

## Global racism, colonialism and white supremacy

By Jed Koball, Mission Co-Worker, and Valéry Nodem, Associate for International Hunger



Uniendo Manos Peru

Mining contamination over the last decades has seriously affected people's health and contributed in many deaths in communities.

Over the past 50 years, the Presbyterian Hunger Program has been witness to the impacts of systemic racism on the lives of people of color both in the U.S. and around the world. The ideology of white supremacy that undergirds systemic racism is a global force whose eradication demands global solidarity. Toward this end, it is important to understand how such an evil ideology came to be and how it is manifest today among our partners in the world.

Most of the countries where we partner were once colonized by European countries.

European colonialism was driven by the Three Gs:

- **Gold:** Explorers were in search of wealth for themselves and for their empires.
- **God:** Europeans defined non-Christians as uncivilized. The Church's "doctrines of discovery" justified their claims to lands considered "unoccupied" or "pagan."
- **Glory:** Colonization was instrumental to competing empires in their pursuits of global domination.

The pursuit of domination coupled with the encounter of different peoples bred the ideology that humanity can be divided into races and that the white race is superior. Ultimately, through the practice of the Three Gs, this ideology led to racist structures and norms that are lived out to this day around the world.

In Peru, we have learned from our partner Red Uniendo Manos Peru (RUMP) how such structural racism is manifest today. Five hundred years ago, prior to the arrival of the Spanish Conquistadors, King Ferdinand of Spain gave his famous dictum: "Get gold, humanely if possible, but at all costs, get gold." About 20 years later, Francisco Pizarro arrived on horseback with a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other. Pizarro sought the chief Inca — Atahualpa. As legend goes, shortly after an exchange of

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## Dismantling Structural Racism as a Part of Anti-Hunger Work

By Rebecca Barnes, coordinator for PHP

Racism and white supremacy are sins. Power and privilege embedded in our societal and church structures have long created, maintained, exacerbated and enabled racial injustice. We are called to confess this sin, to actively turn from it, and to create a world where the *imago Dei* is celebrated in each person.

Because of the inequalities and injustices long perpetuated in church and society, we are particular in naming and affirming that God loves all Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American and People of Color communities, that Christ calls for the

liberation of all people and that the Holy Spirit is moving to make a more just world.

As Presbyterians who work to alleviate hunger and to eliminate all intersectional root reasons why hunger exists, we know that we must stand shoulder to shoulder with others fighting to dismantle structural racism and to dismantle white supremacy. From unequal access to farmland and farm aid, to greater adverse health impacts from toxins, to higher correlation in agricultural labor and food chain work, there are many reasons why racism shows up as a root cause reason why people are hungry and

struggling to make ends meet. To fight hunger, we must fight racism.

In this issue of the PHP Post, you will see how the sin of racism has pervaded everything from our historical church roots in global ministry to the way we extract natural resources to the ways we go about climate change solutions and funding hunger work. Let us be mindful, humble, and open to receive and name hard truths and to embark on more healing and just paths forward.

### Join Us! Special upcoming events!

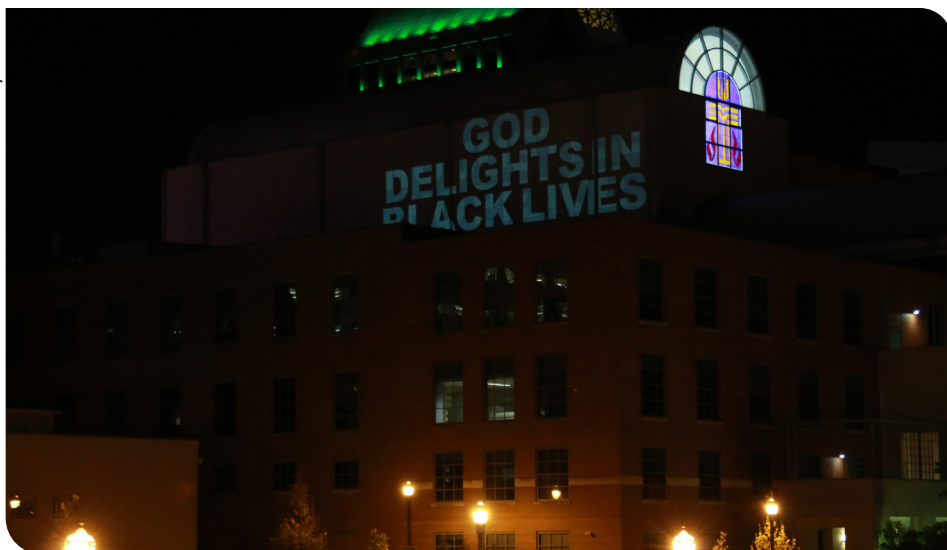
PC(USA) Week of Action will be Aug. 23–29, 2021 with the theme “Shades of Oppression.” Find more at [www.pcusa.org/weekofaction](http://www.pcusa.org/weekofaction).

Celebrate the World Day of Prayer for the Care of All Creation on Sept. 1, 2021. Resources are available at [www.presbyterianmission.org/eco-journey/2017/07/10/world-day-of-prayer](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/eco-journey/2017/07/10/world-day-of-prayer).

October includes World Food Day (Oct. 16) and the Food Week of Action. Find educational, worship and other links at [www.pcusa.org/foodweek](http://www.pcusa.org/foodweek).

The second Sunday in November can be a focus on Hunger and Homelessness Sunday. Find resources at [www.pcusa.org/homelessness](http://www.pcusa.org/homelessness).

Randy Hobson



Excerpts from Presbyterian policy statements on racial justice—such as “God delights in Black lives”—were projected onto the PC(USA) national office building in Louisville, KY in summer 2020.

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## Deep Links Between Racism and Climate Change

By Beth Gardiner, journalist and the author of “Choked: Life and Breath in the Age of Air Pollution”

Elizabeth Yeampierre



Elizabeth Yeampierre

*a direct line from slavery and the rapacious exploitation of natural resources to current issues of environmental justice. “I think about people who got the worst food, the worst health care, the worst treatment, and then when freed, were given lands that were eventually surrounded by things like petrochemical industries,” says Yeampierre.*

*Yeampierre sees the fights against climate change and racial injustice as deeply intertwined, noting that the transition to a low-carbon future is connected to “workers’ rights, land use, [and] how people are treated.”*

### A Just Transition

The following is an excerpt; the full article can be found at [www.pcusa.org/food](http://www.pcusa.org/food).

This article first appeared in Yale Environment 360 - [e360.yale.edu](http://e360.yale.edu). The original article can be found at [bit.ly/justran21](http://bit.ly/justran21) and is also published in full at [www.pcusa.org/food](http://www.pcusa.org/food).

*The killing of George Floyd by Minneapolis police and the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on African Americans, Latinos and Native Americans have cast stark new light on the racism that remains deeply embedded in U.S. society. It is as present in matters of the environment as in other aspects of life: Both historical and present-day injustices have left people of color exposed to far greater environmental health hazards than whites.*

*Elizabeth Yeampierre has been an important voice on these issues for more than two decades. As co-chair of the Climate Justice Alliance, she leads a coalition of more than 70 organizations focused on addressing racial and economic inequities together with climate change. In an interview with Yale Environment 360, Yeampierre draws*

**e360:** Can you talk a little bit about the idea of a just transition to a low-carbon future and how that dovetails with antiracism efforts?

**ELIZABETH YEAMPIERRE:** A just transition is a process that moves us away from a fossil fuel economy to local livable economies, to regenerative economies. Those are different economies of scale that include not just renewable energy but healthy food and all of the things that people need in order to thrive. The word justice here is important because for a long time, people would talk about sustainability, that you could have sustainability without justice, and the climate movement focused on reducing carbon but didn’t really care about other pollutants.

A just transition looks at the process of how we get there, and so it looks at not just the outcomes, which is something that the environmentalists look at, but it looks at the process — workers’ rights, land use, how people are treated, whether the process of

creating materials that take us to a carbon-neutral environment is toxic and whether it affects the host community where it’s being built. It looks at all those different kinds of things.

I can give you one example in New York City. We have been advocates of bringing in offshore wind. One of the things that we learned is that in order for that to happen, the pieces have to come from Europe and be assembled in New York and they would be coming in these huge container ships. Now these ships operate by diesel, and so what happens is they park themselves on the waterfront of an environmental justice community and the climate solution becomes an environmental justice problem. The climate solution is we reduce carbon, but the environmental justice problem is we dump tons of nitrogen oxides and sulfur oxides and PM2.5 [particles] into the lungs of the host community.

We need the climate solution, but then we need to talk about how we electrify the industrial waterfront and how these ships can plug in so they’re not burning diesel. While we’re doing that, we also need to look at how we create the market instead of following the market — wind turbines that are built in the United States, so we don’t have to bring the parts in from Europe.

These are the kinds of things that we think about when we’re thinking about a just transition. A climate activist will be like, “OK, we need offshore wind” — right, that’s it. But a climate justice activist will be like, “OK, let’s look at it a little closer and let’s figure out what the process looks like and how we can engage in remediation to make sure we are not only reducing carbon but we’re also reducing co-pollutants, and let’s make sure that the people that are

*continued on p. 11*



# Reparations Cannot Wait

By Christian Brooks, Representative on Domestic Issues, PC(USA) Office of Public Witness

The concept of reparations is not new to the federal government. Examining the impacts of policy and providing reparations to impacted communities is a common governmental practice. In 1862, Congress passed the Compensated Emancipation Act,<sup>1</sup> which ended enslavement in Washington, D.C. However, the law also provided direct compensation to slave owners in D.C. for the “loss of their human property.” Additionally, in 1980, Congress established the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians<sup>2</sup> to study the wrongful internment of Japanese citizens and permanent residents during World War II. This led to the passage of the Civil Liberties Act of 1988,<sup>3</sup> which issued a formal apology and provided compensation to survivors of internment and their families.

Continued evidence shows the detrimental impact of racist policies and practices on the Black community (police brutality, health disparities, the racial wealth gap, etc.). In 2020 alone, we saw many examples of the impact of our country’s long history of systemic racism on the Black community. However, despite the proof, the U.S. government has never apologized or provided redress to the Black community for the harm caused by enslavement and systemic racism. In the summer of 2020, we saw hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets calling for justice. These protests were a demand not only for an end to police brutality, but for America to repent and atone for its sins against the Black community. H.R. 40 serves as a first step toward repentance and atonement.

H.R. 40, the “Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans Act,”<sup>4</sup> is strategically named after the failed promise of 40 acres and a mule to freed Blacks after the American Civil War. The bill will create an expert federal commission to research reparations

for the African American descendants of enslavement. The commission of 13 people would be tasked with researching the history of enslavement in the United States and systemic racism, including federal and state governments’ role in supporting it, and recommend appropriate remedies to Congress.

H.R. 40 was first introduced by Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.) in 1989. It has been introduced in every Congress since that time. Support for the commission has continually grown since 1989. However, despite the support, the bill had not been brought to a committee vote until April 14, 2021. After more than 30 years in committee, the bill passed the vote and is now waiting to be scheduled for a floor vote.

At the 216th General Assembly (2004), the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) adopted the report of the Task Force to Study Reparations, which affirmed that “Jesus Christ calls us to repair wrongs done to one another and to work for personal and social reconciliation and renewal.”<sup>5</sup> This involves “remembering, restoring, repairing, and redressing injustices for the purpose of reconciliation and human restitution ... and acknowledgment of beneficial gains at the expense of others or harm done to others...” In order for us to move forward as a nation and heal from atrocities committed against the Black community in the past and present, reparations is necessary.

Many educational institutions have



Christian Brooks

Christian Brooks

acknowledged their contributions to enslavement. Our own Union Presbyterian Seminary has created a \$1 million endowment in support of reparations<sup>6</sup> for descendants of enslaved Africans. For the first time in U.S. history, local governments are taking steps toward redress. Recently, the city of Evanston, Illinois, established the Local Reparations Restorative Housing Program as a step “towards repairing historic harm to the Black and African American community caused by past racial discriminatory housing policies and practices in Evanston.”<sup>7</sup> These initiatives are great first steps. Our government must now fully acknowledge its culpability in the institution of enslavement and systemic racism, the resulting harms to the Black community, and make restitution.

1. [www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/civil\\_war/DCEmancipationAct\\_FeaturedDoc.htm](http://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/civil_war/DCEmancipationAct_FeaturedDoc.htm)  
 2. [www.congress.gov/congressional-report/111th-congress/house-report/666/1](http://www.congress.gov/congressional-report/111th-congress/house-report/666/1)  
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 4. [www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/40](http://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/40)  
 5. [www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/report-task-force-reparations](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/resource/report-task-force-reparations)  
 6. [www.presbyterianmission.org/story/union-presbyterian-seminary-creates-1m-endowment-in-support-of-reparations-for-enslaved-african-americans](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/story/union-presbyterian-seminary-creates-1m-endowment-in-support-of-reparations-for-enslaved-african-americans)  
 7. [www.content.govdelivery.com/accounts/ILEVANSTON/bulletins/2c909ac](http://www.content.govdelivery.com/accounts/ILEVANSTON/bulletins/2c909ac)

# RESOURCE EXTRACTION AND RACISM

Resource extraction continues a history of colonialism and racial discrimination



## 1. LAND AND POWER GRABBING

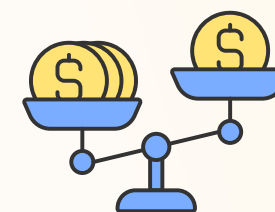
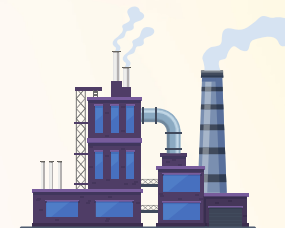
Slavery and colonization were built on the extraction of people’s labor and resources for the development of industrialized countries. Indigenous and other racially or ethnically marginalized communities often do not own titles to their land and are frequently forced off their lands after large-scale land concessions are granted by governments to corporate and elite interests for resource extraction without their consent.

## 2. BIPOC TARGETED

Many Indigenous and other racially or ethnically marginalized communities live in biodiverse and resource-rich regions that are targeted by multinationals for their revenue-generating potential for extracting oil, gas or other resources. Furthermore, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) communities are more likely to be located in zones with higher risks of exposure to contaminants than other communities.

## 3. RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Industrial extraction of natural resources often violates the rights of Indigenous communities, including their right to free, prior and informed consent, which is recognized in the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Indigenous communities often do not know their legal rights and have limited access to the judicial system. health and a healthy environment.



## 4. CORPORATE RIGHTS

The rights of foreign investors to profits are prioritized, and protected under trade agreements, and very often supersede the rights of BIPOC communities to public health and a healthy environment.

## 5. UNEQUAL ECONOMICS

Governments and corporations make a lot of profits from oil, gas and mining projects. But the revenues generated often do not contribute to the development of impacted communities, which tend to be poor and exposed to toxins from resource extraction. There also continues to be a lack of transparency in the revenues generated by extractive projects.

## 6. EXPOSURE TO TOXINS

Extractive practices have contaminated the air, waterways and soils of racial and ethnic minorities, Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups, exposing people to toxic metals and other harmful pollutants.

# Environmental Racism

Environmental racism, a form of systemic racism, refers to the greater impact of environmental hazards on (and fewer environmental benefits for) people of color. It is no accident that communities of color experience more environmental harm and fewer environmental benefits. These outcomes are the direct result of policies and decisions by governments and corporations that have targeted certain communities, forcing them to live in proximity to sources of toxic waste such as sewage works, mines, landfills, power stations and more, while protecting other communities from such impacts.

People of color are **3X** more likely than whites to live in areas with restricted access to nature. For example, **70%** of low-income communities live in areas lacking green spaces.

The Environmental Protection Agency has denied **95%** of the civil-rights claims brought by communities of color against polluters.

Black Americans breathe **56%** more pollution than they produce, and Latinos breathe **63%** more — while whites breathe **17%** less.



**The Environmental Justice** movement resists environmental racism and works to ensure that all people live in safe, healthy and prosperous communities.

As people of faith, we are called to seek well-being for all communities on a thriving, bountiful earth. We can do this by:

- Learning about environmental racism in your local context and globally
- Doing your own research to understand how environmental racism is a part of systemic racism
- Listening to and learning from people with firsthand experiences
- Connecting with organizations that advocate for environmental justice.

Learn more at [www.pcusa.org/environmentaljustice](http://www.pcusa.org/environmentaljustice)

#### SOURCES:

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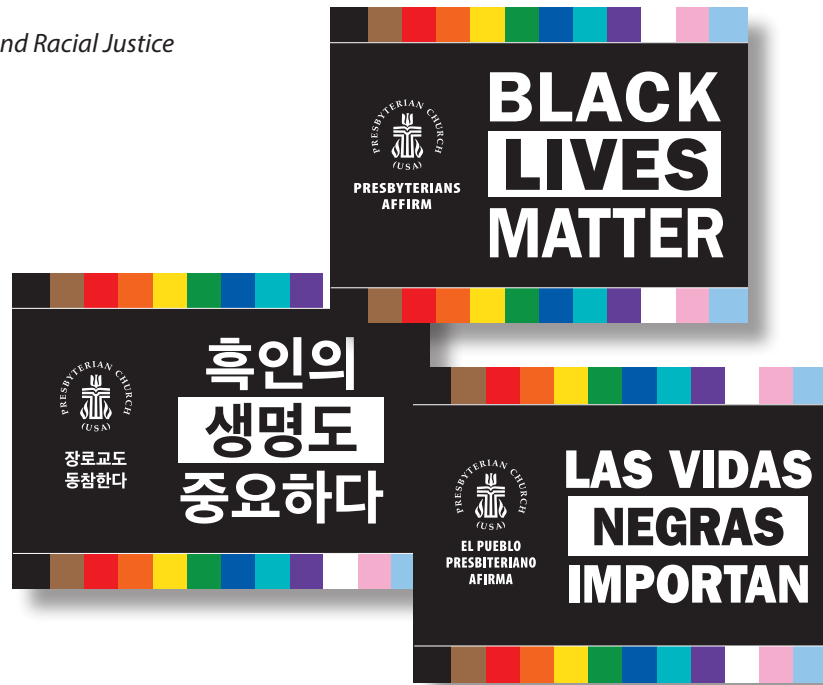
## We Take a Matthew 25 Stand

By Rev. Shanea D. Leonard, Associate of Gender and Racial Justice

One of the evil truths in our country that we do not always like to discuss is the fact that racism is as American as baseball, apple pie and the Fourth of July. From the founding of this country over 244 years ago on the stolen land of Indigenous nations who largely succumb to racialized genocide, to the legalized bigotry against Asian siblings in the Chinese Removal Act and Japanese internment camps, to the segregation and ill treatment of Latin and Hispanic immigrants at the southern border, to the nescient core of deep-rooted discrimination and evil perpetuated on Black people throughout the centuries, part of the fabric of our nation is the incessant existence of inequity. We cannot deny the fact that our nation is built upon the ideals of racism and, furthermore, that the Church is culpable in much of it. Racism is a systemic and sinful evil that has seeped into every facet of American society. It is the intentional and unintentional perpetuation of unfair treatment based on race or culture.

However, that is not the end of the story. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is taking a definitive stance to face this evil head-on in an effort to eliminate it within our body. One of the three foci of the Mathew 25 initiative started by the General Assembly is the eradication of white supremacy and dismantling of racism. Realizing that the Church is culpable for participating in racist practices and behaviors is an undeniable fact. But the work of making sure we are also proactive in its abolition is the move of the Spirit within our Church to propel us forward. The Matthew 25 initiative states:

“Matthew 25:31–46 calls all of us to actively engage in the world around us, so our faith comes alive and we wake up to new possibilities. Convicted by this passage, both the 222nd and 223rd General Assemblies (2016 and 2018) exhorted the PC(USA) to act boldly and



compassionately to serve people who are hungry, oppressed, imprisoned or poor. This work is a direct response to the good news of Jesus and a faithful expression of what it means to be Christ’s disciples in this time and place.” [presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25](http://presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25)

As a Matthew 25 church, our denomination has taken the stand to eradicate white supremacy and dismantle institutionalized racism as we create vital congregations and eliminate poverty. And none of these can be obtained if we do not involve ourselves in ways that create systemic change. We must care about what matters to those in the pews. Making intentional change and creating educational outlets helps to grow the knowledge of Presbyterians on how we all fit in the narrative of doing the work of equity, equality and inclusion.

We must continually remind ourselves that even Jesus had to take care of the dominant needs of the 5,000 before they could be stable enough to hear the gospel message. The needs of our congregants and communities often go beyond just a moving message and an uplifting song. In many

ways, the world around us is hindering the humanity of those most disenfranchised in our churches. Racism is the sin that keeps us from living into the beloved kin-dom that Christ calls us to. We cannot lose sight of our moral obligation to care for, love and welcome all people. Let us not forget that the Book of Order states, “God sends the Church to work for justice in the world: exercising its power for the common good; dealing honestly in personal and public spheres; seeking dignity and freedom for all people...” (Book of Order, W-5.0304) This is the foundation of our denomination and the stance we must take in the world today. Thus, the message of the Matthew 25 initiative is not just an ideal from the General Assembly, but the work of the totality of the Church as we seek to be reformed yet continually reforming.

For more information on Black Lives Matters efforts in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and other resources for racial justice, see [www.pcusa.org/bearingwitness](http://www.pcusa.org/bearingwitness). Aug. 23–29, 2021, will be a national Presbyterian Week of Action on racial justice and other justice concerns. See [www.pcusa.org/weekofaction](http://www.pcusa.org/weekofaction).

## PHP and Decolonizing Wealth

By Alex Peterson, PHP Advisory Committee

Congregations and individuals entrust the Presbyterian Hunger Program (PHP) with financial support to meet PHP’s mission, of alleviating hunger and eliminating its causes, as a result of trust built over decades of intentional and steady work of the PHP staff. Those staff have worked with purpose and clarity to build networks of trust to identify and enter into partnership with organizations whose missions and approaches align with PHP’s. PHP staff and the Advisory Committee have the distinct privilege and difficulty of determining how to use monetary gifts, and make the difficult choices of how to spread the wealth of the church to those who can best use it.

Over the past two years, we have worked to examine that privilege, and in a way that we hope allows us to better fulfill our mission. In 2019, we committed to reading “Decolonizing Wealth: Indigenous Wisdom to Heal Divides and Restore Balance” by Edgar Villanueva, and then had centered group discussions around topics within the book.

“Decolonizing Wealth” centers the discussion of philanthropy and grant-making – the main financial approach that PHP utilizes – around colonization. For centuries, our world’s history has included and been rooted in dividing, conquering and exploiting people. We have formed haves and have-nots, whether they be identified by the country where they live, the color of their skin, the way they speak, education level, gender or any other of the myriad ways in which we separate one from another. This impacts the way PHP and all of philanthropic and granting groups work, for “[t]he basis of traditional philanthropy is to preserve wealth, and that wealth is fundamentally money that’s been twice stolen: once through the exploitation of natural resources and cheap labor, and the second time, through tax evasion.”



One grant partner supported by the PHP Advisory Committee is Climate Justice Alliance, which among many other things, galvanizes youth and others to march for climate justice for historically harmed and disadvantaged populations.

For Villanueva, the essence of decolonizing wealth is to close the gaps, particularly around race. To do that, to truly be part of a justice-seeking solution, if we are to give out money and talents, we need to be aware of the history. The history of how groups were separated from their land, the history of affordable housing, health care, education. Only by employing a lens of race and a real understanding of how we arrived here can we deploy resources in a manner that will provide solutions that work for all.

Collectively, as we read the book, we shared our reactions and responses to the book, to this approach, and where to go next. I so very much appreciated the different ways in which the book impacted each of us. For some, the approach was more natural than for others. Some had critiques; others, questions. What I loved was the clear sense that teammates were invested in the conversation, and in seeing if this exercise could strengthen our understanding of our role and our privilege. It is truly a privilege and honor to be able to support the amazing PHP team and the groups with whom we

collaborate. We also have privilege in being part of a mainline denomination formed in the Global North and boasting eight previous (all white) U.S. presidents. Who we are now as a denomination is predicated on centuries of wealth accumulation, land acquisition and ownership, and tax advantages as a U.S. nonprofit. This does not diminish anyone’s work, but it is necessary to see how we came to the position of privilege and power that we hold now, so we can begin to discuss what we can do to honor those who did not benefit as we did, or who suffered because of the systems that advantaged us.

And this is the crux of where we are now as PHP staff and an Advisory Committee. Just as PC(USA) wrestles with the discussion about where to invest its endowment, we wrestle with the question of how to invest our grant funding. Each year, for instance, only 7% or 8% of grant funding goes to communities of color; I am delighted to say that PHP gives more than 80% of international and national hunger grants to

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Global racism, continued from p. 1

greetings, Pizarro had Atahualpa detained. Atahualpa offered as ransom a room full of gold. Pizarro accepted the gold, and then had Atahualpa executed. Thus began 300 years of Spanish occupation and colonization of what is today Peru.

Over the course of those 300 years of Spanish occupation, the colonizers imposed an extractive economic model, which means taking from the earth what will generate wealth (gold); a caste system that established a racial hierarchy in which Indigenous peoples and enslaved Africans were at the bottom; and a religious structure that suppressed Indigenous spiritualities of harmony with the earth.

Fast-forward 500 years. The extractive model still drives the economy, and Peru continues to be a destination for foreign interests to get gold and other metals. Peru ranks sixth in the world in gold production; second in silver, copper and zinc. Extractives are the backbone of the economy, accounting for two-thirds of its export revenue. But at what cost?

Nearly 20% of the national territory of Peru has been concessioned to foreign mining companies. The land conceded is primarily occupied by people of Indigenous descent. The presence of the mining industry on this land is a threat to their life and livelihood.

For the past 20 years, RUMP has been accompanying the people of La Oroya who are present-day victims of such thirst for gold. La Oroya is often considered one of the 10 most contaminated places in the world, where almost 99% of the children have been shown to have extreme levels of lead in their blood. The cause of the contamination is a metals smelter owned by a U.S.-based corporation. After pressure from RUMP and others in civil society for the government to enforce environmental regulations, the smelter declared bankruptcy. It claimed



Praja Abilasha

Protests from PHP Joining Hands network Praja Abilasha in Sri Lanka, standing with other partners against the eviction of farmers and fishermen from their lands for tourism projects.

the environmental regulations were more costly than it had anticipated, and because of this, it further claimed that its rights as a foreign investor as stipulated in a free trade agreement between the U.S. and Peru had been violated. In effect, it claimed that its right to profit supersedes the human rights to breathe clean air. This case is still pending, and in the meantime, no remediation or health care has been provided to the people. La Oroya is but one of over 4,000 environmental mining liabilities in Peru today that put at risk the lives of over 11 million people — most of whom are of Indigenous descent.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of Peruvian liberation from Spain as well as the 20th anniversary of RUMP. Many might ask what has changed over those 200 years or what difference our global partner has made over the past 20 years? But our partners will respond that it is important to first ask what has not changed over the past 500 years. From the perspective of Indigenous populations impacted by mining activity, many would argue that the only change is those who control the shots. During colonial rule, the extractive industry served the State — getting gold to expand the King’s empire. In this era of free

trade and globalization, it is the State that serves the Extractive Industry - designing laws and trade agreements that facilitate its drive for profit. As for what has not changed - the land is still being misappropriated, extracted and contaminated. The gold is still largely being exported to sustain the way of life in higher income countries. And those paying the price with their lives and livelihoods are still the indigenous.

Perhaps the most important question then comes to us: how might we (the Church) change? Will we be complicit in the continued conquest of places like Peru? or, will we participate in something new?

In our Matthew 25 initiative to dismantle structural racism and eradicate white supremacy ideology, may we remember that the systems that oppress people of color in the United States are intricately tied to systems oppressing people of color around the world. It is imperative that we unite our strengths and work together in solidarity to dismantle these evil structures. To begin we must confess our racist history and repent; listen to and continue to amplify the voices of people of color; and fight against all forms of exploitation of human beings, wherever they are.

Deep Links, continued from p. 3

hired are hired locally.” So, there are all of these other pieces that are involved in a just transition. Climate activists talk about moving at a big, grand scale, and we talk about moving at a local scale, and then replicating those efforts.

e360: Racial justice would presumably have to be at the heart of that.

**ELIZABETH YEAMPIERRE:** It has to be at the center. For example, in Sunset Park [Brooklyn, where Yeampierre runs the Latino community group UPROSE], we just launched the first community-owned solar cooperative in the state. OK, we want renewable energy. We need to be able to prioritize the people that are going to be most impacted. Low-income communities. People of color. It has to matter to white folks because when our communities succeed and get what they need, everyone benefits from that.

With the cooperative, the community actually owns the utility, owns the energy source. People will be able to access renewable energy, at a reduced cost, be hired locally to build it — and have ownership. So, it’s really exciting. We’re hoping this model will birth more projects like this.

Now, we’re reaching out to small businesses. They’re struggling because of how COVID-19 has affected the economy. When we started this project, we were thinking it would provide resilience to disruptions of the grid and other systems from extreme weather events. We hadn’t anticipated the disruption would be something like COVID. But these models become a real benefit in moments like this where you don’t know where your next paycheck is coming from. You have access to energy that is both renewable — which means it has a health benefit — and also benefits your pocketbook.

e360: With the pandemic and its racially disparate impact, and then the killing of George Floyd and the protests that have followed, we’re at this moment where these longstanding racial disparities and racism are on vivid display. What would you hope the climate movement and the environmental justice movement take away from this moment and apply going forward?

**ELIZABETH YEAMPIERRE:** I think that this is a moment for them to start thinking internally and thinking about some of the challenges that they’re having. I think it’s a moment for introspection and a moment to start thinking about how they contribute to a system that makes a police officer think it’s OK to put his knee on somebody’s neck and kill them, or a woman to call the police on an African American man who was birdwatching in the park.

These institutions [environmental groups] have to get out of their silos and out of their dated thinking, and really need to look to organizations like the Climate Justice Alliance and Movement Generation and all of the organizations that we work with. There are so many people who have been working with each other now for years and have literally put out tons of information that there’s no need to reinvent the wheel. It’s all there.

There has to be a fundamental change in the culture of these institutions. If they were thinking strategically, they would be saying, “Hey, let me see. I’m in New York. Who’s doing this and how can we support them?” We’ve had groups of white young people who have contacted us and have said to us, “How can we support you? How can we best use our resources and our skills to support the work that you’re doing?” And, we’ve been like, “You know what? That is the right question. Let’s do this together.”

PHP and Decolonizing Wealth, continued from p. 9

communities of color.

We are looking at the requirements to apply for a PHP grant. I work as a grant writer and fundraiser, so I initially gravitated toward seeing stronger metrics and baselines for applications. However, that lens of privilege from which I operate creates a barrier for organizations who don’t have funding to hire a full-time fundraiser, particularly newer organizations and those representing communities of color. “Decolonizing Wealth” helped drive home for me the need to work harder to meet the communities and groups with whom we partner where they are, and find ways to ensure we support groups who will truly do the right work — not those who just know how the system works and words to use. We are striving to ensure our grants aren’t transactions from those who have power and resources donating to “poor people.” We are seeking to adopt a culture of reciprocity, where living our mission means mutual sharing between PHP, congregations that support our work, and communities that both turn our funds into social change and also provide us lessons in living out Christ’s message and healing the world.

As Villanueva says, “Decolonization is a process with roles for everyone involved, whether you’re rich or poor, funder or recipient, victim or perpetrator. It may not feel like we’re moving forward at all, during certain phases of healing. Patience and grit are required.” My sincere hope is that PHP will learn to see our privilege, grieve for the harms done, listen to the wisdom of those who have been excluded and exploited, and bring our best to invest in healing and repairing this hurting world. This will take time, and needs the support of our community. With the support of the amazing staff at PHP, the voices of the groups we are lucky to support and learn from, and the continued financial trust and support from congregations and individuals, we can get there.



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