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# Theology, Race and Libraries

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# **Theology, Race and Libraries**

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## Background

As an object of sociological research there has been little scholarly attention paid to the study of “anti-racism”<sup>i, ii</sup>. Themes related to “race,” “racism,” “discrimination” and “ethnicity” tend to make up the bulk of the literature. Bibliographic evidence, from library catalogs as well as knowledge structures, such as the schemes of organization and control that are used to describe information resources, confirms this.

Library/WWW	Dates	Anti-racism	Racism
King Library (SJSU)	10/05/2015	15	2,037
	06/17/2016	16	2,143
Library of Congress	10/05/2015	108	5,349
	06/17/2016	183	7,766
WorldCat	10/05/2015	-	-
	06/17/2016	2,834	53,942
Google	10/05/2015	12,400,000	70,200,000
	06/17/2016	4,550,000 (curious decrease)	485,000,000

**Caption:** Results of Searches for ‘Anti-racism’ and ‘Racism’ in Library Catalogs and the WWW

In the *Library of Congress Subject Headings*, one of the critical knowledge structures in global use in libraries for more than a century, the entry for “anti-racism” is brief:

### **Anti-racism** (*May Subd Geog*)

Here are entered works on beliefs, actions, movements, and policies adopted or developed to oppose racism

UF Antiracism

BT **Social justice**

RT **Multiculturalism**

**Racism**

There are far too many subject headings for “race” and “racism” to be included here but a sample is shown below; these categories often have authorized sub-headings as well.

### **Race**

NT

Political theology and race

### **Race – Religious aspects**

UF Religion and race [Former heading]

- **Baptists, [Catholic Church, etc.]**
- **Buddhism, [Christianity, etc]**
- **Christianity**

UF Race (Theology) [Former heading]

### **Race (The English word)**

Race (Theology)

USE Race – Religious aspects – Christianity

### **Race awareness**

### **Race discrimination**

### **Race relations**

Race relations in religion

USE Race – Religious aspects - Christianity

## **Racially mixed people – Religious aspects – Christianity**

### **Racism** (*May Subd Geog*)

BT Prejudices

RT Anti-racism

    Race relations

NT Psychoanalysis and racism

-- **Religious aspects**

No studies on “anti-racism” were found in the library and information science literature; furthermore, the term anti-racism is not used in many of the thesauri for the electronic databases. Anti-racism appears to be conflated to racism!

## **Literature Review**

There has long been an awareness of the challenges subjects pose to providing intellectual access, but the evidence for bias only started to build with the publication in 1971 of Berman’s *Antipathies and Prejudices: A Tract on the LC Subject Headings Concerning People*<sup>iii</sup>. It has continued to do so until recently.<sup>iv, v, vi, vii, viii</sup> Bias was found in the names for people groups (e.g., Gypsies instead of Roma) and complex topics such as gender, race, and class.<sup>ix</sup> Problems of bias include faulty generalization, inappropriate terminology, the privileging of universalism, white as normative, and hegemony over diversity in order to achieve efficiency, ghettoization, treating as exceptions, omission, being procrustean, and more. Often, the bias was unknowing and headings changed once they were made aware but not always. In the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* “Yellow peril” and “Jewish question” were removed and the “Race question” was changed to “Race relations.” “Racism,” suggested as a remedy for “Race discrimination” was added. They remain together.<sup>x</sup>

Many problems continue to exist. Olson<sup>xi</sup>, for example, has discussed the representation of Angela Davis’s *Women, Race & Class*. The subject headings assigned to the book showed no mention of class. More damagingly, the assigned subject headings failed to make explicit Davis’s treatment of the inter-related nature of race, class, and gender. That is, the three facets of gender, race, and class were only represented through separate headings when in reality the concatenation of these three facets dates back to at least 1981. In other words, the three facets are a discrete, identifiable interrelated concept; a single subject heading could have been established for them.

Similarly, 40 years after Clack showed how African American history was marginalized the problems have not gone away. New, separatist headings such as “Black Theology” continue to be used without deeper relationship analysis. The most explicit treatment of the challenges posed by race, specifically in the context of racially mixed people, to library service has been discussed by Furner<sup>vi</sup>. Furner applied Critical Race Theory (CRT) for a case study of the Dewey Classification system’s Table 3 “Racial, Ethnic, National Groups.” CRT which originated in legal and educational institutions shares much in common with librarians’ commitment to the *Library Bill of Rights*, especially the principles of intellectual freedom and diversity. Individual and institutional racism are separated in libraries, and Furner traces the history of “just library service” as “antiracist library service” and highlights instances of institutional racism that produce a “binary divide --- a divide between the information rich and the information poor ... or simply between the white and the nonwhite population.” Globally used classification schemes like the Dewey Decimal are information institutions in their own right and are structures of institutional racism. Furner suggests that the designers of knowledge structures have the moral obligation to do what they can to eradicate the racism with which they are infected simply by way of being Western institutions. The language of race and racism, he concludes is “not simply a matter of eradicating the terminology... [it] require[s], at the very least, recognition of the reality of race, and of the overarching significance of race as a social construct devised in order to exercise and maintain conditions of power, control, dominance and oppression” (*ibid*, p. 26).

## Research Objectives, Limitations and Possibilities

The research proposed the alternative of studying “anti-racism” as it has historically emerged and been practiced within religion and related inter-disciplines. The goal is to build a new anti-racist vocabulary, an *International Anti-racism Thesaurus* much like the *Pathways Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Thesaurus* project<sup>xiii</sup> and the United Nations *International Thesaurus of Refugee Terminology*.<sup>xiii</sup> Both of these are tools meant to be used by organizations processing information on these topics. The *Library of Congress Subject Heading* “anti-racism” is examined in order to understand its strengths and limitations. Many people are puzzled by the term “anti-racism” and how bias in subject headings affects library service. A robust vocabulary, that is, a subject thesaurus that exhibits the major concepts and relationships inherent in the topic of “anti-racism” is needed to increase understanding and provide “anti-racist” intellectual access and “just library service.”

A critical race theory perspective<sup>xiv</sup> underlies this research. Hence, this is not just a project to change the language or controlled vocabulary but also a development project that engages people in building a digital library and thesaurus.

It may not be easy to eradicate the terminology of race because of its social construction but the discourse and literature of disciplines such as anthropology, biology, and theology show little evidence for either the physical or spiritual reality of race. Instead, they exhibit anti-racist or critical race perspectives, and question the use of multiculturalism as an effective approach to racism. For example, Mukhopadhyay, Henze, and Moses<sup>xv</sup> systematically cover the myth of race as biology and the reality of race as a cultural invention, drawing on biocultural and cross-cultural perspectives. Hot-button issues that arise in tandem with the concept of race, such as educational inequalities; slurs, and racialized labels; and interracial relationships, are presented, shedding light on the intricate, dynamic interplay among race, culture, and biology. Nowhere are these inter-, multi-, and trans-disciplinary relationships reflected in the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* used to describe the book. Similarly, sociological and theological accounts of race also lack the faceted subject classification that link multidisciplinary concepts such as antisemitism, anti-Judaism, class, cosmopolitanism, diversity, exnomination, *hypostasis*, nation-state, nationalism, *Other*, *Shoah*, and “swamping” etc. with “anti-racism.”<sup>i, ii, xvi, xvii, xviii, xix</sup>

The role of religion and associated disciplines - in the creation of “race” and in defeating its various expressions as Nazism, *la Résistance* or anti-slavery, and the success of the Civil Rights movement, which was an active collaboration among disciplines and diverse discourse and practitioner communities, cannot be understated; religious peacebuilding has a long tradition in conflict resolution. Thus, research that is investigating a new “anti-racism” vocabulary is best served with a critical examination that starts with Christian theology and expands to inter-faith, inter-cultural, interdisciplinary fields (e.g. emerging positive peace studies and real-life initiatives such as Alternative Violence Project). Ultimately, it must also accommodate multi-lingual resources and be grounded in real-life geographical communities.

## Methods Used

Research and scholarship to support a universal and socially responsible just and anti-racist library service that is also coming from a faith and interfaith perspective suggests a multi-pronged approach. Two are outlined below.

### Stage 1. Library Catalog and Domain Analysis Study:

The treatment of “anti-racism” in the library catalog and in selective and recent theological accounts of race were examined. Using classificatory analysis and the principles of warrant, literary, organizational and user, emerging categories, concepts, and relationships were identified and compared with current representations in the *LCSH*.

### Stage 2: Development of Prototype Using Community Participation:

No digital library that integrated the perspectives of the various faith traditions and scriptures about “race,” “racism,” and “anti-racism” was found although there are many groups and online collections on issues around race, racism, diversity training, and multi-cultural education. There was also no thesaurus for “anti-racism.” Interfaith, inter-cultural, interdisciplinary anti-racism approaches, however, have been shown to be critical in Global Justice Movements. Teachers, learners, and practitioners need reflections, confessions, antiracism tool kits, video, personal stories. Often these are materials that traditional libraries don’t collect. Development was by using an ever-expanding circles-of-inclusion approach: First, by identifying texts and key partners in select local communities, expanding to regional and national, and finally international. Communities include faith-based as well as civil society. A proof-of-concept *Anti-Racism Digital Library* was developed<sup>xx</sup>. Terms were also matched with *Library of Congress Subject Headings* to discover the “anti-racism” facets and concepts.<sup>xxi</sup>

## Findings

### Theological and Political Origins of Race:

Race, as we know it, was constructed in medieval Europe by the unholy marriage of Christian theology with empire and was driven by a need to justify economic domination<sup>xvi, xvii</sup>. Today, no two people will agree about the definition of race, but most scholars are agreed that race is a socio-political category. Race divides humans. Race was unknown in China or India before the coming of the Europeans although both India and China have traditions and prejudices discriminating against dark color skin. Race does not unify countries, nations or the world.

Race is not a concept that is found in the Bible<sup>xxii</sup>. Yet, many faithful American Christians continue to use racial categories to describe people for many reasons. One, we are deceived by the physical differences we see among people. Two, we are enslaved by powerful political forces, the media, and our culture. Race makes good drama and great news, and the USA’s economic strength was built on it! Finally, and most importantly, for the faithful, we also do so because many English translations of the Bible conflate or interpret the Greek words of *ethnos*, *laos*, *phylē*, and *genos* into the English word *race*.

For an example, look at Revelation 7:9 (ESV): *After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands . . .*

These words can be translated as follows, and, as you will see, there is no race!

Nation = *ethnos*  
Tribe = *phylē*  
People = *laos*  
Language = *glossa*

What’s more, biblical attempts to construct race are often foiled by God. In Genesis 11, God destroys the Tower of Babel because its creators wanted to “make a name for themselves,” and establish their power as a singular, undiversified race of people. We have to wonder who was going to be left out! God confounds their attempt to reach into the heavenly realms by sowing seeds for linguistic diversity. Now, new research has now shown that diverse languages and cultural expressions are critically beneficial to human growth, adaptation, and both individual and social development.

Yet, American society continues, millennia later, to ‘racialize individuals, groups and construct ‘new’ races!’<sup>xxiii</sup>

In 2020, the US Census classification of people will undergo changes, yet again, in the government-defined categories of race; apparently, many people don’t feel they fit well into the five current categories (White; Black or African American; American Indian or Alaska Native; Asian; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander; there is another category “other” too). Since it first began in 1790, the census categories have continued to change, reflecting our nation’s confusion about race.

From 1790 to 1840, the categories were: free white males, free white females, all other free persons, free colored males and females, slaves, and Indians (that is, Native Americans). From 1850 to 1890 the census attempted to enumerate color categories such as Mulatto and Quadroon, a practice they soon abandoned. But it was only in 1870,

in the first post-Civil War census, that the word *race* was used. The next 110 years, from 1900 to 2010, brought more changes:

- 1) 1930: “color races” introduced, and Mexicans counted for the first and only time as a separate race
- 2) 1870: two new immigrant categories, Chinese and Japanese, added
- 3) 1960: people choose their own race as census takers (enumerators) no longer assign race
- 4) 2000: people choose two or more races, reflecting mixed ancestry
- 5) 1970/1980: Hispanic is determined to be an ethnicity, not a race

The changes proposed for the 2020 US Census include:

- 1) Eliminating the word *race*
- 2) Eliminating “Negro” from the Black/African American category
- 3) Adding a new category, Middle Eastern and North African (MENA)

The United Nations makes no recommendation for collecting data about race or ethnicity, and most countries don’t collect race data. India, for example, eliminated the race category in 1951. Interestingly, in recent years, the Indian news media and social media are both reporting more racism!

The rationale for race-based classification, in the United States, is that we need it to create a more just society, especially for the historically oppressed and marginalized. However, racial discrimination and injustice have not disappeared. Despite best attempts to build the beloved community with varying approaches such as multi-culturalism, color-blindness, and pluralism, the language about race is neither biblical nor Christ-like. Insignificant visible differences of skin color and phenotypic variations have become important identity labels, while innate human traits and spiritual gifts, such as faith, love, hope, and compassion, are neglected. We cannot dismantle racism while accepting and voicing its essential tenet: that we are divided into races.

Instead of descriptors of color and hyphenated Americans, an anti-racism, vocabulary that rejects the language of race and instead uses human diversity—created, affirmed, and beloved by God—is needed and in faith circles this grounds identity in the *imago dei* (image of God). In civil society groups actively seeking justice, the Golden Rule – do to others as you would have them do to you – is predominant.

**Anti-racism Genres:** The types of literature that are important anti-racism genres in Christian circles are below: definitions are forthcoming and mixed media genres are not included:

- Classics
- Confessions
- Liturgies
- News
- Reflections
- Sermons
- Stories
- Tools
- Vision statements and reports

**Anti-racism Vocabulary:** A preliminary framework emerged as follows:

**Core concept:** Anti-racism

**Preliminary Facets (are given in boldface type below)**

**Beliefs/Values** (e.g. Community, Diversity, Equality, Equity, Faith, Hospitality, Human Rights, Humanism, Inclusion, Justice, Non-violence, Peace, Spirituality, Tolerance, Unity);

**Actions – Practices - Strategies** (e.g. Advocacy, Anti-racism training, Anti-violence training, Awareness training, Community building, Conflict resolution, Cultural action, Cultural democracy, Cultural transformation, Educational events, Dialogue/discussions, Organizational change, Youth activities, Skill-building training); Political participation; Identity politics;

**Movements** (e.g. Civil Rights movement; Interfaith movement)

**Policies** (affirmative action; includes laws too, e.g. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Genetic Information Non-discrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) USA);

**Organizations** (e.g. UN; Catalyst Project; Anti-racism for collective liberation; Stand Up for Racial Justice),

**People** (e.g. groups such as African Americans,);

**Periods** (e.g. modern, 1492 onwards, etc.);

**Space** (e.g. United States);

Concepts of anti-racism: Anti-racist education; Bystander anti-racism; Integrative anti-racism; Tolerance; Inclusivity

Closely related concepts: Diversity, Racial categories/taxonomies/typologies, Racial equity, Racial healing, Cultural racism, Bio-racism; Restorative justice; Competitive advantage; Innovation

Related concepts: Race; Racism; Racialization, Multiculturalism (narrow term); Social justice (broad term)

Domains/Disciplines: Cultural/Ethnic studies, Education, International Indigenous studies, Positive peace, Theology;

Peripheral areas: Biology, Cultural anthropology, Genomics, Psychology, Sociology;

**Anti-racist policies (examples):**

- inclusivity
- neutrality or “colorblindness”;
- cooperative (not competitive) workplace environment;
- affirmative action initiatives and scholarships directed towards increasing diversity;
- multi-culturalism / pluralism /solidarity

**Anti-racist actions (some examples of how people are actively practicing anti-racism):**

- Practicing Cultural Humility – LCSH: Cultural humility
- Acknowledging White Privilege – LCSH: White Privilege
- Interfaith Dialog – LCSH: Interfaith dialog
- Christian Witnessing - LCSH: Witness bearing (Christianity)
- Faithful Rhetoric – LCSH: Faith; Rhetoric; Civic Engagement
- Standing in Solidarity – LCSH: Solidarity
- Original Purpose/Divine Calling (for everybody not just clergy) – LCSH: Vocation

**Anti-racist movements (examples):**

- Anti-apartheid movements; Civil Rights Movement; Indigenous or Self-development of People movement; Interfaith movement; Spirituality movements; Sustainability movements (e.g. campus sustainability); crowdsourced syllabi (campus activism movement)

**Anti-racism Digital Library Collections** under construction include:

- Anti-racist Identity
- A Mote in Minerva’s Eye: Seeing without categorizing (personal faith and culture stories)
- Progressive Christians Uniting (faith group activism)
- Orange County Cities for CEDAW (an UN initiative undertaken by a voluntary group)
- Golden Rule (Round Table for Interfaith dialog - do to others as you would have them do to you)
- Intersectional Invisibility
- American Identity (How Americans are constructing their identities)
- The Christian Imagination (A series of 3 studies on Christian - *imago dei* - identity)

**Dedication, Invitation to Participate, and Acknowledgements**

The Anti-Racism Digital Library is dedicated to the nine victims in the shooting at Mother Emmanuel AME Church, Charleston, 2015. The work seeks to honor all the victims. All who are interested are invited to join and help flesh out ‘anti-racism’ concepts and practices and build the library and the vocabulary.

The *Theological and Political Origins of Race* section of the paper has been shared previously in local talks, classes and in a blog column. I am grateful for these awards: Racial Dialog grant from the Presbyterian Women of the Synod of Southern California and Hawaii; CASA/RSCA research award from San Jose State University; and a travel grant from the American Theological Librarians Association.



# Anti-Racism Digital Library

[About the Library](#)
[Browse Items](#)
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[Browse Tags](#)
[Contribute an Item](#)

The Anti-racism Digital Library seeks to serve as a clearinghouse for information resources about people, groups, and projects who are building inclusive and caring communities. Anti-racism can be defined as some form of focused and sustained action, which includes inter-cultural, inter-faith, multi-lingual and inter-abled (i.e. differently abled) communities with the intent to change a system or an institutional policy, practice, or procedure which has racist effects. [Read more...](#)

## Featured Item

### Theology, Race, and Libraries

Recent theological research into the origin of race and the presence of structural racism in library systems of knowledge organization is discussed....

## Recently Added Items

### The Case for Scholarly Reparations

Race, the history of sociology, and the marginalized man – lessons from Aldon Morris' book "The Scholar Denied"

### Library of Congress Demographic Group Terms PDF Files

The Library of Congress is developing a new vocabulary, entitled Library of Congress

## Featured Collection

### Anti-racist Identity



The Anti-racist Identity Collection brings together resources that highlight the key characteristics of an anti-racist identity such as...

## Featured Exhibit

### Comfort Women at CSW60

At UN CSW60 there was a parallel event on Thursday, March 17, that

**Caption:** The *Anti-racism Digital Library & Thesaurus* is online at <http://endracism.info/> (or <http://sacred.omeka.net>)

<sup>i</sup> Lentin, Alana. *Racism and Anti-Racism in Europe*. London, GBR: Pluto Press, 2004. ProQuest ebrary. Web. 21 September 2015

<sup>ii</sup> Lloyd, Cathie. 1998. *Discourses of Antiracism in France*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

<sup>iii</sup> Berman, Sanford. 1971. *Prejudice and Antipathies: A Tract on the LC Subject Heads Concerning People*. Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press.

<sup>iv</sup> Clack, Dorothy H. 1978. The Adequacy of Library of Congress Subject Headings for Black Literature Resources. *Library Resources and Technical Services* 22: 138.

<sup>v</sup> Furner, J., & Dunbar, A. W. 2004. The treatment of topics relating to people of mixed race in bibliographic classification schemes: A critical race-theoretic approach. In I. C. McIlwaine (Ed.), *Knowledge organization and the global information society: Proceedings of the Eighth International ISKO Conference* (London, England, July 13-16, 2004; pp. 115-120). Würzburg, Germany: Ergon.

<sup>vi</sup> Furner, Jonathon. 2007 [published 2008]. Dewey deracialized: A critical race-theoretic perspective. *Knowledge Organization*, 34(3), 144-168.

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- <sup>vii</sup> Olson, Hope A., and Rose Schlegl. 2001. Standardization, objectivity, and user focus: A meta-analysis. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 32(2) 61-80.
- <sup>viii</sup> Olson, Hope A. 2000. Difference, culture, and change: The untapped potential of LCSH. *Cataloging & Classification Quarterly* 29(1/2); special issue *The LCSH Century: One Hundred Years with the Library of Congress Subject Headings*.
- <sup>ix</sup> Beall, Julliane. 1980. Racism and Sexism in Subject Analysis Subcommittee. *Library of Congress Information Bulletin* 39:103.
- <sup>x</sup> Knowlton, Steven A. 2005. Three Decades Since *Prejudices and Antipathies*: A Study of Changes in the Library of Congress Subject Headings. *Cataloging and Classification Quarterly*, 40 (2): 123-145.
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- <sup>xiii</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, The Refugee Agency). 2001. *International Thesaurus of Refugee Terminology*. Available online. Last retrieved 15 June 2016. <http://www.refugeethesaurus.org/>.
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- <sup>xv</sup> Mukhopadhyay, Carol C., Henze, Rosemary, and Moses, Yolanda. 2014. *How Real is Race? A Sourcebook on Race, Culture and Biology*. R & L Education.
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- <sup>xvii</sup> Carter, Kameron, J. 2008. *Race: A Theological Account*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Cone, James A. 1969. *Black Theology and Black Power*. New York: Seabury Press.
- <sup>xix</sup> Jennings, William James. 2010. *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- <sup>xx</sup> Anti-racism Digital Library and International Anti-racism Thesaurus prototype. 2015. <http://tinyurl.com/antiracedl> Last retrieved: June 20, 2016.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Anti-racism Digital Library and International Anti-racism Thesaurus prototype. 2015. <http://tinyurl.com/antiracedl> Last retrieved: June 20, 2016.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Bible references are from the English Standard Version.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Coleman, Anita. 2016. Seeing beyond race: A Mother's prayer for her son and her church. *A Mote in Minerva's Eye: Seeing without categorizing. One Church, Many Voices, Presbyterians Today*. Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Last retrieved: June 20, 2016. <https://www.pcusa.org/blogs/today/2016/3/9/mote-minervas-eye/>