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Book Analysis: Subversive Witness: Scripture's call to Leverage Privilege

Leadership development in an urban church take is not a task or vocation for the faint of heart. It takes a bold righteous person who is not afraid to venture into areas some would like left alone. One such area is that of racial reconciliation. We as God's people are called to be the bridge that fills the vast separation of between Euro-Americans and people of color. Domonique DuBios Gilliard is one such leader and is the author of *Subversive Witness: Scripture's call to Leverage Privilege*. Gilliard sounds the alarm for all to hear the cry to God's people to use their privilege to call out the injustices within "broken systems, structures and laws that deface the *imago Dei* inherent in our neighbor." (p. 83)

The author's purpose for writing the book as stated by Mark Labberton, President of Fuller Theological Seminary, who wrote the Forward states, "How can Christians with privilege serve as a subversive witness to the not-yet of Christ's reign, creating a mor just and equitable world?" Gilliard tells us in his introduction that he wrote the book to wake up the sister and brother in Christ who are not satisfied with the status quo and who seeks the coming kingdom of God here on earth.

Dominique Gilliard artfully takes us through the stories in the bible and uses those stories to tell us, "Our Creator never intended for the divine image to be affirmed, respected and

protected in some more than others because of a person's race, ethnicity, gender, class citizenship status, land or origin, sexuality, mental cognition, able-bodiedness and physical attractiveness." (p. 14). He writes each chapter telling the stories we know in the bible. It begins with the story of Pharaoh's daughter and how she found Moses and raised him in the palace surrounded by privilege. This story shows how one can leverage privilege to resist systemic sin. The book is further developed as the author takes us to the story of Ester and shows how she leveraged privilege to stand in solidarity with the Jewish people. Gilliard continues to share stories from scripture to show how disrupting the status quo is necessary to tear down the system and structures of oppression.

Subversive Witness has many strengths in the book. One such strength is the way in which Gilliard positions the concept of privilege. The way in which privilege is positioned leaves one with a sense of purpose, as opposed to one denying privilege, or ignoring its existence. Privilege is seen as a powerful tool and he states, "we become instruments of peace that God uniquely uses to induce freedom and justice for our fractured world." Another strength found in the book is the way he uses familiar stories in the bible and weaves a theological and prophetic message throughout. A weakness of the book is found in his view of privilege. Not only should we recognize it but we should work to remove it so that true justice and equality can be had for all.

My personal impression of the book is quite positive. I think that Domonique Gilliard gives us a useful tool and concept that is palatable to those who are privileged in our society. It doesn't set them apart for us, but allows us to recognize that we are all privileged in some fashion or another. With this privilege we can all be active participants in using it to disrupt, call out, and stand against the injustice we see in our communities. We all have a role to play and

with this shift in perspective it opens the door for us to come together, each doing their own part in the pursuit of justice and reconciliation.