

## MATTHEW 25 GATHERING in BLACKHAWK

### Choosing Steps to Dismantle Racism Where You Are

August 11, 2020 RECAP

#### SOME HIGHLIGHTS

Chris Roseland (chris.roseland@pcusa.org), our PMA Mission Engagement Advisor, joined us again (Thanks!) and began by reminding the group that anti-racism efforts have a long, tortuous history. The two black athletes who in chaotic 1968 raised their black-gloved fists on the Olympic medal podium, and were banished for it, captured their reasoning later: “We had to be seen because we couldn’t be heard”. He reiterated: PREDJUDICE + POWER = RACISM and defined the following:

**Racism** is a social construct designed to concentrate capital (material and social) within one group or race of people over others.

**Poverty** is lack of capital (to ensure basic well being) and

**White privilege** is the advantage of having greater access to power and resources than people of color in the same situation do.

Chris alerted us of a new resource coming soon covering the potential impact of the various new voter ID laws that will restrict voter rights and suppress voting especially among the poor and minorities.

He discussed and covered the concept of **microaggressions** – defined as the everyday, subtle, intentional — and oftentimes unintentional — interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups. (If you google it, you will find lots of helpful information to open eyes and confront this form of racism.)

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
Presbyterian Mission

## Microaggressions

**MICROAGGRESSION:**  
A TERM USED FOR BRIEF AND COMMONPLACE DAILY VERBAL, BEHAVIOURAL, OR ENVIRONMENTAL INDIGNITIES, WHETHER INTENTIONAL OR UNINTENTIONAL, THAT COMMUNICATE HOSTILE, DEROGATORY, OR NEGATIVE PREJUDICIAL SLIGHTS AND INSULTS TOWARD ANY GROUP, PARTICULARLY CULTURALLY MARGINALIZED GROUPS.

### RACIAL MICROAGGRESSIONS

Where are you from? Where are you really from? No, where are you really really from?

What are you?

You speak English so well

You're not like other Muslim people

What do your people think about that?

You're really pretty for someone so dark

You don't act like a normal Black person.

Why do you sound so White?

Your name is too hard to pronounce. can I call you Mary?

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The reaches of systemic racism have also in some way created environmental racism, where the poor and persons of color are all too often left to live 'downstream or downwind' from polluting industries. Health suffers, economic opportunities are few and the cycles of poverty continue.

When advocating for systemic change, it is important to be clear that equality can lift some, but equity levels the playing field and true liberation is found only when no barriers exist at all.

The [Presbyterian Week of Action](#), August 24-30, was recently introduced as a way for the denomination as a whole to publicly raise awareness of the issues of systemic racism and to affirm that Black lives matter – to God, and to us.

We are also encouraged to: 1) take an [online Matthew 25 course](#)\* offered jointly by Stony Point Center and Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, 2) take the [21-Day Racial Justice Challenge](#) either individually or in groups, 3) continue to become familiar with all the [resources](#) available. (\*Note: Mike Selburg is signed up for the course and offered his encouragement – he suggested it was not essential to do as a live event. The recorded class would be well worth it. There is a sliding-scale fee.)

Interesting demographic information for your community from PCUSA Research Services can be found here: <https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/research-services/demographic-report/>.

The [Illinois School Report card](#) also has information about the demographics of your community.

We also must consider the painful and lasting effects of the Doctrine of Discovery / Manifest Destiny had on this nation's indigenous populations. The systematic genocide of existing peoples by the 1830 Indian Removal Act and other methods, paved the way for the settlers who founded our communities and churches. The Matthew 25 initiative can be used to begin to address this reality.

Jon Phillips, Interim pastor of Elgin First and former member of Chicago Presbytery outlined for us the steps they have taken over the years to confront racism in their presbytery and to change the way they conduct business and offer education for their members. In addition to hiring a community organizer, a variety of task forces guided the process over several years, first analyzing the history of race relations in the congregations and the governing body. Along the way, they have provided education, encouraged buy-in from all congregations, and sought paths to integrate anti-racism work and objectives into everything the presbytery did. Eventually the presbytery established and fully funded the new CARE, [Commission on Anti-Racism and Equity](#).

Christina Berry, Pastor of Sterling First Pres. reported on some of the work she has seen and been involved with in their community (Sterling, Rock Falls – "Sauk Valley"). She encouraged those beginning anti-racism work to not be overwhelmed by the magnitude of issues, but to choose an entry point and start. Doing nothing is no longer an option. Sterling initially applied for and received a Synod grant to begin their "Buddy Bags" program for food-insecure children. It has proven very successful and opened people's eyes to the needs of the community and the underlying racism as well. An ecumenical pastor's book study group led to "Pastors United Against Racism". The Diversity Committee of the Sauk Valley has not only sponsored awareness-raising events but is now offering "Tough Conversations" for group dialog following the George Floyd murder. Christina's story of "locking the choir room" is worthy of retelling.

Laurie Walker, Interim pastor of Sandwich Federated and Moderator of Blackhawk Mission Committee indicated that anti-racism ideas in the Presbytery may be eligible for funding through Presbytery or Synod grants. The Mission Committee is also looking to form a subcommittee or task force to resource and guide the Matthew 25 program in Blackhawk. Please volunteer! The presbytery is looking to sponsor on-line discussion groups, book groups or learning opportunities. We will be adding a Matthew 25 page to our website and are anxious to support everyone's efforts.

Laurie suggested a series of short, very popular YouTube videos are worth watching and discussing: "[Uncomfortable Conversations With a Black Man](#)" by Emmanuel Acho, former NFL player, now a sports commentator. It may be easier to engage people with short videos in lieu of full book studies.

Regarding the political turmoil around the Black Lives Matter movement (and specifically the words "Black Lives Matter"), some suggested that proactive education was a possibility. The book "When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir" by Asha Bandele and Patrisse Cullors covers the history of the movement. Re-phrasing it to "Black Lives Matter to God and to Us" has also been used. The General Assembly this year voted overwhelmingly to approve a resolution declaring that Black lives matter; confessing that the church has been complicit in perpetuating injustice; and pledging to "confront and dismantle systemic racism" in the church and in society. ([See Presbyterian Outlook article here](#) and the [specific overture information here](#).)

Consider this period of racial unrest as a "teachable moment" - an opportunity to influence our children with our words and our actions. Too many of us were raised in homes where the cries of injustice and inequality (as in the 1960s) were never discussed because our parents and all-white communities thought they weren't 'our problems'. Can we do better?

#### **THE AUGUST 11 VIDEO RECORDING:**

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/-P1xfu7r3VtLGZXB0kjtYoQeMJbqaaa8gShN-fYMykbRj\\_yCjyH8PoKcozw0YjIT?startTime=1597157059000](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/-P1xfu7r3VtLGZXB0kjtYoQeMJbqaaa8gShN-fYMykbRj_yCjyH8PoKcozw0YjIT?startTime=1597157059000)

#### **RESOURCES RECOMMENDED BY PARTICIPANTS** *(from Chat and Conversation)*

Q: (Susan Krause) In our area, the significant demographic group is Latinex rather than Black POC. Does PCUSA have resources for working with Hispanic community? Immigration and DACA issues are predominant in our area. Thanks

A: (Chris Roseland) You may contact Susan Krehbiel, PDA, Associate for Refugees & Asylum, 502-565-6148 (see more info here: <https://pda.pcusa.org/page/staff-committee/>)

<https://oga.pcusa.org/section/mid-council-ministries/immigration/about/>

<https://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/detention-center-reports-strike-pcusa-staff-as-part-of-disturbing-trend/>

<https://facing-racism.pcusa.org/item/50717/>

Susan Krause: I follow Emmanuel Acho on Facebook. His conversations are great!

Jon Phillips, 25, First Elgin, (he/him): <https://www.chicagopresbytery.org/care-commission-on-anti-racism-and-equity/>

Christina Berry: Anything by Willie James Jennings is outstanding, too. Dr. Jennings is academic and some of the books are dense but the articles are easier.

Stephanie Anthony: One good list of resources for children, youth, “Your Kids Aren't Too Young to Talk About Race: Resource Roundup”:  
[parents.https://www.prettygooddesign.org/blog/Blog%20Post%20Title%20One-5new4](https://www.prettygooddesign.org/blog/Blog%20Post%20Title%20One-5new4)