
The Intersectionality of Race, Politics, and the Legal Justice System: Using Theological and Historical Frameworks to Interpret the #BlackLivesMatter Movement

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Introductory remarks

From the time of the European transplantation of the Pilgrims and Puritans in North America between 1620 and 1630 to the emergence of the Religious Right in the 1980s, mainline Protestant churches have been complicit in the oppression and dehumanization of Black people. Moreover, since the founding of the United States, the racialization of religion, politics, and economics has been an instrument used by White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASP) to formulate laws and public policies to discriminate against Black people, meaning Anglo-Saxon Protestants have gone to great lengths to preserve their legacy of white supremacy.

Thus, from the point that Europeans captured Black bodies and stamped them with the brand of slavery, white supremacists have felt empowered to do whatever they wanted to enslaved Black bodies with impunity (e.g., maim, mutilate, rape, murder, etc.). As a result of the transatlantic slave trade, white supremacists have used science and the weight of the law to reduce the worth of Black bodies to the same level as animals. Dreadfully, the way white supremacists continue to mistreat Black bodies strongly suggests that the Black body is incapable of being free of assault anywhere in the United States. So, from an **Africana perspective**, I see this binary relationship between the oppressed and the oppressor as a source of ongoing trauma.

The previous remarks show a long history of oppression toward Black bodies in the United States. Fortunately, since 2014, the participants in the #BlackLivesMatter movement are committed to dismantling and changing the way white supremacists orient themselves toward Black people. While members of the #BlackLivesMatter movement are beneficiaries of the legacies of Black freedom fighters in the United States, they have limited their focus to political change and stopping violence against Black people. However, their focus on political change and eradicating the ongoing threats against Black bodies beg the question about why so many Black churches are not supportive of the #BlackLivesMatter movement? Perhaps, there has always been two faces of the Black church: (1) the face that buys into the missionary model of salvation which is mainly associated with the domination and subjugation of Black people and (2) the face that has always fought

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to preserve African values and beliefs in service of achieving liberation and social justice for Black people. Perhaps, the face of the Black church that is most antagonistic to the #BlackLivesMatter movement is the face that has taken on the model of the White church as a missionary church.

Nevertheless, this article examines the emergence of the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the context of a long history of ontological terrorism that white supremacists have perpetrated on Black people with the blessings and support of mainline White denominations. I aim to discuss race, politics, and the judicial system through an intersectional methodology, in order to show how the #BlackLivesMatter movement seeks to restore the humanity of Black lives. More specifically, to understand why tension exists between some Black churches and the #BlackLivesMatter movement, I think it is necessary to go back in history and look at the historical context of the Black liberation struggle for freedom. Thus, the following components are examined in this article:

- (a) The background of white supremacy and American racism,
- (b) The use of the scientific method to justify white supremacy,

- (c) The slave industry of Savannah, Georgia, as a case example of historical trauma,
- (d) The complicity of mainline churches in the slave trade,
- (e) A theology of forgiveness,
- (f) The #BlackLivesMatter movement and the struggle for justice,
- (g) The Black church's lackadaisical response to Black Lives Matter movement, and
- (h) Proposals for how the Black church can move forward.

The background of white supremacy and American racism

In order to understand the emergence of the #BlackLivesMatter movement in the current political landscape, I believe it is necessary to briefly trace the legacy of white supremacy in Europe and the United States for the purpose of highlighting the continuous impact white supremacy is having on Black people. I begin, then, with observations about the historical background of white supremacy and American racism. According to legal scholar Professor Frances Lee Ansley, white supremacy is defined as a “political, economic and cultural system in which whites overwhelmingly control power and material resources, and in which white dominance and non-white subordination exists across a broad array of institutions and social settings.”¹ For instance, former Republican U.S. Representative of Florida’s 13th congressional district, David Jolly, concurs with Professor Ansley’s assessment of white supremacy. Jolly says, “the reality is, the United States was founded by one race that owned another. And our Constitution and our laws were constructed to protect that ownership of another race. And that has drawn now for generations in a way that has affected the ladders of opportunity in education and finance, in homeownership and jobs and opportunity and labor for one race that is still suffering from that condition on which our nation was founded.”² Thus, white supremacy is embedded in the Constitution of the United States. For example, Article I, Section 2, of the U.S. Constitution of 1787 asserts that enslaved Blacks could be counted as three-fifths of the number of White inhabitants in a state for purposes of Congressional representation.³

Notwithstanding the embeddedness of the white supremacy in the Constitution, Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas traces the history of white supremacy to the publication of *Germania*, a book which was written by Tacitus in 98 CE. *Germania* is an ethnography about an indigenous group of people that lived in the woods of Germany around the first century CE.⁴ Tacitus portrayed them

1. Frances Lee Ansley, “Stirring the Ashes: Race Class and the Future of Civil Rights Scholarship,” *Cornell Law Review* 74, no. 6 (1989): 993-1077

2. Joy Reid, “Right Wing Embraces 1/6 Conspiracy Theories.” ReidOut, June 18, 2021. Podcast, website, 0:05. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lz1_VxeORfM.

3. Cf. U.S. Const. art. I, § 2.

4. Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the*

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as “blonde hair and blue eyes” and responsible for defeating the Roman military in 9 AD in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest.⁵ About 428 CE, members of this warlike community moved to the eastern coast of Great Britain. In exchange for military protection, the British monarch provided them with food and a monthly tribute.⁶

However, after years of residing in Great Britain, these Germanic people became the predecessors of the Anglo-Saxon people. Eventually, two factions of these Anglo-Saxons fled from Europe to the New World in search of religious freedom and economic opportunities. These factions are known as the Pilgrims and the Puritans.⁷ The mission of the Pilgrims was to find freedom from religious persecution and the mission of the Puritans was to find the promised land and establish a New Israel. Douglas explains that the Pilgrims and the Puritans felt the Anglo-Saxon people possessed high moral values and an “instinctive love for freedom.”⁸ In other words, the Pilgrims and the Puritans were devout Christians who felt they were free to engage in a mission of conquest in North America, a mission that ultimately led to the massacre of indigenous people and the desecration of their land.⁹

Unlike the Pilgrims, the Puritans’ voyage to establish a colony in the New World was sanctioned by the King of England. The Church of England was the prototype of the Episcopal Church, a

Justice of God (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2015), 133-137.

5. Fergus M. Bordewich, “The Ambush That Changed History” *Smithsonian* 36, no. 6 (September 2005): 74-81.

6. Michael E. Jones and John Casey, “The Gallic Chronicle Restored: A Chronology for the Anglo-Saxon Invasions and the End of Roman Britain.” *Britannia* 19: 367-398.

7. Kelly Brown Douglas, “How Evangelicals Became White: For Much of American Evangelical History, Spreading the Gospel Meant Spreading Whiteness,” *Sojourners*, (April 2018). <https://sojo.net/magazine/april-2018/how-evangelicals-became-white>.

8. Kelly Brown Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, 5.

9. George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 22-41.

church that was actively involved in the Atlantic slave trade. Ironically, the Pilgrims and the Puritans justified their missionary quest for land in the New World, based on the ideological framework of white supremacy. This white supremacist ideological framework was supported and reinforced by the scientific method, a story to which I now turn.

The use of the scientific method to justify white supremacy

By the time Europe was transitioning out of the Middle Ages and entering the period of Scientific Revolution, European scholars had begun to utilize the empirical method to devise ways of categorizing and classifying scientific data. Eventually, proponents of the empirical approach became obsessed with a racial hierarchy where Whites were on top and Blacks were always on the bottom (i.e., the Great Chain of Being). For instance, in 1779, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach divided the human species into five races based on his study of human skulls (i.e., Caucasian, Mongolian, Malaysian, Ethiopian, and American).¹⁰ Countering this notion only two hundred years later, the American Association of Physical Anthropologists issued a statement that “the Western concept of race must be understood as a classification system that emerged from, and in support of, European colonialism, oppression, and discrimination. It thus does not have its roots in biological reality, but in policies of discrimination.”¹¹ Moreover, the Association declared that the concept of race does not “provide an accurate representation of human biological variation.”¹² In other words, Europeans lied about their superiority in order to aggrandize themselves with the material wealth of the people they exploited and oppressed. Thus, as a theoretical construct, the concept of race continues to be used by white supremacists to justify their discrimination against Blacks in housing, education, the labor market, the criminal justice system, and health care system.

Adding insult to injury, white supremacists legislated laws to maintain their superior status to the detriment of the oppressed. These legislative practices were “rooted in assumptions of innate, natural differences between Europeans and other peoples.”¹³ Unfortunately, Black people in the United States continue to feel the impact of intergenerational trauma because of the legacy of slavery and white supremacy.

The slave industry of Savannah, Georgia, as a case example of historical trauma

An example of the continued impact of intergenerational trauma

10. Agustín Fuentes, et al., “AAPA Statement on Race & Racism,” *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 169, no.3 (July 2019): 400-402.

11. Agustín Fuentes, et al., “AAPA Statement on Race & Racism,” 400-402.

12. Agustín Fuentes, et al., “AAPA Statement on Race & Racism,” 400-402.

13. Agustín Fuentes, et al., “AAPA Statement on Race & Racism,” 400-402.

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toward people of color regarding slavery and white supremacy is found by examining the slave industry in Savannah, Georgia. During a personal tour of Savannah’s slave history on May 30, 2021, I learned that Johnson Square played an essential role in Savannah’s slaveocracy. Johnson Square was the location of City Hall, Christ Episcopal Church, several insurance companies and banks, slave pens, and a slave auction block. Ms. Patt Gunn of the Gullah-Geechee people walked the tour group to the places where captured Africans disembarked from Savannah-bound slave ships, where they were placed in slave pens for a couple of days before being taken to the auction block, and where they were ultimately sold and carted away to a life of perpetual pain and misery.¹⁴ Ms. Gunn explained that in Johnson Square nine groups of white supremacists earned billions of dollars in the slave industry: (1) The ship’s captain paid taxes to City Hall upon the disembarkation of the enslaved Africans (e.g., 45 dollars for adults and 20 dollars for children); (2) Cotton growers paid the Cotton Factoring Company interest on the advancements they received while waiting for Liverpool to pay them for their cotton; (3) The ship’s captain paid fees to the U.S. Customs to have the ship in the water 7-10 days before the next incoming vessel arrived; (4) Auctioneers paid advertisement companies to produce handbills to promote the slave sale; (5) Slave sellers paid the auctioneers 25% of all sales; (6) Slave owners paid the insurance companies for insurance policies that owners were required to keep on the enslaved; (7) The slave buyers paid legal fees to closing attorneys to process documents of ownership (8) The slave owners paid interest on the loans they borrowed from the banks to purchase the enslaved; and (9) Christ Episcopal Church was paid for the use of its slave ships because the church owned 55% of the slave

14. Patt Gunn, “The Underground Tour of Savannah”. Johnson Square: Savannah, Ga., May 30, 2021.

ships leaving the port of Savannah. The slave auctions were held three times a month.¹⁵

The complicity of mainline churches in the slave trade

My tour in Savannah, Georgia, in May 2021 showed me that many mainline churches profited from the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. For instance, Andrew Lowe was a member of the First Christ Episcopal Church of Savannah. He convinced the church trustees to invest in the ownership of a bank in Johnson Square.¹⁶ Consequently, First Christ Episcopal Church benefitted from the banking instruments that were created to fuel the slave industry in Georgia.

According to Katharine Q. Seelye, many of the “ship-builders, captains and financiers of those slaving voyages were Episcopalians.”¹⁷ She explains that the church, Episcopalians and non-Episcopalians alike, “supported slavery and profited from it even after the trans-Atlantic slave trade was outlawed and slavery had been banned in the state.”¹⁸ She identifies some of the most notable Episcopalian slaveholders as Thomas Jefferson and George Washington.

Rhode Island was the epicenter of slavery in the North. At the heart of Rhode Island’s slave trade was James DeWolf, a member of a prominent Episcopalian family that was responsible for transporting more than 12,000 enslaved Africans across the Middle Passage. When the slave trade ended between Africa and Cuba, James DeWolf continued to sell slaves in Georgia because “there was no law to stop the traffic of slaves to or from Georgia.”¹⁹ Moreover, Seelye quotes Bishop W. Nicholas Knisely of the Diocese of Rhode Island, who said, “when Quakers and Baptists in Newport began turning against slavery, some slave owners in those churches switched to the Episcopal Church, where they were welcomed, and their slaveholding was not challenged.”²⁰

There is no question that mainline churches were directly connected to all the benefits that ensued from the slave industry in the United States. Moreover, mainline churches continued to support white supremacy, which entreats us to question their sincerity when they apologized for their involvement in the slave industry. Today, the Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island has undertaken efforts to convert the 200-year-old Cathedral of St. John in Providence, R.I., into a museum and reconciliation center to

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highlight their involvement in the Atlantic slave trade.²¹

A theology of forgiveness

Having traced the background of white supremacy and racism in the United States and showing through personal reflections the continued impact of intergenerational trauma on persons of color, I now turn to some reflections on the theme of forgiveness. Today, in the United States, White people are offering apologies to Black people for the atrocities their ancestors committed during the American slave period. However, their apologies seldom include the mistreatment Blacks continued to experience during the horrific era of Jim Crow (e.g., Springfield Massacre, Elaine Massacre, Rosewood Massacre, Tulsa Massacre, etc.).²² Regrettably, Black people have been quick to forgive White people for the vicious attacks to which they have been subjected throughout their existence in North America because Black Christians are taught to forgive White people as a matter of freeing their souls of hate and revenge.²³ For example, a white supremacist named Dylann Roof murdered nine people attending a prayer service at the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, in June 2015. According to news reports, Roof published a lengthy manifesto in which “he described African Americans as genetically inferior to whites and defended legal segregation.”²⁴ However, some friends and family members of the nine people Roof massacred said that they forgave him. I believe

15. Patt Gunn, “The Underground Tour of Savannah.”

16. Patt Gunn, “The Underground Tour of Savannah.”

17. Katharine Q. Seelye, “Rhode Island Church Taking Unusual Step to Illuminate Its Slavery Role.” *New York Times*, Aug. 23, 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/24/us/rhode-island-church-taking-unusual-step-to-illuminate-its-slavery-role.html>.

18. Katharine Q. Seelye, “Rhode Island Church Taking Unusual Step to Illuminate Its Slavery Role.”

19. Bristol Warwick Rhode Island Digital History Project, *James deWolf: One of the “Great Folk” of Bristol*, https://www.warwickhistory.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=262:james-dewolf-one-of-the-qgreat-folkq-of-bristol&catid=56&Itemid=125.

20. Katharine Q. Seelye, “Rhode Island Church Taking Unusual Step to Illuminate Its Slavery Role.”

21. Katharine Q. Seelye, “Rhode Island Church Taking Unusual Step to Illuminate Its Slavery Role.”

22. Blackpast, “Racial Violence in the United States Since 1660” (2016). <https://www.blackpast.org/special-features/racial-violence-united-states-1660/>.

23. Andre E. Johnson and Earle J. Fisher, “But I Forgive You?": Mother Emanuel, Black Pain and the Rhetoric of Forgiveness. *ResearchGate*, June 2019. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333703782_But_I_Forgive_You_Mother_Emanuel_Black_Pain_and_the_Rhetoric_of_Forgiveness.

24. Matt Schiavenza, “Hatred and Forgiveness in Charleston,” *The Atlantic*, June 20, 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2015/06/dylann-roof-manifesto-forgiveness/396428/>.

the quickness with which Black Christians are willing to forgive white supremacists like Dylann Roof is problematic. I believe we must figure out whether our response to forgive people who commit heinous crimes against our humanity is too formulaic. I don't think this is what the New Testament teaches about forgiveness. Are there times when "I forgive you" should not be the first words uttered out of the mouths of Black Christians?

I think it is important for Black Christians to develop a more robust theology of forgiveness. For instance, how well do Black Christians understand how forgiveness is described in the biblical narrative (i.e., repentance, godly sorrow, and restitution)? The narrative implies that several conditions must be satisfied before granting forgiveness to an offender. First, there must be a sense of remorse on the part of the offender. Second, the offender must ask for forgiveness and offer some form of restitution. Third, after restitution is satisfied, then Black Christians can move forward to talk about forgiveness. To be sure, if a person doesn't want to repent, then, it follows that they are not going to engage in an act of restitution. No restitution--no forgiveness. Thus, under these conditions, Black Christians are obliged to withhold their forgiveness.

In the final analysis, forgiveness should come from a person who has been harmed or wronged. But Dylann Roof did not ask for forgiveness. Instead, Roof said, "I want to make it crystal clear. I do not regret what I did. I am not sorry. I have not shed a tear for the innocent people I killed."²⁵ So, Roof did not repent, he did not provide restitution, and he is not asking for forgiveness. In this case, how can Black Christians forgive a person who hasn't even asked for forgiveness? Having a conversation about forgiveness without a debate about justice is not operating in the spirit of Christian forgiveness. Said debate about justice is seen in the #BlackLivesMatter movement.

The #BlackLivesMatter movement and the struggle for justice

Young people are not interested in doing church the way their grandparents did church. To the contrary, young people are concentrating on how to hold white supremacists accountable for the atrocities of slavery and Jim Crow. In their worldview, religion is for the White elite who can dispatch lobbyists to local, state, and national governmental agencies to ensure Christian doctrines and values continue to be embedded in laws and public policies: the same laws and public policies that oppress and do irreparable harm to Black people.

Without the ongoing legacy of white supremacy, there would be no need for the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Alicia Garza, one of the cofounders of the #BlackLivesMatter movement, explains why the movement exists. She states:

When we say Black Lives Matter, we are talking about the ways in which Black people are deprived of our

25. Matt Schiavenza, "Hatred and Forgiveness in Charleston."

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basic human rights and dignity. It is an acknowledgment Black poverty and genocide is state violence. It is an acknowledgment that 1 million Black people are locked in cages in this country—one half of all people in prisons or jails—is an act of state violence. . . . And the fact is that the lives of Black people—not ALL people—exist within these conditions is consequence of state violence.²⁶

This quotation from Alicia Garza shows that the central theme of the #BlackLivesMatter movement focuses on getting the legal-justice system to recognize the humanity of Black people. For example, Iris Marion Young argues "that where social group differences exist, and some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, social justice requires explicitly acknowledging and attending to those group differences in order to undermine oppression."²⁷ Thus, the #BlackLivesMatter movement came into existence to join an ongoing intergenerational struggle for the dignity and respect of Black people. In other words, the movement is demanding the United States government to repair the harms that have been done to Black communities through the enactment of laws and public policies that were set forth by white supremacists to treat Black lives as though they do not matter.

The Black church's lackadaisical response to #BlackLivesMatter movement

Why does it appear, though, that the Black church is hesitant to assume the reigns of leadership in contemporary political struggles for justice like the #BlackLivesMatter movement? There are several possible explanations for this reluctance, which I will now examine.

First, the church's reluctance to join the #BlackLivesMatter movement could be related to a lack of committed faith-based leadership. For instance, many faith-based leaders have been

26. David B. McNamee, "Black Lives Matter' as a Claim of Fundamental Law," *University of Massachusetts Law Review*: 14, no. 1, (2019): 1-68. <https://scholarship.law.umassd.edu/umlr/vol14/iss1/1>.

27. Iris Marion Young and Danielle Allen, *Justice and The Politics of Difference* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011), 3.

trained in theological institutions that are supported by mainline denominations. Consequently, they have embraced the beliefs and values that are rooted in these institutions. Thus, graduates of these institutions are less likely to disrupt the status quo of white supremacy. In other words, they are more inclined to use curricula formulated by white supremacists to teach their congregants. This limits the opportunities for their congregants to engage in liberation and social justice activities.

Second, politics mean jobs and money. The leaders of faith-based institutions have historically depended on politicians and corporate executives to dole out jobs and money to their congregations in exchange for political favors. For example, corporate executives and powerful politicians have leveraged their relationships with many faith-based leaders to thwart the social justice activities of Black freedom fighters. For example, Sam Hitchmough describes how Pastor Joseph Jackson, one of a few Blacks with inside access to Mayor Daley's political machine, was instrumental in impeding Martin L. King's efforts to expand the footprint of the Southern Leadership Conference (SCLC) into the North. Hitchmough states:

But it is Jackson's relationship to Mayor Daley's infamous city machine where his loyalty to authority and a law and order philosophy struck a chord with city-wide efforts to counter King's protests, throwing the differences between the two men's application of patriotism to the struggle into sharp relief. The philosophical similarities and variations between Jackson, King and notions of patriotism form part of a deeply important intellectual debate about different African-American standpoints and options that played out not just in Chicago but have national repercussions.²⁸

So, these White power brokers have leveraged their influence over these faith-based leaders to gain support for legislation and public policies that favor the White power structure. Thus, Black faith-based leaders are less likely to engage in activities that may undermine their relationship with these White power brokers.

Third, the Black church is comprised of an aging membership that is either too old or not interested in getting involved in political activities. The media (e.g., newspapers, radios, television networks, and word of mouth) tends to shape the way they interpret current events. For example, when we consider the way Fox News portrays the #BlackLivesMatter movement, we can begin to appreciate why elderly Christians are hesitant to get involved in the movement. Fox News tends to sensationalize the violence that is often associated with the movement. Consequently, elderly Christians are likely to see the participants in the #BlackLivesMatter movement as violent troublemakers. Sanya Mansoor disputes the claim that participants are troublemakers. She states:

28. Sam Hitchmough, "Missions of Patriotism: Joseph H. Jackson and Martin Luther King," *European Journal of American Studies*: 3 (February 2011), <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejas.9155>.

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ACLEED highlights a recent Morning Consult poll in which 42% of respondents believe 'most protesters (associated with the BLM movement) are trying to incite violence or destroy property.' ACLEED suggests this 'disparity stems from political orientation and biased media framing... such as disproportionate coverage of violent demonstrations.'²⁹

In reality, 93% of #BlackLivesMatter protests are peaceful. At any rate, young people are willing to put their lives on the line to achieve the goal of social justice and racial freedom for Black people. Rather than being diverted by false accusations of looting and rioting or vandalizing and destroying property, they are focused on the pursuit of justice.

Proposals for how the Black church can move forward

Finally, it is appropriate to ask how the Black church should move forward in light of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. It is difficult to continue using a European "missionary model" to *proselytize* young people in African American communities. This missionary model has a long history of being connected to slavery, terrorism, genocide, and economic deprivation. Also, this model is responsible for alienating African Americans from their cultural roots and depriving them of an authentic self-identity. In effect, the missionary model encourages Black people to participate in their own oppression.

Nonetheless, Dr. Linda Thomas reminds the liberating face of

29. Sanya Mansoor, "93% of Black Lives Matter Protests Have Been Peaceful, New Report Finds." *Time Magazine*, (September 5, 2020). <https://time.com/5886348/report-peaceful-protests/>

the Black church to resist the efforts of White Christians who are committed to dismissing the outrage of Black people as unpatriotic and anti-American. Nothing could be further from the truth. For example, Dr. Thomas illustrates the duplicity of White Christians when they assert that because all Christians are children of God, therefore, all Christians are siblings; therefore, we should love each other as God loves us. Dr. Thomas says that the words spoken by White Christians are incongruent with their actions. She states:

“Since I understand “sibling” to involve having a serious relational connection to another child of God—I ask you not to call me sibling if for you that word does not have my correspondingly responsible vernacular ethic. Don’t say, “*all of us are children of God*” to make yourself feel better. I already know that I am a child of God, which is the reason I fight oppression for myself and other vulnerable folks. When your self-interests mean my demise, then I know that you view dimly those who endure intersectional oppressions, as I do. Our bright lights will never be dimmed, for their current runs straight from the living, Triune God.”³⁰

From the above, notwithstanding, too many Black churches have been inequitably imprisoned by white supremacist power structures and belief systems—including denying (or at least not recognizing) the contributions Black people have made to Christian theology. Such progressive Black churches do exist and serve as an alternative to the missionary model, providing an example for how the Black church can respond to #BlackLivesMatter in the future. Especially important to note is Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, a congregation that is unashamedly *Black* and unapologetically *Christian*. *They are actively creating social justice ministries* to address the injustices committed against Black people. In addition, the congregation is engaged in a Black worship style that reflects the cultural expressions of the Black community. And, rather than rely on white supremacists’ publications, they publish their own Christian educational resources from an Afrocentric theological perspective. For the reasons just mentioned, this congregation can be a catalyst for the Black church in general for Christian engagement with the social justice aims of the #BlackLivesMatter movement.

From this perspective, #BlackLivesMatter means that the Black church also matters. Thus, despite the threat to its acquiescence to a colonialist settler role, the Black church must continue using its prophetic voice to advocate for the healing of intergenerational trauma and the protection of the beautiful souls of Black people.

Conclusion

This article has delineated the history of white supremacy in the United States and established that white supremacists intentionally

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sought to dehumanize Black people through structural barriers that served to deny them access to the American opportunity structure. These dehumanizing conditions were manifested throughout the legal justice system in the form of economic exploitation, health disparities, unfair housing practices, etc. It is therefore past time for the United States to show remorse and atone for its past misdeeds. This country needs to ask Black people for forgiveness and offer an appropriate form of recompense to make Black people whole.

While many Black church leaders are silent on the legacy of white supremacy, groups like the #BlackLivesMatter movement are calling white supremacists into account for their vile acts against the humanity of Black people. However, the work of reconciliation, healing, and repair requires the Black church to use its prophetic voice to ameliorate the intergenerational trauma that Black people continue to experience in the United States due to white supremacy. Finally, the Black church must use its prophetic voice to find practical solutions to Black suffering. It is currently far too silent regarding the ongoing cruelty of white supremacy toward Black people. Embracing the work of the #BlackLivesMatter movement is then an opportunity for the Black church to reclaim its prophetic voice in relation to the wider societal struggle for justice for Black bodies.

30. Linda Thomas, “A Womanist Perspective on the Election of Donald Trump: What Pastors Are Called to Do,” *Journal of Lutheran Ethics*, 16, no. 10, (December/January 2016/7): on-line journal.