NO INNOCENT BYSTANDERS

BECOMING AN ALLY IN THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

SHANNON CRAIGO-SNELL
AND
CHRISTOPHER J. DOUCOT

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I dedicate this book to my partner and wife,
Jacqueline Allen-Doucot,
who has been my ally, mentor, and coconspirator
in the struggle for a better world
for twenty-five loving years

—CHRISTOPHER J. DOUCOT

For Bella

—SHANNON CRAIGO-SNELL

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Introduction

Another video is in the news today. Another incident of brutality against a black person, this time a "student resource officer" flipping a high school student and her desk over, then dragging her out of her chair and slamming her to the ground. The video shows a quiet classroom—no chaos, no danger—until deputy Ben Fields seizes the petite girl sitting at her school desk. The young girl was arrested for "disturbing school," apparently by having her phone out during class.[1] Tellingly, a classmate who recorded the incident on her cell phone and protested the violence was also taken into custody. This incident happened at Spring Valley High School in Columbia, South Carolina, but we know it could have happened almost anywhere in the United States. We know this because there is another video every week in a different location. We saw the video of Eric Garner in New York, Michael Brown's body in Missouri, Tamir Rice in Ohio, Eric Harris and Terence Crutcher in Oklahoma, Jerame Reid in New Jersey, Walter Scott in South Carolina, Philando Castile in Minnesota. We saw the video of officers assaulting young black people at a pool party in Texas and beating a sixteen-year-old black boy in California. We saw the headlines about Freddie Gray in Maryland, Tony Robinson in Wisconsin, Rumain Brisbon in Arizona, Ezell Ford in

California, John Crawford III in Ohio. The list goes on, and the evidence mounts that something has gone terribly wrong in the United States.

Many Americans watch the latest cell phone video with sadness, bafflement, and outrage. For those who are white, the mixture of emotions often includes questions and conflicts about how to respond faithfully. We suspect that our religious and spiritual lives mean something about the roles we should take in the current movement for racial justice in America. We feel a sense of calling toward a better, more just way of living together.

But how? There isn't a road map for well-meaning white people who want to help create racial justice. And quite frankly, it is more complicated than some other imperatives for a virtuous life. We know that we are supposed to share our money and resources with the poor. We might not do it as much as we should, but at least we know it is within the realm of possibility. But when it comes to racism, the way forward is less obvious. As white people, aren't we part of the problem? We are constantly reminded that racism benefits us. While we could give away our money, we cannot give away our whiteness.

And then there is fear. We are afraid of the fallout if we engage our cousins, neighbors, or coworkers on issues of race. We are also afraid we will say the wrong thing, offend someone, or simply stand out and be embarrassed. All of us have seen, in person or in the media, a well-intentioned white person say or do the wrong thing and then get called racist. Sometimes it seems like any effort a white person makes to help the situation will be misconstrued. We have also seen instances when a white person attempts to be helpful but then makes a misstep. His work on behalf of people of color quickly becomes a way of boosting his own importance. He assumes that his role in every effort is to lead it, unwittingly putting a white man in charge once again. Afraid to say the wrong thing, it seems safer to stay silent.

We can even pretend that our silence is a kind of high-minded neutrality. There are many sides to every story. We imagine that

we can inhabit a neutral position that does not support either side of a contested issue. Such neutrality is an illusion. While considering and appreciating different perspectives on any issue is an important step in making thoughtful choices, stopping at "seeing both sides" of a moral issue is irresponsible. In a situation of injustice or oppression, neutrality sustains injustice. Archbishop Desmond Tutu states it plainly: "If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor."[2] Whatever its roots or justifications, silence also speaks. From a jail cell in Birmingham, Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. pointedly responded to criticism from apparently sympathetic and well-intentioned white clergy that the work and words of civil rights activists were "unwise and untimely." King wrote, "We will have to repent . . . not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people."[3] When those who have a modicum of power are silent in regard to injustice, this is a tacit acceptance and support of oppression.

The word "ally" is currently used to refer to someone working for justice with a group other than the group with which they identify. This term is imperfect and problematic for reasons that will be addressed later; but for now, this is the vocabulary at hand. The question is, How to be an ally in the struggle for racial justice? How can we do this well, in ways that don't cause more harm than good?

Many white people in the United States—particularly those who are middle-class—have found that stepping into the role of ally in the movement for LGBTQ liberation is easier than stepping into a similar role in the movement for racial justice. Furthermore, the work of allies seems to have been decidedly helpful for LGBTQ activism. In many ways, the United States has moved forward quickly on issues of LGBTQ rights while we appear to be moving backwards, or are at the very least stuck in the past, regarding racial justice. There has been remarkable success in changing attitudes, laws, and policies regarding LGBTQ rights. Part of this success stems from getting straight people on

board as allies. On the path toward understanding how to best be allies in the struggle for racial justice, we will briefly explore the role of allies in LGBTQ activism. This will introduce *allyship* and provide a comparison from which to discern why it has been so difficult for allies to function as well in antiracist efforts.

We are convinced that there are many people in the United States who care deeply about racial injustice and feel called to a better world but perhaps do not know where to begin. This book offers an introduction to some of the issues and practical guidelines for how to be an ally in the struggle against racism. The wisdom on these pages is largely gleaned from activists and allies who are involved in the struggle for racial justice, for LGBTQ equality, or both. Several activist advisors have contributed to this project by giving on-the-ground perspectives about the roles that people of privilege can and can't play effectively. Insights from these stories help us understand how we can form alliances in struggles for justice. Furthermore, they are shaped by the worldview of our particular religious tradition, Christianity. The conversation in these pages is not always comfortable or cheery. However, it will prepare you to engage in conversations and concrete actions to foster racial justice in our communities.

This text focuses on antiblack racism. This is only one form of racism among many. Asian Americans, Latino/as/x, native peoples, and many others experience distinct and deadly forms of oppression. We do not deny these forms of racism nor do we imagine that they are identical to, completely separate from, or less important than antiblack racism. Our focus draws a fairly arbitrary margin in order to more clearly examine the role of allies in the work for racial justice. We sincerely hope that reading this book will spur you to read other books that examine the struggles of other racialized and oppressed groups.

This book is an introduction, and an imperfect one at that. Its authors are not the foremost experts on racism or heterosexism, although the footnotes can lead you to some of those. We

are simply Christians who have, in various ways, been involved in struggles for justice for many years. Christopher Doucot is a straight, white man who cofounded the Catholic Worker House in Hartford, Connecticut. For twenty-five years, he has lived in an impoverished black and brown community, sharing his home with neighbors and strangers and engaging in activism at a local, national, and international level. Chris is a New Englander who strongly opposes Manhattan clam chowder. Shannon Craigo-Snell is a straight, white woman who teaches theology at a seminary in Kentucky. Over the years, she has been involved in community organizing, peacemaking, and the Black Lives Matter movement. A West Virginia native, Shannon is raising her children on beans and cornbread.

As white, straight people, we understand that this work can be tricky, and it can be hard to know where to begin. The same is true with the writing of this book. For some, it will be too simplistic; for others, it will be too challenging; and for still others, it will seem like hubris for the two of us to address these topics at all. However, while we are white and straight, we are also Christian, and we cannot witness the harm done by structural oppression, and individual acts of prejudice, without attempting to change things. Our limitations are not an excuse for inaction.

This book is intended for practical use. Our primary sources of insight are not textbooks, but stories from activists. However, there a few concepts that are central to all that is to follow and therefore worth defining here. The first of these is structural oppression.

STRUCTURAL OPPRESSION

Racism is a form of structural oppression. The most common way to think about racism is to imagine a person who harbors ill will against people of color or who believes stereotypes about people

of color. However, this view of racism is profoundly unhelpful. Such discriminatory attitudes are not racism; they are prejudice and bigotry. Racism is not merely a matter of individual feelings and beliefs but also a matter of systemic oppression. To understand racism in America we need to take a step back and acknowledge that there are indeed social systems operating in our midst. We are reluctant to do this in America, because we hold dear an ethos of individualism. This reverence for the power of the individual is deeply embedded in our national psyche and reflected in our myths (see Horatio Alger and the belief that those who work hard succeed), our heroes (Superman), our archetypes (the Cowboy), and our villains (Bernie Madoff). In America we want to believe that every success was individually earned and every failure is the result of individual shortcoming.

However, our individual lives play out within a framework of social systems. To get a glimpse of this, let's consider the transportation system.[4] In twenty-first-century America, the transportation system is car-centered, car-dominated, and car-identified, which functions to the advantage of people who own cars. Sitting in traffic every rush hour you might not recognize how this system privileges you. If you don't own a car, and don't live in one of the few American cities with adequate public transportation, then the reality that our transportation system is car-dominated, car-identified, and car-centered confronts every aspect of your daily life. If you get around by bicycle, you use roads and signals that don't work for you. It is nearly impossible to turn left at a busy intersection and interstates prohibit bicycles all together. If you cycle to work, it is unlikely there will be a shower waiting for you; but if you drive, then there will probably be a garage or parking lot.

Many poor people are pedestrians and consumers of public transportation. They walk to and from bus stops to get where they are going. Walking limits employment opportunities to within walking distance. You can take a bus to the suburbs, but

most suburbanites have cars, so bus stops are few and far between and even sidewalks are scarce. If you depend on the bus, this dictates where you live, work, go to the doctor, and go out for entertainment. Relying on the bus limits not only where you can work but also when, because your work hours need to conform to bus schedules. Think about grocery shopping without a car. Consider how hard it would be to buy frozen foods on a summer day or how the amount you purchase depends on how much you can fit and push in a collapsible cart or carry on the bus. Some cities have zoning requirements that mandate a certain number of parking spaces for major supermarkets. This makes it difficult for supermarkets to open up downtown, so the wide selection and cheap prices are often found in the suburbs because, once again, the system is car-centered, car-dominated, and car-identified. In many cities, driver's licenses are needed for other activities, including opening a bank account and even voting. While you can get an alternative government issued photo ID, these are most often issued by the Department of Motor Vehicles. If you don't have a car, you have to walk, bike, or ride the bus to the DMV before you can exercise basic rights of American citizenship.

Not only do those of us with cars not have these worries, we don't know they are worries at all for those without cars. If we have the privilege of car ownership, the system works to our advantage. It is easy not to notice that there is a system at all.

Racism is like this. The United States of America was created and structured under the influence of white supremacy, so the economic, political, and social structures of this country are white-dominated, white-identified, and white-centered.[5] The United States was built for white people in the same way that twentieth-century American cities were built for car owners. If you are white, it is difficult to see all of the difficulties faced by those who are not. It is much, much easier to not notice the system at all. Because racism is a system, it flourishes in the absence of systemic analysis: in other words, if we can keep all

our conversations about racism focused on *individual* prejudices, motives, or intent, then we do not notice the system at all.

With this newfound understanding of our transportation system operating as a system of privilege for car owners, perhaps you are inspired to give up your car in order to be in solidarity with those who don't own cars. Aside from the benefit to your health and the environment, will giving up your car end "car-ism"? Obviously not, because the system that privileges owning a car would not be affected. Giving up your car will not increase bus service, build bike paths, or pave sidewalks in the suburbs. In the same way, for an individual to imagine that her antiracist work is finished because she does not personally hold prejudiced views is a deception.

To end car privilege would require that system to be replaced. If we flash back a hundred years we can see that this is not far-fetched. In 1915 we had a system of transportation that was rail-identified, rail-centered, and rail-dominated. In this era the trolley lines on the east coast were so extensive that one could travel from Florida to Maine by trolley! The demise of this system coincided with the rise of the automobile and a variety of unacknowledged public subsidies that built the car-privileging system of today.[6] This system has also reinforced racial segregation in America.[7] "Car-ism" is the result of public policy decisions. This means the privileges of "car-ism" can be mitigated by new public policy decisions. In the same way, racism is a socially constructed reality upheld by public policy decisions that reinforced white supremacy. While seeing the systemic view of racism can be overwhelming, there is hope in knowing that it is not natural or inevitable. People made this; people can unmake it.

Whereas giving up one's car doesn't change the system of "car-ism," it does make one experientially aware of the frustrations, limited opportunities, and injustice of being car-less in a car-dominated, car-identified, car-centered society. This epiphany should not be dismissed. If our employers, doctors, teachers,

and social workers all drive to work, will they sympathize with the car-less when they are late or miss an appointment because the bus was late? Will legislators who haven't ridden a bus since grade school not only sponsor but advocate for increased funding for public transportation? The conversation on transportation is dominated by those who own cars. For the system to be altered, the conversation needs to be challenged by the voices of those without cars. Furthermore, the harm done by systemic "car-ism" needs to be recognized by those who have cars.

The benefits of being white in a white-centered and white-dominated society are often hard for those who accrue them to notice. We have always had these benefits, so they seem natural. In recent years, these benefits have been called "white privilege" and a great deal of work has been done to help white people see and understand this reality.[8] While we use this term, we do so sparingly for two reasons. First, focusing on white privilege can be a way to continue to speak primarily about white people. This is not the intent of those who use this term but rather an unfortunate pitfall. Second, some of the benefits that accrue to white people are not privileges. Easy access to voting, quality public education, and fair treatment by law enforcement are not privileges. They are rights.

There are several forms of structural oppression, including racism, sexism, heterosexism, and classism. Each of these forms benefits the group that is considered normal or standard. That group can be identified as the dominant culture. The group that is not centered can be called marginalized, as they are pushed to the margins of society. Most of us fit within the dominant group in some ways and are marginalized in others. For example, a poor white person is part of the dominant white culture but marginalized as a poor person. Often, a person experiences two or more forms of structural oppression. A poor white woman has to deal with classism and sexism. A transgender black person has to deal with heterosexism and racism. These multiple forms of

oppression do not just add up like building blocks. Instead, they interact with each other like dangerous chemicals. Heterosexism, sexism, classism, and racism do not just exist side-by-side, they also influence and strengthen each other. This is called *intersectionality*.[9] Although it is useful to look at various "-isms" individually, we must also attend to the ways they overlap, intersect, and interact.

Intersectional oppression happens in a very basic way: becoming accustomed to ranking one group of people over others in regard to one form of identity (such as race) makes it easier for us to think in a similar hierarchical pattern in regard to another form of identity (such as gender and sexuality). It also happens in more complicated ways. For instance, in nineteenth-century America, a "true woman" was supposed to be pious, pure, domestic, and submissive. This ideal was unattainable for enslaved black women who were forced to work in the field and subject to rape by the slaveholders. Enslaved black women were then seen as less than true women. This made it easier for a society that, on one level, told gentlemen to protect and honor white, upper-class women and, on another level, to physically exploit black, poor, and immigrant women.[10]

GRACE

Another concept that informs all the pages that follow is grace. There are many ways of understanding the spiritual dimensions of our lives, including different religious traditions and ethical frameworks. As we address these issues from a Christian perspective, the notion of grace is key.

It would be easier to choose not to see the oppressive systems that surround us. It would be more comfortable to deny our participation in these systems. And yet, the grace of God pulls us to recognize the systems that cause such harm.

Grace refers to the free, unearned gift of God's own self that God gives to us in many ways. God does not remain distant and uninvolved with humanity but rather persistently loves us and calls us into loving relationships with God and one another. While the idea that grace can make us see painful things might seem counterintuitive, it is actually a profound truth of Christian theology. It is because we glimpse God's love that we know we fall short of loving well. It is because we taste the goodness of God that we realize how bitter human enmity can be. It is because we recognize others as children of God that we cry out when they are brutalized. The grace of God reveals what human community ought to be, placing oppressive realities in stark relief.

On a personal level, the grace of God undoes our own pretensions. When we know that God loves us, we can stop trying to impress God or win God over. We can let our guard down about all the ways we fail and falter. The most arrogant, self-centered, conceited people are often those with the greatest insecurities. Without a strong sense of self, the arrogant man needs to convince himself that he is important by convincing those around him. In contrast, a man who knows his own worth does not need to brag or boast. A woman who fears appearing foolish will argue her point to the bitter end; while a woman who knows she is intelligent can admit when she is mistaken without suffering a loss of self. The grace and love of God secure a sense of self in the Christian, which makes it possible for Christians to admit our shortcomings, confess our sins, and even recognize our own complicity in systems of oppression.

The grace of God also undoes our self-abasement. When we trust that God loves us, we can no longer imagine we are unlovable or incapable of goodness. We are not permitted to shy away from our own potential, freedom, and power. There are many people in the world who imagine they are not good enough, important enough, or strong enough to make a difference in the world. When faced with the enormity of

structural oppression, we can become overwhelmed and morally paralyzed. Too often, the awareness that no one individual can fix the whole problem leads us to absolve ourselves from even trying. The grace of God can secure a sense of self, both challenging and enabling the Christian to affirm her own value, potential, and power.

These two positions—pretension and self-abasement—are two sides of the same coin. Both are postures taken up by human beings who do not recognize that they are loved by God. Our worth and value is already given to us by God in grace, but we don't believe it. In our denial of our God-given worth, we sometimes struggle to justify our own existence. The theological term for this is pride. Alternatively, we might deny our God-given worth by failing to live into our calling as Christians. The theological term for this is sloth. Both pride and sloth are denials of God's grace and love.[11]

When we accept God's love, it can have an enormous effect on us. As noted theologian Howard Thurman writes, "awareness of being a child of God tends to stabilize the ego and results in a new courage, fearlessness, and power." Such awareness establishes "the ground of personal dignity" and affords the Christian a form of humility that cannot be humiliated. The awareness of being a child of God does not remove all obstacles from a Christian's path, but it does allow her to perceive her own strengths and possibilities much more clearly. Thurman continues, "If a man's ego has been stabilized, resulting in a sure grounding of his sense of personal worth and dignity, then he is in a position to appraise his own intrinsic powers, gifts, talents, and abilities."[12] These words were originally written for the benefit of those who are oppressed or disinherited, for those who have their backs against the wall. Yet this wisdom is also useful to those of us who have various kinds of privilege.

For many white people, learning the history of white supremacy can be extremely threatening. It is difficult to learn that the

category of whiteness has always been a justification for harm to others. In this regard it does not make sense to be proud of being white. Does this mean we should be ashamed of who we are? No. Instead, it means we should question whether or not race is the primary category we want to use in identifying ourselves. We cannot opt out of whiteness; we will still benefit from racism in many ways, and denying this helps sustain the system of white supremacy. However, we can acknowledge the socially constructed categories of race and the system of white supremacy as circumstances we were born into and therefore must navigate. Instead of navigating these circumstances as people whose identities are secured by whiteness, we can steer through these turbulent waters as people whose identities rest in other categories. Some antiracist authors suggest that white people in the United States should reclaim the identities claimed by their ancestors who first came to America, such as Italian or Irish. This pushes back against the construction of whiteness. For others, claiming a more local, current identity might be meaningful, perhaps for an Appalachian or a New Englander. For those who are Christian, our primary identity rests in Jesus Christ. This can and should recalibrate our posture toward all the other identities that are put on us. This Christian identity is both gift and task. We are *called* beloved children of God, and we are *called to* justice, mercy, and humility. The work of justice and the grace that makes it possible are given together.

In Romans 12, the apostle Paul speaks of the grace that has been given to him and entreats his readers to live according to grace. Romans 12 is a guide to being gracious: "Contribute to the needs of the saints, practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless, and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Do not pretend to be wiser than you are." (Rom. 13–16 MEV). This is the task of an ally.

WHAT IS AN ALLY?

An ally is a person who is a member of the dominant culture in at least one respect who chooses to engage in work for justice regarding precisely that characteristic in which they are part of the dominant culture. A straight person who works for LGBTQ rights, a white person who works against racism, a middle-class person who fights systems that create poverty, and so forth.

Most important, an ally does this by standing with, supporting, and working with people who are not part of the dominant culture in this regard. They make common cause with those who are marginalized. Rev. Josh Pawelek, a Unitarian Universalist minister who is involved in Black Lives Matter, movements for LGBTQ equality, and other struggles for justice, says that the key to becoming an ally is that "people of privilege and dominant culture identity make themselves accountable to people of marginalized and oppressed identity in the struggle for justice. Call it allyship. Call it solidarity. Call it partnership. Call it beloved community. There are a lot of names for it."

The prevalence of the term "ally" emerged through the struggle for LGBTQ equality in the latter part of the twentieth century. A straight person who identified as an "ally" indicated that they did not believe in or accept discrimination of LGBTQ people. Students organized groups known as Gay/Straight Alliances (GSAs) to provide safe spaces for LGBTQ youth and to advocate for equality. In many ways, the efficacy of allies in the movement for LGBTQ equality has made this the term used most often for members of dominant cultures who work for justice alongside those who are marginalized.

However, the term—and the concept—is not without difficulties. In general, allies have been much more problematic in working to end antiblack racism. While simply declaring oneself an ally or one's dorm room a safe space truly did foster acceptance of LGBTQ people, simply declaring oneself an ally for people of

color is not helpful. It does not address the systems and structures of racism. Jessica Stewart, an activist and author, writes, "Race seems really different because of its centrality to all systems of oppression in America. White supremacy is so woven into the economic and political fabric of our country that engaging as an ally in the struggle for racial justice is essential, but also difficult and perhaps problematic in unique ways."

Amy Plantinga Pauw, a scholar who has been very active in the movement for LGBTQ equality, notes that the term "ally" is, "a military image that seems to divide people into allies and enemies, and it seems more problematic in struggles for racial justice" than in work for LGBTQ equality. Rev. Valerie Bridgeman—a preacher, professor, and activist—is also troubled by the military nature of the term. Military alliances are strategic and variable. She writes, "it allows for the 'ally' to come in and out of the fray, not to have to participate when there's no clear gain for them."

Several of the activists who advised this project mentioned that allies in the struggle for racial justice can choose to opt in or opt out at different times. Dr. Ludger Viefhues-Bailey, a former activist and current professor, notes that "the ally has the option to step out of companionship with the minoritized person."

Rev. Dr. Lewis Brogdon, activist and scholar, notes that this choice to be in or out of the struggle is another benefit of being part of the dominant culture. He writes, "An ally is one who intentionally sides with marginalized communities in the fight against injustice but even that act is an extension of privilege because one has the choice to do so or not. An ally always has privilege and the choice to act against or to participate with injustice. This can be a limitation in the term. It can seduce allies into thinking that they can deny their privilege." Community activist Rex Fowler reads this imbalance from the other side, noting that the term ally implies that the marginalized "person apparently needs something/someone to advocate for them, whereas I, as the ally,

don't necessarily need anyone." Several activists have suggested other terms that imply more shared risk and partnership, including "accomplices" and "coconspirators."[13]

Although there are problems with the term, Rev. Nyle Fort, who is an activist and community organizer, reminds us that the work is more important than the terminology and that, "those who want to be in solidarity are actually re-centering themselves by focusing more on what to call themselves than what they're called to do." With his wise counsel in mind, we take the word "ally," imperfect as it is, to gesture toward relationships of shared struggle that cross boundaries of dominant cultures and social locations.

The chapters that follow fall into three sections: historical, theological, and practical. In the historical section, we begin with a brief overview of the struggle for LGBTQ equality, including the social construction of sexual identity, the history of structural oppression of people who are LGBTQ, and the role of allies in the movement. Then we address racism in the same pattern: social construction, history of structural oppression, and the role of allies. Our hope is that this chapter will serve as a first step in understanding these ideas and a positive example of how allies can be useful.

The theological section begins with a quick survey of the various ways that the Bible describes God's intention for the world as one of justice and love. This is the particular shape of a Christian sense of a higher calling. Then we will address a specific problem that arises when white people apprehend racial injustice: white guilt. We argue that the categories of innocence and guilt are simply not suited to the realities of structural oppression. They lead us into a cul-de-sac of defensiveness and paralysis. Fortunately, Christian theology offers a different set of categories that help us both to understand and to struggle against systemic oppression.

Our activist advisers take center stage in the practical section

of the book, which begins with concrete advice for how to proceed in working for racial justice. Quotations from these activists will not be cited; they all reference personal interviews with the authors.

The final chapter of the book highlights four allies whose work inspires us and leads the way.

ACTIVIST ADVISORS TO THIS BOOK

The Rev. Dr. Marilyn McCord Adams† was a priest, theologian, and philosopher who was active in the struggle for LGBTQ equality.

Rev. Valerie Bridgeman, PhD, is a preacher, activist, and professor, who also served as a pastor for many years. She is involved in the Black Lives Matter movement, the struggle for LGBTQ equality, and efforts for fair wages.

Rev. Dr. Lewis Brogdon is a pastor and scholar who works for racial justice.

Rev. Nyle Fort is a writer, PhD student, and Black Lives Matter activist.

Rex Fowler is a community activist living in an impoverished, predominantly black and brown neighborhood. He also works on issues of racial and economic justice through his position as the executive director of the Hartford Community Loan Fund.[14]

The Rev. Wil Gafney, PhD, is an Episcopal priest, biblical scholar, and seminary professor. She is active in Black Lives Matter, interfaith work, and the struggle for LGBTQ equality. She works against white supremacy, racism, sexism, and heterosexism.

Jim Haber is an activist who is involved with work for Palestinian liberation, advocacy for the poor, immigrant rights, and peacemaking.

Frank O'Gorman describes himself as a "Queer Christian faith-based non-violent activist for social justice and peace."[15]

Dr. Amy Plantinga Pauw is a scholar and professor who is involved in the movement for LGBTQ equality and in efforts for racial justice.

Rev. Joshua M. Pawelek is a Unitarian Universalist minister who is involved in efforts for Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ equality, domestic workers' rights, environmental justice, and others.

Jessica Stewart is an activist and writer who is involved in the peace movement, the struggle for racial justice, and efforts for climate justice.

Ludger Viefhues-Bailey is a professor, college administrator, and former priest. He has been involved in HIV/AIDS activism and the struggle for LGBTQ equality. As a college administrator, he works to create campus-wide conversations on race and ethnicity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The authors suggest that it is better to think of injustice in terms of social systems than in terms of individual prejudice. How does that change what could be reasonably identified as racism?
2. Have you ever spent a period of time without access to a car? What did you discover that you didn't know before? What does that suggest about what those of us who are white know about the experiences of persons of color?