

LIVING WHILE BLACK: TOXIC TRIGGERS AND ADVENTIST TRAUMA

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It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness,—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.¹

When I started developing my thoughts, I was tempted to modify Du Bois's prescient insight. Overthinking the issue, I intended to make a case for a triple-consciousness informed by national identity, ethnic reality, and denominational affiliation. It soon became clear that even in the denominational realm, the issue is still one of a double-consciousness, as in my life and ministry, I am continually aware that I am often “looking at [myself] through the eyes of others.” Too often, I feel as if I belong to an institution that only acknowledges my presence because my Black body provides a statistical digit for false advertising about a multicultural remnant. The proof of concept for this marketing strategy is evident in the fact that even with my heightened awareness of the farcical claim of inclusion, I am still here. Like my forebears living under American, Caribbean, and African emanations of Jim Crow-Apartheid, I have been forced to develop creative coping methods to live with the terrorizing trauma that permeates every global institution—including the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Trauma Defined

The American Psychological Association defines trauma as “any disturbing experience that results in significant fear, helplessness, dissociation, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a long-lasting negative effect on a person's attitudes, behavior, and other aspects of functioning.”² Originally, the Greek noun τραύμα defined a physical wound and was associated with the verb τὶτρωσκω, “to pierce, wound, or harm”.³ In classical literature, the term was primarily applied to medicinal contexts and referred to any wound, whether inflicted in battle⁴ or resulting from accident or sickness.⁵

¹ W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903), 3.

² American Psychological Association, “*Trauma*,” accessed [Aug 31, 2025], <https://www.apa.org/topics/trauma>.

³ H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, rev. H. S. Jones and R. McKenzie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

⁴ E.g., Homer, *The Iliad*, trans. A. T. Murray (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924); 5.97. Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. A. D. Godley (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 9.73.

⁵ E.g., Hippocrates, *On Wounds in the Head*, trans. F. Adams (London: Sydenham Society, 1849).

Although primarily referring to physical wounds, Plato laid the foundation for the modern psychological understanding when he used the term to describe “trauma in the soul” (τραυματα εν τη ψυχη)⁶ and the “wounding” of the soul (τιτρωσκει και την ψυχην εαυτου).⁷ While infrequent, the metaphorical application can also be seen in later Greek literature, as we see in Philo’s reference to τραυμα της ψυχης in Philo.⁸ Similar constructs can also be found in the Patristic writings of Clement,⁹ Gregory of Nyssa,¹⁰ and John Chrysostom.¹¹

Plato’s initial application of the term to the psychological realm may have had metaphorical intent, but it reveals a profound truth about the multidimensional impact of trauma. A physical wound not only affects anatomical integrity or physiological function but evokes feelings of dismay and depression in the psychological and moral dimensions of our being. Similarly, wounds to the soul often impact the body’s ability to function optimally.

This mind–body interconnection foreshadowed a transformation in the nineteenth century, when the primary understanding of trauma shifted from the physical to the psychological.¹² Physician John Eric Erichsen observed patients suffering from a condition known as railway spine (later referred to as Erichsen’s disease) in which individuals involved in railroad accidents exhibited persistent physical and mental ailments that could not be attributed to an identifiable wound.¹³ Around the same time, Jean-Martin Charcot and Pierre Janet at the Salpêtrière Hospital in Paris noted that emotional shock could produce symptoms such as paralysis, amnesia, and hysteria.¹⁴ By the end of the century, Sigmund Freud, in *Studies on Hysteria*, developed his theory of psychic trauma as the repression of intolerable experiences.¹⁵ As common experience attests, psychologically inflicted pain may rival, and even exceed, that of physical blows; trauma is painful irrespective of its stimulus.

⁶ Plato, *Timaeus*, 86b–c, trans. W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929).

⁷ Plato, *Laws*, 863b, trans. R. G. Bury (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926).

⁸ Philo of Alexandria, *On the Posterity of Cain and His Exile*, 39, trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929).

⁹ Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata, or Miscellanies*, trans. W. Wilson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882), 2.19.

¹⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Making of Man*, trans. H. A. Wilson, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1893), ch. 21.

¹¹ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, trans. G. Prevost, in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1, vol. 10 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1888), 33.

¹² Allan Young, *The Harmony of Illusions: Inventing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 6.

¹³ John Eric Erichsen, *On Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System* (London: Walton and Maberly, 1866). See also Michael Trimble, *Post-Traumatic Neurosis: From Railway Spine to Whiplash* (Chichester, England: Wiley, 1981).

¹⁴ Mark S. Micale, *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and Its Interpretations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Pierre Janet, *Psychological Healing: A Historical and Clinical Study*, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1904; repr., 1973).

¹⁵ Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, trans. James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 2 (London: Hogarth Press, 1950 [1895]), 1–305.

Continuous Traumatic Stress

Du Bois' observation of "double-consciousness" explains the major catalyst for the psychological condition that anti-Apartheid mental health activists in the 1980s labeled Continuous Traumatic Stress (CTS).¹⁶ Unlike Post Traumatic Stress (PTS), the trauma is not confined to a physical or psychological event in the past but is ongoing. CTS explains the experience of those subjected to cruel forms of torture and is a more accurate description for the collective pain of African Americans. I can understand why some would identify slavery as the traumatic trigger for the Black experience and analyze current social issues through a PTS lens.¹⁷ However, as Harvard epidemiologist David Williams, et al have so brilliantly quantified with their Everyday Discrimination Scale,¹⁸ the trauma experienced by Black folk in America is not inflicted by isolated stimuli but is a persistent systemic reality.¹⁹ To be Black in this society is to live in a constant state of trauma.

The modern architects of the complex mechanisms used to inflict various degrees of torture on Black folk in society have adapted the strategy of the fourth-century Roman Empire, which usurped the Christian Church to advance its imperialist agenda. Therefore, it is no surprise that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is actively complicit in the cruel and continuous assault against continental and dispersed "Africans". Undoubtedly, many will dismiss my observation as they point to the global nature of our denomination in which white people are increasingly becoming a minority. Some may even point to the brilliant work of Kevin Burton²⁰ and Benjamin Baker,²¹ which reveals a time when our denominational forebears had more in common with the abolitionist Quakers than the segregationist Southern Baptists. I will address the second observation first.

Roots of Traumatic Triggers in Adventism

We celebrate the abolitionist roots of some in the Millerite movement and their theological heirs, but fail to see that even the sincerest among them may have embodied an embedded prejudice that would have been difficult for them to recognize. For instance, when seeking a modern parallel for the second beast of Revelation 13, some of our pioneers

¹⁶ Gillian Eagle and Debra Kaminer, "Continuous Traumatic Stress: Expanding the Lexicon of Traumatic Stress," *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 19, no. 2 (2013): 85–99; Gill Straker, *Faces in the Revolution: The Psychological Effects of Violence on Township Youth in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 2013).

¹⁷ Joy DeGruy, *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome: America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing* (Milwaukee, WI: Uptone Press, 2005).

¹⁸ David R. Williams, Yu Yan, and Norman Anderson, "Racial Differences in Physical and Mental Health: Socioeconomic Status, Stress and Discrimination," *Journal of Health Psychology* 2, no. 3 (1997): 335–351.

¹⁹ David R. Williams, "Race, Socioeconomic Status, and Health: The Added Effects of Racism and Discrimination," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 896, no. 1 (1999): 173–188.

²⁰ Kevin M. Burton, "The Adventist Abolitionists: Revisiting the Anti-Slavery Roots of Seventh-day Adventism," *Journal of Adventist Historiography* 10 (2021): 23–45.

²¹ Benjamin Baker, "The Year of Jubilee is Come": Black Millerites and the Politics of Christian Apocalypticism. *Church History* 92 (2023): 68–98.

courageously pointed to America as the natural fit to the lamb-like beast and even heralded slavery as an indisputable indicator. In his *Key to the Prophetic Chart*, published a year after Lincoln's executive order promising emancipation only to enslaved Africans in states that were not even under his jurisdiction, Uriah Smith would write:

The lamb feature is a fit emblem of the *profession* and the early acts of this government. But it speaks like a dragon - a fit emblem of the *practice* of this hypocritical nation. Look at the Declaration of Independence, and the Constitution; and then look at slavery, look at the religious intolerance, the corruption and oppression existing throughout the land. A further development may be expected in the future.²²

However, when he published his comprehensive commentary some three decades later, there is not even the slightest allusion to slavery and absolutely no mention of the landmark *Plessey v Ferguson* decision issued the previous year. The language of a "hypocritical nation" is gone, and America's dragon-like behavior is projected to the future when the government will "enact unjust and oppressive laws against the religious profession and practice of some of its subjects."²³

Almost as if possessed by another consciousness, Smith is now the evangelical patriot who writes, "We must remember that in the last days the vast majority of the people of the most favored lands are to relapse into the low moral condition described in...scriptures."²⁴ With this backpedaling, it is no wonder that the Southern Publishing Association would have no problem in their 1944 deceptive posthumous-editing of *Daniel and the Revelation* to portray America, not as a government full of "religious intolerance, ...corruption and oppression,"²⁵ as Smith described it in 1864, but as "...a nation rising so peaceably and devoted to such noble principles of government...."²⁶

The distancing from justice and general human rights is blatantly evident in the Seventh-day Adventist identification of the "mark of the beast". For the Europeans who shaped church doctrine, there was no repulsion over the blatant display of beastly behavior in the usurpation of native lands. Additionally, their haplotypic affinity with the oppressor allowed them to quickly forget the dragon's tenacious torture of the children of Africa through slavery and its revised emanation after the Compromise of 1877.²⁷ Forget the millions of people suffering under the cruelty of colonial rule. Still imbued by the "little flock" mentality, as far as they were concerned, the only possible application for the "mark of the

²² Uriah Smith, *The Key to the Prophetic Chart* (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press of the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association, 1864), 41.

²³ Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1897), 540.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 541.

²⁵ Smith, *The Key to the Prophetic Chart*, 41.

²⁶ Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation* (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1944), 583.

²⁷ Ta-Nehisi Coates, *We Were Eight Years in Power: An American Tragedy* (New York: One World, 2018).

beast” was a future Sabbath-Sunday showdown. In their legalistic minds, God loved the Sabbath more than people.

African Americans embracing Adventism were so shaped by this legalistic misapplication of the gospel that they were subtly forced to ignore the reality that the mark of Revelation’s beast has been deeply embedded in the very fabric of the United States. To embrace the Seventh-day Adventist interpretation of apocalyptic prophecy required a negotiated double-consciousness that mandated a denial of our lived experience. From the very inception, Black Seventh-day Adventists have been programmed to ignore the legacy of slavery and imperialism in society and church, as they join their European counterparts in lambasting the “evils” of Catholicism while heralding Protestantism as a bastion for truth. We are invited to participate in collective amnesia by ignoring that the churches represented by Martin Luther, King James VI, Huldrych Zwingli, John Knox, John Calvin, and John Wesley (following the Schism of 1844-1845),²⁸ were at the forefront of the slave trade.²⁹ They were taught to embrace the lie of a pure Protestantism that in reality had been apostate from its founding!³⁰

While I do not believe she meant deliberate harm, some of Ellen G. White’s statements have cruelly contributed to the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s dismissive attitude towards the Black experience. She must definitely be celebrated for her courage in confronting the system of slavery, advocating civil disobedience by encouraging believers to disregard the Fugitive Slave Act,³¹ and advocating for the full humanity of Black believers.³² At the same time, she must also be held accountable for the cultural ignorance evident in her acquiescence to eugenicist ideology. Although couched in the language of grace, why would she assume that enslaved people who had endured living hell at the hands of the Dragon’s servants would be denied a place in eternity because in their “ignorance and degradation” they were lower than the enslaver’s “brute beasts”?³³

Further, even in the much-celebrated *Southern Work*, she would lament, “Among most of the colored people we find unseemly practices in their worship....”³⁴ She appears appalled

²⁸ Richard Carwardine, “Methodism and Politics, 1791–1851,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Wesley*, ed. Randy L. Maddox and Jason E. Vickers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 598–608.

²⁹ Katharine Gerbner, *Christian Slavery: Conversion and Race in the Protestant Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); Philip Glasson, *Slave Traders in the Eighteenth Century Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009).

³⁰ Cf. Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999); Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation: A History* (New York: Viking, 2004); James M. Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991).

³¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1864), 42.

³² Ellen G. White, “An Appeal for the South,” *The Southern Work* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1901), 10–11.

³³ Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1 (Battle Creek, MI: Steam Press, 1858), 193.

³⁴ White, *The Southern Work*, 33.

when they “become much excited, and put forth physical exertions that are uncalled for in the solemn worship of God.”³⁵ The remedy to the perceived problem betrays the deep embeddedness of the seemingly unconscious notion of European cultural supremacy:

Let not the colored people be excluded from the religious assemblies of the white people. They have no chance to exchange their superstitious exercises for a worship that is more sacred and elevating if they are shut out from association with intelligent white people who should give them an example of what they should be and do.³⁶

I am sure that apologists who come across this counsel attempt to vindicate her by pointing to the sentence, “Let not the colored people be excluded from the religious assemblies of the white people,”³⁷ which appears to be a call to unity. Those who are tempted to do these are totally ignoring the rationale for such counsel. In fact, it gets worse from here as she contrasts the “intelligent white people” to “the ignorant workers [who] need instruction and guidance.”³⁸ In no uncertain terms, she was convinced that God favored European culture and to gain Divine approval, Blacks had to suppress their very identity—at least until the resurrection, for “in heaven there will be no color line for all will be as white as Christ himself...”³⁹

Normalization of Traumatic Triggers in Adventism

Undoubtedly emboldened by Ellen G. White’s problematic statements, successive generations of leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church have continued to inflict psychological trauma on its non-European constituents through its imposition of Eurocentric norms. The recalcitrant and continuous assault is so ubiquitous that the victims have numbed themselves to the pain. Few take stock of the contemptuous bigotry in the Seventh-day Adventist *Church Manual* in which we are warned,

We should exercise great care in the choice of music in our homes, social gatherings, schools, and churches. Any melody partaking of the nature of jazz, rock, or related hybrid forms, or any language expressing foolish or trivial sentiments, will be shunned.⁴⁰

While music influenced by African cultures is denounced, the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*⁴¹ is unapologetic in its use of scores from Bach (18), Beethoven (12), Mozart (375),

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ellen G. White, “The Colored People,” *The Gospel Herald*, January 1, 1901, par. 20.

⁴⁰ General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GCSDA), *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: Secretariat, 2010), 144.

⁴¹ (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1985).

Welsh melodies (21), Finnish folk tunes (38), Gaelic melodies (44), Russian airs (58), English melodies (93), Netherland folk songs (8), and the list goes on at General Conference sessions and beyond!

For Blacks in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the persistent trauma that necessitates a double-consciousness is also complicated by a debilitating type of what is commonly known as Stockholm syndrome. Suggesting that we rename the behavior “appeasement,” Bailey, et al note that rather than depicting “a positive emotional relationship between victims and abusers” it is “an adaptive strategy to regulate and calm the captor.”⁴² It’s a way for them to cope with a seemingly hopeless situation. For those captured by the imprisoning version of a “remnant” theology, choosing to escape their condition has profound salvific implications. As in other areas of life, where we learn to navigate a gerrymandered society with its knee on our neck, many Black people become resolute in their decision to laugh to keep from crying as they reclaim autonomy in worship and other spaces. Other Blacks deal with their double-consciousness by aligning with the captors and decrying their own identity.⁴³ These quickly find popularity among the proponents of white supremacy, as we see with fundamentalist Adventist celebrities, Randy Skeete, Ben Carson, and Andrew Henríquez.

Most recently, the assassination of Christian Nationalist, Charlie Kirk, elevated the indifference towards Black sensibilities in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Kirk was a young conservative who had devoted his life to propagating a Christian nationalism that yearned for an American era where the dominant place of the colonists’ descendants was unquestioned. Reading from the dog whistle playbook of the architects of the Southern Strategy,⁴⁴ he would refer to Affirmative Action and Black campus clubs as “inherently racist”⁴⁵ and dismiss the well-established reality of “white privilege” as a “myth”.⁴⁶ He also fed raw red meat to his base with statements like, “Happening all the time in urban America, prowling Blacks go around for fun to go target white people, that’s a fact. It’s happening more and more.”⁴⁷ His general disdain towards African Americans is evident in such statements as “If I see a Black pilot, I’m going to be like, boy, I hope he’s qualified.”⁴⁸ Shortly before his death, he would lament “America was at its peak when we halted immigration for 40 years and we dropped our foreign-born percentage to its lowest level ever. We should be unafraid to do that.”⁴⁹

⁴² Clara M. Bailey, Stanley W. Davidson, and Linda J. Fairbairn, “Appeasement: Reconsidering Stockholm Syndrome,” *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 16, no. 1 (2003): 2.

⁴³ Na’im Akbar, *Chains and Images of Psychological Slavery* (Jersey City, NJ: Mind Productions, 1984).

⁴⁴ For a discussion on the building blocks of the Southern Strategy, see Dan T. Carter, *From George Wallace to Newt Gingrich: Race in the Conservative Counterrevolution, 1963–1994* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996).

⁴⁵ Charlie Kirk, Twitter post, June 4, 2018; Charlie Kirk, “Campus Left vs. True Equality,” video, *The Charlie Kirk Show Live Tour* (Turning Point USA, November 12, 2019), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjmysFunUjE>.

⁴⁶ Charlie Kirk, Twitter post, March 11, 2024.

⁴⁷ Charlie Kirk, podcast audio, *The Charlie Kirk Show*, February 2023.

⁴⁸ Charlie Kirk, X (Twitter) post, March 2024.

⁴⁹ Charlie Kirk, podcast transcript, *The Charlie Kirk Show*, January 2025.

Following his untimely death, it did not take long for Adventist mega-influencers Doug Batchelor and Mark Finley to eulogize the firebrand, whose racially charged statements were potent enough to exist independently from their explanatory contexts. Expressing the deep love of David to Jonathan, Batchelor titles his tweet, “How the Mighty Have Fallen” and ends with an assurance that the two will “meet in the kingdom.”⁵⁰ In answering the question, “Why did God let Charlie Kirk die?”, Finley delivers a passionate eulogy placing Kirk in the middle of the Cosmic Conflict.⁵¹ As he moves to his peroration, he apparently includes Kirk in the category of those “...who speak based on the principles of God’s word...; those who walk with Jesus.”⁵²

Perhaps the boldest evidence of the strategic victory of the Confederate States of America over the Union is blatantly displayed in a statement published by the Northern New England Conference on September 10, 2025:

We affirm Charlie’s courage and commitment to the Christian faith, Biblical marriage, strong families, sexual purity, and the seventh day Sabbath. Because of him, many people have been drawn to the truth of the Bible including the seventh day Sabbath.⁵³

Deluded by a pharisaical presumption of doctrinal correctness, those who penned this statement demonstrate deference to a sepulchered religion that “[neglects] the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith” (Mt 23:23). It betrays the extent to which Adventism has submitted to the Babylonian agenda of the American Republic.⁵⁴ In an ironic display of defiance, the spirit of the Dragon has usurped the seventh-day Sabbath to advance its own agenda—one that has found its greatest success in the continued traumatization of the sons and daughters of Africa trapped in ecclesial, societal, global, cultural, and political systems that are designed to keep them in a state of silent subservience.⁵⁵

Conclusion

I can hear someone asking, “If racism has entrenched itself so deeply in the church, why are you still a member?” This is a justifiable question. Why would a person stay in a system that continues to assault and insult many of its members? I have thought about it

⁵⁰ Doug Batchelor, X (Twitter) post, March 3, 2025.

⁵¹ Mark Finley, “Why Did God Let Charlie Kirk Die?” YouTube video, March 2025.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Response to the Murder of Charlie Kirk,” *Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, September 10, 2025, <https://www.nnec.org/news-article/response-to-the-murder-of-charlie-kirk>.

⁵⁴ Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001).

⁵⁵ Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man* (New York: Random House, 1947).

repeatedly. Even as I develop the conclusion to this paper, I find myself wondering if I have rejected Kunta Kinte in favor of Toby.⁵⁶ As I ponder, I am aware of that still small voice reminding me why I abandoned my decision to modify Du Bois's "double-consciousness" into a triple-consciousness. The trauma that comes from living while Black cannot be escaped in this world. It is inherent in all systems.

Rather than surrendering to the bullying beast, my decision to stay is driven by a desire to side with the protagonists in the Cosmic Conflict. I have timidly embraced my assignment in the Conflict and am on a quest to expose the strategies of that great deceiver, the dragon. This may mean shining a light on the subconscious racialism of denominational giants like Uriah Smith and Ellen G. White. It definitely calls for prophetic denouncements of the intolerance of leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, particularly as Adventist media personalities, tabloid ministries, and conference leaders advance the white supremacist agenda of Christian nationalists.

If there is any chance of healing the systemic trauma in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, we can no longer continue with business as normal. Silence, denial, and token appeasements are not the answer. Restoration can only come when church leaders and members recognize the depths to which the embedded toxic triggers have negatively impacted both the victim and the perpetrator,⁵⁷ who are often unaware of the degree of their suffering or complicity. The church must be willing to repent for straying from the gospel's invitation to an intentional society that is diverse, equitable, and inclusive, and replacing it with a European distortion based on cultural homogeneity, partiality, and exclusion.⁵⁸ I am committed to doing my part. Ultimately, *living* while Black does not necessitate my acquiescence to victimhood, but challenges me to become an agent of healing for both the traumatized and those whose actions trigger trauma.

Maranatha.

⁵⁶ Alex Haley, *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1976), 214.

⁵⁷ Judith Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 191–222.

⁵⁸ Brenda Salter McNeil, *Roadmap to Reconciliation 2.0: Moving Communities into Unity, Wholeness, and Justice* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 4, suggests, "Among those who seek to follow Christ, it is generally understood that in order for reconciliation to occur, there must be repentance, justice, and forgiveness. A wrong must be acknowledged and the cause of the lack of unity identified."

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