

# Gregory of Nyssa and the Culture of Oppression

BY KIMBERLY FLINT-HAMILTON

**In the late fourth century Gregory of Nyssa spoke out against the institution of slavery in a way that none had before, vilifying it as incompatible with Christianity. What can we learn from this Cappadocian Father about seeing beyond the veil of oppression?**

---

**I**n the late fourth century a lone Christian voice spoke out against the oppressive institution of slavery in a way that none had before. Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335-394), one of the Cappadocian Fathers, laid out a line of reasoning vilifying the institution as incompatible with Christianity in his fourth homily on Ecclesiastes. It is considered the “first truly ‘anti-slavery’ text of the patristic age.”<sup>1</sup>

His words seemed not to have had much affect on the Church at the time, however. In fact, it took until nearly 1,500 years after Gregory’s death for the Christian faithful to take an unequivocal stance against slavery, and even then American Christians continued to turn a blind eye to the suffering of slaves and to the incompatibility of slavery with the message of the Bible. This raises a deluge of questions. What was the sociocultural context in which Gregory of Nyssa formed his critique of slavery? How did the culture of fourth-century Cappadocia work to ensnare nearly everyone in the grasp of slavery? What was it about Gregory that enabled him to rise above the status quo? How did a slave society transform into a culture of racism? What are the consequences of that transformation? What can we learn from Gregory, and how do we see beyond the veil of oppression?

Gregory vigorously attacked slavery as an institution. In his homily, he lays out a complex philosophical argument based on the premise that masters and slaves are equal in the eyes of God. This premise was already generally accepted by Christians. Both slaves and masters were understood

by Christian intellectuals to have the same human nature. Gregory, however, follows the argument farther than most of his contemporary intellectuals did. If slaves and masters are both equally human, then the practice of one human enslaving another is immoral in the eyes of God.

You condemn a person to slavery whose nature is free and independent, and you make laws opposed to God and contrary to His natural law. For you have subjected one who was made precisely to be lord of the earth, and whom the Creator intended to be a ruler, to the yoke of slavery, in resistance to and rejection of His divine precept. ...How is it that you disregard the animals which have been subjected to you as slaves under your hand, and that you should act against a free nature, bringing down one who is of the same nature of yourself, to the level of four-footed beasts or inferior creatures...?<sup>2</sup>

Gregory's position on slavery is especially surprising given his cultural context. Gregory of Nyssa, his older brother Basil of Caesarea (c. 329-399), and their friend Gregory of Nazianzus (c. 325-389) formed a group of intellectuals known as the Cappadocian Fathers. Together, their theological teachings and scholarship helped define Christian doctrine regarding the Holy Trinity, challenged Arianism (the concept that the Son was of different substance from and inferior to the Father), and contributed to the authorship of the Nicene Creed. Gregory of Nyssa's ideas on slavery differed, however, from those of the other two Cappadocian Fathers.

Both Gregory of Nazianzus and Basil of Caesarea considered slavery an unfortunate part of human existence. Gregory of Nazianzus reasoned that slavery was nothing more than an unfortunate "sinful distinction" — it came about as a result of sin and therefore is one aspect of the human condition.<sup>3</sup> Basil, on the other hand, came to a different conclusion. He argued that all humans share the same basic human nature, but unlike Gregory of Nazianzus, he believed that slavery was good for slaves because of their inferiority. Slaves, in other words, are inferior in intelligence and should be grateful for their enslavement to those of superior wisdom because they could not otherwise survive. This is a position that Augustine (c. 354-430) advocated in *City of God* (19.15).

Another of Gregory of Nyssa's contemporaries, whom we know as Pseudo-Ambrose, took Basil's and Gregory of Nazianzus' justifications for slavery farther still. It was Pseudo-Ambrose who traced slavery to Noah's cursing of Ham in Genesis 9:25-27. According to John Francis Maxwell, "This disastrous example of fundamentalist exegesis continued to be used for 1,400 years and led to the widely held view that African Negroes were cursed by God."<sup>4</sup> Pseudo-Ambrose, through his extreme teachings, was responsible for the ancestral link between slavery and racism. African Americans still suffer today from his interpretation. Jean Douglas writes of her experience growing up Catholic in inner-city Detroit, Michigan:

The curse of Ham has been used for centuries to rationalize the oppression of Black peoples. The message has been preached from the pulpit countless times. And Blacks have accepted it. The curse of Ham is a profound statement of God's unwillingness to forgive us the sins of our ancestors. It justifies centuries of Black subjugation at the hands of Whites, who, after all, are only helping to ensure that God's will is done. Our oppressors are the very hands of God.<sup>5</sup>

What becomes apparent when reading Gregory of Nyssa is just how extraordinary was his theology. He was remarkably ahead of his time. Having been brought up in a world in which slavery was the order of the day and had been for centuries, even millennia, and surrounded by intellectuals whose thinking on the topic was more in line with the sociocultural milieu, he followed his theological logic far beyond the contemporary context. Even though Gregory was not alone in his compassion for the lot of the slaves, his conclusion to attack the very institution was unique. Two early catechetical documents, *The Shepherd of Hermas* and *The Apostolic Constitutions*, advocated that slaves should be bought with monies from early Christian common funds and manumitted to alleviate their suffering.<sup>6</sup> But neither of these documents aggressively advocated abolition. Before Gregory, slave owners had been urged to treat their slaves with dignity and not abuse them. They had even been urged to manumit those servants that had proven themselves worthy. Yet only Gregory suggested that slavery, as an institution, was sinful.



To understand just how advanced Gregory of Nyssa was, a brief digression on culture is in order. For generations, anthropologists have debated the definition of culture. Even though culture surrounds us – we eat, drink, and sleep according to predetermined cultural patterns established long ago and transmitted to us by our forebears – it remains frustratingly difficult to define. Most definitions focus on patterns of behavior, life ways, symbols, and shared systems of meaning. Culture may be the single most powerful adaptive strategy human beings have to help us survive in the world. It is culture, in the minds of many anthropologists, that makes us human.

Culture works because of tradition. Certain behaviors and attitudes, taught to us by our parents, teachers, priests and ministers, and society at large, persist generation after generation. Most of us go through life without questioning these complex patterns of behavior that shape our identity. Clyde Kluckhohn describes culture as a kind of "blueprint for all of life's activities."<sup>7</sup> Just as we never actually see gravity but know it exists from its ability to force objects to behave in characteristic ways, so too does culture shape our behaviors and attitudes in characteristic and predictable ways, both consciously and subconsciously. Traditions for which there is no apparent logical explanation arise from generations of doing certain things

and approaching certain problems the same way. Tradition helps us understand our physical and cultural environments, and allows us to form social networks with one another. But not all traditions are good for all members of a society. Oppression and its companion, racism, are traditions too.

Most people never ponder the rightness or wrongness of their particular traditions, at least not to the point of changing their behaviors or increasing the awareness of others around them. It is too easy to go with the flow, and there are risks associated with challenging the status quo. Questioning authority can lose you your clients, your job, your position in society, even your family. It might eventually thrust you into poverty and oblivion. It takes a great deal of courage to speak out against deeply entrenched cultural traditions. Gregory of Nyssa was one of those rare individuals who could see beyond the cultural boundaries and stereotypes of his time and take the risk of speaking out. For Gregory, the real risk lay in losing his immortal soul rather than his social position.

Another anthropological concept relevant to our discussion on slavery and racism is *cultural materialism*. According to this concept, human behavior is shaped by the struggle for survival and the complex ways in which human beings in a given society gain access to the materials of life, which include things like food, water, shelter, and even jobs and political clout, but extends to values, ideas, and beliefs. According to cultural materialist analysis, in a society whose economy relies on the work of slaves it is inevitable that the dominant class will come to believe that slaves are inferior and immoral, and that they deserve their servitude.

The culture of mastery and servitude had become ingrained into the socio-political matrix of the fourth century and was accepted unquestioningly, at least by the masters. It was a culture of oppression. We will probably never know what the slaves thought of their situation, but if they were anything like the African slaves in the New World, most felt trapped and abused. The slave narra-

---

**Christian slave owners had been urged to treat their slaves with dignity and not abuse them, even to manumit those who had proven themselves worthy. Only Gregory suggested that slavery, as an institution, was sinful.**

---

tives paint a vivid picture of dehumanization and oppression that ensnared master and slave alike.<sup>8</sup> Paolo Freire points out that oppressors create a conservative “possessive consciousness,” and the desire to possess extends from material goods like food, clothing, and housing, to the earth itself and the individual human beings who find themselves in the oppressors’ wake. In fact, the very term “human being” gets co-opted by the oppressors whose

sense of entitlement to the right to live comfortably and peacefully empowers them to reap the benefits of the labor of the oppressed who, in the oppressive society, are deemed not-quite-human. The right to life itself is an entitlement that oppressors merely concede to the oppressed. And because of this warped hierarchy of power, oppression intrinsically represents violence. A culture of oppression ultimately has its start in an act of violence by powerful individuals

---

**It takes courage and great strength to break cultural bonds that shape our perceptions. This is what makes Gregory's accomplishment so remarkable: he escapes from the invisible trap laid by generations of oppressors and confronts the established hierarchy.**

---

against the powerless. Freire writes, "This violence, as a process, is perpetuated from generation to generation of oppressors, who become its heirs and are shaped in its climate."<sup>9</sup>

The oppressive society therefore is both violent towards and possessive of its oppressed. In that value system, the oppressed deserve and should be grateful for their status.

In fact, the oppressors deserve to be on top of the social hierarchy. They are better than the ones on the other end — smarter, stronger, holier, less inclined to sin, and thereby closer to God. They are more valuable and deserve to be masters. Indeed, in the reasoning of the oppressors, the hierarchy exists because God ordained it. In Basil's, Gregory of Nazianzus', and Augustine's view, the oppressive hierarchy is an unfortunate result of sin and, therefore, slavery comes from sin. In fact, in the view of Augustine, slavery is God's just punishment for sin.<sup>10</sup> By analogy, just as God is the overseer for creation, so too must masters be understood as overseers for those who are inferior.

Basil, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Augustine were reading Scripture though a sociopolitical matrix. After all, slavery was very much accepted by everyone — Christians, Jews, and pagans alike. Church leaders accepted it just as absolutely as the rest of society.<sup>11</sup> Even a freed slave like Epictetus, a Stoic philosopher of the late first and early second centuries AD who had been rendered lame by his former master, never questioned the institution.<sup>12</sup> It had been woven into the fabric of society for so long that it was accepted without question. It became convenient to subordinate theology to tradition, and to use Scripture as a tool to explain, justify, and even sanction the culture of slavery. It would never have occurred to most people, not even religious intellectuals, to use Scripture to analyze critically an institution that subordinates God's creation. Trapped in that oppressive cultural matrix, most people were blinded to the injustices of slavery.

The same was true for the American colonists. The early years of the Virginia colonies were extremely difficult. Faced with starvation, the settlers had to come up with a strategy to cultivate enough food to survive and make a profit as well. African slaves were their answer. Given the colonists' near-starvation and desperation, and the virtual helplessness of Africans who were thousands of miles from their homes without a support network, "the peculiar institution" of slavery appeared to be an attractive solution to their problems. By the 1640s laws were created to extend servitude indefinitely for blacks, to include future generations of their offspring, and to punish whites who fraternized with blacks,<sup>13</sup> because of a strong desire to force a wedge between poor whites and blacks that would circumvent any impetus for their collaboration.<sup>14</sup> Thus, American racism was born.

The Virginians used religion to support their racist attitudes and interpreted Scripture to support the enslavement of Africans. Paul's exhortation, "Slaves, be obedient to your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ" (Ephesians 6:5), took on a life of its own. Although the authenticity of the Pauline 'household codes' has been questioned, with many theologians believing that they were inserted into the text a generation or more after Paul,<sup>15</sup> they were still a highly effective tool to keep slaves in their place.

Later the Manifest Destiny doctrine – the belief that God intended for the United States to spread across the continent – was used to support the subjugation of non-Europeans, particularly Native American people in the 1840s. The power of religion to reinforce an oppressive hierarchy was inestimable.



It takes courage to question the status quo and great strength to break the cultural bonds that shape our perceptions and understandings. This is what makes Gregory of Nyssa's accomplishment so remarkable: he escapes from the invisible trap laid by generations of oppressors and confronts the established hierarchy. Applying a critical theological matrix to the slave society, Gregory of Nyssa casts new light on human interactions. He shows that slave-owning society creates an illegitimate human hierarchy – illegitimate because it is in conflict with God's plan for creation.

Gregory interprets the Book of Ecclesiastes through the lens of the *imago Dei* of Genesis. Reading Scripture "intertextually," he creates the "scriptural grammar for a theological anthropology that makes the case against slavery," Kameron Carter notes.<sup>16</sup> According to this new dialectic, within every single human being – past, present, and future – there exists the seed of the fulfillment of God's grand design in creation. Gregory understands Genesis 1:26-27 to be about not just the creation of the first humans, but "the fullness of humankind, comprehended by God's 'foresight,'" David Bentley Hart writes. "Adam and Eve, however superlatively endowed with the gifts of grace at their origin, constitute in Gregory's eyes only the first increments (so to

speak) of that concrete community that, as a whole, reflects the beauty of its creator."<sup>17</sup> This fullness of humankind, which Gregory calls *pleroma*, includes all humans, from the very first to the last, throughout all ages.<sup>18</sup>

In his fourth homily on Ecclesiastes, Gregory denounces slavery on the grounds that the nature of humankind is free. The *pleroma*, as the fulfillment of God's will, must be free; it cannot be subservient to any human subdivision.

---

**What force is so attractive as to blind people—slave and free, black and white, oppressors and oppressed—to slavery's corrosive force to the point of risking their very souls? The answer is privilege.**

---

Ownership of one human being over another is therefore antithetical to human nature. God endowed human beings with dominion over all other creatures, but not over other humans, so slavery calls God's will into question. "Irrational beasts are the only slaves of humankind," Gregory writes. "But by dividing the human species into two

with 'slavery' and 'ownership,' you have caused it to be enslaved to itself, and to be owner of itself."<sup>19</sup>

Since all humans are reflected in *pleroma*, the beauty of *pleroma* cannot be revealed by subordinating one portion of humanity to another. Only in universal freedom can the fullness of *pleroma* unfold, with each individual human being contributing. Slavery, racism, and oppression in general, are completely incompatible with the will of God.<sup>20</sup>

What was it about Gregory that enabled him to step outside of his own sociocultural matrix and question—condemn, rather, in the strongest of terms—an institution that his contemporaries, including members of his own family, accepted and even endorsed? Kameron Carter describes the difference-maker as Gregory's theological imagination, a way of seeing present realities in light of theological truths. "I am suggesting a connection between the theological imagination out of which Gregory operates and the theological imagination that was emerging within certain currents of Afro-Christian faith in its New World dawning."<sup>21</sup>



Yet the message of Scripture, as interpreted by Gregory, failed to reach the faithful. The culture of oppression held too strong a grip. Nearly fifteen centuries later, Pope Gregory XVI condemned the slave trade in an Apostolic Brief, *In Supremo Apostolatus Fastigio* (1839). But it was composed in a way that invited skepticism: American bishops interpreted it as not applying to their particular sociopolitical situation. Because Gregory XVI did not include censure and did not lay a theological foundation for his condemnation of

trading in slaves, his message was diluted.<sup>22</sup> Because slavery was considered essential to the social fabric of nineteenth century America, the bishops, priests, and lay people – many of whom were slaveholders themselves – never seriously considered questioning the institution, even in the face of papal condemnation.

What force is so attractive as to blind people – slave and free, black and white, oppressors and oppressed – to slavery’s corrosive force to the point of risking their very souls? The answer is privilege. Privilege for those in Gregory of Nyssa’s generation who benefited from the existence of slaves, for whom being a ‘good slave master’ even accrued social and spiritual rewards, so deeply entrenched was the culture of oppression. And white privilege for those in our society, who more than a century after the official end of slavery continue to link whiteness to goodness and entitlement, and blackness to crime, corruption, and disenfranchisement, so blind are most of us to the legacy of slavery and racism. In James Cone’s analysis:

Unfortunately, American theologians...have interpreted the gospel according to the cultural and political interests of white people. They have rarely attempted to transcend the social interests of their group by seeking an analysis of the gospel in the light of consciousness of black people struggling for liberation. White theologians, because of their identity with the dominant power structure, are largely boxed within their own cultural history.<sup>23</sup>

In other words, white privilege is a theological problem, but because most white – and black – theologians are trapped in an environment of encultured and institutionalized racism, most people are blind to it and white privilege has not been studied adequately. Non-whites, and particularly blacks, have long been treated as *objects* of religious discourse rather than *subjects* in relationship with God.<sup>24</sup> Theologian Jon Nilson analyzes the problem of racism, particularly the problems raised by ignoring racism in the Church and in society: “racism is a theological problem because it creates a sinful cultural matrix. It makes white supremacy and black subordination seem normal.”<sup>25</sup>



There can be no doubt of racism’s destructive force. Medical experimentation on blacks, without their informed consent – on slaves in the antebellum era and free black citizens afterward – persisted for hundreds of years and was endorsed by the federal government as well as the health care community.<sup>26</sup> The infamous Tuskegee Syphilis Study is a perfect example. For forty years (1932-1972) nearly four hundred poor black men were given placebos and denied treatment for syphilis. Not one of the hundreds, possibly thousands, of physicians and politicians who knew about the study raised a finger to stop it. When the study was publicly disclosed, the federal government commissioned a team of theologians, philosophers, and physicians to study the

problems of abuse and establish ethical guidelines for the health care system. In their *Belmont Report* issued seven years later, the commissioners – blind to the entrenched structures of oppression – virtually ignored race and poverty, the dominant factors that made the Tuskegee men vulnerable as study subjects.

Shawnee Daniels-Sykes observes, “by ignoring the relevant features of the men who participated in the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, arguably, the commissioners charged with the development of the *Belmont Report* failed to protect *all* human subjects in a holistic manner.”<sup>27</sup> Applying Gregory of Nyssa’s logic, racism and white privilege so distorted the commission’s perspective that they were unable to protect the *pleroma*, and instead were concerned only with protecting one facet of humanity at the expense of another, in direct violation of the will of God.

That same distortion empowered white physicians and health care workers to perform illegal sterilizations on black women without their consent during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>28</sup> Even today, there are countless disparities in access and quality of medical care between blacks and whites, due largely to the culture of racism and oppression that seeps into virtually every aspect of our lives.

The legacy of oppression and slavery did not end with the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and the *Belmont Report*. In 2005, Hurricane Katrina showed us how the force of oppression has blinded many to the suffering of those trapped after the levees broke in New Orleans. The victims, mostly black and poor, waited five days for relief. Compared with an even larger disaster – the Indonesian tsunami of December 2004, for which the United States responded with humanitarian aid in less than forty-eight hours for a region half-a-world away – the response to Katrina was abysmal.

Many Katrina victims could see a safe haven walking distance away, in neighboring Gretna, a predominantly white community. The Gretna sheriff’s deputies, however, set up a blockade at the bridge separating the cities and kept the victims out of their town by gunpoint. Satellite photos reveal a convoy of New Orleans public school buses rushing to rescue the white citizens of the neighboring St. Bernard parish rather than the black New Orleans residents. Federal and state officials ordered the Red Cross *not* to provide relief to the New Orleans residents while allowing it to enter other, predominately white neighborhoods affected by Katrina.<sup>29</sup>

And this environment of oppression and subjugation gave free rein to the more extremist of the oppressors. At least eleven black men were shot by whites in the aftermath of the storm in what several witnesses have described as a free-for-all, a hunting season on blacks; yet, to date, no attempt has been made to charge the whites responsible.<sup>30</sup> In a culture of racism and oppression one can, quite literally, get away with murder.

One need not wonder why the suicide rate for blacks has been shown to be directly proportional with the level of education attainment. In a recent study of factors contributing to suicide, the rates were inversely proportional with levels of education attainment for all other demographic groups stud-

ied: that is, more educated individuals are less likely to commit suicide. But the reverse is true for black men. For them, increased suicide rates correlate with increased education. The author concluded that because increased educational attainment does not produce expected economic and social gains, the realization that one is trapped in a web of racism from which there is no apparent escape and the resultant frustration and depression can drive blacks to extremes.<sup>31</sup>



We can learn a great deal from Gregory of Nyssa. All corners of humanity, including men, women, blacks, whites, Hispanics, Asians, Native Americans, and people of every race, ethnicity, class, and nationality are part of *pleroma* and reflect God's beauty and perfection.

As difficult as it can be to see past the veil of institutionalized oppression, we have a moral obligation to try. It takes wisdom and courage to challenge the status quo, to call the dominant culture to task. And it takes hard work to defuse the standard arguments that we have all heard since childhood – “They wouldn’t be poor if they worked hard,” “There wouldn’t be so many of them in prisons if they weren’t guilty,” “It isn’t really their fault that they suffer so much from unemployment and poverty, they just lack the appropriate work ethic.” Fifteen hundred years later, we are still fighting the anti-slavery, and anti-racism, and anti-oppression battles. We may be victorious yet, but it will take all of us to engage the battle.

## NOTES

1 John Francis Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church: The History of Catholic Teaching Concerning the Moral Legitimacy of the Institution of Slavery* (Chichester and London: Barry Rose Publishers, 1975), 32.

2 This passage from Gregory of Nyssa’s *Homilies on Ecclesiastes* is quoted in Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church*, 33-34.

3 J. Kameron Carter, *Race: A Theological Account* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 232.

4 Maxwell, *Slavery and the Catholic Church*, 34-35.

5 Jean K. Douglas, *Why I Left the Church, Why I Came Back, and Why I Just Might Leave Again: Memories of Growing Up African American and Catholic* (Barberville, FL: Fortuity Press, 2006), 146-147.

6 Kimberly Flint-Hamilton, “Images of Slavery in the Early Church: Hatred Disguised as Love?” *Journal of Hate Studies* 2 (2003), 27-45.

7 Clyde Kluckhohn, “Queer Customs,” in Gary Ferraro, ed., *Classic Readings in Cultural Anthropology*, second edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 2008), 6-12, especially 6-9.

8 For a sampling of slave narratives, see the Library of Congress’ “Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers’ Project, 1936-1938” (accessed February 5, 2010), <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/snhtml/>.

9 Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition (New York: Continuum, 2007), 57- 58.

10 Augustine, *City of God*, 19.15.

11 Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (New York: Cambridge University Press 1996), 240.

12 Keith Bradley, *Slavery and Society at Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 174-182.

13 James Banks, *Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies*, eighth edition (Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc., 2009), 192.

14 Howard Zinn, "Drawing the Color Line" (accessed February 5, 2010), <http://www.worldfreeinternet.net/archive/arc9.htm>.

15 Clarice Martin, "The *Haustafeln* (Household Codes) in African American Biblical Interpretation: 'Free Slaves' and 'Subordinate Women,'" in Cain Hope Felder, ed., *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 206-231.

16 Carter, *Race*, 237.

17 D. Bentley Hart, "The 'Whole Humanity': Gregory of Nyssa's Critique of Slavery in Light of His Eschatology," *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 54:1 (February 2001): 51-69, here citing 57.

18 Ibid.

19 This passage from *Gregory of Nyssa, Homilies on Ecclesiastes: An English Version with Supporting Studies*, edited by Stuart G. Hall (New York: de Gruyter, 1993), 73-74, is quoted by Carter, *Race*, 238.

20 Hart, "The 'Whole Humanity,'" 62.

21 Carter, *Race*, 231.

22 Cyprian Davis, O. S. B., "1807-2007: Whose Bicentennial and Whose Abolition?" *Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium II* (2008), 11-29, especially 23-24.

23 James Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, revised edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 43.

24 Carter, *Race*, 230.

25 Jon Nilson, *Hearing Past the Pain: Why White Catholic Theologians Need Black Theology* (New York: Paulist Press, 2007), 9.

26 Harriet Washington, *Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Doubleday, 2006).

27 Shawnee Daniels-Sykes, SSND, "Code Black: A Black Catholic Liberation Bioethics," *Journal of the Black Catholic Theological Symposium III* (2009), 29-61, here citing 45.

28 Ibid, 37.

29 Tim Wise, *White like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*, revised and updated edition (Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull Press, 2008), 182-187.

30 Tim Wise, *Between Barack and a Hard Place: Racism and White Denial in the Age of Obama* (San Francisco, CA: City Light Books, 2009), 69-71.

31 Robert Fernquist, "Educational Attainment and the Payoff of Education: Black Male Suicide in the United States, 1947-1998," *Current Research in Social Psychology*, 19 (2004), 184-192.



**KIMBERLY FLINT-HAMILTON**

is Associate Professor and Chair of Sociology and Anthropology at Stetson University in DeLand, Florida.