

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

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Reporting on Civil and Human Rights

Gracie Bonds Staples

gstaples@ajc.com

770-263-3621

Last year I embarked on a month-long journey to try and make sense of what remains a volatile brew: race and religion. The result was a five-part series examining the role of the church in perpetuating racism.

Does it deserve an Award of Excellence? Based on both print and online reader reaction, I'd say yes.

"This could not have come at a better time," wrote Anjetta Thackeray in an online response. "I am part of a racial reconciliation study group at my church. I struggle with conflicting feelings about my anger at what is going on in the world and the love I am supposed to show as a Christian."

Many like Henning, in a post to the "This Life with Gracie" Facebook page, thanked me for the series.

"As I read part one, I thought about the novel, 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' I read for the first time last week for one of my theology classes," he said. "Stowe lays the reason for the continued institution of slavery at the feet of the unconcerned Christians. I didn't think a book 160 years old would move me so. Your article is doing the same."

Dozens more sent emails.

I heard from Max Lipscomb of Atlanta, who said: "I'm quite sure some of your older white readers will not be too happy with you for exposing an old wound, but as we see every day in America, this conversation is badly needed and you are right it needs to start with the church! When people say I didn't own slaves or I'm not a racist, all these things are true but what's missing is they profited off the mistreatment of Africans through slavery all in the name of the bible! Because of your series, I'm going to continue my AJC subscription they are about to cancel."

Lamar Harold wrote too, saying: "Your series was so enlightening, inspiring and well written ... my applause to you for a masterpiece of journalistic excellence."

And finally, one reader summed up all of my hope for Race and Religion: "As a God fearing white male, you have highlighted scripture that forces me to re-evaluate my whole thinking on race relations. I've never considered myself a racist as I have often hid behind 'I don't care (about) the color of the man as long as he takes care of his family' and I have lived that way. However, this thinking is flawed in the eyes of Jesus. I still am prejudiced toward men who don't support their family. Nor do I speak Jesus into their life. I'm guilty. Upon self-evaluation, while my (opinions) have kept me from being actively racist, I have not been actively anti-racist and in not doing so I have dishonored God and I have sinned."

<https://www.ajc.com/lifestyles/why-needed-write-about-race-and-religion/gStnutVTeolckiwL3lkziL/>

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THE SERIES

Part 1: <https://www.ajc.com/lifestyles/racism-whose-fault-anyway/xKqVpUsHswzvsR58SRn7wM/>

Part 2: <https://www.ajc.com/lifestyles/from-slavery-mass-incarceration-does-systemic-racism-persist/abGrcBwx42R8DsiEVaQqrl/>

Part 3: <https://www.ajc.com/lifestyles/how-does-sin-fit-discuss-racism/mXvdvphfEOFcJtAGNb9zZl/>

Part 4: <https://www.ajc.com/lifestyles/religion/can-allow-what-has-broken-the-heart-god-break-ours/scHRic90g1FT2IbzQHNqhl/>

Part 5: <https://www.ajc.com/lifestyles/how-black-white-ministers-are-working-bridge-racial-divide/lAsj4614834ppKXoWj3BWL/>

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