



Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion

Expanding on a Journal Like This

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Two years ago, the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and Religion* (*JREER*) began to carve out a space within the academy where the scholarship occurring within communities of color would be centralized, a move away from the margins where they have historically been relegated. Since its inception, *JREER* has strived to assemble the brightest voices within the academy that would challenge the prevailing assumption that the present religious scholarly landscape, rooted in Eurocentric thought, is the pinnacle of academic excellence. *JREER* provides an epistemological preference to the perspectives emanating from the disenfranchised and dispossessed so as to raise issues concerning which type of engaged praxis should be employ; moves beyond the false

assumption that religious perspectives constructed by Euroamericans are normative; creates a space where religious scholars of color can study their oppression, and that of their communities, as a network of interdependent histories; deconstructs the false walls that separate natural allies; and finally, explores how separate marginalized communities are complicit with disenfranchising other groups of people.

To this end, *JRER* has exceeded our modest goals; standing as the premier, rigorous journal which centers its focus on communities of color. With almost 3,000 subscribers on facebook; we have maintained our commitment to make the articles published freely available. Each year, our website www.raceandreligion.com has been accessed from over 110 countries throughout the world, with more than 7,000 individuals reaching our site. As we begin our third year, it is obvious that *JRER* has addressed a deep need within the religious academy. And while *JRER* will continue to operate for some time; still, how do we continue to expand on the original purpose for the journal? What should be our next step as a community?

My personal involvement in several academic guilds has led me to the painful awareness that the presence of scholars of color is at times requested to demonstrate a politically correct diversity; nevertheless our scholarship remains ghettoized. Having scholars of color as officers and directors of different academic guilds is a tremendous step forward within the academy, and should never be underestimated. Still, to simply limit ourselves to having a few faces of color sitting around the table while ignoring our contribution to the overall discourse fails to consider seriously how power operates. Scholarship within the field of religion remains a constructed discourse, legitimized and normalized by those who have the ways and means to make their

subjectivity objective; hence, determining who is “in” (academically rigorous) and who is “out” (interesting perspective but lacking academic excellence).

Although a space has been carved out for scholars of color, the scholarship taking place within that space continues to be ignored. And when our scholarship is indeed engaged, it is usually at an elementary level. Two years ago I asked if scholars of color inadvertently constructed impressive exclusive cul-de-sacs from which to master their particular disciplines. Like a four-leaf clover, their separate cul-de-sacs operate side-by-side with few ever venturing into the adjoining community. Solidarity may occur from time to time, but it usually happens with little intellectual engagement. If we rile against most Euroamericans for not engaging our scholarship, then in all honesty, we must also hold ourselves accountable, for few of us, in our numerous books and articles, actually quote or dialogue with other communities of color. How is that different from what the Euroamerican community does to us?

Many of us are content to remain within our own academic niche. Still, how then can we, with any integrity, hold to task the dominant culture for not engaging the scholarly work within our own community when we too seldom engage the works of the adjacent cul-de-sac? More disturbing is when scholars of color are oblivious to how they and their communities are locked into structures that cause the oppression of other communities of color. Where do we explore how our separate marginalized communities remain complicit with disenfranchising other groups, whether those groups are marginalized due to darker skin pigmentation, language, gender, sexual orientation, economic class or different religious traditions?

Of course, we can recognize that the discipline has been constructed to force communities of color to compete against each other for the scraps falling from the table even when we sit at the table. When a department decides it wants to diversify its faculty, it usually asks potential candidates from differing communities of color to interview against each other for the one coveted slot made available, which usually is not tenure-track. When a professor decides for the sake of political correctness to “color” a syllabus, s/he usually picks just one book about one community. When an academic administration decides to use resources to emphasize a racial or ethnic concentration, they pour their money into teaching the perspectives and experiences of one community in the hopes of attracting students from that community, not necessarily for the sake of their white students or in service of a broader contextual awareness. When publishing houses decide to issue or bookstores decide to offer publications written from and about communities of color, these books must compete for room on the shelf relegated for them. Is it any wonder that some within communities of color might hold each other at arm’s length?

To this end, we propose creating *The Society of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion* (SRER). The purpose of this multi-discipline Society is to create a space where communities of color can gather to discuss among themselves so as to advance their scholarship through the power of synergism – a space where we can engage, learn, and be challenged from communities of color other than our own, those residing on the adjacent cul-de-sac. At this time, we are simply coordinating the first meeting. At that first meeting, a leadership council will be established with proper representation from each community of color.

WHEN: April 26-28, 2013 (tentatively)

WHERE: Chicago (tentatively)

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- 1) Forward this article to scholars of color you believe would be interested.

- 2) Become a member of SRER by sending a \$100 membership check to:

Society of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion
c/o Miguel A. De La Torre
Iliff School of Theology
2201 University Blvd
Denver, CO 80210

Send the check by March 15, 2012, so that you can be listed as a Founding Member of the Society; and we can have a head count so that when we travel to Chicago in late March 2012, we know how many people are really interested and can make appropriate reservations for 2013 accommodations. Include with your check a) Your name, b) Institution, c) Email, d) Phone numbers, and e) if you plan to attend the first meeting.

- 3) Get involved! We need people who have legal experience that can incorporate us; have CPA experience who can file our 501(c)3; have grant writing experience who can help find monies for getting the Society off the ground and provide scholarship for students to attend; and can help us set up a webpage/blog where members can discuss and help plan that first meeting.

4) When we have our first conference, space would be created to organize ourselves more efficiently. Meanwhile, our first task is to discover how many colleagues of color are truly interested (measured by membership) and then, actually meet.

5) Find us on facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Society-of-Race-Ethnicity-and-Religion/181068971982277>

The SRER is the next logical step after *JRER*. Let's make it a reality!