InterVarsity

INTERVARSITY'S CORE COMMITMENT OF ETHNIC RECONCILIATION AND JUSTICE: A FIELD MINISTRIES RESOURCE PAPER & WORKING DOCUMENT

September 2019

Introduction

For InterVarsity's history, concerns around ethnic reconciliation and justice have played a role in our experience of campus mission. Yet every generation needs to engage those concerns for their own cultural moment. Societal awareness of racial inequity and hostility is rising.[1] On campus, the prevalence of racial incidents is coming to light.[2] At the same time, students are increasingly aware socially and inclined toward activism in the cause of justice.[3] It is imperative for campus ministries to engage. Over the 2017–18 year, in response to President Tom Lin's mandate, Field Ministry leaders Paula Fuller and Joe Ho assembled 17 staff from across the movement to learn together and offer a shared starting point for engaging ethnic reconciliation and justice in our present ministry context. This paper is the result of that work. It aims to equip campus staff (and those resourcing campus staff) by clarifying language, raising questions, and offering campus-focused recommendations.

We hope to offer InterVarsity's working answers to the questions below. We call this a working document to indicate the necessity for ongoing learning from the Holy Spirit in discerning our times, from each other as co-laborers, and from the inhabitants of our academic mission field.

- What part does ethnic reconciliation and justice play in InterVarsity's mission?
- What do we mean by "ethnic"?
- What do we mean by "justice"?
- What do we mean by "reconciliation"?

We are grateful that many InterVarsity departments (Learning and Talent, Multiethnic Resources, MPD, Discipleship, etc.) are developing resources and initiatives to realize these values in greater measure on campus and within our organization.

What part does ethnic reconciliation and justice play in InterVarsity's mission?

Imagine that you are starting your first week as a Campus Staff Minister. You have been meeting new students and faculty by the dozens, investing in current and potential leaders, and trying to find space for prep and administrative rhythms. It's exhilarating, but your mind is swirling. Meanwhile, the campus itself also is swirling. In just one week, you have seen the following:

- *A Black student was unexpectedly stopped and questioned by campus police for being in the library after hours. (Students commonly study in the building after hours.) The student believes it was racial profiling, which the police department denies. Student groups are protesting this incident, as well as several similar ones that have occurred in recent years. They are asking that police be trained around unconscious bias, to increase recruitment for students of color, and for more diverse hiring in all sectors of the faculty and administration.*
- *Possibly in response, racist epithets were found written on a dorm wall one morning. Increasing numbers of your students are involved in the protests. Increasing numbers are also asking what you think about it. You attend one of the protests and develop relationships with non-Christian students there.*
- *Now that your attention is aroused, you see that these are not the only forms of protest happening. Cafeteria workers are considering a strike to advocate for a living wage. Meanwhile, adjunct faculty and graduate student teaching assistants are organizing in hopes of better job protections in their contracts.*

At the end of the week, you meet with a prospective ministry partner and tell her about your activities on campus, as well as the dissonance you have observed. You mention that InterVarsity has a core commitment to "ethnic reconciliation and justice,"[4] and express a desire to engage with these campus issues. She replies, "I understand that InterVarsity is about 'calling every corner[5] of every campus to follow Jesus.' Tell me how ethnic reconciliation and justice are part of that calling."

What is your answer? What is our answer?

On our campuses, and in every campus community, we can plainly see brokenness: broken relationships—including cross-ethnic relationships—and broken systems that shape the ways the campus is ordered (structural brokenness). As we work to catalyze a movement among every community on every campus, we maintain our comprehensive calling to the "people, ideas, and structures of the University."[6] The Bible describes God's original and ultimate vision for creation as comprehensive wholeness, harmony, and flourishing. This vision is captured in the Hebrew word *shalom*.[7] Shalom is the desire of God's heart and a reflection of God's character. It defines the way we should

relate with God, with other people, and with creation, and it should be reflected in the cultures and structures we create in the context of those relationships. So, while our campus reality demands engagement with ethnic reconciliation and justice, *this is not merely a concession to our context or to this activist generation*. Concern with ethnic reconciliation[8] and justice[9] occurs throughout Scripture and is a part of God's mission. This paper will show that InterVarsity's commitment to ethnic reconciliation and justice arises both from the demands of our mission and also from our understanding of Scripture.

When we enter a new campus or take a second look at our current campus, the questions we should ask are:

- Where do personal, relational, and structural brokenness exist, particularly in the areas of race and ethnicity?
- What would wholeness and flourishing look like in these areas of brokenness?
- How is God inviting us to partner with him in bringing ethnic reconciliation and justice to our campus?[10]

We will fall short of *shalom* in our campus ministries as well. There will be ways that we too reflect a fallen world more than God's desire for the flourishing of all.[11]

We should ask ourselves:

- What communities of students and faculty are present on our campus but missing in our fellowships?
- Are our leadership roles occupied by the diversity of students in our chapters, or are only some represented?
- Does our community affirm the dignity and worth of all people through what we say and what we do?

Our desire for God's *shalom* will not stop at the edge of the campus. Every campus is affected by the people, ideas, and structures of their surrounding communities. Every student and faculty member is affected by the injustices they experience off-campus. Our awareness of these realities will increase as we serve more diverse communities on more diverse campuses. If we are sent as ambassadors of a loving God, heralds of good news, and shepherds of emerging generations, we must be watchful, engaged, and prepared to address the issues that affect students and faculty, as well as their environment. InterVarsity believes that following the Holy Spirit's movement among every community on every campus will require a deepening of our commitment to ethnic reconciliation and justice.

The brokenness before us may feel overwhelming. The options to engage may seem endless. Although no one person or community can do everything, we can learn to discern God's invitation together. As Jesus "had to go through Samaria,"[12] Philip was directed to the Gaza road,[13] and Paul was guided toward Macedonia,[14] we will find God's Spirit more than able to lead us to the places where InterVarsity is called to proclaim and model God's shalom as revealed in Jesus' gospel of comprehensive salvation.

May we follow God "to be ambassadors [of reconciliation] . . . to live wherever we find ourselves, to engage the politics of that place [i.e., the way communal life is ordered] from the vantage point of God's new creation and to try to influence the politics through various tactics so that it may increasingly resemble that new creation."[15]

What do we mean by "ethnic" reconciliation and justice?

You met Priscilla at a student protest. Her mother is a second-generation Chinese American from San Francisco, and her father a multi-generational White west Texan. Neither are Christian. She speaks no Chinese, though her physical features are distinctly Asian, and she is comfortable identifying as multiracial and Chinese American. Since arriving at college last year, she has been involved in an activist organization where she has grown in her identification as a woman of color. You find out that some of the members of this organization are in the LaFe chapter, and that they have invited Priscilla to hang out with them on several occasions. You invite her to your Fall Conference, and, to your surprise, she comes! Afterward, one of the LaFe students asks Priscilla if she would like to check out one of your Asian American small groups on campus. When you meet up with her for coffee, she expresses interest in spiritual things, but asks about your ethnic focused small groups, and how she should think about involvement.

What do we mean by "ethnic" and "ethnicity"?
In InterVarsity, our preference for the term "ethnicity" or "ethnic group" is influenced by the prominent biblical term "nations."[16] (We acknowledge that the term "ethnicity" does not map precisely with the definition of "nations", but we also believe that the Biblical portrayal of Israel and the "nations" can be a constructive contribution to that conversation.) In the Bible, God views human beings not only individually, but also corporately. They are identified corporately, blessed corporately, and even corporately held responsible,[17] even through successive generations.[18] These corporate identifications can be small ("family," "tribe") or large ("people," "nation"). The Bible indicates or implies the tribal or ethnic membership of virtually every character mentioned, and these identifications are portrayed as important.[19] Scripture is clear that God's ultimate redemption of humanity is not as undifferentiated individuals, but as recognizable members of "nations,"[20] which are large kinship communities associated with distinct geographic locations, histories, and cultural practices. Ultimately, "nations" are invited to receive healing for their corporate brokenness, and to bring the best of their cultural goods into the worship of God.[21]

InterVarsity encourages ethnic identification so that people like Priscilla can understand that her ethnic heritage matters to God. We hope she will be able to see and to identify with God's redemptive work in the "nations" in her own story: Chinese, Chinese Americans, west Texans, "white" Americans, European Americans, and so on. Of course, we want her to identify primarily as a daughter of God. All of our desires for her flow from our desire for her to put her faith in Christ and to find new life in his Spirit. As part of that, we *also* want her to experience God's redemption of her ethnic story. Even more, we want her to embrace God's invitation to participate in God's redemption of

her ethnic peoples and others—friend and enemy, near and far. For example, she may participate in ethnic-focused conferences or conference breakouts. She might join or start a GIG for multiracial students to explore their ethnic identity as it relates to the gospel. Secure in her own Chinese-Texan identity, she might even help plant cross-culturally among any number of communities on campus, entering humbly and in a spirit of learning and partnership.[22]

What do we mean by "culture"?
God intended humans for community, and likewise God intended human communities to make culture, by which we mean shared practices, meanings, and (for larger communities with longer histories) artifacts and institutions.[23] Culture also includes the systems and structures that create and sustain those practices, artifacts, and institutions. Culture exists wherever community exists, from the smallest communities to the largest, including ethnic communities. Human cultures inevitably reflect humanity's beauty as God's image-bearers and also humanity's sin and brokenness. One example of this brokenness is that, when encountering difference, we will have a tendency to assume the good in our own culture and the brokenness in others'. Similarly, a dominant culture tends to impose its own practices, values, institutions, etc. on marginalized cultures, believing that the dominant culture is inherently better and reflective of the good – morally, pragmatically, intellectually, relationally, emotionally, etc.

We desire for Priscilla to recognize that, like all individuals, she embodies values and habits from multiple and overlapping cultures—including but not limited to her ethnic cultures. These cultures, strictly speaking, are human-generated, not God-given (i.e., God did not "make" anybody's culture). However, her particular cultural background and affinities give her a unique vantage point from which to see beauty, brokenness, redemption, and mission potential. Cultural affinity does not determine ethnic identity, so she is not "less" Chinese American by virtue of not speaking Chinese.[24] Our vision is for Priscilla to recognize and intentionally engage the cultural practices, values, and structures of her various communities,[25] including ethnic communities. We want her to graduate with the tools to continue doing so throughout her lifetime.

What do we mean by "race" and "racism"?
Racial categorization of human beings is a historical invention, and a relatively recent one.[26] Of course, ethnic groups have always told stories of their own superiority, as have virtually all human groups. However, the particular category of "race" arose alongside the modern phenomena of European colonialism, Darwinian theory, and, especially, the justification of slavery in America. This was the lie that was told: *Just as there are biologically distinct species of animals, there are biologically distinct species or "races"*

of humans. Some of these groupings are higher on the evolutionary scale and therefore superior. The truth is that genetic variations among humans do not group us into "races" at all—let alone superior and inferior ones.[27] As a matter of fact, racial categories were more determined by laws than by biology. Racial categories changed as laws changed. Irish, Swedish, South Asians, Native peoples, and others were considered non-White at times when legal policy served to exclude or eliminate them. But when legal policy sought to assimilate them, they were considered White or White-compatible. Throughout American history (and the history of other countries), racial hierarchy was (and continues to be) reinforced by systems, structures, and laws so as to define a privileged status for a constantly shifting population defined as "White."[28] Centuries of legal and social reinforcement have given rise to insidious and lasting inequity for people based on the race to which they were assigned. "Race" is a living social reality even if it has no biological reality. InterVarsity believes we should be conscious of the ongoing effect of racially unjust structures in the past *and* the ongoing reality of racially unjust systems and structures in the present.

In our work on campus, we will encounter people who use the same words but in different ways. Many students, and some faculty, use "racism" as a synonym for racial or ethnic prejudice or superiority, and "White supremacy" to denote fringe ideology associated with neo-Nazis. These remain the most common vernacular uses of the terms. On the other hand, most activist communities and many academics, especially within the social sciences, use these terms to refer to *the reality of modern racial inequity in general*. So, they use "racism" primarily to describe systemic oppression (as opposed to the assertion of individual superiority) based on race. Similarly, they use "White supremacy" or "White privilege" to describe the system of concrete benefits which accrue to those who are considered White or who act in ways that conform to White dominant culture. People who use these words in one way will object to them being used in the other way.

Priscilla's biracial identity and Asian appearance create a range of possibilities for her in campus race relations. She can probably "pass" as White in certain circumstances if she chooses, but she will also be categorized as non-White in others, no matter what she chooses. We want to help her recognize and engage these dynamics with the resilience and agency that comes from her relationship with Christ. Given her participation in the student activist group, she will likely become conversant with the historical dynamics of race, and comfortable with activist/social sciences ways of describing them. We hope that as Priscilla works for justice among her peers she will be able to fluently share the hope of Christ as part of that work. We also hope she will be empowered to share Christ and His heart for justice with those who do not yet know. Furthermore, we desire that

she experience her European American heritage not primarily through the lens of shame but, instead, through the broader context of God's redemptive call, which requires a nation/people to lament over and to repent of its sins and to embrace Christ's redemptive invitation to express the good it was created to do.[29]

What do we mean by "justice"?

You have had several conversations with your ministry partner who asked you about InterVarsity's understanding of ethnic reconciliation and justice. She forwards you an online article from a prominent Christian speaker that warns against confusing the Bible's message with a worldly agenda of social reform. The speaker especially finds protests distasteful, saying that God wants us to submit to authority and obey the laws of the land. Your ministry partner says that she doesn't necessarily agree or disagree with the article, and would genuinely like to hear your perspective. What would you say?

What are some different ways people talk about "justice"?
We need to begin by recognizing a wide variation in how people use the word, "justice." Common everyday usage might be captured by the *Oxford English Dictionary* definition, as the "quality of being fair and reasonable."[30] However, in a world with differing views of "fair" and "reasonable," people still need to decide what actions or ideas are right or fair. Analyzing a nation's laws may be a means of doing this. As Old Testament scholar M. Daniel Carrol points out, laws *reflect* societal values and culture as much as they set them.[31] One can read the laws of a nation and deduce that society's preferences, norms, and ideals of justice.[32] However, just because something is legal, that doesn't mean it is necessarily just. For example, the United States, like many modern governmental systems, articulates an aspiration for fairness in its representative system. However, history reveals a system of law that has not been moral and fair for all peoples, for example, for Native peoples[33] and African slaves.[34]

Historically, the power to legitimize definitions of justice has been held by those in power, often majority groups. Currently, marginalized groups are introducing themselves into conversations about what is just. One prominent academic example is Critical Race Theory (CRT), an academic and legal attempt to reveal and reverse the harmful impact of race on all facets of society.[35] CRT perceives definitions of justice from the viewpoint of those most affected by injustice.[36] CRT can help Christians better understand harmful dynamics of race, as well as help us communicate with those who study it academically.

However, both academic and academic understandings of justice (e.g., CRT) are limited to the extent that they approach a definition of justice without consciously locating that definition in a particular faith. While common and academic articulations of justice can be helpful starting points for conversations around the topic, Christians derive our particular understanding of justice from the Old and New Testament Scriptures, particularly in the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It is incumbent upon

us to bring these resources to bear in articulating and embodying God's desire for *shalom.*

What is distinctive about the Bible's definition of justice?
The biblical account of justice through God's covenant love and faithfulness reveals key distinctions between God's justice and the ways justice is described and realized in human cultures, including dominant Western culture. God's moral code and vision for life (the way things ought to be) is found in the Old Testament and New Testament.

The ultimate goal of God's justice is to form community: a "beloved" community that is centered in Jesus' love and vision for life.[37] The core biblical idea is *shalom*: all-encompassing, whole peace and flourishing.[38] "There is strong evidence that [justice] refers to actions that help restore balance or wholeness (*shalom*) to community and, when exercised by God, reference a strong divine moral influence in the structure and governance of creation itself."[39] Thus, the biblical view of justice is holistic, encompassing systemic and personal justice and righteousness.[40] Furthermore, biblical justice is more than a goal or abstract standard; it is relational and actively restorative.[41]

A community of justice is made possible through covenant relationship with the Lord. Yahweh's justice inaugurates social arrangements of compassion as seen in Exodus 19–24. In this text God creates a different way of life than what the Israelites had encountered as slaves in Egypt. In contrast to the imperialistic goals of power, pleasure, and possession, Yahweh depicts a way of life centered in his holiness and faithfulness to the covenant promise that he will be with Israel and with all those who desire to be with him.[42] Deuteronomy and Leviticus reveal laws that require the people of God to treat the poor, foreigner, orphan, and widow with justice. When the people of God strayed away from their covenant promise to God, or were acting unfaithfully, prophets reminded them of their moral codes and of the consequences of not keeping the covenant. The New Testament reiterates and deepens these concerns. These passages have direct application on campuses today.

Amos challenged his community's economic oppression of their neighbors. Today, he might similarly confront our nation's appetite for drugs and prostitution, which fuel the oppression of cartel violence and sex slavery. This confrontation also directly speaks to substance abuse (including binge drinking) and sexual assault (including date rape) as issues of justice on campus.

Isaiah 58 challenges the people of God to stop fake worship and to feed the hungry; to clothe the naked; to shelter the poor wanderer; to care for the foreigner, orphan, and

widow; and to loose the chains of injustice. Today, he might confront uncharitable national policies toward immigrants, and possibly international policies that contribute to those migration crises in the first place.[43] On campus, our chapters could apply Isaiah 58 by welcoming and advocating for undocumented students.

In Luke 6, Jesus pronounces blessing and provision for the deprived and downtrodden of his people, but woe to those in comfort and plenty. In John 4, he disregards gender and ethnic hierarchies to engage a marginalized person and commission her as a herald of the gospel. In Matthew 25, Jesus asserts a radical solidarity with "the least" of his people as they are in need, and in Mark 11 he harshly condemns the temple authorities for exclusion and economic exploitation of ethnic outsiders. Each of these contains concrete mandates for Christian students and faculty. They also contain mandates for those in higher education leadership--those who have the responsibility for setting terms of access to the benefits of higher education.

God's ultimate answer to injustice, however, is the cross, the place where "Jesus suffers the full consequences of evil: evil from the political, social, cultural, personal, moral, religious and spiritual angles all rolled into one," where "cosmic and global evil . . . are met by the sovereign, saving love of Israel's God."[44] In other words, God confronted injustice by assuming the sin and suffering of oppressed and oppressor alike, and thus stripping the enslaving and condemning power behind injustice. Christ, crucified, then resurrected and ascended, takes rightful authority as the "Son of Man" over all nations and peoples.[45] Finally, Revelation 18–19 depicts the final overthrow of the world's unjust systems, along with the nations (ethnic groups) that follow them. And in Revelation 21–22, we finally realize the promise of a world full of God's presence and healing, with the nations submitting their glory to the glory of God. Followers of Jesus pray as Jesus prayed: for his kingdom to come, and for his will to be done *on earth as it is in heaven*. We believe that God's justice has already been realized in heaven. Jesus bids us to pray for that justice to be reflected on earth in the present. What would it mean for our praying imaginations to envision God's justice reflected in our university context? What would this persistent, praying imagination lead us to say and do?

What do we mean by "systemic" injustice?
Systemic injustice is the establishment of unjust ideas in the form of societal policies, norms, and habits. Systemic injustice takes a bias or prejudice and embeds it concretely into essential functions of the life of individuals and communities. For example, "colored" water fountains, segregated schools, restrictive covenants to prevent certain types of people from buying homes, or redlining to deny mortgages to certain people forces injustice into daily life. Citizens then participate in and enforce these unjust

systems. Over generations, the system feels normative and thus unchangeable. Since not all laws were created to be fair and right for all peoples,[46] an unjust legal system stands in place, disadvantaging and even oppressing certain people to the benefit of others. Even if laws change, the conditions they created often continue through habits or "unwritten rules." Thus, great work is needed to uncover and untangle the legal and social fabric that holds the system of injustice together.

One example of systemic injustice in higher education is the disparity in access to education. One recent study found that "white students are overrepresented in selective colleges" and "African-American students are overrepresented in less-selective institutions."[47] If fewer students of color have access to elite academic institutions, then there will be fewer PhDs of color working in higher education. People of color will consequently be underrepresented in influential roles in society, as will their experiences and perspectives. In addition, this disparity will serve to perpetuate the income and wealth gap among ethnic populations.

What do we mean by "reconciliation"?

As a new campus staff, one of your favorite experiences on campus is a small faculty prayer group you've been invited to join. After prayer, three professors begin to discuss the student protests on campus.

Marcus is a professor in the economics department. While acknowledging the presence of bias, he maintains that emphasizing racial and ethnic identifications can obscure our common humanity before God. Racial categories were broken to begin with, so the less power we give them, the better.

Jenny is a professor in the education department. She agrees with Marcus that we have a common humanity, but counters that it is important to own and name our cultural differences. Only by acknowledging and crossing cultures can we build bridges of understanding. When Christians in particular build healthy relationships of confession and forgiveness, both Church and society will experience increasing reconciliation.

Marcus responds that corporate confession and forgiveness can be good to an extent. However, he maintains that our racial identities, especially as they define us as victim or oppressor, can place limitations on who we can become. All in all, he believes that the use of identity politics produces more liabilities than benefits.

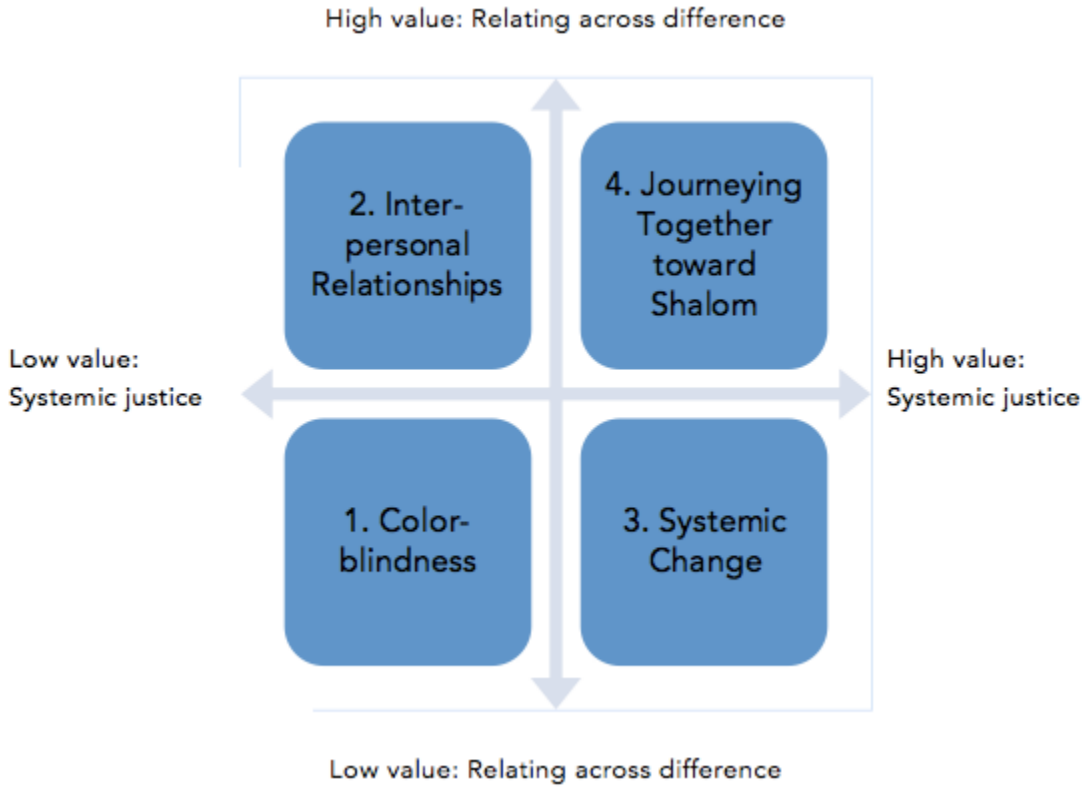
Tania, a public policy professor, disagrees with both colleagues. Relationships are important, but a relational focus misses the point, regardless of whether you emphasize or minimize difference. Relational tension is the problem of the privileged, whereas marginalized people's real problems are structural disadvantage in law enforcement, education, health care, etc. Relational "reconciliation" can make togetherness a goal that distracts from wholeness—that is, the "reconciliation" of unjust systems.

Jenny agrees that systemic change is necessary, but counters that relational reconciliation is still necessary as both the goal and means for systemic change. Otherwise our complex humanity can be reduced to just relationships of power.

Tania agrees that the beloved community is indeed the goal of systemic justice, but we cannot have healthy intergroup community without concretely better life outcomes for historically marginalized peoples.

Reconciliation, specifically across ethnic and racial divisions, has long been an aspiration in InterVarsity's ministry. But what exactly do we mean by *reconciliation*? The term

carries a variety of connotations for different people. Three of the most common understandings of racial or ethnic reconciliation are (1) colorblindness (Marcus), (2) interpersonal relationships (Jenny), and (3) systemic change (Tania). Whereas all three have some merits, InterVarsity de-emphasizes option one[48] and recognizes options two and three as *both* necessary in journeying together toward *shalom*.



1. Reconciliation as Colorblindness

First, like Marcus, some embrace colorblindness as a way of ethnic reconciliation. In this perspective, the racial categories that have separated people in the past are clearly wrong. The way to bring people together and live in harmony today is to disregard these categories and to treat everyone equally under the same rules. Reconciliation will happen as we stop talking about our differences and simply focus on our common humanity before God. Continued conversation about the pain of the past or differences between groups only perpetuates divisions.

On the positive side, colorblindness rejects the overt discrimination of previous generations. It envisions a future in which race and ethnicity do not limit a person's life outcomes by defining us as oppressor and/or victim. However, colorblindness underestimates the significance of differences and of the past, ignoring the residual effects of historic oppression. Ignoring difference will privilege the dominant (White)

culture and maintain its conventions as "normal," thus reinforcing the racial inequity it seeks to eliminate.

2. Reconciliation as Interpersonal Relationships
Second, like Jenny, others envision ethnic reconciliation primarily in terms of interpersonal relationships—often on the individual level. Unlike colorblindness, this perspective recognizes the importance of naming our differences. Proponents of this approach seek to bridge historical divisions through loving interpersonal relationships characterized by cultural appreciation, confession, and forgiveness. As more Christians build healthy friendships with people of different ethnicities, the Church and society will experience increasing degrees of reconciliation.

The strength of this view is its intentionality in crossing ethnic, racial, and cultural barriers for the sake of the gospel. Building interpersonal relationships can deepen self-awareness and appreciation for diverse ethnic heritages—both positive and potentially God-honoring ends. Unfortunately, this approach tends to overlook systemic injustices. Even when it includes confession and forgiveness for past injustice, it can conceive of reconciliation more as togetherness than wholeness—again, privileging the dominant culture.

3. Reconciliation as Systemic Change
A third group, like Tania, considers "reconciliation" a dirty word, a cover-up for ongoing White supremacy. In this view, intercultural relationships are of secondary importance to concerns of justice and equity for historically marginalized people. There can be no conciliation between dominant and subordinated groups without systemic changes in law enforcement, education, healthcare, etc., involving a redistribution of power and resources.

This approach champions God's concern for justice for the oppressed. It refuses to accept reconciliation words without reconciliation deeds that result in better life outcomes for marginalized communities of color. However, this view can minimize or disregard the biblical value for unity amid diversity. An emphasis on systemic change alone misses out on the relational dimensions of being part of one new family in Christ, a family explicitly defined as the joining of former enemies, oppressor and victim alike.[49] Pursuing systemic change, though necessary and God-honoring in itself, can still fall short of building the beloved community.

4. Journeying Together toward Shalom

InterVarsity's vision of reconciliation is grounded upon God's work in Christ (1) reconciling the world to himself[50] and (2) reconciling oppressed and oppressor to one another both corporately and individually.[51] Reconciliation between divided peoples, especially in situations of inequity and oppression, includes a reordering of the status quo in terms of honor and resources.[52] In Christ, we share in the ministry of reconciliation.[53] This ministry pursues God's *shalom*—the wholeness, harmony, and flourishing God intended for all of creation, including individuals, communities, and the systems and structures embedded in our cultures.

We believe the pursuit of ethnic shalom must take into account the particular brokenness of our racialized society.[54] This journey includes corporate responsibility, repentance, and reparation[55] for the corporate sins (historic and on-going) committed against marginalized people of color. ("Reparations" are controversial, particularly if reduced to a caricature of cash payment. Broadly speaking, though, "reparation" refers to any sort of "repair." In addition to acknowledging past wrong, we also want to identify present consequences of those wrongs and work together to repair them.) The journey also includes continued witness against injustice, while humanizing and inviting even historic oppressors into God's mission of restoring *shalom*. As we journey together toward shalom, each community from its respective location, we will experience the messy grace of reconciliation by the Holy Spirit's power.[56]

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[1]See https://news.gallup.com/poll/1687/race-relations.aspx.
[2]See https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/09/22/racist-incidents-colleges-abound-academic-year-begins.
[3]See https://www.chronicle.com/article/Today-s-Freshman-Class-Is/235273.
[4]See https://intervarsity.org/about-us/what-we-believe.
[5]"Corner" is meant to evoke a posture of leaving no place neglected and no stone unturned in our ministry on campus (Luke 15), whether we consider people groups, university departments, or geographic locations. However, being designated a "corner" can reinforce the marginalized experience of some students and faculty. Therefore, we will use "every community on every campus" in this paper.
[6]Contained in another of our core commitments. See https://intervarsity.org/about-us/what-we-believe.
[7]Lisa Sharon Harper, *The Very Good Gospel* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2016), 17-37.
[8]Ephesians 2:11-18 is one example of ethnic reconciliation through the work of Jesus on the cross.
[9]Isaiah 28:16-17 talks of Jesus the "cornerstone" who has justice as the measuring line and righteousness as the plumb line.
[10]For example, your fellowship might (a) engage the "corner" of adjunct faculty and staff to hear concerns and discern ways to pray for and advocate with them; (b) sponsor cross-cultural or implicit-bias training for fellow students, and volunteer to undergo the training first; (c) learn about the extent of support services for economically disadvantaged students, and ask how you can augment them and/or how you can advocate for increasing those services, (d) seek partnership with other organizations to do any of the above.
[11]Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. used the thermostat versus thermometer image in the *Letter from a Birmingham Jail* to describe this reality in the church of the day. Do we merely reflect the culture, or do we change the culture?

[12]John 4:4.
[13]Acts 8:26.
[14]Acts 16:6-10.
[15]Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice, *Reconciling All Things* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 109. By "politics" Katongole means more than governments and laws, but the way communal life is ordered generally.
[16]"Ethnic" is somewhat rarely used in vernacular, which can allow us to infuse it with biblical meaning in many cases. However, in the social sciences, the term "ethnic" is used in varied ways, sometimes similarly to our usage, and sometimes not.
[17]Joshua 7; Ezekiel 25–30.
[18] Exodus 20:5
[19]See the video *Ethnicity Matters* at https://vimeo.com/35721693.
[20]Matthew 28:19; Mark 13:10; Revelation 5:9; Revelation 7:9-10.
[21]Isaiah 60; Revelation 21:24, 26; 22:2.
[22]InterVarsity has found that healthy ethnic identity (the ability to locate one's ethnic story in God's story) contributes to relationships not only along lines of similarity, but also along lines of difference.
[23]Andy Crouch, *Culture Making* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 22-26. Also see Crouch, *Playing God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 169-178.
[24]We find it helpful to distinguish ethnic identification from cultural affinity. For instance, if Priscilla grew up immersed among Latino peers and spoke Spanish fluently, she may have a high cultural affinity for Latino culture. However, she should be cautious to avoid *cultural appropriation* (dominant cultures adopting elements of marginalized cultures, often without consent or context).
[25]In addition to her ethnic cultures, Priscilla will also interact with cultural patterns from her family of origin, university community and sub-communities, racial identities, and any other social affiliations. It will include her academic and vocational fields. In each of those she will have the opportunity to participate in God's story of redemption.
[26]Ken Wytsma, *The Myth of Equality* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 29-44.
[27]See https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/race-is-a-social-construct-scientists-argue/.
[28]See Ian Haney Lopez, *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*, Revised 10th Anniversary Ed. (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 3-5. These pages describe how the courts switched the definition of Whiteness according to what was convenient for current racial preferences. At times they justified their decisions on contradictory bases, sometimes appealing to "scientific reasoning" and at other times to "common knowledge."
[29]There is an important and delicate debate over whether "Whiteness" as an identifying descriptor is redeemable. We absolutely affirm that "White" *people*, along with their ethnic and cultural heritage, should be treated as image-bearers with redemptive potential like everyone else. At the same time, it is important that the legacy of racial injustice, tied up with the category of "Whiteness," be repudiated.
[30]"Justice," *Oxford University Press*, accessed January 15, 2018, at https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/justice.
[31]Danny Carrol, *Christians at the Border: Immigration, the Church, and the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008). Carrol provides a comprehensive biblical history of migration and journey in the Old Testament.
[32]Some Christians, following philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre, have concluded that a community's conception of justice is rooted in its practices of justice, rather than the other way around (https://www.ethicalpolitics.org/ablunden/pdfs/macintyre2.pdf). Consequently, when a person says "justice," it basically amounts to the preference of the community to which that person belongs. This also means, for Christians, that forming a community which lives justly is foundational to articulating a plausible conception of justice to others.
[33]Mark Charles, "Native American Perspective on Immigration," lecture for the Survey of Immigration Perspectives, InterVarsity Borderlands Program, San Diego, CA, July 2012.
[34]The Declaration of Independence states that all men were created equal and endowed by their Creator with "certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." Slaves were clearly not free, and therefore were not judged as fully human. During the 1787 United States Constitutional Convention, southern states compromised with northern states to count each slave as 3/5

of a person, furthering the *social imagination* that slaves were not fully human. If justice is defined through law and laws strengthen social cleavages, then we begin to see how laws codify systemic injustice and even rationalize individual prejudice. Even after the abolition of slavery, racial inequities were perpetuated by Jim Crow legislation and residential segregation. Following the Civil Rights Act, current laws continue to be critiqued for their exacerbation of historic racial inequities.

[35]Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2012). This succinct yet helpful book explains the beginning and aspirations of CRT.

[36]Philosopher Enrique Dussel proposes that the people most capable of seeing injustice in any social system are those that are the most negatively impacted by such a system. Therefore, CRT has merit in giving voice to marginalized peoples, allowing them to speak and shape a more just system. See Enrique Dussel, *Twenty Theses on Politics*, trans. George Ciccariello-Maher (Durham: Duke University Press), 2008.

[37]Dr. Martin Luther King often used the term "the Beloved Community" as a place where the biblical vision of interconnected community was lived. See "The King Philosophy" at www.thekingcenter.org/king-philosophy.

[38]See above under "What part does ethnic reconciliation and justice play in InterVarsity's mission?"

[39]Bruce C. Birch, "Justice," *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 434.

[40]*Mispat* is the Hebrew word that is most often translated as "justice," and it encompasses a broad range of meaning including "judgment," "verdict," "law or statute," and a social code or law (Bruce C. Birch, "Justice," *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel B. Green [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011], 433-435). The Hebrew word for righteousness, *tsedeqah*, is frequently used alongside *mispat* ("justice and righteousness"), and has similar relational and holistic connotations as *shalom.* The Greek word *dikaiosyne* is used for both justice and righteousness in the New Testament.

[41]For a biblical survey of justice, see Bethany Hanke Hoang and Kristen Deede Johnson, *The Justice Calling: Where Passion Meets Perseverance* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2016).

[42]Walter Brueggemann, *Interpretation and Obedience* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 146-150.

[43]*Harvest of Empire*: *A History of Latinos in America* is a documentary that highlights the cyclical and systemic function of immigration and U.S. policy.

[44]N. T. Wright, *Evil and the Justice of God* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 92-93.

[45]Daniel 7:13-14, Matthew 26:64

[46]See notes 33 and 34, above.

[47]Beckie Supiano, "Racial Disparities in Higher Education: An Overview," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Nov. 10, 2015, accessed April 7, 2018, at https://www.chronicle.com/article/Racial-Disparities-in-Higher/234129. In addition to potentially discriminatory admissions processes, this disparity is also arguably rooted more significantly in systemic housing discrimination, which gives rise to generationally compounded disparities in wealth and public education quality.

[48]See "What do we mean by 'ethnicity'?" regarding our preference for ethnic identification over and against colorblindness.

[49]Ephesians 2:11-22.

[50]2 Corinthians 5:19.

[51]Ephesians 2:11-22.

[52]1 Corinthians 12:23-24; 2 Corinthians 8:13-15; Acts 6:1-7.

[53]2 Corinthians 5:18.

[54]See George Yancey, *Beyond Racial Gridlock: Embracing Mutual Responsibility* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 75-124.

[55] David Brooks, a conservative journalist, makes the case for reparations in the following article: https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/07/opinion/case-for-reparations.html

[56]Systems of racial injustice don't uniformly benefit European Americans, nor do they uniformly disadvantage people of color. For instance, unjust economic structures are typically bad for all poor people, although they disproportionately affect ethnic populations that are disproportionately poor. Also, people of color can benefit from racially unjust systems as well, usually by accommodating to or assimilating toward dominant culture.