



# Race in a Post-Obama America: The Church Responds

*David Maxwell (Editor)*

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Recent events in the United States have provoked not just a willingness to discuss issues of racism in this country but a desire to do something meaningful to confront it. "Race in a Post-Obama America" offers concerned Christians the chance to clarify terms and issues around racism and discern how to respond.

The reader will learn the basic definitions and history around racism in the United States, be presented with current thoughts on institutional racism and what is to be done to end it, and learn about specific actions individuals and churches are taking. Designed for individual or group study, the book includes questions for reflection and discussion.

## **Race in a Post-Obama America: The Church Responds Details**

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Author : David Maxwell (Editor)

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# From Reader Review Race in a Post-Obama America: The Church Responds for online ebook

## **Matt says**

Great read as a primer on the role of the church in racial justice and the work needed from church members. Clearly explains significant terminology and reflects on them theologically. Great historical explanations in brief. Would work great for a group study or adult sunday school.

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## **Stephanie says**

Like so many other Americans, I have had questions since Ferguson. What have I been missing? Why is there still so much confusion on this topic? What is my role in this? I was thankful to win a copy of this book through Goodreads First Reads and I was excited to read it. While I don't align with the authors on everything theologically (I learned why in the last chapter), I did gain many very valuable and helpful insights while reading this book. I recommend it.

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## **Abby Pechin says**

I won this book in a Giveaway. I was not thrilled with the content and how it was presented in a biased way, but I would argue that it would make a great supplemental tool for college students or anyone wishing to learn more about racism in our country.

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## **Robert D. Cornwall says**

The election of Barack Obama as President of the United States was an important milestone in American history. Finally, a person of color had been elected to the highest office in the land. Some hailed his election as marking the beginning of a post-racial society in the United States. As we've seen of late, such a reality never came to fruition. The names Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown and the Birther Movement ring out as reminders that even though we have an African-American President, race still plays an important and often negative role in our society. The very fact that the #BlackLivesMatter movement arose is evidence of that.

As a white male Christian, reading books about race and racism isn't comfortable. Neither is acknowledging my privileges as one who is white. Even if I don't embrace white supremacy, there certain privileges accorded to me, whether I ask for them or not. By understanding that these privileges exist I am put in a better position to stand with as an ally those who because of their ethnicity and race do not share in these privileges. It is important to understand that these privileges have little to do with economics and everything to do with color.

As an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) I am expected to participate in anti-racism training. This training is designed to sensitize clergy to these realities so that we might be better able

to help our congregations move toward an anti-racist perspective. Educating ourselves to these realities is important, and there is an increasing number of books and resources that help us in this regard. One of these books is "Race in a Post-Obama America."

This book is edited by David Maxwell, the acquisitions editor for Westminster John Knox Press, the publisher of this book. It is largely a committee written book. There are ten contributors, including the editor and the author of the foreword -- Otis Moss III. All except Moss are Presbyterian. Except for the two contributors whose last names suggest they might be people of color, we're not told who is writing and what their ethnicity is.

One of the contributors, the Rev. Mary Gene Boteler, writes in the introduction that the book is especially written for white Christians living in the United States so that they might "read, discuss with others, and initiate or continue a plan of action to confront racism" (p. xviii). The book both educates and calls the reader to action.

The book is divided into two parts. Part one defines and recounts racism in six chapters. The authors define terms, explore the relationship of the Bible to racism, and then offers four chapters that provide a historical overview. In chapter three we explore the years 1492 (the date of Columbus' fateful voyage) to 1790. The later date marks the beginnings of the American nation. Chapter 4 covers 1790 to 1954 (the latter date being the moment of "Brown v. the Board of Education," the Supreme Court decision that overthrew separate but equal legislation. In the next chapter the timeline grows shorter. It takes us from 1954 to 1973, a period in which racism went from being overt to covert. Finally, in chapter 6 we explore the post-Civil Rights movement era. This final era was supposed to be the time when things would change. But in reality racism simply changed its stripes. This is the period of the New Jim Crow when mass incarceration disenfranchised large swaths of the African American community. It is a period where anti-Arab racism emerged, in part due to the war on terror. Moves toward multi-culturalism emerged but were often resisted.

If Part I offered definitions and recounted history, Part II focuses on racism today. There are five chapters in this section. The first chapter asks the question of whether the election of President Obama ended racism. The current election cycle offers us an important reminder that racism continues to exist. Chapter 8 is a difficult chapter to read for it raises the question of segregated churches and whether they imply racism. While Martin Luther King decried the reality that eleven o'clock on Sunday is the most segregated hour of the week, the authors aren't so sure that the continuing existence of ethnic churches is a necessary sign of racism. While truly integrated worship is to be welcomed, a case can be made for, at least at this moment, the continuing existence of ethnic churches. But if we do move toward multi-cultural worship it needs to be more than simply a reflection of the dominant culture's preferences without allowing for other expressions to exist. The authors write that "dominant-culture hegemony is akin to the melting-pot metaphor in which all ingredients are welcomed but are expected to surrender their distinctiveness to assume the flavor and texture of the soup" (p. 80). Better is the metaphor of the salad, where distinctive elements are present and celebrated! We have a long ways to go before this reality is widespread.

Chapter nine addresses the issue of police brutality, inviting us to consider its causes, ramifications, and offers insights into how we might as the church respond. For we who are white the police are often seen as protectors of our safety. I have very good relationships with the police in the community in which I live. But then I'm white. I've not had the negative experiences that many in communities of color have had. So I must listen and respond as requested. The reality is that in communities of color the police often are brutal in their treatment of the people. This must be stopped.

Chapter ten is written primarily to white people, like me, by contributors who are white. This chapter

addresses the challenges of white supremacy and white privilege. It serves to remind us that racism is more than prejudice. It is systemic. We who are white often miss the signs. It is telling that 80% of white youth and young adults don't like talking about race and assume that they live by a color blind code. So, what do we do? The authors provide us with eight excellent suggestions for how we who are white can address white privilege and work toward the elimination of racism. Among these include recognizing our privilege, along educating ourselves as to what this means, and then speaking up and showing up. Again, the chapter is not a comfortable read, but then it's not supposed to be.

Finally, in chapter 11, we turn to the church's response. While we may want to quickly move toward a color-blind beloved community, they tell us that there must be justice before there can be reconciliation. That will take a lot of work. It means addressing questions of reparations and looking at the way in which we engage in mission. The authors conclude that "racism is hard-wired into this country from its founding and then through its constitution and religious, social, economic, and political life. Undoing it will take more than reading a book or going to one protest. But change and transformation and hope are also in the DNA of the Christian Disciple" (p. 124). Addressing the challenge won't be easy, but this should not deter us or lead to complacency. That is not an option.

It's a tough read, and that is to be expected. It challenges and educates. If I have any critique is that the conversation remains too binary between black and white. While Native Americans, Latinos/as, and Asians are addressed, it's mostly on the margins. If we're going to engage in true redeeming experiences we'll need to broaden our horizons. Nonetheless, as the current political situation reminds us-- there is much work to be done if we're to truly become that Beloved Community envisioned by Dr. King.

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### **Karla says**

I read this book in entire afternoon. It is what my colleague and friend Martha Spong describes as a "great primer on race in America" and a great resource for congregational discussion, especially for majority white churches. There are discussion questions all the way through, and most essentially, it's written for American Christians. I look forward to sharing this with my congregation! Thank you Martha for pointing me to this book.

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### **Michelle Kidwell says**

Race in a Post-Obama America

The Church Responds

by David Maxwell

Westminster John Knox Press

I was given a copy of a Race in A Post-Obama America the church responds through the publisher and their partnership with Netgalley in exchange for my honest review which is as follows:

In this book the author points out that even today racism is something that many face. The author describes racism as racial prejudice plus institutional power. He also goes on to describe different forms of racism.

The book goes on to talk about what the Bible says about racism. And then he goes on to show both ways some people misinterpret the ways the Bible looks at racism.

The book goes on to show us that history itself is often biased.

Maxwell goes on to tell us that even Segregated Churches imply racism.

I give Race in A Post Obama America five out of five stars

Happy Reading

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### **M. says**

Multiple points of view from different writers. Contemporary discussion. I won this in a contest and it was interesting to read.

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### **Martha says**

I highly recommend this great primer on race in America, which offers historical and present-day context in short, matter-of-fact chapters. The incorporated discussion questions lend themselves to use with church groups. If you are looking for a way in to congregational discussion, particularly in a majority white church, this book is a great resource.

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