

CONFRONTING WHITENESS

If not Color-Blindness, what now?

with Dan Berry

I believe that most of us have come to a place where we realize that color-blindness is not the answer to racial healing. Color-blindness allowed some people to just ignore the effects of the construct of race, therefore excusing most from taking any responsibility for the repair of its damage.

After all I don't see color, I just see people. I still struggle with what that meant. If I say I don't see your color then how can I have any understanding of what your color has caused you to experience in your journey.

Any way, we are seemingly moving past that belief. So, if not color blindness what now?

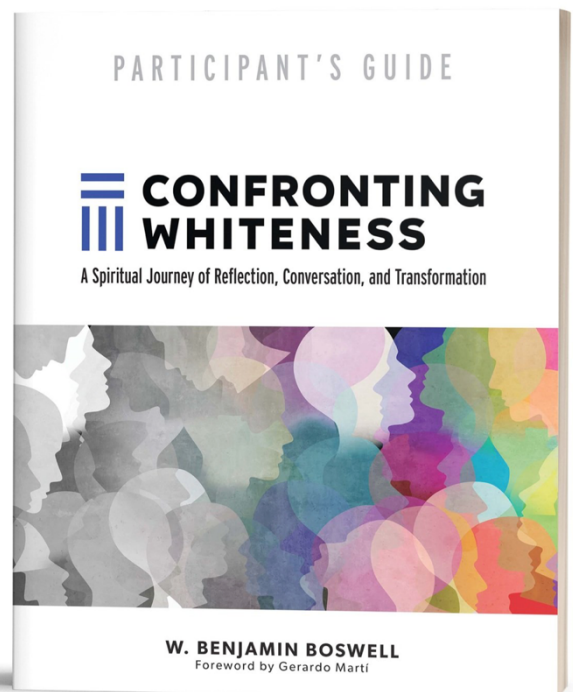
I see many people gaining an understanding about race/ism which is so wonderful. We are learning that race was constructed by white people to funnel wealth and power into their own hands while people of color were left out.

But, here's the thing, if you are going to learn about the construct you cannot forget that all the while people were being racialized as non-white, there was a shameless effort to construct whiteness.

Early in our history, white people in power worked feverishly to categorize people of color into non-white racial groups. Simultaneously, they created their own racial group. If you are what the world calls white it is because someone decided that being called human would not afford you all that life had to offer.

Because you fit into this new racial category more was available to you. While some were being categorized as non-white so they could be pushed out, others were being categorized white so they could start on top.

So, let's just say now that our eyes are open and we are seeing color, we cannot stay blind to our own racialized color. Whiteness is real. Right now, it wants to reign supreme and keep others at bay. If we really want to take steps



towards racial healing and heal the racial divide, we must seriously look at our own construct called whiteness.

I have discovered that I need to take a hard honest look in the mirror and own my racial category. I cannot say I see you and not be willing to look at myself. I know it's a hurdle, but one that we need to face.

I am reminded about something James said to church:

James 1:23-25 KJV

23 For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24 For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

I thought about this because most of us don't want to spend any more time in front of a mirror than they have to. In this context I wonder if our whiteness has blurred out our humanity. If not then why are we so defensive about this thing called whiteness? And why do we know so little about what it means to love our neighbor as ourself?

A few years ago, I was able to take a class developed by Dr. Ben Boswell, called "Confronting Whiteness". As I look back, I can say that the course really challenged and changed my life by helping me see whiteness for what it is, but first, I needed to understand it. I didn't like what the course revealed to me. How could I have been so blind.

This is my story, but I have to say when I looked in the mirror, I saw a white guy. I would never have described myself as that, but it's what I saw.

I wondered where the guy Jesus created went. White people struggle to see whiteness for what it is, I know I did. So, in this course we let black, brown, indigenous and other people of color hold up the mirror that reveals whiteness for what it is.

The more I looked at the racial construct of whiteness, the more I understood it and the ill affects it imposes on those who are not white. It motivated me to reclaim my humanity, especially the humanity that God created me for.

So, I close by asking you, If not color blindness, then what? Are you willing to take an honest look into the mirror and start your journey to confronting your whiteness?