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No Church in the Wild

Missiological Education in a Post-Civil Rights Era

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Good day friends and colleagues. I come to you with a heavy heart. As I sit preparing this talk, the current time, context, climate, and culture in the United States is fraught with racial, gender, and cultural strains the likes of which have not been seen since the Jim Crow Era. It is a time unlike any other. While the period prior to the 1970's was direct and intense racism, the present context utilizes social media, with passive and micro-aggression to create its hegemony and culture of hate. I struggle as a racially Black male living in the U.S. and trying to live out a faith rooted in Christianity—particularly when the history of Christianity has been shown to be objectionable to not only the color of my skin, but my narrative, body, and life.[1] The events that have taken the main stage in the media's public sphere started to erupt, at least personally, during the Troy Davis campaign. Here, a young Black male, who was convicted of shooting and killing a White police officer, sat on death row. When I began to research the issue and the Davis case, I found little physical evidence was actually found, and the "eye witness" later recanted the story of seeing Davis murder the police officer.[2] Amid a strong social media campaign and even phone calls to elected officials, Troy Davis was executed on September 21, 2011. Then came Trayvon Martin and later Michael Brown[3]; both the Ferguson and Baltimore uprisings; and the terrorist acts of Dylann Roof in Charleston, South Carolina. Roof mercilessly murdered nine Black church members of the historic Emmanuel A.M.E Church. Then came Tamir Rice, Dante Parker, John Crawford III, Sandra Bland, and in Chicago, Laquan McDonald. This list could continue with names as it seems the killing of Black bodies has become an epidemic sport in the U.S. All of this time the use of Christian discourse is used to continue the subjugation of Black bodies in the use of phrases and words such as "forgive," "love your enemies," and "bless those that curse you." And while in allegory, at least, those are hoped for and desired, the reality is that when White America feels threatened or is attacked (e.g. 9/11), the opposite of these

1 One must consider the use of Christianity as both a racist and violent tool of oppression towards many Africans and African Americans—not to mention other ethnic-minority groups such as Mexicans, Chinese, Japanese, and Native Americans. This will be engaged more later in this text as it relates to missions and colonialization.

2 I do realize this is a controversial case. In fact, most Black and White cases typically are. From my research and investigation, Troy Davis should have had another trial and the new evidence should have been admitted into that trial. I am fully aware that many White evangelicals took issue with the Davis trial and sided with the courts. This is part of the ongoing tensions in the U.S. and especially in Christian evangelical circles.

3 This is in no way minimizing the women and other Black youth who have been murdered and/or killed at the hands of either police officers or "vigilante" White citizens. What I suggest here are the capstone events that have shaped both our nation and where I personally stand as a Black Christian male.

phrases is taken and a type of "holy violence" is often utilized.[4] And while I see White evangelical youth dancing to Lecrae at one of his concerts, the irony comes when those same youth tell me things like "Michael Brown wasn't innocent and probably deserved to die." Or "These 'thugs' were asking for it." Or the classic, "This was part of God's plan."[5] They say such things as they enjoy and embrace Black culture.

Further, the events that culminated on November 8, 2016, shook many of us in the ethnic-minority community when Donald J. Trump was elected as the 45th president of the United States.[6] The election of such a figure in the office of presidency, sent a direct message to ethnic-minority communities that their voice did not matter.[7] Our foretold "hope" of the Obama legacy was

4 The use of violence and the construct of a "just God" is a matter we will be engaged with briefly in this text. For a greater examination see Daniel White Hodge, *Hip Hop's Hostile Gospel: A Post-Soul Theological Exploration* ed. Warren Goldstein, vol. 6, Center for Critical Research on Religion and Harvard University (Boston, MA: Brill Academic, 2017), 122-47.

5 These are all direct quotes taken from two summer youth events in 2014 and 2015. The latter quote came from George Zimmerman's interview with Sean Hannity (2012) in which he stated that the killing of Trayvon was part of "God's plan" and that he "prays for them [Martin's family] daily." This type of discourse is common and is part of the ideological structure that many post-civil rights millennials refuse to engage with and/or adopt. This has ramifications for Evangelicalism as many in the post-civil rights millennial generation view Evangelicals as outdated, racist, sexist, and having a very skewed reality of who "God" is.

6 While the goal here is not to condemn those who favor a conservative perspective, it is, however, important to note that Trump's rhetoric, policies, and many of his appointed cabinet members are aligned with an Alt-Right worldview which is in direct contradiction to any social justice or intercultural work. Therefore, it is difficult to entertain the notion of Trump being "for all Americans" when it is clear, by his actions and cabinet, that he is only for the continuation of Whiteness as a standard for "American." I would challenge anyone who voted for Trump to defend someone like Steven Bannon, for example, and the rhetoric of hate he has spewed over the years towards Jews, Blacks, Palestinians, and even women that his perspective fits as a "Christian worldview." It is imperative that we critically wrestle with these matters because they are of utmost importance for anyone who regards Christianity as their faith.

7 It is also noted in emerging research that the presence and notion of "growing diversity" creates fear in many Whites who concern themselves with the changing electorate. This also illustrates the fear which has existed in many White churches for decades regarding growing ethnic-minority populations, Brenda Major, Alison Blodorn, and Gregory Major Blascovich, "The Threat of Increasing Diversity: Why Many White Americans Support Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election," *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 21, no. 6 (931-940). A type of warning, if you will, was issued in the classic text *Divided by Faith : Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) by Michael Emerson and Christian Smith which, even then, outlined the growing

shown to be mythological in nature and the optimism that was of the coming "demographical changes"[8] in which minorities were to finally triumph and take "power" for justice was just another neo-liberal delusion. It also shook those of us who have dedicated our life to intercultural and racial justice work that 81% of White Evangelicals voted for such a person like Trump and continue to support his policies.[9] That was an awakening for me and it made me question the work I do. Had it mattered? Did any of it sink in? How could all the material published and spoken on just go ignored?

All these questions developed while attempting to prepare this talk. My heart is heavy and my mind full. I ask for your prayers as we enter into this discussion.

I ask, what does faith look like in this context? What does a missiological response feel like when the bodies of Black youth are celebrated and adored on one platform, yet hated and seen as of little worth on the other? What does all of this mean for those doing short term missions in domestic urban contexts—specifically if that ministry favored Trump in the election? How might the dissonance towards multi-ethnic life be salient in popular culture yet manifested in an artist like Lecrae? Do we as mission-minded people take race, gender, and class into account when we "evangelize?" In addition, how does one contend with someone like Darren Wilson who spoke of Michael Brown as a "demon" coming after him? Does the Christian faith, as the mystic and Black Christian theologian, Howard Thurman states, "make room" for concerns such as racism and the disinherited?[10] Some still argue that the only "ministry" or "missions" worth doing is preaching the "gospel" to the "lost" and that is where our mission ends.

I would take issue with ministry and mission defined so narrowly. Woven into that definition is a construct around missions and who those missions are directed at, who does missions, and why those missions are conducted. I would

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gap within Evangelical churches.

8 Those that are rooted in the notion that somehow the rise of the ethnic-minority population in the U.S. will somehow skew voting to reflect a more "diverse" country and one that has an emphasis on social justice. While no one can accurately predict the future, and I too would argue that possibly in two or three generations we may very well be in such a place within the U.S., as of now, it is not the case and if we have learned anything from the history of South Africa, we know that those in power do not have to have the majority in ethnic numbers.

9 See Gregory A. Smith and Jessica Martínez, "How the Faithful Voted: A Preliminary 2016 Analysis," in *Fact Tank: News in the Numbers* (Washington D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2016); Myriam Renaud, "Myths Debunked: Why Did White Evangelical Christians Vote for Trump?," in *The Martin Marty Center for the Advanced Study of Religion* (Chicago, IL: The Univeristy of Chicago 2017).

10 Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1976).

contend with Richard Kyle that, "Reflecting the old Puritan heritage and American individualism, evangelicals focus on abortion and sexual immorality while downplaying the issues of poverty, racism, and social injustice. When they address such problems, they believe that the problems can be solved primarily through individual, church, or local efforts."[11] Further, the agency of race, gender, and class are lost within that narrow definition. Given the current state of American Christianity, race, gender, and class can no longer be avoided. I would argue that one of the reasons Christianity is viewed as irrelevant, useless, sexist, racist, and exclusive is a result of this narrowly defined concept around ministry and missions. The simplicity it depicts is much too utopian in a world that has rejected almost any form of utopianism[12] and rather give creed to complexity, mystery, ambiguity, and a disruptivist worldview. "The Gospel" means nothing to someone who lives in a constant state of terror from institutional racism personified in a police uniform. "Jesus' good news" is just empty discourse to those whose lives are disrupted by short-term missionaries who are only around for selfies, newsletters, and narcissistic emotions taking advantage of a people's misery and despair. Therefore, we find ourselves in a quandary at this point in Christian history, a quandary of values and morals. Whose narrative will win—conservative or liberal?

I would suggest that the issues we face as Christians and missiologists alike are much more multifaceted and broader than those binary constructs such as left vs. right. They are much broader than simply saying ministry and missions ends at the acceptance of Jesus into one's life. I would assert that the issues we face in terms of racism, sexism, fascism, and classism are worsened by a myriad of media outlets claiming to be "fact-checking" or "truth tellers" which drive people deeper into their binary corners and thereby ignore a plethora of complexity in the middle. Thus, a church in the wild is needed. A church that embraces a mission of complexity, mystery, ambiguity, and high concentrations of doubt. The same mindset that makes up large portions of this era and this generation's ethos. A church in the wild bold enough to disrupt the commonplace of American Evangelicalism and create a much more contextual approach to Jesus. A church in the wild creative enough to

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11 Richard G. Kyle, *Evangelicalism : An Americanized Christianity* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 314.

12 In fact, most post-soul theorists resist simplicity and utopianism as a form of thinking and life. See Dick Hebdige, "Postmodernism and 'the Other Side'," in *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*, ed. John Storey (London, England: Pearson Prentice Hall, 1998). Also, Garth Alper, "Making Sense out of Postmodern Music?," *Popular Music and Society* 24, no. 4 (2000); Nelson George, *Post-Soul Nation : The Explosive, Contradictory, Triumphant, and Tragic 1980s as Experienced by African Americans (Previously Known as Blacks and before That Negroes)* (New

use Hip Hop and its theological core13 as a missiological premise. A church in the wild confrontational enough to interrupt White supremacy in American Christianity.

A church in the wild, that does not yet exist.

There is No Church In The Wild

Jay Z and Kanye West's song from their 2011 album *Watch The Throne*, "No Church In The Wild" lays out the genesis for this book:

> Human beings in a mob
>
> What's a mob to a king?
>
> What's a king to a god?
>
> What's a god to a non-believer?
>
> Who don't believe in anything?

Note the progression of the chorus. It follows a linear hierarchy of reasoning. Human beings as a group, a community, and/or a specific locality, but what does that even matter to someone like a king or high-established official? In other words, with all the issues and problems someone has on a moment-by-moment basis, why would a king—and I would add queen to this equation—care one bit about those issues? How might something like the Laquan McDonald murder by a police officer affect a high city official like the mayor? How might something as trivial as a parking ticket—whose monetary effect could devastate a family on a very tight budget—distress someone like the president of the United States? But the chorus continues; what is a king to a god? This type of analogy and symbolism repeats itself continually throughout our Bible. Matthew 6:33 urges us to seek first, the kingdom of God, John 18:36 shows Jesus saying how his kingdom is not of this world, Daniel 2:44 tells of God setting up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, and Zechariah reminds us that one day God will be king over all of the earth. Throughout the Bible, there are references which give credence to God not caring much for the kingdoms that humans create God's kingdom is much more important and much more tangible. So, what's an earthly king to a god? Yet, the chorus

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York, NY: Viking, 2004); Mark Anthony Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Paul C. Taylor, "Post-Black, Old Black," *African American Review* 41, no. 4 (2007); Joseph Winters, "Unstrange Bedfellows: Hip Hop and Religion," *Religion Compass* 5, no. 6 (2011).

13 A theology of suffering, a theology of community, a theology of the Hip Hop Jesuz, a theology of social action and justice, and a theology of the profane Daniel White Hodge, *The Soul of Hip Hop: Rimbs Timbs & A Cultural Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: Inner Varsity Press, 2010).

line comes back, almost to a singularized point in asking, what is a god to a non-believer—taking the escalating meta-question back to a micro-singular position; what does all that even matter if you do not believe in anything?

This, then, is where Christianity finds itself in the present era: post-civil rights and post-soul.[14] In a place wanting to prove itself relevant; desiring to argue the "truth"; engaging in an "us vs. them" debate. It is in this era that Christianity, in all its complexity, beauty, force, intricacy, and faith is reduced into binary corners: good and bad; moral and immoral; conservative and liberal—or the more recent term of "progressive." Yet, what does this matter to someone who: 1) has lost faith in God altogether, 2) has been oppressed and disenfranchised by Christians, 3) has read, and possibly lived, the destructive history of Christian faith being weaponized for violence and death, 4) has been psychologically affected by the damaging effects of fundamentalism, and 5) simply does not believe there is a God? Given the current age of information and interstellar exploration, God may not even be a literal figure, possibly one created in the minds of humans, right?

I will just say it: it does not matter! It does not matter that the debate continues on regarding abortion. It does not matter if prayer is allowed in school or not. It does not matter that the debate of creation vs. evolution rages on. It does not matter which day is the "right" day to worship God; Sunday or Saturday. It does not matter whether or not your church has an American flag planted in the sanctuary. It does not matter whether or not there is a rapture or a time of suffering. It does not even matter whether or not being LGBT is a sin or not. It does not matter! These side issues are merely noise to a non-believer who does not believe in anything. As Christians and missiologists this should be of greatest concern.

Christian theologians, pastors, priests, be it Protestant, Catholic, Evangelical, or Orthodox, seem to want to convince those non-believers that those things, and other issues, are important. Somehow if the "kingdom" is shown, if somehow the argument and articulation of the Christian faith is done in just the right manner, then they will believe. Jay-Z and Kanye, however, got it right. They ask the pertinent question. They force us to wrestle with those five little lines and within those lines, create an intricacy of dilemmasfor anyone wanting to "preach the Gospel" or carry out any form of missions in the United States. Simply put, there is no church in the wild. A church that can sit with more questions and doubt than it can answers and solutions. A church, which disrupts its own thinking on race, gender, and class. A church

14 While these definitions will be defined later in the introduction, I am using these two terms here to name 1) the current generation of young people between the ages of 14 and 29 and 2) the era of the past thirty-five years which questions meta-narrative, meta-ideology, and agency defined from hegemonic positions.

which is able to transcend tradition, dogma, and rigid theological stances and push for relationships, community, and the mystery-enlightenment of who God is in this present age. Is there a church that can do that? Is there a church that pushes past the age-old arguments for the sake of a conversation with a person? Is there a church inside of the Hip Hop generations? Is there a church for the thugs, the pimps, and the drug pushers? Jay-Z and Kanye are wrestling with this! They ask us to grapple with it as well.

The Christian church has been out of the wild for quite some time. The 1960's, (the decade that ushered in the post-soul era[15]) was the last stage for binary Christian thought. It is argued that WWII was the last "just war" and one in which the enemy and the hero were clearly defined—one of the many reasons almost every year there is a new film dealing with some facet of that era. The era prior to the 1960's was a "hay-day" for missionaries; a time when a White heterosexual male was the model for Christian missions and the

15 While an exact date and time is not clear, most scholars suggest that the decade of the 1960's gave rise to a deconstruction of which we are still wrestling with, in many regards this was labeled as "post-modernism" and is said to have re-structured the way church and state relate and began what we can now term as the "culture wars." For the purpose of this book, I will use this decade as ground-zero for the post-soul era, see: Zygmunt Bauman, "Postmodern Religion?," in *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity*, ed. Paul Heelas (Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998); Daniel Bell, *The Coming of a Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission : Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1991); Don Cupitt, "Post-Christianity," in *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity*, ed. Paul Heelas (Oxford, UK; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998); Norman K. Denzin, *Images of Postmodern Society: Social Theory and Contemporary Cinema* (Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications, 1991); D. Escobar, "Amos & Postmodernity: A Contemporary Critical & Reflective Perspective on the Interdependency of Ethics & Spirituality in the Latino-Hispanic American Reality," *Journal of Business Ethics* 103, no. 1 (2011); George, *Post-Soul Nation: The Explosive, Contradictory, Triumphant, and Tragic 1980s as Experienced by African Americans (Previously Known as Blacks and before That Negroes)*; Hebdige, "Postmodernism and 'the Other Side'"; Paul Martin David Heelas and Paul Morris, *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity, Religion and Modernity*; *Variation: Religion and Modernity*. (Oxford, UK: Malden, Mass., 1998); Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Anthony Pinn, *The Black Church in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002); Taylor, "Post-Black, Old Black." *African American Review* (Winter 2007) 41(4):625-640.

"sending forth" came from the U.S.[16] to "them, out there." That era was a time when society "made sense."[17] An era when many kept a traditionalist ideology. A time when men were men, children listened, and people—particularly ethnic minorities—knew "their place." It was an era that created America as the powerhouse-sending agent of missionaries.[18] In addition, it was an era which created a sense of the U.S. as the authority for missions and "truth"[19] for those "out there" on foreign soil.

Yet, today, the decline of Christianity as noted by scholars such as Christian Smith, Robert Putman, and David Kinnaman seats the U.S. as a "lost" and "pagan" ground. The church looks more like the godless societies of the 1950's and 60's. It could then be argued that the U.S. is in fact a missiological ground for the sending forth and Missio Dei. This was in fact the shift when Ray Bakke made the case for urban missions and a theology for the city. Domestic missions were not something taken very seriously and not until the last decade

16 Soong-Chan Rah, *The Next Evangelicalism : Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Books, 2009), 127-31. Also see William R. Jones, *Is God a White Racist? A Preamble to Black Theology* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Press, 1973); John D. Wilsey, *American Exceptionalism and Civil Religion : Reassessing the History of an Idea* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2015); Richard Twiss, *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys : A Native American Expression of the Jesus Way* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2015); Trevor B. McCrisken, "Exceptionalism," in *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, ed. Richard Dean Burns, Alexander DeConde, and Fredrik Logevall (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2002). It is of interest to note that the majority of missions material between 1950-1961 was written by men, most of whom were White.

17 In particular, for those in the Boomer, Builder, and Civil Rights generations.

18 In Robert Glover's text, *The Progress of World-wide Missions*, he notes the missionary's motives and while those motives are, in some regard, rooted in a Biblical manner, the "sending agents" were primarily from North America; the U.S. to be precise. To further this, a majority of these missionaries were White males coming with a strict evangelical perspective. As I will note later, those perspectives do not come without bias, prejudices, racial constructs, and/or racist presuppositions and thereby, create a settler colonialist missiological space. This practice, continued over decades, is debilitating and does not allow for a full view of the breadth of what Christianity is.

19 This is noted throughout the documentary *God In America: How Religious Liberty Shaped America* (2010) and also by William Ernest Hocking who noted the "error" and "mistaken" approaches of many missionaries abroad *Re-Thinking Missions; a Laymen's Inquiry after One Hundred Years* (New York; London: Harper & Bros., 1932), 29-32.

has it become an area of study for missionaries.[20] But what do we do with the shifting of Christianity in the 20th century and now 21st? How might we then contend with a generation of ethnic minority Millennial Gen Y's? This group calls out the White hegemonic structures of inequality, but seek to also disrupt those hegemonic structures of older ethnic minorities as well? How might one see the U.S. as a mission field when a god does not mean a thing to a non-believer?

This is where this talk enters the scene amid the tension of these questions and at a time when many Christians scurry to keep some remnant of what they define as "Christian." We as missiological educators enter at a time when racial unrest is at, or in some cases beyond, the levels it was in 1969.[21]

Societal Shifts and the Context of Missiological Education in the Post-Civil Rights Context

The White homogeneity of missions in North America is problematic. Not because of White homogeneity solely (e.g. White people), but because many Whites are ignorant to the issues surrounding racism, White Supremacy, and systemic racism, and thereby have continued a legacy of colonialism, micro-aggression, and passive discrimination. Those issues conflate under the premise of "Christian mission" and do not have the cultural relevancy or competencies to enact a contextualized culturally proper missiology. Therefore, my thesis can be broken down into two parts, 1) current missiological approaches are impaired

20 When I first attended Fuller Theological Seminary's School of Intercultural Studies (Formerly School of World Missions), I was required to have at least five years of "cross cultural" work in a mission's field. While I thought about using the fact that I had been a racially Black man working in predominantly White Christian settings met that qualifier, I decided to use my domestic missions work as my entry in, which at that time was over a decade. I was denied entry and had to appeal, as "local missions" was not a consideration for "missions" work. This will be taken up later, but often, especially for White missionaries, the only "worthwhile" missions work is that overseas. Overseas work, however, ignores the brutality and severity of White Supremacy and White racism, so, in turn, it is much easier to deal with a genocide your ethnic heritage had nothing to do with, than to engage the issues we face in the U.S. currently.

21 I use 1969 as a set point because it is a time in which many scholars argue that "we almost lost our civility" in society due to the racial, cultural, sexual, and political unrest and violence beset in the U.S. at the given time, for examples of this see George Ritzer, *The Mcdonaldization of Society* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Pine Forge Press, 2004); Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (New York Free Press, Toronto, 1994); Gordon Lynch, *Understanding Theology and Popular Culture* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005); Neal, *Soul Babies: Black Popular Culture and the Post-Soul Aesthetic*; "Sold out on Soul: The Corporate Annexation of Black Popular Music," *Popular Music and Society* 21, no. 3 (1997).

and missiological methods need a difficult yet necessary transformation which allows for ethnic-minority leadership, vision, and theology; 2) a Hip Hop theology is a missiological framework which will help in creating community, Church context, and a stronger relationship to the trinity in a wild context.[22]

I explore missiological engagement within post-civil rights[23] contexts in the U.S. and focus on Hip Hop theology as a missiological tool for radical engagement of emerging adult populations in the wild. I would argue we need to emphasize a missiological perspective, within post-civil rights contexts, and suggest new conceptual models for domestic missions within an ever-growing multi-ethnic demographic. My argument speaks to and from three disciplines simultaneously—missiology, Hip Hop studies, and youth ministry—in an attempt to bring the three together around the themes of my thesis and a hybridity of *lived missiology*[24] grounded in the subject of Hip Hop Studies.

At the commencement of this talk, I must note that while many lectures conclude with a course of action or methodological solution—and I confess I have done that in other talks—this lecture will not. The goal here is to sound the alarm, of sort, and present the issues, arguments, and areas of need. We all have a part in this; you are to help in creating solutions and a praxiological approach to what I am raising today. I will assume that if you are here this it is because you are curious as to what the issues might be and possess the capacity to want to see some type of change. Thus, my goal here is to steer away from a 1-2-3 process of "what to do next" and "positivity" for the sake of positivity. We are in a critical state within missiology—a DEFCON 5. When

22 The use of wild here is not to imply that people who are non-Christian, or even those who are Christian but do not fit the traditional evangelical Christian image, are less than or even wild for that matter. The use of this word here continues the conversation raised in the song "No Church In The Wild" and is more a symbolic term that I am using here to describe things outside of a tradition or even stereotypical missiological lens rooted in Western Christianity. The current shift occurring in the U.S. is creating a healthy deconstruction of what it means to be Christian and how a Christian even looks, talks, believes, and loves; this would be an example of what I mean by "wild" and not the literal definition of the word.

23 It is important to note that the post-soul/post-civil rights context is made up of a matrix of people, cultures, sub-cultures, groups, ideologies, theologies, and events. I do not desire to take anything away from these important areas. However, an article, as vast as it can be, has limitations. This article will focus primarily on urban/city culture with a strong emphasis on Hip Hop, Black, Latinx, and U.S. contexts. There are plenty of works that deal with areas outside of the aforementioned, yet, very little that deal specifically with "our" (meaning ethnic-minorities) areas. Thus, this article will take up part of that canon and have a specific focus.

24 That is, the notion that missions, rather than a sending forth to some foreign land, is lived, breathed, and carried out on a day-to-day basis in the sacred, secular, and profane; a lifestyle and engagement with the everyday within a community.

the American Society of Missiology (ASM) are formed of older, White, cis gendered males and struggle to "find diversity" in speakers, we have a problem. When the Association of Professors of Mission (APM) can count the number of ethnic-minorities in their guild, things are not right. To singularize this text and have it act as the guide, rather than a developing guide, is both precocious and arrogant. Moreover, in the current era we are in throughout the U.S., to have an "expert" be the only voice, is egotistical. If we are to move forward, we need to do so in community. Therefore, the suggestions placed here are to begin what a church in the wild might look like; possibly a generation from now. I present research and findings with some brief thoughts on those and allow you, the audience, to begin to formulate what solutions might be within your own context. This is a shift away from having a one-stop-shop within a text and to create dialog and community while working towards a common goal. Therefore, it should be noted, again, that the conclusion and thoughts about moving forward are merely suggestions and not a 1-2-3 step process of "solving" the "dilemma" of those "leaving the church." Rather, it is an invitation to move beyond the traditional missiological response of "going out there" to "reach them" for God and to commune and sit with those who are in the wild. What this is not, is an authoritative guide to the post-soul, and/or post-civil rights era to be used as a type of lexicon or canon. I come to this work as a participant and learner and ask those of you reading to do the same; let us explore what is in order to better see what may be.

Moving forward, we must lay out definitions that will be used throughout. The "wild," while the dictionary definition defines the word in a more adverse premise, I will use this word to symbolize the uncharted, non-domesticated, non-evangelically tamed area of ideological thoughts, theological principles, and generational motifs that makes up those from the Hip Hop and urban multi-ethnic generations. The generation that is now asking how Christianity can be of any help during a time of Black death. The wild is a context in which Black Lives Matter and the Black Youth Project are part of a missiological space and it offers both spiritual and socio-political formation for those movements. The wild is a not a place of methods, standardized curriculum, and over-simplified theologies that do not consider race, gender, and class as a central principle. Therefore, the wild is a space and place that those who venture in are in full knowledge of it being new, not designed for White Supremacy, seeking a Jesus outside of Evangelicalism, and in continual transformation. The wild will not be a place that is easily grappled with—even in an article like this. In other words, the wild is just that, an ongoing development and creation of ideas pushing away from Western White Evangelicalism and moving toward a more holistic space in which all are truly welcomed and embraced.

Sacred places are those areas held as hallowed, consecrated, and/or revered. The areas that we tend to hold near us and keep as special. In essence, the Sacred can be that space in which God finds you even if it is in a tattered state. Possibly the journey of Christian faith, while being held in tension with the secular world, is not just devoid of a deity representing God presence, but even hints about God's manifestation in our life. Often this means living in and taking up residence in a non-church context and environment. The secular has traditionally been used in Christian discourse as a place that is "un-godly" or "non-Christian." I will, however, suggest that the secular world can also nuance understandings of the Sacred while one is seeking a non-deity. In other words, it is in some sense the notion of being "spiritual, but not religious," and while that particular phrasing is captured by those not wanting to associate with religions, I too would agree that those who are secular and want to remain secular, do not necessarily wish to devoid themselves of all socio-spiritual notions and affiliations.[25] This then brings us to the *profane*,[26] the process of deconsecrating that which was once considered consecrated and sacred; the funk and the treacherous. Those areas in a society labeled or given the designation of being outside the given morals, codes, ethics, and values established as "good" and/or "right" by the society and culture being studied. When combined (sacred, secular, profane), you have a rich and complex intersection of faith that has the three elements held in tension. It can be, particularly on first contact, an uncomfortable space in which to exist, yet, the wild is in constant tension with all three. Sometimes one more than the other. This is no different than any human experience. The experience of anyone on this planet (if they are honest) has all three of these elements present in their life. It is unwise to think that one can only be sacred all the time, or, profane at the core. Thus, this book will keep the trinary elements of the sacred, secular, and profane in tension as we explore the wild.

I also think it is important to define what *Hip Hop Culture and Theology* will mean for this article. Hip Hop culture is an urban sub-culture that seeks to express a *life-style, attitude*, and/or *urban individuality*. Hip Hop at its core—not the commercialization and commodity it has become in certain respects—*rejects* dominant forms of culture and society and seeks to increase a social

25 This was a crucial finding in the interviews I have conducted among Hip Hoppers who insisted that they were not affiliated with a church or denomination, yet desired to pursue a relationship with God in a secular space. As one interviewee exclaimed, "I don't need a church to find God, nor do I need a pastor to get wisdom and insight on the word. I like finding God in the void of everyday life."

26 In addition to these three definitions, this article will implore the use of these definitions of the sacred, secular, and the profane: sacred: those things that are divine or could be construed as divine; the secular: that which is devoid of God or lacks in spirituality; and the profane: that which is nefarious, oblique, and at times, contrary to 'good.'

consciousness along with a racial/ethnic pride. Thus, Hip Hop uses *rap music, dance, music production, MCing, and allegory* as vehicles to send and fund its message of social, cultural, and political *resistance* to dominate structures of norms.[27] Therefore, Hip Hop theology is derived from this latter definition and from the bowels of oppression, marginalization, and disenfranchisement in turn. As such it rejects normative and simplistic responses to such issues. Hip Hop theology is a post-civil rights theology and therefore this book will argue for its use as a missiological premise and construct moving into the wild. A Hip Hop theology is comprised of a theology of suffering, a theology of community, a theology of a Hip Hop Jesuz, a theology of social action, civil disruption, and a theology of the profane.

Thinking about Hip Hop and its culture, I think it is wise to define a word that has become quite coded in missiological contexts, the "urban."[28] For some it means those associated with Black and Latinx are all urban—meaning poor, in need of help, and impoverished. For others, it means something negative and a place in ministry they want nothing to do with because it is loud, aggressive, and non-familiar to their own worldview and cultural backgrounds. Yet, for still others, urban means a new space to exact your wealth; a place where the industry caters to you and the once stereotype of the "inner-city" is now gone—those who live in gentrified urban communities. And yet for other people, the urban is a place of ministry, life, missions, and community within a growing geographical area that, in growing cases, has little to do with an actual city. Therefore, urban, is defined as the conflation of low income, poverty, disenfranchisement, dislocation in society (e.g. anomie), and a sense of depravity from mainstream definitions of success. We will use this term not as a geographical location, but as a societal and cultural one. In other words, urban can be in various locations of a city such as Los Angeles and Chicago; it is not just the "inner city" in many regards.[29] I also find it necessary, although

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27 Adapted from the works of Hodge, *The Soul of Hip Hop: Rimbs Timbs & a Cultural Theology*; *Hip Hop's Hostile Gospel: A Post-Soul Theological Exploration* 6; Efrem Smith and Phil Jackson, *The Hip Hop Church: Connecting with the Movement Shaping Our Culture* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2005).

28 This term was popularized by urban theologians such as Ray Bakke, Roger Greenway, Harvie Conn, and the legendary John Perkins. This does not take anything away from the work that these pioneers laid out. It simply means that our times have changed and we have entered a new era with emerging definitions and in need of further developing the canon of urban missiology.

29 Scholars of urban studies are also agreeing that this term is rapidly changing, see Edward W Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (New York, NY: Blackwell Publishing 2000); William E Thompson and Joseph V Hickey, *Society in Focus*, 7 ed. (New York, NY: Pearson Books, 2011); William H. Whyte, "The Design of Spaces," in *The City Reader*, ed. Richard T. Le Gates and Frederic Stout (New York, NY: Routledge, 1996).

not a central premise of the article, to define an emerging term, the post-industrial era. This is the era we in the U.S. find ourselves and it is the era of electronics, digital narrative, commodification, and co-opting of other cultures for the use of dominant White structures. In a theological sense, this is the era in which knowledge is no longer sequestered to those with pedigree and status and it is the era of transmediated deity. An information age encasing industry rooted in the digital age and focusing primarily on the glorification of the self through social media spaces.[30] On the other hand, it is also a time when a rapper like Chance The Rapper can create a masterpiece of work without the help of a major record label. It is also the era in which a social media platform like Twitter helped in forming a powerful movement called Black Lives Matter. It is a time when those in Palestine suffering oppression can connect with those in Ferguson, Missouri suffering similarly and lend advice on how to resist. The post-industrial era is developing and although it is not a term used in missiological literature, it needs to be researched more so that it should. We are quickly leaving the era in which categorizations fit nicely in the scientific lab; the post-industrial era reshapes how we view the very basic elements of the "how" in life.

In addition, it will be helpful to examine a few other definitions to be used in tangent with the above list. *Soul context/er* is the era and context that is typically referred to as the Boomer Generation (1948-1969), but encompasses a much broader multi-ethnic variable. It is the era of the Civil Rights Generation and those born between 1945-1970. This era is steeped in the Church and raised on traditional primarily Protestant Christian values. This era saw the likes of Marvin Gaye, Aretha Franklin, and Ray Charles. Culturally speaking, there was a linear process to "life" and society. The soul era is etched with faith and religious overtones that mark its norms, values, and belief system strongly in the Christian church—especially the Black Christian church. The soul era, embraced an American Dream type of social element which many strived to achieve.[31] Leadership was top down and singularized—meaning one voice for the masses. It was a period that helped shape a large part of the African American diaspora in the U.S. It also situated the Black Church as the authority and socio-political space for justice and civil protests. Without this period, there would be no Hip Hop, soul, funk, disco, or Black liberation movement.

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30 Craig Detweiler, *Igods: How Technology Shapes Our Spiritual and Social Lives* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2014), 199-210.

31 See Daniel White Hodge, *The Hostile Gospel: Exploring Socio-Theological Traits in the Post-Soul Context of Hip Hop*, ed. Warren Goldstein, Center for Critical Research on Religion and Harvard University (Boston, MA: Brill Academic, 2015), Chapter1; *The Soul of Hip Hop: Rimbs Timbs & a Cultural Theology*, Chapter 2.

Still, even with the optimism of Black middle-class life during the 1950's and great hope of the civil-rights movement of the 1960's, the post-soul context/era came at a time when Black values in the public sphere were declining and leaders of Black life, iconic even in their own time, were either killed or sent off into exile. The following generation was then raised in that void and in a time when media was creating tropes of Black life in shows like *The Jeffersons* (1975-1985) and *Sanford and Son* (1972-1977). This is the era and context following the soul era and similar to what is termed the postmodern period. The post-soul context/era lost its leadership and this emerging generation, those born from 1971 on, was disconnected from earlier ones. The youth born during this time were disconnected and disjointed from society. Moreover, with the rise in the absence of Black fathers during this time,[32] Black youth, especially, found it difficult to adjust in a world that was not socially, religiously, and morally logical to them and without the guidance of caring adults. This era created the first Hip Hop Generation.[33] This article will use this era as the base to build a missiological premise as we engage *with*, not to, this generation of emerging adults.

A term that received some traction after Obama was elected as president in 2008, was *post racial*. This is a false dichotomy created to insist that American society has somehow moved beyond or past the racial divide. In some regard, it was a wishful hope that suggests we—meaning society—no longer sees "color" or race. In this sense, we would be "post" race meaning we overlook the issues of White privilege, White supremacy, and the legacy of racism this country has endured. This book rejects a post racial society and will maintain that the issues of race are even more pronounced in the 21st century.

The *post-civil rights context/era* will be further clarified later, but, for now, it is the generation of youth born during the post-soul era/context, raised on a transmediated diet, disconnected from previous generations both locally and ideologically, and currently have non-binary issues to contend with in a post-9/11 society living within Western society. This generation of youth does not have the binary issues to contend with that the civil rights generation did (e.g. more Blacks in leadership or the right to vote). While those issues are still present, they manifest themselves in a matrix of problems, which involve sexuality, sexual orientation, socioeconomics, transgender, class, and race.

32 Angela J Hattery and Earl Smith, *African American Families* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers, 2007), 9-37. There is a host of literature discussing the denigration of Black fathers and the creation of the welfare system during the late 1960's and early 1970's.

33 We will spend some time later in further exploring these concepts, but this gives us a platform on which to begin.

Another socio-geographic term also needs defining is *suburban*. The movement of resources and people out of the cities—suburbanization. The outer cities, albeit smaller, exist outside a metropolitan area and can vary in size and degrees of distance from a Central Business District (CBD).[34] Wealth, traditional approaches to the "American Dream," legacy prosperity, and the concept that "blessings from God" are encapsulated in these areas, accompanied by an ideological framework which situates the suburban locale as a desired place to dwell. This framework is reflected in a certain manner of division—being outside of, or separated from, the urban. Suburban areas are noted as having gates, guards, privatized resources, and allocated locations for the demonstration of power and wealth. Yet, the nuance to all this is that the geographic location of the "suburbs" is quickly receding back into the city with the rise of gentrification a.k.a "urban renewal."

Lastly, I wanted to define several racial terms. *Black* and *White* are both racialized terminology[35] that I realize are both debated and subjective in relation to how they are defined. However, I use these terms to categorize ethnic groups in a pan-ethnic sense. I also want to make clear that while there is still a discord between how those of African heritage living in the U.S. wish to be defined, I am in no way belittling those definitions. In other words, there are some who desire to be called African American, those who like the term Black while still others who desire to only be referred to by their ethnic heritage. African American is typically preferred in academic settings; however, I wish to focus in on a pan-ethnic term such as Black. Thus, Black is the racial term to identify anyone from a Pan African, Afro Latino, and/ or multi-ethnic background that appears "Black" in race. We contend that race is a socially constructed

34 William A. Darity, Jr., "Suburban Sprawl," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. William A. Darity, Jr. (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008), 208-09.

35 I will discuss this further in section one, but color prejudice is part of a much larger issue of racism and oppression. The White gaze upon blackness, as a color, stems back into pre-colonial periods when Europeans first laid eyes upon central Africans. It was quickly noted that they were "less than" and that "their religion was un-Christian; their manner of living was anything but English." In essence, the "Negro" was one of lesser being, but one of marvel and rich for study. Early missionaries saw them "in need of God" and European stylized education. Winthrop Jordon notes that prior to the 16th century, Black had connotations of being soiled, muddied, evil, dark, twisted, and foul (from the *Oxford English Dictionary*). This worldview, engrained no less, stretched well into the creation of North American slavery and saw the African as less than human, nowhere near the excellence of the European. These same worldviews have continued on and created great divides and tensions all in the name of the "mission of God" *White over Black : American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, Omohundro Institute of Early American, History & Culture (Chapel Hill [N.C.]. University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 4-11.

category and rooted in colors (e.g. White, Brown, Yellow, Black, & Red). Ethnicity is, conversely, a biological and a much older term used to identity people and cultural groups much more accurately. *White* is the racial term to

identify anyone from a European, Russian, Norwegian, Swedish, or ethnically fair-skinned background. White, can therefore be understood as a position in a racialized social structure; that is, it is a label that is meaningless outside of a social system where racial categories influence access to social, political, and economic resources and in the absence of other socially constructed identities such as "Black" or "Asian."[36] I will assert that race, is always on display, while ethnicity can always be hidden, hence the use of these terms.

Racism, then, is a set of ideologies, beliefs, and worldviews regarding the superiority of one race over the other, and it is rooted in a system which reinforces that doctrine.[37] Those systems extend into education, criminal justice, health care, military, food industry, politics, and religion. The latter being of most importance for us as it relates to the way in which White missionaries have gazed upon Black bodies for centuries. The systemic approach to missions, including funding, social agency, networks, and access to seminary education, has privileged Whites and given them the advantage to "present the Gospel" in a one-dimensional manner.[38] Thus, systemically and often unaware, Whites have created a system in which those who are similar may enter and "do the work." This will be examined further in this article, but it is important to note the use of this word and how it will be applied through this text.

As a qualitative researcher, I am compelled to *tell the story*. While numbers and hard data has its place, my research relies heavily on qualitative interviews and narrative methods. First, is research which began in 2005 while I was completing my doctorate at Fuller Seminary, and working as a youth worker on the Northwest sector of Pasadena, CA. At that time, there were at least a dozen or more White evangelical churches bringing their youth groups to the "'hood" to do "mission work" among the "poor kids" of our community.

36 "Whiteness," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. William A. Darity, Jr. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008), 87.

37 Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, "Critical Race Theory," in *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas*, ed. Maryanne Cline Horowitz (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2005); Jonathan Marks, "Racism: Scientific," in *Encyclopedia of Race and Racism*, ed. Patrick L. Mason (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2013).

38 Samuel Perry, "Social Capital, Race, and Personal Fundraising in Evangelical Outreach Ministries," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 52, no. 1 (2013); "Diversity, Donations, and Disadvantage: The Implications of Personal Fundraising for Racial Diversity in Evangelical Outreach Ministries," *Review of Religious Research* 53, no. 4 (2012); "Racial Habitus, Moral Conflict, and White Moral Hegemony within Interracial Evangelical Organizations," *Qualitative Sociology* 35, no. 1 (2012).

And therefore, I began to document the experience and narratives of those being "ministered to," the "'hood kids," as one short-term missionary kid would later come to say. This is based on five urban[39] former students/mentees of mine between the years 2005-2010. Three females and two males of Mexican American, African American, Caribbean, and a mixture of Euro American ethnic makeup comprised this group. The interviews were conducted bi-monthly from 2005-2007 and then five times a year after. The interviews and research began in late summer 2005. Semi-structured interviews were utilized from 2005-2007. From the fall of 2007 to 2010, active interviews were used in group settings as all but one of the students had graduated from high school. All of the students were living in a gentrified urban/suburban environment and attended a predominantly White/Euro American affluent church which had once been located in a primarily White/Euro American community in Southern California. Each of the students started attending the church in early middle school and continued on through their early college years. I chose these students primarily for five reasons: 1) they were the most outspoken on issues of race, class, and gender in the group, 2) they each represented an ethnic minority group, 3) they were each leaders of their respective peers, 4) each had some type of leadership position in their late high school years, and 5) they represented the feelings of many ethnic minorities who did not have the access each of them did to senior leadership.[40] My wife and I also worked/volunteered for this ministry organization and had access to detailed information in regards to the training and background context.[41]

Second, is the research I started with my book *The Soul of Hip Hop* investigating not just Hip Hop culture, but the Hip Hop generation itself. That research, largely qualitative, has grown and continues to develop given

39 While the term "urban" is becoming vaguer by the year and a growing debate about how the term is applied and to whom, in what context, I will limit the use of the word to those who live in and/or engage with the issues of poverty, gang violence, single parenthood, low income housing, lack of adequate education, systemic dysfunction, and violent contexts within families, communities, neighboring spaces, educational constructs, and/or community surroundings. While this definition too can present its racial, gender, and class challenges, it will offer the necessary framework for this article and research.

40 The interviews began with the question "Tell me about your experience in X ministry organization" and then led to deeper probing questions as respondents gave their answers.

41 Please note that all of the names have been changed to protect the identity of the participants. Further, any identifying names and/or attributes to the ministry organization have been removed as well. What follows is not an exhaustive breadth of their experience; rather, using grounded theory, themes and patterns will be highlighted to connect their experiences to the broader issue of what Soong-Chan Rah describes as "Western Cultural Captivity," *The Next Evangelicalism: Releasing the Church from Western Cultural Captivity*, 27-44.

the current racial issues occurring in the country with police terrorism, police brutality, and the continual disdain for Black life. Thus, in the fall of 2011 I began doing active interviews with those in the age range of 17-29[42] targeting specifically, urban multi-ethnic young people and emerging adults. Asking open-ended questions such as:

- Tell me your religious affiliation?
- How do you define Christianity? Evangelicalism?
- How has Hip Hop informed your worldview, if at all?
- How might Hip Hop culture provide a space to think, love, play, pray, and converse?
- How does God speak to you, specifically?
- How do you define salvation? Sin? The devil?
- Where is God at and how does God speak in this current era/ generation?

Demographic data was collected, but the heart of the research was to allow the participants to speak and direct the story. From this, arose central themes which will drive this book:

- God is pluralistic in nature.
- Corporate and institutional sin are much greater than individual sin.
- God loves the marginalized.
- Media speaks of God and media creates a transmediated experience for those seeking God.
- Hip Hop is a way for peace and religious expression.
- Space and place, theologically, exists for all, even those considered 'sinful' by other Christians.
- God will judge, not humans.
- Jesus is who you make of him to be.
- Christianity needs a re-boot.

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42 This age group is targeted because this is the emerging adult group most research is based on. Further, age 29 is the age that most psychologists are now asserting that brain development ends and adulthood begins. Lastly, this is the largest generation of individuals and the group most Christian churches tend to target.

- Ethnic minorities struggle with and tend to not identify with evangelicals and evangelicalism.

These themes might present challenges for some who are evangelical Christian. Yet, missionally speaking, it is exactly where we need to go and be and where this article takes up exploration.[43] These two sets of research will provide the engine for both this article and its direction.

I utilized a theomusicological approach to study Hip Hop and urban popular culture. As the field of missiology develops, it is imperative that new methodological frameworks be engaged and utilized; this is the objective for utilizing theomusicology.

Established by Jon Michael Spencer,[44] theomusicology is defined as, "…a musicological method for theologizing about the sacred, the secular, and the profane, principally incorporating thought and method borrowed from anthropology, sociology, psychology, and philosophy."[45] It is, as Cheryl Kirk-Duggan and Marlon Hall state, "Music as spiritual practice…[to] hear the challenges and evils in the church and the world as the music reveals."[46] What distinguishes theomusicology from other methods and disciplines such as ethnomusicology[47] is:

43 Such themes can add to the core specializations of missiology, which often aims to contextualize a current context. Glenn Rogers, *A Basic Introduction to Missions and Missiology* (Bedford, Tex: Mission and Ministry Resources, 2003), 79-81.

44 Created initially as a discipline, theomusicology is a methodological inquiry as it seeks to understand the theological inferences within the studied culture's music. This method has been used by scholars to examine other areas of music and popular culture such as issues of sexuality and promiscuity Angela McRobbie, "Recent Rhythms of Sex and Race in Popular Music," *Media, Culture & Society* 17, no. 2 (1995); Heidi Epstein, "Re-Vamping the Cross: Diamanda Galas's Musical Mnemonic of Promiscuity," *Theology and Sexuality* 8, no. 15 (2001), understanding poetry in context-Sandra L. Faulkner, "Concern with Craft: Using Ars Poetica as Criteria for Reading Research Poetry," *Qualitative Inquiry* 13, no. 2 (2007), understanding the basic elements of Hip Hop spirituality Jon Michael Spencer, "Book Notes Rapsody in Black: Utopian Aspirations," *Theology Today* 49, no. 2 (1992), to examine the sacred and profane within Black music Melva Wilson Costen, "Protest and Praise: Sacred Music of Black Religion by Jon Michael Spencer Minneapolis, Fortress, 1990," ibid.48, no. 3 (1991), and examined as a methodology in practice Stephen A. Reed, "Exodus by Terence E. Fretheim Louisville, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991," ibid.

45 Jon Michael Spencer, *Theological Music: An Introduction to Theomusicology, Contributions to the Study of Music and Dance* (New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1991), 3.

46 Cheryl Kirk-Duggon and Marlon Hall, *Wake Up! Hip Hop Christianity and the Black Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), 77.

47 There is no universal or singular definition of ethnomusicology, as William Darity states, several words comes to mind for ethnomusicology such as sound,

> Its analysis stands on the presupposition that the religious symbols, myths, and canon of the culture being studied are the theomusicologist's authoritative/normative sources. For instance, while the Western music therapist would interpret the healing of the biblical patriarch Saul under the assuagement of David's lyre as a psychophysiological phenomena, the theomusicologist would *first* take into account the religious belief of the culture for whom the event had meaning. The theomusicological method is therefore one that allows for scientific analysis, but primarily within the limits of what is normative in the ethics, religion, or mythology of the community of believers being studied.[48]

Therefore, the theomusicologist is concerned with multi-level data within the context of the people they study, and subsequently analyzes the material within the proper time, culture, and context in which it was created. This book will encompass not just the music, but art, print, context, and artists themselves. This will give us a broader picture of the context and allow room for further development and research given that this is such a new area of research in the field of missiology. Thus trinary approaches of theomusicology utilize the sacred, the secular, and the profane as previously discussed.

This trinary approach and methodology best discloses what spirituality and theology look like within the Hip Hop community. Theomusicology rises above simple lyrical analysis and the imagining of what artists might be attempting to say, and goes into the complex arena where the sacred, secular, and profane intersect. This means that songs which express an explicit sexuality might, in fact, be connecting to a spiritual realm. Theomusicology broadens the discussion of missions within a post-soul context and asks, "What is a post-soul community saying in the context in which the music, art, album, and artist were created in?" The following is also used in this study in order to provide a clearer picture of Hip Hop's theological construction:[49]

- Cultural context
- Political climate

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music, performance, context, and culture. For some it is the study of music in culture, or, more broadly, the study in context."Ethnomusicology," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, ed. William A. Darity, Jr. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2008), 20-22.

48 Spencer, Theological Music: *An Introduction to Theomusicology*, 3-4.

49 Spencer asserts that these areas are crucial in the understanding of the theological message at the time the song was created. *Protest & Praise : Sacred Music of Black Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); Spencer, *Theological Music: An Introduction to Theomusicology*.

- Artists upbringing and background
- Album cover and art
- Cultural era
- Religious landscape
- Geographic location

I find it necessary to describe, albeit not exhaustively, the social, cultural, political, theological, and varying geographic conditions in which this music was created, because as missiologists there is a dearth of knowledge around almost any form of media within the current era. One must not overlook the various eras and societal shifts that gave rise to Hip Hop and urban popular culture and their connections, implications, and contributions to missiology for the 21st century.

So, let us begin this exploration and give precedent to a more applicable missiological approach to North American missions. I invite you to be challenged and keep an open heart as we explore a newer expanse for missiology scholarship and practice.

White Supremacy in Missions

Christianity is an African religion. Christianity was shaped by people of color and theologically developed by what we would now consider ethnic-minorities. The roots of Christianity lay in the heart of people who are dark skinned, community-oriented, and focused on a relationship with God, the earth, and family.[50] Long before the influence of Western thought, Christianity was familial, communal, had abilities to deal with the reality of day to day life,

50 This is recorded well in history when one does their historical homework, Darlene Clark Hine, William C Hine, and Stanley Harrold, *The African American Odyssey*, 4 ed., vol. 1 (New Jersey Prentice Hall, 2010), 2-26; 80-130, document the religious aspects of central, western, and north east African culture. Here, it is revealed just how intricate Christianity was weaved into African culture long before Western White influence. Darlene Clark Hine, William C. Hine, and Stanley Harrold, *African Americans : A Concise History*, Fifth edition. ed. (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2014), 2-33, also describes the elements of a Christian heritage within African culture. This is not to suggest that Christianity was the primary religion, but that it was a part of many civilizations. Andrew Walls has also discussed elements of this as well in *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History : Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2002). It should be noted that Christianity throughout Africa was contextual and relevant for each country, clan, and tribe. There was not a singular version or message of what Christianity was, rather, it was a collective faith that was deeply rooted in Jesus' message and the Old Testament prophets.

and was not centered on a "personal relationship" with Jesus. It was much more intuitive and a respecter of other faiths. This all changed once the faith was centered in Western Rome.

With this in mind[51], how is it that many of the mission organizations in North America are still led by White people—and White males at that? Part of what is problematic in all of this is that White evangelicals have difficulty both embracing and envisioning anything that they did not 1) create and 2) have a strong influence in or on. Therefore, the Civil Rights Movement, for example, is not seen as a Christian evangelical movement. The contributions of missiological influence on Christianity originating from ethnic-minority communities is very often overlooked and not acknowledged. This presents a dilemma in the missiological approach and creates a wall between people, not to mention the racist historical aspects of mission that are rarely discussed in mission circles. The issue of historic and present racism seems oblivious and "non-essential," yet it is extremely essential to the people groups these missionaries claim to serve. Acknowledging that my area of specialty is not in history, I am persuaded to discuss, briefly, some key historical moments[52] that have affected how Christian missions have reinforced racism, colonialism, and vicious ideologies rooted in a skewed notion of theology. I will rely on the work of Winthrop D. Jordan as a guide and work to connect it back to historical moments in Christian missions.

The age of discovery, 1500-1600, was flawed with outright violence and extreme racism. While some have heralded this period, I along with other scholars, would assert that it had a horrendous effect on native people groups and Africans. Jordan notes that, "By the early years of the seventeenth century Englishmen had developed a taste for empire and for tales of adventure and

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51 While one might argue that this is merely anecdotal and does not equal causation or correlation, I would suggest they read Jones, *Is God a White Racist? A Preamble to Black Theology*; Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," *Independent School* 49, no. 2 (1990); bell hooks, *Yearning : Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1990); Perry, "Social Capital, Race, and Personal Fundraising in Evangelical Outreach Ministries;" "Diversity, Donations, and Disadvantage: The Implications of Personal Fundraising for Racial Diversity in Evangelical Outreach Ministries;" "Racial Habitus, Moral Conflict, and White Moral Hegemony within Interracial Evangelical Organizations." I would then suggest that those then be applied to mission context; in the work of Perry, his work is a direct examination into White-led Christian organizations.

52 This is but a brief sketch on the history of racism within Christianity-there are great works that I would recommend for an even deeper examination into this very important history. I would emphasize the works of J. Kameron Carter, Race: *A Theological Account*, American Council of Learned, Societies (Oxford [U.K.]: Oxford University Press, 2008); Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven [Conn.]: Yale University Press, 2010).

discovery."[53] This taste came with a host of problems rooted in a twisted unexamined knowledge of the Bible. Moreover, the fetish and obsession with the "oddity" of Blackness—as many Europeans noted—was beginning to already head in the wrong direction.[54] "Englishmen found the natives of Africa very different from themselves. Negroes looked different; their religion was un-Christian; their manner of living was anything but English,"[55] the assumption of superiority here was clear. The European establishment of the "standard of living" was held high as Africans, and those from India, were less and unknowledgeable of the "right way." Exploration continued, but with an intent of mastery and healing of the African communities encountered. Jordan adds,

> In England perhaps more than in southern Europe, the concept of blackness was loaded with intense meaning. Long before they found that some men were black, Englishmen found in the idea of blackness a way of expressing some of their most ingrained values. No other color except white conveyed so much emotional impact. As described by the Oxford English Dictionary, the meaning of black before the sixteenth century included, 'Deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul… Having dark or deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister…Foul, iniquitous, atrocious, horrible, wicked. Indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment, etc.' Black was an emotionally
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> partisan color, the handmaid and symbol of baseness and evil, a sign of danger and repulsion. Embedded in the concept of blackness was it direct opposite—whiteness.[56]

This type of superiority would continue long after the dictionary definition was changed in missions. Those categorized as "black" did not always mean ethnically African. Sometimes it meant South American, Indian, or Native American.[57] Because this placed those with darker skin on a hierarchal continuum, this type of ideological construct would result in the subjugation and, eventually, enslavement of Blacks. The "less than" concept because of skin color would continue and place those groups below the European.

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53 Jordan, *White over Black : American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, 3.
54 Ibid., 4-7.
55 Ibid., 4.
56 Ibid., 7.
57 *The White Man's Burden : Historical Origins of Racism in the United States*, (London United Kingdom: Oxford Univ. Press, 1980). E-Book. Location 143-289.

As missionary movements spread southward and westward from Europe, the entanglement with race and Christianity became even more distinct. It was the concept of Whiteness as the prime factor in being Christian and moral. In other words, to be White was to be human and Christian.[58] It was the duty, then, of Whites (Europeans) to evangelize the world and help the "savages" in their lost nature.[59] Jordan states that,

> In the long run, of course, the Negro's color attained greatest significance not as a scientific problem but as a social fact. Englishmen found blackness in human beings a peculiar and important point of difference. The African's color set him radically apart from Englishmen. But then, distant Africa had been known to Christians for ages as a land of men radically different in religion.[60]

The ideological stage was being set which would affect worldviews for centuries to come. The age of discovery created an ethos which held anyone of Black skin as less than and in need of dire help. The essence of a Christian hegemony was scaffolding into what was to become a sentiment of missions

58 In Jones, *Is God a White Racist? A Preamble to Black Theology*, chapters 1-5. This particular concept carries on today. A direct quote from Revered Buchner Payne is a classic one to this point,

> Now as Adam was white, Abraham white and our Savior white, did he enter heaven when he arose from the dead as a white man or as a negro? If as a white man, then the negro is left out; if as a negro then the white man is left out. As Adam was the Son of God and as God is light (white) and in Him is no darkness (black) at all, how could God then be the father of the negro, as like begets like? And if God could not be the father of the blacks because He was white, how could our Savior, 'being the express image of God's person,' as asserted by St. Paul, carry such a damned color into heaven, where all are white, much less to the throne?" Ibid., 258.

This historical ideological construct has multifaceted implications for domestic missions. One element to this is the approach to the Gospel; how is it interpreted? How might domestic missionaries respond to racial profiling, police killings of Black bodies, Muslim bans, and White racism? Often time these go unnoticed and the sole goal of missionary work becomes "winning souls." Thus, social ills are often looked over and avoided as not being part of "ministry" or even part of the mission ethos.

59 White Europeans saw the African religion as "defective" and of no worth; it was heathenism at its highest and therefore in need of the one "true God." Jordan notes that this was cause for proselytizing of the "Negro" for it then became evident that "his religion was in fact defective." Jordan, *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, 20-22.

60 *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States*. Location 189.

in which ethnic-minorities and their culture were to be seen as inferior. With this sense of inferiority, came the heathenistic virtues of Native Americans and their pluralistic sensibilities, which were seen as a task to be attained in "winning" them over for "God."61 Willie Jennings, discussing property and control, tells us that,

> The grid pattern of sellable squares of land signified the full realization of property ownership. It also displayed the complete remaking of indigenous land. Now, under the grid system, each space of land could be surveyed and designated for purchase by measurement and location. All native peoples, no matter what claims to land, no matter what designations they had for particular places, no matter their history and identity with specific lands, landscape, and indigenous animals, were now mapped on to the grid system.[62]

In many regards, the notion of "America" being God's chosen land for Whites was deeply embedded into the imagination of Whites. It created a sense of rights in the gaze of White men toward anyone non-White. It created a sense of ownership of both land and body. It created a sense of calling which, with the mandate of western expansion through Manifest Destiny, gave decree to Whites as God's chosen to missionize the lost and create God's Kingdom in the image of Whiteness.[63]

By the time one enters the 1700's, the economic force of indentured servitude had turned into African slavery and one reinforced by a twisted interpretation of the Bible.[64] The idea of missionizing was placed into the context of regulation. Any types of passages in the Bible which discussed injustice, love your neighbor/stranger, and of God's love were inconveniently placed into the trash can.[65] The eighteenth century was one of brute violence and a century which saw the juxtaposition of freedom from an "oppressor," England, and the brutality of slavery. Still, the Black was considered not worth missionizing as much as Native Americans. Dysfunctional in approach, missions to Native Americans was seen as a help to Whites during this century. To this, Jordan says,

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61 Twiss, *Rescuing the Gospel from the Cowboys : A Native American Expression of the Jesus Way*, 61-70.

62 *The Christian Imagination : Theology and the Origins of Race*, 225-26.

63 Hine, Hine, and Harrold, *The African American Odyssey*, 1, 140-60.

64 Jordan, *White over Black : American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, 101-02.

65 To this Jordan discusses the relevant literature and material which was published in order to support the justification of Black enslavement. Titles such as *Anglican Humanitarianism in Colonial*, or *An Appraisal of The Negro* were created and kept those proof texting verses in the Bible in support of slavery, ibid., 180-81.

> Indeed they went so far as to conclude that converting the natives in America was sufficiently important to demand English settlement there. As it turned out, the well-publicized English program for converting Indians produced very meager results, but the avowed intentions certainly were genuine. It was in marked contrast, therefore, that Englishmen did not avow similar intentions concerning Africans until the late eighteenth century. Fully as much as with skin color, though less consciously, Englishmen distinguished between the heathenisms of Indians and of Negroes.[66]

This distinction is important as the sediments of its roots carried over into nineteenth century mission ideology in the form of fear. In some regard, the missionizing of Black peoples was regarded as making them "too smart" or "aware."[67] Some were converted and placed as literate ministers, as was the case with Nat Turner, who were to keep the form of Christianity which kept them oppressed.[68]

The Death & Movement away from White Dominance in Missions

The prevalence of Whiteness in missionary settings is problematic in an era of demographic change that favors an intercultural perspective.[69] Further, the image that has been seared into the minds of those outside of Christianity

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66 *The White Man's Burden : Historical Origins of Racism in the United States*. Location 207.

67 *White over Black : American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, 181-82.

68 It is this same construct in which many ethnic-minority millennials argue that Christianity is the oppressor's religion and not worth any type of inspection as White's control it and have manipulated it enough that it is in critical condition.

69 In his text, Jones notes that White ignorance of social injustices experienced by ethnic-minorites, is large. He says,

> America's still-segregated modern life is marked by three realities. First, geographic segregation has meant that—although places like Ferguson and Baltimore may seem like extreme examples—most white Americans continue to live in locales that insulate them from the obstacles facing many majority-black communities. Second, this legacy, compounded by social self-segregation, has led to a stark result: the overwhelming majority of white Americans don't have a single close relationship with a person who isn't white. Third, there are virtually no American institutions positioned to resolve these persistent problems of systemic and social segregation.

This is highly problematic for those same White Christians desiring to enter predominantly ethnic-minority communities to do "missions" and bring the "gospel" to this community, Robert P Jones, *The End of White Christian America*, Kindle Edition ed. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2016), Location 2049.

is that of White-blonde Christians, joyfully doing the work of God in other countries or "working among" the "at-risk" youth in inner cities. Couple that with a social media cannonade reflecting these groups amidst ethnic-minorities, assuming dominance, conferring a victory, and the dominance of White values makes mission a "White thing." These images must cease.

I would also contend that predominately White church plants into ethnic-minority communities are problematical as well. Many times this comes with a type of gentrification into a community that, even though unknowingly at times, destroys any indigenous or local voice. Churches that spring up in the new urban landscape[70] of many U.S. cities create an off balance socioeconomics conjoined with an ignorance of that particular community. A typical scenario is when White suburban mega-churches want to enter an urban context and "teach" those in that context to do "missions" using their methods, practices, and ultimately their theology.[71] A partner of our center at North Park from the South Side of Chicago runs one of the largest Black youth ministries in the city. They have been a cornerstone of that community for decades. A White suburban church approached them desiring to train them on how to do "missions" and "outreach" in their community—for a fee of course.[72] The church was looking to "expand" and work in the "city." My friend told me that they sat down, talked, but in the end, lovingly, yet firmly rejected the idea and proposal. If anything, my friends' church could have taught them how to develop intercultural and multi-ethnic relationships; how to create a Christian

70 As discussed previously, urban environments are quickly changing in the U.S. High rents and stratospheric real-estate, have created a type of new urban center. The once-feared inner city is developing into a White, affluent, and green movement toward city living that erases any relic of local history—it is as if the Apple Store and Starbucks have always existed and the ugliness of displacement and inequality never happened. Scholars of urban studies are also agreeing that this term is rapidly changing, see Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions*; Thompson and Hickey, *Society in Focus*; Whyte, "The Design of Spaces."

71 I would assert that this comes from a position of dominance rather than out of a genuine "call" from God. It is done in a manner of superiority to "teach" those without asking, learning, and collaborating with the people in that community who, often, are doing great work.

72 The monetizing of Christian ministry is troublesome on many levels. And while I still support honorariums, pastoral salaries, and the professional component of ministry, yet, the how-to market is treacherous to navigate and those labeled as "experts" in a particular space of Christian ministry can be questionable. Monica Miller contends that this is part of the Christian "marketplace" in which morals and deviant behaviors are monitored and managed; I would agree. Moreover, the focus then becomes about money and profit, rather than on people—a recipe for disaster and exploitation, Monica R Miller, *Religion and Hip Hop* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), 6-7.

Community Development (CCD)[73] model; how to live with and among people, even if they never change in a manner that the church prescribes. This is an example of this type of imperialism that has continued to plague missions and missional approaches to community engagement.

The White gaze upon multi-ethnic contexts needs redirection and reconstruction. Death and movement away from White dominance will mean we come at Christian theology the way Willie Jennings describes as a, "Christian intellectual identity that is compelling and attractive, embodying not simply the cunning of reason but the power of love that constantly gestures toward joining, toward the desire to hear, to know, and to embrace."[74] One would not plot a course across the country without consulting a map and acquiring the necessary knowledge prior to departure. The same is true for engagement with any context in which you are not familiar. Do not assume God has not been doing God's work in a context long before you arrive. To assume you are a savior, or any form of rescuer, is to assume dominance and create an imperial status for and in that context. This is why I am in strong favor of the death and movement away from White dominance in any missional setting.

The death of White dominance means that fundraising strategies and models will need to be overhauled. A large part of the dominance for Whites is that donor bases tend to be White and affluent which, in turn, fund other Whites. And because Whites continue to be in privileged positions financially, mission organizations reflect that dominance. Christian mission organizations simply lack diversity and engagement with diverse perspectives. Conversely, volunteer organizations and Evangelical Outreach Ministries (EOMs) are racially homogenous[75]; to place this in another manner, most EOMs are led by White Evangelicals. In his study of social capital and fundraising within EOMs, Samuel Perry found that Whites dominated the ministry landscape; 84.8% compared to just 4.8% Black, 8.3% Asian, and 2.2% Latino.[76] We see some of these similar numbers among young ministry organizations. Numbers such as these present several problematic variables. It has been widely researched

73 That is based on John Perkins' now famed model of the three R's: Restoration, Relocation, and Reconciliation. This model is focused on developing the community holistically and not placing the sole emphasis of ministry around salvation and church attendance. It is about community and working with the people already in a space and place, see John Perkins, *With Justice for All* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1982).

74 *The Christian Imagination : Theology and the Origins of Race*, 291.

75 Michael D Lindsay and Robert Wuthnow, "Financing Faith: Religion and Strategic Philanthropy," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 49, no. 1 (2010): 87.

76 "Social Capital, Race, and Personal Fundraising in Evangelical Outreach Ministries," ibid.52(2013): 164.

and argued that Whites tend to be unconscious and unware of much of the history of race in the U.S.[77] This presents issues on two fronts, because Whites will more than likely be leading an EOM, and be in a supervisorial role. If they are unaware or unconscious of the racial history in the U.S., it will be likely that they will dismiss or minimize racial identity and racism within the EOM, or on national issues such as Trayvon Martin, appear unsympathetic toward the death of a young man. On the second front, it is difficult for a subordinate to discuss issues of racism and racial inequality with their supervisor—even more so if the issue is with their supervisor. Thus, fundraising becomes problematic when issues of social capital are factored into the context. As Marla Fredrick McGlathery and Traci Griffin remind us:

> Further complicating this problem is that upon becoming a part of contemporary interracial evangelical mission organizations, many workers do not know the history of African American evangelical missions or the struggle of the black church in America. Without this knowledge, the appeal of white-conversion Christianity can appear unproblematic. Those who want to share the gospel with the world and be held accountable for living lives of more integrity would 'naturally' become part of such an organization. …[This] immediately places them in a position that requires them to work against the stigma within African American communities regarding the racist history of white missionary organizations in places like the United States, Africa, and South America.[78]

Lack of diversity presents difficulties for ethnic minorities among donor bases. When I was a young area director with Young Life on the Central Coast of California, my metro director (supervisor), who was Black, lost 75% of his

77 Michael O. Emerson, People of the Dream : Multiracial Congregations in the United States, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), http://carli.eblib.com/patron/FullRecord.aspx?p=664562; Antony W. Alumkal, "American Evangelicalism in the Post-Civil Rights Era: A Racial Formation Theory Analysis," *Sociology of Religion* 65, no. 3 (2004); Wilbert R. Shenk, *Changing Frontiers of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999); Tim J. Wise and Twomey Center for Peace Through Justice., *Little White Lies : The Truth About Affirmative Action and "Reverse Discrimination"*, Blueprint for Social Justice (New Orleans: Twomey Center for Peace Through Justice, Loyola University, 1995); Tim J. Wise, *Colorblind : The Rise of Post-Racial Politics and the Retreat from Racial Equity*, Open Media Series (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2010); *Between Barack and a Hard Place : Racism and White Denial in the Age of Obama*, Open Media Series (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2009).

78 ""Becoming Conservative, Becoming White?": Black Evangelicals and the Para-Church Movement," in *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith*, ed. Robert J Priest and Alvaro L Nieves (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 151.

funding when he assumed the leadership role within the first two months. Further, parents did not want to send their children to our weekly club meetings for fear of the new "urban youth ministry" component, and within the next three months—after losing 75% of their funding—lost over half of his parental support and committee members. While he and I could lament these issues, his supervisors above him were opaque toward the situation and even suggested that he change his approach to "be more like them." Conforming to the hegemony is often a struggle for ethnic minority youth workers in EOMs, as just the mere fact of being an ethnic minority in an EOM can place them in an adversarial stance. But more than likely, the ethnic minority who works for the EOM will have to conform.

> Recent research on race relations within evangelical institutions suggests that white evangelicals, like white Americans in general, tend to embody a complex of covert racial ideologies, attitudes, and practices collectively labeled "white racial identity" or "whiteness" that serve to legitimize and reproduce white structural and cultural dominance within evangelical institutions.[79]

Thus, it becomes difficult when *one* ethnic minority is hired. They are faced with a myriad of issues in regards to race and ethnicity. This "Whiteness" which Bell refers to, complicates the fundraising process, and, as I will argue briefly, facilitates fundraising models that are not suitable for ethnic minority contexts.

Having engagement and being knowledgeable of the historical occurrences of racism, inequality, and oppression toward ethnic minorities in the U.S. could alleviate some of these problems. When one is aware and conscious of their own ethnic heritage and know the continuing significance of race in the U.S., they are able to listen to others' narrative and life experience much better.[80] Further, a diverse staff means diverse views and approaches to Christian Theology and the Gospel within respective contexts. However, what typically happens is that ethnic minorities suffer in silos within EOMs, and if there is a group of ethnic minorities who can organize, they do so in small numbers or once a year at national events such as the CCDA (Christian Community Development Association) or the UYWI (Urban Youth Workers Institute).

White Supremacy does not like to be uncomfortable. Moreover, White Supremacy will not allow itself to be in distress over issues of race. Whites have continually commented on how "uncomfortable" they are the first time

79 "Diversity, Donations, and Disadvantage: The Implications of Personal Fundraising for Racial Diversity in Evangelical Outreach Ministries," 398.

80 Alvaro L Nieves, "An Applied Research Strategy for Christian Organizations," in *This Side of Heaven: Race, Ethnicity, and Christian Faith*, ed. Robert J Priest and Alvaro L Nieves (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), 310-11.

they realize they are the minority. To that, Whites tend to feel stressed, uneasy, nervous, anxious, and even angry after experiencing what many ethnic-minorities have to contend with most of their lives—being the other. Exclude a White person from something and they will let you know immediately. Have an injustice occur to Whites and there will be a claim of "reverse racism." Yet, through all of this, there are many Whites who will sit by in their comfort while ethnic-minorities live out a life of discomfort, stress, anxiety, and even fear of death. So, just because there is ethnic inclusion does not mean there will be ethnic "unity." If we learned anything from the 2016 election, it is that the dream and hope of a multi-ethnic future is still yet to be realized; that hope of having the minority vote away a person like Trump was simply a myth. This is also seen in EOM's when an ethnic-minority is hired—the hope is that somehow the evil of racism will suddenly end and now, because of that one hire, the organization is "reconciled." No. In fact, most White organizations do not even realize their racism and bigotry until an ethnic-minority is present. Therefore, the presence of one, while good, often causes more problems. If that person, say, wants to change the mission statement that reflects a more interculturally sensitive perceptive, how will the organization react? If that person wants to hire more women and ethnic-minorities in positions of power, will funders hold back their money? If that person interprets the cross as having its connection to the lynching tree, will that organization have the strength to engage or wither into a mythical land of "unity" and White fragility? Often the latter is the course of action and White voices remain in control. This means that power and control must be yielded. That is often easier said than done, especially when those in control fear that loss, such as many Whites who voted for Trump in the 2016 election.[81] I am not convinced that by hiring someone of ethnic descent, that somehow the organization then becomes inclusive. If anything, the organization has just begun that process and might not be able to survive the change, if that ethnic hire is freed to actually be culturally ethnic.

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81 Fear is what often drives many Whites. The 2016 election of Donald Trump was no different. Fear of immigrants. Fear of losing control. Fear of Blacks. Fear that somehow, the U.S. is becoming more "multi-cultural" and that is a problem. This type of fear finds itself embedded deep within the American Christian imagination and the threat of anything other than Whiteness presents a clear and present danger to a supremacy that many Whites simply do not see, nor care to see. Thus, it is with ease that many White people then dismiss a candidate for an EOM position by openly saying race had nothing to do with it, yet power and control remains with Whites. It is also easy for Whites to dismiss anyone who thereby suggests racism is at work. That fear of loss, accounts for a lot, see Major, Blodorn, and Blascovich, "The Threat of Increasing Diversity: Why Many White Americans Support Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election."

I long for a different route and a different face on newsletters, EOM social media pages, and for the voice of ethnic-minorities to be heard. I also desire to see a much broader and different voice within Christian theology—especially in missiology. My goal here is to converse on and present new ideas that resist White dominance in missions. However, I am not inclined to believe that just because my ideas and actions are adhered to, that White supremacy will end and racism will stop. This is a much more complex problem and one that is not simply written off as "the fall of humanity" (e.g. sin). I am not hopeful that Whites will levy power to ethnic-minorities. I am not ambitious enough to believe that somehow God will sprinkle magic dust on U.S. Christianity and things will "work out." There are deep divides and hurts that exist—especially within the ethnic-minority community. Those hurts have gone unaddressed for far too long. When a known rapist and racist is in the highest position of the land, it is not a hopeful time nor a time to celebrate. It is a time of lament, a time for sorrow, and, a time for action. I am not so convinced that White people can partake in that action. And while I believe some, very few, Whites can "get it" and be an ally, the vast majority—especially those in positions of power in EOMs—cannot undo their supremist nature. I am in doubt. The next and final imperative starter will be to nurture and nourish doubt and ambiguity in missiology as we dismantle and move away from White dominion in missions.

Concluding Thoughts

I believe that none of what I am grappling with in this book will be easy, nor is it simple to engage with or develop innovative pathways. Yet, that should not stop any of us. Nothing good is ever within easy grasp nor without tedious labor. And so I would like to propose some dream-making moving forward. Dreams of what might be and could be. Some, are already dreams in action turning into reality, while others are still at a distance. Nonetheless, I would like to bring about some closing thoughts around where I feel we are at and need to go.

Hip Hop provides the space to dream. Hip Hop allows space for dissent, questions, and doubt. So much of our Christian faith is built upon a foundation of assurance and knowledge, moreover, Western Christianity wants to defend God when God needs no defense. The notion of apologetics is not what Jesus had in mind when he laid out the Great Commission. Questions are often for those who need a "stronger walk with God," or for those who are "questioning God" altogether. I would contend that when spaces are created for dissent and disruption, faith grows. At my church, here in Chicago, LaSalle Street Church, those spaces exist. Dissent is allowed and encouraged. Moreover, it is part of the ministry mechanism that is in the ethos of the church. As a result, conservative, centrist, progressive, and liberal are all under one roof. The spectrum of the

community is great—it is not a church of all-of-one by any regard. Hip Hop, therefore, allows the room to have that dissent and openly question aspects of the faith that simply do not make sense, or have errors in them. Part of this dissent and disruption will also mean dismantling the dominion of absolutized "truth" concepts and policies.

Embracing Hip Hop means you then begin to work as a community in the process of truth-seeking and knowledge. Knowledge and truth, then, is owned by the community and not an individual. For faith development to develop, one must own their faith for themselves. Far too often, knowledge and truth comes from up front with the pastoral team, without any real connection to what it may actually mean for their one's own life. I am not suggesting a revival of individualism and faith, but that knowledge and truth be looked at as an evolving concept, keeping Jesus at the center of it all. Hip Hop theology does just that. In fact, in some cases, conflict, tension, and communication are all in one package. Tension is sure to come, but, as I have mentioned, it is part of the deal. There is no "kumba-ya" fuzzy feeling about doing the difficult work of faith development in the wild. Yes, we should strive for equality. Yes, we should not always focus on the serious and have a comedic approach. But, in relationships, the messier it gets, the more opportunity that 1) the gospel will be seen, and 2) the relationship will grow.

Hip Hop theology is also a place to experience rather than know. For too long the Christian faith has been about knowing and having that assurance that you are "right." Hip Hop theology continues to shake those foundations while still allowing Jesus to remain central in the conversation. Further, it creates the opportunity for intimacy in the experience, rather than just a knowing of what is "right." That intimacy is part of the experience. Experiential components to faith development are also a central aspect of urban post-soul millennial pedagogy. The days of passive learning in churches where a pastor delivers knowledge from up front, and then assumes it has been disseminated are non-existent for this group. Further, even with previous generations, there is no engagement, interaction, thought development, and embracing of those values. And while I am not suggesting that all sermons be eliminated—they do have a useful purpose in some contexts—they can at the very least be utilized as a starting point in the development of faith. The great thing about a Hip Hop theology is that it truly lives out the sacred, the secular, and the profane; all areas I have argued are important for a missiology and church in the wild.

I return to the opening lyrics of Kanye and Jay-Z's track, "No Church In The Wild," in which the question is posed, "what's a god to a non-believer, who don't believe in, anything?" As argued, nothing. But, if that god is shown to be the God of the Bible (loving, forgiving, challenging, mysterious, ambiguous at times), then, you might begin to have something. The possibility to have a

relationship with a God that has not been seen much in the wild. A God that exists in a space of questions and dissent. A God like that is different than a God that is an all-clad perfectionist. And while I am not asserting we dumb God down, or put onto God that which is not God, I am suggesting we show the God of the Bible. A God who can be bargained with, a God who chooses a liar to be the beginning of a nation, a God who allows a book like Jonah to end on a miserable note, a God who would allow sorcerers (the Magi who came to Jesus' birth) into the birth of Jesus, the God who has women at work in all areas of biblical narrative, the God who's origin is unknown, the God who sent Jesus who disrupted all of the religious structures and ideology of his day, and the God who continues to abound even though hate fills the world. That God is a God I would like to get to know. And I know it is the God who could begin the conversation with the person who is not a believer, in the wild. The goal here is not to "convert" that non-believer, but to have a relationship of meaning, significance, and one rooted in God. Allow God to do the work, not you, not the "church," not knowledge, and not "absolute truth." God. God through Jesus using Hip Hop as a vehicle is part of that process.

The neo-secular sacred within Hip Hop gives much more room for individuals to expand their knowledge about God and does not constrain them within narrow religious and doctrinal boundaries. In this manner, the neo-secular sacred could possibly be a better approach to spirituality using Hip Hop as merely one of its vehicles, and allowing for the yin and yang of life to flow more naturally without guilt, shame, and rules which no one can live up to.

My dream is that we can continue this conversation, explore new pathways, dismantle White supremacy, and use Hip Hop as a vehicle to create a missiology with the wild for a new modus of operation for Christianity in the 21st century. The time is now. The time is ready. And I truly believe, God is at work in areas that we simply cannot see with the naked eye until we get up close, intimate, and personal. It's time for a church and missiology in the wild!

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