



**RE-CON-CILIA-TION LESS METANOIA (REPENTANCE)  
EQUALS ZERO**

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Bishop Thomas Dexter Jakes: Let me commend you for having the courage to do “something” instead of “nothing” as a response to the escalating crisis on race in America. You have quite an array of names included in the one hundred and fifty (150) leaders from the Faith Community invited to the one day forum at your church on the **2015 King Holiday**. I was startled to see that Pastor Frederick Haynes or Tony Evans were not in the line up since both have been most vocal in Dallas to challenge social evil and injustice while other leaders have lived under the cloud of stark silence except for media show time. Your partnering with Bishop Harry Jackson of the High Impact Leadership Coalition is of special interest. I wish **Washington Post** columnist Hamil R. Harris (January article) would have done a little more research to set the context for your interview. He would have discovered that what you are attempting is a dated simulated replay of what was optimistically called the “1994 Memphis Miracle.” A premature celebration took place on the eve of the 1994 Conference after symbolic gestures took place such as white leaders washing the feet of black leaders with the love embrace of forgiveness. Many left on the high notion of celebration that racism among the Pentecostal- Charismatic Movement had suffered a fatal blow. I led in the drafting of a “*Manifesto on Racial Reconciliation*” which was to be sure evidence of our profound intent and gut level seriousness. Some twenty-one (21) years later, not only are many of the key participants deceased, but what was touted as a miracle was a mirage. The problem then was that repentance was not taken seriously. So, here we go again, same call, different players.

The signing of a Covenant of Reconciliation by participants appears to be a genuine move based on good intention and good will, but that should not be the starting point. You have just persuaded participants to become reconciled to persons they were never with which is the meaning of authentic reconciliation. Without appearing to “*rain on your parade*” allow me to stretch you toward the ecclesial goals of the Kingdom. Throughout the Gospels Jesus came preaching “*repent for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.*” The Kingdom (*basilea* – Greek) which is the “*reign of God*” is near. However, the “*reign of God*” is waiting for an

opening in the affairs of humankind. Symbolic gestures will not usher in its presence. Speeches, debates, forums and idle chatter will not usher in its reign. Genuine, authentic repentance (*metanoia*-Greek) alone will pave the way for the reign of God. To attempt to “*heal the racial divide*” separate from repentance is similar to the Iraqi fighter planes that never left the ground when ordered to fly. When genuine repentance takes place, persons will become reconciled to each other for the good and wellbeing of the other. Why is radical repentance necessary and mandatory?

Racism is in no way like a light cough that requires over-the-counter medication to cure the malady. Racism is an ingrained faith with its own special DNA and requires radical surgery. Black African-American ethicist George Kelsey who taught at Morehouse and Drew University admonished us decades ago that racism is self-deification in its purest form. It is like a deadly viral epidemic. It is a decisive act of turning away from God. It consist of self-glorification and arrogant ingratitude. From a theological perspective racism is a moral and spiritual problem which constitutes the pervasive worship of the self rooted in pride (*hubris*-Latin), which makes it a spiritual problem Once racism is linked with power it proceeds to subjugate we deem inferior to us. The creature is worshipped rather than the Creator and is life “according to the flesh.” The unspeakable brutalities of the Jewish and African holocaust are inextricably tied to racism. The brutal executions implemented by Isis is fueled by religious ethnocentrism rooted in religious extremism. That is why racism as a cancer in the body politic of nations and institutions is more than demonic. Bishop Jakes, that is why I wanted to stretch you and your forum members to know what the task ahead consists. For over a half century I have fought racism through word and deed. The Sit-In Movement started during my first semester at Morehouse. Under the direction of Dr. Martin Luther King we challenged the evils of segregation and discrimination in public accommodations. Racism when treated as the manifestation of a grave social problem receives band aid treatment. (cold cream on cancer).

Racism as a spiritual problem must be the focus of the Faith Community. It must be rooted out by any means necessary to preserve the dignity of all persons. Reconciliation between persons cannot bear the load of love separate from repentance. It is a freighted term. Initiative is involved in the task. Horizontal and vertical movement is demanded. At a

time when the presidency is under attack with unmatched incivility from the conservative religious right...radical repentance may be an only option. I need to admonish you to be cautious as you even mention the thought of healing the racial divide in this nation. Please keep in mind you are trying to unite people who honestly believe that our nation has been lost to foreign immigrants. Opposition to immigration is really about controlling turf within our borders not protecting our borders. It is the fear of a takeover that is fueling the fight against immigration. Oh Bishop Jakes , one more thing. Have you thought about the large number of conservatives who may believe that the Bush contingency (Jeb Bush for the presidency) need a third chance to save and redeem America? Make prayerfully sure that you do not confuse your ego with the voice of the Holy Spirit. They are different.

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