

The Catholic Church's Role in Combating Racism

By The Most Rev. Joseph N. Perry, Auxiliary Bishop of Chicago, Illinois

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The Church led the campaign for civil rights in this country, that is, the Protestant church in general and the Baptist tradition, in particular under the leadership of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. King came in contact with the Catholic Church through individual priests, nuns, and religious who joined him with carefully orchestrated marches in racially recalcitrant urban centers of the South and North. Along his campaign, he met church leaders like Cardinal Spellman, Meyer, and Cushing.

The Catholic Church's role in the race problem in this country is at once remarkable and puzzling. The social Gospel has been our most difficult instrument of evangelization to peddle. The message is, in fact, intellectually received by folks in the pews but loses force with its impact on our privileges of free enterprise and the pursuit of the American dream of material success. Most citizens still find the encroachment of Blacks a disturbing reality. Economics, health, education, and opportunity are some of the thickest walls dividing White and Black in America. Thirty years since the death of King, the interwoven issues of race and affirmative action seem as intractable as ever.

One cannot talk about the race problem in America without treating the intertwine of economics. Poverty and racism are closely related issues in this country because opportunity is divided between White and Black in America. And Catholics, like others, still choose to flee the city for reasons of security and the good life. Problems resulting from poverty are profound and these tend to register alarm and indifference to the agonies of the minorities left behind. In most instances, the Church followed White flight instead of summoning her faithful to participate in life and church with those left behind.

No one indicts the penchant for seeking a better life in the suburbs. It's just that living in communities that satellite the poor guarantees that one's children seldom interact with peers who are of another race unless the school has some measure of forced integration. Outlying communities, while being symbols of opportunity, also intensify fear of the minority poor. From this social segregation, most citizens, while guarding their prerogatives, tend to look upon Blacks and other poor out of empathy or pity. Our democracy these days is laced with strident conceptions of a meritocracy. Some make it; some don't. And those who don't are often blamed for carrying the largest responsibility for their plight.

Catholics were not there to lead the Civil Rights crusade having just put off, for the most part by the time of the presidency of JFK, the shackles of anti-Catholic prejudice in this country. But we had our quiet heroes and heroines even while on the sidelines; however, the jeerers screaming racial epithets at the marchers were also White Catholics. Parish priests gave way to the cry of "fire" by real-estate moguls and the fear generated by the red-lining of neighborhoods. The clergy were often conspicuous in their silence in face of the summons to social and religious change.

We remain inheritors of an entrenched historical pattern of racial separation in this country that is fixed in our psyches where White and Black are totally out of touch with each other. We operate out of skewed perceptions of each other. Whites, by and large, still experience a visual and emotional dissonance when a Black person enters their space. One wonders whether some

inherent psychological barrier premised in racial and color distinctions prevents that understanding people of good will desire.

We cannot rest with what appears to be a better situation for many Blacks we see on television. Integration and some modest gains with affirmative action have taken place not so much as a result of national good will, but by force of the law. Now there is seen retrenchment with these gains. People, by and large, prefer to live and work and worship and recreate and school with their own. People tend to look upon past historical errors and horrors as somebody else's sin, not theirs. Our society simply does not generate nor does it care for checks and balances to ensure equity and justice.

Despite the ethnic and racial variety of Catholicism, Catholics in this country are settled in Euro-American patterns of thought and culture and, like so many institutions in this country, have had to take a second look at Blacks. The social Gospel has not perceptively changed the choices of middle class and upper class American Catholics. The social message simply fell upon infertile soil the closer it was delivered to the threshold of domestic power and survival. Folks in the pews found the theory easy enough to stomach. It's the implied attitudinal and lifestyle changes that many have found non-negotiable. The separation of the races does not strike many Americans as an anomaly, but rather is justified as a legitimate option we have in a land of freedom. Despite open housing legislation and the desegregation of institutions, when Blacks encroach on a neighborhood, Whites, in due time, move elsewhere.

The record of the Catholic Church with the race problem is mixed. White Catholics in the United States continue to find Black Catholics an anomaly [even] when the New Testament gives obvious reference to Black presence and leadership in the Church from its beginning. Yet, while Cardinals Ritter and Meyer ordered archdiocesan schools in St. Louis and Chicago to desegregate and Archbishop Cousins tacitly blessed the open housing marches of Fr. Groppi in Milwaukee, the social Gospel fell hard on tight ethnic neighborhood patterns in our cities. Racial struggle is practically indigenous to the American Church, wrestling with becoming a part of the society it serves, while being a prophetic voice amidst the social and moral aberrations of our society.

Like all other institutions, the Church has its inspiring figures with the race issue, while deep-seated attitudinal issues of some beg for redemption. After all, in the scheme of social relations heroes and heroines are few. There are dazzling Catholic personalities who broke through all that is sluggish, fearful, and racist in us, people like Dorothy Day, Mother Teresa, and a host of others known only to local communities. Social consciousness is not an easy product to sell in our Eucharistic assemblies. It never has been. Going out of ourselves toward another is a courageous act for most of us.

In the meantime, we confess that the Church still has the most persuasive voice appealing to the moral fibers of materially advantaged Americans. The Gospel rescues us from all barriers that prevent us from creating the kingdom here on earth so we can see it in the hereafter. The Gospel, the Church's effective tool for improving relations among peoples, redeems the broken human situation. This aspect of human brokenness of its nature surfaces saints and martyrs, scoundrels and sinners. Without doubt, the love of neighbor ethic taught by Christ is a profound dialectic.

King's dream of equality of the races is still a dream deferred as we approach the third millennium. Black contributions to art, literature, religion, sciences, and medicine are only begrudgingly mentioned. A Black person cannot drive in certain neighborhoods without being pulled over by the police. Black customers are still watched more closely than others in stores by security guards and owners. Black college and graduate students are presumed to have been given

preferential treatment with admissions policies. African Americans are still, today, generalized to be drug addicts, criminally oriented, and welfare recipients even if those generalizing have never known a single Black person who fits the description.

There is much work to be done if the Church's influence will not wane. The Church remains the principal source of healing and hope for people with the race issue. We continue to need from the church prophets and agents of reconciliation, individuals and groups, laity and clergy who make it their responsibility to bring people together despite stubborn differences and the conflicts that would guarantee walls of separation. This task has been the heart of the Christian mission in our society. Issues of race are the most urgent business of Church today to aid in annihilating stereotypes and nurturing mutual respect. Ultimately, our Christian faith is about building bridges between people, not walls.

Discussion Questions:

Bishop Perry is very blunt about the problems with racism among Catholics. Does this make you uncomfortable in any way? Why or why not? Is it surprising that he is being so blunt? Why or why not?

Bishop Perry states that the Catholic Social Gospel is “hard to peddle” to American Catholics. What have you seen in terms of Catholics knowing and embracing Catholic Social Teaching? Why is the social Gospel difficult to embrace for some Church members? How does it conflict with basic American values? How does this conflict in values relate to leadership from the Church, clergy and laity, in dealing with racism?

Have you seen evidence of the “white flight” Bishop Perry mentions: that is, White Catholics leaving the cities and the problems of poverty behind? How does this kind of social segregation impede creating a multicultural society where there is justice and respect for all? What have been your own experiences in interacting with others from different races and cultures—what attitudes did you bring to the interactions?

Bishop Perry believes that Whites and Blacks are out of touch with each other. Do you see instances of that? Do you see signs of hope where people are coming together? Do you see yourself part of the problem and/or part of the solution to racism in the U.S.?

Do you agree with Bishop Perry that the Church remains the principal source of healing and hope for people? How can we, as Catholics who value the teachings of our Church, build bridges and take down walls between people of different races, cultures, faiths? Look at the suggestions below from the Catholic Bishops of Illinois: which of these can you take up, as an individual and as part of a group?

Conversion of the Heart

By Catholic Bishops of Illinois

Conversion is the response to God's self-revelation as love. Infinite love calls us to a transformation of mind and heart, a turning away from sin and an embrace of God's way for us. Once converted, our eyes are opened; we see what is truly important. We become, with God's grace, free, responsible and holy.

Conversion changes individuals, and individuals change society. Overcoming the sin of racism begins by opening ourselves to God's Spirit, who draws all to holiness. The Spirit makes each of us a member of the Body of Christ, and this spiritual relationship is the source of our hope for personal and social change. In Christ, we recognize racism as a division contrary to His will for His people, a division the Spirit will heal.

Relying on God's grace, seeing with Christ's eyes, living in the Holy Spirit, what should we do to dismantle racism?

Concrete, visible steps will vary from diocese to diocese, from community to community. Here are some actions, some small and some larger, which all can take:

- Pray for an end to racism.
- Take a personal inventory of your own heart and discover what has to change.
- Seek opportunities to know and learn from a person of a different race.
- Identify racist behavior in our community, speak with others and make plans to oppose it.
- Refuse to use biased language and to tell jokes tinged with racist attitudes.
- Teach children to move beyond mere toleration and to accept open-heartedly people of all races.
- Avoid investing in companies which support or practice racist policies and tell the company why you are withdrawing your money.
- Elect public officials who will work for racial justice. Question people running for office about their commitment to end racial discrimination. Let them hear from you after they are elected to hold them accountable on promises to work for racial justice and harmony.
- Join community groups which nurture relationships of trust among peoples of different races and ethnic groups.
- Be critical of how violent crime is focused on and reported; ask media people to publicize good people and actions in every racial group.
- Have your parish/school/group sponsor workshops which both present racism in all its complexity and evaluate it morally.

- Help organize ecumenical prayer services inclusive of different racial and ethnic groups.
- Speak and live the truth that you acquire by seeing with the eyes of Christ.

Living with Hope

The theological virtue of hope is not the same as wishing for the impossible. Christian hope stirs up in us the desire that God's kingdom [will] come, here and in eternity. We place our trust in the promises of Christ and rely on his grace rather than on our own strength. It would be naive to think that racism will disappear overnight; it is too deeply embedded in the American experience. But change will come if we remain constant and never lose sight of the goal. The goal is visible when we see with the eyes of Christ, for our hope of ultimate victory is the Lord who desires that we be one in him.

As the bishops of the Catholic Church in Illinois, we commit ourselves to speak the truth about racism. We commit ourselves to encouraging dialogue between African Americans and other Americans. We commit ourselves to model in our dioceses a future without racism. Confident in the Lord, we invite all Catholics in Illinois, and all men and women of good will, to join us in the struggle against racism so that, one day, we may all be free.

Prayers and Reflections

OPENING PRAYER

O Great Spirit
Whose voice I hear in the winds,
and whose breath gives life to all the world,
hear me! I am small and weak. I need
your strength and wisdom.

Let me walk in beauty, and make my eyes
behold the red and purple sunset.

Make my hand respect the things you have made
and my ears sharp to hear your voice. Make me wise
so that I may understand the things you have
taught my people. Let me learn the lessons you have
hidden in every rock and leaf.
I seek strength not to be greater
than my brothers and sisters, but to fight my greatest
enemy—myself.

Make me always ready to come to you
with clean hands and straight eyes
So when life fades, as the fading sunset,
my spirit may come to you without shame.
From Kateri Mitchell and P. Michael Galvan's *The People*

REFLECTIONS FROM CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The Christian faith should celebrate and strengthen the many diverse cultures which are the product of human hope and aspiration . . . As individual Catholics and as a Church, we must promote and defend the human rights and dignity of all people. This means that we have a responsibility to join with American Indians in their struggle to secure justice. In dialogue with them, we must increase our understanding of their needs, aspirations and values. . . Government policy and legislation deserve our special attention because American Indians are vitally affected by them. We must examine these systems and policies in light of the Gospel and the Church's social teachings, and advocate resolution of treaty questions, protection of Indian land rights, better housing, education, and health care, and increased assistance.

The U.S. Catholic Bishops' *Statement on American Indians*, 1977

I encourage you as Native people to preserve and keep alive your cultures, your languages, the values and customs which have served you well in the past and which provide a solid foundation for the future. [In regard to justice for Native Americans] all consciences must be challenged. There are real injustices to be addressed and biased attitudes to be challenged.

Pope John Paul II's address to Native Americans, 1988

CLOSING PRAYER

(Group yourselves in four sections representing the four directions of North, South, East and West, all facing center. A lighted candle or burning incense can be placed at the center. Each group in turn prays from their direction.)

In the East is the rising sun, the dawn of a new day. As we walk the sacred path of life today, help us, Creator God, to grow in wisdom and strength.

To the South, where new and fresh rains come, we ask your help, gracious God, to walk in the ways of goodness and gentleness in heart and speech.

To the West, the place of the setting sun, we thank you, good and generous God, for our day, ask forgiveness for the times we caused disharmony today.

To the North we find courage to walk each day and ask your help to overcome fears and anxieties.

(All form a circle and join hands facing the center)

For greater wisdom, gentleness, forgiveness and courage, let us together pray to Our Father.



Activities

- 1) Begin with the opening prayer and reflections on page 1 of this unit.
- 2) Case Studies on Native American Culture and Spirituality: Copy and distribute pages 3, 4 and 5. In small groups, have participants read the material and discuss the questions presented. Have them report back to the main group and see what common responses emerged from their discussions.
- 3) Have participants take the quiz on the history and current facts and issues of Native Americans on pages 6 and 7. They can discuss possible answers in small groups. When finished, go over the answers on pages 8, 9 and 10. Have participants respond to these questions:
 1. What information you learned from the quiz was most surprising or striking to you?
 2. Can you share any experiences that you've had with Native American culture and people? Have you witnessed or heard of prejudices against Native Americans?
- 4) The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, on page 11 can be used for discussion about the rights of Native Americans and its relation to Catholic Social Teaching.
- 5) The Prayer of Relationship and Prayer of All Races can be used in planning a prayer service in the spirit of Native American culture and spirituality that can invite more in your greater community to celebrate Native American month. Also, the symbols on page 3 can be incorporated into the prayer service you develop, and you can also use the prayers and reflections on page 1 and any of the facts in the quiz.
- 6) Use the web site resources listed on page 14 to continue learning about the Native American people.
- 7) End with the closing prayer found on page 1 of this unit.

Native American Symbols

The Native American world is one of meaningful symbols which helps one to encounter God, Creator, Great Spirit and the sacredness of all Creation. Symbols and ceremonies express meaning in the lives of Native peoples and are an important part of their culture and spirituality.

The sacred drum and its beat symbolizes for many tribes the rhythmic beat of the human heart.

Sacred animals and birds are relatives, teachers and models that call forth further growth in life's journey.

Sacred plants such as sweetgrass, tobacco, cedar, sage, juniper and others designated by tribes, are burned for purification, healing, strength, wholeness and greater harmony in one's life.

The sacred circle is a symbol of wholeness and unity, establishing harmony and oneness with the earth, all of creation, humanity and the infinity of God. The circular design of some traditional dwellings, such as the tepee and sweatlodge, helps one to better understand life's journey for greater harmony during various stages of human growth and development.

The medicine wheel, another circle image, helps one to visualize and understand ideas that cannot be seen. It shows the different ways all things of life are interconnected. This sacred wheel (circle) is a medicine for a whole and healthy life.

Dances use the circle as a sign of unity, strength, and wholeness. Dancing is also a way of praying with the total self and bonding with one's community.

Read the poem below by the Native American poet, Joy Harjo. What traditional Native American symbols does she use in this poem? What spiritual attitudes towards Creation does she reveal in the poem?

The Eagle Poem

Joy Harjo

To pray you open your whole self
 To sky, to earth, to sun, to moon
 To one whole voice that is you
 And know there is more
 That you can't see, can't hear
 Can't know except in moments
 Steadily growing, and in languages,
 That aren't always sound but other
 Circles of motion
 Like eagle that Sunday morning
 Over Salt River. Circled in blue sky
 In wind, swept our hearts clean
 With sacred wings.
 We see you, see ourselves and know
 That we must take the utmost care
 And kindness in all things.
 Breathe in, knowing we are made of
 All this, and breathe, knowing
 We are truly blessed because we
 Were born, and die soon, within a
 True circle of motion,
 Like eagle rounding out the morning
 Inside us.
 We pray that it will be done
 In beauty.
 In beauty.



Case Studies

Water: Lifeblood of Mother Earth

by Priscilla Solomon

Anishinabeque (an Ojibway woman) and a Sister of St. Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario

“In the testament of our Hebrew ancestors, water images appear like a life-giving stream throughout the history of God’s people. Water quenches both physical and spiritual thirst, cleansing, purifying, transforming, and bearing life. In Genesis, God’s creative word results in ‘every kind of living creature with which the waters teem’ (Gen. 1:21). ‘A flood was rising from the earth and watering all the surface of the soil.’ (Gen. 2:6) Out of this watered soil, life is brought forth. ‘A river flowed from Eden to water the garden and from there it divided into four streams.’ (Gen. 2:10)

For me as an Aboriginal person, the image of four streams is enriched by our teaching of the four sacred directions and the four symbolic races. If one faces the four cardinal directions consecutively one has completed a circle. It is immediately clear to me that water is meant for all of creation and for all humankind. But such is not the common understanding of our time. As water is threatened and becomes scarce in more parts of the earth, individuals and corporations are capitalizing on human need, commodifying water for their own profit.

What is water? It is a natural and essential element without which no one can long survive, and is the birthright of every living creature. Precious, sacred rivers flow through highlands and lowlands, bush lands, deserts and cities, cultures and spiritualities, quenching both physical and spiritual thirst. People of all cultures recognize the necessity and symbolic nature of water. Indigenous people, because of our holistic world views, have a rich relationship with water that is particularly needed in our contemporary world.”

Discussion Questions:

How does Sr. Solomon honor both her Catholic faith and her Native heritage in her reflection?

Read the box to the right. How is Sr. Solomon’s reflection an example of inculturation?

Why is water so important in spiritual as well as physical terms?

The shortage of usable, healthy water is a growing problem around the globe. The right to water is seen as a human right by Church teachings. How can we become more aware of the issues surrounding control and usage of water?

Inculturation

Inculturation refers to incorporating elements of a native or ethnic culture in the expressions of the faith. It is based on the understanding that the “best of the culture is enhanced by the truth of the Gospel” and that the church is enriched by respecting the culture which the Gospel embraces and which in turn embraces.”

US Catholic Bishops, 1992: Time for Remembering, Reconciling and Recommitting Ourselves as a People



Case Studies (continued)

The Legend of Wountie

This legend is from the Squamish Nation, Coast Salish, on the west coast of Canada. The Cheakamus River is north of the town of Squamish and flows into Howe Sound.

A long time ago, even before the time of the flood, the Cheakamus River provided food for the Squamish people. Each year, at the end of summer, when the salmon came home to spawn, the people would cast their cedar root nets into the water and get enough fish for the winter to come.

One day, a man came to fish for food for his family for the winter. He looked into the river and found that many fish were coming home this year. He said thanks to the spirit of the fish, for giving themselves as food for his family, and cast his net into the river and waited. In time, he drew his nets in, and they were full of fish, enough for his family for the whole year. He packed these away into cedar bark baskets, and prepared to go home.

But he looked into the river, and saw all those fish, and decided to cast his net again. And he did so, and it again filled with fish, which he threw onto the shore. A third time, he cast his net into the water and waited.

This time, when he pulled his net in, it was torn beyond repair by sticks, stumps and branches which filled the net. To his dismay, the fish on the shore and the fish in the cedar bark baskets were also sticks and branches. He had no fish, his nets were ruined.

It was then he looked up at the mountain, and saw Wountie, the spirit protecting the Cheakamus, who told him that he had broken the faith with the river and with nature, by taking more than he needed for himself and his family. And this was the consequence.

And to this day, high on the mountain overlooking the Cheakamus and Paradise Valley, is the image of Wountie, protecting the Cheakamus.

The fisherman? Well, his family went hungry and starved, a lesson for all the people in his family.

-Education World

Discussion Questions

What do we learn about the values of the Squamish by reading this tale? What would you guess is their view of relationship between:

- human and earth and all that lives in it
- creator and earth
- individual and society
- human and spirit world

What can we learn from this indigenous tale? How would our society be different if we lived by similar values?

Native American History and Culture - Quiz (continued)

10. Other special elements of Native American culture involve their understanding of:
- time
 - ritual
 - history
 - respect for elders
 - the earth
 - living creatures
11. Native American and Catholic Christian spiritualities are:
- compatible
 - incompatible
12. The Native American cultures are _____.
- very similar to one another
 - all very different
13. Native American nicknames, such as _____, are frequently used for athletic teams.
- Redskins
 - Braves
 - Indians
 - Warriors
14. Reservations have served to:
- return to Native Americans the land that was once theirs
 - reunite families and preserve the rich Native American culture
 - act as a system of forced segregation
15. The average income of Native Americans is about _____ of that for whites, the lowest per capita income of any population group in the U.S.
- 66%
 - 72%
 - 79%
 - 83%
16. On the existing 278 reservations, existing problems include:
- unemployment
 - poverty
 - alcoholism
 - gambling dependency
17. True or False? The U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) is responsible for the administration and management of land held in trust by Native Americans tribes.
18. _____ percent of all Native Americans have gone to college.
- 1
 - 2.5
 - 5
 - 10
19. How many countries in the world have been both founded and maintained by the original inhabitants of the land?
- 56
 - 70
 - 93
 - 110

Native American History and Culture Quiz - Answers

1. a, b, c, and e

The English, French, Spanish, and Russians had the first contact with Native Americans. Each had varying approaches to colonization. Some Native Americans experienced this contact almost 500 years ago, while others had their first substantial contact only in the last 150 years. Of the latter group, a number of Native Americans had their primary European contact with Americans of European descent who no longer considered themselves to be immigrants.

2. a, b, c, and d

As an effect of European contact, a number of Native American tribes lost their cultures and languages through the destruction of their villages. Some tribes disappeared while others continued with a few survivors.

3. b, c, and d

Through the experiences of European contact and missionaries, some Native Americans lost their own culture and language and adopted European ones. Many Native Americans maintained two strictly divided cultural lives: one for the village or reservation and the other for the larger society and often for the church.

4. d

Government assimilation efforts caused Native Americans to lose their cultures and language. Between 1785 and 1866, over 400 treaties were made with Native Americans in the United States, and every treaty was broken. Until the mid-twentieth century, it was common practice for the government to remove Native American children from their cultures and relocate them in boarding-school type educational settings, where they were not allowed to speak their cultures' languages, wear their cultures' dress, or practice their cultures' customs. Today, tension between the government and Native Americans continues, with conflict surrounding land use, casinos, and reparations. Additionally, there has been a long history of discrimination towards Native Americans by the U.S. government. One commonly cited example is that in order for a Native American to be recognized by law as part of that group, he or she must engage in an extensive officialization process and receive an identification card for a federally-recognized tribe. The card is necessary to access certain federal and states services. Some Native Americans see this process (they must apply to become a citizen of a tribe but a person becomes a U.S. citizen by virtue of having being born in the U.S.) as an example of unequal treatment.

5. d

The Native American population, once estimated to be as many as 20 million people at the time of European discovery, declined to 250 thousand in the 1890s and now number 2 million. Native Americans make up less than one percent of the U.S. population.

6. d

There are 557 tribes in the lower forty-eight states. Some of the more well known tribes and their populations include: Cherokee: 308,132; Navajo: 219,198; Chippewa: 103,826; Sioux: 103,255 (these numbers only reflect officially recognized tribe members, but there are many more people with kinship ties to these and other tribes).

7. False

Currently, twenty-five percent of Native Americans live on the 278 reservations that exist in the United States. Half of Native Americans live in an urban setting, away from government reservations, but many maintain some contact with their cultures through Native centers and/or visits to their reservations. In urban areas, there exist some Native Americans who are native to the area and others who have migrated there from other parts of North America. However, it is important to note that not all Native American tribes have reservations. Some urban Natives belong to landless tribes. Their primary community is the multicultural urban experience of North American society. This is in contrast to some other Native Americans who live among their own people on their own land (reservations). Others have grown up on their reservations and have migrated to an urban setting, which for most, is a real and dramatic experience of immigration.



Native American History and Culture Quiz - Answers

(continued)

8. **b**

Presently, a revival of Native cultures, traditions and languages is occurring. Many new forms of ties across tribes are being formed.

9. **spoken/written**

The spoken word has a higher value than the written word. The use of story has primary importance; through the telling of their tribe's stories, the people are given, and sustained in, life. The speaker's personal integrity gives credence and value to the words he or she speaks. The value of words lessens with their quantity. Silence is also seen as having an intrinsic value. It is important to spend time in silence with people.

10. **a, b, c, d, e, and f**

The primary understanding of time is how it relates to the days, months, and seasons of the world. Time is the expression of one's unity and harmony with the world. While the understanding of time by hours and minutes used in the dominant society has importance, it is secondary to the Native understanding of time. Through the use of ritual, one can place oneself in greater harmony with the rhythm of the world. History is not seen as linear but rather as cyclical; it reflects the movement of the world, of the seasons. Through respect for one's elders, this appreciation of one's history is reflected. The elders carry in their bodies the traditions and values of the people. Native Americans view the world on which we live as mother earth, the giver and sustainer of our life. The land has a unique relationship with Native peoples. The sense of ownership differs from that of the dominant society. Native people do not "own" the land, but they and the land belong to one another. Native Americans view their relationship with the land as characterized by care, for our mother earth makes us who we are. All life is sacred and shared by all living creatures. No one form of life has a greater intrinsic value than any other since all creatures form one family and share one common life. By living in harmony with all creatures, humans can live the life for which the Creator made them.

11. **a**

Native spirituality and Catholic Christianity are compatible with one another. Native Americans have a diverse cultural experience that is deeply spiritual. In the faith expression of Native Americans, Catholic Christianity needs to be inculturated in the Native traditions and cultures. Otherwise, the adoption of Catholic Christianity would mean the loss of one's culture.

12. **b**

The Native American cultures are all very different. The primary identification of Native Americans is with their village, tribe or nation, and they are diverse in their own cultures and traditions. The cultural differences among Native Americans are as diverse as among other cultural groups, such as Asians and Europeans. North of the Rio Grande, there are, in fact, over 300 extant Native languages and cultures.

13. **a, b, c, and d**

As an ethnic group, Native Americans were once America's most visible minority. They were frequently seen in movies and on TV, and before that, on coins and in the form of wooden cigar store Indians. Their nicknames were also frequently used for athletic teams. Some Native Americans believe that this usage encourages racial stereotyping and racism.

Native American History and Culture Quiz - Answers

(continued)

14. **c**

Due to the experience of reservations, Native people have known the experience of forced segregation. The reservation system developed as a consequence of the Native people being a conquered people. As a result, some Native Americans have come to mistrust the institutions of the dominating culture (e.g. governmental agencies, church, etc.). They also continue to experience racism and racial stereotyping. The media has played a significant role in both dispersing and supporting stereotypes about Native Americans.

15. **a**

Native American average income is 66% that of whites.

16. **a, b, c, and d**

Unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, and gambling dependency are all problems on the reservations. Other unsettling facts, off and on the reservations, include that Native Americans make up 5 percent of the prison population, even while they are less than 1 percent of the U.S. population. Native Americans rarely live past the age of 70, and their suicide rates as well as infant mortality rates are double the national average.

17. **True.**

The BIA is responsible for the administration and management of 55.7 million acres of land held in trust by the United States for American Indians, Indian tribes, and Alaska Natives. The agency's tasks include: developing forestlands, leasing assets on these lands, directing agricultural programs, protecting water and land rights, developing and maintaining infrastructure and economic development. Tension has existed, however, between Native Americans and the agency that manages their land. Many Native Americans consider their land as their main resource, and through the BIA, it is often leased out to corporations (for mining, waste dumping, ranching, farming, and gaming).

Another function of the BIA is to provide educational services to Native American students. Currently, the BIA provides this service to 48,000 students, but their educational involvement has been very controversial. Issues involving "Americanization" and the discouragement of Native American culture, language, and dress, as mentioned earlier, has resulted in a damaged relationship between Native Americans and the BIA and accusations of government-promoted assimilation.

18. **a**

Only one percent of Native Americans have attended college.

19. **b**

Of the 115 nation-states on this planet, only about 70 of them were founded and are being maintained by the original inhabitants of that land. The rest, 45 nations or so, were built by outsiders who exterminated or tried to exterminate the indigenous, or original, population. The situation of Native Americans in the U.S. shares similarities with those of many others elsewhere.

Sources: Kateri Mitchel, SSA and P. Michael Galvan, *The People*

"Understanding Discrimination Against Indigenous Peoples and Native Americans," <http://faculty.ncwc.edu/toconnor/soc/355lect12.htm>, 2004

U.S. Census Bureau

Education World

The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was completed by a Working Group in 1993. Since 1995, nine more sessions on the document have been held and the group is expected to make a final report to the UN Commission on Human Rights before the end of 2004. More than 100 indigenous groups participate in the Working Group. Since some articles concerning the rights to self-determination and land rights are controversial to some, the draft Declaration has not yet been adopted. Highlights from the Draft Declaration are below.

Indigenous peoples are entitled to:

Article 1 - the right to all human rights and fundamental freedoms recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Article 2 - the right to be free from discrimination, since they are equal to all other people in dignity and personhood.

Article 3 - the right of self-determination and a nationality.

Article 4 - the right to develop their own political, economic, social, cultural, and legal systems, while retaining their rights to participate fully in the political, economic, social and cultural life of the State.

Article 6 - the right to live in peace and security and to full guarantees against genocide or any other act of violence, including the removal of indigenous children from their families and communities.

Article 7 – the right to be protected against ethnocide and from any form of assimilation or integration.

Article 10 – the right to be protected from forcible removal from their lands or territories.

Article 11 – the right to special protection during armed conflicts and from being forcibly recruited into arms forces

Article 12 – the right to practice and revitalize their cultural and customs, to practice, develop, and teach their spiritual and religious traditions to their children and others, and to have their indigenous sacred places, including burial sites, be preserved, respected and protected

Article 18 – the right to be protected under international and national labor laws.

Article 22 – the right to special measures to improve their economic and social conditions, including the areas of employment, vocational training and retraining, housing, sanitation, health and social security.

Article 24 – the right to practice their traditional medicines and health practices.

Article 26 – the right to own, develop, control and use, and conserve, the lands, territories and environments they have traditionally owned, occupied or used.

Article 27 – the right to restitution of the lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, occupied, used or damaged without their consent.

Article 38 – the right to access to adequate financial and technical assistance from States.

Discussion Questions

Consider these tenets of Catholic Social Teaching (CST): participation, human dignity, option for the poor, rights and responsibilities. Where do you see concepts from CST in the Draft Declaration?

What do you know about past injustices against Indigenous People? How does the Draft Declaration respond to the quote from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on page 1?



Native American Prayer Services

Prayer of Relationship:

Gather in a circle with a lighted candle in the center.

Opening: Summer is a time of freshness, of color and of life; a time of growing, of nurturing and of maturing. As we live this summer season, let us share the past events of our lives, enjoy the present moments with friends and with family, and dream the tomorrow. Let us try to live this season to the fullest as we continue to be aware of ongoing personal development. Let us focus on relationships with self, others, the world and creation.

Ask Reflection Questions on Relationships below and ask all to respond silently, or in verbal sharing.

Relationship with self.

How can I embrace the different aspects of myself and see that I am loved by God in my totality?

Relationship with others. In strengthening our bonds with others, how open are we to widen our circle to allow for diversity?

Relationship with the world. How do I feel when I meet people of other cultures? Do I recognize beauty and the face of God in every person in the world?

Relationship with creation. As we observe many signs of life in nature, how do I develop connectedness with the earth, rivers, mountains, hills, sky, sun, winds, and all of God's creation?

After these reflections, join hands to say the prayer of Black Elk, below.

Prayer of Black Elk

Hear me, four quarters of the world -- a relative I am!
 Give me the strength to walk the soft earth,
 a relative to all that is!
 Give me the eyes to see and the strength to understand
 that I may be like you . . .
 Great Spirit, Great Spirit, my Grandfather,
 all over the earth the faces of living things are all alike.
 With tenderness have these come up out of the ground.
 Look upon these faces of children without number
 and with children in their arms
 that they may face the winds and walk the good road
 to the day of quiet.

Closing Prayer: Through our relationships, let us help one another grow more fully and experience life with greater wholeness and holiness. Amen.



Native American Prayer Services (continued)

Prayer of All Races

As a sign of our baptism and symbol of our ongoing need for healing, we place four bowls of water, one in each direction and play a nature tape of running water. We pray:

Creator, giver of life, bring us to new birth in water and the Great Spirit. Teach us the ways of peace and forgiveness. Help us to respect the differences we see in one another and learn to appreciate them. As we become healers in our relationships, may we come to wholeness and holiness. Amen.

Each person moves clockwise to each direction/bowl and washes one of the senses as indicated below. Each asks forgiveness (in silence) for the times—by word, action, mannerism or silence—he or she has hurt a person from the different races.

Red Race
Hands
NORTH

WEST
White Race
Eyes

EAST
Yellow/Brown Race
Ears

SOUTH
Mouth
Black Race

One or all pray:

Help us, Creator, to walk straight the sacred path of life, hearing your voice and seeing your beauty in creation and creatures alike. Give us the strength and courage, our Creator, to preserve the sacredness of life, of mother earth, and of all creation. Give us the vision to see and admire your beautiful creation. Amen.

Other Native American Resources

The Tekakwitha Conference is a Catholic organization which promotes Native American culture, works with Native peoples and trains Catholic clergy and laity who seek to minister to Native Americans. They will host a conference in July 2005. See the Tekakwitha Conference website at <http://www.tekconf.org/index.html>

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops document, "Native American Catholics at the Millenium," can be found at <http://www.usccb.org/education/nativeam.pdf>. This document, using data from the 2000 Census, profiles Native Americans in the U.S.

National Catholic Education Association book, *People: Reflections of Native Peoples*. Written by Native Americans. Offers a reflection on the experience following the arrival of Columbus and the Catholic Church in 1492. 1992. 103pp. <http://services.ncea.org/source/orders/index.cfm?section=orders>

The website of the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, which opened in September 2004 in Washington, DC, can be found at <http://www.nmai.si.edu/>

A long list of resources for learning and teaching about Native Americans can be found at: http://www.teacheroz.com/Native_Americans.htm

"First Nations Histories" offers short histories of the better known Native American tribes: <http://www.tolatsga.org/Compacts.html>

"Aadizookaanag" offers Native American stories, myths, and legends at: <http://www.kstrom.net/isk/stories/stories.html>

Reflection

IF YOUR RACISM IS UNCONSCIOUS, YOU ARE A PROBLEM: REFLECTIONS OF A RECOVERING RACIST

By Nancy Schreck, OSF

For much of my life I did not think of myself as a racist because I didn't do or think things that people I defined as racist did and thought.

Then one day an African-American woman spoke with me about not knowing who I was because I grew up a radical: I did not have to include race in my self definition. She noted that not all bigots join the Klu Klux Klan or hate groups. Then looking directly into my soul, she said, "If your racism is unconscious, then you are a problem, too."

Her words have haunted me for years. Since that time, I have been committed to the task of understanding my identity as a white person with its accompanying privilege. I have continued to discontinue my former lifestyle of living in isolated homogeneous situations where I rarely have cause to think about race, white privilege or my racism.

I have become more sensitized to the ways I unwittingly participate in racism, even though I do not condone it. I am not finished with the process and write this reflection primarily to my white sisters about the work that is ours to do in dismantling racism.

The problem of White Privilege

Racism is a white problem and white people need to work with each other to confront it. The effort must begin with an understanding of the privilege that comes with being white. White privilege is the unearned set of advantages white people have been taught to believe is their birthright because of the color of their skin—that white is normative, average, ideal, and therefore preferred.

White privilege reflects the attitudes and fears absorbed by white people growing up in a racially prejudiced society. We may be taught to think that all people are equal, but we are socialized to feel that white people are better, cleaner, harder working, more trustworthy. The list goes on.

We absorb these attitudes, images, and messages emotionally even while we eschew them mentally. Our families, schools, churches, books, and television have given us the message that white people belong to the superior group, thus creating the illusion that it is a white people's world.

Clearing out these distorted images and stereotypes is extremely difficult. Replacing misinformation with accurate information requires time and deliberate attention. It does not just happen, nor does it happen quickly, for white privilege is a pervasive social cancer. Failure to treat the illness, even the collective lack of reflection upon this reality, leads to serious individual and societal problems.

Recovery from racism and white privilege is not unlike other recovery processes. It begins with knowing ourselves well and being honest enough to admit our problem.

We must talk to each other about the reality of our privilege, be aware of the power and access afforded us by our white skin, help each other understand the sick behaviors our racism causes, and assist each other in the faltering steps of recovery.

This is work we as white people need to do ourselves instead of depending on those in parallel cultures to raise the issues for us. We do not do our work of recovery from racism in isolation from the perspective of people of color, but we hold ourselves accountable for what it is ours to do.

Dismantling or unlearning racism must be a deliberate lifelong journey which begins in personal work and always leads to confronting institutional racism. It requires long term plans, sustained vigilance, and daily practice. Even after many years of deliberate effort, I find that subtle thoughts and feelings indicate that the illness is still eating away at my soul.

Prejudices have seeped in even as I think I am breaking down my walls of separation. I hope my continuing awareness will lessen my potential for harming others.

The Truth Will Set You Free

We have a moral imperative to expunge the tumor of racism with its toxic tentacles and social death threat. This is critical spiritual work for our time because racism is so



Reflection

dangerously destructive of both the person who has the disease and those who experience its effects. It is a great threat to the Body of Christ.

Jesus understood the need for people to take care of their inner work in the process of responding to the difficulties of the larger world. Jesus says: Go inside yourself first. Take the log out of your own eye.

Jesus also says the truth will set you free. My truth is knowing I have absorbed racist attitudes and that despite my best efforts and deepest desire to be otherwise, I am racist. It is my hope that confessing this truth will weaken its power over me and help me recover from its symptoms.

To be spiritually awake means to undertake this journey that cannot remain personal but becomes social and political. Embracing a vision of equality and freedom leads us to take public action. We must learn how to fight as well as to pray.

Dismantling White Privilege

The following suggestions are intended to dismantle the illusions created by white privilege:

Choose to be aware.

Spend one year (or a month, week, or day) refusing to read material not written by people of color. Reflect on your experience. How has your vision of the world been impacted? How much access to information do you have? Get white men out of your head. Choose to experience life from the perspective of African American, Asian, Latina, Native women writers.

Question whether the pictures and other visual representations in your home/office are multiracial. Are your musical choices, prayers, etc. reflective of the multicultural make up of our world?

Break the silence by refusing to tolerate racial slurs, jokes, and racist attitudes. Speak to your white friends about their experience of whiteness, white privilege, and other issues of race.

John Perkins, in his book *The Quiet Revolution*, claims that relocation is a necessary step in recovery from racism. He notes that it is impossible to be converted from this sin

as long as sit carefully isolated in our “ivory” towers. Make a lifestyle change which immerses you either permanently or at least for significant amounts of time in a parallel culture so that your awareness of issues and white privilege is clarified.

Nancy Schreck, OSF, is a member of the leadership team of the Sisters of St. Francis, Dubuque, IA. She was president of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in 1995-1996.

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Discussion Questions

1. How would you define a racist?
2. Sr. Nancy Schreck says she formerly lived in “isolated homogeneous situations” where she rarely thought about race. In what situations can people place themselves where they do have to think about race? Are these situations different for whites and for people of color?
3. Many people will ask people of color who are not clearly black, Asian, Hispanic, etc, “What are you?” Why does that question matter to so many in our society? How does it put an emphasis on difference and race as a central part of the person of color’s identity? Do white people feel the need to explain their racial identity when meeting new people? How do we respect the dignity of the human person when we encounter new people from any racial background?
4. Reread the second paragraph under the subtitle, “The problem of White Privilege.” Discuss the author’s comments that white people are taught to *think* one way about people of color, but are taught to *feel* another way about people of color. Why the dichotomy?
5. How can white people work together to challenge themselves regarding racist stereotypes and sentiments?
6. What suggestions does the author make to actively combat racism? Discuss these suggestions and brainstorm for others.

