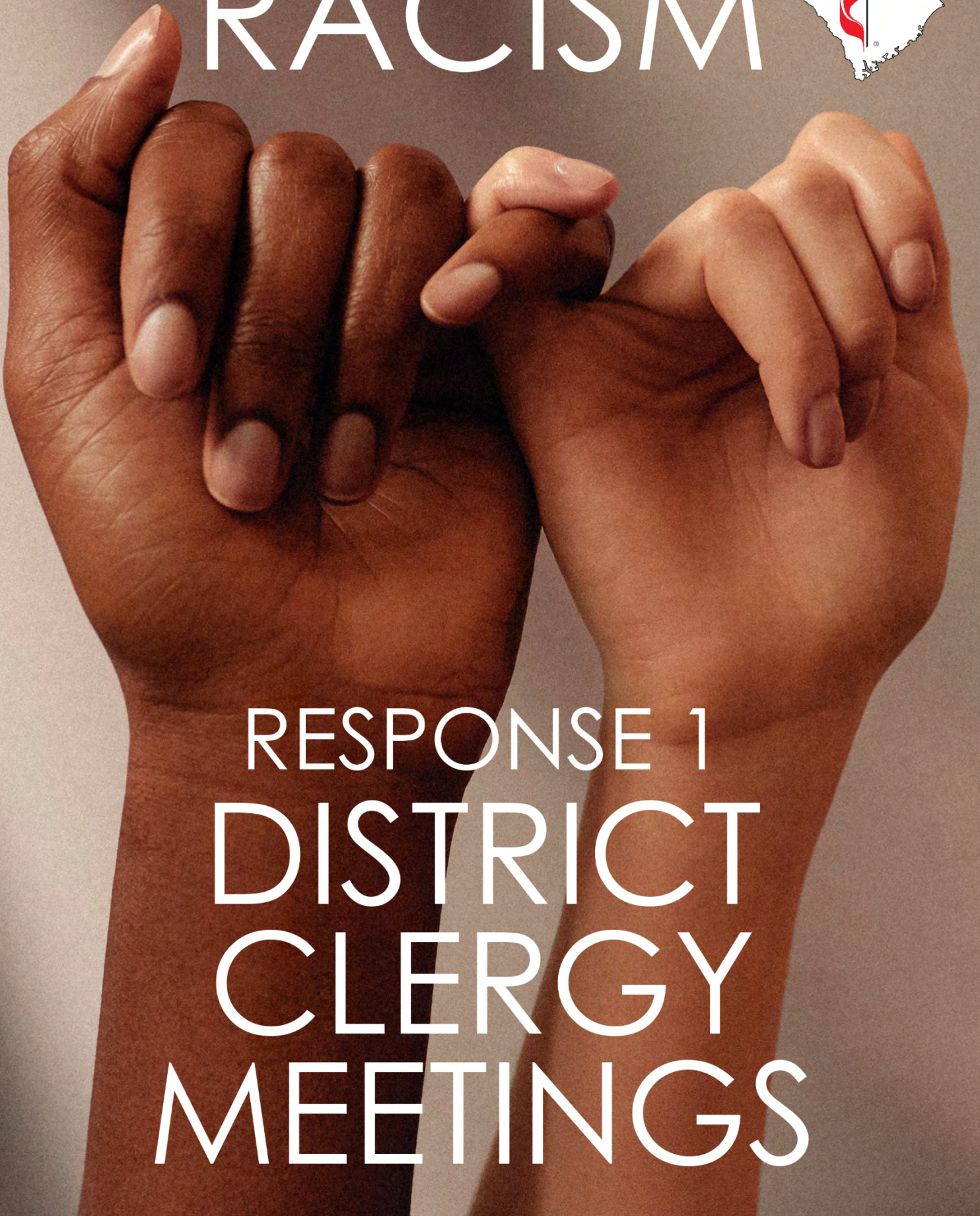


# OUR RESPONSE TO RACISM



RESPONSE 1  
DISTRICT  
CLERGY  
MEETINGS

# Response 1 – District Clergy Meetings

## Building a Foundation for the Day

*(Please adhere to [COVID-19 best practices](#) to keep everyone safe.)*

### **Activity:** Sub-Group Introductions

- Organize the group into sub-groups of 5 or 6. (Option: Assign numbers to each person as they come in the door; ask them to sit at the table with the corresponding number.)
- Instruct each person to introduce themselves at their tables with the following:
  - Name and church
  - Answer in 3 words: What does love look like to you?

### **Slide 1-2:** Welcome [Download “History of Racism” PowerPoint](#)

Welcome to this time together. While this may be a hard conversation and a difficult history to look at together, we feel it is vital to our lives together and for our life as the church as we seek justice and equality for all. Robin DiAngelo, author of “White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism,” shares this. *(Read quote on slide)* Our hope today is that we can share the history of this disparity and maybe discover our role in it.

### **Slide 3:** Purpose

To create space for conversation around systemic racism, its origins and its impact on current views of people of color. To foster conversation where participants can share experiences and struggles thereby leading the way to seeing the full humanity of each other.

### **Slide 4:** Goals

We have 3 goals for our time together:

- Discover and learn the history of racism through past and current events
- Engage in conversation around race by sharing and reflecting on personal experiences
- Point out the pattern of racism throughout history.

### **Slide 5:** A Holy Time

We consider this a holy time. What makes it holy is the sometimes difficult and emotional conversation. There will be images, words and true stories that might prompt emotions we have not anticipated. To give us some direction on how to navigate this information, we offer these guidelines for engagement. Let’s read these “Guidelines for Engagement” together. *(Consider providing a hard copy of this slide to each person.)*

# Think About Race Words & Phrases

## Slide 7 (Activity): Words We Say

- Provide each person with something to write with and something to write on
- Display one word at a time on the screen.
- For each word, ask each person to write down the first thing that comes to mind. Reinforce the importance of being completely honest. No filters.
- Share within the sub-groups:
  - Ask one person to lead each sub-group (or they can take turns leading)
- Share with the overall group:
  - Session leader asks the group these questions:
    - What are the consistent answers in the group?
    - What did you learn from another person's experience?
    - What was the first thing you think of when you see this word?
    - What emotions does this word stir in you?
    - What tangible actions will you take going forward?

## Slide 8 (Activity): Phrases We Use

- Provide each person with something to write with and something to write on
- Display one phrase at a time on the screen.
- For each word, ask each person to write down their answers to these questions:
  - What does this phrase remind you of?
  - What emotion does it stir up?
  - What do you think this means?
- Share within the sub-groups:
  - Ask one person to lead each sub-group (or they can take turns leading)
- Share with the overall group:
  - Session leader asks the group these questions:
    - What are the consistent answers in the group?
    - What was the first thing you think of when you hear this phrase?

# Four Movements Throughout History

## Colonization and Plantations – 1800-1860s

### Slide 10:

Slaves were shipped over from Africa. Many were shipped in horrid conditions. Many did not survive the trip. Slaves were not thought of as people but as nonhuman, those who worked the plantations. Crops of cotton and rice were key economic resources and created great riches for plantation owners. Many of the new government leaders owned slaves and plantations. When they used the word “free” in the nation’s founding documents, that did not include slaves. They meant human beings – but slaves were considered property, not humans.

Plantations were the mainstay in the South; therefore, a large number of slaves were in the South. Charleston was a major harbor for the slave trade, and a reminder of that remains today on Chalmers Street (just off Market Street) – The Old Slave Mart Museum.

Slavery was the societal norm. Men were brutalized and their “value” was based primarily on their brawn. Women were often raped and forced to bear children who also could be slaves. They worked the fields during pregnancy, often gave birth there, and were back in the field with their newborn the next day.

Slaves were not considered smart or creative, and the idea that the men were “savages” was birthed here. Both assessments were far from the truth. It is remarkable how they were able to make a home out of nothing and how they were tenacious when it came to their faith.

### Psalm 137:4

Slaves would work all day and then meet in the brush arbors to worship. Faith was a source of hope and strength for each one. A few became lay speakers and traveled with Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury during the Methodist Movement. John Wesley adamantly opposed slavery – so much so that, at the famous Christmas Conference of 1784, the Methodists made a bold statement against it.

Six months later, though, it was overturned because many pastors and influential church members owned slaves, and to go against slavery would impact their bottom line. In spite of this, slaves couldn’t be counted out just yet, because they knew that they were created by God as people of worth. They would go on to form their own church – the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

# Civil War and Reconstruction – 1861-1896

## Slide 11:

While slavery was big in the South, it was less admired in the North. The men and women of slavery began to yearn for freedom. Freedom from cruelty and terrorism. Freedom to worship. Freedom to be paid for the hard work they did every day. They began to seek ways to escape. Some were successful, but the price of failure was brutality and death. This was the time of the Underground Railroad. Harriett Tubman and many other courageous people hid fugitives as they moved north toward freedom. While there were lots of reasons the North and South went to war, slavery and the right to own slaves was a significant one. Many black men served in the Union army and risked their lives for freedom and equality.

## Slide 12:

**The 13th Amendment** – Passed by Congress on January 31, 1865, and ratified on December 6, 1865, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished slavery in the United States.

## Slide 13:

**The 14th Amendment** – Ratified in 1868, the 14th Amendment granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States – including former slaves – and guaranteed all citizens “the equal protection of the laws.”

## Slide 14:

**The 15th Amendment** – Ratified in 1870, the 15th Amendment granted African-American men the right to vote by declaring that the “right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Its promise, however, would not be fully realized for almost a century. Through the use of poll taxes, literacy tests and other means, southern states effectively disenfranchised African Americans. It wasn’t until after the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that the majority of African Americans in the South were registered to vote.

## Slide 15:

**“Forty Acres and a Mule”** – Near the end of the Civil War, land was granted to recently freed families (and the Union army loaned them the use of mules). Federal authorities initially protected this right, but that did not last long. As black men, women and families began to make money and find their way, white supremacists (those who wield power over black people in any form) rose up and worked to take away their ability to make a living. They deployed violence, sabotage and displacement. The 14th Amendment, to these whites, did not apply to the black man who was “taking money away from the white man.” This would become a theme throughout history: “While free, not equal.”

Black men ran for office and served in Congress. They sought to own business and proved to be creative and savvy business people. They were making a way out of no way. It took tenacity, great faith and hope. They continued to form their own churches. Great preachers and community leaders were formed in these churches. Faith was a mainstay and a great motivator.

# Jim Crow and Segregation – 1897-1940s

## Slide 16:

Black people were making a way out of no way. As they made progress toward providing for their families, whites pushed back – using media and other tools to keep black people in their place, in poverty and in a nonhuman status as “uneducated savages.”

Let’s take a look at “The Birth of a Nation,” a landmark 1915 silent movie that promoted white supremacy. As you watch this video, write down any thoughts that come to mind. (*Be prepared to quickly skip through ads.*)

## Slide 17 (Video): “The Birth of a Nation”

- Afterward, share thoughts within sub-groups

“The Birth of a Nation” was a successful tool in painting the picture of a black man as a savage whose intent was to do harm to white women. In fact, the film proclaimed, it was a white supremacist’s duty to protect his family from these “savages.” This was only one way that white men in power worked to limit progress and racial equality:

- The right to vote was taken away.
- Segregation was instituted with the mindset that black people should not be in the same places as white people.
- Although black people were great business people, they often were self-educated writers, bankers, mayors, congressmen, etc., who had to fight against the prejudice that was often the result of propaganda and public violence.

## Slides 18-22 (Activity): Images Shape Perception

- For each image, ask each person to write down their answers to these questions:
  - What is the image trying to portray to you about our brothers and sisters?
  - What does each image say?
- Share within the sub-groups:

## Slide 23: Who was Jim Crow?

“Jim Crow” was a character created by a white minstrel who would perform in blackface and put on shows that painted a picture of the black man as stupid, silly and gullible. The term “Jim Crow” would go on to be synonymous with segregation and the Civil Rights Movement. While Jim Crow began as a joke, there was nothing funny in the painful reality into which the concept would evolve. It became a system of laws that struck down what had been intended in the Reconstruction Period. Perceived or accused vagrancy, laziness and disrespectfulness to whites became crimes for which the punishment could be very severe. Many would escalate to the point of lynching.

## **Slide 24 (Activity):** “Strange Fruit”

- Play “Strange Fruit,” a song by American jazz singer Billie Holiday. (4 minutes) (*Be prepared to quickly skip through ads.*)
- Allow time for discussion.

## **Slides 25-29:** Lynchings

While equality, the right to vote and other freedoms were promised and enshrined in the law, black men continued to be painted as dangerous and deviant. They were set up for crimes they did not commit – often with white women as the alleged victims. Lynching was the tool of choice. As seen in this photo (*Slide 25*), crowds of men and women would gather to watch such a hanging. Some would bring picnics. Even when due process was attempted, black men often were dragged out of jail in the middle of the night and lynched – usually without any repercussions for those in the mob.

Such was the case in:

- (**Slide 26**) The 1871 hanging of soldier and military leader Jim Williams at the hands of a KKK mob in York County.
- (**Slide 27**) The 1898 shooting deaths of Lake City postmaster Frazier Baker and his 2-year-old daughter by a white mob. (photo is of Baker’s surviving family)
- (**Slide 28**) The 1916 stabbing, beating and dragging death of successful Abbeville businessman and landowner Anthony Crawford by a mob of whites jealous of his wealth.
- (**Slide 29**) In what is considered the last reported racially motivated lynching in South Carolina, a 24-year-old black man named Willie Earle was dragged out of the Pickens County Jail in 1947 by a white mob from nearby Dacusville. Earle had been arrested and accused of murdering a Greenville cab driver. When the local Methodist preacher wanted the City Council to do something about Earle’s lynching, he was told by city leaders to let it be.

## The Lynching of Emmett Till – 1955

### **Slide 30:** “The Body of Emmett Till”

The story of Emmett Till bears witness to why black mothers and fathers gave “The Talk” whenever their boys left home – they were afraid that they would never return. Till’s mother lived this nightmare. While visiting family in Mississippi in August 1955, the 14-year-old boy from Chicago was brutally murdered for allegedly flirting with a white woman. We still see this context playing out today, when a white woman calls the police on a black man who was simply walking in a public park. This made national news, but it was nothing new for Black people.

- Play “The Body of Emmett Till,” an 8-minute Time magazine video case study on YouTube (*link in Slide 30*). (*Be prepared to quickly skip through ads.*)

## Case Study (Activity): Emmett Till

- Break into subgroups.
- Participants can take turns reading aloud and discuss the following excerpt from “Emmett Till’s Death Inspired a Movement,” from the National Museum of African American History & Culture.
- Each group can share one main idea or theme with the overall group.

*The alleged teasing of white store clerk Carolyn Bryant by Emmett Till led to his brutal murder at the hands of Bryant’s husband, Roy, and his half-brother, J.W. Milam, forcing the American public to grapple with the menace of violence in the Jim Crow South. According to court documents, Till bought two-cents worth of bubble gum from the Bryant Grocery store and said, “Bye, baby” over his shoulder to Carolyn Bryant as he exited the store.*

*That night, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam ran into Emmett’s uncle’s home where he was staying, dragged Till from his bed, beat him to the point of disfigurement, and shot him before tossing his body into the Tallahatchie River with a cotton-gin fan attached with barbed wire laced to his neck to weigh him down. Bryant and Milam maintained their innocence and would eventually be acquitted of the murder by an all-white, all-male jury. They later sold their story for \$4,000 to Look magazine – bragging about the murder as a form of Southern justice implemented to protect white womanhood.*

*For African Americans, the murder of Till was evidence of the decades-old codes of violence exacted upon Black men and women for breaking the rules of white supremacy in the Deep South. Particularly for Black males, who found themselves under constant threat of attack or death for sexual advances toward white women – mostly imagined – Till’s murder reverberated a need for immediate change. Carolyn Bryant testified in court that Till had grabbed her hand, and after she pulled away, he followed her behind the counter, clasped her waist, and using vulgar language, told her that he had been with white women before. At 82, some 60 years later, Bryant confessed to Duke University professor Timothy B. Tyson that she had lied about this entire event.*

*Members of Citizens’ Councils (white supremacist civic organizations that used public policy and electoral power to reinforce Jim Crow) celebrated the acquittal, further threatening those who had testified against Bryant and Milam and members of the local NAACP. But rather than bending to the intimidation and psychic horror caused by the savage murder, Till’s family – along with national newspapers and civil rights organizations – used his death to strike a blow against racial injustice and terrorism.*

*One hundred days after Till’s murder, Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white passenger on a Montgomery, Alabama, city bus and was arrested for violating the state’s bus segregation laws. The Rev. Jesse Jackson told Vanity Fair magazine in 1988 that, “Rosa said she thought about going to the back of the bus – but then she thought about Emmett Till and she couldn’t do it.”*



### **Slide 31:**

Black people continued to strive for equality – the same rights to make a living, to worship, to education, and to influence government and culture. The nonviolent Civil Rights Movement contrasted sharply with news images of violent aggression perpetrated by white people.

### **Slide 32:**

Desegregation became law, but not until after a long legal battle. While schools are no longer segregated legally, all things are still not equal. Biases and systemic practices that are harmful to children of color still exist.

### **Slides 33-34: The Orangeburg Massacre**

On February 8, 1968, (**Slide 33**) three teenagers – Samuel Hammond Jr., Henry Smith and Delano Middleton – were killed and 28 other people were wounded when South Carolina Highway Patrol officers opened fire on protesters on the South Carolina State University campus in what came to be known as The Orangeburg Massacre.

The protest that night (**Slide 34**) followed months of demonstrations and other efforts to allow black people to bowl at the local bowling alley – years after segregation had been abolished by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Students marched and started a bonfire, while police officers surrounded the campus.

A lone shot rang out, beginning a volley of bullets into the crowd of unarmed protesters. Hospitals were still segregated in Orangeburg at that time, and the black hospital quickly became overtaken by the injured.

Nine police officers were acquitted after standing trial in federal court on charges of using excessive force.

- Allow time for discussion.

### **Slide 35 (Activity): Selma**

Break into subgroups and encourage them to discuss these questions:

- What do you know about the persons in these images? The bridge?
- What's the first thing you think of when you see these images?
- What makes these three events important in confronting systemic racism?

## “The New Jim Crow” – 1968-present

### **Slide 36 (Activity):** Law Enforcement & The Black Community

- Show the list of topics of the day.
- Break into subgroups and discuss the topics.
- Each group can share one main idea or theme with the overall group.

Continuing the theme that black people are dangerous – which started with slavery – black men were targeted in the so-called “war on drugs.” We talk about equal justice, but it is not so equal.

- **(Slide 37)** Recommend participants read the book “Just Mercy,” by Brian Stevenson, the attorney for Walter McMillian, a young Black man sentenced to die for the murder of a young white woman that he didn’t commit.

In her book, **(Slide 38)** “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness,” civil rights lawyer and legal scholar Michelle Alexander presents the case that slavery, Jim Crow and mass incarceration are “three major racialized systems of control adopted in the United States.” The latest system **(Slide 39)** places more men and women of color in prison at alarming rates. See disparity of incarceration.

Author Jemar Tisby, in his book, **(Slide 40)** “The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church’s Complicity in Racism,” wrote: “History demonstrates that racism never goes away; it just adapts.”

### **Slide 41 (Activity):** Jarvious Cotton Case Study

- Break into subgroups.
- Read aloud and discuss the following excerpt from “The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness.”
- Each group can share one main idea or theme with the overall group.

*“Jarvious Cotton cannot vote. Like his father, grandfather, great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather, he has been denied the right to participate in our electoral democracy. Cotton’s family tree tells the story of several generations of black men who were born in the United States but who were denied the most basic freedom that democracy promises – the freedom to vote for those who will make the rules and laws that govern one’s life. Cotton’s great-great-grandfather could not vote as a slave. His great-grandfather was beaten to death by the Ku Klux Klan for attempting to vote. His grandfather was prevented from voting by Klan intimidation. His father was barred from voting by poll taxes and literacy tests. Today, Jarvious Cotton cannot vote because he, like many black men in the United States, has been labeled a felon and is currently on parole.”*

*“Cotton’s story illustrates, in many respects, the old adage, ‘The more things change, the more they remain the same.’”*

## **Slides 42-44:**                    Then & Now

As much as times may seem to have changed, they have remained the same. These slides show photos from the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s alongside recent photos of recent headlines following the killing of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis. (*Encourage the overall group to comment on and discuss the images on the screen.*)

## **Slide 45:**                            The Shooting of Walter Scott

On April 4, 2015, Walter Scott, an unarmed black man, was fatally shot by Michael Slager, a white North Charleston police officer who had stopped Scott for a non-functioning brake light. Slager was charged with murder, but only after a video surfaced showing him shooting Scott from behind – which contradicted Slager's report of the incident.

In June 2015, a South Carolina grand jury indicted Slager on a charge of murder. A 2016 trial ended in a mistrial due to a hung jury. In May 2016, Slager was indicted on federal charges including violation of Scott's civil rights and obstruction of justice. He pleaded guilty a year later to federal charges of civil rights violations and was sentenced to 20 years in prison, with the judge determining the underlying offense was second-degree murder.

## What comes next?

(10 minutes)

### **Slide 46-47 (Activity):**

- Break into subgroups.
- **(Slide 46)** Encourage each person to reflect on what they have learned and discuss what might come next.
- Each group can share one main idea or theme with the overall group.
- Show “Where do we go from here? **(Slide 47)** to share broad next steps we can take.

## Closing Prayer

### **Slide 48-50 (Prayer):**

We close with this “Prayer for the Elimination of Racism,” from the Sisters of Mercy Community. Let us pray together:

*“Good and gracious God, who loves and delights in all people, we stand in awe before you, knowing that the spark of life within each person on earth is the spark of your divine life. Differences among cultures and races are multicolored manifestations of your light. May our hearts and minds be open to celebrate similarities and differences among our sisters and brothers. We place our hopes for racial harmony in our committed action and in your presence in our neighbor. May all peoples live in peace. Amen.”*



“Our Response To Racism:  
Forming Authentic Connections Across Racial Lines”  
was developed by a team from the [South Carolina Conference of  
The United Methodist Church](#). It is intended for use by local  
churches and other groups that desire to take steps to eliminate  
racism and the separation it has fostered among God’s people.

We extend our appreciation to all involved for their work.

This resource can be downloaded at

[umcsc.org/endracism](http://umcsc.org/endracism)

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