professor in the Korean School of Intercultural Studies program, shared her research on the Mennonite church and forgiveness at the ReconciliAsian Banquet last year.

“This session was eye-opening, and the women were sincere and honest with each other, and they truly heard and acknowledged one another’s hurts. The women felt heard and better understood, and they felt their hurt was acknowledged. This does not mean that they necessarily agree with each other, but that they learned to better listen to one another. The other side’s acknowledgment of one’s hurt is part of the forgiveness process, and it helps in the healing process. They left excited by the furthering of their relationships and the newly found openness they achieved as they were vulnerable with one another.”

Salim J. Munayer (MAT ’84) founded and leads Musalaha (an Arabic word that means “forgiveness” or “reconciliation”), a nonprofit in Jerusalem committed to restoring relationships between Israelis and Palestinians. This reflection is from their recent women’s conference on the theme of forgiveness.

“Forgetfulness is a journey, sometimes a lifelong journey. We have no control over the end; some relationships will never be mended this side of heaven. Some offenses are so grievous that it is not within our power to forget. And yet the journey must begin, for it is a journey toward our own freedom and peace.”

—from the late Ray Anderson, professor of theology and ministry at Fuller (1976–2009), in his essay “A Theology of Forgiveness.” Pictured above is the gravesite of Jacob Rogers’ (MAT ’13) uncle and nephew. In the class Developing Communities in Muslim Contexts Jacob wrote on the long-term process of forgiveness—one he confesses is still a work in progress: “I cannot say that my deep-seated reservations are completely gone, but through study and understanding I am finding healing.”

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“Forgiveness is the process by which love and trust are reestablished in relationships. Forgiveness doesn’t consist of simple platitudes or superficial statements that are expected to make the past go away. It is not forgetting about serious damage or letting someone off who caused hurt without taking responsibility. It is not about subjecting yourself to an unworthy or unloving person who will just hurt you all over again. What forgiveness is about is the coming together of at least two people, after there has been severe damage or hurt in their relationship, to rewrite the story of love and trust in a responsible way that will make their relationship, and families stronger and healthier.”

—from Terry Hargrave, professor of marital and family therapy in the School of Psychology, in his book Forgiving the Devil. This quarter, Dr. Hargrave is leading Fuller’s first “Family and Forgiveness” group through Fuller Psychological and Family Services.

My Story of Forgiveness

My story of forgiveness begins with my mother.

She was a wonderful, selfless woman—a woman of prayer, often on her knees in the early hours of dawn. Her Bible was worn through from reading. She was generous and kind, often giving her bread to strangers on the bus. She was an evangelist who gave tracts to people waiting with her at the bus stop, who went up and down the aisles of her bus praying for other passengers. When I decided to go into full-time mission work, I knew she would cover me in prayer and love.

Early in 2010, my mother was diagnosed with cancer of the lymph nodes. I returned to the States from Taiwan to be with her during surgery, but afterward—even though she asked me to stay—I chose to go back because I loved the towels and the excitement of my work. So, in the name of what God was doing in the world, I abandoned my mom.

This is one of the most painful mistakes of my life.

A year later the lymphoma had spread throughout her body. I returned to the States again, and, for a year, I lived in the hospital with my mom, feeding and washing and caring for her as penance for my failure to love her more than my ambitions.

After I buried my mom in February of 2012, I entered into the darkest season of my life. I was overcome by guilt—I couldn’t sleep, I didn’t eat, and my mind was teeming with thoughts of death and suicide. I was riddled with regret, pain, and grief. I should have persuaded her to receive preventative chemo. She had given all her life and I had taken and taken. When she needed me, I had abandoned her. My heart felt like it was going to burst.

The first year of my mother’s passing I was at Fuller. I sat in an ethics class talking about the Beatitudes and the poor in spirit, the meek, those hungry for righteousness. My heart ached because I was feeling closer to hell than to the kingdom. My professor prayerfully told me what no one else did, that my selfish and self-centered choices were waking me up early every morning because they needed to be set right. The Holy Spirit was prodding me to recognize my offenses and to receive God’s forgiveness and my mom’s.

I went to my mother’s grave, where I sat weeping, confessing my sins. Though a friend who accompanied me prayed a prayer of forgiveness over my life, I walked away feeling the same. I still woke in the early hours, tormented by the same memories of chemo, radiation, needles, and surgeries. I still missed my mother and longed to feel her hand stroking my face. I still felt guilt, anger, sadness. But each time, a quiet voice in the back of my mind said, “I forgive you.”

I was selfish and self-centered: “I forgive you.” I considered myself more highly than others: “I forgive you.” I let ambition rule my life: “I forgive you.”

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I was selfish and self-centered: “I forgive you.” I considered myself more highly than others: “I forgive you.” I let ambition rule my life: “I forgive you.” I abandoned you when you needed me: “I forgive you.”

My mother left me a legacy of her cruciform life, where the weak are highly than others: “I forgive you.” I abandoned you when you needed me: “I forgive you.”

My mother left me a legacy of her cruciform life, where the weak are stronger, the generous have immeasurable wealth, the kind win people’s hearts, and forgiveness overcomes selfishness, my selfishness transformed by forgiveness. I am forgiven.
New Faculty Books and Journal Articles

We the People: Israel and the Cathedrality of Jesus (IVP Academic) edited by Todd Johnson, known for his casual style of dress, accompanied Walter Brueggemann

The Spirit of Prayer: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity
Edited by David Allan Hubbard

Do You Need the New Testament? Letting the Old Testament Speak for Itself
John Goldingay

Theology and the Emotions
Reflections on Empathy, Empowerment, and Spirit-Engaged Movements
Karin Powell

New Fuller Faculty

KEON SANG AN
Assistant Professor of Bible and Mission
A School of Theology alumnus and most recently an adjunct assistant professor, Keon Sang An has previously served as a pastor in Seoul, Korea, as a preaching pastor at churches in Ethiopia, and as a professor at Evangelical Theological College in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

LAURA ROBINSON HARBERT
Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology
Already serving as dean of chapel and spiritual formation, Harbert adds a faculty title to her role at Fuller. She has 25 years experience as a clinical psychologist, and looks forward to study and teaching on the psychological and theological dynamics of spiritual formation.

TED COSSE
Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology
Alongside his new faculty role in the School of Psychology, Cosse serves as executive director of Fuller Psychological and Family Services (FPFS) and PsyD program director. When providing individual psychotherapy, his focus is with adults struggling with issues of meaning.

MICHAEL PASQUARELLO III
Assistant Professor of Practical Theology
Pasquarello taught at Asbury Theological Seminary for 14 years and served as a pastor in the United Methodist Church for 18 years. He sees himself as “a pastor with a PhD,” called to serve the church’s mission by training and equipping those who will be its future leaders.

STEVEN T. YAMAGUCHI
Assistant Professor of Practical Theology
Adding to his role as dean of students, Yamaguchi anticipates more in-depth interaction with students in his new faculty position. He will teach on addiction and recovery and pastoral care, employing personal and professional experience to help students hear God’s call.

AHMI LEE
Assistant Professor of Preaching
Along with 12 years of pastoral service, Ahmi Lee brings international ministry experience with churches throughout Asia and in Australia, South Africa, and the United States. She has also served as a translator for Campus Crusade for Christ in Japan and Fuller’s Korean DMin program.

KUTTER CALLAWAY
Assistant Professor of Theology and Culture
Former director of church relations and affiliate faculty, Callaway describes his academic work as “an extension of a more fundamental experience with the Spirit of God through music, film, and other cultural forms,” teaching us “something about who God is and who we are to be.”

STEVE ARGUE
Assistant Professor of Youth, Family, and Culture
Argue worked with the Fuller Youth Institute (FYI) for the past five years while pastoring at Mars Hill Bible Church in Grand Rapids, and is now a School of Theology faculty member and applied research strategist with FYI focusing on youth ministry strategy and leadership development.

LAURA ROBINSON HARBERT
Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology
Already serving as dean of chapel and spiritual formation, Harbert adds a faculty title to her role at Fuller. She has 25 years experience as a clinical psychologist, and looks forward to study and teaching on the psychological and theological dynamics of spiritual formation.

TINA R. ARMSTRONG
Assistant Professor of Clinical Psychology
A Fuller alumna, Armstrong has been an assistant professor at Alliant International University, California School of Professional Psychology since 2011. Her research interests include minority women in academia, vicarious trauma, liberation psychology, and early childhood mental health.

STEVE ARGUE
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NEW FULLER FACULTY
El Seminario Teológico Fuller es una de las instituciones eclesiásticas más influyentes del mundo, el seminario teológico más grande, y una voz principal para la fe, la cortesía (civility en inglés) y la justicia en la iglesia global y la cultura en general. Con raíces profundas en la ortodoxia y veintiocho centros, institutos y iniciativas, aproximadamente 4,000 estudiantes de 90 países y 110 denominaciones inglean anualmente a nuestros programas y nuestros 41,000 ex alumnos y ex alumnas han aceptado el llamado a servir en el ministerio, la consejería, educación, las artes, en organizaciones sin fines de lucro, los negocios y una multitud de diferentes vocaciones alrededor del mundo.

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Jesus said the most conclusive evidence of gospel truth is our love for one another. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples.” (John 13:35) The gospel demands more than words in response to the ravages of racism. We need prayerful action. By galvanizing independent churches to become communities of informed believers, we can mobilize a committed force to build bridges of justice and reconciliation.

We find deep encouragement in the stories of Sacramento pastors Joy Johnson and Bret Widman (see pg. 36), who met as members of “Micah Groups” at Fuller Theological Seminary. A Micah Group gathers a dozen church leaders in one community from diverse ethnic, economic, and denominational contexts to meet for two years, working toward issues of justice through the ministries of their churches. In a few short years we have built networks involving almost 1,000 church leaders in over 60 cities across the United States, Canada, the UK, France, Egypt, and South Africa. They show their communities the transforming love of Christ while providing a safe meeting point for church leaders with differing backgrounds to explore God’s will together.

When we consider the long road to reconciliation, we know it requires more than talk. Imagine what might happen if the “sleeping giant” of the church across America could be mobilized to act toward justice? Micah Groups is one of Fuller’s commitments to long-term, courageous action. If you’re interested in learning more, visit micahgroups.org.