



Adventist Youth Leader Magazine

Spiritual Youth Leaders Resource



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General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists®
Adventist Youth Ministries

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Seventh-day
Adventist® Church

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Editorial

JULY, 2020

In our previous issue, we began with an editorial enthusiastically speaking on the plans we had for the year 2020 and all the excitement to see what lied ahead for all of us. I think we can all agree that things have certainly take a turn for the worst since then. As I write this, we are still enduring the Covid-19 pandemic in the United States. People are still suffering from this virus and countless others continue to die on a daily basis. People are struggling with trying to keep with their rent and some have to decide between a place to live and food. So many are having a hard time just trying to deal emotionally and mentally with stay at home orders and the chaos that surrounds us.

As we dealt with this, another ugly pandemic reared its ugly head and took the stage front and center; we had nothing else to do but to stare at it head on. Racism, bigotry, prejudice and white supremacy. These are terms that we all know but sadly our Black and Brown brothers and sisters have to deal

with these issues on a regular basis. Peaceful protests have taken off since the viral video of George Floyd's death at the hands of a White police officer, as well as a separate group engaging in riots. Everywhere in the United States and stretching to countries across the Atlantic, thousands of people with posters and hands in the air made their presence and support for our Black community known. Many of our Adventists members have joined while others question whether or not we should be joining, and others adamantly disagree with our involvement.

We are disciples of Christ. We have accepted Jesus as our Savior and have taken our cross and vowed to follow Him and live as He did and as He wants us to live. While on earth, Jesus demonstrated time and time again that He lived by the words He uttered himself: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have

love for one another" John 13:34-35. We here at the General Conference Youth Ministries department, seek to be disciples of Christ every day. We have accepted His calling to serve and love everyone as He has loved us. Therefore, we stand firmly against racism, bigotry, prejudice, discrimination and white supremacy in all of its forms and against all that support it. In this issue you will find articles from different leaders, that seek to inform and help us grow as Christians and as a church. We pray they are a blessing to you and to the work we are sure you are doing to spread God's love and denounce all forms of hate. If we all do our part and lead other young people in the way of love and justice, we can change this world, just as Jesus did.



Andres J. Peralta, D.Min.
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RECOGNITION



We want to give our very own, **Pako Mokgwane**, a cheerful welcome to his new position as Public Campus Ministries World Director. We are positive that with his leadership PCM will continue growing and impacting many lives with the help of all our PCM ambassadors across the globe. We are all looking forward to the work that will be done by the Holy Spirit through him and our youth and young adult leaders. Join us in prayer for our new PCM Director and for all those who will work by his side.



For 6 years, Dr. **Jiwan Moon** has been the fearless and tireless World Director of the PCM. During his time as director, we have seen the growth of PCM worldwide. So many youth and young adults have drawn closer to Jesus as they look to minister to others as PCM ambassadors. Because of their united efforts, we have seen many lives accept Jesus Christ as their Savior. Dr. Moon we are indebted to you for all the sacrifice and dedication you have demonstrated on behalf of PCM and the gospel. Thank you for your selfless service. We vow to continue the work you begun with the same zeal and dedication. May God bless you and guide you in your next journey. May He bless your ministry and your family as well.





SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE ROLE OF YOUNG ADVENTIST ACTIVISTS

INTRODUCTION

With the recent unjust and evil slaying of George Floyd on May 25 in Minneapolis, Adventist young people of all colors are feeling moved to do something. But what can they do? How should they respond to evil? Is there guidance for a younger generation that deeply respects the Word of God and wants to walk in His Spirit?

Yes, there is! This article is designed to help our youth and youth leaders respond in ways that are firmly supported by God's word and will empower them to beat back the forces of racism, injustice and violence in this twisted world.

THREE REVOLUTIONARY CHALLENGES

Here are three revolutionary challenges from God's Word along with some practical and spiritual ways to apply them. This article is in no way the last word on this subject but hopefully it is a template for immediate action!

1) GET WARMER NOT COLDER

Jesus predicted these very days when he warned in Matthew 24:12 that as this world nears its end, the "love of many will grow cold." He then went on in verse 13 to encourage the church to not follow this trend but to instead "endure" in love to the end. Jesus is calling

Adventist youth to get warmer not colder in these last days! In fact, the greatest litmus test of a true follower of Jesus is whether or not they "have love one for another" (John 13:35).

So, in what practical ways can we get warmer not colder? This kind of love is supernatural and happens only when the Holy Spirit is poured out in response to earnest prayer. Romans 5:5 says "...God's love has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit" and in Luke 3:21-22 scripture says that as Jesus "...was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove."

Young people, God is calling you to join together in small groups (two or more) to pray for the Spirit of love to motivate your actions. Many have skipped this step and discovered that all their activism accomplishes little or even makes matters worse. Why? Because it lacks supernatural power and the frigid melting heat of love! Prayer is therefore not just preparation for action it is the most important part of it!

ACTION STEP ONE: Form a small action group and determine to meet regularly in person or online to pray for supernatural love through the Holy Spirit! As you pray in groups as the disciple did in Acts 1-2, God will fill you with the warm attributes of Jesus. These attributes or "fruits of the Spirit" are found in Galatians chapter 5. Someone once said, "we are the nail on which God hangs his portrait." It's time for God's people to stand out in stark contrast to the growing hatred people of this world have toward those who are different from them in politics, religion, color, country or culture!

2) GET ANGRY NOT EVIL!

Are you feeling angry right now because of all the evil you are seeing in our world today? If so, this

is a good thing! In Ephesians 4:26-27 God says, "Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger and give no opportunity to the Devil." Anger is an emotion that God feels too, so it is right for us to be angry when we see or experience evil.

The question though is what are we doing with our anger? It is God's desire that all young Adventist Activists channel their anger toward positive and righteous ends. In fact, the Bible teaches that evil can be overcome only when it is overcome with good (Romans 12:21). In other words, we can never overcome injustice with more injustice, or violence with more violence or racism with more racism! Many have tried and ultimately failed. Young Adventist activists can only use the tools that God uses, which are righteousness, peace, truth and love!

DIDN'T JESUS ENDORSE DESTROYING PROPERTY?

Of course not! Although Jesus did indeed overturn the tables of the money changers in Matthew 21:12, He did not steal their money, burn down their temple, destroy their property, beat up or kill anyone with the rope he had in His hand.

Maybe unlike Jesus, you have allowed anger to lead you into sin and have given the wrong spirit an opportunity to use you. If so, you are not alone. Even Christ's disciples were tempted to call fire down from heaven when their Savior was a target of Samaritan racism (Luke 9). Although Jesus was patient with them, he warned them that they were being manipulated by the wrong spirit (verse 55). His warning no doubt is also for us today.

SHOULD ADVENTIST MARCH IN PROTEST?

Protesting is our first amendment right as Americans and peacefully speaking out against evil is our sacred responsibility as Christians (Ephesians 5:11). This being said, we should ask ourselves three questions before marching on city hall etc. First, who is leading this protest and as a Christians do, I want to be associated with them? Second, what are they protesting and are their values in line with The Bible? Thirdly, what kind of spirit is motivating this protest, and do I want to be influenced by it?

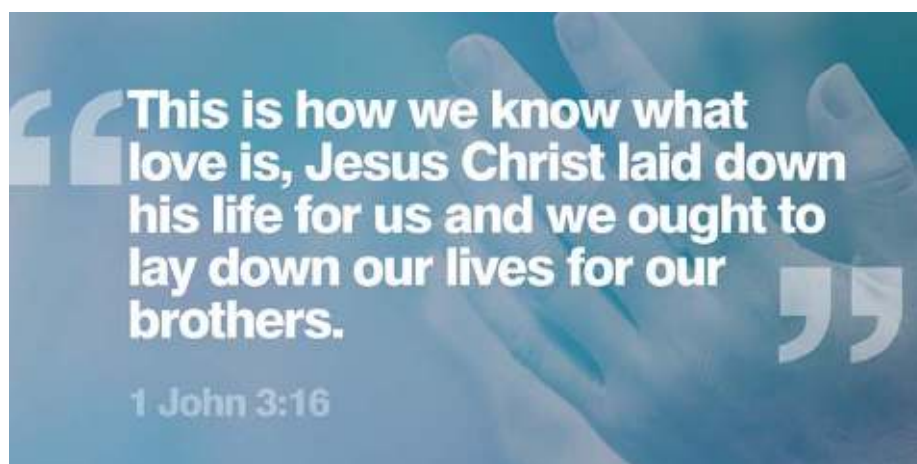
You may remember the story in John 18 when a mob motivated by Satan came to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. They were carrying torches and swords.

Interestingly, their bad spirit was so contagious that Peter one of Christ's closest disciples caught it. The Bible says, He actually drew his sword and committed a terrible act of violence (verse 10). Jesus rebuked him and everyone else who allows themselves to be influenced by evil. The point? Protect yourself by avoiding all protests that display or start to display hateful, illegal or unchristian behavior.

ISN'T SYMPATHY, EMPATHY AND PRAYER ENOUGH?

It is not enough for us to be sympathetic or empathetic toward those in need of our help! The Bible says, "this is how we know what love is, Jesus Christ laid down his life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers" (1 John 3:16). True love as modeled by Jesus on Calvary includes selfless action. Just two verse later in the same chapter, The Apostle John writes "Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth" (vs 18).

Young Adventist Activists need to do more than just verbally protest! In the name of Jesus and under His banner, we need to do something to help those who are suffering. For example, while Peter



and John were on their way to the temple for prayer, they saw a lame man begging (Acts 3). Notice, they did not tell the man they would pray for him or that they were sorry about the condition he was in (though these are good things to do). Instead, The Bible says they helped him up in the name of Jesus (verse 6) and brought him into the church. If you want to see miracles happen and watch the church grow, then do all your acts of love in Christ's name and under His banner alone!

ACTION STEP TWO: In your small group, ask God to give you a plan you can implement right away. Just like Jesus gave Joshua an action plan to tear down the "impregnable" walls of Jericho (Joshua 5-6), God will certainly give your prayer team a strategy

to successfully tear down the walls of racism, injustice, violence! Nehemiah one of the greatest leaders in the Old Testament realized this phenomenon firsthand. As he brought his concerns for his oppressed people before the Lord in prayer (Nehemiah 1-2), God impressed him with a bold and righteous plan that would build up his city not tear it down. God also miraculously provided the resource Nehemiah needed to achieve God's plan! Interestingly, Nehemiah used his position as the king's "Cupbearer" to make things happen.

Here are several questions your action group can discuss together to help decipher God's leading.

- 1) Which evil is most prevalent in our community—violence, racism, injustice, poverty,

disease, drugs, prostitution, abuse etc.? And which evil do we feel most passionately against and most equipped to fight?

- 2) What opportunities to be the hands and feet of Jesus are directly in front of us as a group? What doors are being opened in response to our prayers? Do we need to create a ministry to meet the need or simply help a ministry that already exists?
- 3) What influential platforms do we have (jobs, titles, town hall meetings etc.) that can be leveraged to make things happen and who do we know who can help us get the access and resources we need to push back against evil and minister to the suffering?
- 4) What can we do right now as a group? What action steps must we take and who will be responsible for what on our team?
- 5) Are the plans we've made plans that God would approve of and will they lead to both the temporal as well as eternal benefit of others? Do our plans

harmonize with God's word and rightly reflect His character? How will our plans give glory to God directly and lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus and discipleship in His Church?

3). GET LOUDER NOT SOFTER

Now is not the time for young Adventist Activists to be silent! Especially as it pertains to our unique and phenomenally relevant message. The Adventist denomination is a denomination of destiny, a movement called by God to take The Three Angel's message to all the world. There has never been a time when the world needed us more than it needs us now. Adventist are not better than other Christians but we most certainly have been given a greater responsibility! God has tasked us with communicating His last message of warning and hope to the world.

FACT: God cares more about justice than we do! The Three angels' message of Revelation 14 highlights this fact. "Fear God and give Him glory for the hour of His judgement is come..." (vs 4). In fact, the conclusions of the three angels message describes God's ultimate

eradication of evil and evil doers once and for all (vs 17-20).

Young Adventist Activists, nobody will ultimately get away with racism, violence and injustice! Many may think they have swept their evil acts "under the carpet" but even now the Lord sees what they have done and will soon bring justice to this unjust world. You need to know this so you will not be discouraged as you continue to stand up and speak out against evil but find it eerily resilient. Remember we are not home yet. We are still behind enemy lines, but praise God Jesus is coming, and we must get louder not softer regarding this good news!



JOY TO THE WORLD

Every Christmas, Christians love to sing the hymn "Joy to the World." They do this because most think it was written to celebrate the first coming of Jesus. However, the inspiration for this song came from Psalms 98 which is about the second coming of Jesus not the first. The composer Isaac Watts wanted God's people to be encouraged by the joyful news of the soon return of Jesus!

How does the 2nd coming bring joy to the world? Notice how Psalms 98 answer this question clearly and relevantly in its last few verses. "Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy;

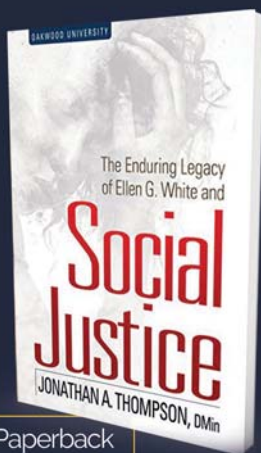
let them sing before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity" (vs 7-9).

ACTION STEP THREE: Maybe as you read this, you are convicted of your own need to get right with the coming Judge. Perhaps in your own heart you have discovered racism, bigotry, hatred, injustice, violence, lust and evil in its various forms. If this is the case, then the Holy Spirit is working on your heart, and you are experiencing repentance which simply means a change of mind regarding sin. I encourage you to go by faith in private or in your small group to the blood-stained cross of Jesus and confess your sins and

lay the heavy burden of your guilt, regret, fear and condemnation on His shoulders. Jesus will most definitely forgive you and give you His spirit of grace, love and forgiveness. Now with this gospel in your heart, use your group's action plan to lift up Jesus as you minister to human needs. Warn those who participate in evil of the coming judgement but with grace in your heart point repentant sinners to the cross where you found grace.



Gary Blanchard,
World Youth Director of the
Seventh-day Adventist Church



Paperback
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“Social Justice reminds us that Ellen White deserves a special place in the pantheon of great Christian thinkers, missionaries, and activists. Her preeminence as a church founder, gifted minister and counselor, prolific writer, visionary, and social reformer leaps from the pages of this book”

Lewis V. Baldwin, PhD
Professor emeritus of religious
studies, Vanderbilt University



Should We Protest Discrimination and Racism?

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But Pastor, is it okay to protest?"

"Did Jesus ever do it? Didn't He just preach the Gospel and didn't waste His time doing that?"

"Doesn't Ellen White say that we cannot involve ourselves in this type of thing?"

"Don't you think we should stop wasting our precious time in distractions such as these and preach the Three Angels Message?"

"This is all politics."

These are some questions and comments we have heard during

the last few weeks. Actually, some of these, we have heard for years now. They come from colleagues, family members, brothers, and sisters in our churches, and others. Interesting, that as Adventists, with protestant roots, we have to ask the question, if it is OK to protest.

So let's start with Jesus; after all, He is the one we should always begin with. He is the One Ellen White would have started with. After that, we will deal with the early church and its pioneers, and we will end with our church today.

How did Jesus respond to discrimination and racism?

During the time of Jesus, there was discrimination and racism.

Discrimination came in many different forms: it was religious, social, economic, gender, and racial. The poor, prostitutes, publicans, women, lepers, and gentiles were all discriminated against. The Samaritans, perhaps, is an excellent example of racism due to their mixed heritage. They were despised and discriminated by the Jews.

Jesus did not remain quiet before any of these forms of discrimination and racism. He spoke up! Each time He issued a public command or an admonition to care for the poor and the least of these, ate with prostitutes and publicans, touched and healed a leper or someone who was unclean, He was

protesting the discrimination and injustice of His time.

Among the many instances, there is one that rises to the surface. When Jesus went from Judea to Galilee and decided to go through Sychar, which means "city of drunkards", and is located in Samaria (John 4:1-42). This route was hardly ever traveled by the Jews. They avoided Samaria, yet Jesus invested plenty of time talking to a Samaritan woman, of not such a good reputation. By doing this, Jesus was clearly saying: "Samaritan Lives Matter!" In another instance, when He set the Good Samaritan as the example above the Jewish priest and Levite, He was cutting to the chase of the racism of His time and clearly affirming: "Samaritan Lives Matter!" (Luke 10:25-37)

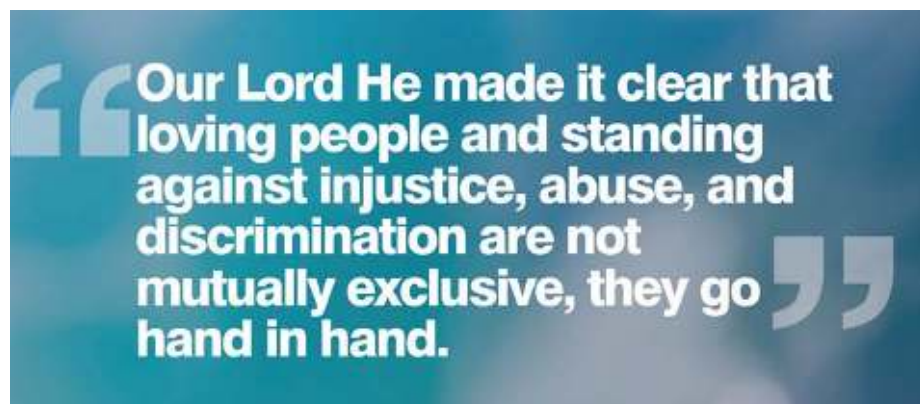
The cleansing of the temple was another instant of protest, this one was harsh, a powerful

condemnation to the Jewish religion and its establishment. Some have recently tried to make it look like a mild occasion, but according to Scripture, there was righteous indignation. There were people thrown out, tables and chairs were "overturned", which means that they were flipped and ended upside down. Interesting to note that after this incident, the very people who had limited access to the temple, the lame, the blind, and the children came to Him, and He spent time with them and healed them (Matthew 21:12-17).

If it is true that Jesus commanded us, His followers, to love our enemies, turn the other cheek, walk the extra mile, and give our coat, it is also a reality that with His example He made it clear that loving people and standing against injustice, abuse, and discrimination are not mutually exclusive, they go

hand in hand. A clear reminder that we cannot call ourselves loving Christians while we sit silently and allow people, whom we claim to love and whom we wish to save, to suffer unjustly at the hands of others! Jesus never felt that His teachings were more important than the people. His teachings were meant to bless. The Gospel that Jesus preached was not limited to sermons; neither should ours.

Jesus said, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar" yet He took an active role as many marched and exalted Him during His triumphal entry to Jerusalem in fulfillment of prophecy (Matthew 21:1-11). Although He did not intend to take an earthly throne or to overthrow the Romans, the crowd surely thought He would, perhaps, some of His disciples agreed with the crowd. Today, many would have said, "Look at Jesus being political." Although He was not pursuing an earthly throne by participating in that triumphal entry, or could we say march, in my opinion, He definitely established that His Kingdom of grace, love, and compassion was far better than the abusive and ruthless Roman Empire. The Romans hated it so much that they crucified Him a few days later.



How did Adventist pioneers respond to discrimination and racism?

Our Adventist church was formed and founded during a time of discrimination and racial injustice in the United States. And yes, our pioneers responded. Following, there are a few examples:

John Byington: First General Conference President, was an abolitionist. He frequently both chaired and participated in abolitionist conventions, signing petitions demanding that the US Congress abolish slavery, which he called "an outrage" and "a sin." New historical evidence indicates that Byington and his brother Anson actively assisted fugitive slaves escaping to Canada along the famous "Underground Railroad", which ran near his home in Bucks Bridge, New York, United States. (<https://www.adventistreview.org/decoding-the-adra-genome>)

Joseph Bates: the former sea captain, who accepted the Sabbath, and became known by many as the "Apostle of the Sabbath" as he contributed in his writings connecting the Sabbath with the heavenly sanctuary, and also our first temperance advocate and

Adventist vegetarian, helped to found the abolitionist society in his home town. (http://www.oakwood.edu/additional_sites/goldmine/hdoc/blacksda/champ/index.html)

Ellen White: The co-founder of the Adventist church, who blessed and guided the church through her inspired voice and writings, also became very engaged during the time of slavery. "While many fine Christians defended slavery or insisted that it was an economic or political issue, certainly not a moral one, Mrs. White called slavery "'a sin of the darkest dye.'" (*Testimonies*, vol 1. p. 359)

She called for the disobedience of a Federal statue when she said: "the law of our land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey." (*Testimonies*, vol. 1. p. 202)

In her passion and discernment, she went to the point of asking that the fellowship of those who sympathized with slavery be removed from the church: "You have never looked upon slavery in the right light, and your views of this matter have thrown you on the side of the Rebellion, which was stirred up by Satan and his host. Your views of slavery cannot harmonize with the sacred, important truths for this

time. You must yield your views or the truth. Both cannot be cherished in the same heart, for they are at war with each other. . . Unless you undo what you have done, it will be the duty of God's people to publicly withdraw their sympathy and fellowship from you, in order to save the impression which must go out in regard to us as a people. We must let it be known that we have no such ones in our fellowship, that we will not walk with them in church capacity." (*Testimonies*, vol. 1. p. 359-360)

She also opposed the days of fast and prayer, proclaimed by church leaders who were indifferent to the causes of abolition: "Great men professing to have human hearts have seen the slaves almost naked and starving and have abused them and sent them back to their cruel masters hopeless bondage.... They have deprived them of their liberty and free air which heaven has never denied them, and then left them to suffer for food and clothing. In view of all this, a national fast is proclaimed! Oh, what an insult to Jehovah!" (*Testimonies*, vol. 1. p. 257)

Early Adventists: a significant group of Christians who were against slavery left their churches because they didn't oppose slavery. A number of those who left their churches became Seventh-day

Adventists. (http://www.oakwood.edu/additional_sites/goldmine/hdoc/blacksda/champ/index.html)

How is the Adventist Church responding to discrimination and injustice?

Our global church and our North American Church have made several pronouncements against discrimination and racism. Take a look:

Fundamental Belief #14: makes it clear that the body of Christ is made up of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. (<https://www.adventist.org/beliefs/fundamental-beliefs/church/unity-in-the-body-of-christ/>)

Official Statement on Racism: voted during the General Conference session of 1985, in New Orleans, that the Seventh-day Adventist Church deplores all forms of racism. An excerpt of the statement reads:

"Racial discrimination is an offense against our fellow human beings, who were created in God's image. In Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek" (Gal. 3:28). Therefore, racism is really a heresy and in essence a form of idolatry, for it limits the fatherhood of God by denying the brotherhood of all mankind and by exalting the superiority of one's own race." (<https://www.adventist.org/articles/racism/>)

North American Division Response to Recent Deaths and Racial Turmoils in the United States in the aftermath of the death of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd: declares that "As Christians we condemn such actions of hate and violence and call for justice to be served for the victims and their families." The statement goes further as it requests that as Adventist, we do not stay silent before discrimination and racism:

"We urge all our church members to prayerfully consider how they interact with everyone in their communities. We ask you to speak out against injustice and hatred, just as Jesus did when He was on this earth." (<https://www.nadadventist.org/news/nad-issues-response-recent-deaths-and-racial-turmoil-us>)

So, should we protest discrimination and racism?

If Jesus did it, if our pioneers, founders, and the inspired writer did it, if our church is officially encouraging us to do it, perhaps we should!

This article was taken from NAD Ministerial: "Should We Protest Discrimination and Racism?"



Pastor Jose Cortes Jr. is an Associate Director of the Ministerial Association and leads Evangelism, Church Planting, and Adventist/Global Mission for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

Racism is really a heresy and in essence a form of idolatry, for it limits the fatherhood of God by denying the brotherhood of all mankind and by exalting the superiority of one's own race.



5 Reasons Adventists Stink at Social Justice

14

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If you repeat something often enough, you can start to believe that almost anything is true. At least that's what I learned from "The Little Engine that Could."

One of the phrases that I hear repeated over and over again is that Christians and social justice don't mix. Another is that pastors should stay out of politics, but we'll get to that later.

No matter which side of the political aisle you may consider yourself to be, one truth remains: Adventists stink at social justice. Here are five reasons why:

1. WE MISTAKENLY CONFLATE THE IDEA OF SOCIAL JUSTICE WITH POLITICS

The phrase "social justice" is by in large misunderstood by many Adventists. To some, the phrase is a dog-whistle for a very political connotation. For example, if I say "Adventists should be engaged in social justice," someone might hear, "Pastor Nelson is a Bernie Sanders loving liberal who wants to bring about a socialist revolution" (none of which is true).

The word itself becomes a stumbling block because they see it as political rhetoric instead of Gospel imperative. Therefore, because we are not clear on definitions, more often than not,

we face existing walls of prejudice when the phrase gets mentioned.

In its basic essence, social justice is defined as "the fair and proper administration of laws conforming to the natural law that all persons, irrespective of ethnic origin, gender, possessions, race, religion, etc., are to be treated equally and without prejudice."

Jesus' self-proclaimed mission integrated a strong social component (irrespective of politics) when he read from Isaiah 61:1-2. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and

freedom to prisoners; to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.

We only need to read the Old Testament prophets to recognize that the idea of social justice is a Judeo-Christian birthed Gospel imperative, not code for "here comes Robin Hood."

2. WE MISUNDERSTAND THE RELATION BETWEEN FAITH, POLITICS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Like I said earlier, "pastors should not be involved in politics" is another phrase that I hear often. While it is true that anyone, including pastors, can fall into the trap of thinking that the Kingdom of God will be built through political action, we should not underestimate the positive impact an individual spiritual leader can have on societal change.

There was a pastor named Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that did some amazing things in the 20th century. He even has a day named after him, I hear.

It's important to make a distinction regarding what kind of political engagement I'm advocating for. The Johnson Amendment (which I wholeheartedly approve of) prohibits pastors and other non-profits from endorsing a political candidate or party. It doesn't prevent

them from saying statements that might be perceived as political. Big difference.

Dr. King understood that and was extremely effective in working for social justice.

To me, this means that speaking truth to power and advocating for causes that are born out of spiritual principles are on the table.

Take for example John the Baptist. What was he doing when he publicly confronted King Herod with the statement that it wasn't lawful for him to take his brother's wife, if not getting fully involved in the life of a political figure? Should he have remembered that God sets up kings and takes them down? Christians have a right, and even a duty, to speak up when moral issues are at stake, irrespective of political party.

3. ADVENTISTS HISTORICALLY HAVE FLIPPED-FLOPPED ON THEIR ENGAGEMENT WITH SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Believe it or not, early on in our history, Adventists were very engaged in social justice through cause-based community action.

The Adventist Review notes that two years after the Church was officially organized in 1863, they met for its third General Conference session in 1865. The church made

one of its first official statements on voting at that time:

Resolved, That in our judgment, the act of voting when exercises in behalf of justice, humanity an right, is in itself blameless, and may be at sometimes highly proper; but that the casting of any vote that shall strengthen the cause of such crimes as intemperance, insurrection, and slavery, we regard as highly criminal in the sight of Heaven. But we would deprecate and participation in the spirit of party strife.¹

You may be thinking, "the quote only specifies voting, it doesn't say anything about forming groups and marching in the streets or anything like that." We'll get there.

Over the course of time, some Adventists were against political involvement for any kind, even for social justice. But the majority of Adventists, and especially the church leadership, supported political involvement concerning vital areas such as prohibition.

The best example of this is when Ellen White and the rest of the church publicly galvanized in support of the Eighteenth

Amendment. Her support for prohibition was not just political activism, or even activism for a good cause, it was political evangelism with the goal of saving people through sobriety. Note the brazenness of her words:

"Shall we vote for prohibition?" she asked, 'Yes, to a man, everywhere,' she replies, 'and perhaps I shall shock some of you if I say, If necessary, vote on the Sabbath day for prohibition if you cannot at any other time.'"²

And then there's this quote:

The advocates of temperance fail to do their whole duty unless they exert their influence by precept

and example—by voice and pen and vote—in favor of prohibition and total abstinence. We need not expect that God will work a miracle to bring about this reform, and thus remove the necessity for our exertion. We ourselves must grapple with this giant foe, our motto, No compromise and no cessation of our efforts till the victory is gained.³

Obviously, the Eighteenth amendment was repealed 13 years later by the Twenty-first amendment. However, the fact remains that Adventists were extremely active in social justice during that period of activism because of this cause they saw as important.

The pendulum swing came sometime during the 20th century. For reasons I have yet to understand, public engagement in social justice causes among Adventists seriously dwindled. It's telling to note that prominent Adventist

historian C. Mervin Maxwell (the son of the guy who wrote the Bible Story books), even seemed to reinterpret Ellen White's original statements to advocate a completely "hands off" approach to politics and social justice. He claims that:

Ellen White encouraged voting under certain circumstances (See *Selected Messages*, book 2, page 337) and she did not advise Adventists to ignore political issues entirely. But she warned ... Adventists to stay out of politics they can be assured that the dim torch of social advancement through legislation will be carried by other men and women; but, she appears to ask, if Adventists fail to proclaim the third angel's message with all possible tact and energy who will perform this grand service for the world?

The only problem is that the church suffered from the same social problems that the larger American society was facing. When faced with injustices within, Adventism usually has been forced to change by external pressure instead of making a corporate change because it was intrinsically the right thing to do. In 1962, it took physical demonstrations, written demands, and front-page news stories for the announcement to come that the church would

If Adventists fail to proclaim the third angel's message with all possible tact and energy who will perform this grand service for the world?

desegregate. It took a lawsuit in 1973 for the Adventist church to begin to equalize pay for men and women doing the same job. We needed a Civil Rights reform in our own church, but...

4. WE WERE MOSTLY INACTIVE DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Because Adventism had a "hands off" approach to social justice during parts of the 20th century, some pastors were actually prohibited by their conferences from getting involved in the Civil Rights movement. For any scholars out there, further study could be done regarding the attitudes towards social justice and whether it breaks down by ethnicity and conference. I met a pastor who was told by his conference administration that if he attended the March on Washington where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., famously delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech, he could find another line of work.

It's no surprise then that Yolanda Clarke, an Adventist who stood next to Dr. King that day was surprised to see hardly any Adventist ministers present. This led her to say that:

We as Adventists are too withdrawn from what's happening

around us. We must change that. Jesus was among the people – that's where His ministry was. And so, we also need to be a part of what's going on. That's the only way our light will shine.

Even today, our ability to speak to issues of racial tensions is incredibly undermined by the fact that we have delayed in having race conversations as a church that we should have had years ago. We do not hold the moral high ground in this area. The rest of society integrated, our church hasn't.

5. OUR THEOLOGY HAS HIGHLIGHTED ESCAPE THEOLOGY INSTEAD OF ENGAGEMENT THEOLOGY

Adventism came out of the Millerite Movement, a cross-denominational phenomenon that brought people together precisely because they didn't believe that the world would last much longer. People of all different backgrounds quit their jobs, sold their homes, and left everything behind because they thought that Jesus' return was imminent.

There was no need to push for any sort of social change because the entire world was literally, in their minds, about to burn. The goal was to escape the world, not to engage,

much less change it. Of course, that didn't happen, and many were left holding the bag when Jesus didn't return. It's important understand that this is the context the we came from.

On the surface, I get it. After all, Jesus said that my kingdom is not of this world. On the other hand, we are citizens of that Kingdom and where do we currently find ourselves? We are to be ambassadors of Heaven here today. This doesn't just apply to what we believe, but also how we act. We cannot be so Heavenly minded that we're of no earthly good.

In conclusion, what is the takeaway?

Praying for justice is easier than working for justice, but...

Both are important, only one involves your direct participation with those around you. It's easier to give a homeless person a hot meal than to address the social structures that allowed the person to be homeless. Yet, let's take your prayers into account for a second:

If Jesus came down and answered every prayer you prayed last week, what percentage of them would make the world a better place for others? How many prayers would only be about you?

Each person and each church can make a difference in the community they're in.

We are largely absent from the communities we live in. Are you an Adventist that is worried you'll have nowhere to run to when the Persecution comes? Good news, most Americans have no idea your church even exists! Get to know your civic leaders.

Be the example for civil public discourse on social issues.

There are enough people yelling and taking ad-hominem attacks at each other on TV and social media. Christians don't need to add to the chaos. The Gospel teaches me that I can love people that persecute me and may even hate or want to kill me, while I treat and speak to them in a loving and respectful way.

Don't engage in "whataboutism" and point to the perceived faults of everyone else. Peter tried that with Jesus and here's his response to him and to you:

"Lord, what about him?" Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain until I return, what is that to you? You follow Me!" – John 21:21-22

So, what kind of world does Jesus want? You can help bring a little bit of Heaven to Earth today through engaging in social justice. Practice it today.



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This article was taken from NAD Ministerial: "5 Reasons Adventists Stink at Social Justice"

1. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 23, 1865, p. 197.

2. In Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Lonely Years, 1876-1891* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1984), vol. 3, p. 16L.

3. *Review and Herald*, October 15, 1914, par. 22





Ministry in the Aftermath of George Floyd's Death

I can't breathe..."

"Mama, mama..."

"I need water... I can't breathe"

These were the words that kept me, my wife and our two teenage sons, glued to the screen, as we watched George Floyd's life slowly slip away, as a white police officer knelt on his neck. Yes, we were watching the last moments of a man's life, on the pavement, handcuffed, begging for air, water, mama, with the knee of a cruel man on his neck. Tears, sadness, and hurt filled my heart as my stomach tightened with anger. The human being in me, knew this had to be wrong. The United States citizen in me, knew this was definitely illegal. The Christian in me knew this was sinful, a commandment was definitely being broken. And the Pastor in me, knew for sure this was morally reprehensible.

As I watched in horror, I knew that something had to be done, I had to do something, but what can a Pastor and a disciple of Jesus do in the face of injustice, discrimination, and crime?

Here are a few things we can do to start with:

PRAY

Pray for George's family and the families of others who have recently been killed unjustly. Pray for communities who have been victims of prejudice and continue to suffer from racism and discrimination today, not only in Minneapolis but right in your city. Pray for the perpetrators of injustice and crimes regardless of their despicable actions. Jesus died for them too.

CONNECT

Call, text, FaceTime an African American family, a colleague, a friend, ask the question "How are you?" Listen, and offer your genuine condolences.

Although we should all be heart-broken and enraged by this act of violence and the ones that have preceded it, we know that our African American brothers and sisters are bearing the most abundant share of the pain. It is African American moms and dads who worry as their sons go out for a jog or a drive, knowing that something could go wrong anytime. They have the right to feel that way because of past and current history, a history that other communities have not experienced or endured. Their worries, concerns, and fears are real. This is once again the time to support our African-American colleagues and communities. They should not have to bear the pain and defend themselves at the same time.

SPEAK

Use your platform to speak up against what is wrong, denounce racism, discrimination, and demand change. This is something all disciples of Jesus can do, but Pastors are leaders, not only within the walls of the church but beyond in the community. As disciples of Jesus we are the moral compass in our communities and the spiritual voice in our nation, and we should not give up our God-given mandate. We are not here to echo what others, who are not in tune with God are saying, we are here to lead and serve like the prophets of old.

Don't buy the mythical and failed argument which continues to empower racists, abusers, and perpetrators, which proposes that advocating for people's right to live is political. It is not political, it is human, it is right, and Jesus would have addressed it. As His followers we ought to! As disciples of Jesus and ministers of the gospel it is our duty to uphold the sanctity of life, and to speak up for the right to live, not only of the unborn but also for the born.

If the death of George Floyd bothered you, if you feel that it was morally reprehensible, please don't stay quiet, say something. If you believe that Eric Garner, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many others were taken from us too soon due to racism, speak up. Use the gifts and the influence that God has given you to bless your community. Staying quiet in the face of human pain, discrimination, and abuse is not a characteristic of the followers of Jesus. Queen Esther didn't, neither did the Apostle Paul, nor Jesus. It is time to make it clear that as disciples of Jesus we do not stand for discrimination, injustice, and murder.

THE BIBLE IS CLEAR:

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:8,9)

This article was taken from NAD Ministerial:
"Ministry in the Aftermath of George Floyd's Death"



Pastor Jose Cortes Jr. is an Associate Director of the Ministerial Association and leads Evangelism, Church Planting, and Adventist/Global Mission for the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists.



It's Not Them. It's Us

Two films I've been meaning to watch finally got seen in these weeks of quarantine. They weren't light, airy romantic comedies or dark, suspenseful thrillers. Courageously and honestly, they pulled back the curtain on the real story of Black experience in these United States. Both films are set in an era when Black lives clearly didn't matter.

It's tempting to watch, and say complacently to ourselves, "My, we've come so far."

We haven't come nearly far enough.

As an Indian American woman, the story of my immigrant family is one of those American dream success stories some like to tout as evidence that things are just fine. We came to the United States so that my parents could attend graduate school. Both of them were recruited to jobs before graduation. We bought homes exactly where we wanted in New York and then in California. I attended the schools I wanted

to attend and enjoyed all the opportunities I sought.

Ours wasn't a fairytale, however. As a person of color, I saw my parents ignored in checkout lines in favor of White customers. I remember the McDonald's worker who spoke rudely to my mother—because she was South Asian—when my mother ordered Happy Meals for my sister and me. There were job opportunities for which my parents were told they were "overqualified," though time and again the job interview led them to believe that wasn't actually the case.

But we still lived well. We road-tripped a lot and never worried about police even in states where we were stared at when passing through. When my sister and I started driving, our parents never had to tell us what to do if a police officer pulled us over. At age 17, when I was pulled over for rolling through a stop sign, the only thing I feared was what my dad would say. For the record, the cop gave me a warning and told me to have a nice night.

Even though my family experienced aspects of a culture of prejudice toward persons of color, I regret how long it's taken me to fully understand how unfair our country has been toward my Black brothers and sisters. How can any person who professes to love and follow the Saviour who died for all witness official injustice toward some, and not be moved to action?

Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd? They are two names among too many.

For many of us who follow Jesus, there's a sad tendency to look at atrocities committed to others with sadness or pity, and only rarely with genuine indignation. But even our empathy may mask a troubling undertone: "It's too bad. It really is. But at least it didn't happen to me or to mine." Something bad happened to them, but it didn't happen to us.

And that's exactly the problem.

For too long we've lived comfortably in our bubbles of "us" and "them." And that's why uncharged Black men and women are dying at the hands of those tasked with protecting ALL of us. Only the cameras on smartphones have revealed the reality of what is occurring. Only vigorous, persistent protests to the elected officials charged with managing security forces will bring about the change that justice demands.

Wake up—all who call themselves sons or daughters of the Heavenly Father. There is no "us" and "them" if Jesus is one Saviour for all. What happened to Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd happened to all of us, and our response has to move far beyond sad thoughts and weak prayers.

What must we pray for, honestly? For the courage to confront the prejudice in our own hearts; for the courage to work alongside our Black brothers and sisters to stomp out the evil of racism in our culture.

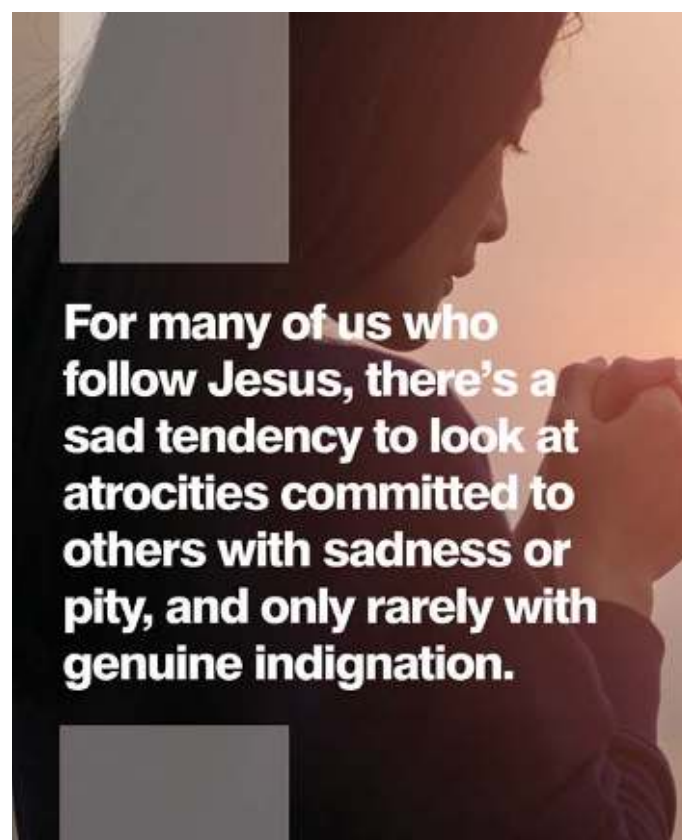
Christ has been calling us to love our neighbors as ourselves for more than 2,000 years.

"Lord Jesus, take any trace of racism—or apathy—from our hearts. That's it. Amen."

This article was taken from *Adventist Review*: "It's Not Them. It's Us."



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WORLD PATHFINDER DAY

SEPT. 19. 2020



WHERE DO I BELONG?

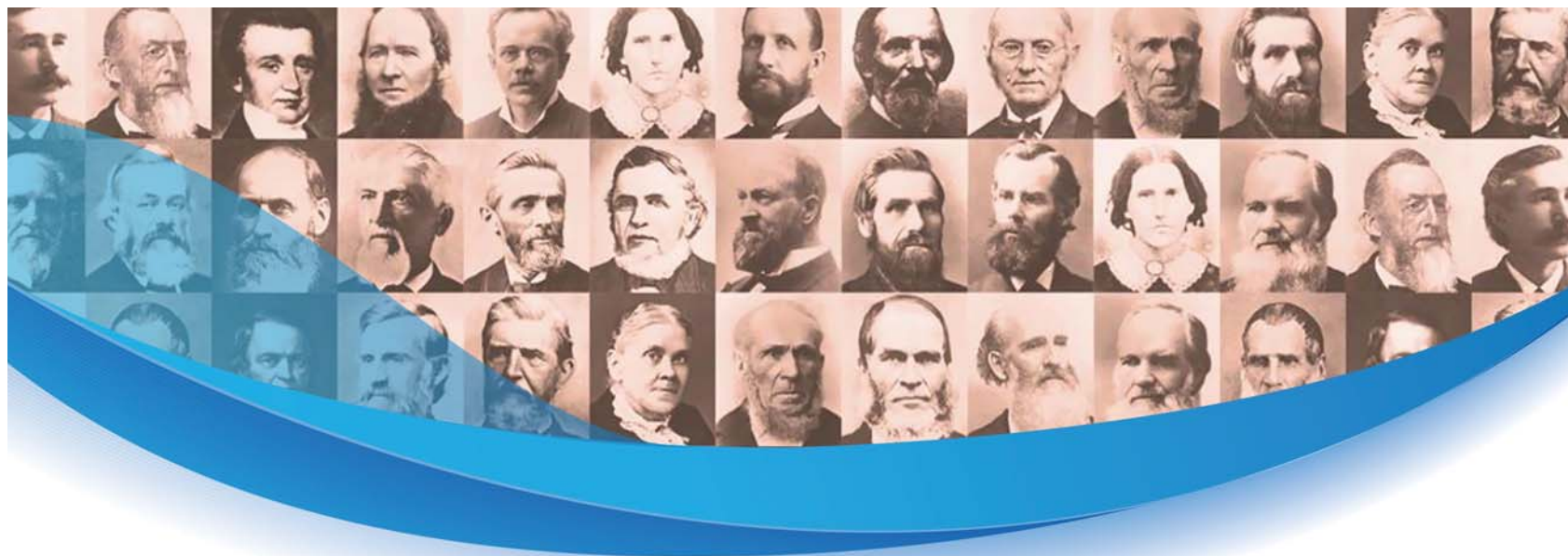
LUKE 15:22



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Seventh-day Adventist Pioneers and Their Protest Against Systemic Racism

JUNE 23, 2020

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THE SECOND ADVENT MOVEMENT WAS INSEPARABLE FROM THE CALL TO ABOLISH SLAVERY AND GRANT EQUAL RIGHTS TO THE OPPRESSED.

The second advent movement was inseparable from the abolitionist call for the immediate and total destruction of slavery and the demand for equal rights for the oppressed.

From the rise of the Millerite movement in the early 1830s through the end of the Civil War, Adventists of all varieties used the tactic of moral suasion to warn pro-slavery Americans that God would soon return

and judge them if they did not immediately repent and reform. In this manner, they made protest against racial injustice inseparable from their Adventist faith.

Though many Millerite Adventists avoided association with political parties because those parties supported slavery, beginning in 1840 a significant number joined the Liberty Party, which had a single platform: the immediate and total abolition of slavery and "the restoration of equality of rights among men."¹

In 1848, the Liberty Party nominated Gerrit Smith — a prominent abolitionist, Millerite Adventist, and seventh-day Sabbath observer — as a candidate for president of the United States. Throughout the antebellum period, Millerites and Seventh-day Adventists also risked their lives to liberate slaves from bondage.

While some did this legally by purchasing slaves' freedom, many broke federal law by assisting fugitives

on the Underground Railroad. They upheld God's fugitive slave law in Deuteronomy 23:15, 16: "Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee. He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him" (KJV). Indeed, in all of these ways and more, Adventists were inspired by their Christian faith to fight against systemic racism in America.

The antislavery cause was rooted in black protest, and black Seventh-day Adventists were also active abolitionists. John "the Dominie" West, a Seventh-day Adventist minister, a former slave and close friend of Gerrit Smith, preached against the evils of slavery and racism, published and promoted several of Smith's abolitionist works, and operated a store in Peterboro, New York, that sold no products grown by slave labor. In Bath, New York, Elias and Henrietta Platt were local Adventist leaders and the most active abolitionists in their town. Elias served as the local agent for Frederick Douglass's *The North Star* and operated a free-produce store like West's. The Platts regularly hosted traveling abolitionists.

In January 1852, the Platts hosted James and Ellen White in their home during a time when virtually all white northerners publicly refused to associate with blacks. When Elias Platt died unexpectedly in 1854, Frederick Douglass wrote his obituary, stating that Platt was "one of the most devoted, honest, and persevering friends of his people in the State of New York."²

Seventh-day Adventists also petitioned against southern slavery and northern racism. Joseph and Prudence Bates were leading abolitionists in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, during the 1830s and 1840s. They signed and circulated petitions to abolish slavery and

prevent the annexation of new slave states, urged the United States to recognize Haiti's independence after its successful war of independence from France, and helped abolish racial segregation on trains and the law against interracial marriage in Massachusetts.³

In the 1850s and 1860s, Sabbath-keeping Adventists petitioned against more issues, like the death penalty (believing that both slavery and capital punishment "represented systems of brutality that coerced individuals"⁴), the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act (1854). In the 1860s, Seventh-day Adventists sometimes placed the denomination's name on petitions they wrote and circulated. In April 1862, for example, a group of forty-four "Seventh Day Adventists and others" from Linn County, Iowa, testified, "That our professions of Christianity and boasts of liberty, are but a mockery in the sight of the nations of the Earth and the God of the Universe, so long as we delay practically to recognize the 'Inalienable right of all men to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.'" The Linn County Adventists then "urged" Abraham Lincoln and Congress to immediately abolish "the great unnatural crime of slavery, the exhaustless inveterate source of our national ruin."⁵

Seventh-day Adventists also incorporated abolitionist arguments into the three angels' messages (Revelation 14:6-12). The first angel warned that the hour of God's judgment was at hand, and Adventists emphasized that if pro-slavery Americans remained unrepentant, they would be doubly punished for their sins.

The second angel warned that Babylon was fallen, and Millerites came out of the Protestant churches (Babylon) because those churches supported slavery. Ellen White specified that any Seventh-day Adventist

holding pro-slavery sympathies must be immediately disfellowshipped.

Finally, Seventh-day Adventists connected the third angel's message against worshipping the beast with the antislavery cause. Revelation 13:1-18 reveals that the two-horned beast enforces idolatry, and Adventists identified America as this beast because it professed to uphold religious and civil liberty (the two horns) but, in reality, denied those privileges to religious and racial minorities.⁶

Seventh-day Adventist pioneers fought against oppression through their faith and actions during an era when only a tiny minority of Americans protested against racism. By incorporating antislavery arguments into their presentation of the three angels' messages, Seventh-day Adventists made a protest against systemic racism an important part of their fundamental beliefs. They challenged their spiritual descendants to carry on this faith.

This original version of this [commentary](#) was posted by the North American Division [Ministerial Association](#).

This Article was taken from *Adventist Review*: "[Seventh-day Adventist Pioneers and Their Protest Against Systemic Racism](#)"

By: **Kevin M. Burton**

1. Thomas Hudson McKee, *National Conventions and Platforms of All Political Parties, 1789 to 1905: Conventions, Popular, and Electoral Vote*, 6th ed. (Baltimore, MD: Friedenwald, 1906), 52.

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6. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:259, 358; Charles Fitch, "Come Out of Her, My People": A Sermon (Rochester, NY: J. V. Himes, 1843), 16; White, *Testimonies*, 1:360; Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 15-29.

"That our professions of Christianity and boasts of liberty, are but a mockery in the sight of the nations of the Earth and the God of the Universe, so long as we delay practically to recognize the 'Inalienable right of all men to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' "

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The Gospel Defeats Racism

JUNE 14, 2020

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FOR PETER AND FOR US IN THE PRESENT DAY, THE SPIRIT OF JESUS ROOTS OUT THE SIN OF PREJUDICE.

The tragic and senseless killing of George Floyd in the United States on May 25 has brought the issue of racism and police brutality to the fore once more. His murder has reached deeply into the hearts of people all over the world. It has sparked anger, disgust, and protest, first in Minneapolis and then across the globe, from hundreds of thousands of people.

Racism is defined as "prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one's own race is

superior." In short, racism is sin, and because it is sin, it doesn't always manifest itself as it did with Derek Chauvin pinning George Floyd down with a knee on his neck. Rather, it manifests itself in subtle and nuanced ways in institutional prejudice toward people of color by limiting access to student loans or serving up minimal community municipal services. It has shown itself in systematic racism through overt redlining in the past and by digital and reverse redlining in the present. It manifests itself on the personal level in the false assumption that you are superior to me, or that I am better than you.

It displays itself in subtle antagonism toward the advancement of people of color. Its selfishness is hidden under the pretense of sophistication, corporate tokenism, societal niceties, shallow acquaintance, and the occasional explosion of rude, raw, and rotten nature through confrontation, violence, and, yes, death.

Because I was born and raised in South Africa, and because I'm a person of color, I know firsthand what racism looks like — how easily it is dismissed by white folk. "Oh, apartheid wasn't that bad," they murmur, not wanting to acknowledge their privilege or the inequality and injustice the system bred. I've witnessed the dehumanizing conditions under which Blacks have lived for decades.

The truth is, in every place I've worked — New Zealand, Australia, and South Korea — I've seen racism. The current protests are global because racism is part of the human condition. That's why I know that my own heart is far from good, far from noble, and that I'm in desperate need of grace.

On a personal level we acknowledge sin, and we confess and repent. The Lord forgives and restores us (1 John 1:9), and we press forward to the prize of the high calling in Christ (Phil. 3:14). But because racism is personal and societal, structural and systematic, and because contemporary Blacks and people of color have endured decades and centuries of racism, it can't be dismissed. We can't say All Lives Matter, because all lives have not mattered. We can't say, "We've spoken about racism, now let's move on," because Blacks have experienced and are experiencing racism now. Our culture and nations are still unjust and unequal.

PAUL, PETER, AND RACISM?

The Galatian church had struggled with following Paul's teaching on righteousness by faith because some troublemakers from Jerusalem had infiltrated the church and begun to champion another gospel (Gal. 1:7, 8). These provocateurs advocated that salvation could be attained by faith in Jesus plus obedience to certain Jewish practices. Paul recounts his meeting with the

Jerusalem leaders in Galatians 2:1-10 and contends that when he finally met with them about his evangelism among the Gentiles, they endorsed his God-given role. Then he talks about an encounter with Peter, recorded in verses 11-14 (NIV):

When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

Peter had come to Antioch to check out the good work that Paul was doing. In all likelihood, this occurred after the Jerusalem Council described in Acts 15. At Antioch, Peter discovered Jews and Gentiles eating together, and so he joined in. He no doubt recalled the rooftop vision of the sheet when God told him, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean" (Acts 10:15, NIV).

When the circumcision party arrived from Jerusalem, however, Peter distanced himself from the Gentiles with whom he had previously been fellowshiping. In first-century culture, eating together demonstrated social acceptance. Peter was more afraid of people (Gal. 2:12) than he was of God. Here's Peter, born-again, filled-with-the-Holy-Spirit Peter, acting as a hypocrite. He assumed that because he was superior to the Gentiles, he could treat them in

any way he pleased. He could eat with them when no one important was watching but didn't need to eat with them when someone important was watching. His behavior wasn't determined by his convictions but by the actions of others, or their proximity to him. Peter and those who followed his example knew they were wrong but pretended they were right. Paul states that even Barnabas, who is otherwise always depicted in a positive light in the New Testament, was led astray (v. 13).

Peter's hypocritical actions reveal his ethnocentrism and racism. If, as we have suggested, racism is insidious and subtle, then Peter was demonstrating his ethnic and racial bigotry by his actions toward Gentiles. To save face, Peter chose not to listen to the Spirit, nor to the vision he received from God in Acts 10. Instead, he chose to follow his sinful nature, distancing himself from Gentiles because of the visit of the troublemakers from Jerusalem.

The candid description of Peter in Scripture serves as a witness and encouragement to us all. Scripture doesn't hide the flaws of its leading characters. On the one hand, Peter can declare that Christ is the Son of God (Matt. 16:15-17). On the other, Jesus can rebuke him (vv. 22, 23). We see his betrayal of Christ in the gospels (Matt. 26:69-75), and we hear the tender invitation of Christ for the disciples and Peter to come and meet Him in Galilee (Mark 16:7). We read of Peter's powerful preaching in Acts 2 and now his failure in Galatians 2. In spite of Peter's weakness and failure, God still used him.

THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Paul lays down a powerful principle in dealing with Peter's racial pride. He argues that Peter hasn't been acting "in line with the truth of the gospel" (v. 14,

NIV). The truth of the gospel is the immeasurable and unfailing love of God for all who believe (Gal. 1:6, 15; 2:9a, 16, 21), and thus, the freedom of Gentile believers without the imposition of the law (Gal. 2:4, 5). The phrase "in line" is a translation of *orthopodeo*, the basis for our English word "orthopedics." It means "to walk straight or upright." It denotes unwavering, upright, sincere conduct—not the unsteady, hypocritical course followed by Peter.

In effect, Paul was saying that the gospel provides power for righteous living (Rom. 1:16). The gospel must be applied, therefore, to every aspect of our lives — spiritual, corporate, social, and physical — by our living out the "lines" or implications of the gospel. Paul writes in Philippians 2:12, 13: "Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed — not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence — continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose" (NIV).

We work out the lines of the gospel as we live our lives each day in and through the work of God in us. The gospel must be given a "workout" in every area of our thinking, relating, serving, feeling, and behaving.

Confession and repentance are what make the gospel operative in our lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. Confession and repentance build bridges, foster unity, and deepen relationships. It takes courage — courage God will supply — to confess and repent. Repentance is godly sorrow (1 Cor. 5:7). That sorrow acknowledges that I'm a broken sinner, that my life is deserving of death, eternal death, and that I'm in desperate need of a Saviour who can rescue me, redeem me, and restore me. That sorrow never leaves, but it deepens as my walk with Jesus matures — not



because of the wrong things I'm doing but because the closer I get to Jesus, the more I see how far I actually am from Him. The paradox of the Christian journey is that we never arrive, at least until the Lord returns.

The immeasurable and unfailing love of God manifested in the gospel of Jesus Christ empowers new living. Repentance is turning a corner, changing direction, and heading in a new path. We need to repent of our racism — corporately, personally, socially — to make this world a better place. Repentance is a movement of God's Spirit deep in my heart that brings a godly sorrow — sorrow that changes the direction of my life, my society, my church, my workplace, my family, and my culture. Only God can do it, if we are willing!

Growing into Christlikeness — sanctification — is a life's journey. Ellen White writes: "All true obedience comes from the heart" (*The Desire of Ages*, 668). The Lord desires the continual transformation of our hearts on this journey.

Sanctification isn't about getting to heaven but about getting heaven into me. Paul urges Timothy to "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12), not the bad fight of sin. May we continue to fight this good fight of living our faith, with the power that God supplies, so that Jesus Christ will be revealed, and His mission will advance.

This Article was taken from *Adventist Review*: "[The Gospel Defeats Racism](#)"



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A Time for Compassion and Healing: Our Christ-Centered Mission

JUNE 3, 2020

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The following message was shared by Seventh-day Adventist Church president Ted N. C. Wilson on June 1, 2020.—Editors

In this time of pain and unrest across the United States, our hearts continue to go out in sympathy to all who have suffered, and especially to the families of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, whose lives ended tragically.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we stand together worldwide in condemning racism, bigotry, hatred, prejudice, and violence in all of its myriad forms. We know that God is a God of justice, who sees and knows all, and we look to Him to fulfill His Word when He says, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" (Rom. 12:19).

On behalf of the Seventh-day Adventist worldwide family, I have sent letters of condolence to the families of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, expressing our sorrow for the tragic loss of their loved ones and stating unequivocally that as Seventh-day Adventists we stand strongly on the biblical principles that go against hatred, rage, racism, bigotry, evil surmising, prejudice, and more, and offered the families support, hope, and encouragement through God's Church. In addition, we are sending each family a small, tangible indication of sympathy and practical encouragement in the form of an edible fruit arrangement, facilitated through Oakwood University's connection with Edible Arrangements.

I encourage you, too, as a Seventh-day Adventist, to reach out to these and other individuals within your local community, bringing, in a practical way, the peace,

comfort, hope and courage that only Christ can provide as we follow His example in ministry outlined in Luke 4:18. As Christians, we seek to practice, through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit — “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22,23). While the world is filled with wickedness and sorrow, let us take encouragement from God’s Word in helping us to find a better way. Jesus Christ is central, as He is the only One who can truly change a person’s heart in this sin-filled world.

God calls us to shine as lights in this dark, sin-sick world, pointing all to Jesus Christ, our Savior, and ministering in a tangible way to those who are in need physically, socially, emotionally, mentally, and most importantly, spiritually. “A large number of precious souls are groping in darkness, yet longing and weeping and praying for light.”¹

Let us ask God to guide us as we reach out with healing hearts and hands, ministering to those who are needing hope and healing now.

And as we look to the future, let us never forget that one day very soon, Jesus Christ will come again and take all those who love Him to a much better place, where “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

1. Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 65.

This Article was taken from *Adventist Review*: “[A Time for Compassion and Healing: Our Christ-Centered Mission](#)”



Ted N.C. Wilson, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists





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