

# Transcript of : Do Black Lives Matter to God ?

Presented on October 15, 2020 by

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hierarchy, white desire, white ego, white access, white privilege is not new. That these questions are, at the very least, also deeply embedded in the Christian imagination.

Because today is not the first day. This summer was not the first summer. This year not the first year. This decade not the first. This century not first where we have had to ask do Black Lives matter to God? And because today will not be the last when we in ashes and sackcloth cry out again over black blood needlessly, senselessly disturbingly, disgustingly spilled without cause.

A poem paired with this image from Turner himself. It was unfinished and unpublished, and displayed alongside of his painting. "Aloft all hands strike the topmasts and belay; Yon angry setting sun and fierced clouds declare the typhoon's coming. Before it sweeps your decks throw overboard the dead and dying—heed their chains. Hope, Hope, fallacious Hope, where's thy market now? " How does one mourn the interminable?

Two. I can't see you right now. There is no body language. No energy in the room. No reading the faces in the crowd. No assurances, no nods, no tilts, no questions, not even the clarity of someone getting up and walking out. I am standing in my home with an infant in the other room, dinner le Tw ( )4 (n t)-7.2 (h)2.89(r)-3.3 (lhj 0.001 en t)-7.2 (h)2.9



Yes, yes we know. Racism is a sin. ~~Anti~~blackness is evil, of course. But acknowledgment is the easy part. Building an infrastructure of critical apparatus and abolitionist commitment is not. How offensive to reduce the structural and systemic killing of black and brown bodies to an issue of the heart, when the material realities of racism are the glinting mortar that still adorn our robes, our books, our pillars, and our steeples.

I have said it before and will say it again: if racism is something from which we need to repent, we must first take seriously that race is something we have been daily taught to confess. We believe in race just as we believe that some peoples, by birth and by class, are superior to others.

We confess these things with our apathy. We continue to invest in our power and our privilege. The fact of race has been memorized and memorialized at every juncture of Christianity in the world. Beyond the social constructs, or the biological data, or the intellectual categories, we have allowed race to become incarnate in our lives. Its own word made flesh.

But it is not a theological word. It is not a word from God, or to God, or about God. Instead, it becomes god. Our idol structural and systemic, a sacramental perversion. Race is thought the superlative, alternative fact. And racismo icelismah



He goes on to explain that the critical study of the icon begins with the idea that human beings are made in the image and likeness of their creator, and culminates rather less grandly, in the modern science of image making in advertising and propaganda. The continuum is one that makes meaning at every end.

While icons reach out to us, drawing a worshiper closer to God, this economy, this field of relations does not find a bounded or pure manifestation in relationship to the icon alone. Other images, immeasurably powerful, also reach out, also ask to participate in their offering of the imaginary in ~~ing~~ an iconic force, an iconic function.

Alas, in the wrong hands, without sacred community, left to her own devices, even the icon like anything can become an idol in person or through a screen. What have we been taught through image? Through ~~death~~ ~~the~~ Ar things we see moving us toward liberty or enslavement?

We have to remember that we have been inundated with images of black death, and black dying for centuries. Do Black Lives matter to God? It confuses me in as many places and spaces as I have invoked Our Lady of Ferguson how many people have commented to me that at first they did not see the overt references to race. To blackness, the references to racism, to police violence, to gun violence, to injustice, and the image.

It did not even really register that this quote, "beautiful image", it's always commented on in its beauty. I have it all



continue to insist, explicitly or implicitly, that God is white. For otherwise, we will never see the image of God in black flesh.

Four, and final. Black Lives Matter. Let me be clear that this is a theological statement of the most important kind. Black and womanist black liberation and womanist theologians have for years and years resisted the image of Christ that is only reflected in the values and beliefs that sustain white supremacy, masculinity, heterosexuality, patriarchy, and violence.

The idea of Black Lives Matter actually started as a love letter as Alicia Garza, one of the founders, wrote after Trayvon Martin's murder. "We don't deserve to be killed with impunity. We need to love ourselves and for a world where Black Lives Matter. Black people, I love you. I love us. We matter, our lives matter."

It reminds me of a moment in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* where Baby Suggs gives a sermon in the clearing. She says, "In this here place, we flesh. Flesh that weeps, laughs. Flesh that dances on bare feet and grass. Love it, love it hard. Yonder, they do not love your flesh. They despise it."

"They don't love your eyes, they'd just as soon pick them out. No more do they love the skin on your back, yonder they flay it. And oh, my people they do not love your hands. Those, they only use, tie, bind, chop off and leave empty. Love your hands. Love them, raise them up, and kiss them."

"Touch others with them. Pat them together, stroke them on your face because they don't love that either. You've got to love it, you. And no, they ain't in love with your mouth. Yonder out there, they will see it broken and break it again. What you say out of it, they will not heed. What you scream from it, they do not hear."

"What you put into it to nourish your body, they will snatch away and give you leavins instead. No, they don't love your mouth. You got to love it. This is flesh I'm talking about. Flesh that needs to be loved. Feet that need to rest and to dance. Backs that need support, shoulders that need arms. Strong arms, I'm telling you. And oh my people out yonder, hear me, they do not love your neck, yonder they knowed and straight."

"So love your neck. Put a hand on it. Grace it, stroke it, and hold it up. And all your inside parts that they just as soon slop for hogs, you got to love them. The dark, dark liver. Love it. Love it and the beat, and beating heart love that, too. More than eyes, or feet, more than lungs that have yet to draw the air, more than your life holding womb and your life giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize."

Black people have learned to resist, to struggle for liberation through the eyes of a black Christ who hears their cries. A Word made flesh that loves their flesh, too. As so many womanist theologians have posited, this is something we can strive for. This is something that we can survive. That the insistence and the love is something that is a blessing and a gift.

But we must know that Jesus cannot be white. As James Cone so many years ago said, "Jesus is black, baby." And that definition of Christ, to quote Cone, as black means that he represents the complete opposite of the values of white culture and leads the warfare against the white assault on blackness. I want to be clear that whiteness as a logic does not require white skin to participate.

And that our individual ideas and values are no match for the system and structural racism that upholds the

alienated America from its very soul thereby normalizing violence against Black Lives, and preventing all people from reaching for their best selves?"

"The answer is whiteness itself." She continues, and says that whiteness is ~~an~~ <sup>an</sup> inherently oppositional and violent construct. Not only does it stand in opposition to all those who are not white, but most insidiously it opposes the very humanity of people. Whiteness is soul crushing as prevents those who refuse to name and let go of its privileges from living into who they are, sacred beings created in the image of a loving and just God.

White America is alienated from its very soul, that is, its humanity. And this fact continues to have dire consequences, both for black life and black ~~life~~ <sup>life</sup>. If the Jesus we serve is more committed to whiteness than to pav17.51800

Prof. Adkins -Jones :

No idea what happened, but thank you for staying with me.

Meghan Lovett :

For sure. We're running a little short on time, but there's been a question that's been similarly posed in the Q&A so it might be a good one to pose to you. "What specifically can the Church do to address the issues that you raised? To lead towards the systemic change that we need?"

Prof. Adkins -Jones :

Right. So I think that it's a little difficult at times. Obviously, we are at Boston College. I'm not a member of the Catholic Church so I have deep reverences for the church universal, and all of the ways that we are connected.

We are still reckoning with a time where if our churches are going to be active about racial injustice, and if we are going to take antiracist work seriously then we have got to name all of the ways that we are complicit in not only the historical instances of racism. sy|nl,e ff tve focsoe cdn5-0.7 (o)32 ( f)59 (r)0.7 ( t)-15..9 (o)3 (ed)-2B8 (s)7u (d)-2.2 .7 (s)2

