



UNRECONCILED

From *Racial*
Reconciliation to
Racial Justice
in Christian
Evangelicalism

Andrea Smith

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From Racial Reconciliation
to Racial Justice in
Christian Evangelicalism

Andrea Smith

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To
Sunjay and Tsali Smith,

everyone involved in Evangelicals 4 Justice, NAIITS,
Liberating Evangelicalism, and Killjoy Prophets,

and the memory of James Hal Cone, Richard Leo Twiss,
and Wendy Beauchemin Peterson

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CONTENTS

Abbreviations ix

INTRODUCTION 1

- 1 FROM CHIT'LINS TO CAVIAR
Evangelical Multiculturalism 30
 - 2 "WE DON'T HAVE A SKIN PROBLEM, WE HAVE A SIN PROBLEM"
Racial Reconciliation and the Permanency of Racism 53
 - 3 MULTIPLE LOGICS OF WHITE SUPREMACY 90
 - 4 THE BIOPOLITICS OF CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION 116
 - 5 THE RACIALIZATION OF RELIGION
Islamophobia and Christian Zionism 142
 - 6 DECOLONIZATION IN UNEXPECTED PLACES 192
 - 7 NO PERMANENT FRIENDS AND ENEMIES 211
 - 8 WOMEN OF COLOR EVANGELICAL THEOLOGIES 250
- CONCLUSION Between Black Lives Matter
and Donald Trump 269

Notes 287

A Note on Sources 305

Bibliography 307

Index 377

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIM	American Indian Movement
AIPAC	American Israel Public Affairs Committee
BDS	Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions
BLM	Black Lives Matter
CBA	Christian Booksellers Association
CCDA	Christian Community Development Association
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CUFI	Christians United for Israel
CUIC	Churches Uniting in Christ
DOMA	Defense of Marriage Act
ERLC	Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
ICEJ	International Christian Embassy Jerusalem
IJM	International Justice Mission
IRD	Institute of Religion and Democracy
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
KKK	Ku Klux Klan
LCJE	Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender
NAE	National Association of Evangelicals
NAIITS	North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies
NARAL	National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League
NBEA	National Black Evangelical Association
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NPIC	nonprofit industrial complex
NRB	National Religious Broadcasters
PCCNA	Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America
PCUSA	Presbyterian Church USA
PIC	Prison industrial complex
PICO	People Improving Communities through Organizing
PK	Promise Keepers

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PUSH	People United to Serve Humanity
RCA	Reformed Church of America
SBC	Southern Baptist Convention
SIM	Serving in Mission
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
VBS	Vacation Bible School
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCGIP	World Christian Gathering of Indigenous Peoples

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INTRODUCTION

Under the gospel, [slavery] has brought within the range of gospel influence, millions of Ham's descendants among ourselves, who, but for this institution, would have sunk down to eternal ruin; knowing not God, and strangers to the Gospel. In their bondage here on earth, they have been much better provided for, and great multitudes of them have been made the freemen of the Lord Jesus Christ and left this world rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.—Pastor Thornton Stringfellow, 1860 (E. N. Elliott & J. H. Hammond, 1968, 491)

I mean, there is no excuse that I can think of for choking a man to death for selling illegal cigarettes. This is about cigarettes. This isn't a violent confrontation. This isn't a threat that anybody has reported, a threat of someone being killed. This is someone being choked to death. We have it on video with the man pleading for his life. There is no excuse for that I can even contemplate or imagine right now. . . . Romans 13 says that the sword of justice is to be wielded against evildoers. Now, what we too often see still is a situation where our African-American brothers and sisters, especially brothers, are more likely to be arrested, more likely to be executed, more likely to be killed. And this is a situation in which we have to say, I wonder what the defenders of this would possibly say. I just don't know. But I think we have to acknowledge that something is wrong with the system at this point and that something has to be done. . . . When we've got police officers killing a man on video with a chokehold, can we not say there are still some problems in American society when it comes to race?—Russell Moore (2014), president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the

Southern Baptist Convention

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A Tale of Two Southern Baptist Conventions

It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) organized in 1845 on the foundation of slavery, anti-Blackness, and white supremacy. The SBC broke away from Northern Baptists when the larger Baptist association prevented an elder from a slaveholding church from becoming a missionary. Slaveholding Baptists organized the SBC, which supported slavery, in Augusta, Georgia. The SBC eventually apologized for slavery in 1995. But it was not until Russell Moore became president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission in 2013 that we began to see the SBC explicitly address institutionalized racism in a sustained way. Moore spoke out against racism in policing, anti-immigration organizing, and the Trump campaign.

What explains this shift? This book is focused less on Moore, who has received considerable attention for his position, and more on lesser-known organizers for racial justice (particularly women of color) within Christian evangelicalism,¹ which has enabled prominent figures to begin to shift their position. As discussed in chapter 8, organizers and thought leaders such as Zakiya Jackson, Christena Cleveland, AnaYelsi Velasco-Sanchez, Austin Channing Brown, Brenda Salter McNeil, Angela Parker, Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Jenny Yang, Lenore Three Stars, Cheryl Bear, Shari Russell, Micky ScottBey Jones, Alexia Salvatierra, Nikki Toyama-Szeto, Lisa Sharon Harper, Chanequa Walker-Barnes, Kathy Khang, Mayra Macedo-Nolan, Erna Kim Hackett, Emily Rice, Evelmyn Ivens, Sandra Van Opstal, and countless others demonstrate that radical racial justice organizing through a critical ethnic studies lens is happening across diverse communities and has the potential to shift racial politics in the future.

Evangelicalism and Critical Ethnic Studies

Theoretical formulations by white European thinkers are granted general applicability while those uttered from the purview of minority discourse that speak to the same questions are almost exclusively relegated to the jurisdiction of ethnographic locality.—Alexander G. Weheliye (2014, 6)

I contend that Christian theology and scholarship will remain “provincial” as long as some major challenges continue unaddressed [such as] the perception of indigenous Christian scholars as purveyors of exotic

raw intellectual material. . . . Indigenous theologians are . . . relegated to the museums of theological curiosity just like their cultures. We are then left with this: the West claiming to produce universal theology and the rest writing to articulate fundamental theology that will make [them] equal partners in the theological circles that determine what is theologically normative.—Tite Tiénou (2005, 16–17)

Alexander Weheliye speaks of the need to develop a critical ethnic studies approach to intellectual inquiry in which ethnic studies goes beyond the positioning of communities of color as ethnographic objects of study. Rather, the theoretical analysis emerging out of critical ethnic studies is one that fundamentally challenges the epistemological frameworks of Western scholarship itself. As ethnic studies has generally developed along identity lines (Asian American studies, Native American studies, etc.), it has done critical work that provides the foundation for looking at intersections of racism, colonialism, immigration, and slavery in the U.S. context. However, this identity-based approach also has its limits, necessitating the development of a critical ethnic studies, which is poised to interrogate the structures in which it can find itself. Ethnic studies often becomes mired in an identity politics that advances what Elizabeth Povinelli describes as “social difference without social significance” (Povinelli, 2002, 16). In this context, critical ethnic studies has emerged to build intellectual and political projects that do not dismiss identity but instead are structured around the *logics* of white supremacy, colonialism, capitalism, heteropatriarchy, and so forth in order to expand its scope. Such a shift in focus is significant in providing a space for all scholars to be part of an engagement with critical ethnic studies, because these logics structure all of society, not just those who are “racialized.” As Denise Da Silva points out in her defining text on raciality, the entire Western epistemological system is governed through logics of raciality that fundamentally shape what we even consider to be human (Silva, 2007).

Yet, as Tite Tiénou (professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) suggests in the epigraph at the beginning of this section, critical ethnic studies analyses are not confined to the academy or even to groups that we would see as necessarily being on the “left.” He makes a critical ethnic studies claim about Christian evangelicalism: that evangelicalism is only willing to tolerate evangelicals of color to the extent that they can be safely incorporated within white evangelicalism—or, as Povinelli might say, they add theological difference without theological consequence. While evangelical

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critiques may not use the same terminology as those speaking in more secular critical ethnic studies venues, they are in fact critiquing settler colonialism, white supremacy, and capitalism as well as engaging in movements to challenge them and reconstruct alternative versions of Christian evangelicalism. And in many cases the intellectual trends within Christian evangelicalism and more secular critical ethnic studies circles are not simply similar or parallel but actually intersecting. The continuity of ideas from critical ethnic studies to Christian evangelicalism troubles the notion that critical ethnic studies is a marginal intellectual project that only informs academic elites; in fact, these ideas are actually informing the attempts to create new forms of Christian evangelicalism. Thus, the project of critical ethnic studies is an expansive one capable of informing movements across political, religious, and academic divides.

In that spirit, this book focuses on what possibilities emerge when Christian evangelicalism is positioned within a critical ethnic studies framework through a study of racial justice organizing within Christian evangelicalism. In particular, it focuses on the racial reconciliation movement that developed within Christian evangelicalism beginning in the 1990s. The racial reconciliation movement within conservative evangelicalism began with the aim of promoting racial harmony within evangelical churches in general and within Christian evangelical political activism in particular. The goals of this movement were articulated by Ralph Reed, then head of the Christian Coalition:

There's no question that white evangelical Protestants, especially in the South, were not only on the sidelines but were on the wrong side of the most central struggle for civil justice of the twentieth century, namely the struggle for civil rights. . . . Until the pro-family, religious conservative movement becomes a truly biracial or multi-racial movement, it will not have moral resonance with the American people, because we were so wrong at that time. I want the Christian Coalition to be a truly rainbow coalition. I want it to be black, brown, yellow, white. I want it to bring Christians of all faith traditions, all denominations, and all races and colors together. I don't think that's going to happen overnight. It's going to take years, but we're committed to it. (quoted in Martin, 1996, 365–66)

Since the early 1990s numerous books on the topic of racial reconciliation have appeared as well as an increasing number of articles in conser-

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4 | INTRODUCTION
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vative Christian periodicals that have focused on racism and the role of people of color in conservative Christian communities. Most prominent white evangelical organizations have issued statements advocating racial reconciliation. The purpose of racial reconciliation, as racial reconciliation-ist Tony Evans puts it, was to “establish a church where everyone of any race or status who walks through the door is loved and respected as part of God’s creation and family” (T. Evans, 1990, 157).

The impact of this movement has been far-reaching, shaping everything from electoral politics to the formations of new evangelical churches. Because of the presumption within the secular academy that evangelicals, particularly evangelicals of color, are necessarily and singularly politically conservative, there is often not much engagement between these critical ethnic studies projects across religious divides. And yet people of color have not just been involved in this racial reconciliation movement but have developed analysis and critique about this movement as well as larger critiques of the white supremacist, colonial, and imperial nature of evangelical Christianity.

The Christian Right, or Christian evangelicalism more generally, is often portrayed as the “permanent enemy” of liberal democracy. By this I mean that some constituencies can be marked as politically intractable and necessarily antagonistic to social justice struggles. Consequently, liberal democracy’s investment in a white supremacist, capitalist status quo goes unremarked. In addition, secularism is presumed necessarily to be the site of political and social tolerance rather than itself also being equally mired in the logics of white supremacy and colonialism, as Vine Deloria Jr. pointed out many years ago (Deloria, 1992).

Liberal democracy’s investment in creating permanent enemies so that some sectors are presumed to be on the side of righteousness and others necessarily on the side of injustice also coincides with the development of the nonprofit industrial complex’s model of activism. Dylan Rodriguez defines the nonprofit industrial complex as the set of symbiotic relationships that link together political and financial technologies of state and owning class control and surveillance over public political ideology, including and especially emergent progressive and leftist social movements (D. Rodriguez, 2009a, 22–23). He and Ruth Wilson Gilmore argue that the nonprofit industrial complex (NPIC) is the natural corollary to the prison industrial complex (PIC): while the PIC overtly represses dissent, the NPIC manages and controls dissent through incorporating it into the state apparatus. Gilmore explains that NPIC is a shadow state in that it is constituted by a network of

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institutions doing much of the work that the state used to do through taxation, such as providing education and social services (Gilmore, 2017). The NPIC functions as an alibi for the state, allowing it to make war, expand punishment, and proliferate market economies under the veil of public/private partnerships.

The NPIC impacts how activists organize for social change. In particular, the logic of funder-driven nonprofits diverts activists' attention from grassroots organizing to grant administration—short-term activist or advocacy projects that are funder-friendly—rather than to the slow process of building mass movements of change (Incite, 2007). To end global oppression, it would be necessary to engage in broad-based building work that engages mass numbers of people to topple the system. To accomplish this goal, it becomes necessary to find ways to engage people who do not think as you do, but who, through a politics of rearticulation, may begin to see a long-term interest in struggling for social change. The strategies often employed by the NPIC, however, organize around a “permanent” enemy, such as the “Tea Party,” “Christian Right,” or “Pro-Life Movement.” If these huge sectors of the population remain permanent enemies, it can be guaranteed that progressive movements will never actually build large enough movements to change the system. Creating these permanent enemies provides a space to vent righteous anger but ensures that the system causing this anger will stay in place permanently.

This logic of organizing around a permanent enemy continues even within more radical groups that critique the NPIC. Soon the enemy is not only the Tea Party but other progressives who do not toe the correct party line. The NPIC soon becomes replaced by revolutionary chic, where progressives content themselves with having the most racial political analysis without any concern for actually building movements that can dismantle white supremacy. Unfortunately, progressive movements tend to present two equally unsatisfactory alternatives: either silence around racism within political groups in order to maintain a “united front” for justice or endless witch hunts to root out counterrevolutionaries. This situation suggests not that we should avoid internal critique but that there may be a different way to do critique. This book proposes that some of these possibilities may exist in unexpected places, specifically, Christian evangelicalism.

Given, then, that the logics of domination also structure the way we think to resist and how we even critique how we resist, there is not a clear “correct” alternative way forward. Rather, this context suggests a “revolution by trial and error” approach. It also suggests that we may look to unexpected places

for guidance. In particular, this book suggests that Christian evangelicalism, and the Christian Right in particular, should not only be the object of racial critique but perhaps may also be a site and source for new possibilities for engaging racial critique and racial justice work. In doing so, I hope to question what we presume ethnic studies to be. In these times of ethnic studies bans and cutbacks in Arizona and elsewhere, it is easy to panic about the future of ethnic studies. However, this panic often presumes that the state and/or the academic industrial complex owns and controls ethnic studies—and hence is actually in a position to ban it. But if we open our minds to intellectual projects wherever they may be, we may find that critical ethnic studies is alive and well in places that we may not have expected.

This book emerges from the research that I did for *Native Americans and the Christian Right: The Gendered Politics of Unlikely Alliances*. In that book I examined religious and political configurations of Christian Right and American Indian activism as a way of talking about the larger project of rethinking the nature of political strategy and alliance-building for progressive purposes. Large-scale transformation cannot happen without mass movements. In turn, building mass movements requires that we do not organize around the premise of a permanent enemy (the Christian Right), since these “enemies” are people who need to be recruited for movements for social change. If we understand that current configurations of religious and political identity within Native American and Christian Right communities are not givens, then it is possible for them to be rearticulated into new configurations that favor progressive politics. *Native Americans and the Christian Right* explored these possibilities by focusing on sites of political and religious practice that do not neatly fit into categories of “progressive” or “conservative.” Borrowing from the analysis of Native American activists as well as Stuart Hall, I argued for a politics of rearticulation whereby political alliances (or antagonisms) were not presumed. Instead, I called for an exploration of the possibilities of rearticulating identities and political formations for more liberatory ends. After all, the Christian Right itself is a result of a political rearticulation in which previously apolitical fundamentalists were rearticulated into right-wing voting blocs. As Stuart Hall argued in *Hard Road to Renewal*, Thatcherism (and Reaganism) was successful because it rearticulated working-class concerns into reactionary political agendas. Thus, it seems appropriate that the Left should return the favor and develop its own politics of rearticulation rather than presume that entire communities of people could never be interested in liberatory politics.

In the course of writing that book, however, I was not able to include many important sites where the politics of rearticulation have the potential to have a major impact on how political coalitions have been formed or might be formed in the future. Thus, this book focuses on racial justice politics in general as they intersect with the Christian Right. While my previous work focused on how Native American evangelicals were rearticulating evangelical rhetoric to support Native sovereignty and self-determination, this work looks at how evangelicals of color are engaged in similar politics of rearticulation. Because these sites of racial contestation and rearticulation within the Christian Right are so dispersed, I am focusing on the racial reconciliation movement that began in the 1990s as a way to distill this study. But, as will become clear, the impact of racial reconciliation reverberates far beyond the confines of its movement to impact how evangelicalism itself is articulated.

In addition, the racial reconciliation movement within Christian evangelicalism perhaps has had the unintended consequence of challenging what we even define as evangelicalism.

As Peter Heltzel argues in his groundbreaking work *Jesus and Justice: Evangelicals, Race, and American Politics*, the manner in which evangelicalism is marked as white requires deconstruction. He contends that this framing of evangelicalism disavows the extent to which U.S. evangelicalism is fundamentally constituted through African American Christianity (Heltzel, 2009, 11). And, as *Christianity Today* notes, surveys on evangelical political thought generally include only white evangelicals. Thus, even though 40 percent of Assemblies of God members are people of color, they will not be included in evangelical surveys (Moon, 2014). Social science research surveys replicate the idea that evangelicalism is white. Similarly, Jonathan Walton critiques how scholarly accounts of evangelical religious broadcasting excise the participation of African Americans with no intellectual justification. He argues that this excision rests on two dual assumptions: (1) conservative evangelicalism is defined as white; and (2) African American Christianity is romanticized as inherently liberal or progressive. Consequently, the role of theologically and politically conservative African American Christians in constituting evangelicalism disappears from view (Walton, 2009, 1–26). While we must problematize the manner in which evangelicalism is marked as white, this book turns to a moment in which white evangelical organizations and churches self-critically began to mark themselves as white and seek incorporation of evangelicals of color in the 1990s. One of the ironies of this move is that by attempting to be “inclusive” of people of color within Chris-

tian evangelicalism, this inclusion began to challenge ideas about who can define evangelicalism. The discourse of racial reconciliation illuminates the extent to which evangelicalism has historically equated Christianity with whiteness. And, as discussed later, racial reconciliation has also promoted the racialization of religion in myriad ways, particularly within Christian Zionism. Since evangelicalism is fundamentally constituted through the logics of white supremacy, the racial reconciliation movement cannot help but fundamentally challenge the construction of evangelicalism itself. That is to say, while the project of racial reconciliation might have been a project to rehabilitate the whiteness of evangelicalism within the context of racial justice critique (as discussed more fully in chapter 1), the unintended consequences of it simultaneously destabilized it.

As in *Native Americans and the Christian Right*, my narrative of racial reconciliation and the politics of rearticulation does not tell a simple story of racial progress. Because rearticulation does not presume fixed or stable categories of political identification, it is necessarily the case that even when new political formations are created, they continue to be sites of contestation. Forging new alliances is difficult. As Stuart Hall argues, while there is no fixed relationship between classes and ideologies, these relationships are not free-floating either. Consequently, reconstituting political positions is a Gramscian “war of position,” requiring political actors to articulate a platform in light of the political and social forces that shape this war. Thus, racial reconciliation has had varied political effects, many of which reinstantiate reactionary political agendas. On one hand, racial reconciliation may have provided a critical foundation that enabled the mobilization of evangelicals of color to support Barack Obama’s candidacy. As a result, even traditionally more conservative organizations (such as the Southern Baptist Convention) have gone beyond calls for racial “color blindness” to support struggles against white supremacy, such as the Movement for Black Lives and immigrant justice. Yet, at the same time, the rhetoric of racial reconciliation is often premised on Christian and U.S. imperialist presuppositions that have fueled both the demonization of Obama and the racial backlash seen in Tea Party politics, culminating in white evangelical support for Donald Trump’s candidacy despite his lack of support for traditional Christian Right political positions relative to the other Republican candidates running at that time.² The racial logics of Christian evangelicalism impact society as a whole. Thus, this moment in history is perhaps a particularly important time for further analysis of the dynamics of race and religion within the United States.

Of course, the broad-based white evangelical support for Donald Trump's candidacy is arguably overwhelming evidence that evangelicalism cannot be redeemed. Is not evangelicalism itself an inherently colonial and white supremacist project? But here it is important to note that many evangelicals of color are asking the very same question and organizing based on this as an open question. An example can be found in the conference statement for the upcoming *Liberating Evangelicalism: Decentering Whiteness* conference (Chicago, September 2019):

Christian evangelicalism, particularly of late, has often been equated with partisan politics and the faulty assumption that all evangelicals are white. *Liberating Evangelicalism* seeks to challenge this assumption by creating a space for a biblically-based, people of color centered movement that is open to all who seek to build a Jesus-centered vision for social justice.

We imagine a space where people of color are at the center rather than the margins of the conversation, a place to build visions of liberation and inclusion, and a place for belonging and community-building with peoples across diverse political and theological perspectives.

By “liberating evangelicalism,” however, this conference does not presume a particular attachment to Christian evangelicalism.

Some may seek to reclaim the term “evangelical” while others, suspicious of its history and contemporary expression, intend to jettison it from their faith identity altogether. We seek to create a space that allows for diverse engagements with biblically-rooted faith traditions. In building this space, this gathering also does not presume any particular theological or political perspectives. (*Liberating Evangelicalism*, 2019)

Thus, what is at stake is not so much the rehabilitation of the term “evangelical” but an engagement with organizing centered on people of color in support of an anti-white supremacist, patriarchal, and colonial Christianity among conservative constituents, who are not generally being reached by traditional left-wing organizations. This organizing is in many ways distinct from the histories of more white-dominated progressive evangelical organizing because it does not claim to replace a “bad” conservative evangelicalism with a “good” progressive evangelicalism but instead calls for a theological and political enterprise based on uncertainty. It suggests that the process of decolonizing Christianity may result in something that we might not even be able to recognize currently. And as many in this move-

ment have suggested, some of these terms like “evangelical” may or may not survive the process of decolonization. It coalesces around a commitment to an open-ended theological praxis and process rather than a commitment to a bounded-set of theological and political principles. Or, to quote Daniel J. Camacho, it resists the politics of theological stop-and-frisk.

By evangelical theology centered on people of color, I mean a certain political and theological project that is not simply identity-based but signifies what Chanequa Walker-Barnes describes as a commitment to an intersectional theological and political engagement across sites of racialization and oppression. Just as critical ethnic studies emerges out of the field of African American/Black studies, Native American studies, Chicano/Latino studies, Asian American studies, and Arab American studies but is not reducible to the sum of them, evangelicalism centered on people of color emerges out of and overlaps with Black evangelicalism, Latino/Hispanic evangelicalism, Indigenous evangelicalism, and Asian American evangelicalism without being reducible to them. Certainly, many evangelicals of color do not have such theological or political commitments. Yet evangelicalism centered on people of color, would not exist without the work of more conservative evangelicals of color who might not identify with this movement, that is done in organizations like the National Black Evangelical Association, CHIEF (Christian Hope Indian Eskimo Fellowship), the National Hispanic Leadership Conference, and many others, as well as work done through independent ministries and racially or ethnically based denominations and churches. In addition, many people who are part of this movement might not completely identify with the term “evangelical.” Currently, for instance, many adopt the term “evangelical adjacent.” However, as noted, I am using the term “evangelical” to signify a discursive community rather than a bounded community based on clear doctrinal principles or sociological characteristics. Essentially, then, this project invites a shift from a (presumed white) definitional understanding of “evangelicalism” to an ethical (a.k.a. centered on people of color) understanding of “evangelicalism.” “Ethical” means something quite specific. It means “people of color” as theoreticians qua practitioners of “evangelicalism.” “People of color” indexes an ethical swerve “in the break” of something that has gone under the name “evangelicalism.”³

The theologizing and organizing done through evangelicalism centered on people of color is important, this book contends, not just because it demonstrates the possibilities of mobilizing through a critical ethnic studies lens in an unexpected place, but also because it is instructive for racial

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justice mobilizing among ethnic studies scholars in the academy. That is, as elaborated further in chapter 6, the presence of people of color within the academy or the presence of ethnic studies in the academy is often presumed to be an unquestioned good, because the colonial, capitalist, and white supremacist structure of the academy goes unremarked. However, organizing of evangelicals of color is necessarily forced to reckon with the colonial and racist structure of Christianity itself even as it tries to center the voices of people of color within evangelicalism. It must necessarily go beyond arguing for “inclusion” within evangelicalism to calling for the transformation of evangelicalism itself. Such organizing efforts are instructive to all racial justice organizing that seeks to go beyond inclusion to transformation.

In that sense, like *Native Americans and the Christian Right*, this project is thus ultimately an anticolonial project that seeks to unsettle the presumptions behind the whiteness of evangelicalism by asking what is left of evangelicalism if it is divested from whiteness. Just as Native feminist theorists have asked for American studies without the presumption of something called “America” (A. Smith and J. K. Kauanui, 2008), so too this project does not presume the end goal of evangelical organizing centered on people of color because it recognizes that whiteness has constructed what is conceived to be religion, theology, and politics (P. Metzger, 2013). In not presuming an endpoint, this project also presumes that “secularism” is equally invested in whiteness and is not the default framework from which radical politics should emerge (Mahmood, 2011). If, as Frederick Moten, Denise Da Silva, and Alexander Weheliye have observed, whiteness has constructed the human, whiteness has also constructed theologies, discourses, and political frameworks for explaining the human: hence nothing can be taken for granted.

It is a mistake to dismiss movements such as racial reconciliation under the premise that anything seeming to support progressive politics within evangelicalism is necessarily an evil plot to co-opt progressive movements. First, the changes within evangelicalism to support racial justice struggles were the result of hard-fought battles by evangelicals of color in particular. Their often invisible organizing behind the scenes as well as their willingness to engage the work of critical ethnic studies scholars/organizers outside of evangelicalism provided an entry point for white evangelicals to become informed by critical ethnic studies analyses. Their work has dramatically changed the parameters of evangelical discussions on race, gender, imperialism, and colonialism within a relatively short period. In fact, many evangelicals are also interested in supporting global justice move-

ments. It does not help our movements if we politically isolate entire communities of people through a refusal to engage with those who either are interested in social justice or might be interested if they had the opportunity to be engaged with different conversation partners. Ultimately, mass movements for social change cannot be built if we are unwilling to talk with people with whom we disagree. The point, however, is not to express disagreement but to consider whether there are different possibilities for wrestling with political differences that can assist in building mass movements rather than in foreclosing possible alliances in the future. In progressive movements, splits often arise between those who claim that it is not “practical” to fully address white supremacy, settler colonialism, and so forth in campaigns for justice because it will alienate potential campaign partners. Consequently, certain groups get sacrificed in the name of political expediency. Meanwhile, those who refuse to compromise on these issues often remain content with the critique without then developing a plan for dismantling white supremacy. In some ways, it seems as though both groups agree that it is not possible to build a mass movement for radical change. Thus, the only alternatives are to build mass movements for liberal reform or to engage in sectarian advocacy for radical change. While not holding any answers, this book explores how peoples across religious divides are trying to rethink the way we do organizing and racial critique in order not just to have the correct opinion but actually to try to dismantle white supremacy. In doing so, it attempts to situate evangelicalism centered on people of color as a site for critical ethnic studies theory that has something to add to the project of critical ethnic studies.

The Historical Context for Racial Reconciliation in Christian Evangelicalism

Christian evangelicalism has often claimed to be a discourse based on biblical truth unimpeded by social and political context. Yet the history of evangelicalism demonstrates that white supremacy fundamentally shapes its discursive field such that whiteness becomes constitutive of evangelicalism. Consequently, as discussed later, antiracist organizing in Christian evangelicalism can pose a constitutive crisis for evangelicalism. Before analyzing this crisis, it is useful to detail how white supremacy has shaped Christian evangelicalism.

The history of evangelical complicity in white supremacy, be it slavery, racial segregation, or American Indian genocide, is well documented (Helt-

zel, 2009; Tinker, 1993; Tise, 1987). Indeed, part of the genesis of the racial reconciliation movement entailed evangelicals coming to terms with the fact that, as Ralph Reed, the former head of the Christian Coalition, admitted, “[the] white evangelical church carries a shameful legacy of racism” (R. Reed, 1996, 65). Of course, Christian evangelicals also engaged in antislavery and racial justice struggles, but this was a minority compared to those who used religion to defend racial hierarchies. In addition, revival movements within Christian evangelicalism often began racially integrated. However, these movements often eventually went the way of racial segregation. For instance, although Azusa Street, considered to be a birthplace of modern Pentecostalism, was racially integrated when it began in 1906, it became segregated within a decade. Charles Parham, called by some “the father of American Pentecostalism,” endorsed the Ku Klux Klan in the early 1900s (J. L. Grady, 1994).

More recently, the rise of the Christian Right generally highlighted not only changing gender and sexual politics as one of the movement’s rallying points but also racial politics as a major, if often unacknowledged, organizing principle.⁴ For instance, commentators often look to the rise of the Moral Majority and the new Christian Right as a reaction against feminism. But when asked why the New Religious Political Right was gaining in popularity at this point in time (1982), Jerry Falwell stated *three* reasons: the *Brown v. Board* decision (1954), the decision banning school prayer (1962), and *Roe v. Wade* (1973) (Rosenberg, 1984, 84). Similarly, the Christian homeschooling movement was as much a reaction against school desegregation as it was a reaction against permissive sexual mores being taught in public schools.

Some evangelicals did speak out against racial segregation. As Peter Heltzel notes, Carl F. H. Henry, a central figure in the rise of neo-evangelicalism, spoke out against racial injustice (although he was not particularly politically active in this arena). At the same time, his ability to speak out on this issue while he was editor of *Christianity Today* (the flagship magazine emerging out of the neo-evangelical movement) was hindered by J. Howard Pew, who financed the magazine, and L. Nelson Bell, Billy Graham’s father-in-law and a member of the editorial board, both of whom supported segregation (Heltzel, 2009, 83).

Billy Graham, perhaps the father of neo-evangelicalism, exemplifies this complex relationship between the movement and race. On the one hand, he spoke out against racial segregation in the church two years before the *Brown* case was handed down. However, the manner in which he spoke out

gave tacit support for legal segregation: “There is no scriptural basis for segregation. It may be there are places where such is desirable to both races, but certainly not in the church” (Myra and Shelley, 2005, 58). Eventually, Graham did stop segregation in his services by cutting the dividing ropes at a Crusade in Chattanooga, Tennessee, in 1953, but he was hesitant about being too vocal because he did not want to offend his white audiences (Carnes, 2005e; Heltzel, 2009, 82–83). Graham then began to recruit Black preachers to encourage African American participation at his events: Howard Jones became the first Black preacher to join Graham’s Crusade in 1957 (Gilbreath, 1998b).

While Graham was not the strongest racial justice advocate, other Christian evangelical leaders were more blatantly racist. Jerry Falwell, for instance, was an admitted racist (M. Olasky, 2007c, 12) who denounced Martin Luther King Jr. in a 1965 sermon (T. George, 2007). He later apologized for this racism (although, as discussed later, he implicitly continued to support racial apartheid in South Africa). Similarly, W. A. Criswell, one of the architects of the fundamentalist takeover of the Southern Baptist Convention, similarly supported racial segregation until 1968, when he preached a sermon on “The Church of the Opened Door,” in which he declared: “I have come to the profound conclusion that to separate the body of Christ on the basis of skin pigmentation is unthinkable, unchristian, and unacceptable to God” (T. George, 2002b).

Throughout the 1970s, race continued to be a rallying point for the religious Right. When the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) revoked Bob Jones University’s tax-exempt status because it did not admit Black people, the university received widespread support from conservative Christians (and many liberal Christians as well) who felt that the IRS action was an infringement upon religious freedom. In deference to the Christian Right, Ronald Reagan promised to change IRS rules early in his presidency but later retreated. Although the Supreme Court finally heard the case and ruled against Bob Jones in 1983 (Capps, 1994), the IRS dropped its plans to revoke the tax-exempt status of other private schools that did not meet federal standards of racial integration.⁵ Curiously, when Ralph Reed discusses the Bob Jones fracas in *After the Revolution*, he omits the fact that the struggle was over racial segregation (R. Reed, 1990).

During the 1980s, the Moral Majority effectively mobilized its constituents to oppose legislation that would have reversed a number of Supreme Court decisions eroding civil rights. The Christian Right was also very active in supporting the South African government, arguing on many occa-

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sions that apartheid was an acceptable or even agreeable state of affairs. John Eidsmoe expressed his unconditional support of South African apartheid by claiming that “America must consider its own national security. Whatever its sins, South Africa has no designs of aggression against the United States. The Communist powers do” (Lienesch, 1993, 219). Pat Robertson, Jimmy Swaggart, and Jerry Falwell also strongly supported the white South African government (S. Diamond, 1989; Stafford, 1996). As Jerry Falwell stated: “It is despicable that President Reagan should be forced by a spineless Congress and a biased media into slapping the wrist of such a good friend as South Africa” (Spring, 1985a, 53).

It is perhaps not a surprise that, with such politics, evangelical organizations found themselves very racially segregated with high rates of segregation in evangelical journals, parachurch organizations, and colleges (Spring, 1985b; see also Lehmann, 1991, 54; June, 1996; Maxwell, 1993b; Reynolds, 1988; Sidey, 1990b; Tapia, 1997a, 55). In addition, the National Black Evangelical Association (NBEA), formed in 1963 (originally named the National Negro Evangelical Association), sharply critiqued the racism of white evangelicalism (Rah, 2016, 183). However, as Soong-Chan Rah’s germinal study on the NBEA notes, the more NBEA leaders such as Tom Skinner explicitly addressed racism within white evangelicalism, the more they were marginalized within white evangelical venues (Rah, 2016).

The Emergence of Racial Reconciliation

It is within this history of complicity in white supremacy that the evangelical racial reconciliation movement emerged in the 1990s. When Bill McCartney organized the first Promise Keepers (PK, an evangelical men’s organization) rally in 1991, he was troubled by the fact that the attendees were all white: “The Spirit of God clearly said to my spirit, ‘You can fill that stadium, but if men of other races aren’t here, I won’t be there, either.’” McCartney decided to make racial reconciliation one of the *top* priorities of Promise Keepers. During its prime, about one-third to one-half of the speakers at Promise Keepers rallies were men of color, and racial themes sounded throughout most if not all speeches. The journal *New Man*, which originally began as a Promise Keepers publication in 1994 but then went independent in 1997 (News Briefs, 1997), also focused on racial reconciliation and prominently featured articles by and about men of color. Over a dozen books on racial reconciliation were published in 1996 by evangelical publishers. Bill Anderson, president of the Christian Booksellers Association (CBA), directly attributes the increased visibility of African American au-

thors in CBA stores to Promise Keepers (Rabey, 1996, 60). Men of color were central to the group's organizational structure as well: R. Leslie Jr. looked into the Promise Keepers' Colorado headquarters and found that not only its board president but also 38 percent of its executive staff were men of color (Leslie, 1996). Promise Keepers then intensified its efforts by forming a "reconciliation division" with national strategic managers for each major racial group (Olsen 1997b, 67; Tapia, 1997b, 58–59). This sparked planning meetings for Latinx, Native American, and Asian American leaders in order to build toward its largest event, the national 1997 Stand in the Gap rally in Washington, D.C. (W. T. Whalin, 1997). These efforts increased the participation of men of color in Promise Keepers. For instance, while in general about 84 percent of the attendees at PK rallies were white, at the 1996 rally in New York City, one-third to one-half of the attendees were men of color (S. King, 1997).

In addition to Promise Keepers, the Los Angeles uprising in 1992 seems to have sparked an interest in racial reconciliation among white evangelicals. Articles contemplating the causes of racial strife and the need for reconciliation proliferated during the crisis and have persisted into the present. William Pannell's *The Coming Race Wars* was one of the first books of the racial reconciliation movement. Written in direct response to the L.A. riots, the book called on evangelicals to admit to their complicity in white racism and address the societal power imbalance between white and Black people. "There is brewing in the nation a full-scale war of people's groups against one another, and the issue is power. Powerless groups are beginning to realize that marginality in America is not about being *dumb*—it is about being *denied*" (Pannell, 1993, 87). Pannell stressed that multicultural evangelism was insufficient; rather, evangelical churches must address their abandonment of urban areas in pursuit of the suburban. He sarcastically noted that *Christianity Today* should change its name to *Suburban Christianity Today* (Pannell, 1993, 137). "The issue is not how Christian congregations might cooperate in an evangelistic strategy or church-growth crusade . . . when a whole city is up for grabs" (Pannell, 1993, 138). Later Pannell essentially criticized racial reconciliation for promoting multiculturalism instead of addressing white supremacy (Gilbreath, 1998a).

Another factor in the rising interest in racial reconciliation may have been the increased visibility, and acceptance, of white supremacist militia groups and the far-right Christian identity movement during this period. *Christianity Today* noted at the time that evangelical groups have traditionally been slow to denounce white supremacists (Stimson, 1986). But with the

increased incidents of militia violence and violence against abortion clinics in the 1990s, Joe Maxwell and Andrés Tapia argued that “evangelicals will be challenged in defining why they should not be confused with the militia movement” (Maxwell and Tapia, 1995, 45). Racial reconciliation became one strategy to separate “good” white evangelicals from “bad” white extremists.

In any case, evangelical Christian organizations everywhere began jumping onto the racial reconciliation bandwagon in the early 1990s. In 1995 the Southern Baptist Convention issued an apology for slavery and racism (T. Morgan, 1995b). The mostly white Pentecostal Fellowship of North America dissolved and reformed into the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America, with a 50-50 Black-white board (S. Strang, 1995, 110). The Dake Bible issued a revision and apology for suggesting that racial segregation was the law of the land in the commentaries (B. Bruce, 1998a). White conservative evangelical events came in the wake of the Promise Keepers’ organizing. Increasingly these events featured religiously conservative African Americans like Wellington Boone, Tony Evans, John Perkins, Star Parker, and Kay Cole James. Billy Graham began intensive recruitment of people of color for his Washington Crusade in 1986, his Atlanta Crusade in 1994, and his Minneapolis Crusade in 1996 (J. W. Kennedy, 1994; Olsen, 1996; Spring, 1986). The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in its 1994 reorganization announced that it would prioritize combating racism in the church and would initiate discussions with the National Black Evangelical Association to cultivate closer relationships (T. Morgan, 1994b).⁶ *Christianity Today* even went so far as to run a cover story supportive of evangelical Black nationalism (Zoba, 1996). A variety of reconciliation efforts developed to allow Christians to repent for sins such as slavery, American Indian genocide, racial exclusion acts that targeted Asian Americans, and so forth (Blair-Mitchell, 1997; Lawson, 1999; Little, 1997; News Briefs, 2008c). Interestingly, at a time when the larger society was retreating from the rhetoric of racial justice through rollbacks in affirmative action, backlash against multicultural education, and other factors, Christian evangelical leaders seemingly wholeheartedly embraced the imperative to address racism within their own ranks. Of course, the *way* they chose to address racism did not necessarily mirror the strategies or analyses employed by more radical racial justice movements. Yet, as discussed later, these attempts to address racism among a constituency that not only had not concerned itself with racism but often wholeheartedly supported it have had significant, and often unexpected, impacts not only on evangelicalism but on society as a whole.

Disillusionment Sets In

We do not want to down play the genuine conversion that has taken place among religious conservatives over the last few decades with regard to issues of race. Many have acknowledged and repented of their views of white racial superiority. Because of that, conscious racism has largely diminished in the conservative Christian community. However, we challenge conservatives to move beyond a simplistic definition of racism in order better to understand its insidious nature and the varied forms it takes. . . . Those who attempt to call attention to subtle expressions of racism are typically dismissed by conservatives as being “politically correct.” . . . We suspect that these same conservatives, who now hail Martin Luther King as a hero, three decades ago would have considered him “politically correct,” too, had the term been in vogue. (R. Frame and E. Tharpe, 1996, 160–61)

Many people *within* evangelicalism (as reflected in this quotation) were critical of racial reconciliation. At a meeting of the National Black Evangelical Association, for example, one participant asked Bill McCartney, “What is the Promise Keepers going to say about the anti-affirmative action atmosphere in this country? . . . What are the men in the stadiums this summer going to hear about that?” (Mortimer, n.d.). When asked how African Americans feel about Promise Keepers, Bennie Simmons replied that Blacks would join when Promise Keepers demonstrated willingness to invest money in inner-city businesses (Mortimer, n.d.). Simmons’s response was typical of the pragmatic attitude with which evangelicals of color (and white evangelicals as well) regarded racial reconciliation. Andy Crouch criticized racial reconciliation ministries for continuing to maintain leadership in white hands (Crouch, 2002; Wadsworth, 2014, loc. 3138). “Discussion of racial reconciliation is now in vogue,” states Ronald Potter of the Center for Urban Theological Studies, “but most discussions tend to be superficial and trite, reduced to ‘can’t we get along?’” (H. Lee, 1995). In *Christianity Today*’s institute on “The Myth of Racial Progress,” many African Americans expressed the belief that white evangelicals were concerned with racial reconciliation only in order to mobilize forces for their conservative agenda and were attempting to substitute personal transformation for a social response to racism (Tapia, 1993, 17). As one Latino pastor commented, racial reconciliation “is helping whites more than it is helping me right now” (Tapia, 1997a, 55).

Indeed, after the initial fervor behind the racial reconciliation move-

ment, the difficulty in effecting true reconciliation became apparent. Michael Emerson and Christian Smith's study on evangelical race relations in *Divided by Faith* concluded that racial reconciliation was largely unsuccessful, a conclusion that proved to be very disturbing to those involved in these programs. According to Emerson and Smith (2000), these failures have three causes:

(1) White evangelicals see racism on an individual rather than structural level. Consequently, they assume that legal equality provides true equal opportunity. If people of color do not measure up to white people on the political or economic level, it must be because they did not work hard enough.⁷

(2) White evangelicals have sporadic contact with people of color. According to Emerson and Smith (2000), having sporadic contact with people of color results in more racism than having no contact with people of color at all. The reason is that white evangelicals feel that their casual relationship with a person of color entitles them to their racist beliefs. Only sustained contact with people of color, particularly people of color who are in a position of authority, results in decreased racism among white evangelicals.

(3) Evangelical theology holds that simple conversion to Christianity is sufficient to address all problems related to race relations.

Emerson and Smith also found that only 60 percent of evangelicals had even heard of racial reconciliation (Emerson and Smith, 2000). At that point in history, even after racial reconciliation, only 8 percent of employees in large evangelical organizations were not white (Aikman, 2003). Of the participants in the 1996 Promise Keepers rallies (which focused specifically on racial reconciliation) who had complaints, 40 percent complained about the reconciliation theme (Emerson and Smith, 2000). Some typical complaints about Promise Keepers' efforts were published in *Christianity Today*: "Why should we all repent for racism as if the guilt of some were imputed to all. That can't be right, since clearly not all men (including both whites and blacks) who attend a PK rally are racists . . . PK should not be PC" (Letters to the Editor, 1998, 8).

Evangelical magazines began to document the stumbling blocks faced by Christians interested in reconciliation. *Christianity Today* held a forum in response to *Divided by Faith*. In general, the forum participants noted the importance of evangelicals going beyond individual reconciliation efforts to support efforts to end structural racism. Charles Lyons made an implicit critique of the Promise Keepers approach to racial reconciliation by complaining that white evangelical churches like to do very short-term programs in urban areas and then leave without building ongoing relation-

ships. Eugene Rivers criticized Promise Keepers for substituting “fundamentalist hugfests for the kind of deep, substantive dialogue that has a genuine impact on institutional decisions and public policy” (Gilbreath, 1998a). One of the responses to this forum corroborates the central problem identified by Emerson and Smith: that sporadic contact with people of color entrenches rather than diminishes racism among white evangelicals.

Like Fred Price, my favorite TV pastor, I really believe that the black community needs to take it upon itself to improve its own conditions. If that makes me a racist and means I’m hindering the healing, so be it. There comes a time in the life of well-meaning individual whites when we realize that whatever we do for the black condition, it really is not our problem and we cannot solve it. Therefore, the best and healthiest thing for us to do is to mind our own business. For myself, my business includes being friend and sister to the blacks, orientals, and Mideast-erners in my church. I can’t even tell you what the ratio of races is in our church. We don’t pay attention. Sometimes I have to stop and think about it before I can remember if a certain friend is black or white.
(Letters, 2000, 14)

Other articles spoke to the continuing difficulties in local racial reconciliation efforts (Andrescik, 2000a; A. Gaines, 1997; T. Morgan, 1996, 87; Zylstra, 2008). For instance, in 1994 a Pentecostal convocation known as the “Memphis Miracle” was designed to stir the spirit of repentance and reconciliation between Black and white churches. It was led by the Pentecostal Fellowship of North America, a historically all-white organization. At the climax of the event, Black and white pastors tearfully washed one another’s feet. Since then the Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches of North America (PCCNA) has been co-chaired by various Black and white leaders. On September 11, 2003, the organization adopted a position statement condemning racism in all its forms. In addition, leaders from ten denominations in Memphis formed a national organization called Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC) to commit to worship together. This new organization, however, was accused of fostering worshiping together as a “token gesture” toward addressing racism. Despite these accusations, CUIC thinks worshiping together is not just a “token gesture,” but pastors in Memphis concede that their efforts to integrate their churches have largely failed. One African American pastor, Brandon Porter, traces his failure to integrate his church to the fact that “whites are less willing to engage in cross-cultural re-

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PRESS

relationships. The whites who attend our ministry are either in an interracial marriage, are in our drug-and-alcohol ministry or are running for office” (Schweikert, 2004). The one “success story” is John Siebeling’s Life Church, which is still 80 percent white (Schweikert, 2004).

The Southern Baptist Convention became embroiled in controversy when it published a Vacation Bible School curriculum called *Far-Out Far East Rickshaw: Racing to the Son* in 2004. The curriculum centered on a children’s race through Japan and was replete with stereotypical imagery such as kimonos and chopsticks. Soong-Chan Rah, a prominent evangelical author on racial reconciliation issues, condemned it for its perpetuation of Asian stereotypes and published a website, “Reconsidering Rickshaw Rally,” to oppose it.⁸ He gathered 1,100 signatures in support of his cause within a month of publishing the website. The response of LifeWay (the Southern Baptist agency that published the curriculum) was that the director was “offended” by the charges because he is not racist. Southern Baptist ethicist Ben Mitchell at Trinity International University said that, while he did not think it was realistic for LifeWay to withdraw the curriculum, it should apologize. “For many people, it will either confirm their view of Southern Baptists as parochial and culturally naive at best, or it will make them suspicious of our commitment to racial justice and ethnic sensitivity” (Walker, 2004b). In the end, the Southern Baptist Convention ignored its complicity in anti-Asian racism. Not until 2013 (as discussed in greater detail later) did LifeWay acknowledge or apologize for Rickshaw Rally. And even when it apologized, it never acknowledged Rah’s contribution in bringing attention to the issue in the first place.

The Persistence of Racial Reconciliation

Despite these challenges, racial reconciliation continues, albeit in different forms. Promise Keepers, one of the leading organizations to spark this movement, has not maintained the same focus on addressing racism. The organization has gone through many ups and downs in its history, from bringing close to 100,000 men together at the 1997 Stand in the Gap rally to laying off its entire staff in 1998, to rebirthing itself and rehiring most of its staff soon thereafter, resulting in much less public prominence (Andrescik, 2003). Judging from my participation in the 2004 and 2005 Promise Keepers conferences, racial reconciliation, particularly racial reconciliation among non-African American men of color, figures significantly less prominently than it did in the late 1990s. And, as discussed later in this book, the issue

of racial reconciliation disappeared completely at the 2010 Colorado conference (the only one held that year), replaced by a focus on reconciliation with women, poor people, and Messianic Jews. In fact, McCartney even went so far as to suggest that Promise Keepers has already accomplished racial reconciliation (Horner, 2002).

However, other organizations, such as InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, a national campus-based evangelical parachurch organization, have filled this vacuum. As can be seen in InterVarsity's huge Urbana conferences, both race and gender reconciliation are major program emphases in terms of plenary speakers and issues discussed, workshop topics, and literature sold at the conference. *Christianity Today* interviewed staff members from InterVarsity to discuss how they managed to succeed in maintaining a focus on racial reconciliation when organizations such as Promise Keepers gave up. According to Jim Lundgren: "One thing that keeps predominantly white Christian organizations from continuing in this process is that when they start succeeding, they take a lot of flak. For a two- or three-year period it's really intense" (Neff, 2004a, 54). Other staff members agreed that organizing within InterVarsity was not a simple task. However, according to Jeanette Yep, the groundwork was laid even before the racial reconciliation movement began (Neff, 2004a). In June 1948 the organization resolved not to hold events at facilities discriminating against people of color. In the 1980s Yep chaired a taskforce that called on InterVarsity to make achieving racial diversity an explicit mandate, to create a new staff position for a vice-president of multiethnicity, and to tithe a portion of every dollar raised by staff workers to support multiethnic staff. To Yep's surprise, president Gordon MacDonald approved the proposal. Thirty-seven years ago, 4 percent of its staff and students were ethnic minorities. Today those percentages have grown to 16 percent (for staff) and 35 percent (for students), which compares favorably with the national average of 27 percent of all college students who identify themselves as people of color (Neff, 2004a). As discussed in fuller detail in the conclusion, InterVarsity ran into controversy during its 2015 conference when the speakers declared their support for Black Lives Matter.

Another importance arena for racial justice work is the Justice Conference. Originally headed by Ken Wytsma, this annual conference, which started in 2010, focuses on mobilizing evangelicals for social justice. In 2012 it was critiqued by a number of evangelicals of color for featuring almost exclusively white speakers. But in response to this critique Wytsma changed the agenda and more strongly incorporated by speakers of color as well as

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UNIVERSITY
PRESS

workshops that specifically addressed racial justice. As of 2015 Wytmsa no longer leads the Justice Conference, but the conferences continue to center on concerns about racial justice.

Of the various evangelical periodicals, *Charisma* has highlighted racial reconciliation the most consistently over time (S. Strang, 2015). Strang Publications (the publisher of *Charisma*) increased its employment of people of color from 5 percent to 25 percent in a Florida county where people of color represent only 9 percent of the population (Neff, 1997a). Passages such as the following are typical of its regular op-ed pieces supporting reconciliation:

We can no longer cluster in cliques surrounded only by those who happen to be like us. God never intended for His church to be divided into color quadrants. A homogen[e]ous church is an incomplete church, and no pastor or people should be satisfied with it. Will it be uncomfortable to embrace brothers and sisters of different backgrounds and ethnicities? Absolutely. But since when is the kingdom of God comfortable. (Doyley, 2009, 63)

Even *World* magazine (an evangelical magazine explicitly committed to conservative politics), which has generally avoided engagement with racial reconciliation, finally ran a special issue on race in 2001. Joel Belz admitted that prior to writing this forum he had never thought to talk to people about racism (J. Belz, 2001b). Focusing entirely on white-Black relationships, various conservative commentators were asked what they would like to see happen in 2063, a hundred years after Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech (M. Olasky, 2001d). The forum did acknowledge some continuing structural forms of racism, such as racism in law enforcement, even though it concluded that the United States is a great country if Black people such as Colin Powell are able to rise to power (Race in America: A Historical Timeline, 2001). Its predictions for the future were that capitalism would solve the problem of racism because "corporations [have] no choice but to hire the best and the brightest, whatever their ethnicity" (Taulbert, 2001). One article even implicitly supported some kind of program of national apologies and reparations (W. Plummer, 2001). Ironically, some commentators said that they hoped for an African American president (although Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Convention specified that he wanted only a Republican one) (Land, 2001; W. Plummer, 2001). As discussed later, this wish came true sooner than expected, putting these writers in the position

of demonstrating that their interest in a Black president was genuine only insofar as it remained an abstract ideal.

In addition, local efforts that received momentary national visibility through Promise Keepers and other similar organizations continue to persist in their attempts to address racism in Christian communities (E. Belz, 2009a; see also Bonham, 2003; A. Gaines, 2009a; P. Johnson, 2004; J. Kennedy, 2005; Moring, 2011). The Southern Baptist Convention has reported a significant increase in the number of its members that are African American churches since its apology for slavery in 1995 (Dean, 2012b). The SBC added 1,600 churches from the 1990s to total more than 2,700 by 2002. This total is more than the 1,800 congregations of the Progressive National Baptist Convention. After the apology, the SBC instituted an annual Racial Reconciliation Sunday, and made race relations the emphasis of its Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). Albert Mohler of Southern Baptist Seminary received the highest honor given by the Black Southern Baptist Denominational Network for his support of Black studies at the seminary. Finally, the SBC elected its first Black president on June 19, 2012 (A. Green, 2004). In June 2016 the SBC passed a resolution urging Christians to discontinue displays of the Confederate flag (J. Bruce, 2016).

As discussed in later chapters, a newer generation of evangelical thinkers and activists is taking racial reconciliation to a new level, focusing on racial justice as it intersects with all other forms of oppression. In doing so, evangelicals are increasingly integrating into broader social movements for racial justice that are in turn unsettling the constraints of evangelicalism itself.

Chapter Outline

This introduction provides a historical context for the history of the racial reconciliation movement within Christian evangelicalism. Chapter 1 examines the logics of evangelical “multiculturalism” promoted within racial reconciliation. That is, racial reconciliation tends to focus on multicultural representation rather than structural forms of white supremacy. The goal of racial reconciliation is generally framed as making white evangelical institutions more inclusive of people of color without actually fundamentally changing these institutions. Such approaches have been heavily critiqued within critical ethnic studies. At the same time, the efforts within Christian evangelicalism may also provide some important critiques of dismissals of multiculturalism. That is, racial reconciliation efforts dispute the notion

that white supremacy can easily accommodate multiculturalism. In fact, evangelicalism's efforts to incorporate multicultural voices has had the unintended consequence of challenging what defines Christian evangelicalism itself. Hence, after promoting racial reconciliation, many white evangelicals complain that inclusion has gone "too far." Thus, even seemingly innocuous attempts to incorporate the voices of people of color can have unintended radical implications.

Chapter 2 explores how the ramifications of the manner in which white evangelicals tend to frame race as a problem of "sin." On one hand, this paradigm generally individualizes race and obscures white supremacy as both an institutional and epistemological structuring system. At the same time, this paradigm implicitly recognizes what many critical race theorists have noted: that racism is a permanent part of the social fabric. The response to the recognition of the permanency of racism is to disengage from social movement struggles while remaining overly optimistic about the ability of evangelicalism to carve a space safe from racism. In addition, most racial reconciliation efforts tend to center white evangelicals as the subjects of reconciliation, with evangelicals of color as their objects. At the same time, some evangelicals of color in particular have been able to analyze white supremacy both as a system and as a personal sin that could be potentially helpful for all those seeking to address social and personal transformation simultaneously.

Decentering whiteness within the evangelical racial reconciliation movement allows us to explain the multiple logics of racialization as they appear within evangelicalism more carefully. Chapter 3 examines how white evangelicalism engages in multiple logics of race: anti-Blackness, people of color as mission field, indigenous disappearance, and so forth, in the service of Christian empire. In doing so, this chapter offers possibilities for how racial justice organizers within Christian evangelicalism might build different kinds of alliances among communities of color.

Chapter 4 examines the racial and biopolitical logic of the "persecuted Christians" movement. Arguably, Christian evangelicalism is a theological system that is fundamentally shaped by biopolitics. That is, through the doctrine of substitutory atonement, Jesus (or other populations put in the place of Jesus) must die so that Christians can live. In this chapter I examine how the Christian persecution movement racially differentiates which Christians should live and which should die. In particular, the persecution movement organizes in support of Third World Christians suffering persecution in the interest of purifying the Western church. At the same time, I

explore evangelical theologians who question the logics of this movement by rearticulating Christianity as a faith that does not treat death instrumentally. Echoing the work of Black studies scholars in particular, these evangelical theologians locate the moment of genocide as a place that questions the evangelical world order.

Within the rhetoric of “global persecution,” Islam looms particularly large. The perceived threat of Islam predates the events of September 11, 2001. Islam is particularly threatening to the Christian Right because it represents a direct challenge to both Christianization and Westernization. However, Islamophobia within the Christian Right has reached new heights since 9/11. Chapter 5 examines how Arabs and Muslims are racialized within white evangelical discourse, focusing particularly on how this racialization intersects with Christian Zionism. Evangelical ideologies also racialize Jewish people in complex ways in order to support Christian Zionist projects. On the one hand, Christian Zionism often becomes the structural limit to racial reconciliation. On the other hand, racial reconciliation has also paved the way for reformist impulses within Christian evangelicalism regarding Christian Zionism and evangelical-Arab and Muslim relations. At the same time, some of evangelical organizing efforts against Islamophobia question the presumption that the antidote to it is secularism. Because religion is racialized, Islamophobia is present in secular society. Meanwhile, many evangelicals have found a theological base for contesting both Islamophobia and Christian Zionism.

In Native studies, many scholars propose “decolonization” as a guiding principle for Native American scholarship and activism. This work generally presumes a non-Christian framework for decolonization, because the imposition of Christianity within Native communities is understood as part of the colonial process. But interestingly, some Native American evangelicals are reading the same works cited above and are also applying decolonization as a guiding principle for biblical faith. Chapter 6 focuses on one unexpected place for indigenous decolonization: Native evangelical leaders and organizations that circulate through the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies (NAIITS). This chapter further explores how this model of education can be informative for all scholars in considering how they may dismantle the educational system.

As mentioned previously, Emerson and Smith’s germinal study (2000) of racial reconciliation concluded that it was largely unsuccessful in changing evangelicalism. Chapter 7 explores a site that would seem to contradict that claim: the 2008 elections. On the one hand, these elections confirmed the

entrenched attitudes toward race described in Emerson and Smith's book. At the same time, they show how white evangelical efforts to court Black and Latinx evangelicals through racial reconciliation had the unintended consequence of white evangelical organizations being forced to shift their politics in order to effect racial unity, particularly on the issues of immigration and prison reform. This chapter further examines how this election cycle provided an opportunity for insurgent voices within evangelicalism to challenge more traditional Christian Right politics.

Chapter 8 examines the emergence of a women-of-color consciousness within Christian evangelicalism. Racial reconciliation and evangelical feminism have been two movements within Christian evangelicalism that have often had an orthogonal relationship with each other. Racial reconciliation has generally been male-dominated, and evangelical feminism has generally been white-dominated. Yet race and gender are inextricably linked in Christian Right discourse such that both racial reconciliation efforts and conservative evangelical women's organizing habitually target women of color as scapegoats for social, religious, and political problems. Within this context, women of color have increasingly begun to articulate an intersectional politics within Christian evangelicalism that calls not only for the inclusion of the voices of women of color within evangelicalism but for a broader framework for political and theological transformation altogether. By centering women of color evangelicals, a very different picture of the racial reconciliation movement emerges.

Finally, this book concludes with two pivotal moments in the racial reconciliation movement, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement and the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump. While previously white evangelicals could claim to be "color-blind" in response to racial reconciliation, this claim lost credibility in 2016. Even conservative evangelical organizations could no longer ignore institutionalized racism or white evangelicalism's investment in whiteness. The fact that Donald Trump was elected in no small part because four out of five white evangelicals voted for him despite his having virtually none of the credentials that white evangelicals previously claimed to be important for any presidential candidate would suggest that the racial reconciliation movement has been a complete failure. At the same time, this moment has both enraged and emboldened many justice-centered evangelicals, particularly evangelicals of color, to wrest evangelicalism from its white captivity and change it to something that we have yet to imagine.

Conclusion

According to Emerson and Smith's *Divided by Faith*, racial reconciliation has had virtually no impact on race relations within evangelical circles (Emerson and Smith, 2000). They make compelling arguments that the nature of evangelical discourse tends to promote an individualistic approach to racial justice issues—an approach that hinders real reconciliation. However, they fail to consider that racial reconciliation is also a relatively new phenomenon within the Christian Right. Many people of color might argue that actual racial equality comes very slowly, even in progressive organizations that have been working on racial justice for decades.⁹ Meanwhile, racial reconciliation in white evangelical circles faces the challenges of working with constituencies that often overtly support racial segregation, slavery, and genocide (A. Smith, 2008; Worthen, 2009). Therefore, it is not clear why we would expect racial reconciliation to alter racial attitudes among white evangelicals dramatically in such a short period. In fact, Emerson and Smith's book itself influenced many racial reconciliation activists to begin to emphasize structural racism in their analysis and reshape the way they approach politics (G. Yancey, 2006).

In addition, the impact of racial reconciliation has had ramifications beyond the personal attitudes about race held by evangelicals at any moment in time. Some of these attitudes may shift generationally and will not necessarily be apparent in a ten-year period. Furthermore, as this book discusses, race cannot be separated from a host of theological, political, and social issues. Consequently, racial reconciliation may have an impact on discourses that do not appear at first glance to be directly related to race. Because evangelicalism has been constituted through whiteness, racial reconciliation does more than engage racial attitudes: it puts questions on the table about the fundamental nature of evangelicalism itself. These questions in turn have shaped evangelical discourse around everything from Christian Zionism to global politics to gender/sexuality politics. The destabilization of the category of “evangelical” itself provides possible spaces for intervention for those who are interested in building new coalitions for progressive politics. This book, then, builds on the work of Emerson and Smith by focusing not so much on individual attitudes about race within evangelical communities but on the political ramifications and possibilities that are emerging and might emerge as a result of this movement.

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NOTES

Introduction

1. I use the word “evangelical” to refer to Protestants who generally subscribe to the five fundamentals of faith that have served as a rallying points for evangelicalism: biblical inerrancy, the deity of Christ, substitutionary atonement, bodily resurrection, and the second coming of Christ. This definition centers on the neo-evangelical movement that emerged out of Christian fundamentalism in the 1950s but also includes Pentecostals and groups that do not trace their roots to the fundamentalist/modernist debates of the 1920s. I do not include here the more explicitly racist Christian movements, such as Christian Identity groups. I use the term “evangelical” to signify a discursive community rather than a bounded community based on clear doctrinal principles. Thus, some peoples within this discursive community might not always use the term “evangelical” themselves but nonetheless remain part of the ongoing conversations that emerge from Christian evangelicalism. For a more extensive mapping of how I define “evangelical,” see my previous work (A. Smith, 2008).

2. As Robert P. Jones notes, the white evangelical vote for Trump in the general election was not distinguishable from its votes in any other presidential election since 1984. White evangelicals vote for Republicans regardless of the religious affinity of the candidate. But, as he notes,

white people in general tend to vote Republican, so race is more significant than religion in terms of voting patterns. However, the question arises, given the critique of Donald Trump by evangelicals for his support of Planned Parenthood, his previous pro-choice positions, and his ambivalent position on gay marriage (Camosy, 2016; Gremore, 2016), why was he favored by evangelicals over other Republican candidates in the primaries who had more solidly traditional Christian Right positions on these issues? Jones contends that white evangelicals are more likely explicitly to support a white racial nostalgia, which Trump explicitly campaigned around (R. P. Jones, 2018).

3. Thank you to J. Kameron Carter for this articulation.

4. Historically, commentators on the Christian Right have often minimized the importance of race as an organizing principle for its genesis. An early exception was Ellen Rosenberg (1984). Almost two decades later after Rosenberg’s book, other scholars began to address race in their analysis of the Christian Right (Burlein, 2002; Kintz, 1997; A. Smith, 1999). Newer works are now centering a race analysis. Peter Heltzel’s work is a key text in this area (Heltzel, 2009). See also Balmer, 2014.

5. Bob Jones University dropped its ban on interracial dating on May 3, 2000, claiming that it “had become an obstacle” (News Service Briefs, 2002, 34).

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6. Talks between the NAE and the NBEA broke down in 1992 because the NBEA felt that the NAE's rhetoric of racial reconciliation was not matched by its deeds. "[The NAE] holds itself as white first and Christian second," stated William Bentley, president of the NBEA. "White supremacy—they would shrink from being called that. But they practice it. They practice it like white people" (Bray, 1992). The NAE continued with its racial reconciliation efforts, however, distributing a seven-point racial reconciliation packet to clergy and inviting the NBEA and the Hispanics to meet in 1996 (J. Kennedy, 1996, 101). In January 2003 leaders from both organizations met to hold have a joint summit for the NAE and NBEA, to emerge with common strategies. Don Argue, former leader of NAE, stated: that "racism and reconciliation are not on the radar screen of most white evangelicals, because we don't deal with it daily. . . . Racism is always on the agenda at black evangelical meetings because they deal with it every day" (J. Kennedy, 2002, 18).

7. This finding was contradicted by the follow-up study of Nancy Wadsworth, who concludes that all evangelicals regardless of race tend to assess race on an individual rather than a structural level (Wadsworth, 2014, loc. 3249). Robert P. Jones, by contrast, found that the exception to the tendency for evangelicals to ignore structural racism is among African American evangelicals (R. P. Jones, 2016).

8. Reconsidering Rickshaw Rally (December 8, 2018), at <http://www.geocities.ws/reconsideringrickshawrally/>.

9. Nancy Wadsworth in her follow-up study on the racial reconciliation movement documents that at least evangelical elites took Emerson and Smith's arguments to heart. Her focus, however, is on the development of multiethnic minis-

tries as a response to this critique (Wadsworth, 2014).

Chapter 1

1. But Herndon does address power differentials between white and Black churches by arguing that white people need to stop thinking of Black churches as mission churches and understand them as partner churches (Mission Mississippi, n.d.).

2. Much internal critique of Christian America also shapes evangelical discourse (A. Smith, 2008). For further examples since the publication of that book, see K. Miller, 1997a; S. Carter, 2006; Cheaney, 2005a; Olsen, 2005; C. Thomas, 1999.

3. See "Mars Hill Bible Church," n.d., <https://marshill.org/>.

Chapter 2

1. Richard Twiss, personal communication, January 4, 2013.

2. See also A. Gaines, 2000; Maxwell, 1997; McKissic, 2008; Stetson, 1997, 34.

3. See also Boone, 1996, 85; Kantzer, 1989; S. Lee, 2014; M. Olasky, 2004d; Veith, 2006a.

4. See, for example, R. Cooper, 1995; Dawson, 1994; Neff, 2002; P. B. Powell, 2000; Rice, 2002; S. Strang, 1998c; Walker, 1998c, 2008b; Washington and Kehrein, 1993; G. Yancey, 1996 This trend is still prevalent within evangelical circles. See Gray, 2015.

5. One *World* article did say that Katrina demonstrates some need for government spending. "Too many [Republicans] act as if poverty doesn't exist" (Abraham, 2005a, 26). Regarding similar responses to Haiti and other disasters, see Alford, 2005a, 2006c, 2006f; S. P. Bailey, 2010a; J. Belz, 2005b, 2005e; Bergin, 2006c; Carnes, 2005b; Carnes and Moll, 2005; Christianity Today, 2005; Courbat, 2011; Cushman, 2005; Daigle, 2005a;

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