

THERESA LADRIGAN-WHELPLEY: Welcome to INTEGRAL, a podcast production out of the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education at Santa Clara University; exploring the question is there a common good in our common home?

I'm Theresa Ladrigan-Whelpley, the director of the Bannan Institutes in the Ignatian Center and your host for this podcast. We're coming to you from Vari Hall on the campus of Santa Clara in the heart of Silicon Valley, California. This season of INTEGRAL, we're looking at the ways in which racial and ethnic justice intersect with the question of the common good. Today, we will explore the ways in which race has been constructed in the national landscape; how anti-racist and racist movements defined national identity from World War II through the Obama and Trump presidencies.

JANE ELLIOT (audio clip): If you white folks want to be treated the way blacks are in this society, stand. Nobody's standing here. That says, very plainly, that you know what's happening, you know you don't want it for you.

TONY HAZARD (audio clip): What has White Allyship been over time? What did it look like during slavery? What did it look like during the modern civil rights movement? And what does White Allyship look like today?

THERESA LADRIGAN-WHELPLEY: To unpack these questions, we're joined today by Tony Hazard, Assistant Professor in the Ethnic Studies Department at Santa Clara University and Bannan Institute Scholar in the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education. His first book, *Postwar Anti-Racism*, examines the interplay of US cultural relations, and the production of scientific theories of race at the United Nations immediately following World War II. Welcome, Tony.

TONY HAZARD: Thanks, Theresa. I'd like to start today with a story about a young man: Jim Zwerg, a white college student from Wisconsin who, in 1960, decided that he wanted to become involved in the Civil Rights Movement. So, he decides to actually go south and join SNCC, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Jim also decides in that move to actually become an exchange student at Fisk University, a historically black college. So, Jim leaves Wisconsin, kind of the safety of his middle class, white existence, to go into the heart of the south and become a part of this movement. Jim becomes a central white ally in the student-led movement.

So, 1961 rolls around and members of CORE and SNCC decide that they want to challenge segregated interstate bus travel. Their idea was to embark upon what they were calling "Freedom Rides." The first wave of Freedom Rides would begin in May of 1961. That first wave of Freedom Riders leave Washington, D.C. on May 4th, and they really don't encounter too much resistance. The two buses reach Anniston and then Birmingham on May 14th. It's that day that changed the entire Freedom Ride. In Anniston and Birmingham, the buses are attacked by members of the Klan and other sympathizers. The damage to both the vehicles and those who were riding the buses was so extreme that those two groups decided that they would kind of take a break.

At that point, the Department of Justice becomes involved and puts a halt to all Freedom Rides. It's at that moment that members of SNCC decide to organize a second wave of Freedom Riders. And so, they begin on May 16th and it's Jim Zwerg, one of the white allies, that is among that group. Jim and the other 21 Freedom Riders reach Montgomery, Alabama on May

20th. In Montgomery, they are attacked. Jim suffers a concussion; his teeth are knocked out, he's really beaten brutally. He ends up in the hospital. The next day, May 21st, Jim is interviewed. And that interview, along with photographs, are published nationwide, across the globe. And this image and this interview presents a new picture for, not just the United States, but for the world to see the sort of violent resistance to Civil Rights activism.

And so, let's go ahead and hear that interview from Jim:

JIM ZWERG (audio clip): Segregation must be stopped. It must be broken down. Those of us who were on the Freedom Ride will continue to Freedom Ride. I'm not sure that I'll be able to, but we're going on to New Orleans, no matter what happens. We're dedicated to this, we'll take hitting, we'll take beatings. We're willing to accept death. But we're going to keep coming until we can ride from anywhere in the south to anyplace else in the south without anybody making any comments. Just as American citizens.

TONY HAZARD: Ultimately, Jim and other Freedom Riders were successful in bring about the nationwide desegregation of interstate bus travel and at that point, in 1961, the Attorney General Bobby Kennedy became involved and supported desegregating the bus travel across state lines. I share this story because I think it's a striking example of White Allyship. This is an idea that has really come to the floor recently in academic and activist circles, particularly with the emergence of Black Lives Matter in 2013, and certainly with the racism that has been front and center in the recent Presidential election.

Jim's story, while seemingly unique, should be understood within its proper historical context. So, to consider that longer history of White Allyship, beginning, really, in the colonial period with the first indentured servants. Moving through the 18th and 19th centuries, considering abolitionists, and then certainly folks like Jim and others who were central to the modern Civil Rights movement.

There's a long history there that should be recognized and discussed. And, it must be noted as well, that if we consider this history of Civil Rights organizations, such as the NAACP and CORE and SNCC. These organizations, from their inception, had white members. One key area that I examine in terms of these ideas of race is anthropology. That really begins with the work of one man: Franz Boas, the renowned Jewish anthropologist who, by most accounts, is rightly referred to as the father of modern American anthropology. It's in his work that you see these ideas about race that are both philosophical and scientific being challenged, really, for the first time. And so, Boas is able to challenge these ideas and he does that by looking at the ways in which the environment and history actually influence the shape of, let's say, cultural practices of a particular group that had been racialized. Groups such as Native American populations were looked down upon because of their cultural traditions. And culture was tied to this idea about race, that people are inherently different because of their biology.

Boas challenged all of that and what we also see then is his allyship with people like W.E.B. Du Bois. They produced work together, they gave talks at each other's institutions, and they were very much directly involved with the NAACP. Of course, W.E.B. Du Bois was a founding member of that famed organization. So, with Boas then, he's able to begin to institutionalize his work once he's hired at Columbia University. And it's from that moment forward that Boas begins to build this incredibly powerful and forward thinking department of anthropology. And it's

over the next 40 years that Boas would train his graduate students, the likes of Margaret Mead and Ashley Montagu. And it's not coincidental that many of Boas' early students were either women or Jewish or African-American because Boas himself as a Jewish immigrant fully understood the gravity of racism and the ways in which it really ordered society. And so, Boas saw himself as both a scholar and an activist and he was able to kind of embrace those two things through his anthropological projects. And you see that being carried forward through his graduate students.

To talk about one of his famed students, Ashley Montagu: there's a book that Montagu published in 1942 by the title of *Man's Most Dangerous Myth*. In this book, he not only points out the fallacies of scientific racism, but he also challenges the very concept of whiteness, this notion of white intellectual and cultural superiority. And, I'd like to read a brief quote, a passage, from that book.

"Primitive Neanderthal man who lived more than 50,000 years ago had a larger brain than the average white man of today! Strange that this elementary fact has been so consistently overlooked. Are we to assume then that Neanderthal man was culturally and intellectually superior to modern white man?" (MMDM, pg 57)

Here, in this book published in 1942, you have a Jewish immigrant who is a trained anthropologist questioning the century old notions about head size; this notion that head size correlated to intelligence. If we consider Montagu within kind of the anthropological tradition that existed in the United States, you're also then challenged to understand anthropology as politics, as a part of this continuum of anti-racist activism. Reconsidering someone like Jim Zwerg: he was an activist. He fought for legal rights, civil rights but didn't necessarily challenge the very concepts of race nor did they challenge the concept of whiteness. And I think that's what's so important about understanding the history of science, the history of anthropology because that's precisely what some of those folks did.

Montagu, and a few others, they took that a step further: by interrogating the very notion of whiteness. It's interesting to me because there were folks in the 1940s asking those questions, posing those challenges to whiteness in ways that folks haven't really done since. And if we look at the growth of the historical profession, and anthropology as well, in the 1990s we can locate a moment in which scholars were really engaging this idea of whiteness but that wasn't sustained; and so as they move into the 21st century, what we see is a lull in that sort of work, save two examples: activist and educator Jane Elliott and of course anti-racist activist Tim Wise.

These are two of the very few public figures who are white and who challenge the concept of whiteness. There's an initial step to take that involves recognizing the kind of privilege status that whiteness continues to hold even into the 21st century, and that initial step, in one of her famed workshops on anti-racism and whiteness, Jane Elliott gives us a blueprint to make that first step. So let's have a listen to Jane.

JANE ELLIOTT (audio clip): I want every white person in this room who would be happy to be treated as this society, in general, treats our citizens, our black citizens, if you as a white person would be happy to receive the same treatment that our black citizens do in this society, please stand. If you white folks want to be treated the way blacks are in this society, stand. Nobody's standing here. That says, very plainly, that you know what's happening, you know you don't

want it for you. I want to know why you're so willing to accept it or to allow it to happen for others.

TONY HAZARD: So, in that challenge that Jane issues, the people in that room seem to understand what white privilege is, that it exists, they identify it, but by the same token, those folks in that room refuse to embrace being treated like an African-American in the United States in the 21st century. We have another example of a white ally: Tim Wise, someone who works very hard in challenging power of whiteness. Tim also looks to history and he attempts to locate the kind of constructions of whiteness over time. We'll hear from Tim on what is really the omnipresence of race and racism within the contemporary political arena.

TIM WISE (audio clip): If the only reason for Trump's support was economic anxiety then people of color should be flocking to Trump. Because black folks, for instance, are twice as likely to be out of work as white folks, three times as likely to be poor, have 1/15 the net worth, nine years less life expectancy in large part due to economic inequality. So, if it were just economics, people of color should be rallying to him but it is not. So there's a link between the kind of economic anxiety that white folks are feeling and this larger political or racial anxiety. Really what it comes down to is if you think about it, it's the same way that southerners, and I am a southerner, will say, you know, "Well the Civil War wasn't about slavery, it was about state's rights." Yeah, but the right you were fighting for was the right to own people.

So when folks in the Trump camp say "Well it's not about race, you know, I like the fact that he says what's on his mind." Yeah, but you like that he says things about Mexicans, and about the Chinese, and about black activists in the streets protesting police brutality and he says things about Muslims. In fact, all of those things that people say Trump is about: economics, the straight shooting, you know, straight talking guy, all of that still comes back to his perspective on othering other people and saying "They're your threat, they're the ones who endanger your job, they're the ones who are to blame for your lack of safety in the streets." It's very much about racialized scapegoating and economics, of course, make it possible to combine things but at the end of the day it's still very much about identity.

TONY HAZARD: The words of Tim Wise bring us into the present moment, the contemporary political environment in which the President rose to power by invoking and recycling racist language, racist ideas, about American exceptionalism and certainly a notion of whiteness. I'd like to reference here the work of Ta-Nehisi Coates who in the most recent addition of *The Atlantic*, makes a very short, concise, revealing statement about what whiteness is and it's role in this particular election. I quote:

"Whiteness in America is a different symbol—a badge of advantage."
-Ta-Nehisi Coates

So if we take Ta-Nehisi Coates' words, and, again, consider this longer history, this longer trajectory of race as a concept and certainly whiteness as a concept and a lived reality, we should also consider what whiteness means in relation to other identities - in relation to blackness, being a Native American, being a person of Asian descent, being a person of Latin descent, in the 21st century. We understand that in those constructed identities, there was one particular identity that was placed on top and certainly that kind of relational construction of race

continues to play a role in shaping both institutions and, in some cases, interpersonal interactions. I'll close referencing again Ta-Nehisi's metaphor of whiteness as a badge.

"I ask, who among potential white allies is willing to challenge the authority of that badge? To deconstruct the meaning of that badge? Or, to remove that badge altogether?"

-Ta-Nehisi Coates

THERESA LADRIGAN-WHELPLEY: Thanks for listening to INTEGRAL, a Bannan Institute podcast of the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education at Santa Clara University. Special thanks to Professor Tony Hazard for his contribution to today's episode. Coming up next week is Brett Solomon, Associate Professor in the Child Studies Program and interim Associate Provost for Diversity and Inclusion at Santa Clara University, who will look at the school to prison pipeline, considering the extent to which implicit racial bias among school teachers results in increased suspensions and expulsions among students of color.

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Sources:

- Jim Zwerg, FR Project: Jim Zwerg in Hospita, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQbqzaRAqI8>
- Jane Elliott, Anti Racism Activist & Educator Jane Elliot Speaks To White Citizens, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xUlqTNwm-mk&feature=youtu.be>
- Tim Wise, CNN, available at: <https://youtu.be/t389YuDy7DM>