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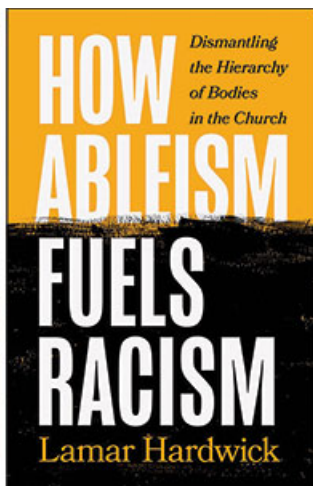
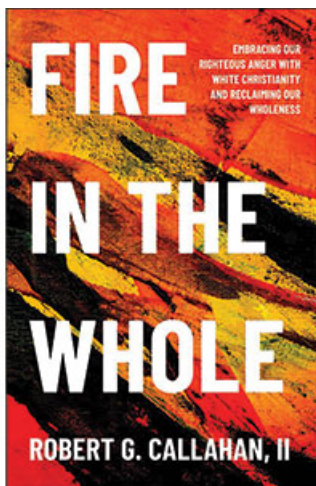
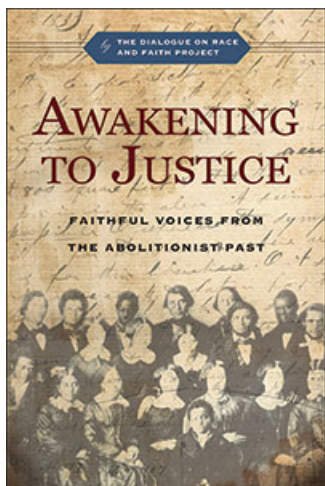
Heeding the Spiritual Call for Racial Justice

By Emma Wenner | Feb 09, 2024

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Racial justice is a focus of many religion publishers, as evidenced by nearly a dozen titles releasing in 2024 and early 2025. These books are designed for readers of diverse spiritual backgrounds and aim to provide guidance on eliminating racism, creating an equitable society, and healing Black communities.

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IVP Academic has three forthcoming titles on the intersection of faith and race. "I'm sure it goes pretty much without saying that racialization and the problems it brings are among our thorniest troubles," says associate publisher and academic editorial director Jon Boyd, "so I think it's wise to get all the help we can from every quarter we can."

Releasing in March, *Awakening to Justice: Faithful Voices from the Abolitionist Past* features the diary of 19th-century abolitionist and missionary David Ingraham. Historian Chris Momany found the diary in 2015 in a storage closet at Adrian College in Michigan. After he tapped fellow historian Doug Strong for help studying it, 14 additional scholars joined to form the Dialogue on Race and Faith Project. Members and contributors to *Awakening to Justice* include Estrelida Y. Alexander, Esther Chung-Kim, David D. Daniels III, Diane

Leclerc, Albert G. Miller, R. Matthew Sigler, and Jemar Tisby. Examining Ingraham's writings, as well as those of two of his Black colleagues, James Bradley and Nancy Prince, the authors of *Awakening to Justice* explore the current reality of racism through the context of history.

"The appeal of unearthing a buried historical treasure goes a long way, but in this case that's just the start—because the coauthors want not just to preserve a lost document but also to put into practice the insights about racial justice and collaboration its history suggests," Boyd says. "The

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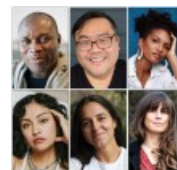
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past may be intrinsically interesting, but it's even better when a healing balm, or a bracing tonic, from it. That's what the Dialogue on Race and Faith Project and *Awakening to Justice* aim to do."

IVP Academic will publish two additional titles on faith and race, one by historian Karen J. Johnson and the other by anthropologist Christine Jeske, in 2025 and 2026, respectively. Both yet-to-be-titled works center on interracial communities working together to end race-based discrimination, and are intended to run parallel to *Awakening to Justice*. "Let's do a lot of these books," Boyd says, "until all our communities learn what we need to."

Righting religion's wrongs

Christians are commanded by Jesus to welcome the stranger, protect the vulnerable, and stand against evil in all its forms, but racism has a long and lasting history within white churches. "Religion has too often been an exacerbating factor in social problems, with Christian voices speaking most loudly against equality and inclusion," says Jessica Miller Kelley, senior acquisitions editor at Westminster John Knox. "So WJK seeks authors who boldly advocate for justice as the most faithful expression of following Jesus."

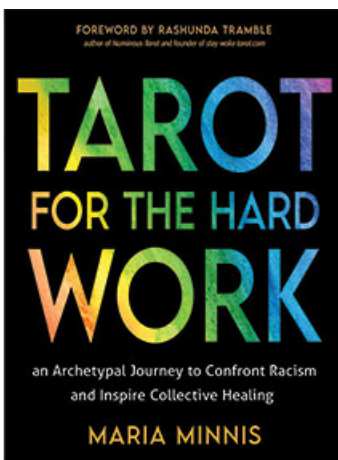
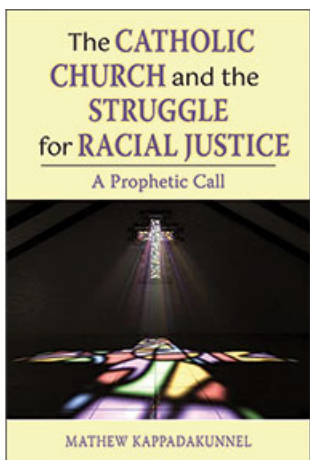
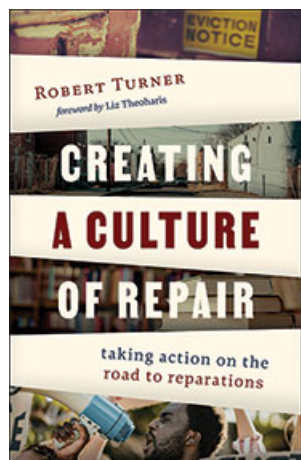
New to WJK's list is *Fire in the Whole: Embracing Our Righteous Anger with White Christianity and Reclaiming Our Wholeness* by Robert G. Callahan (Sept.). In it, criminal defense attorney Callahan offers empathy for the pain Black Christians experience when white Christians are complicit in the perpetuation of racism—such as when they fail to uphold liberty and justice for all, or ignore the biblical call to love their neighbor. Anger, Callahan writes, is righteous and holy, and it can motivate Christian readers of all backgrounds to work toward liberation and inclusivity.

"*Fire in the Whole* specifically calls out white Christians who should be leading the fight against white supremacy but instead turn a color-blind eye to prejudice and injustice both in the church and across U.S. society," Kelley says. "As Callahan writes, 'Their supposed faith in Christ apparently provides them no insight into how Christ calls us to love our neighbors.'"

Another title aiming to hold religious groups accountable for silence in the face of injustice is *How Ableism Fuels Racism: Dismantling the Hierarchy of Bodies in the Church* by Lamar Hardwick (Brazos, Feb.). The book explores how the belief that some bodies are superior to others led to racial discrimination in both American culture and the church. Hardwick, a pastor and author of *Disability in the Church*, calls on churches to address ableism, while also offering steps readers can take to dismantle both ableism and racism. *PW*'s starred review called the book "a searing indictment of the ableist theology" that features "fine-grained historical detail and scrupulous analysis."

Looking specifically at the world's largest Christian body, Mathew Kappadakunnel, who has written for the *National Catholic Reporter*, chronicles experiences with racism along his spiritual journey in *The Catholic Church and the Struggle for Racial Justice: A Prophetic Call* (Paulist, Apr.). According to Donna Crilly, senior academic editor at Paulist, Kappadakunnel spotlights hypocrisy and division within the Catholic Church as well as in Catholic culture. "The author draws on the theological tradition of Christian teaching going back to the earliest centuries, especially the idea that we are all created in the image of God," Crilly says. "He is most insistent on his insight that racism is indeed a heresy against this ancient dogma, and that it goes against the church's 'pro-life' stance."

Additionally, Crilly notes, the book examines the parable of the Good Samaritan, asking readers to consider the question, Who is your neighbor?



Healing a broken society

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Authors focused on restoring harmed communities are turning to spiritual teachings and practices to help confront racism in new books.

Publishing in May from WaterBrook, *Brown Faces, White Spaces: Confronting Systemic Racism to Bring Healing and Restoration* examines nine areas where Brown and Black Americans experience inequities—including the church. Author Latasha Morrison, whose *Be the Bridge* was named 2021's book of the year by the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association, invites readers to join what she calls a "bridge building movement" in which historically white spaces are reformed and systems that work for the good of all are created.

Laura Barker, v-p and publisher for WaterBrook and Multnomah, who edited *Brown Faces, White Spaces*, notes the "inextricable link between faith and justice," and says she hopes the book can help "those who follow Jesus stand against false narratives, commit their voices and resources to advocate for justice, and take action in doing the good work God has called us to."

Chuck Mingo and Troy Jackson, who founded Undivided, an organization dedicated to helping businesses, organizations, and churches take action to advance racial justice, are sharing their methods for mobilization in *Living Undivided: Loving Courageously for Racial Healing and Justice* (Baker, out now). Brian Vos, editorial director at Baker Books, says he decided to publish the book because the authors' message is backed by significant experience and a ministry that works. "Their message isn't about just hoping and wishing for healing and justice," Vos says. "It's about actionable change."

For readers interested in tarot, mind-body-spirit publisher Weiser offers *Tarot for the Hard Work: An Archetypal Journey to Confront Racism and Inspire Collective Healing*, by writer and artist Maria Minnis (out now). The workbook-style guide to divination cards is designed for "anyone who has ever felt overwhelmed or outraged by the discrimination prevalent in today's society," according to the publisher, and Minnis makes a case for how tarot can be a tool for change.

Making inroads to reparations

Building a just American society requires both cultural and legislative reform. Three new books explore ways to disrupt the status quo and initiate institutional change, including implementing reparations for people of African descent.

Brenda Salter McNeil, author of *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0* and *Becoming Brave: Finding the Courage to Pursue Racial Justice Now*, shares a vision for a more equitable future by drawing on the biblical story of Nehemiah in her new book, *Empowered to Repair: Becoming People Who Mend Broken Systems and Heal Our Communities* (Brazos, May). Reparations, she writes, "give all people an opportunity to experience healing and become who God created them to be." (For our q&a with McNeil, see "Lessons from the School of Hard Knocks," p. 18.)

Creating a Culture of Repair: Taking Action on the Road to Reparations (WJK, Apr.) by Robert Turner, a pastor and commissioner for the National African American Reparations Commission, provides 100 actions readers can take to repair the effects of racial inequality. The book is divided into categories of individual, social, institutional, and spiritual repair. Examples of reparative actions from each category, respectively, include "Decolonize Your Bookshelf," "Fund Black Art Galleries or Exhibits," "Reimburse Victims of Urban Removal," and "Redirect Foreign Missions to a Black Church." And while financial recompense will require large-scale government action, these acts of reparation are intended to help "balance economic injustice, undo hurtful decisions from decades past, and rally public support for bold and principled legislation," according to the publisher.

Joel Edward Goza, a professor of ethics and the director of academic partnerships at Simmons College of Kentucky, examines the ideological roots of white supremacy and argues for the necessity of a reparations process that closes the wealth gap between Black and white Americans in *Rebirth of a Nation: Reparations and Remaking America* (Eerdmans, Sept.). The creation of a more perfect union, Goza writes, starts with "the work of repentance, repayment, and repair."

A version of this article appeared in the 02/12/2024 issue of *Publishers Weekly* under the headline: Heeding the Spiritual Call for Racial Justice

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