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Racial Reconciliation. TH601. NLS

Final Paper

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Asians in America

Introduction

Often in American history, students are taught about how westerners have colonized America and made it great. Through the process of making America “great”, lots had to suffer, including minority groups such as Black people but not often have we been educated about how Asians have influenced and shaped America as well. Asians have been dated historically to have been in America since 1870. If we are to pursue racial reconciliation in America, it is important to be inclusive of all minorities including the Asian population in America.

To pursue inclusivity of Asians in America with racial reconciliation, we must define and identify what racial reconciliation is. Racial reconciliation cannot be separated from the gospel. Racial reconciliation is necessary in our broken world and systems currently in place that are unjust to minority groups such as Asian Americans. To begin, we must take steps and efforts to practice biblical reconciliation in and outside the church.

Racial Reconciliation

Racial Reconciliation is important as it pursues equality, justice, and restoration for a broken world, specifically the disparities and inequalities due to race in this world. McNeil defines reconciliation in light of the gospel as “Reconciliation is an ongoing spiritual process involving forgiveness, repentance and justice that restores broken relationships and systems to

reflect God's original intention for all creation to flourish."¹ America specifically, has historically and presently experience a lot of brokenness from racist violent acts done against certain people groups to discrimination that has led to rights being withheld from minority groups. Ever since COVID-19 entered America in 2020, Asians have experienced an exponential number of racism against them. The most common phrase heard and publicized in the media is COVID-19 being called the "Chinese virus". For it to have been spoken as such by the President of the United States in 2020, reinforces some citizen's perspective to directly associate COVID-19 with Asian people, specifically Chinese. Racist actions and words as such, shows the deep need for healing and reconciliation.

Ever since sin entered the world in the Garden of Eden, God has been seeking ways to reconcile His creation back to Himself. Ultimately, God needed to overcome sin to be reunited with his Creation, for sin separated creation from the Creator. This shows that creation is meant to be with the Creator. God also desires for an intimate relationship with His people. "God is a relational being who spoke the heavens and the earth into existence and stepped into it for the sake of building relationship with his creation."² The disconnect between the two is what we experience now on earth but there is hope.

For restoration to occur, reconciliation must be part of it. Jesus paid the price and overcame the consequences of sin which is death, so that forgiveness and reconciliation can occur on earth. Jesus was and is the bridge that reunited God the Father and God's people together to be in direct relationship and communication again. "The cross of Christ isn't just a bridge that gets us to God; it's a sledgehammer that breaks down walls that separate us."³ The

1 Brenda Salter McNeil, J. Derek McNeil, and Eugene Cho, *Roadmap to Reconciliation Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness and Justice*, page 26.

2 Mark Charles and Soong-Chan Rah, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, page 40.

3 Rich Villodas, *Deeply Formed Life: Five Transformative Values to Root Us in the Way of Jesus*, page 46.

power of Christ truly has the power to break through barriers and obstacles so that the Kingdom of God can reign on this side of eternity. Jesus' death and resurrection made Him the Savior and Messiah for all of creation to give them a second chance at life. Therefore, it should be part of every believer's heart and calling to exemplify God's heart of second chances by meeting those who need help fighting with and for them and extending God's healing power to them.

Reconciliation through the power of God is not separated nor discriminated by age, gender or race but it is available to all who confess and profess Jesus as Lord and Savior. This proclamation of God to be Lord, also claims for God to be King. We need to invite God to take full reign by being obedient to doing what God has commanded and invited all to do. Believers need to shift their perspective to see all people created in the image of God.

Although racial reconciliation is in fact a gospel issue, it is not something we witness nor experience often in today's world for it requires not just for individuals to change, but corporate confession, repentance and transformation. Acknowledging this would lead to changes in systems that have been in power for years now. In order for new to come, the old must die and go. The idea of change scares people for it is outside of comfort but if it is seen as a need, then sacrifices need to be made individually and collectively. The idea of racial reconciliation is also new to many for not many are aware of the injustices that people experience because the majority live in comfort and have not experienced their rights being violated or withheld from them. Sometimes it takes big and tragic events to take place in order for voices to be heard and raised. It is unfortunate but pivotal moments and events in time can be the wake up call that society needs in order to recognize the hurt and brokenness that others are experiencing.

Racial Injustice Towards Asians in America

Racial Reconciliation is something that cannot be done alone. Just like any other marketing or leadership strategy, it needs movement and momentum which therefore requires a collective effort. This is a challenge for not many would see race as an essence of one's identity and race having a huge impact on one's life. Although Asians may be one of the larger minority groups in America, they have still been considered lower class or segregated to their own part of the city. There are even jokes that make fun of Chinese people's names and accents. Collective efforts to address issues and injustice is necessary. It needs to start with the Asian community.

The irony is that the challenge is within the Asian culture itself. Within the Asian culture, we have been taught to keep silent and to endure any suffering by brushing things off the rug. "Saving face" is a term known amongst the Asian community to represent that one's dignity and pride is more important than anything. This is the Asian way of earning respect which is through growing thick skin by having high tolerance. Therefore, choosing to stand up or confronting injustice would require being counter-cultural which is new and uncomfortable.

The media is one big factor to how people view each race whether it is from the news highlighting certain races in crimes or lack of representation in entertainment media. Asians have not had their true and full stories told properly in America. Just like Hispanic people, there is misrepresentation for Asians in the media. The first and main movie that highlighted Asians in America is called "The Joy Luck Club", in 1993. This movie had an all Asian American and predominantly female cast. Although this movie was a success and brought attention towards the Asian community in America, it has taken 25 years until the next film was produced also with an all Asian American cast. "Crazy Rich Asians" premiered in 2018 and highlighted various themes of the Asian culture to help audiences relate and identify unique traits to Chinese culture. Outside

of these two films, Asians are either stereotyped in entertainment media or their roles are replaced or played by a white American.

According to the United States Department of Justice, 61.8% of hate crimes in America are based on race/ethnicity/ancestry. The motivation categories for victims of single-bias incidents in 2020 are predominantly by race in comparison to religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, and gender. The number greatly increased between 2019 and 2020. “There were 279 anti-Asian incidents reported in 2020, a 77% increase since 2019.”⁴ This number shows the racial injustice and discrimination Asians have been experiencing, especially in the recent years. The Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism shows that New York City, San Francisco, and Los Angeles have been the top three cities that have experienced a high increase in Asian hate crimes in 2020 and 2021.⁵ These three cities are also known to have the highest Asian population in America. This is no coincidence. Part of the reasons for increased Asian hate crimes could be due to the media and society blaming Chinese people for the COVID-19 epidemic. The media has portrayed China to be the root source of the virus that has taken so many lives.

Racial Reconciliation Towards Asians in America

What and where racial justice and reconciliation can begin is through building intentional relationships with various minority groups and communities. Jesus in his ministry on earth challenged people in the way they lived through demonstrating grace and mercy in his actions and words. Jesus may have used his power to do good but his goal and intention was not to

⁴ “2020 FBI Hate Crimes Statistics,” *The United States Department of Justice*, last modified December 9, 2021, accessed April 19, 2022, <https://www.justice.gov/crs/highlights/2020-hate-crimes-statistics>.

⁵ Abby Budiman and Neil G. Ruiz, “Key Facts about Asian Americans, a Diverse and Growing Population,” *Pew Research Center* (Pew Research Center, February 16, 2022), last modified February 16, 2022, accessed April 19, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/04/29/key-facts-about-asian-americans/>.

display how mighty He was and is, but is to display compassion and build a trusting and loving relationship between Him and people. In Luke 9:47-48, we see how God sees the little children as one who is great. “For it is the one who is least among you all who is the greatest.” This shows that the way God operates is radically different from the world. Jesus’ standards of others are measured differently. Jesus chose to go to those who were lowly and weak. He built them up by getting to know them and empowering them through their character. On this side of eternity, we need to demonstrate this same relational and transformative love to others to become more understanding and gain awareness of each other’s differences. People can begin to build relationships with the Asian community by befriending them or seeing what issues that matter to the Asian community. Through building relationships like Christ, we can learn to meet people where they are at.

Systemic and government changes can make a difference in racial reconciliation. In California, the state government has decided to take action against hate crimes and other states are pending to follow. According to CSUSB, “Assembly member Richard Bloom of Los Angeles is introducing a bill in January 2021 to create a permanent State of Hate Commission and other states are expected to follow his lead.”⁶ This shows that racial reconciliation needs to occur not just on an individual level but government and corporate level should be involved and responsible as well. Accountability and systemic changes need to occur to make an actual difference so there may be consequences to actions. This shows how the government is not only acknowledging the situation and problems but also taking ownership by taking action by taking initiatives in the legislative branch of our democratic government.

6 Brian Levin, “Report to the Nation: Anti-Asian Prejudice & Hate ... - CSUSB,” *Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism CSUSB*, last modified 2021, accessed April 19, 2022, <https://www.csusb.edu/sites/default/files/Report%20to%20the%20Nation%20-%20Anti-Asian%20Hate%202020%20Final%20Draft%20-%20As%20of%20Apr%2030%202021%206%20PM%20corrected.pdf>, page 34.

The entertainment industry has been increasing in producing movies that highlight a more accurate depiction of the Asian culture. Animated movies such as Turning Red, Raya and the Dragon, and Shang-Chi have been produced and released in recent years which has been a big turning point for the Asian community. It has included accurate depictions and elements of the Asian culture such as family dynamics and relationships, and food culture. Embarking into another person's culture through watching films about their culture can be enlightening and bring awareness of things that are acceptable and non-offensive in that culture.

Conclusion

Racial reconciliation needs to be a partnership between the victims and witnesses so voices and issues may be raised. As Paul invites believers to do, we must bear each other's burdens. It will take the church to partner with the government and other parties to engage in social justice and other actions to counteract all the hurt that has been experienced.

As a member of the Chinese Christian community, I believe we can do better by speaking publicly about the hurt and pain Asians experience in America. It can range from protesting for No Mega Jail to be placed in Chinatown, the part of Manhattan that has been a home to many Chinese immigrants, to inviting a non-chinese friend to a meal as an authentic Chinese home-cooked meal. This can be the start of a bridge.

We need to step out of our comfort zone and engage with people who do not look like us. We have either hidden because we fear another race or engage because we feel superior to another race. We need to engage with people outside of our culture and get to know their stories for the sake of Christ to be made known. It is also a great way to help us understand what it really means to be made in the image of God. Especially as the body of Christ, we need to do better.

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