

DISMANTLING RACISM DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTERSECTIONALITY

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RELIGION & RACE
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OPENING PRAYER

God of multitude - who continues to invite us to be in community with your creation:

Call us to love the diversity we represent as we reflect your likeness. Stir in us a deep discontent and restlessness for calls for unity that seek to suppress each one's unique voice, body, experience, and expression of belovedness. Embolden us into spaces where each of these expressions are seen, valued, restored, and where we are reminded that all you created is good. Amen.

INTRODUCING THE DISCUSSION



In anti-racism work, it can be tempting to focus only on fighting racial injustice, as we can fall into the trap of reducing anti-racism work into a silo. However, injustice is intersectional, and liberation is interconnected. **Miguel A. De La Torre**, **Traci C. West** and **Erin Hawkins** explore historical ways in which we have partitioned off justice work without an awareness of intersectionality as they explore the joy and hope around community and coalition building.



SCRIPTURE

EXODUS 1:15-2:10 (THE INCLUSIVE BIBLE)

Pharaoh spoke to the midwives of the Hebrews—one was Shiphrah, and the other Puah—and said, “When you assist the Hebrew women in childbirth, examine them on the birthing-stool. If the baby is a boy, kill it. If it is a girl, let it live.” But the midwives were God-fearing women, and they ignored the Pharaoh’s instructions, and let the male babies live. So Pharaoh summoned the midwives and asked why they let the male babies live. The midwives responded, “These Hebrew women are different from Egyptian women; they are more robust, and deliver even before the midwife arrives.” God rewarded the midwives, and the people increased in numbers and in power. And since the midwives were God-fearing, God gave them families of their own. The Pharaoh then commanded all those in Egypt, “Let every boy that is born to the Hebrews be thrown into the Nile, but let every girl live.”

There was a man from the house of Levi who had married a Levite woman, and she conceived and gave birth to a boy. And she saw that the baby was good, so she hid it for three months. When she could hide the baby no longer she took a papyrus basket, daubed it with bitumen and pitch, and put the child in it, and placed the basket among the reeds by the banks of the Nile. The baby’s sister watched from a distance to learn what would happen. Pharaoh’s daughter came down to the Nile to bathe, while her attendants walked along the river bank. She noticed the basket among the reeds, and sent her attendant to fetch it. Opening it, she saw the baby—and how it wept! She was moved to pity and said, “This must be one of the Hebrews’ children!” Then his sister said to Pharaoh’s daughter, “Do you want me to go and find a nurse for you among the Hebrews to suckle the child for you?” “Yes, go,” she answered. So the sister went off and brought the baby’s own mother. Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, “Take this child with you and suckle it for me, and I myself will pay you.” The woman took the child and nursed it. After the child was weaned, she brought it to Pharaoh’s daughter, who adopted it as her own. She called him Moses—“He Who Pulls Out”—for she said, “I pulled him out of the water.”

DEVOTION/REFLECTION

There are powerful and violent forces that shape our lives in ways we feel we cannot control, and powerhungry leaders in positions of power outside our spheres of influence. They may not be called Pharaoh, but we see the violence echoed in this narcissistic behavior where decisions are based not on what is best for the people, but in response to powerful and often competing interests. We see this play out as communities are being further pushed to the margins out of sight, as Black, Brown, Indigenous, people of color, and trans persons are brutalized, with their literal breath extinguished.

As modern-day people of faith, we might find ourselves reading this passage from Exodus simply as an empowering story of women taking a stand to save the lives of thousands of baby boys.

But this story isn't just about women - or even midwives.

It is a story about all of us as we consider our overlapping and intersecting identities as we co-create, birth, and usher in new worlds and possibilities where these identities are not seen as threats, but as gifts to the world—reflections of a creative God who does not make mistakes.

We are midwives.

As we reflect our multitudinous God, we are invited in all of our expressions as God's beloved, to resist evil and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves, and work against those powers that destroy human potential and thriving.

We cannot opt out of all the systems of power that seek to marginalize and other, but we can make choices, just like the midwives and Pharaoh's daughter did.

May God be with us as we interrogate these systems of power that deny God's people of visibility and belongingness and move toward a more intersectional and collaborative approach to dismantling white supremacy and racism, as we work together to create God's beloved community.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The Rev. Dr. Traci C. West invites us to think about the ways intersectionality is less about our identities and more about issues of power. Rather than begin with "I am..." statements, we are invited to consider the systems of power and the ways in which those systems operate in multiple ways at the same time, and how our identities are associated with those systems.

- **What are some of those systems of power that you have noticed or are a part of?**
- **In what ways is Christianity a system of power that we are invited to interrogate? How does it work in collaboration with other systems of power?**
- **It is a common approach to be siloed or insular in our understandings of oppression, which as the speakers named, is a function of white supremacy. What are ways that you (whether through your congregation, organizations, etc.) might begin moving toward a more intersectional and collaborative approach to dismantling white supremacy and racism?**
- **If we believe that God made all of creation good and diverse in God's image and we are called to reflect, uphold, honor that Imago Dei, perhaps a starting point for us could be to ask the following questions to center our work: Who is the most vulnerable in my community? How are they targeted? What are the consequences of my indifference? In other words, how are we perpetrators to violence and marginalization? Who am I, or who are we accountable to when we consider ministries and outreach and our relationships with these communities?**

DISMANTLING RACISM

"It is a story about all of us as we consider our overlapping and intersecting identities..."

- Sophia Agtarap

