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Introduction to Racial Reconciliation

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Mass Incarceration

Why is Racial Reconciliation so important?

As a child, it was easy for me to notice that Mass incarceration of black people was evident and had been a noticeable problem since I moved to the United States. I did not understand the law in the country, but as I looked and heard from those around me as a kid, it was clear that a particular group was targeted to be behind bars. Rising up in Haiti, I was taught that when you are in a place and you notice that people behave in specific ways, you learn how they walk and adapt to it. I understood from a young age that I did not need to commit a crime to be behind bars living in the United States. I can spend the rest of my life in jail if I am at the wrong place and time. It would not matter if I committed the crime or not. It would solely be because of the way I look. Therefore, it is wrong and unacceptable for people to feel that way. We need to create an environment where people do not feel like victims or their lives are in danger. We have to be creative to survive, and it's wrong. Why is it that my white brothers do not have to do anything? Their lives are not in danger cause of the color of their skin. This is a system that we have to break. Oh, it's because the law was written for white people but not for black people. Therefore, we need to include black people in the law to start impacting black people's lives. Reconciliation is a good thing to think about, but it's not good enough to think about it. It is significant to talk about it, and of course, it is not enough to just talk about it. We

have to act upon it. Our black children are suffering; we must do all we can to protect them. We cannot allow a law to enslave people because they did something wrong. Slavery is evil, and if we allow enslaving people as a form of punishment, we are participating in this evil act. We must do all we can to eliminate slavery in America.

I must be clear that if someone commits a crime or presents him or herself as a danger to our society, this person must be evaluated, trialed, and put behind bars and he does not work as an enslaved individual. It is significant to reform the criminal justice and allow people who do not have money to receive a fair trial. This idea is that if someone has a lot of money, they can afford an expensive lawyer and, therefore, can escape justice. It is wrong, and we should not have a system where someone with money can escape justice. Perhaps this may be why we don't see people with much cash imprisoned and punished by enslavement behind bars. However, most people behind bars are blacks. They are behind bars because of their skin color and poverty.

What is Racial Reconciliation all about?

Racial reconciliation is all about unifying the body of Christ in the United States. Interestingly, in Africa, the people are conservative, and in European countries, they are liberal. I am not sure why it is difficult for me to unify the conservative white evangelical with the Africans in America. However, the law in the United States was made by conservatives. Therefore why is it so much against black people? In the United States, the law enacted against slavery except in the form of punishment, black people can be enslaved. I must be clear that our current law against slavery does not end slavery. And what that mean is that slavery is legal in the United States. Therefore, if we accept that slavery is wrong, then we have reason to have a law against such atrocity toward black people. One of the questions we must ask is why slavery is legal. Slavery is not practiced the same way that it used to be, but there is another form of

slavery that is being practiced. The way it is practiced is that white people are cashing out when black men are in jail.

Tisby argues that the vice president of the Confederate States of America, Alexander Stephen outlined the ethos of rebellion states in his famous for his phone speech given in March 1861. He said the confederacy cornerstone rests upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man¹.

Unfortunately, we do not teach that in our school, but this is what's happening. We need to find ways to tell our children about racial reconciliation. Therefore, to qualify as enslaved, you must be black and poor. I have not seen a man or woman And at the same time become enslaved and, is rich. Therefore you need people with low incomes to be in one place; you do not want them to mingle with other groups. Topsy Argues that the concentration of low-income black people in communities such as Ferguson and the police force subjected residents to hardship patrolling and penalties. Furthermore, the Police Department has a pattern of anti-black discrimination from 2012 to 2014, showing that African American accounts for 85% of vehicle stop, 90% of citation, and 93% of arrests made by the Ferguson Police Department despite comprising only 67% of Ferguson's².

Why is Racial Reconciliation so neglected?

According to Spencer, Jim Crow laws, which have their roots in Black Codes, they have further entrenched systems of apartheid for Black Americans in almost every aspect of life in the post-Reconstruction era, including the criminal justice system³. What happened here is that when you want a group of people to be penalized for anything, remember that they don't have to

¹ Tibbsy, p. 166

² Tibsy, p. 156

³ Spencer, 2022

commit a crime to get them in jail. They would simply need somebody in prison, and the police will pick them up and put them there. Therefore, these laws legalized racial segregation throughout the public life of black people and the establishment of the "separate but equal" doctrine by the U.S. Supreme Court in Plessy v. Ferguson. For Black Americans, noncompliance with Jim Crow laws was often met with imprisonment.

It is important to follow the money. How is all that is being paid for? And who gets to cash out for the enslavement? Kuhn argues that today, according to a recent ACLU report, the U.S. incarcerates 1.2 million people in its state and federal prisons, and incarcerated workers produce more than \$2 billion in goods and commodities annually. According to those findings, incarcerated people earn an average of 13 to 52 cents per hour. Some states, like Alabama and Arkansas, do not pay incarcerated workers⁴. We know that in some states, the people work for free; in others, the prisoners get very little for their labor. How did we get there? Kuhn also argues that when the 13th Amendment adopted language reminiscent of the Northwest Ordinance, many states followed suit, creating a pathway to legally enslave people through incarceration and imprisonment, leading to labor practices that advocate decrying as exploitative. The states follow other states to enslave black people legally.

Why is Racial Reconciliation so difficult?

The white conservative in the United States is not doing the work to reconcile with their black brothers regarding racial reconciliation. The gospel, in general, forced us to fight against such treatment. God commands us to love our neighbors the same way we love ourselves⁵. And seeing a brother being mistreated because of his skin color is heartbreaking. We ought to feel angry and upset about it. However, ignoring it is like participating in the hill treatment our

⁴ Kuhn, 2022

⁵ Mark 12: 31

brothers are receiving. The question that we must ask is, do we love Jesus Christ? If we do, we must treat His creation with love, kindness, and tenderness. And one of the things that I'm particular about is racial injustice. We are not to remain silent when we witness injustice. We must speak up, allow the oppressor to feel uncomfortable, and make them pay for their action if possible. And in the process, it will shed light and force changes. Racial reconciliation appears difficult because our black and white brothers are using excuses to speak up against it when they see racism. One of the questions we may ask is, what if it's happening to you? How would you feel about it? Do you think it is acceptable when you are being abused for people to see it and not do anything about it? You love your brother and do not stand still or silent when they are victimized because of the color of his skin.

Furthermore, white brothers do not want to hear about it. They think that it's not essential. I said this before because it's not happening to them, and that's why they think it's not important to take action toward racial reconciliation. Visual reconciliation becomes difficult when you have the prison system privatized. According to Buday and Nellis, "Private prisons incarcerated 99,754 American residents in 2020, representing 8% of the total state and federal prison population. Since 2000, the number of people housed in private prisons has increased by 14%⁶." this is not helping racial reconciliation. In fact, it's worse than it. If they were losing money, there would be a reason to close this out, but they are making money now by enslaving African Americans. Now imagine you live in the same household with your brother, and because of how your brother looks, he was put in jail as an enslaved person because he smokes weed. How would that make you feel? You would not be happy about it, and no black brothers are struggling because they are the target to fill the prison. Mass incarceration is not helping our situation. It's making eating a lot more complicated than it used to be. I desire to see our white brothers join

⁶ Buday & Nellis, 2022

together with us to put an end to this atrocity. Black people suffered enough during slavery. We do not want a system to enslave them again.

How is Racial Reconciliation to be most effectively accomplished?

According to Spencer, An Amendment eventually passed in 2018 after 65% of voters in Colorado approved its adoption. It was the first state to explicitly abolish slavery without exception in its constitution since Rhode Island did so in 1842⁷. We need legislative action to include black people. To stop slavery, we need a law to abolish it altogether. If we allow this law to continue, then slavery will thrive. We cannot allow it to continue. Colorado is one of the states that achieve it, I believe this is just the start. And I believe that most people wanted to see the abolishment of slavery. We should never allow slavery to show its evil presence in the form of punishment. When things like that happen, it becomes a cashout for those who benefit from this act. The whole country can learn from voters in Colorado. Colorado has abolished slavery in their law. There are other things that they can do to prevent such atrocity happened to black people. This is not the end, but this is just the beginning of the removal of slavery in our country.

It is essential for the country to feel ashamed because of the ill-treatment of black people. It is normal to go to God and repent and love the sand of slavery. Morrison argues that Ezra was a priest and personally innocent of the sins committed by his people, and he prayed, "Oh God, I am utterly ashamed. I blushed to lift up my face to you, for our sins are piled higher than our heads, and our guilt has reached the heavens⁸." acknowledging that your ancestor had done wrong and repent is a good thing. However, if you refuse to repair it, it may mean that if you can bring these people back to slavery, you would. And maybe perhaps you don't think that slavery is a bad thing. It is biblical to ask God for forgiveness for your grandparents for your parents of

⁷ Spencer, 2022

⁸ Morrison, p.68

their sins. Although you did not sin, there's nothing wrong with you asking God for forgiveness. The action of asking for forgiveness is an acknowledgment that what our parents have done was wrong to black people. Morrison also argues that Daniel identified with the guilt and shame of his people. He prayed, "Oh Lord, we and our king, princes, and ancestors are covered with shame because we have sin against you⁹." like Ezra, Daniel had Bing innocent of the offences against God. Still, he did not try to distance himself from the collective sand of his people. He owned his part in it as a community member. To stop mass incarceration, it is significant for white brothers to acknowledge that what their ancestors have done to black people is wrong, and they need to go to God and ask God for forgiveness.

Mass incarceration targeting black people. And we know the majority of people in prison are blacks. While in prison, we have other ethnicities, but most are blacks. We have reason to believe that there is something wrong here. The evidence shows that mass incarceration targets people of color and especially those who don't have money. I appeal to my white brothers to help us fight against the enslavement of people of color. We cannot win this fight alone.

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⁹ Morrison, p. 68

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