



Pilgrimage Through the Pandemic Reflection Guide

Session 3 – COVID-19 and Racism in Historical and Contemporary Context

Prepare

Read: Genesis 1:27: *“So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”*

Pray: Creator God, you have created humankind in your image. Every person on this earth reflects your glory and is equally precious in your sight. The diversity of your Creation reflects your beauty, but we exploit, manipulate, invent and believe in corrupt ideologies of difference to hold onto power and pursue greedy endeavors. Forgive us for the racism that harms ourselves and harms others. Forgive us for the racism that misrepresents you. Help us to see the ways in which racism has emerged during these present circumstances, and dismantle it so that we might see each other and you as you intended. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. Amen.

Listen

Watch: Watch the *COVID-19 and Racism in Historical and Contemporary Context* panel at www.durhamcares.org/pilgrimage. Speakers:

- Dr. Charles Johnson– Chair, Department of Public History, North Carolina Central University
- Gina Chung – Educator, Organizer, and Activist
- Alexandra Valladares – City of Durham Human Relations Commissioner and Durham School Board Member
- Ivan Almonte - Advocacy Director and Media Host of Bull City Lawyer
- Griselda Alonso – Activist and Organizer

Reflect

Take some time on your own, or with your small group, to reflect on the following questions through discussion, contemplation, journaling, or artwork.

1. Dr. Charles Johnson opened the discussion by contextualizing racism in American society and sharing about the myth of white supremacy that was created to justify exploitation. He connects that with the disproportionate impact that COVID-19 has had on African Americans. How is this contrary to God’s desire for us as stated in James 2:8-9: *“You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors”*?



2. Gina Chung and Dr. Johnson both shared about the importance of knowing history. Dr. Johnson shared that for people of color, good historical education is a counter-narrative to dehumanizing ideas that lead to self-hatred. Gina Chung shared that for white people, it's a way of listening before speaking and knowing the things for which white people need to repent. In what ways might knowing your own history or the history of others be healing in your own life?

2b. In the Scriptures God is constantly telling the people of God to remember – for example, Deuteronomy 6:12: “take care that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” In what ways are God’s injunctions to remember a counter-narrative and a cause for empathy and repentance?

3. We often avoid lament as a practice because we think it is our Christian duty to stay positive. But lament is a common form of prayer and worship in the Scriptures, such as when Jesus quotes Psalm 22, saying, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Alexandra Valladares shares many of the things that cause her to lament. How does joining her – lamenting with her – draw us closer to God and closer to the people and things that God cares about?

3b. What are some things about racism and COVID-19 that cause you to lament?

4. Griselda Alonso shared how she is speaking out about many of the ways that racism is harming the Hispanic/Latino community and how it relates to the harm done to other communities of color. Why is it important to speak out?

4b. Similarly, one of the white participants asked what white people can do, and the panelists shared about the danger of silence and how important it is for white people to speak out against racism. Read Mark 3:1-6. Why is Jesus angered at the people’s silence? Why is silence sometimes worse than saying the wrong thing?

5. Ivan Almonte shared hopeful stories about how his community is caring for each other. At the same time, his stories raised many lamentable realities about the difficulties his community faces. How is hope birthed out of lament? How is the life of Jesus a story of lament and hope? And how might we hold lament and hope together during the pandemic?