

**There is Another King: Jesus**  
*Luke – Acts*

**Racism at Boston College and in the United States: Wealth and Power**  
*Luke 19:1 – 10*

BCACF Winter Retreat 2011

PART ONE: Intro to Systemic Racism (60 minutes)

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**Introduction: The Framework**

Last night we talked about secular multiculturalism and Christian multiculturalism and the differences between them. As we probe the issues of race and ethnicity in America and at BC, we needed to see Jesus’ mission as the foundation for a radically new and fresh option. Now, we will continue to look at Jesus’ interaction with issues of wealth and power. Injustices around wealth and power are probably the biggest problem area of race relations. Now just so that we are on the same page, I’m going to step you through some definitions and then an exercise. First, the definitions:

- *Ethnicity*: Your people group of origin, the traditional way of grouping humanity for most of time. Biblically, ethnicity is the Greek *ethnos*, our God-given reality through birth as made in the image of God as both ethnic and gendered. Jesus affirms our ethnicity.
- *Culture*: The sum total of our way of relating to our environment and one another. Biblically, it is the product of both our nature as God’s image-bearers and our fallenness. Jesus both affirms and challenges our culture.
- *Race*: An attempt to group people according to physical appearance, which began in the colonial expansions and Enlightenment science’s categorization of people into caucasoid, mongoloid, and negroid. This categorization is arbitrary and does not fit everyone. For example, on the 2010 census, the U.S. government sees Hispanic/Latino not as a race but as a place of origin. Nor are racial terms the same in different parts of the world. Biblically, the category of race does not exist, as God does not group people this way. Hence, Jesus deconstructs, dismantles, or defeats the idea of race.

Second, I’m going to put up another matrix on the screen. This is a way of understanding oppression of any kind. We’re going to focus on race and ethnicity. So here’s what it looks like:

	By design (intentionally)	By default (unintentionally)
Relational		
Systemic		

I’m going to describe one example per quadrant, and then open it up for you in small groups to fill in:

- Relational, by design: Racial name-calling, slurs
- Relational, by default: [Personal example] I once asked my Jamaican neighbor Stacy whether they spoke English at the Jamaican church she went to. Jamaican Patua is a derivative of English,

- and although not all Jamaicans would respond the same way, Stacy was offended that I thought it wasn't English.
- Systemic, by design: The internment of Japanese Americans in WW2 by Executive Order 9066
  - Systemic, by default: This is the most difficult category to see and understand. It has to do with how social structures have a racializing effect even though they aren't intended to have that effect.

I use two examples:

- [personal example] When I was in 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, I got straight A's. When I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, I got a lot of B's. Why? It wasn't because I changed schools. The same kids in my class went through all six years of elementary school together. Nothing was happening in my family. I was actually trying just as hard. It was the way the teachers managed the classroom and rated oral participation. In 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, I had the same teacher, an African-American woman who asked a question and then called on people: "Jonathan, do you have an answer to that question?" In 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, I had a Japanese-American woman who did the same thing. Both teachers made sure they went around the class and called on everyone. In 4<sup>th</sup> grade, my teacher was White. The way she managed her class was like this: She asked a question, and then said, "Raise your hand if you have an answer." My family taught me to never answer a question quickly because if I talk quickly it shows disrespect for the person asking the question, as if I was just saying the first thing that came out of my mouth without thinking. Waiting meant I was taking the person seriously. But in my 4<sup>th</sup> grade class, that meant I was never the first person to raise their hand, and my grade suffered. My teacher wasn't racist, but the way she managed her class had a racializing effect. What would have helped was if she had waited for longer for me to raise my hand, given me some coaching, or alternated styles and just called on me.
- [personal example] When I was at Intel, I worked for an internal management consulting group that did project management consulting to all the major chip design projects, like Pentium II, Pentium III, etc. Once my supervisor told me I had to speak up more at meetings to tell senior level managers who were 40 – 50 years old what they were doing wrong. I was a 23 year old kid just out of school! I didn't even have a degree in Electrical Engineering! I was an Industrial Engineer, and at Stanford they jokingly called us Imaginary Engineers because we did mostly conceptual things. Furthermore, being Asian made it hard for me to say those kinds of things to people who were older than me. I did very poorly that year on my performance review. American business culture is individualistic, so it has a racializing effect because non-western ways of relating to older people are sometimes not taken into account.

As I've described these categories, you probably thought of examples in each of the quadrants. Break up into small groups to fill in the quadrants in the same order. [10 minutes]

Let's regroup. Name some of the things that your group talked about. [Gather some responses. Here are some things that probably came up; I'll bring them up if they don't get named]:

Relational by design:

- Hate crimes, e.g. committed against Arab-Americans after September 11<sup>th</sup>
- Cross burning on people's lawns
- Vandalism and destruction of property
- Mockery; Making fun of a person's accent or origin. Rush Limbaugh made fun of Chinese premier Hu Jintao and the Chinese language on January 19, 2011.
- Bomb found in a backpack in Spokane, Washington along the route of the MLK Day parade on Monday, January 17, 2011. That area is known to be home to white supremacists called Aryan Nation. ([http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/18/bomb-found-on-mlk-day-parade-route\\_n\\_810735.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/18/bomb-found-on-mlk-day-parade-route_n_810735.html))
- A friend of mine – his dad owns a dry cleaning store. The owner of the building complex brought a legal charge against him for some supposed violation of how chemicals are handled in the dry

cleaning business. When he got some legal help and pushed back, the charges were dropped. Was this intentionally trying to take advantage of an immigrant who might not have had legal help?

Relational by default:

- Stereotyping out of ignorance:
  - A person who says to an Asian-American born in the States, “You speak English really well!”
  - My Latina friend who, in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, told her bus driver she wasn’t going to a school dance. The bus driver said, “But don’t you people like to dance?”
  - A school counselor who encourages a black student to apply to a junior college as opposed to a four-year university
  - Saying to a minority person, “I don’t see race.” As noble as this sounds, it amputates a person out of his or her ethnic community. It is the social lens of white American individualism. By contrast, I do want people to know about my racial/ethnic group’s history and how it has affected me.

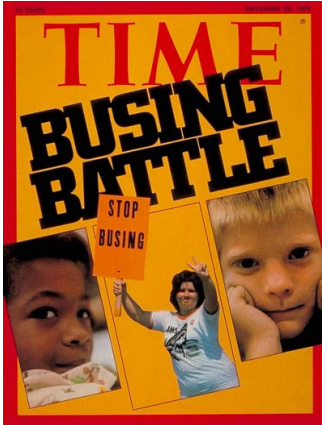
Systemic by design (say that you’ll spend more time on the two systemic quadrants because these are more pervasive and hurtful to a community, and very relevant to how inner cities formed)

- Slavery, which lasted for 200 years
- Jim Crow segregation laws that followed slavery, for 100 years
- Miscegenation laws: No racial intermarriage laws
- Cherokee Trail of Tears
- Moving Native Americans to reservations
- Seizure and annexation of the Southwest from Mexico; deportation of Mexicans in the 1930’s, making them out to be scapegoats for the Depression
- Alien Land Laws that prevented Asians from owning land on the west coast
- Early Immigration laws that were racially motivated, with respect to Asians: allowing mostly male laborers to come, but often using deceit and trickery to get them here (e.g. Chinese railroad workers)
- Early labor movements: strikebusting playing racial/ethnic groups off each other
- White Flight from the inner city, facilitated by:
  - Bank red-lining, the practice of banks putting a map on the wall, outlining certain minority neighborhoods with a red pen and setting the policy that no loans will be made to them
  - Real estate agents playing on racial fears. In Boston, they told the Jewish community in Roxbury that the black community was moving in. Thus, they got houses sold to them for cheaper, then they turned around and sold them for higher
- Political redistricting:
  - In 2003, the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts declared Boston’s political districts to be unconstitutional. Speaker of the House Thomas Finneran had changed his district boundaries. He went from a rectangle-shaped district to a dumbbell shaped district. He did so because Black households had moved into the middle of his district. So he thinned the middle of his district to avoid the Black votes and extended it in a bulge on the other side to grab the Irish vote. In the Boston Globe, he claimed he didn’t know about this. YEAH RIGHT!!! Elected officials pay close attention to who their constituents are!!!
  - In northern CA, the wealthy white city of Piedmont is the donut hole where minority-inhabited Oakland is the donut.
- Bank predatory lending: The mirror image of Bank red-lining, where banks make high interest rate loans to minorities who are in higher risk categories. The banks expect them to default on their loans so the banks can go in and repossess their houses and cars. This has happened in Philadelphia so much that ACORN went in and did sit-ins.
- Public transportation decisions
  - Highways are often laid down to separate rich from poor neighborhoods.
  - There is no Green A line anymore because it went to Newton, a wealthy white area. They didn’t want minorities to have easy access to their neighborhood

- Extra payments are required to get off the Red line at Braintree and the Green line past Newton Center (rich neighborhoods)
- In northern CA, the placement of the Dumbarton Bridge across the Bay. It was originally supposed to connect from Fremont (some Latino and other minority, lower-income) to San Mateo (wealthy white) and join the 101 Freeway directly. But the residents of San Mateo argued that that would destroy the mud habitat of a certain kind of snail. So the Bridge was connected further south, at East Palo Alto. But it doesn't connect to the Freeway directly. Instead, freeway-level traffic has to go through residential neighborhoods for a mile to reach the Freeway.
- Racial profiling by the police
- Military: Blacks and Latino servicemen die at disproportionately higher rates than whites because they are put on the front lines earlier and more frequently.
- Tuskegee during the 40's and 50's: Sterilization of black women without their knowledge; they thought they were going in for another procedure (see Donna Franklin's *Ensuring Inequality*). Black men were given syphilis without their knowledge. Bill Clinton formally apologized for this decades after the events.
- Criminal Justice system (also partly by default): Disproportionate number of blacks given death penalty and executed. Racial biases present in jury affects the outcomes.

#### Systemic by default

- Classroom management styles favor White, middle-class girls. Studies show that the further you are away from that, the worse you do, statistically.
- Legacy admissions: If your parents graduated from a university and are donors, that increases the chance that you'll be admitted. Princeton is the most notorious example.
- How are schools funded? Property taxes and local municipal taxes. What does this mean? Wealthier neighborhoods have far better schools. Is that just? Especially when you can rearrange political boundaries?
- Standardized tests like the SAT have been (at least as recently as 10 years ago) culturally biased in favor of Whites
- Test prep for SAT's costs about \$700 for Kaplan. Who can afford that? Wealthier families.
- Thus, the SAT is strongly correlated with parents' income. Some studies show that, as a predictor, parents' income is just as decisive a predictor as SAT score. In other words, on the broad level they are the same thing.
- Boston public schools
  - Because of segregation laws, until 1975, Boston had dramatically racially divided schools. A US district court judge (Arthur Garrity) declared this unconstitutional and forced Boston to bus students between schools. This resulted in riots, busses being stoned, children being stabbed. White mothers took up picket signs and blocked black children from entering white schools. See [http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/137/metro/30\\_years\\_after\\_historic\\_ruling\\_views\\_goals\\_shifting+.shtml](http://www.boston.com/dailyglobe2/137/metro/30_years_after_historic_ruling_views_goals_shifting+.shtml)



- White families then moved out into the suburbs. But they maintained PO boxes in Boston so they could maintain a Boston address so their kids could go to the prestigious exam schools, Boston Latin and Boston Latin Academy.
- Boston Public School system (BPS) is now mostly black. But kids spend up to 2 hours a day on the bus because buses go all over the city
- And local neighborhood ownership of schools is gone. Thus, all the hard-to-quantify things that parents do when there is local ownership (talk to administration, help in classrooms, keep in better touch with what is being taught to be consistent at home, talk with other parents to partner, form strong PTA's, advocate for the kids, keep an eye on the school so there is no vandalism, hang out during baseball games, etc.) is GONE.
- As a result, the average tenure of a NEW teacher in BPS is ONE YEAR!
- Studies show that your future success is determined most strongly by your parents' income
  - The U.S. claims that it is a 'meritocracy.' That is, if you work hard, you'll get ahead. Yet there are plenty of people who have worked as hard as I have, and have not 'got ahead.' For some, there is a limit to what hard work will get them.
- **Affirmative Action:**
  - Take a historical view. The first time universities modified admissions criteria for race-related reasons was the early 1900's. Harvard, Princeton, and Yale all noticed that they had 'too many' Jewish students in their student bodies. (see the book *How the Irish Became White*). They wanted more WASPs (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants). So instead of just taking straight GPA, they began to weight (1) the interview and (2) extracurricular activities. So being the President of your Yacht Club suddenly started to mean something. This advantaged WASP's (White Anglo-Saxon Protestants).
  - The way we interact with Affirmative Action comes from the 50's and 60's, when universities decided they needed to take action to affirm minorities. There are lots of different ways Affirmative Action is carried out.
    - Acknowledge that race-only affirmative action disadvantages Eastern Europeans, Irish, and Italian white-ethnics.
    - Nevertheless, personally, I favor the way MIT does it: They determine by academic standards whether a person will survive at MIT, and then they take race into account. A diverse student body has some value.
  - We don't all have to agree on how to do Affirmative Action, but we can only have a constructive conversation if we acknowledge that we've actually had Affirmative Action for years, in fact, centuries. *It's just been for White people.*
  - Personally, I also favor marketplace interventions, like Clinton's programs: the matched savings account encouraging savings, and the Empowerment Zone, where lower income areas can receive lower-interest business loans that encourage small businesses.
- Race tensions between minorities (e.g. Asians and Blacks)
  - Vietnamese – Black tension in Fields' Corner. The Vietnamese came with some money. They settled in a historically black area. They opened stores. They now run a lot of hair and nail places. This places economic power in the Vietnamese community's hands. No

one intends for this to produce racial tension, but it does. Similar to Korean – Black tension in LA during the Rodney King incident.

- Jobs leaving America's cities for overseas
  - E.g. At one point, Intel was no longer hiring in the U.S. Only in India and China. It's cheaper there.
  - This naturally makes it hard for urban minority communities
  - Does it matter whether we educate people if there are no jobs??? That's an exaggeration but points out the concern.
- Capitalism: The idea that you can do whatever you want with your money no matter how it affects others leads to racialized effects.
  - Assessing the wealth holdings of the same families for 23 years (1984-2007) shows that the wealth gap between whites and African Americans increased more than 4 times, from \$20,000 in 1984 to \$95,000 in 2003. This gap persisted for African Americans and white families in the same income range. For example, middle-income white households had greater gains in financial assets than high-income African Americans; by 2007, they had accumulated \$74,000, whereas the average high-income African American family owned only \$18,000. At least 25% of all African American families had no assets to turn to in times of economic hardship. (Brandeis Institute on Assets and Social Policy) Thus the saying, "When white America catches a cold (recession), black America gets pneumonia." A recession in the economy or a divorce in the family can leave a black family on the street.
- Politics: In American political discourse, these institutional forms of advantage are covered up by ideological language. Fox News commentator Bill O'Reilly said on his TV show on August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010, 'White Americans fear government control. They don't want the feds telling them what to do. And they don't want a bankrupt nation. For decades, African-Americans have supported a bigger federal government so it can impose 'social justice.' The vast majority of Blacks want money spent to level the playing field, to redistribute income from the white establishment to their precincts.'<sup>1</sup> This was a candid admission. It oversimplifies what black Americans have truly called for, since they have not wanted to stay in 'their precincts' but rather wanted to end discriminatory practices and institutional biases in public schools, housing, banking, policing, employment, the behavior of corporations, etc. But O'Reilly accurately puts his finger on the fears of white Americans: loss of money. He acknowledges that political slogans like 'strict constitutionalism,' 'small government,' or 'fiscal responsibility' is often code language for something else. It actually means, 'I want the wealthy segment of white America to be able to maintain our money and privilege without being accountable to black Americans, or other Americans.' As one small piece of evidence for this, consider that 'fiscal responsibility' was not a cry of political conservatives when the George W. Bush administration started two wars in the Middle East, expanded the Medicare prescription drug program for seniors, and still cut taxes especially for the super-rich, vastly increasing the federal deficit. Yet when black American Barack Obama was elected President, suddenly Republicans and 'Tea Party' enthusiasts erupted with outcries of 'fiscal responsibility.' That cry was accompanied, of course, with suspicions that Obama was a socialist, not born in the United States (Orly Taitz), a 'secret Muslim,' and perhaps even a radical anti-colonialist secretly bent on dismantling American power (Dinesh D'Souza), despite all evidence to the contrary. Whether or not this type of political language is coded language for racial prejudice can be debated. I think it is, but we can debate that. Without a doubt, it is a cover-up for the sin of greed.

#### Conclusions:

- Most people think racism = the quadrant of 'relational by design'. They think it's just personal prejudice. Now it's good that there is less personal prejudice nowadays, but we still have a 3 other quadrants! Especially the systemic issues, which are the most injurious.

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<sup>1</sup> Bill O'Reilly, *The O'Reilly Factor*, August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010

- It may be depressing to look at the quadrants with all the stuff inside. But there is still hope with Jesus, as we'll see. There has been some progress made, largely due to the activity of the Spirit of Jesus through the Black church, most recently in the Civil Rights Movement.
- With Jesus, forgiveness does involve not withdrawing, but it still means that we can point out injustice, particularly Systemic injustice.