



## Why This Book?

### A ROAD MAP FOR THE JOURNEY

We hope you're reading this book because you want to understand what it means to be white in a racially diverse environment. Maybe your neighborhood has become integrated or a person of color\* joined your department. Maybe you are asking questions about affirmative action. Maybe a professor challenged you about being white. Perhaps you go to church and look around and wonder why it's all white. Maybe you wonder why there are so many crosscultural conflicts in your campus fellowship. Maybe you have been on the journey for a while, and you are tired.

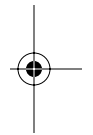
This book is written to help white people who want to figure out how to make a difference in multiethnic contexts. We'd like to give you a vision of a journey toward godly interdependence between white people and people of color.

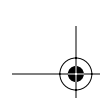
"White" is a racial category that acknowledges our physical skin color as well as our social status. In white culture, as you may have observed, it's fairly unusual to call attention to the fact that someone is white. In this book we will use a small *w* for white because that is most comfortable. We don't want the way the word is typed to shout *WHITE* at you.

*Ethnicity* refers to a population or group with a common national or cul-

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\*We will mostly use the terms "people of color" and "ethnic minority" as inclusive ways to describe others of different races from ours, simply because we believe these terms are more respectful than *nonwhite*.





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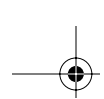
tural origin. Whites also are “ethnic.” We can be of many ethnicities, perhaps an Italian or Polish ethnicity. This book will focus on the racial category “white” because it is broadly inclusive of different white ethnicities, and it has significance in North America. But that doesn’t mean we are going to focus entirely on race. How many of us long for the day when people are judged “not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character”? We do. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s profound vision has shaped us enormously:

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: “We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.” I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. I have a dream today.<sup>1</sup>

When we read his speech, we think, *Yes, we Americans have done a lot of that. Maybe it’s not a dream anymore.* In some ways that future is here. All races can vote, and most of us are represented in Congress. Several black men have run for president, and people of color are increasingly represented at all levels of our government. We are the first legally integrated generation in American history. The Supreme Court repealed the law against interracial marriage in 1967, and the last state finally complied in 2000. Recently InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (IVCF)<sup>2</sup> sponsored a multiethnic training program in which the grandson of a slaveholder sat alongside the grandchildren of former slaves as brothers and sisters in Christ.

If you’re a person of color reading this book, first of all, thank you for working to understand the white people around you. Second, an explanation. This book may make you mad. Maybe you’ll want to throw it across the room. That’s okay. Maybe you’ll want to write us an e-mail setting us straight. That’s okay too. We have a lot to learn. There may be multiple places where we take “the superficial view” of a situation and then try to help





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white people go back and see more deeply. Or perhaps we “make it seem too easy” and then go on to challenge whites to work harder.

Honestly, this book isn’t written for you. There is a whole lot about race that you learned through a long journey and a community that talked about race and racism. We white people mostly start on our racial journey as adults. Generally our parents, pastors, bosses and teachers didn’t or even couldn’t talk to us about race, racism and interracial interaction. Most of them—and many of us even today—don’t have to think about race, because the system set up around us usually runs smoothly. It’s not until you show up that we realize something is not quite right, and often we blame the messenger. So we really need to start at the beginning, with milk, before we are ready for the meat you see at the table of cultural diversity.

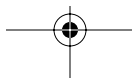
We pray that we whites will learn to “rid [ourselves], therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander. Like newborn infants, [let us] long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it [we] may grow into salvation—if indeed [we] have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Pet 2:1-3).

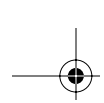
**DOUG’S STORY**

This book is an expression of our life journeys, so you will get to know Paula and me through these pages. I was born in San Francisco in a multiethnic urban context (Chinatown), but my family moved to an upper-middle-class suburb, where I spent fourth through twelfth grade in a majority white context. In May 1986, during my first year at Occidental College, I experienced a spiritual revolution and became a follower of Jesus.

During my college years I received a great biblical foundation through InterVarsity, including a compelling picture of God’s multiethnic kingdom. After the 1992 Los Angeles riots, God led me through a transformation from being a person of tolerance to being a man of conviction in this multiethnic arena. My wife and I served in an African American church for a few years, and then we led a small Korean American congregation for a few more years. From 1989 to 1999 I worked with IVCF at UCLA. I now serve as a regional director, supervising the work of InterVarsity in Southern California.

Paula and I will both write in the first person in our respective chapters. You will come to recognize our voices as you read. Hopefully you will enjoy





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the variety of our two styles. One of the joys of collaborating with Paula on this project has been the profound sense of unity we have experienced. We speak in unison in this book, though our voices and stories are different.

We welcome you to join us on this journey of being white in a multi-ethnic world. I doubt if there are any experts on this journey; we have never met any. We see ourselves as two white people on a lifelong journey, and both of us are very aware that we have much yet to learn and much room for growth.

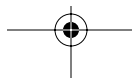
And while we are exploring this journey from a Christian perspective, we welcome everyone from all perspectives to join the discussion, and we hope you find something helpful in this book.<sup>3</sup> If you are spiritually unconvinced, here are a few pointers to enhance your reading experience. We have included a fair amount of discussion of the Bible in these pages. You can either skim those parts or get a Bible and follow along. In case you are wondering, our Christian frame of reference presupposes a few basics:

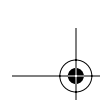
1. We humans are spiritual beings, and we need spiritual solutions to the messiness of life.
2. We are broken people, and we need repeated infusions of the life of God into our souls.
3. We are followers of Jesus, and we find our life in God through Jesus.
4. The Bible is our guidebook, our inspiration, and our way of understanding the invisible Creator and all creation.

**PAULA'S STORY**

My journey started when the civil rights movement was changing America. I was born in Dallas, Texas, the year after President Kennedy was shot. I was four when Dr. King was murdered.

My family was profoundly shaped by this era. My parents intentionally taught us to be colorblind, to ignore skin color and look for common traits of humanity. My sisters and I had friends from all races. We had a sort of unspoken family rule: you can talk about what people do and say, but not their physical appearance. As missionaries in Papua New Guinea my parents pursued justice for people of color, at some cost to themselves. As a working missionary mother of four daughters—three in diapers—my mother agreed





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not to have a household servant, so that we didn't learn to associate class differences with race. My father integrated the missionary schools where he worked, inviting indigenous black children to study alongside white missionary children. He worked hard to integrate the pool of missionaries in the organization, initiating both personal and structural changes, including partnering with black New Guineans and African Americans.

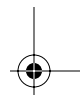
Today, my family is remarkably diverse. In my immediate family are African, Chinese, Hispanic, multiracial Native American and white children. Learning to be colorblind, to judge by character and not by color, was a good *beginning* for my sisters and me to this journey into a multicultural future.

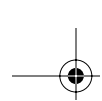
Like Doug, I can remember when God transformed me from a "colorblind" woman who befriended people of color to one having real convictions based on what Scripture teaches about justice and shalom. Many people mentored me, and the InterVarsity community has shaped me in this journey. Translating those convictions into practical steps is still challenging. After studying the missionary growth of the Antioch church in the book of Acts, I recruited multiethnic missions teams of staff and students out of conviction that loving one another across cultural boundaries honors God and gives testimony to the power of the gospel. I looked for elders/mentors and peers in each of the communities to become better equipped to lead ethnically diverse American students to minister as missionaries in Europe.

During those years I fell in love with an African graduate student. Shortly after we married, he became verbally and physically abusive, but I was convinced that I could figure out how to make the marriage work. I tried everything I knew—counseling, prayer from Christian leaders, help from his family—but nothing changed. On one level, I thought divorce was wrong. And on another, I was too proud to admit I had been wrong about this relationship. We had two wonderful children together, and I feared that as a white woman, I couldn't raise them well in their biracial, bicultural identity.

After five years, though, my husband became so violent that I feared for our safety, and we fled. The courts protected us with restraining orders, and he was convicted on several counts of domestic abuse.

When I decided to continue on the journey of reconciliation after my ex-





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perience of marriage and divorce, there was no turning back. God is still showing me how I can walk a straight path between recklessness (not enough caution) and fearfulness (too much caution). I pray that my journey in understanding my own fears about race is helpful to others. Not everyone has an abusive spouse of another race, but for many of us, unaddressed fears lead to failure to connect deeply with people of color.

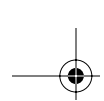
### A LIFELONG JOURNEY

This book is neither academic nor theoretical. We are not race scholars, and we won't write abstractly about racial issues for white people. We are both thirty-something people on the journey. We stand on the shoulders of those who paved the way since the '60s, and yet we connect with the postmodern generation. We want to see changed hearts and a changed society. We hope sharing our souls and our personal journeys gives you an idea of what commitments and stages can equip whites to move forward in a healthy interracial journey. A lot of us whites *begin* this journey. We hope more of us can continue it when it gets hard.

“All men are created equal” is written in the Declaration of Independence, as Dr. King observed. But the truth is that the law *meant* “all [white] men [with property] are created equal.” At that time white men without property were counted in the census and paid taxes but could not vote. The “Three-fifths Compromise,” article 1, section 2 of the U.S. Constitution, determined that a black man would be counted as three-fifths of a white man for determining the Southern states' representation in Congress, but he could not vote. And the rest of us—Asian, Hispanic, Native American men and all women—had no legal rights and could not vote. Married women of all races were not legally persons but the property of their husbands.<sup>4</sup>

Consider the InterVarsity training program we mentioned, where the white grandson of a slave owner sat alongside the grandsons and granddaughters of slaves. This happened, yes, but it was training for whites and blacks, managers and staff who needed help in intercultural communication. Every white person in the room was a manager, supervising black staff. Is America an “oasis of freedom and justice”? Do we judge each other by color or by character? Well, if truth is told, some of both.





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**STAGES ON A JOURNEY**

We want to help you on your journey as a white person by telling you our stories, by asking questions of Scripture, and by pointing out steps we whites can take toward healthy communities and identities. We think the journey of a white person into multiethnic community has five basic stages.

*Encounter* usually begins when we first meet a person of color. Most often encounter happens because the nonwhite person has left her comfort zone and has chosen to enter a white context through displacement and to function in our white culture. The key task for us whites to move beyond this stage is choosing to enter into a relationship with a person of color.

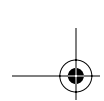
Some whites begin the multiethnic journey because they have been personally convicted of wrong through study of interracial history or current events. They may repent and may make an intellectual commitment to racial justice without ever encountering a person of color. A white journey that lasts, though, probably needs to engage the heart as well as the mind, and this is done through loving another person.

When we begin a relationship with a person of color, we enter *friendship*. We learn to listen to his experiences, to see his individuality, to trust and love him as a person. We also learn to repent of particular sins against our friend, especially if he helps us by telling us where we've gone wrong.

Friendship will teach us a lot, and it will help us open our heart. But it won't change society, and it won't correct racism.<sup>5</sup> It may leave us still not understanding how racism functions on a structural level.

To go beyond the friendship stage, the white person chooses to put herself in a context where people of color are dominant in number and culture and whites are in the minority. We call this *displacement*. Maybe she joins an Asian-led campus fellowship; maybe he goes to live and work on a reservation. Maybe a family moves into a neighborhood and school district that are mostly nonwhite. In this stage, the white person can learn to see whites and people of color in groups. He starts to see our respective racial and cultural systems and how they truly function. The key work in displacement is learning to submit and becoming a student of nonwhite cultures. The white person learns the other culture—celebrations, conflict-resolution styles and so





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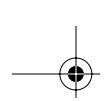
on—and begins having productive, healthy conflict. He learns history through books and people’s stories. It is a profoundly stretching stage of the white journey. Toward the end he has a healthy place in the nonwhite community and owes a deep debt of gratitude to his teachers.

The active crosscultural growth process a white person experiences in displacement causes her to reconsider her white *identity* in foundational ways. Some psychologists have described this stage as “disintegration” of the identity, as the former identity is questioned and a new identity begins to be formed. In other words, the white person who formerly had an unquestioned white identity, seeing herself as “normal,” begins to realize through displacement that white and nonwhite identities are very different, that our experiences are different. The white person begins to form a new white identity, strong enough to face the truth about white history and current reality, and positive enough to experience godly redemption of herself and other white people.

Finally the white person can begin to learn how to become a structural advocate and ally of people of color. Through displacement he has learned to identify his own power and privilege; through identity he has learned to confess his sin and believe God is redeeming him. Now as he begins to use privilege, to spend power on behalf of others, he can become a member of a *just community*. This is a wonderful stage of a positive white identity, freedom from shame, quickness to repent from guilt, and true interdependence between whites and people of color.

This journey is not only a linear model of developmental stages white people go through but also a cyclical model in which we find ourselves at various parts of our life. We can always begin. A few years ago a small group of Native American leaders and pastors attended the Urbana Student Mission Convention.<sup>6</sup> My (Paula’s) ministry with InterVarsity is to direct programming for Urbana. I invited these Native American guests out of a naive desire to “integrate” the convention properly, as well as, I trust, a godly desire to remove obstacles so that students of every culture can have a part in what God is doing in crosscultural missions. Two of these leaders befriended me, praying for me, telling me their stories, correcting me and inviting me to Native events where I could learn about their cultures—ah, they have two





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*different* tribes, two *different* cultures.

So I found myself at the very beginning again, *encountering* Native American people (thanks to their open hearts); developing *friendships* and praying that I would learn well and graciously; *displacing* myself into their worlds and putting myself under their authority and the authority of other Native leaders there; reflecting on the questions these experiences pose for my own *identity* as a white person and as a missionary (missionaries have not brought only good to Native American peoples: they have stolen children from Native families and cooperated with those who wreaked violence); and seeking ways we can each use our power and graciously receive the gifts we bring to each other as we build a *just community* together.

As part of our own growth in Jesus, it is our joy to designate all of our proceeds from the sale of this book for Native American ministry. Money you spent on this book that would ordinarily have gone to authors' royalties is instead being put into a fund for Native American leadership development. Thank you for joining us in investing in Native Americans whom you and we may never meet.

