



BRAVE CHURCH  
TACKLING TOUGH TOPICS  
TOGETHER

Antiracism

Part II

# Prayer to End Racism

Gracious God, you created all of us in your image. Open our hearts and minds to this reality. Let us recognize that we are all Your beloved sons and daughters.

You are community: Father, Son, and Spirit. Help us to foster community in our neighborhoods. Teach us to be one as you are one. Teach us to love as you love.

Open our eyes to the sin of racism. Show us where it exists in our society. Please grant us the courage to denounce it, and always with a loving heart like yours.

Enlighten our minds to be aware of our own weaknesses and gently teach us not to act out of our own biases. Teach us to celebrate our differences and to see diversity as strength.

Please grant us the grace to work together for an end to racism in our world. We long to live together in your kingdom as brothers and sisters.

Amen.

# Covenant Rules

## **RULE 1**

We will accept conflict and commit to the way of kindness.

## **RULE 2**

We will take responsibility for how our own words are received.

## **RULE 3**

We will ask permission before we challenge someone's views on a subject.

## **RULE 4**

We will show respect for one another and graciously receive feedback if someone feels disrespected.

## **RULE 5**

We will use 'I' instead of 'you' statements. We will not accuse or attack."

## **RULE 6**

Give everyone who wants to speak an opportunity to do so.

# Topics on Antiracism

## April 12

What is the difference between Antiracism and Racism?

How do we address Institutional Racism vs. Individual Racism?

What effect does White Privilege have on the race issue?

## April 19

White Privilege and the Caste System

Reparations – To be or not to be

Microaggressions – What are they?

# Definitions

- The Caste System
- Reparations
- Microaggressions
- Unconscious Bias

# The Caste System

An artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value that sets the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of other groups on the basis of ancestry and often immutable traits, traits that would be neutral in the abstract but are ascribed life-and-death meaning in a hierarchy favoring the dominant caste.

This hierarchy helps determine standing and respect, assumptions of beauty and competence, and even who gets benefit of the doubt and access to resources.

The concept of caste has been around for thousands of years: it predates the idea of race, which is ... only 400 or 500 years old, dating back to the transatlantic slave trade.

Caste is the term that is more precise than race; it is more comprehensive, and it gets at the underlying infrastructure that often we cannot see, but that is there undergirding much of the inequality and injustices and disparities that we live with in this country.

As a means of assigning value to entire swaths of humankind, caste guides each of us often beyond the reaches of our awareness. It imbeds into our bones an unconscious ranking of human characteristics and sets forth the rules, expectations, and stereotypes that have been used to justify brutalities against entire groups within our species.

# What Is the Caste System?

- In America, race is the primary tool and the visible decoy, the front man, for caste. Race does the heavy lifting for a caste system that demands a means of human division. If we have been trained to see humans in the language of race, then caste is the underlying grammar that we encode as children, as when learning our mother tongue. Caste, like grammar, becomes an invisible guide not only to how we speak, but to how we process information, the autonomic calculations that figure into a sentence without our having to think about it.
- Caste and race are neither synonymous nor mutually exclusive. They can and do coexist in the same culture and serve to reinforce each other. Race, in the United States, is the visible agent of the unseen force of caste. Caste is the bones, race the skin. Race is what we can see, the physical traits that have been given arbitrary meaning and become shorthand for who a person is. Caste is the powerful infrastructure that holds each group in its place.

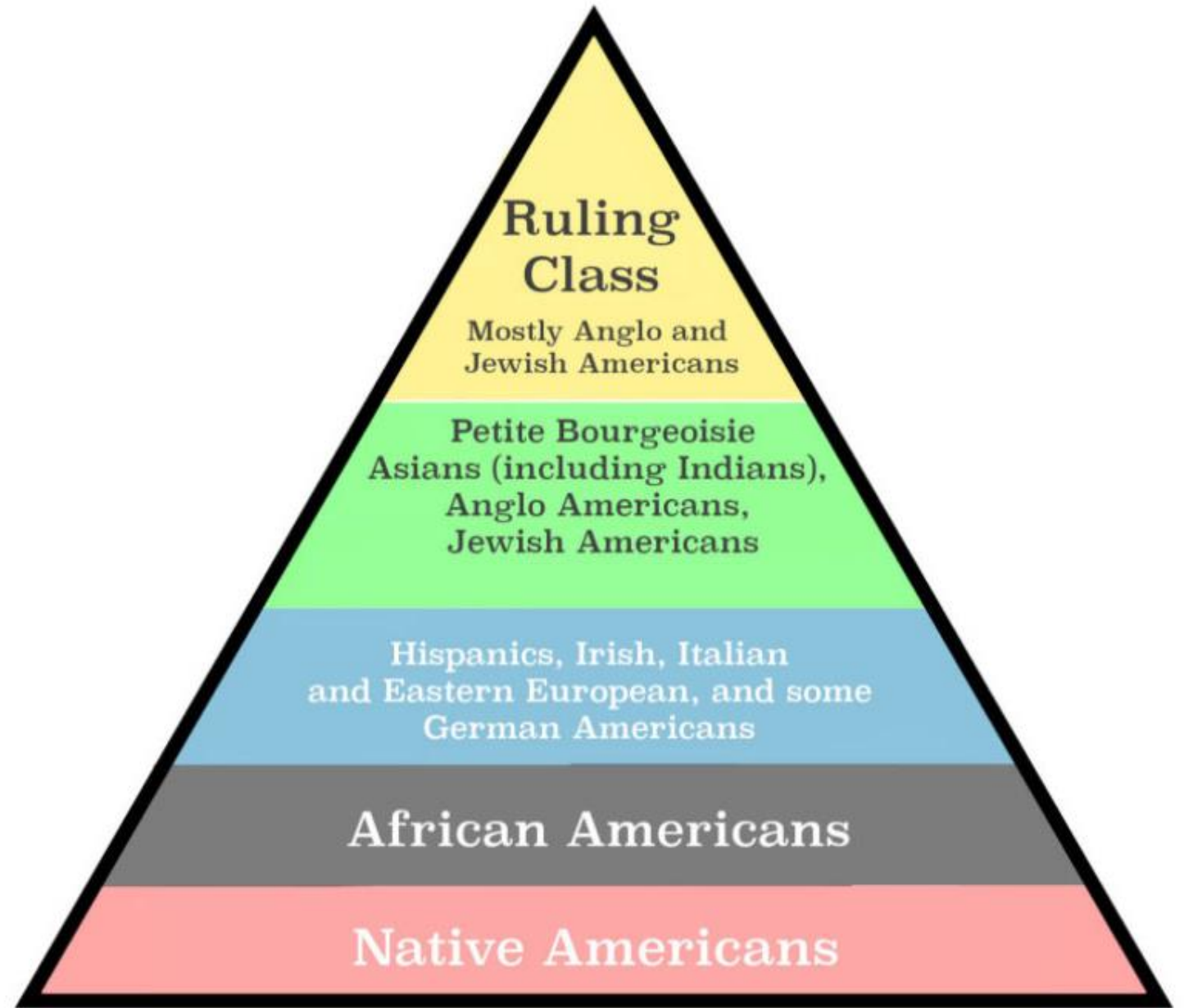
# What Is the Caste System? (continued)

- To justify their plans, they (the predominantly white and male and powerful ancestors of our ancestors) took preexisting notions of their centrality, reinforced by their self-interested interpretation of the Bible, and created a hierarchy of who could do what, who could own what, who was on the top and who was on the bottom and who was in between...There developed a caste system, based upon what people looked like, an internalized ranking, unspoken, unnamed, unacknowledged by everyday citizens even as they go about their lives adhering to it and acting upon it subconsciously to this day...Its very invisibility is what gives it power and longevity. And though it may move in and out of consciousness, though it may flare and reassert itself in times of upheaval and recede in times of relative calm, it is an ever-present through line in the country's operation.
- Just as DNA is the code of instructions for cell development, caste is the operating system for economic, political, and social interactions in the United States from the time of its gestation.

***Caste makes distinctions where God has made none.***



# The American Caste System



# The Characteristics of White Supremacy Culture



# **Discussion Questions**

Think about white privilege as the highest level of the caste system. Those who identify as white are the highest level, with the most affluent at the top of the level. Does this change your perceptions of the term 'white privilege?'

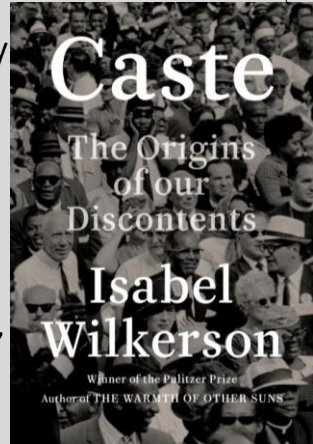
# 'America is an old house'

## Isabel Wilkerson on race and caste in America

. . . . We in the developed world are like homeowners who inherited a house on a piece of land that is beautiful on the outside, but whose soil is unstable loam and rock, heaving and contracting over generations, cracks patched but the deeper ruptures waved away for decades, centuries even. Many people may rightly say, "I had nothing to do with how this all started. I have nothing to do with the sins of the past. My ancestors never attacked Indigenous people, never owned slaves." And, yes. Not one of us was here when this house was built. Our immediate ancestors may have had nothing to do with it, but here we are, the current occupants of a property with stress cracks and bowed walls and fissures built into the foundation. We are the heirs to whatever is right or wrong with it. We did not erect the uneven pillars or joists, but they are ours to deal with now. And any further deterioration is, in fact, on our hands.

Unaddressed, the ruptures and diagonal cracks will not fix themselves. The toxins will not go away but, rather, will spread, leach, and mutate, as they already have. When people live in an old house, they come to adjust to the idiosyncrasies and outright dangers skulking in an old structure. They put buckets under a wet ceiling, prop up groaning floors, learn to step over that rotting wood tread in the staircase. The awkward becomes acceptable, and the unacceptable becomes merely inconvenient. Live with it long enough, and the unthinkable becomes normal. Exposed over the generations, we learn to believe that the incomprehensible is the way that life is supposed to be. . . .

Like other old houses, America has an unseen skeleton, a caste system that is as central to its operation as are the studs and joists that we cannot see in the physical buildings we call home. Caste is the infrastructure of our divisions. It is the architecture of human hierarchy, the subconscious code of instructions for maintaining, in our case, a four-hundred-year-old social order. Looking at caste is like holding the country's x-ray up to the light. A caste system is an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value that sets the presumed supremacy of one group against the presumed inferiority of other groups on the basis of ancestry and often immutable traits, traits that would be neutral in the abstract but are ascribed life-and-death meaning in a hierarchy favoring the dominant caste whose forebears designed it. A caste system uses rigid, often arbitrary boundaries to keep the ranked groupings apart, distinct from one another and in their assigned places. . .



# Reparations

The making of amends for a wrong one has done, by paying money to or otherwise helping those who have been wronged.

Forms of reparation include **restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition.**

The aim of reparation is usually to eliminate, as far as possible, the consequences of the illegal act and to restore the situation that would have existed if the act had not been committed.

*...the payment of reparations would represent America's maturation out of the childhood myth of its innocence into a wisdom worthy of its founders.*

*Ta-Nehisi Coates*

# The Case for Reparations

- Reparations are not just about slavery but also centuries of theft and racial terror
- Abraham Lincoln offered funds (maybe \$300 per person) to the landholders freeing their slaves
- It involves stealing something from someone. Example: using our tax monies to build public facilities that then can only be used by white people
- A lot of discomfort
- 250 years of enslavement followed by 150 years of terror
- We are still paying (2017) pensions to heirs of Civil War widows
- Germany, South Africa, Canada, Chili – their governments gave reparations to those they mistreated

# The Case for Reparations (continued)

- In 1988 reparations were paid to surviving Japanese Americans in incarceration camps WWII
- Investment in underdeveloped neighborhoods, doesn't have to be monetary, commissions for collective healing access to skills training, investments in underdeveloped neighborhoods, major legal reforms
- Has yet to apologize for slavery
- Thriving free black settlement, Seneca Village, was destroyed to make room for Central Park in the 1850s; can be considered one of the first gentrified black urban sites in New York.

***Until America reckons with the moral debt it has accrued—and the practical damage it has done—to generations of black Americans, it will fail to live up to its own ideals.***

***Ta-Nehisi Coates***

# Common Challenges

- Obtaining political support and adequate funding
- Ensuring fair, comprehensive, and transparent victim identification and participation
- Fairly addressing the needs of massive numbers of victims and a broad range of violations and abuses
- Dealing with issues of gender, class, marginalization, and other disparities
- Creating a scheme that adequately and fairly deals with the scope and range of victimization
- Relating reparation programs to other transitional justice mechanisms



# **Discussion Questions**

Should the United States offer reparations to people of color in this country?

What types of reparations would work for those wronged in this country?

Who is responsible for providing reparations?

# Microaggressions

Microaggression is a term used for commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental slights, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative attitudes toward stigmatized or culturally marginalized groups.

# Nonverbal Microaggressions

Nonverbal microaggressions are expressed through body language, facial expressions or gestures that convey hurtful or discriminatory messages to a certain group of people.

# Types of Microaggressions

- Inappropriate jokes
- Malicious comments
- Singling-out students
- Setting exams and project due dates on religious holidays
- Stereotyping

# Examples of Microaggressions

- “Why do you have to be so loud/animated/aggressive?”
- “I don’t even think of you as Black!”
- “When I look at you, I don't see color.”
- “You’re pretty for a dark-skinned girl.”
- “You are very articulate.”
- “You don’t *sound* Black.”
- A retail employee follows a Black shopper around the store for no reason.
- A person in authority assumes that a Black person cannot afford an item in the store, a meal at an expensive restaurant, a first-class seat on a plane, or a house in a nice neighborhood.
- A Black person is pulled over by police in an affluent neighborhood and asked where they’re going; then told that there have been break-ins nearby recently— which appears to be the reason for initiating the traffic stop.
- Black executives are presumed to be support staff in a professional setting.
- The assumption that a Black student on an ivy-league campus must be an athlete.
- Familiarity or sense of entitlement to a Black woman’s body. For example, touching her hair without her permission.

# Ways to Respond to Microaggressions

- Pause and take a deep breath. Do not act with anger as it will not help the situation.
- Decide when and if you want to respond.
- Assume there is no malicious intent. Approach the situation with a positive attitude and give the individual the benefit of the doubt.
- Focus on the event and not the person. The goal is not to win a point or to make your colleague feel bad. It is about helping them understand how their comments or actions are hurtful.
- Discuss your feelings about the impact of the incident. Use emotional intelligence to help diffuse the situation. Try to understand the situation and be empathetic.
- Actively listen.
- Document the incident(s).
- If you choose not to address the interaction directly, you should process your experience with an ally, who will help validate your experience. Or do something creative to express your feelings about the experience (i.e., write your feelings in a journal).

# Unconscious Bias

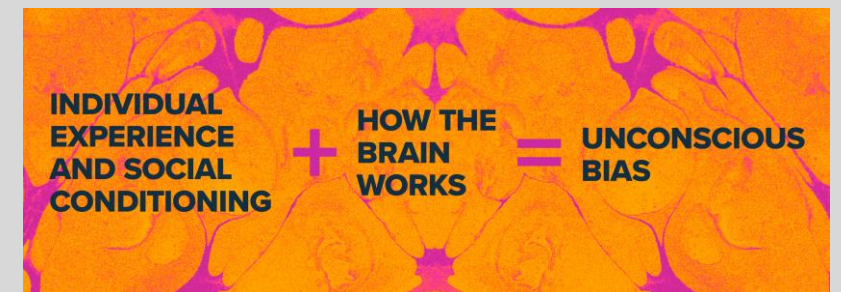
Unconscious bias is when we make judgments or decisions on the basis of our prior experience, our own personal deep-seated thought patterns, assumptions or interpretations, and we are not aware that we are doing it.

It is often defined as prejudice or unsupported judgments in favor of or against one thing, person, or group as compared to another, in a way that is usually considered unfair.

In common usage, bias has a negative connotation because of its association with terms like “prejudice” and “discrimination.”

# Unconscious Bias in Our Everyday Lives

- A college professor being more likely to respond to a student's email based on the perceived race or ethnicity of the student given their name
- Doctors recommending less pain medication for Black patients than white patients with the same medical condition
- Black preschool-aged boys being disciplined and expelled at much greater numbers than their white counterparts
- White applicants being called for interviews at a ratio of 2 to 1 compared to Black applicants with the same resume
- Romantic movies that tend to make the main stars white people, not acknowledging that people of color fall in love too





## **Discussion**

## **Questions**

The first step to addressing our unconscious biases is to acknowledge that everyone has them. Let's take a moment to reflect on our actions and decisions and think about what motivated them. Did your actions benefit a particular group of people in an unfair way?

# **Discussion**

# **Questions**

Is the church complicit in spectating racial/social justice?

What individual actions will you take to become an antiracist?

# Dream a World

I dream a world where man  
No other man will scorn,  
Where love will bless the earth  
And peace its paths adorn  
I dream a world where all  
Will know sweet freedom's way,  
Where greed no longer saps the soul  
Nor avarice blights our day.  
A world I dream where black or white,  
Whatever race you be,  
Will share the bounties of the earth  
And every man is free,  
Where wretchedness will hang its head  
And joy, like a pearl,  
Attends the needs of all mankind—  
Of such I dream, my world!

*Langston Hughes*

# References

## Books

- Ibram X. Kendi – *How to Be an Antiracist*
- Ta-Nehisi Coates – *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy*
- Clint Smith – *How the Word Is Passed*
- Isabel Wilkerson – *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*

## Articles

- *Calgary Anti-Racism Education (CARED) Glossary*
- *How to Stop the Racism in You, How to Stop the Racist in You – Mindful*
- *Peggy McIntosh: How to recognize your white privilege – and use it to fight inequality | TED Talk*
- *Reparations as a Key to Reconciliation with Communities of Slavery Descent: A Matter of Social Justice*, Pamela A. Bridgeman and Debbie Kemp, presented at NACSW Convention, November, 2017
- *America Is an Old House: an excerpt by Isabel Wilkerson on race and caste in America*
- *Reparations Are Profoundly Biblically Correct*, an article on the PCUSA website summarizing a 2022 Black History Month forum on reparations for well-being.