



# Christianity and Justice: Cautions and Suggestions

Dr. Neil Shenvi

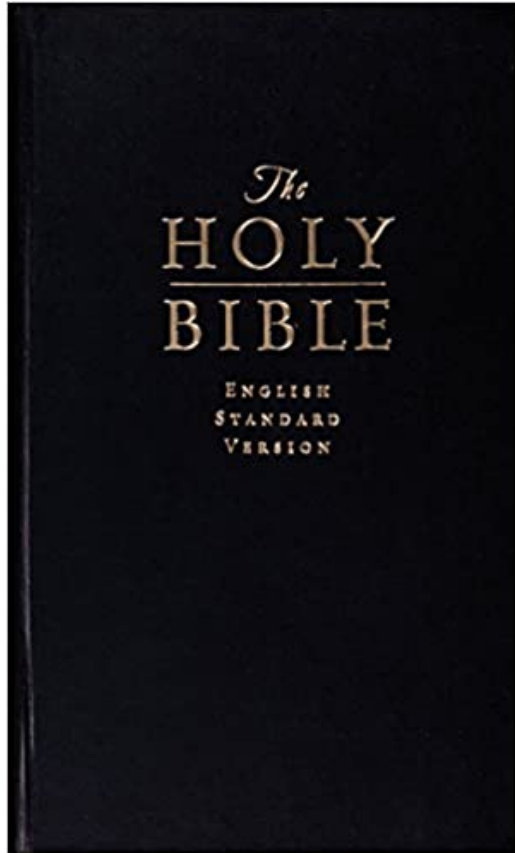
August 20-21, 2021

# Christianity and Justice

- What is “justice”?
  - Biblical Justice
  - Social Justice
  - Does Social Justice = biblical justice?
  - A Christian approach to social justice?
- Advice for Dialogue
  - Acknowledge and fight racism
  - Be charitable
  - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
  - Justice and the gospel
  - Read broadly

# Biblical Justice

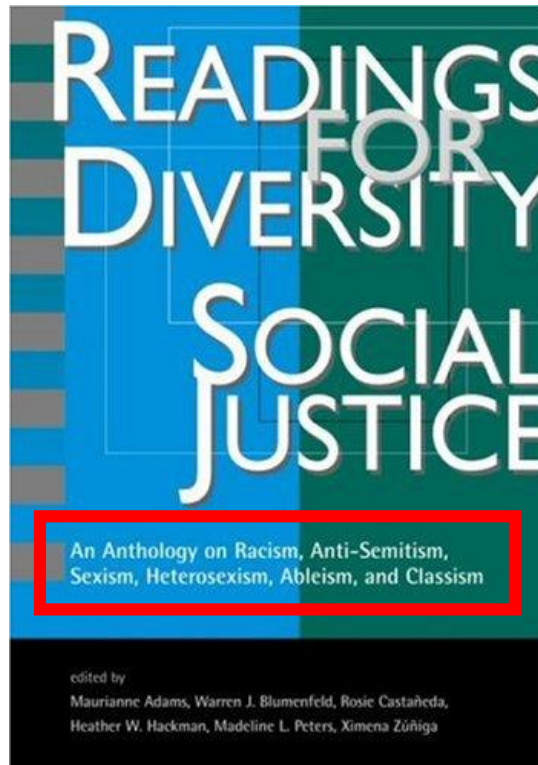
Biblical justice is “giving to each person what they are due”



- Protecting the vulnerable: “Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; bring justice to the fatherless, plead the widow's cause.” – Is. 1:17
- Judging impartially: “You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor.” – Lev. 19:15
- Punishing evil: “Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain.” – Rom. 13:3-4

# Secular Social Justice

“Social justice [is] **the elimination of all forms of social oppression**”



“*Heterosexism* is the institutionalization of a heterosexual norm or standard, which establishes and perpetuates the notion that all people are or should be heterosexual, thereby privileging heterosexuals and heterosexuality, and excluding the needs, concerns, cultures, and life experiences of LGBT people.” – Blumenfeld, p. 262

“First, in considering oppression theory, the question ‘what is *sexism*?’ is addressed through a definition that combines prejudicial attitudes or beliefs with social power. Suzanne Pharr defines sexism as ‘an enforced belief in male dominance and control’ held in place by system of power and control that ultimately keep women subordinate to men.” – Hackman, p. 199

“Like other forms of oppression, *ableism* operates on individual, cultural, and institutional levels. Ableism affects those with disabilities by inhibiting their access to and power within institutional structures that fulfill basic needs, like health care, housing, government, education, religion, the media, and the legal system.” Castaneda and Peters, p. 320

# Christianity and Justice

- What is “justice”?
  - Biblical Justice
  - Social Justice
  - Does Social Justice = biblical justice?
  - A Christian approach to social justice?
- Advice for Dialogue
  - Acknowledge and fight racism
  - Be charitable
  - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
  - Justice and the gospel
  - Read broadly

# Children are Oppressed

"People are just beginning to have a glimpse of what oppression based on age involves... Children are ... being considered helpless, dependent, and cute - creatures to be cherished and taken care of but not full human beings to be deeply respected... and trusted with significant power. They experience 10-15 years of unpaid labor and brainwashing in our current form of education." - Blood, Tuttle, and Lakey in "Race, Class, and Gender", p. 140



# Objective, rational linear thinking is aspect of white culture

“Whiteness and white racialized identity refer to the way that white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard by which all other groups of are compared.”

TALKING ABOUT RACE | NMAAHC

## ASPECTS & ASSUMPTIONS OF WHITENESS & WHITE CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES

White dominant culture, or **whiteness**, refers to the ways white people and their traditions, attitudes and ways of life have been normalized over time and are now considered standard practices in the United States. And since white people still hold most of the institutional power in America, we have all internalized some aspects of white culture — including people of color.




**Rugged Individualism**

- The individual is the primary unit
- Self-reliance
- Independence & autonomy highly valued + rewarded
- Individuals assumed to be in control of their environment, “You get what you deserve”

**Family Structure**

- The nuclear family: father, mother, 2.3 children is the ideal social unit
- Husband is breadwinner and head of household
- Wife is homemaker and subordinate to the husband
- Children should have own rooms, be independent



**Emphasis on Scientific Method**

- Objective, rational linear thinking
- Cause and effect relationships
- Quantitative emphasis

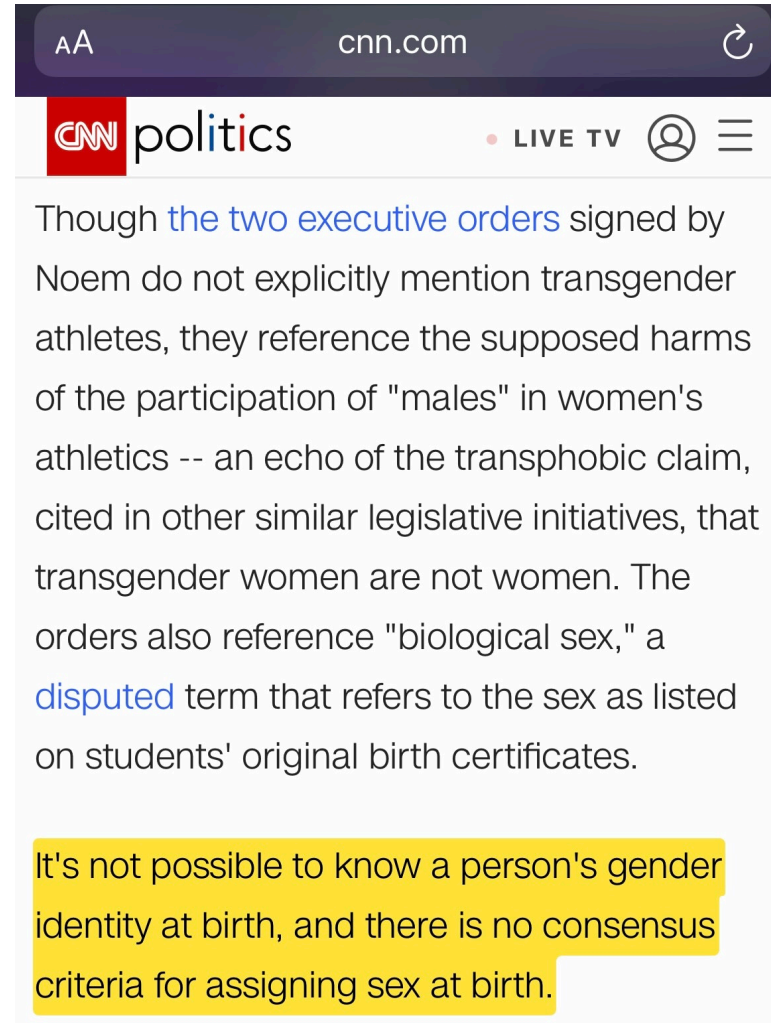
# Whiteness as child abuse



“Thandeka (1999) argues that **raising White children to be White is a form of child abuse** because ‘the child learns to silence and then deny its own resonant feelings towards racially proscribed others, not because it wishes to become White, but because it wishes to remain within the community this is quite literally its life’ (p. 24)... If Whites are reared in this manner, then emotional and psychological damage on the White psyche results...we hope to offer a **new approach to racial healing by affirming Thandeka’s (1999) postulation of Whiteness as a form of child abuse** and tracing what happens when that abuse goes unchecked”



# “No consensus criteria for assigning sex at birth”



AA cnn.com

**CNN** politics LIVE TV

Though [the two executive orders](#) signed by Noem do not explicitly mention transgender athletes, they reference the supposed harms of the participation of "males" in women's athletics -- an echo of the transphobic claim, cited in other similar legislative initiatives, that transgender women are not women. The orders also reference "biological sex," a [disputed](#) term that refers to the sex as listed on students' original birth certificates.

It's not possible to know a person's gender identity at birth, and there is no consensus criteria for assigning sex at birth.

# “No unfair advantage”



Replying to @ACLU

FACT TWO: Trans athletes do not have an unfair advantage in sports.

**MYTH: Trans athletes' physiological characteristics provide an unfair advantage over cis athletes.**

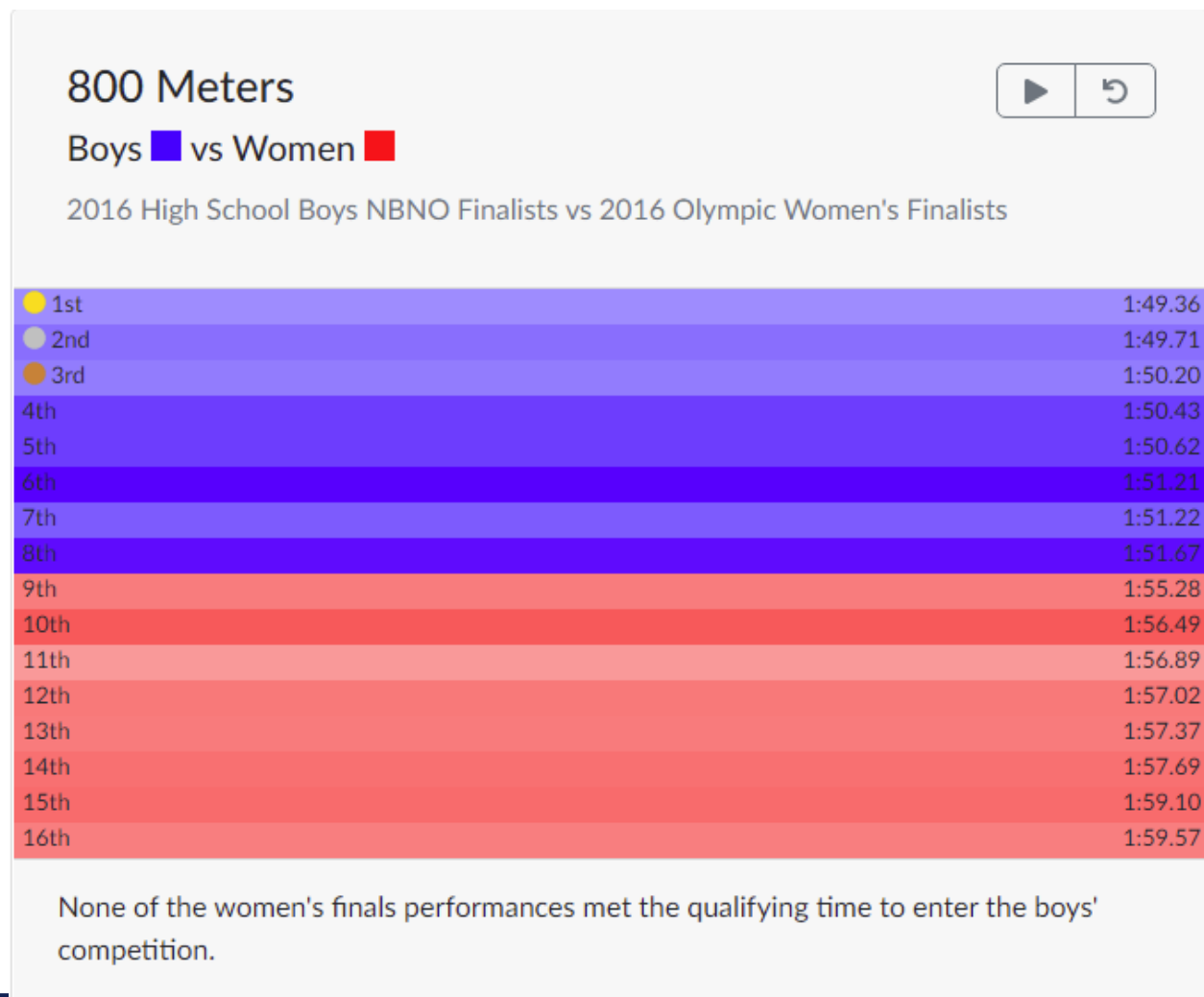
Trans athletes vary in athletic ability just like cisgender athletes. In many states, the very same cis girls who have claimed that trans athletes have an “unfair” advantage have consistently performed as well as or better than transgender competitors.

The ACLU logo, consisting of the letters 'ACLU' in a bold, red, sans-serif font.

3:23 PM · Feb 3, 2021 · Twitter Web App

221 Retweets 2,144 Quote Tweets 670 Likes

# “No unfair advantage”



# Christianity and Justice

- What is “justice”?
  - Biblical Justice
  - Social Justice
  - Does Social Justice = biblical justice?
  - A Christian approach to social justice?
- Advice for Dialogue
  - Acknowledge and fight racism
  - Be charitable
  - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
  - Justice and the gospel
  - Read broadly

# Basic biblical foundations

- All people are made in God's image
- All people are morally obligated to love and protect the vulnerable
- The Mosaic Law made legal provision for the vulnerable
- God's commands plus OT precedent do not entail modern legislation
- Not everything that is immoral should be illegal
- All legal compulsion is through the threat of force



# All people are made in God's image

- “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. – Gen. 1:27
- “he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, for “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we are indeed his offspring.” – Acts 17:26-28
- “Love your neighbor as yourself.” – Mark 12:30



# All people are morally obligated to love and protect the vulnerable

- “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy.” – Prov. 31:8-9
- “Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” – Luke 12:33-34
- “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.” – James 1:27



# The Mosaic Law made legal provision for the vulnerable

- "Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God." – Lev. 19:10
- "When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God." -Lev. 23:22
- "At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied." - Deut. 14:28-29





# God's commands plus OT precedent do not entail modern legislation

Love and protection for the **vulnerable** is morally obligatory.

Love and protection for the **vulnerable** is enshrined in Mosaic Law.



We ought to create legislation to mandate **love and protection for the vulnerable.**

# God's commands plus OT precedent do not entail modern legislation

**Adultery** is morally wrong.

**Prohibition of adultery** is enshrined in Mosaic Law.



We ought to create legislation to **prohibit adultery**.

# God's commands plus OT precedent do not entail modern legislation

**Idolatry** is morally wrong

**Prohibition of idolatry** is enshrined in Mosaic Law.



We ought to create legislation to **prohibit idolatry**.

Not everything that is immoral should be illegal



All legal compulsion is through the threat of force



# A Christian approach to social justice?

- All people are made in God's image
- All people are morally obligated to love and protect the vulnerable
- The Mosaic Law made legal provision for the vulnerable
- God's commands plus OT precedent do not entail modern legislation
- Not everything that is immoral should be illegal
- All legal compulsion is through the threat of force



# Christianity and Justice

- What is “justice”?
  - Biblical Justice
  - Social Justice
  - Does Social Justice = biblical justice?
  - A Christian approach to social justice?
- Advice for Dialogue
  - Acknowledge and fight racism
  - Be charitable
  - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
  - Justice and the gospel
  - Read broadly

# Acknowledge and fight racism





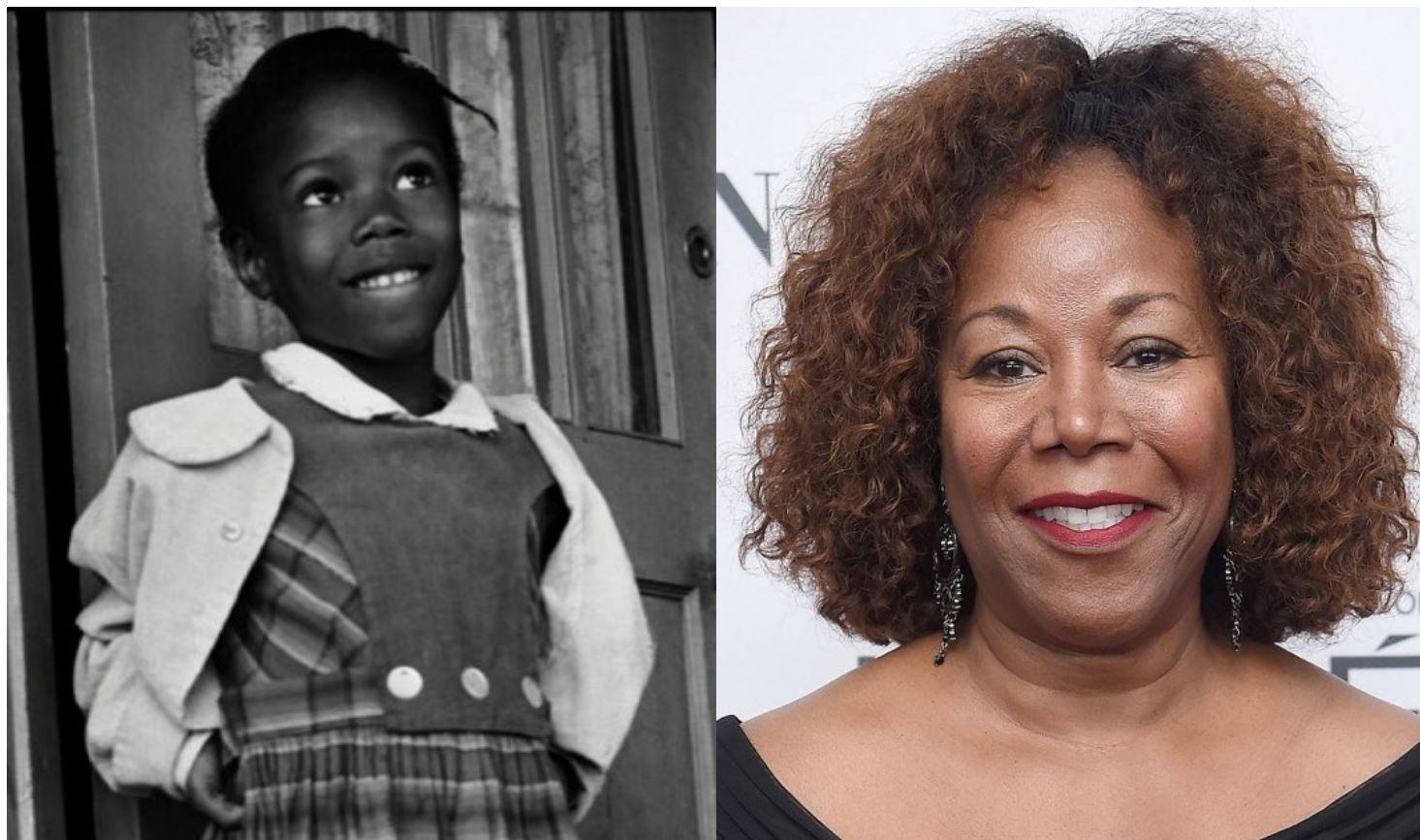
# Acknowledge and fight racism



# Acknowledge and fight racism

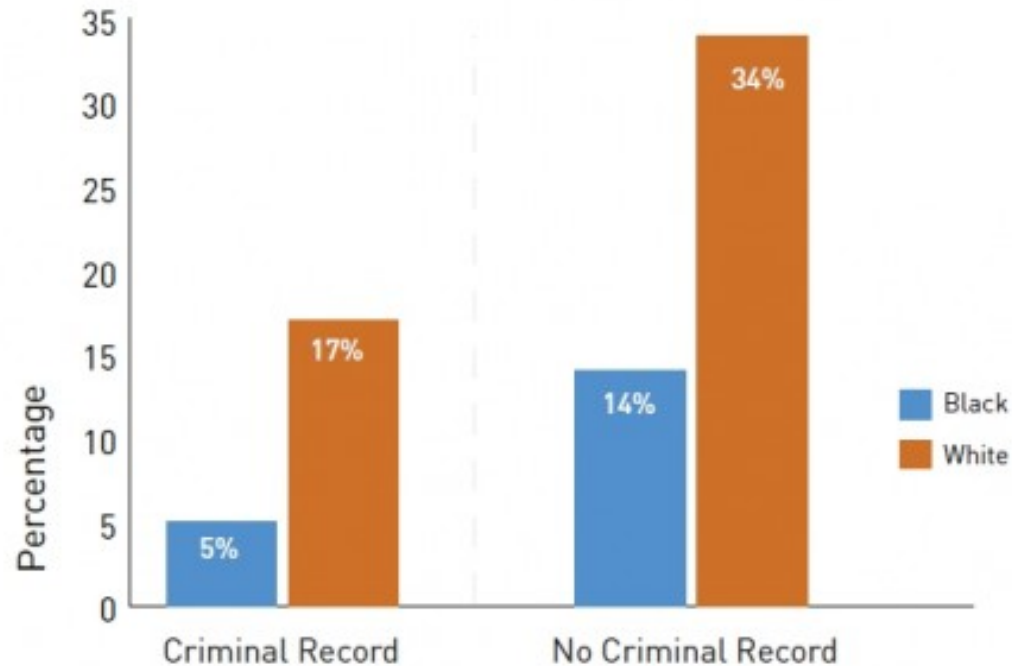


# Acknowledge and fight racism



# Acknowledge and fight racism

Fig. 9. Racial Impact of a Criminal Record on Interview Callbacks, 2003



Source: Devah Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 108, No. 5 (March 2003), Figure 6, p. 958.

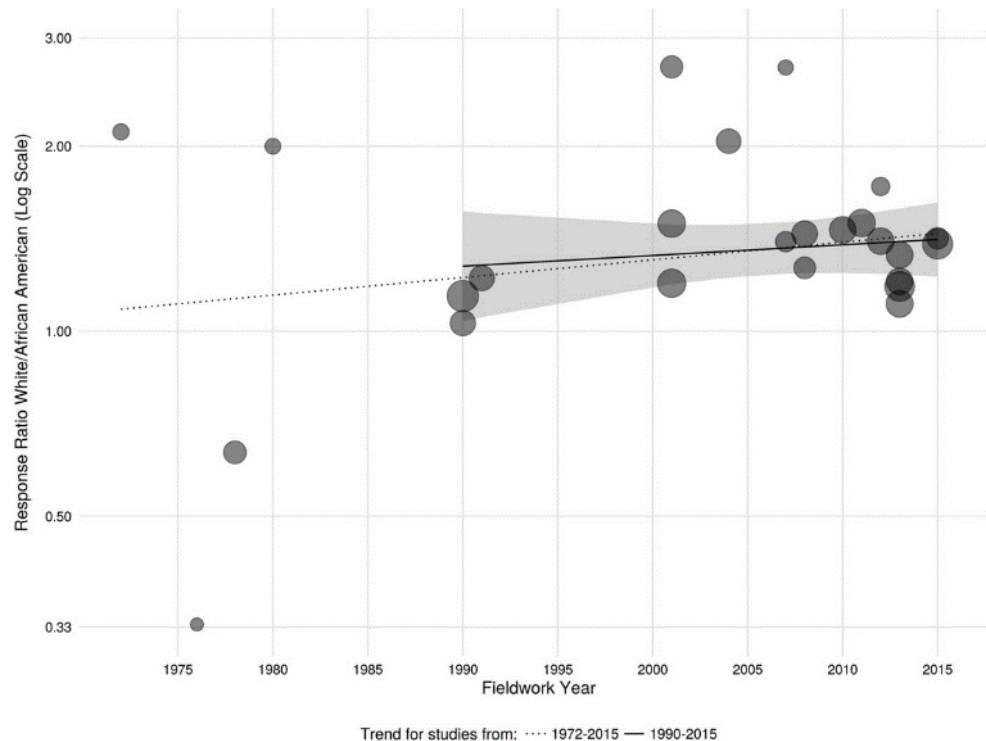
20% higher response rate for whites **with criminal record** compared to blacks **with no criminal record**

# Acknowledge and fight racism

## Meta-analysis of field experiments shows no change in racial discrimination in hiring over time



Lincoln Quillian, Devah Pager, Ole Hexel, and Arnfinn H. Midtbøen



40% higher response rate for whites has not changed in at least three decades

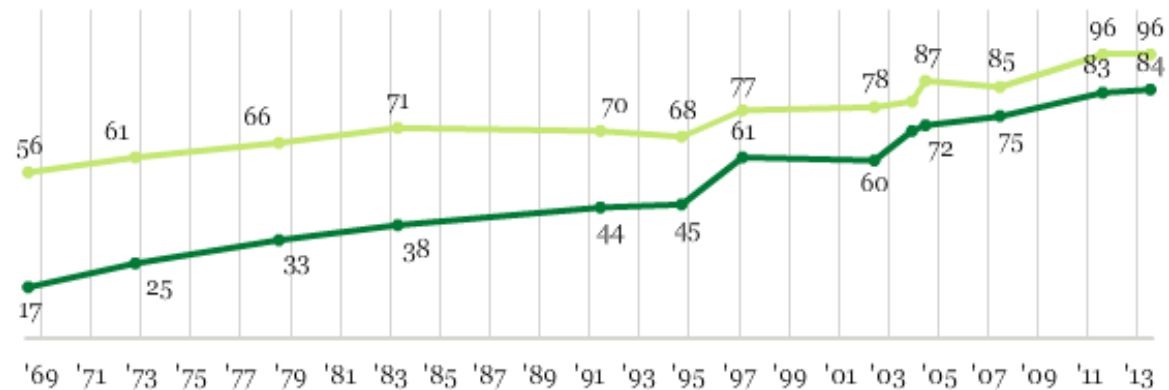
Note: Size of plotting symbols proportional to meta-regression weights. Shaded region gives 95% confidence interval.

# Acknowledge and fight racism

Approval of Black-White Marriage Among Whites and Blacks

Selected trend

Whites ^ Non-Hispanic blacks



1958 wording: "... marriages between white and colored people"

1968-1978 wording: "... marriages between whites and nonwhites"

^ Trend from 1968-2003 includes Hispanics; trend from 2004-2013 is for non-Hispanic whites only

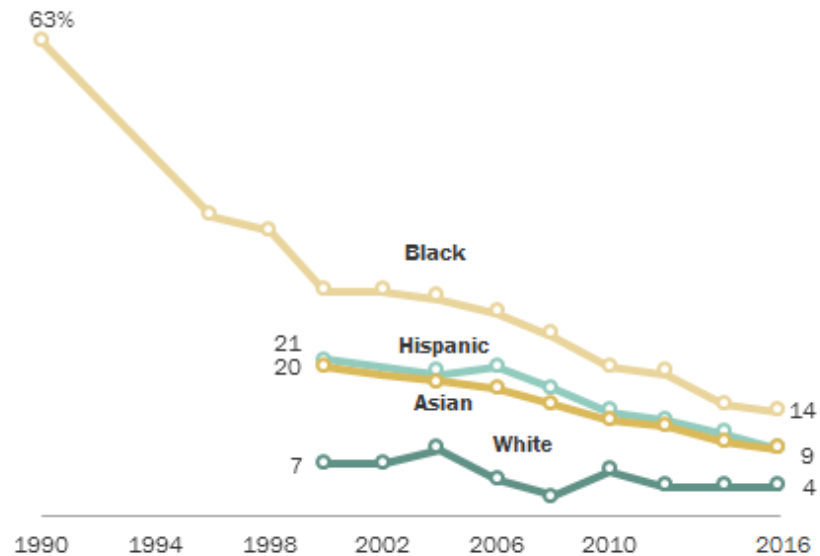
GALLUP®

16% of whites do not approve of intermarriage between whites and blacks

# Acknowledge and fight racism

## Dramatic dive in share of nonblacks who would oppose a relative marrying a black person

*% saying they would be very or somewhat opposed to a close relative marrying someone who is \_\_\_ among U.S. adults who are not that race or ethnicity*



**14%** of non-blacks would oppose a relative marrying a black person

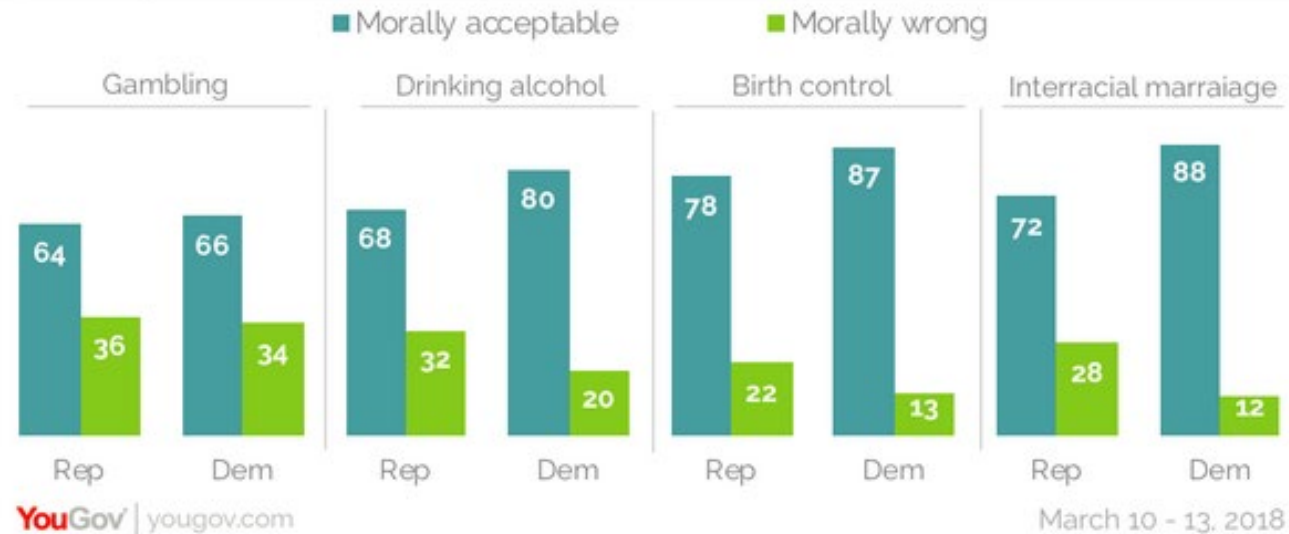
Note: Due to changes in question wording, the universe of nonblacks prior to 2000 includes anyone who reported a race other than black; in 2000 and later, the universe of nonblacks includes those who did not identify as single-race, non-Hispanic blacks (and so may include Hispanic blacks and multiracial blacks).

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of General Social Survey. "Intermarriage in the U.S. 50 Years After Loving v. Virginia"

# Acknowledge and fight racism

## Broad acceptabnce in many formerly taboo areas

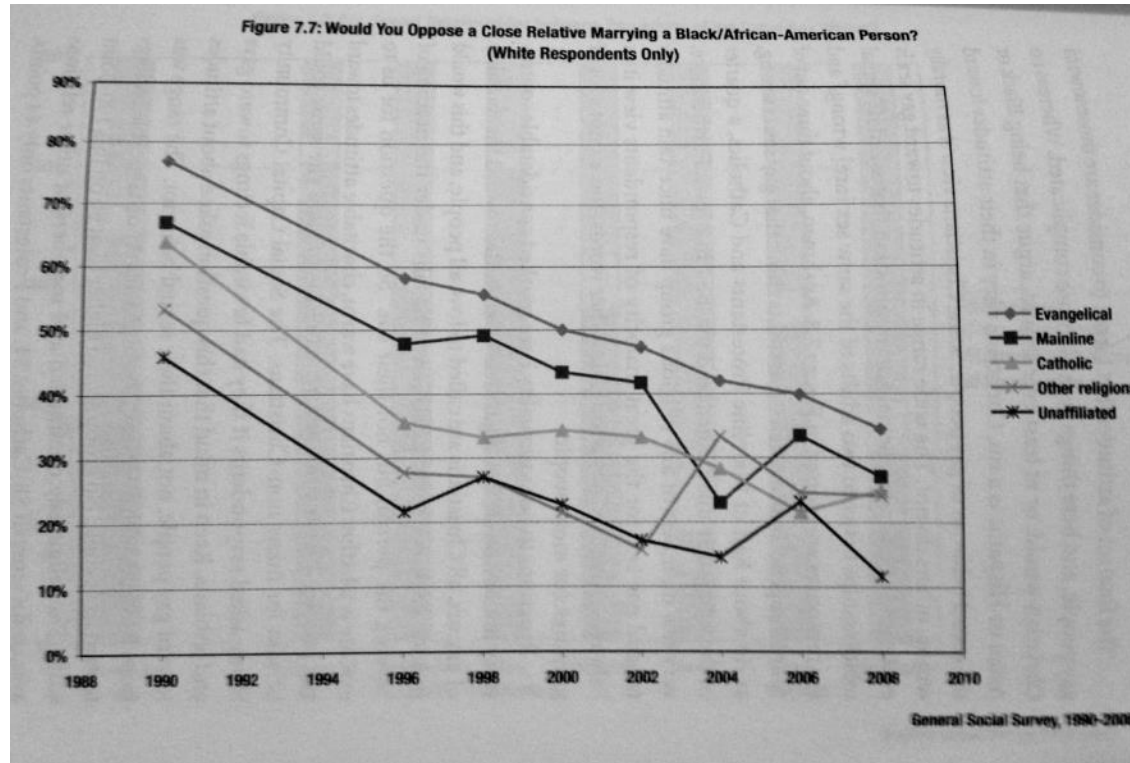
Regardless of whether they should be legal or not, which of the following things do you personally consider to be morally acceptable or morally wrong? %



28% of Republicans think interracial marriage is 'morally wrong'



# Acknowledge and fight racism



**34%** of white Evangelicals would oppose a close relative marrying a black person

“Among Evangelicals... we see no evidence of prejudicial attitudes decreasing with church attendance.” – Bradley Wright, *Christians Are Hate-Filled Hypocrites... and Other Lies You've Been Told*, p. 170

# Christianity and Justice

- What is “justice”?
  - Biblical Justice
  - Social Justice
  - Does Social Justice = biblical justice?
  - A Christian approach to social justice?
- Advice for Dialogue
  - Acknowledge and fight racism
  - Be charitable
  - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
  - Justice and the gospel
  - Read broadly

Be charitable



Don't be that guy



# Avoid labels



I think immigration laws should exist.

**AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM** is captive to **CONSERVATIVE, FASCIST, WHITE SUPREMACIST, NATIONALIST** ideologies that have more in common with the philosophy of **AYN RAND** than the teachings of Jesus!!!!



# Avoid labels



I think immigration laws should exist.

**AMERICAN EVANGELICALISM** is captive to **CONSERVATIVE, FASCIST, WHITE SUPREMACIST, NATIONALIST** ideologies that have more in common with the philosophy of **AYN RAND** than the teachings of **JESUS!!!!**



I think affirmative action laws should exist.

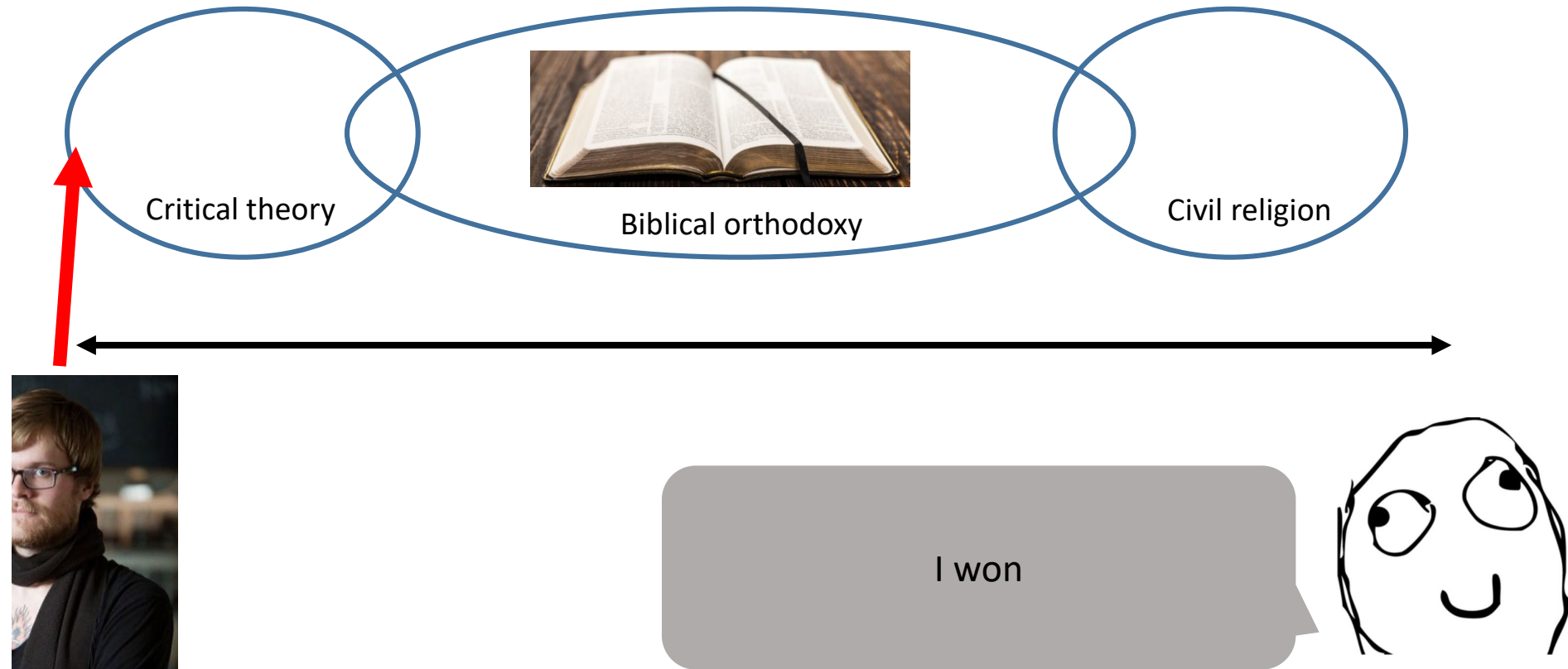
**'WOKE' EVANGELICALISM** is captive to **PROGRESSIVE, SOCIALIST, THIRD-WAVE FEMINIST, GLOBALIST** ideologies that have more common with the philosophy of **KARL MARX** than the teachings of **JESUS!!!!**



# Beware of polarization



# Beware of polarization





# Christianity and Justice

- What is “justice”?
  - Biblical Justice
  - Social Justice
  - Does Social Justice = biblical justice?
  - A Christian approach to social justice?
- Advice for Dialogue
  - Acknowledge and fight racism
  - Be charitable
  - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
  - Justice and the gospel
  - Read broadly

# What's at stake

- Our primary identity is in Christ, not in race, ethnicity, gender, or anything else. (Gal. 3:26-28, Phil. 3:3-11)
- We can only repent for our own sins. (Ez. 18:14-20, Deut. 24:16 and Jer. 31:27-34)
- No one's "lived experience" makes them infallible. (Prov. 14:12, Jer. 17:9)
- Biblical justice means "giving people their due," not "dismantling hegemonic norms." (Rom. 13:1-7, Is. 1:17)
- Diversity is not always good. (Jdg. 21:25, Rev. 17:13-14)
- The gospel is an indicative, not an imperative. (Rom. 4:5, John 6:29)

# Christianity and Justice

- What is “justice”?
  - Biblical Justice
  - Social Justice
  - Does Social Justice = biblical justice?
  - A Christian approach to social justice?
- Advice for Dialogue
  - Acknowledge and fight racism
  - Be charitable
  - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
  - Justice and the gospel
  - Read broadly

# Just and Unjust



# Unjust and Justified

- What are your **moral obligations**?
  
- Have you **kept** them?



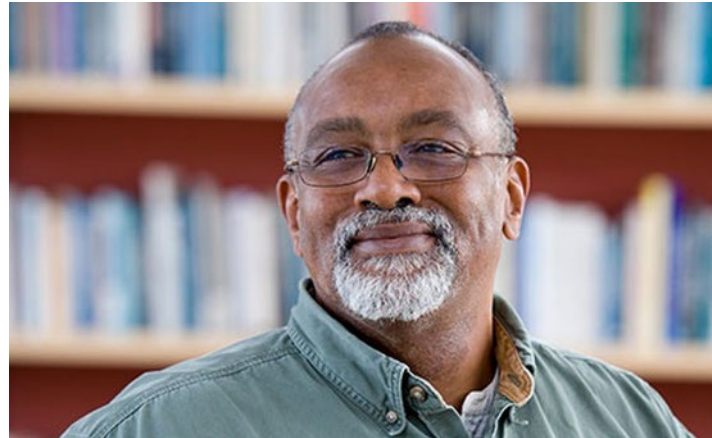
# Christianity and Justice

- What is “justice”?
  - Biblical Justice
  - Social Justice
  - Does Social Justice = biblical justice?
  - A Christian approach to social justice?
- Advice for Dialogue
  - Acknowledge and fight racism
  - Be charitable
  - Recognize the biblical issues at stake
  - Justice and the gospel
  - Read broadly

Read broadly



# Read broadly

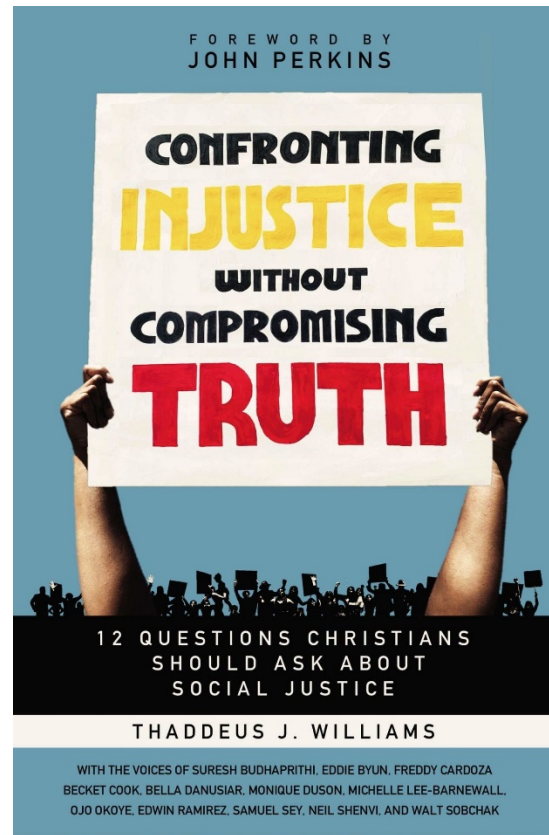




# Read broadly

- Reading broadly forces you to read critically
- Reading broadly exposes your blind spots
- Reading broadly inoculates against error
- Reading broadly **does not require** agreement

# *Confronting Injustice Without Compromising Truth* by Thaddeus Williams



# Acknowledgements

Dr. Christina Shenvi



Dr. Pat Sawyer



- “Engaging Critical Theory and the Social Justice Movement” *Ratio Christi*
- [shenviapologetics.com/defend19](http://shenviapologetics.com/defend19)
- Twitter @NeilShenvi, @RealPatSawyer