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The Power of Story: Toward Dismantling Racism

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ABSTRACT

The traditional narrative of America is one that upholds Whiteness and reinforces a society built on a system of advantages based on race. The particular blueprint for narration of self and experience that I posit in this project stands in opposition that dominant narrative as I advocate instead for the flourishing of people of color through narration of self. I propose a call to people of color that we *counteract and dismantle our racist system by telling our stories.* In this project, I explore four theologians from the perspective of storytelling and memory: Father Robert Schreiter, Stephen Crites, Miroslav Volf and Willie James Jennings. Together their works allow us to shape a theology of memory— a theology necessary for the embodied praxis of storytelling. I propose a storytelling model that encompasses three pillars: 1) the articulation of one's story as told by others, 2) to research one's story, and 3) the telling of it. This particular model serves as an entry point into race discourse in a racialized society and is therefore vital in forging a new future that respects difference and diversity.

Introduction

One of my earliest memories is of a conversation I had with my mom. I was in the third grade and had returned from a long day of school. We lived about a mile from my school, which meant my commute home was short but long enough to convince myself that I had to have a serious conversation with my mom. I don't remember what occurred that day while in school, but I felt a sense of profound tension. I did not have the vocabulary in my repertoire to name the tension per se but the magnitude of the tension was deeply felt and I sensed the urgency. The particular tension I befriended signaled a years-long struggle I had carried. It was an internal battle I had with my name, *May Tag*. It lingered until I walked through the doors that day. I swung the front door open and as if on cue, my backpack slid off of my shoulders and plopped onto the ground. I took my shoes off, as the good submissive Asian daughter my mom had raised me to be. With my socks still on my feet, I stomped my way through the house to locate her. I panted my way through our home and quickly found my mom in her room. Somewhat out of breath, with the little authority I thought I possessed, I asked firmly, "Niam, kuv hloov puas tau kuv lub npe?!" (Mom, can I change my name?!) With a bit of sass, she immediately replied "Yog vim li cas" (How come?).

I wrestled with my name for quite a while for several reasons. I attended a primary Black and Latino elementary school. Names I encountered were: Erika, Tiffany, Maria, and Stephanie. These particular monikers belonged to my peers and I secretly envied how effortlessly they flowed out of the teacher's mouth during roll call. Another reason I had difficulty embracing my birth name at age nine was how easily teachers and

peers would mispronounce it. Instead of *May* Tag, it became *Mai* Tag. A simple, unattended, letter change changed the name entirely. In addition to this, peers and teachers would default to a shortened moniker. They would continually refer me to *May* even after my brief introduction where I voiced my preference for *May Tag*. These slight changes, though unheeded, perpetuated the tension I had developed for my name.

In hindsight, mainstream media deeply informed the discomfort I had with my ethnic identity, particularly my name. I grew up in the nineties and the lack of Asian representation perpetuated the shame I had developed around my identity. As an impressionable kid, I found myself indulged in popular TV shows such as *Full House.* In attempts to make sense of my identity, I sought *Full House* to construct my sense of self. Contrastingly, in *Full House*, the youngest daughter's name was Michelle. After watching several episodes, I internalized the character and her name. I wanted to be her. I must become her and the quickest way I knew was to consider a name change. In my conversation with my mom, I suggested Michelle because it was easier for my teacher to pronounce. In actuality, I believed *Michelle* was normal and I wanted a *normal* name. Every fiber of my nine-year-old identity wanted nothing more than to be normal because normal (in other words, Whiteness) was portrayed in media. Thus, my birth name, May Tag, signaled difference—as perpetuated by media, peers and my teacher.

This particular dissonance with my name began to shape a type of tethered identity. My identity exploration did not disentangled me from the body I occupied. To the world, I was still Hmong despite my disassociation with my ethnic identity and name. Contrastingly, a phenomenon of sort takes place and stories like these, and their complex

nature, turns into memory. As such, I mention this particular story from my childhood because it is the earliest *memory* I have—a memory that highlights the complexity of my identity development in the midst of a racialized society. This particular memory has profoundly shaped and informed my understanding of my narrative when understood in the context of society's narrative—a presupposition played out in myriad ways.

My grasp of memory and the role it plays in identity development began to come into focus through the writings of Father Robert Schreiter, a contemporary theologian and priest. Thus, much of my theology of memory has been informed by his work and his critiques on memory is referenced throughout this paper. In his book, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry In A Changing Social Order*, Schreiter argued:

> "Memory is the principal repository of our own identity. We *turn* to memory to know who we have been both as an individuals and as a people. We *add* to memory as we gain experience and insight; we *adjust* our memories in light of those same experiences and insight. Loss of memory is loss of identity"[1] (emphasis added).

For the author, memory shapes the stories we tell ourselves. Thus, we draw from memory to construct our identity and these memories play a profound role on our individual and collective identities. W*e turn to memory, our narrative, to know ourselves—memory is intrinsically linked to our sense of self.* We add to the memory as we gain new insight through our lived experiences. Equally as important, we adjust these memories and stories in light of our particular experiences and positionality. Therefore, to conceal our story is to let our story perish. As such, it is apropos to argue loss of memory, that is, loss of story is loss of identity.

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[1] Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Orbis Books, New York, 1992), 38.

Context

Through precisely this argument I developed an appreciation of stories and the particularity they hold in our collective understanding of our world views; this I write specifically to people of color. I write to my sisters and brothers of color because I know the value your story has within the larger narrative. Your story is important and must be shared because it speaks of *difference*. This difference points to the Creator and his purpose for the world. In Genesis 2, God created male and female. Two very different individuals composed of their own particularities. The very act of creating male and female was purposeful and is a creation that perfectly reflect his image. Male and female, majestic and mysterious though a necessary creation for His Kingdom. The creation of male and female signal the Creator's intention for difference—something to be embraced. As male and female[2] reflect the image of God, so too do our individual stories. Each story is a meaningful brushstroke of God's grand masterpiece. As such, our stories are to be shared because they speak of a thoughtful God.

Story of America

The story America has cultivated is a story that upholds Whiteness, a society with a system of advantages based on race[3] as the infrastructure. This particular blueprint, stands in opposition to the flourishing of people of color. Furthermore, people of color must counteract and *dismantle our racist system by telling our stories*—stories that are

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[2] Though I used the terms, *male* and *female*, I am not affirming these identities as absolute. I am aware of individuals who do not necessarily identify with these binary terms. I understand these terms to point to the beauty and complexity of God's creation. Thus, I do not affirm male and female as absolute identifiers.

[3] Beverly Tatum, *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria* (Basic Books, New York, 2017) 87.

not for America's taking. Your story is yours to tell and ought to be expressed and articulated in such a way that honor your lived experiences. Therefore, your narrative ought to be narrated by you. When our story is shared, we began to dismantle the lie that says our stories and bodies are properties to be sold and commodified. The quest for a redeeming story begins with the articulation and expression of your particular story. The particularity of your narrative of grief, love, loss, joy, and so forth counteracts the larger story that negates your voice. Thus, your story is important and is part of God's grand tapestry. In addition to this, to withhold your story is to perpetuate our system of advantages based on race. To withhold your story and the richness and particularities therein, is to passively participate in a racist society.

As I write this, Stephon Clark, an unarmed Black man in Sacramento, has died from shots fired by two police officers. This death, the death of yet another Black body, speaks of the racial tension that defines our political climate. Prior to Clark, a host of other deaths of unarmed Black men and women occurred: Terence Crutcher, Philando Castile and Sandra Bland. The list is more than I can count on two hands. The sheer violence against unarmed Black men and women is alarming. My heart is heavy for the families of the victims and the lack of accountability of our justice system. I yearn for a sustainable solution. A creative solution to a complex and long history of police brutality against the Black community—and all communities of color, for that matter. I desire a solution that will maintain the dignity of each of our stories in the Kingdom of God while dismantling systems of oppression and racism.[4]

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[4] Here, I am arguing police brutality against the black community is racist. Thus, it propagates a racial profiling tactic employed by police departments.

According to Mapping Police Violence's website,[5] police have killed 1,146 people in 2017. Of these, 25% were Black victims.[6] In addition to this, Blacks are three times more likely to be killed by police than White people.[7] These statistics are disturbing. They speak of our racist policies[8] that target Black and Brown communities. As a follower of Christ, I cannot encounter these statistics and not carry the burden of these deaths with me. I follow a Creator who deeply values life and when one is taken, such as lives of Black and Brown bodies, I have to question why these alarming statistics persist. Why do we have policies that specifically target certain people groups? In my seminary endeavors, I have found that it is because we've created a "system of advantages based on race."[9] That is, we created and continue to perpetuate a system to the advantages that works in the favor of Whites to the detriment of people of color.[10] It is in this understanding of racism, as elaborated by author and psychologist Beverly Tatum that we can say we have a racist society.[11] A brief analysis of our American history confirms this. For example, the discovery of the Americas was made possible by the taking of land from the Native community, claiming it as ours. And the enactment of slavery, which was the

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[5] https://mappingpoliceviolence.org

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] For example, the way housing is zoned and the allocation of educational funds are prime examples of systemic racism. These are hurdles Black and Brown bodies are challenged with.

[9] In her publication *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria,* author Beverly Tatum borrows this definition from another scholar. She offers her analysis on why she agrees with this particular definition. For more, please refer to page 87 of her publication.

[10] Tatum, *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria*, 87.

[11] It is also a racial scale that categorize and prioritizes Whites above all other ethnicities. I explain the concept of a racial scale in greater detail in the section "Stories that Shape Us" below.

taking Black bodies and institutionalizing them as a property to be owned.[12] In my brief examination of our history I see the overt racism that our nation was built on.[13] It is no wonder Black and Brown lives continue to be disregarded.

My Story - The Hmong Storytelling Model

In Southeast Asian community, storytelling is vital in our narrative and deeply embedded into our culture. Storytelling was our way of communicating our historicity, culture, traditions and social norms—it was often passed down from generation to generation. It was a tool my parents embodied and their implementation of storytelling and narrating their lived experience in Laos informed my ethnic identity profoundly—it oriented me toward my cultural roots. Additionally, hearing stories of my parent's upbringing signaled a connection to them and our culture as a whole. Through story I developed a connection to the Hmong people and a sense of liberation in the face of a racialized society. Hearing my parent's immigration story validated the necessity of connecting to one's history. As such, my parent's story became my story. Therefore, when I share my story, I often begin by articulating my parent's journey to America. My story was only possible because of theirs. My parents' story *is* my story. How I articulate and understand my story in the grand scheme of things speaks volumes. Once I saw this particular intersection, that is, my story is their story and vice versa, I began to narrate my

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[12] For more on the history of America, construction of race and the notion of America's Exceptionalism read Kelly Brown Doughlas' book, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and The Justice of God*. She provides an analysis of race and traces back to the notion of American Exceptionalism, arguing for the degradation of black body.

[13] Author Kelly Brown Douglas argued in *Stand Your Ground*: "the grand narrative is the story of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism. The narrative of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism *is* America's exceptionalism" (Douglas, *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*,15). Again, the connection she proposes is the historicity of the construction of race. Whiteness is rooted in America exceptionalism which has deep roots in Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism.

story more often. Simply put, I was empowered to see my story as a tool to dismantle racism. Thus, every time I tell my story, I am strengthening mine and my family's memory.[14]

My mom would often recall her earliest memory, of her childhood in Laos, with me. It was her way of sharing a piece of her identity with me. For as long as I can remember, her farming lifestyle in a remote village always made it into our mundane routine. She would be teaching me to cross stitch and we'd found ourselves deep in conversation about her home life in Southeast Asia. She shared proudly whenever I inquired—and this was often because I was fascinated with a country life. When I was old enough, I began to piece all her stories together. My dad was a ladies man but choose my mom after their parents' encouraged the relationship. They married young, gave birth to my sister and soon after, The Secret War was in full swing. Their lives were threatened and they sought asylum. Immediately they were stationed at a refugee camp in Thailand and were granted immigration status. They immigrated into California in the early 1980's, leaving behind their families and home.

When I think about these storytelling memories of my mom, there were a couple of things always present: first, a *posture of imagining* what life was like, to be her in her native land. I found myself engulfed by her stories and it did not take much to lean into her particularities; her classmates, teachers, pets she owned, her siblings, markets she strolled through for groceries. Who can blame me? I was an inner city, ninety's kid attempting to grasp life outside the hustle and bustle of a city life. The second thing

[14] To Schreiter's point: "Memory is another means of keeping connected to our own narrative." (Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 35).

present, she willingly enlightened me with her narrative. She *told* her story. She let me into her narrative though I never step foot into the soils of our ancestors. Third, *stories were always in company with another activity*; steaming rice, cross stitching, laundry, etc. Her stories were narrated while we worked on a project together. Therefore, much of her narration was participatory. As such, I could always count on hearing a new story when I steamed rice. Interestingly, the mundane task of steaming rice became more than just preparing rice; it was a dynamic process. Her story sharing accompanied household chores and projects. Her story always strengthened and deepened my outlook on the boring tasks I had to complete. These three things are markers of the Hmong storytelling model.[15] A model that shaped my understanding and validates the importance of narrative. In addition to this, this particular way of storytelling informed and shaped my ethnic identity development. Thus, my ethnic identity is intrinsically tied to these particularities; Hmong storytelling model *and* my parent's story.

What follows are three sections: 1) memory, 2) stories that shape us and a 3) model of telling your story. In the first two sections, I make the case for the culmination and curation of a theology of memory create a particular model for storytelling, for people of color as a way to dismantle racism. Thus, section three highlights the praxis of telling your story.

[15] For more on the intersections of story, culture and identity, read *Hmong and American: From Refugees to Citizens* by Vincent K. Her and Mary Louise Buley-Meissner. This publication has several authors who write on a variety of topics relating to Hmong, culture and identity using storytelling as the mode to communicate these intersections.

I) Memory

For this section on memory, I will draw upon the work of three theologians: Father Robert Schreiter, Stephen Crites and Miroslav Volf. As you will see below, I briefly analyze each of their respective works and make the distinct connection to my argument for the praxis of storytelling. Each theologian addresses memory from different angles, though the overarching consensus can be made: *the formation of memory is imperative in shaping our identity development and memory is intrinsically tied to our sense of self.* As I tease out their respective arguments, it will hopefully be clear that memory and storytelling are two sides of the same coin.

Father Robert Schreiter

Father Robert Schreiter is a systematic theologian who writes to Christians and the Church. His work is rooted in theology and Christian Scripture. Most notably, Schreiter's work highlights the intersection of faith and culture which fuel his work of reconciliation. Much of his efforts involve helping societies heal from their divisions after long periods of conflict through reconstruction.[16] For Schreiter, the vocabulary he employs are: victim/offender and violence/suffering. It is important for readers to note this because his work is descriptive. In the sense that he articulates the impact of societies torn by wars creating instability in a society which fuels racial inequity. Again, the theme in much of his work is narrative, the stories we tell and stories being told to us in terms of injustice provide a great deal of insight to how we can remedy racism. Building upon this, Schreiter posits, "violence tries to destroy the narratives that sustain people's

[16] http://faculty.ctu.edu/robert-schreiter/#1505148396471-1caa0b9a-1b8e042d-820c

identities and substitute narratives of its own."[17] This can also be referred to as the "narrative of the lie." Here, Schreiter believes violence takes on many forms, from physical, oppression—that is withholding resources—to and psychic domination, and is destructive to individuals and communities. Drawing upon the work of anthropologist, Rene Girard, Schreiter believes violent "acts lie at the formation of every culture or society. That violence explains why every society is inherently unstable and why societies resort to violence as a way of dealing with conflict."[18] It is with this understanding that Schreiter is a firm believer violence is "an attack on our sense of safety and selfhood."[19] As such, violence is the destroyer of narrative and attempts to replace it with a narrative of its own. Thus, "narrative of the lie" is disruptive in nature and must be dismantled.

In sum, the angle Schreiter takes is that of conflicts and war. I have found his particular contextualized approach helpful in framing race discourse. Building upon this, the intent of the *narrative of the lie* is to "negate the truth of a people's own narrative."[20] It seeks to destroy the narrative of the victim in the pursuit of elevating the narrative of the oppressor's. As such, our identity, which is tied and link to narrative, is at stake. When we succumb to the narrative of the lie, we alter our identity and we submit to the will of the oppressor's. In addition, the narrative of the lie is rooted in maintaining violent control—eventually, the lie will "become" the truth.[21] With Schrieter's analysis of the narrative of the lie, it is appropriate societies discover and embrace a redeeming narrative

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[17] Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 34.
[18] Ibid., 31.
[19] Ibid., 32.
[20] Ibid., 34.
[21] Ibid., 35.

as a form of liberation to break from the lie's seductive and cunning power.[22] As such, a redeeming narrative is rooted in *orthopathema*; a right way to suffer.[23] The way to right suffering is to work through it. That is, acknowledging the violence perpetuated onto the individual. Practically speaking, it is to lament and cry out against the violence. In other terms, to name the pain in order to increase our awareness of our helplessness as a means to "accept other narratives to counteract the narrative of the lie."[24] Thus, a right way to suffer, *orthopathema,* is the act of trusting in a redeeming narrative that involves regaining our humanity.[25] All in all, violence seeks to rid us of our humanity and it is vital to be attuned to the nature of the narrative of the lie as a means of resistance and in order to remedy it. For Schreiter, the quest of a redeeming narrative is the quest to reinstate our humanity.

Schreiter's critique is helpful in that he seeks to give power back to those who have been marginalized and oppressed. For the author, power is equally as in the possession of the victimized as it is in the oppressor. Power is present in all individuals and society. This is vital because much of his theological endeavors create the space for the victim while other scholars negate the role of the victim—perpetuating the narrative of the lie substantiated by the oppressor. Contrastingly, a shortcoming of Schreiter's analysis has to do with the individuality perspective he employed. He championed individuals to reclaim their narrative as a way to counteract the narrative of the lie, though there is no mention of how this can be done in and through community. Thus, the

[22]Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 36.

[23] Ibid., 37.

[24] Ibid.

[25] Ibid.

role of community is neglected in his critique. The process of reclaiming ones narrative is above all a dynamic one that requires community. The necessity and interdependence of community is not explicitly named in this reclaiming process, though maybe it was implied.

Stephen Crites

Theologian Stephen Crites writes in his article, "The Narrative Quality of Experience*,"* the praxis of storytelling is cultural expression. In other words we tell stories, our narration of our lived experiences allow the individual to occupy a space—a dwelling space that facilitates the individual's perception of the world. These stories we tell ourselves and others, form a "sense of the story of which their own lives are a part, of the moving course of their own action and experiences."[26] Simply put, narration gives meaning to human life. Within these stories, we began to create a "world of consciousness and the self that is oriented to it."[27] As our sense of self is constructed through consciousness, these instances of consciousness cycle into memory. Thus, we recall things through the praxis of storytelling when they are retrieved from our consciousness.

For Crites, this is where narrative takes on another dimension. The role of memory and its formation on storytelling are intrinsically linked. In this particular intersection, an identity is constructed in such a way that the embodiment of storytelling becomes a type of creation. Our identity formation is created through story—we live in

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[26] Stephen Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience" in *Why Narrative: Readings in Narrative Theology* (ed. Stanley Hauerwas; Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 70.

[27] Ibid., 71.

them and the world is created through story.[28] Therefore, Crites argued, stories "orient the life of people through time, their lifetime, their individual and corporate experience…to the great powers that establish the reality of their world."[29] In other words, the world we create is the same world that forms our identity. Our knowledge and perception of the world stems from story. The stories we tell generate a type of rhythm that moves in and through us—it is an intrinsic part of our lived experience. For Crites, the praxis of storytelling is a cyclical process that draws from an individual's lived experience (their world), consciousness and memory.

The role of memory is crucial in the embodiment of storytelling. To reiterate, memory is derivative from consciousness and identity. Crites' theology of memory is inspired by Augustine of Hippo's *Confessions.* Crites analyzed Augustine who pondered the concept of time by employing the paradox of a future which does not yet exist, and the process is difficult to do.[30] As such, Crites concluded that Augustines's work seeks to parse memory from recollection. Arguably, all the "sophisticated activities of consciousness literally re-collect the images lodged in memory into new configurations, reordering past experience."[31] As such that memory is an order of succession. These particular successions are ordered events and experiences through time that are then impressed upon the memory.[32] The ordered events and experiences chronicle events that are defined in the order in which they were experienced. Building upon this, Crites

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[28] Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," 70.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid., 73.

[31] Ibid., 74.

[32] Ibid.

argues, "we must consult our memory in order to recollect its images…[therefore], experience is illuminated only by the more subtle process of recollection. [In sum], all knowledge is recollection…including storytelling."[33] Here, the retelling of story and narration of our particular narrative is ordered in chronicle succession which is preserved in memory. For Crites, recollection and memory are imperative for the praxis of telling one's story. When we tell our story and share our experiences, our identity comes to fruition. Through time, identities merge and bridge past experiences into the future.[34] Narration and storytelling are a way of constructing our world and forging a future.

All in all, Crites' argument can be summarized as such: the stories people tell shape the inner story of experience.[35] The inner story of experience is the modality of our identity. To conclude, Crites' main argument is that *our lived experience is narrative in form*. Our human experience in not fixed in time; rather, it moves in and through time—rhythmically. The more we know our story, the more we are able to "recover a living past, to believe again in the future, to perform acts that have significant for the person who acts."[36] Thus, Crites advocates for the narration of our particular story and encourages his readers to tell their lived experience as our human experience is durational—it is rhythmic, moving in and through time. As such that the praxis of story is the best way to tell of our experience because our lived experience is inherently durational. Therefore, Crites argues for the justification of, indeed the *necessity* of storytelling.

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[33] Crites, "The Narrative Quality of Experience," 75.

[34] Ibid., 78.

[35] Ibid., 79.

[36] Ibid., 88.

For Crites, the role of memory and its formation on storytelling are intrinsically linked. His critique is helpful in that it points to the dynamic process of forging one's future through narration and storytelling. Contrastingly, a pitfall of his analysis is the negation of accounting for multiple stories of the same event. For example, consider September 11. There are multiple perspective of this events: those who nearly escaped (people in the buildings), families of those whose lives were lost, bystanders who saw the event unfold (people on the streets of New York), reporters, children born of the escapees, to name a few. The variance in stories add to the forging of *our* future and Crites make no mention of these overlapping stories. If he addressed the role of multiplicities of story, his critique would be stronger as a whole. Though, the main argument is not to be missed: through time, identities merge and bridge past experiences into the future—our human experience is naturally duration.

Miroslav Volf

Theologian Miroslav Volf argued in his publication, *The End of Memory*, "to remember a wrongdoing is to struggle against it."[37] Here, he sets out to argue for a theology of memory. For the author, memory is crucial in the process of healing. That is, to view and remember the wrongdoing in a new light. Thus, "the *means* of healing is the *interpretive* work a person does with *memory*."[38] In other words, to remember is a recapitulation of healing. In addition to this, Volf argued the process of healing involves a specific type of remembering; there is a right way to remember. Particularly for

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[37] Miroslav Volf, *The End of Memory: Remembering Rightly in a Violent World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006) 11.

[38] Ibid., 28.

Christians, remembering rightly is intrinsically linked to redemption, redemption of the past. For the author, remembering rightly and reception of the past are the two sides of the same coin. As such, remembering well is the key to redeeming the past. For Christians, the notion of redemption is found in God's story of restoration of a broken world. It is a restoration that encompasses redeeming the past, present and future.[39] To put more plainly, redeeming the past is to remember rightly and truthfully.

Here, Volf's theology of memory takes another dimension. In memory, a person must remember truthfully. A person is to remember truthfully because it is their moral obligation.[40] "When we remember, we bear the moral obligation to pay to others the debt of giving events their "due" by remembering them truthfully."[41] Building upon this, the author also believes that the obligation to truthfulness in remembering is stemmed and rooted from their obligation to do justice.[42] Here, it is clear Volf is arguing for the intersection of memory and justice. This particular intersection of remembrance and justice is vital because for Volf, this is the driver for *reconciliation*.[43] Therefore, "To remember truthfully…is to render justice both to the victim and the perpetrator and therefore to take a step toward reconciliation."[44] In my analysis of Volf's argument, he is in the camp of restoration and reconciliation. His theology of memory is one that accounts for the victim *and* perpetrator, to move them toward a process of healing and

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[39] Volf, *The End Of Memory*, 42.

[40] Ibid., 51.

[41] Ibid., 53.

[42] Ibid., 55.

[43] For Volf, reconciliation is the "the highest aim of lovingly truthful memory seeks to bring about the repentance, forgiveness, and transformation of wrongdoers, and reconciliation between wrongdoers and their victims" (Volf, 65)

[44] Ibid., 56.

redemption—a right way to remember. Thus, memory and truthfulness are intrinsically bound to justice. Truthfulness is, as he argued, a form of justice that presupposes reconciliation.[45] To be reconciled is to embody right and truthful remembrance of the wrongdoing.

For Volf, right and truthful remembrance is a necessary process though they must be juxtaposed and set within the redemption story of the Israelites, particularly the Exodus pericope. The framework to remember rightly and truthfully stems from the juxtaposition of God's redemption in freeing the Israelites. The meta narrative of the Israelites and their journey to redemption is "primarily the memory of God's intervention in [sic] behalf of humankind."[46] Therefore, the Exodus—a story of the Israelites' redemption, is the memory of God's promises. Remembering the Israelite's redemption story is the praxis of remembering rightly and truthfully the promises and memory of God. The praxis of remembrance shapes identity and memory—it is a cyclical process. To embody the praxis of remembrance and memory, Volf proposes integration. That is, "integrating remembered wrongdoing into our life-story."[47] It is in this integration individuals can render the wrong they have experienced. Integration, then, is not a negation of the trauma and hurt one has endured. Instead, integration is ascribing positive meaning to the wrongdoing. With new meaning ascribed to the wrong doing come *new identity* and *new possibility*. Put another way, "we remember wrongs suffered as people with identities defined by God, not by wrongdoers' evil deeds and their echo in our

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[45]Volf, *The End Of Memory*, 59.

[46] Ibid., 102.

[47] Ibid., 76.

memory."[48] Therefore, integration for Volf is a reconstruction of new identity defined by God, not by the trauma and wrong we have encountered. Our new identity, found and affirmed through Christ, is the process of integrating these particular wrongdoings into our life-story "either by labeling them as patches of absent meaning….or by coming to see how they fit into its whole and contribute to some good."[49] New identity then proceeds to new possibility. That is, "When Christ's promise defines our possibilities, memories of the traumatic past become for us just that— memories of one segments of our past. They need not colonize the present nor invade the future by defining what we can do and become."[50] In sum, Volf believes remembering rightly and truthfully is best understood through the story of Israelites and their Exodus. This particular comparison is vital to integrate the wrongdoing we experienced to form new identity and new possibilities through Christ.

Volf's analysis is critical in and how we might account for memory. His argument is one that is linked to justice, one I have yet to encounter while doing research for my project. His focus in *The End of Memory* is as follows: remembering rightly and truthfully are the powers we have to render the injustices we have experienced. Thus, Volf's argument parallels my project quite nicely in that his theology of memory echoes my argument for the praxis of storytelling. In order for us to dismantle and remedy the injustice, people of color have experienced, we must tell it in such a way that brings healing to ourselves—to render the inequity. Therefore, the praxis of storytelling is a

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[48] Volf, *The End Of Memory*, 80.

[49] Ibid., 81.

[50] Ibid., 82.

manifestation of memory that facilitates healing for us—as recapitulated through Christ's life and death. Looping to my argument which was named in the introduction section: tell your story because it speaks of difference. You occupy your story in the way you narrate and recount *your* story. The ways in which you articulate your story does two things: 1) implicates how you see your past and 2) perceive the future.

In short, Volf's critique was helpful in that it made the distinct connection between memory and story. Memory is a recapitulation of healing—healing is found in and through the redemption of Christ. It is a story Christ has spoken into existence. Therefore, we have a moral obligation to remember rightly the wrongdoing we experienced. In addition to this, he hits on the intersection of remembrance and justice—this particular intersection is what drives reconciliation. His construction of theology of memory is the most dynamic of the three theologians I analyzed. As such, the weight of story is significant and contributes profoundly to one's identity. Thus, a theology of memory is one rooted in story, remembering rightly and redemption.

II) Stories that Shape Us - Willie James Jennings

For this section, I will provide a brief analysis of *Christian Imagination,* a thought provoking critique put out by Willie James Jennings. This particular book is enlightening in that is addresses the intersection of theology and race. In brief, Jennings provides a thorough theological account of the construction of race. In using Jennings work, I make the connection to the importance of language and storytelling—mainly drawn from his first chapter, Zurara's tears. This particular parallel, language and story, as you will see below, is the impetus for the praxis of storytelling.

The majority of *Christian Imagination,* features a great analysis of the social and theological construction of race. In chapter one, Jennings highlights the implication of language—the language of naming what the explorers saw and experienced. In their White colonializing way of naming, for the sake of European Expansion, they were constructing Whiteness through a condemnation of Blackness. The naming and construction of such bodies were made possible through the Portuguese chronicler, Gomes Eanes de Azurara (throughout the book, Jennings refer to him as Zurara. To maintain constancy, I will uphold to this name as well). Zurara[51] is a storyteller in some sense. Jennings' critique of Zurara is appropriate as he articulates the impact of Zurara's work:

> "Through comparison, he describes aesthetically and thereby fundamentally identifies his subjects. There are those who are almost white—fair to look upon and well proportioned; there are those who are in between—almost white like mulattoes; and there are those who are black as Ethiopians, whose existence is deformed. Their existence suggests bodies come from the farthest reaches of hell itself. Zurara invokes in this passage, a *scale of existence*, with white on one end and black at the other end and others placed in between"[52] (emphasis added).

Here, Jennings posits that Zurara's storytelling process created a scale. This particular racial scale created a dichotomy of Black and White, both existing in opposite ends of the spectrum. According to the scale of existence, Blacks are inferior therefore located at the bottom of the scale. This rationale is the genesis of the social construction of a race.

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[51] Zurara is a Portuguese chronicler who worked for Prince Henry the Navigator. His linguistic work is analyzed by Willie James Jennings in *The Christian Imagination* where Jennings critiqued Zurara's racial scale—a scale that deeply implicate the Black body, through the formation of his linguist endeavors. For more information, read chapter one of *The Christian Imagination*.

[52] Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and The Origins of Race* (Yale University Press: London, 2010) 23.

In addition to this, Zurara's work also implicated the theology of race. In some of his narrative work, he likens the slave's suffering to that of Christ.[53] Jennings explains:

> "Zurara articulates the exercise of church and state power over bodies he echoes some of the deepest realities of Jesus agony and in effect triggers misapprehension and reversal similar to those found in the condemnation of Jesus. The innocent suffer the penalty of the guilty. Like Jesus, those *peoples of distant lands are brought to a place where a crucifying identity, slave identity, will be forever fastened like a cross to their bodies*" (emphasis added).[54]

Jennings posits that Zurara's work perpetuated the enslavements of Blacks. Like so, enslavement is justified because of its parallelism to that of Christ.[55] This particular way of likening the story of Black slaves, through the eyes of a Portuguese chronicler, to that of Christ's death, creates a certain type of story: a story laced with Christological patterns of a specific narrative regarding Africans existing in a European colonialist economy.[56] Zurara creates a society in which the racial scale is precedent in the formation of race. The construction of Blackness was only possible as the early conquerors sought to name their power[57] over those who were "inferior," in this case Blacks. Furthermore, Blacks are commodified giving birth to the formation of Whiteness and Blackness.

Given the constraints of my project, I have decided to provide a brief summary on one chapter, the chapter titled *Zurara's Tears* as it echoes my argument. In this project, I

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[53] Jennings, *The Christian Imagination,* 20.

[54] Ibid.

[55] In addition to this, Prince Henry is that of Christ. Perpetuating Prince Henry's ideology and motivation of saving the "souls of the heathens" (Jennings, *The Christian Imagination,* 16).

[56] Here, I am drawing from Jennings' analysis regarding the positionality of Zurara's theological work: "Zurara deploys a rhetorical strategy of containment, holding slave suffering inside a Christian story that will be recycled by countless theologians and intellectuals of every colonialist nation" (Jennings, *The Christian Imagination,* 20).

[57] "Prince Henry claimed his motivation was the salvation of the soul of the heathens" (Jennings, *The Christian Imagination,*16) thus justifying enslavement and obtaining slaves for his own production process.

have thoroughly advocated for the praxis of storytelling. As we have seen, Zurara's description as a chronicler were instrumental to the construction and configuration of race. In his line of work, he articulated the political and economic climate of his time; the enslavement of Africans. Thus, the language Zurara employed was one of construction. Naming that which was different—Black, in contrast to Whites. This particular activity of naming and writing shaped the notions of race. Jennings' argued:

> "This Portuguese chronicler is watching and participating in the reconfiguration of space and bodies, land and identity…He stands between bodies and land, and he adjudicates, identifies, determines. The position of the agent is equal in importance to the actions. Zurara is capturing the twin operations of discovery and consumption. With those twin operations, four things are happening at the same time: first, people are being seized (stolen); second, land is being seized (stolen), third, people are being stripped from their space, their place; and fourth, Europeans are describing themselves and these Africans at the same time."[58]

The point is this: Jennings' propositions regarding Zurara's linguistic work is intriguing and worth noting because as he (Zurara) named the other, Blackness, he also named Whiteness. The configuration of Blackness came from a configuration of Whiteness—so goes the construction of race. He created a duality that birthed the construction of race in America.

To reiterate, Zurara was a storyteller. He created a culture that implicated the Black body. In his creation, a story about Black body was born. Thus, the story he created infused into the American culture and society—making its way into the systems and structure of our government. He, a Portuguese chronicler under the authority of Prince Henry the navigator, possessed a certain degree of power and authority. The tools and

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[58] Jennings, *The Christian Imagination,* 24.

resources at Zurara's disposal enabled him to write and tell of his experience to the disadvantage[59] of Blacks an enslaved community at the hands of colonial conquers. As he wrote[60] of his lived experience as a chronicler, he did so through the configuration of race. The language he used[61] became the way in which Blacks are viewed today, namely, as inferior. Zurara's storytelling scripted our notions and understanding of Blackness and Whiteness, a racial scale and a duality that stands in opposition to the other. *As such, Whiteness is exalted at the cost of Blackness.* This particular script is picked up by other European conquers[62] and reverberated throughout the generations to come. It is a script laced with theological blind spots. As such it is a vicious cycle penetrating America's government and economy.[63] All in all, Zurara's storytelling process is the genesis of the construction of race. Naming Blackness was descriptive though it became prescriptive to the ways Blacks are perpetually victimized. It is a cyclical story intrinsically linked to the historicity of America's narrative. Zurara is a story that shaped us and Blacks continue to reap the disadvantages of his culture making.

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[59] To Tatum's definition of race: "a system of advantage based on race" (Tatum, *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria*, 87).

[60] For more on what he wrote, read chapter one of Jennings' publication, *The Christian Imagination*.

[61] "as black as Ethiops [Ethiopians], and so ugly, both in features and in body" (Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 18).

[62] In *Christian Imagination*, Jennings observed the following about Columbus in the ways he reverberates Zurara's linguistic racial scale: "He has dropped anchor at the southeastern tip of Venezuela, near Trinidad, a place he named Punta del Arenal: 'The next day there came from east a large canoe with 24 men in it, all of them young and bearing many weapons…As I said, they were all young and fine looking and not negroes but rather the whitest of all those that I have seen in the Indies and they were graceful and had fine bodies and long, smooth hair cut in the Castilian manner." (Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 29). Here, Jennings makes the connection between Zurara's racial scale to that of Columbus. Building upon this Jennings argued, "The logic of Columbus's description is obvious—the comparison begins with the known, the self. Thus the whiteness he names is reflective, even reflexive of their European bodies—graceful, fine, with long, smooth hair, even cut like theirs" (Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 30). As such, Columbus picks up where Zurara left off and the racial scale is perpetuated.

[63] Here, I am referring to gentrification, the way housing is zoned, mass incarceration rates, etc.

III). Storytelling Model

This brings us to the model section of my project. Up to this point, I have argued racism is a "system of advantages based on race"[64] and is something to be dismantled. From there, I made the connection between memories, drawing upon the work of Schreiter, Crites and Volf. Their work, curating a theology of memory, paralleled Jennings in how our world view and ideology are impacted through stories (Jennings) that create us. In short, the analysis of these four theologians are vital in that they argued memory is imperative to our identity development. To foster our identity formation, I propose the praxis of storytelling. What follows will be a model of how to tell your story in such a way that alleviates to a certain extent, racism and prejudices. Building upon this, this model is for people of color, as this is my target audience. There has been much writing devoted to analyze the race discourse though they are mainly written for White readers, leaving little room or no invitation for people of color to enter into the dialogue. Given the lack of resources available for people of color to engage in the race discourse, I write from the place. Thus, my entire project has been written precisely with people of color in mind. What I have attempted to do in the proceeding pages is create a model of storytelling as a way for people of color[65] to engage in a productive race discourse. With that, let us turn to my model which encompasses three pillars: 1) articulation of your story as told by others (listen to how your story is portrayed and articulated), 2) research your story and 3) tell your story.

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[64] I am using a definition quoted in *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria*, as highlighted by author Beverly Tatum. Much of this particular definition is derived from another scholar to which Tatum analyzes. For more, refer to page 87 of her publication.

[65] Here, anyone who is not of European descent is a person of color.

Articulation of Your Story as Told By Other People

To illustrate these three pillars, I will share a bit of my story. Growing up in Fresno, I was surrounded by predominately Blacks and Latinos. I attended a primary Black elementary and middle school. My family and I resided in a low-income apartment complex to which much of my ethnic identity formation was formed through these social locations. Living and attending schools with other students of color drew me into my own narrative. At the playground, Black and Latino peers would say ignorant things such as "*you* eat cats and dogs." I was perplexed by their comments though did not think too much about their propositions. Contrastingly, as a timid child, I shut down and did not engage in a productive way. One day, when I had had enough of their insensitive comments, I decided to inquire more and approached my mom. She informed me of her younger years in Laos and of the economic hardship she experienced. There were times her family resorted to eating cats and dogs, though these eating habits were far and few. This new information was enlightening and I felt empowered to respond to my classmates. A few days later when another peer innocently inquired "is it true Hmong people eat cats and dogs?". I felt this was my moment to teach her and replied, "Yeah, because when you grew up poor and all you have to eat are cats and dogs you do it. My mom and her family *had to* because they did not have anything to eat. Wouldn't you?"

I share this story to articulate a few things. First, my peers were misinformed. Being that we were around age ten, misinformation is unavoidable. Pre-adolescence is marked by the absence of a physical and cognitive maturity that would be needed to

reflect in abstract ways.[66] That is, much of their world view is black and white. Their comments were a reflection of this. As the peers received more information, such as the economic hardship contributing to Hmong's ingestion of cats and dogs, they were able to further their cognitive development a bit. As such, my peers were more inclined to receive information and readjust their understanding. Most of them had the presupposition that Hmong ate cats and dogs leisurely. They heard somewhere, probably from another classmate the strange phenomenon and concluded it as fact: Hmong people eat cats and dogs. The partial information they acquired about Hmong people and culture, began to morph into something different and strange. My peers communicated a story about my people in such a way that did not align with my lived experience. At the time, I was around ten and could not remember eating such things they described. Either my peers knew more about my eating habits or I was deceived into thinking the pork I had the night before indeed was dog meat saturated in herbs and spices. Thus, the story they articulated was not entirely accurate. The way I went about interacting with this particular encounter also highlights the remainder pillars of my storytelling model.

Research Your Story

Let us turn to the second pillar: *research your story*. The little research I did with the misinformation I received from my classmate was instrumental in the furthering of my own and my peers' formation. When I first encountered their comment, I was apathetic. In hindsight, I did not have the tools to engage in such a task that required me to research and dig deeper into my peers' presuppositions. It wasn't until I really thought

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[66] Tatum, *Why Are All The Black Kids Sitting Together In The Cafeteria*, 101.

about their story that is, Hmong people eat cats and dog, juxtaposed to my lived experience. Their story, the facts they kept repeating did not match mine. I was annoyed with this and believed a way to counteract their comments was to do something about it. I went to my mom for resolution and instead received much more. My conversation with my mom opened my eyes to see my peers were neither entirely wrong nor entirely right. They were somewhat right in stating the fact: cats and dogs had been eaten. Though, they were also partially wrong in that this particular fact did not necessary portray the economic hardship that contributed to this fact: cats and dogs were occasionally consumed, especially in Laos where there were economic hardships.[67]

The research I delved into provided a new perspective that counteracted my peers' presuppositions. In addition to this, with the new information I collected, I was able to present to my classmates. Doing so allowed them to see the flaws inherent in their comment: they were only stating facts and not accounting for the underlying truth of Hmong participating in such eating habits. Once I shared the alternative prospective, one extending beyond the facts, they had to readjust their understanding. The new information shaped a new perspective. This particular eating habit was something they had not encountered prior to our friendship. Instead of inquiring more, they recycled the facts into a type of story that left little room for exploration. Obtaining new information impelled me to counteract with their attitudes. Building upon this, our cognitive and identity development were shaped into something more—we were able to build and construct more abstract ideas and concepts. As such, the story they told and believed

[67] To ease your mind, my family has not continued the practice since immigrating into America.

looked strikingly different. Furthermore, the narrative about Hmong people eating cats and dogs had more context.

Tell Your Story

Moving onto the final pillar of my storytelling model: *tell your story*. With the above illustration, my responsibility at the time was to correct my peers. This comes from a place of wanting to be right and not necessarily to educate. As I reflect on this encounter, the more I realized the depth of insight it provide for my storytelling model. Thus, the final step in my model is to tell your story. There is a danger to a single story and to remedy the pitfalls, we must, to borrow the words of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: "reject the *single story*, when we realize there is never a single story about any place…"[68] In addition to rejecting a single story, I would add the necessity of telling your story— a way to reject the side effects of a single story. As such, telling your story is vital because it reinstates your humanity[69] in your narrative. When others tell your story, they take your agency away from you. To restore the particularity of your story, it must be told from your perspective. It is precisely this I encourage you to think about the importance and role of your story. To tell it in such a way that remedy the racist systems at play in our society and economy.

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[68] Here, I am using the word *single story* as inspired by a Tedtalk given by author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie. (Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. "The Danger of A Single Story." TEDGlobal, July 2009. https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story).

[69] For more information, read Schreiter's propositions in chapter two titled "Violence and Suffering: Narrative of the Lie" of his publication *Reconciliation: Mission & Ministry In A Changing Social Order*. He provides a great analysis on the intersection of narrative and humanity.

Final Thoughts on Storytelling Model

The Storytelling Model is one I believe will make a difference in our racialized world. The three pillars that make up this particular model are influenced directly by the work of Schreiter, Crites, Volf and Jennings. The first pillar, articulation of your story as told by others, highlights Jennings argument of the power of a storyteller. In Jennings' analysis, the culture and story Zurara created as a chronicler implicated the narrative of the Black community. Storytellers have power and if they are telling your story, it is imperative they tell it in such a way that is honoring to your particularity. The second pillar, research your story reverberates Volf's argument in that a theology of memory is rooted in story, right remembering, redemption and integration. In other words, integration is ascribing positive meaning to your story. The third and final pillar of my storytelling model, tell your story recapitulates Schreiter and Crite's argument. Telling your story is reinstating the power that already exist in you (to Schreiter's proposition). In addition to this, narrating your story is a way to merge and bridge past experiences into the future. Thus, the praxis of story is constructing your world and forging a future (to Crites' argument).

Employing these pillars are an entry point into the race dialogue. Too often, people of color, myself included, find it too daunting of a task to address racism directly. It can be paralyzing and difficult to navigate. In addition, we expose ourselves to repercussions and backlash in the process of remedying racism. The cost is high though not doing anything and standing on the sidelines is to participate in a racist society. In other words, to remain silent and neutral is to actively, passively, contribute to a system

that oppresses Black and Brown bodies. Remedying racism or any oppressive system is not for the faint of hearts. It requires courage and the ability to envision an equitable society. In addition, doing this work involves accountability and hope—keeping others accountable for establishing an equitable just system and hope for things yet to be actualized. As such, beginning with your story is a necessary starting point. Your narrative reveals truths—it is knowledge in the making, to borrow from Crites' work. Thus, it is vital to narrate your story as it forges a new future, for all.

Conclusion

My project has brought us to this point. By way of concluding, let me briefly summarize the main points. I began the introduction stating my own identity formation process. At the tender age of nine, I sought *Full House* to inform my identity which was unsatisfactory in many ways. Though, revealed a complex racialized society in which I had to navigate. This particular navigation manifested into an attempt to change my birth name from May Tag to Michelle, a fictional character in *Full House.* As such, my identity was contested and I was left to navigate my racial identity in other ways. This particular rationale highlighted for me the types of stories being told of Asian Americans. In other words, the lack of Asian representation in media, in addition to all other sphere of my life, greatly impacted my perception of my ethnic identity. Thus, my attempt to change my moniker is a memory I often find myself referencing when dialoguing with colleagues and peers about the race discourse. It is a particular incident that has profoundly shaped my perspective of race and racism. I had internalized racism though it

that was unearthed several years later. In addition, it is a memory that I have learned to embrace as part of my narrative in the face of a racialized society.

Building upon this, I highlighted the work of three theologians who constructed a theology of memory that contributed to my project immensely. I found inspiration from: Father Robert Schreiter, Stephen Crites and Miroslav Volf. In each of their particularity, they argued for a theology of memory, a component necessary for reconciliation. As such, to dismantle systems of oppression, such as racism, memory is a factor. Father Robert Schreiter a theologian argued "Memory is the principal repository of our own identity."[70] Here, memory is intrinsically linked to identity. For Crites, he believes our lived experience is narrative in form. Therefore, memory is appropriate for articulating one's narrative. In addition to this, I believe Crites would be a proponent for storytelling as it is in the same vein as memory. For Volf, he argued for right and truthful remembering in regards to reconciliatory work. By combining these three I created a theology of memory. As such that this type of memory, remembering rightly is an avenue to engage in systems of oppression. Thus, to pursue justice, memory and storytelling is a tool to dismantle such inequities experienced by people of color.

For Jennings, the analysis he provided through his publication, *The Christian Imagination* was a type of storytelling. Jennings critiqued the work of Portuguese chronicler, Zurara by way of introducing his readers to the construction of race. In short, Jennings posits that Zurara writings reconfigured race. It was done so through the naming of Blacks, that which is different, in contrast to defining and configuring Whiteness.

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[70] Schreiter, *Reconciliation*, 38.

Thus, Jennings' observation of Zurara's work is imperative for the race discourse as we have seen similar sentiment made by Zurara, about Blacks being ugly,[71] perpetuated in contemporary times.[72] In Zurara's case, his words deeply implicated the African body. He was a storyteller of the Black body and his particular positionality as a chronicler was the impetus of the dehumanization of Africans—through the use of language and the imposition of prejudice. Zurara's linguistics endeavors created a racial scale that reverberates into the present day. In addition to this, Jennings' work on Zurara's linguistic forays highlights a type of story being told from those in power. Zurara was in a position of power and deeply informed the self-perception of Africans. His linguistic work became a script America would cycle through again and again. In sum, Jennings analysis of Zurara's work cannot be missed: a story about an African was told, written and accounted by Zurara a man of Portuguese heritage. Zurara set into motion a racial categorization through naming that which was different, Black, while constructing Whiteness. The construction of Whiteness was only possible by naming the opposite, Blackness, and deeming it inferior.

All in all, the work of the four theologians: Schreiter, Crites, Volf, and Jennings, have aided in my argument: storytelling is a way to counteract and dismantle the scripts written about people of color. The praxis of storytelling is a useful tool when people of color employ it to dismantle the dominant scripts and narratives. These scripts and

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[71] A quote of a quote cited in *The Christian Imagination*, "others again were as black as Ethiops [Ethiopians], and so ugly, both in features and in body" (Jennings, *The Christian Imagination*, 18).

[72] I am reminded of an article published in 2011 by Psychologists Satoshi Kanzawa where he claimed Black women were less physically attractive than other women. The full article can be access here: http://www.humanbiologicaldiversity.com/articles/Kanazawa,%20Satoshi.%20%22Why%20Are%20Black%20Women%20Less%20Physically%20Attractive%20Than%20Other%20Women%3f%22%20Psychology%20Today,%20May%2015,%202011.pdfAccessed May 21st, 2018.

narratives are partial in that they are told from a perspective of power and authority. They are stories narrative from the lens of privilege already skewing the experiences of the marginalized which perpetuates a racial scale. For the scripts and narrative to have a more accurate account, those particular individuals from the margins must speak up. People of color are made vulnerable, objectified and victimized by the racial scale, and we must proactively dismantle this process, the narrative of the lie, to borrow Schreiter's word. Thus, I vehemently encourage you to share your story. Sharing your particular lived experience is necessary as it is a destabilizer of dominant objectifying and victimizing scripts and narratives. Thus, the power of *your* story forges a future for all.

Epilogue

I opened my paper by narrating a dialogue I had with my mom. In my conversation, I proposed a name change. This particular interaction signaled a racialized world in which I had to navigate my ethnic identity from an early age. My inhabitation of a colored female body will always entail a negotiation, this is a fact I must live with, especially in a racialized world. A way I can withstand the push and pull of this particular negotiation of my ethnic identity is to tell my story. It is within the confines of my particular narrative and lived experience that will decentralize the dominant scripts. I have shared my story of my conversation with my mom to White peers in previous years. They too expressed their dissatisfaction with their birth name—as a way of sympathizing with my discomfort of possessing an ethnic name. There is a danger in this, when Whites attempt to share such sentiments, "Yeah, I know what that's like. I too feel that way." These comments are a negation of your particularity. They seek to neutralize your lived

experience. A person of color's lived experience is vastly different from Whites thus cannot be equated. Our experience as people of color cannot be reduced to a neutral place. Therefore, we must communicate our particular story in such a way that point to our particularities as people of color living and operating in a racialized economy. As such, I leave you with two question: how can you began to draw upon the particularity of your narrative to dismantle the narrative of the lie? In what ways are you forging a future through the praxis of your story?

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