

# SHOULDER TO THE WHEEL: Resources to Help Latter-day Saints Face Racism Abolish White Supremacy and Become a Zion People

June 8, 2018 marks the fortieth anniversary of the LDS Church's restoration of the priesthood to Black men and temple blessings to Black men and women.

This short book is designed to help LDS people prepare for this important milestone. Many of us are just beginning to grapple with why priesthood and temple access were denied to Black members, how we as the Church treated Black, Latino, Native American and Pacific Islander members, and how racism has impacted us all.

Ether 12:27 - 28 teaches that God gives us "weaknesses" so that we may be "humble" and through "faith" turn them into "strengths." We hope the fortieth anniversary will inspire us to

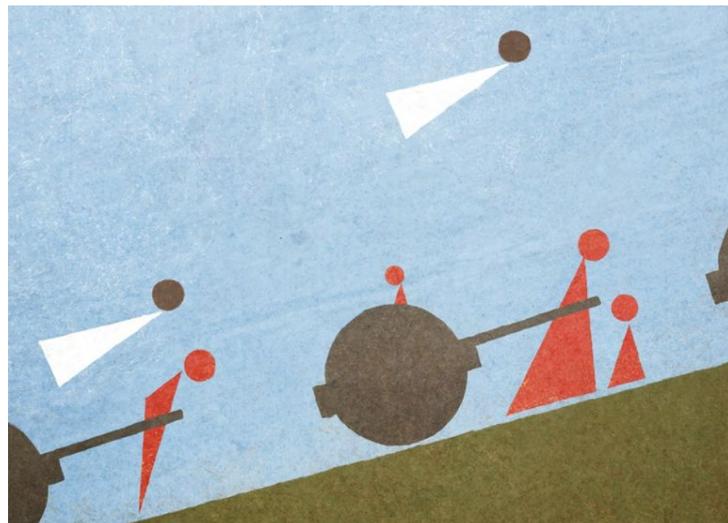
- learn to acknowledge our "weaknesses"-- past and present, intentional and unintentional--on race and racism;
- gain greater understanding and humility about racism, past and present;
- seek a change of heart through the atonement of Jesus Christ;
- put our shoulders to the wheel to develop new "strengths" in addressing racism and white supremacy.

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## 1. LDS TEACHINGS ON RACE AND RACISM

President Gordon B. Hinckley testified in April 2006 General Conference:

*“No man who makes disparaging remarks concerning those of another race can consider himself a true disciple of Christ. Nor can he consider himself to be in harmony with the teachings of the Church of Christ.”*

Similarly, in a 2012 Church Newsroom statement, LDS leaders proclaimed:

*“We condemn racism, including any and all past racism by individuals both inside and outside the Church.”*

In a 2017 Church Newsroom statement, LDS leaders declared:

*“White supremacist attitudes are morally wrong and sinful, and we condemn them. Church members who promote or pursue a 'white culture' or white supremacy agenda are not in harmony with the teachings of the Church.”*

Scripture teaches us that “all are alike unto God” (2 Nephi 26:33) and that the Lord “looks upon the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). But we do not yet see as God sees. We see “through a glass darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12) because we are born and raised in a society that organizes and divides people and distributes resources and opportunities on the basis of skin color.

**Racism** is the system of ideas and beliefs that divides people and gives some people better life chances--opportunities to live a happy, healthy life--based on their skin color.

**White supremacy** is the system of ideas and beliefs that give white people better life chances based on our perceived skin color and ancestry. The idea that racial inequality is meant to be, or “just the way it is” is an expression of white supremacy.

These systems surround each of us—whether we are white, black, or brown—and shape how we think and act, *even when we are not aware of it or do not mean to harm others*. For example, we may not even be aware that we clutch a purse closer when we walk past a young Black man in public, but our conduct is likely visible to him and impacts his life.

D&C 38: 22 - 31 teaches **“I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38: 22 - 31).**

4 Nephi shows us that to be a Zion people we must overcome divisions by drawing closer to the Lord, dealing “justly” with one another, having “all things in common,” and living without “contentions and disputations.” The first step towards overcoming these divisions is understanding how racism has impacted our brothers of sisters of color and ourselves.

## 2. HOW WHITE SUPREMACY AND RACISM AFFECT PEOPLE OF COLOR

4 Nephi teaches us that even righteous societies can over time fall into sins of “pride,” “strifes,” “envyings,” and division over wealth. We can see this in American history. To understand how white supremacy and racism create burdens for our brothers and sisters of color, it is important to understand the divisions and weaknesses in our own society. Here are some examples:

- **Land:** When European and white American settlers took land, they intentionally or unintentionally caused physical, cultural, and spiritual harm to the Native American communities that cared for and depended on these homelands for physical and spiritual sustenance, resulting in higher rates of death, disease, and poverty among Native Americans.
- **Citizenship:** In 1790, the U.S. Congress restricted citizenship and voting rights to “free white persons.” African-Americans did not enjoy the right to vote until 1870. American Indians were not recognized as citizens until 1924. Southern states used formal and informal means to prevent African-Americans from voting and serving on juries, as did some Southwestern states with Latinos, and these patterns continue in some places to this day. (More information at the [Library of Congress](#).)
- **Slavery and Incarceration:** Until the 1860s, it was legal in many states to hold African-Americans as slaves—forced labor, no pay, little or no access to education, no right to marry. Under the law, children born to a mother who was enslaved were also slaves for life and could be sold far away. (More information at [PBS](#).) After slavery ended, systems for policing and incarcerating Black people continued through convict leasing and other means. To this day, police officers disproportionately stop people of color and search them or their cars—a practice called ‘**racial profiling**.’ Latinos are three times more likely to be imprisoned than whites, and Native Americans are four times more likely. (To learn more, watch this [BYU panel discussion](#), see this [fact sheet](#) from the NAACP, or watch this [PBS documentary](#).)
- **Segregation:** After slavery ended in the 1860s, states developed laws and customs that preserved racial structures from before the Civil War. They prevented black people from using the same schools, restaurants, public pools, bathrooms, and even buses as white people and made it more difficult for black people to vote, get an education, or make good money for their families. (Learn more at the [Smithsonian](#).)
- **Building wealth:** Today, the average white family in America has eight times more wealth (bank accounts, houses, cars) than the average Latino family and twelve times more wealth than the average Black family. This is in part a result of government programs that disadvantaged people of color. When Social Security was created in 1935, domestic workers and farmworkers—occupations held by large numbers of African-Americans and Hispanics—were excluded. Black and Hispanic families could not count on a safety net for taking care of disabled and elderly relatives. Caring for disabled and elderly relatives exhausted the savings of many families of color time and time again and prevented them from building wealth. (Learn more at the non-partisan [Economic Policy Institute](#).)
- **Buying a house:** From the 1930s through the 1960s, banks backed by the Federal Housing Administration refused to loan most Black and Latino families money for mortgages, but did loan to white families even when they made less money. This practice was called

“red-lining.” The GI Bill, a government program providing home loans and education for World War II veterans, did not provide equal opportunities Black veterans, affecting generations of Black families. (Learn more [here](#).)

- **Marriage:** White people created laws designed to exclude racial minorities from accessing white privileges through marriage. Interracial marriage was illegal in many states until 1967 and was discouraged by some LDS Church leaders. (More information is [here](#).)
- **Staying healthy:** Barriers to accessing healthcare, poverty, racism-related stress, and environmental hazards mean that African-Americans, Hispanics / Latinos, and Native Americans are less likely to receive good healthcare and more likely to die early deaths from diseases like diabetes and heart disease. (More information from the [Kaiser Family Foundation](#).)
- **Environmental racism:** Native Americans are 50% more likely and African-Americans are 76% more likely than whites to live in places dangerously polluted by toxic or industrial waste. Loss of clean, uncontaminated water has disproportionately affected African-Americans in places like Flint, Michigan and Native Americans on reservations where mining and oil production take place. Environmental poisoning and pollution cause serious health problems, especially for children.
- **Microaggression:** People of color encounter everyday actions that are intentionally or unintentionally hurtful, like rudeness, cruel humor, being singled out, being followed in a store, being questioned by police or security officers, or being yelled at on the street. When microaggressions accumulate, this can result in **racial battle fatigue**.
- **Internalized racism:** People of color absorb racist ideas that impact how they view themselves and their communities. They may have to spend extra energy every day to put these ideas aside and see themselves as God does: beautiful, worthy, powerful, and good.

### 3. HOW WHITE SUPREMACY AND RACISM IMPACT WHITE PEOPLE

Racism gives unearned advantages to white people--**white privilege**--that white people benefit from even when we do not intend to disadvantage others. It means that just by being born white, a person statistically has a better chance of owning a home, having a long and healthy life, and having access to opportunity. (See this BYU [panel discussion](#) to learn more.)

White privilege developed over the last few hundred years in the United States as light-skinned European immigrants (including Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants) assimilated and became “white.” In the nineteenth century, Mormons were seen by mainstream America as “a degraded race” that was something less than “white,” but we assimilated in the twentieth-century and today Mormons of European descent have white privilege.

Just as white privilege provides some material advantages, it also brings spiritual disadvantages that prevent us from “being one” (D&C 38:22) and divide us from our brothers and sisters of color. They include:

- **Isolation:** When we are divided by race, it is harder to access accurate information about the experiences of and develop authentic relationships with people of color.
- **Amnesia and anesthesia:** When school curricula center around a narrow set of white experiences and perspectives, there is little opportunity to understand the bigger historical picture and our place in it. When do not understand history or others’ experiences, it is harder to develop a sense of compassion, and we are more likely to act in unkind or inappropriate ways, often without realizing it.
- **Racial anxiety:** If we do not have understanding or experience with people of color, we may unintentionally carry unreasonable fears of other people based on the color of their skin, or fear of being in places where white people are not the majority.
- **Denial and avoidance:** If we do not know how to talk about racism, we may feel defensive and awkward or fear that we will lose the respect of other white people if we address challenging subjects.
- **Fragility:** If we are not used to hearing or facing just criticisms of white privilege, we may react by feeling victimized and hurt, which limits our ability to grow and learn.
- **Guilt, shame, and paralysis:** Being aware of racism and white privilege can create discomfort--including shame about the way we, our family members or friends past and present have acted--and fear of discomfort can prevent us from taking positive steps towards change.
- **Rigidity:** If guilt and shame make us feel so paralyzed we can’t reflect on and forgive our own shortcomings, it may be harder to forgive others for their shortcomings.
- **Negligence:** If we do not know how to take responsibility for our shortcomings and the past shortcomings of others, this means more work for other people in mending the impacts of racism.

Addressing these weaknesses requires that we acknowledge them and seek a mighty change of heart through faith in Jesus Christ so that we can work together to build Zion.

### 4. HOW RACISM AND WHITE SUPREMACY IMPACT OUR FAITH

Just as racial divisions are woven into American history, they are woven into how American religion. In fact, religion has been used to justify divisions and strifes that have hurt people of color:

- **Colonization:** From the fifteenth-century onward, Europeans claimed that being Christian gave them the right to take Native American lands and lives. They used religious symbols and scriptures in colonization even though their main purpose was building wealth and power for themselves.
- **Slavery:** In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, it was common for white American Christians to justify slavery by using stories in the Old Testament about “curses” placed on Cain and Ham. (Contemporary [LDS Church leaders](#) have taught us that such views were wrong and unfounded.)
- **Segregation:** Christian churches in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries routinely barred people of color from worshipping next to white people. For example, in eighteenth-century Philadelphia, Episcopal church leaders forcibly removed an African-American man named Absalom Jones from his knees during prayer in a church service. Jones later went on to found the African Methodist Episcopal Church.
- **Depicting God as a white European:** Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, angels, and figures from the Old and New Testament have been depicted with white European features in religious books and art, even though we know that Jesus and other Biblical figures were not Europeans but Middle Easterners.

Joseph Smith and other early leaders of the LDS Church grew up in a society divided by racism and white supremacy. Even as they insisted that the gospel was for “all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples,” they held many views on race common to people of their times, and these views have influenced our faith. Here are some examples:

- **Teachings about Blackness:** We as a Church accepted the common but false Christian teaching that Blackness was the result of a “curse” placed on Cain or Ham. This has limited LDS Church growth among Black people in North America, South America, and Africa, which means that many LDS people grow up with little substantial interaction with Black people. It is impossible to “mourn with those who mourn,” as the Book of Mormon instructs us (Mosiah 18:9), if we do not know them as we know ourselves.
- **Teachings about indigenous people:** We as a Church developed a false teaching that Native Americans were dark-skinned because of a “curse” placed on Laman or Lemuel in the Book of Mormon and would become “white” or light-skinned when they repented. This was taught by beloved LDS Church leaders like Spencer W. Kimball through the 1970s and 1980s and incorporated into LDS Church programs like the Indian Placement Program. Some Native families who participated in the Program recall benefits including opportunities to access new experiences and education; some also remember that the Program exposed them to deep racism among white Mormons, abuse, loneliness, sickness, and sadness in being separated from home, and internalized racism.

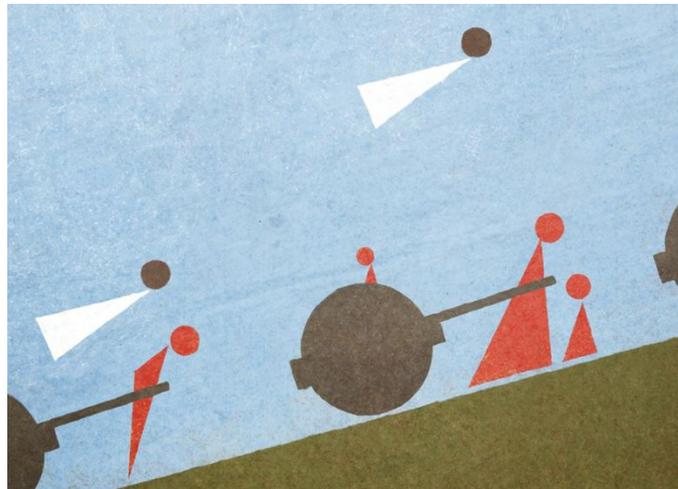
- **Opposition to interracial marriage:** Many Latter-day Saint leaders and members have openly opposed interracial marriage and codified this in the curriculum taught to youth until 2012. This has contributed to division and isolation. To this day, Black LDS writer Zandra Vranes relates, LDS Church member interracial couples who seek to marry in the temple sometimes must “bishop shop” to find a bishop who will give them a recommend. ([Source](#))
- **Depicting God as a white European:** Most images of Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and important Biblical figures featured in our LDS Church buildings and printed materials depict them as white. Janan Graham Russell writes, “When I went to the temple for the first time and came upon a portrait of Jesus Christ in the Celestial Kingdom, surrounded by angels, what struck me was the fact that in this depiction, both Jesus Christ and all the angels were white. In seeing this, the question that was raised is, how do my fellow members see me in the eternities? How do I see myself?” ([Source](#)) These pictures unintentionally require extra effort and energy from Mormons of color to see themselves as “created in the image of God.” They also unintentionally give white Mormons the false sense that just by virtue of being white they are inherently closer to God.

Stories from Mormons of color show us that racism is not just a part of our past--it is a part of our present.

- **Defensiveness or protectiveness of past LDS Church leaders in their racism:** Many of us were raised to view prophets and other Church leaders as infallible or to instinctively protect the Church against what we perceived to be criticism. We may have also heard mythology about Cain, Ham, and “fencesitters” in the War in Heaven taught by grandparents, parents, or teachers we love and admire. We may have explained away or defended the priesthood and temple ban as the will of God, when they were not.
- **Underrepresentation of LDS people of color among visible Church leadership:** Many Mormons of color share that they hunger to see more men and women of color on the stand at General Conference, so that they can take comfort the way white Mormons do in seeing faces that look like their grandfathers and grandmothers and so that they can feel more assured that Church leaders fully understand the realities of racism in their lives.
- **Lack of awareness of the needs of members of color in the planning of activities:** For example, Black LDS author Zandra Vranes remembers difficulty in doing early morning (before school) youth baptisms for the dead due to the specific requirements of caring for her hair as a Black woman. Her youth leaders were not able to understand this issue and did not accommodate her needs, so on days her ward did baptisms for the dead she attended school all day in the winter with wet and frozen hair. Members of color may have other specific physical, familial, monetary, dietary, and cultural considerations that affect their ability to participate in activities.
- **Open racism and racial paternalism in our faith community:**

- Tamu Smith, a Black LDS author, recalls being called the “n-word” in the Salt Lake City temple.
- Alice Faulkner Burch, a leader of the Genesis group, reports that she can rarely attend a Mormon Sunday meeting without someone asking to touch her hair--a personal imposition that would never be asked of a white woman ([source](#)).
- Zandra Vranes, a Black LDS author, recalls being called the “n-word” at a Church youth activity by a white Mormon young man, and that her youth leader did nothing when she reported it.
- Native American and Hispanic Mormons relate that it is not uncommon for white Mormons to instruct them on the meaning of their “Lamanite” heritage in ways that are uncomfortable and condescending.
- It is not uncommon for well-intentioned white Mormons to comment on the foreignness, uniqueness, or the especially “humble” circumstances of members of color. These remarks can be unintentionally demeaning or divisive and make members of color feel singled out in the place where they want to belong and worship peacefully.
- Increasingly competitive admission to LDS Church schools has become a point of racial conflict in some LDS communities. When white members remark that our sons or daughters did not get into BYU because a Black member, through just the color of their skin, did so instead, or even ask Black members what sport they played while at BYU, this may be construed as an allusion that members of color are less deserving of education or not smart enough to attend otherwise.

It is important to recognize these impacts to our faith community but not become paralyzed by them. A contrite spirit is the conduit to improved understanding and action. Everyone requires a “mighty change of heart” (Alma 5: 12 - 14) and everyone can put their shoulder to the wheel.



## 5. Understanding the Ban on Black Priesthood Ordination and Temple Participation

One of the most significant ways racism has impacted Mormonism was the ban on priesthood ordination and temple endowments and sealings for Mormons of African ancestry, which began in the 1850s and lasted until 1978.

**1830 - 1840s:** Black men like Elijah Abel and Walker Lewis were ordained to the priesthood. Abel also participated in temple worship, was a member of the Third Quorum of the Seventy, and served several missions. These facts suggest that Joseph Smith was supportive of Black participation in the LDS Church. By the time of his death in 1844, Smith expressed anti-slavery views and argued that if Blacks were given the same opportunities as whites they would have the same outcomes.

**1852 - 1900s:** After the Mormon migration to Utah, LDS Church President Brigham Young was asked to weigh in on whether slavery would be allowed in the territory. (Several Mormons had brought slaves to Utah--African-Americans Green Flake, Oscar Crosby, and Hark Lay were in the first Mormon wagon train to reach the Salt Lake Valley.) In his remarks to the Utah territorial legislature in 1852, Young allowed African-American slavery and Native American servitude in Utah and declared that those with African ancestry were banned from the priesthood. At no time did Young say that this ban on priesthood was based in revelation.

Slavery ended in Utah in 1862, but the priesthood ban and a ban on access to temple worship for Black men and women continued to be enforced. Prophets and apostles justified the ban by speculating that those of African descent were “less valiant” in the premortal existence or by referring to verses in the Bible or Book of Abraham. Female church leaders also espoused racist views. In one of her poems, Eliza R. Snow, second president of the Relief Society, wrote of African-Americans as “curse[d]” by “the Almighty.”

**1900s - 1978:** The priesthood and temple ban became LDS Church crystallized into official Church policy in the first decade of the twentieth century. Missionaries were discouraged from proselyting Black people in North and South America and the Caribbean. Generations of Mormons grew up being taught various “reasons” for the policy’s existence which have subsequently been rejected by Church leaders as false doctrine:

- It had something to do with the Old Testament stories of Cain or Ham being “cursed.”
- It had something to do with African-Americans being “cursed” for not taking sides in the war in the premortal existence over the plan of happiness. (In 1907, Apostle (later LDS Church President) Joseph Fielding Smith wrote that many Mormons believed this, but it “is not the official position of the Church, [and is] merely the opinion of men” ([source](#)).)
- It had something to do with white people not being “ready” to accept African-Americans and God waiting until white people had overcome their prejudices.
- It had something to do with the pattern in the New Testament of the priesthood being given first to Jews, then Gentiles.

Living with the ban and with false doctrines held by LDS Church members caused many challenges to African-American Mormons. In 1971, three Black Mormons--Ruffin Bridgeforth, Darius Gray, and Eugene Orr--met to pray for guidance and support. The men met regularly with apostles Gordon B.

Hinckley, Thomas S. Monson, and Boyd K. Packer from June through October 1971, when Church leaders told Bridgforth, Gray, and Orr that they wanted to organize an official auxiliary organization for African-American members called the Genesis Group. From 1971 to 1978, and again after 1996, the Genesis Group held regular meetings to provide LDS spaces where Black members could worship together.

LDS Church Presidents since at least the time of David O. McKay had wrestled with a sense that the priesthood-temple ban did not reflect the will of the Lord. But it was not until after the Church started building a temple in São Paulo, Brazil in 1975--a country where mixed-race heritage is common--that LDS Church President Spencer W. Kimball studied the history of the ban and sought revelation in the upper room of the Salt Lake City LDS temple. ([Source](#))

**1978 to the present:** Revelation that the ban should be lifted came on June 1, 1978 and was announced on June 8, 1978. Prophets and Apostles immediately told the Saints that all prior justifications for the ban were false. Elder Bruce R. McConkie said:

*There are statements in our literature by the early Brethren which we have interpreted to mean that the Negroes would not receive the priesthood in mortality. I have said the same things . . . Forget everything that I have said, or what President Brigham Young or President George Q. Cannon or whomsoever has said in days past that is contrary to the present revelation. We spoke with a limited understanding and without the light and knowledge that now has come into the world.* ([Source](#))

President Dieter F. Uchtdorf said in General Conference 2013:

*To be perfectly frank, there have been times when members or leaders in the Church have simply made mistakes. There may have been things said or done that were not in harmony with our values, principles, or doctrine. I suppose the Church would be perfect only if it were run by perfect beings. God is perfect, and His doctrine is pure. But He works through us—His imperfect children—and imperfect people make mistakes.*

It is hard to say that “we were wrong.” But we were wrong. Past racism by Mormon prophets, apostles, and other leaders does not need to be defended, nor do we need to defend our own past weaknesses as LDS people. In fact, as Ether 12:27 teaches, acknowledging our “weaknesses” as a Church in “humility” and seeking a change of heart through the atonement “strengthens” us.

## **6. Let Us All Press On: Examples of Anti-Racist Courage from LDS History**



Jane Manning James (1813 - 1908) was an African-American woman from Connecticut who joined the Church in 1842 and promptly converted eight members of her family. Her family walked from Buffalo, New York, to Nauvoo, Illinois because they were forbidden to travel by racially-segregated ferries, as did many other white Saints migrating from the region: “*We walked until our shoes were worn out, and our feet became sore and cracked open and bled until you could see the whole print of our feet with blood on the ground.*” Jane crossed the plains to

Utah, where she raised a large family, was active in the Relief Society, and contributed to the building of the Logan, Manti, and St. George Temples. But she was never allowed to receive her temple endowments, even after she appealed to the First Presidency in 1895, asking: *“Is there no blessing for me?”* (Her temple work was completed in 1979.)

Len Hope and his wife joined the LDS Church in Alabama right before World War I. After he fought in the War, Hope returned to Alabama where he faced persecution from racist mobs on account of his conversion:

*“They had the pistols, the rifles, the sawed-off shot guns. Come to my brother’s home and tell me to come out and asked to talk to me. . . . And I got up enough nerve to go out and talk with them. And they said, ‘What happened here? You went over the seas and you learn few things about the white folks and you wanna come back here and you want to join them, is that it?’ I told them no, I had been investigating this gospel long before I went overseas, and therefore I find that this was the only true Church on earth, and therefore I came back and joined. They stood there for a little while and they said, ‘Well, go down to the bank and we goin’ hang you from a limb and shoot you full of holes.’ Pretty hard licks, and I was scared. So I went down the next morning, down to Church where they was having a conference and told them my experience and what had happened. To my surprise, I thought I was going to see them with hung down head and sad carriage, but what do you think I saw? Some of the beautifulest smiles that the Latter-day Saints give. They said, ‘Brother Hope, this is just the persecution of the devil. We all have to endure this.’ I thought to myself, these beautiful people. . . If these beautiful people can endure persecution, why couldn’t I?”* ([Source](#))

Chieko Okazaki (1926 - 2011) was a counselor in the General Relief Society presidency. As a Japanese-American, she experienced and gently spoke out against racial discrimination:

*“I think people of my generation—white members of the Church—always have a little bit of a problem with racial prejudice. When I was a student at the University of Hawaii during World War II, one of the apostles of the Church at our stake conference spoke. I was a member of the Japanese Branch, and it was hard for us to go to the tabernacle, because everybody else was white people. Many servicemen were present, and this apostle said very bluntly, ‘I want all of you soldiers to know that you are not to get into the situation where you would like to be married to any of these people. And you women, you are not to get to the point of integrating yourself to the point where you think you are going to be married to one of these men.’ I remember how surprised I was. . . . I thought, ‘Why is it that the Church doesn’t look upon us, who are of a different race, as worthy to marry a white Mormon man? If we are daughters and sons of God, I don’t think the Lord would look at us and say, ‘You’re different, so there are things you can’t do.’”* ([Source](#))



## **7. Putting our Shoulders to the Wheel Today**

Many LDS people want to acknowledge our weaknesses, seek change through faith in Christ, and become stronger in building Zion, but do not know how to start.

African-American LDS people recently developed [a list of ideas](#) for changes in the LDS Church, including:

- Cast a black Adam and Eve (or an interracial couple) in the LDS temple film.
- Use more African-American faces in church art and manuals and display more artwork depicting Christ as he would appear: as a Middle Eastern Jewish man.
- Place more people of color in highly visible leadership positions.
- Apologize for the faith's past priesthood/temple ban on blacks.
- Show the documentary film "Nobody Knows: The Untold Story of Black Mormons" to every all-male priesthood quorum, women's Relief Society class and Young Men and Young Women groups.
- Quote from the church's Gospel Topics essay "Race and the Priesthood" regularly at LDS General Conference and translate it into all the languages that the church uses to communicate with its global membership. Direct that the essay be read in every Mormon congregation and mission in the world.
- Have 2 Nephi 26:33 — "All are alike unto God" — be a yearlong Young Women or Primary theme and make it part of the curriculum to talk about the sin of racism.
- Bring more people of color to LDS Church-owned Brigham Young University as students and faculty, while providing sensitivity training for all students about racial issues and interactions with people of color.
- Teach children about heroic black Mormon lives, such as LDS pioneers Jane Manning James and Elijah Abel.
- Provide training on racial issues for newly called mission presidents and missionaries.

There is also much we can do as individuals. **We invite you to visit [shouldertothewheel.org](http://shouldertothewheel.org) and pledge to take one or more of the following actions by June 8, 2018:**

1. Read and reflect on the following scriptures: [2 Nephi 26:33](#), [D&C 38: 22 – 31](#). Share them on social media, read them with your family, and encourage others to read them.
2. Read and reflect on [Official Declaration 2](#). How did the denial of LDS priesthood and temple blessings for Black people from 1852 – 1978 affect you and your family? How did it affect Black LDS people and their families? How do you suppose we came up with “explanations” for the priesthood ban? How do you suppose these explanations make Black LDS people feel? Do these ideas fit with how you understand God and the Plan of Happiness?
3. Read and reflect on the LDS Church’s official [Race and the Priesthood](#) essay and share it with others on social media. What are the common “explanations” you’ve heard for the ban, and why would the Church ask us to no longer use these

“explanations”? If appropriate, work with your ward leaders to encourage that this is read in a ward setting. Mormon Newsroom also has articles on diversity: [Unity in Diversity](#), [People and Place](#), [Difference and Dignity](#), and [Engaging the Differences Among Us](#) that can be read, shared on social media, and studied in ward settings, if appropriate.

4. Watch the series of videos available in the Church’s Media Library on [Race and the Priesthood](#) and share them on social media or on your ward’s Facebook page.
5. Study the [supports for Sunday School teachers](#) at the [Blacksinthescrptures.com](#) website and use these materials in a Sunday lesson plan during the coming year.
6. Read [Shoulder to the Wheel: Resources for Latter-day Saints Working to Face Racism, Abolish White Supremacy, and Become a Zion People](#), a resource put together by Latter-day Saint scholars and anti-racism advocates using scriptures, LDS Church materials, and educational information. Share it on social media.
7. Select one or two of the books or essays by Black Mormons listed in the “Resources” section of [Shoulder to the Wheel: Resources for Latter-day Saints Working to Face Racism, Abolish White Supremacy, and Become a Zion People](#). Read and share them on social media—Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook—with a comment about what you found meaningful or thought-provoking. This is important because there is so much racist and white supremacist content on social media, even content that uses LDS scriptures and images of apostles and prophets to support white supremacy.
8. Make a list of the ideas and stories you heard from your parents and teachers in LDS settings about race and African-Americans. Reflect on these prayerfully. Where do you suppose these ideas came from? How have they impacted Black LDS people? Do these ideas fit with how you understand the Plan of Happiness?
9. Watch [Nobody Knows: The Untold Story of Black Mormons](#) with your family, church class, or friends. How has the ban impacted Black LDS people? What can all LDS people learn from this history?
10. Visit (with your family or Church class, if appropriate) Jane Manning James’s grave in the Salt Lake City cemetery. In an 1895 letter to the First Presidency, James wrote, “Is there no blessings for me?” How did it feel for James to be excluded from the temple despite a lifetime of faithfulness and sacrifice? How does it affect Mormons today that our ancestors kept temples as segregated spaces? If you are able to visit the Payson LDS temple, look for an original portrait of Jane and reflect on what it would have meant for her to attend the temple in her own time.
11. If you do not remember the 1978 revelation, talk to an older member of your family or ward who does. What did they remember about the ban and its end? How have they seen the Church change over the years? What have they learned

from witnessing these changes?

12. Review the [list of ideas](#) developed by Black LDS people for positive changes in the church. Identify three ideas you and your family can adapt and apply in your home, or in your ward.
13. Take a moment to look at your family history—alone or with your family—in light of the information in [Shoulder to the Wheel: Resources for Latter-day Saints Working to Face Racism, Abolish White Supremacy, and Become a Zion People](#). If you are white, ask yourself how your family’s path would have been different if your ancestors happened to be born African-American. Locate advantages your family enjoyed on account of race, including access to GI Bill resources, or federally-insured home loans.
14. Hold a Family Home Evening using resources from [Shoulder to the Wheel: Resources for Latter-day Saints Working to Face Racism, Abolish White Supremacy, and Become a Zion People](#). Dedicate part of your FHE to practicing being an anti-racist upstander, not a bystander, by saying simple phrases like “This is not kind,” “This is not okay with me,” or “Please don’t say that.”
15. Suggest to your local leaders a special 5th Sunday meeting before June 2018 to prepare for the 40th anniversary of Official Declaration 2. Use materials from scripture, from the LDS Topics essay, or from [Shoulder to the Wheel: Resources for Latter-day Saints Working to Face Racism, Abolish White Supremacy, and Become a Zion People](#) booklet to prepare the lesson.
16. Bear your testimony of what you have learned from reflecting on the priesthood / temple ban and its end, including the importance of understanding and bearing one another’s burdens and being of one heart and mind.
17. Work with quorum, Relief Society, and auxiliary leadership in your ward as appropriate to make Sunday meetings and activities more welcoming to participation by people of color. When people of color share their perspectives in majority-white settings, leaders can help amplify and support them with simple affirmative statements: “I think Brother Johnson made an important point, and I’d like us to reflect on it a little while;” “I am thankful to Sister Davis for the courage she showed in sharing her experiences, and I want to say that I hear her and will think about what she has said.” It is also critical that leaders are prepared to firmly, lovingly, directly, and immediately engage members who express racism or use racial slurs in Church settings, whether or not a person of color is present to experience the racial insult.
18. Discuss [Shoulder to the Wheel: Resources for Latter-day Saints Working to Face Racism, Abolish White Supremacy, and Become a Zion People](#) with your Relief Society book group, student organization, quorum, or Church class.

## 6. FOR FURTHER READING

Continue to learn by reading these books and articles by LDS people of color:

Devan Mitchell, “A Black Mormon Man's Thoughts on Race, Priesthood, and the Church's Essay,” <i>LDS Living</i> (2017)	<a href="http://www.ldsliving.com/A-Black-Mormon-Mans-Thoughts-on-Race-Priesthood-and-the-Churchs-Essay/s/85553?page=1#story-content">http://www.ldsliving.com/A-Black-Mormon-Mans-Thoughts-on-Race-Priesthood-and-the-Churchs-Essay/s/85553?page=1#story-content</a>
Janan Graham Russell, “Choosing to Stay in the Mormon Church Despite its Racist Legacy,” <i>The Atlantic</i> (2016)	<a href="https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/black-and-mormon/497660/">https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/08/black-and-mormon/497660/</a>
Tamu Smith and Zandra Vranes, <i>Diary of Two Mad Black Mormons: Finding the Lord's Lessons in Everyday Life</i> (Ensign Peak, 2014)	sistasinzion.com
Darius Gray, “Diversity in the Mormon Church” (A four-part lecture series delivered at BYU in 2016)	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lep7tS81lwQ">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lep7tS81lwQ</a>
Marvin Perkins, “Blacks in the Scriptures” website, especially the lesson plan for teachers	blacksinthescriptures.com; see especially <a href="http://blacksinthescriptures.com/lesson-outline-for-teachers/">http://blacksinthescriptures.com/lesson-outline-for-teachers/</a>
Chieko Okazaki, “There is Always a Struggle” (Interview), <i>Dialogue</i> (2012)	<a href="https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V45N01_CO.pdf">https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_V45N01_CO.pdf</a>
Janan Graham Russell, “God Sees Us: Talking To Youth About Race and the Priesthood,” <i>Rational Faiths</i> blog	<a href="http://rationalfaiths.com/god-sees-us-talking-youth-race-priesthood/">http://rationalfaiths.com/god-sees-us-talking-youth-race-priesthood/</a>
Ahmad Corbitt, “Revelations in the Summer of 1978: A Personal Essay on Race and the Priesthood,” LDS.org “Church History” site	<a href="https://history.lds.org/article/personal-essay-on-race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng&amp;_r=1">https://history.lds.org/article/personal-essay-on-race-and-the-priesthood?lang=eng&amp;_r=1</a>
Natasha Smith, “Saying Goodbye to White Jesus,” <i>FEMWOC</i> blog	<a href="https://femwoc.com/2015/10/09/saying-goodbye-to-white-jesus/">https://femwoc.com/2015/10/09/saying-goodbye-to-white-jesus/</a>
Mica McGriggs, “The Doctrine of Christ is Social Justice,” <i>Huffington Post</i>	<a href="http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mica-mcgriggs/doctrine-of-christ_b_8125510.html">http://www.huffingtonpost.com/mica-mcgriggs/doctrine-of-christ_b_8125510.html</a>
Eliza M., “Brown people at church – No, we’re not all related!” <i>FEMWOC</i> blog	<a href="https://femwoc.com/2015/06/24/brown-people-at-church-no-were-not-all-related/">https://femwoc.com/2015/06/24/brown-people-at-church-no-were-not-all-related/</a>
Fatimah Saleh, “God of the Margins,” <i>Feminist Mormon Housewives</i> (2014)	<a href="http://www.feministmormonhousewives.org/2014/10/god-of-the-margins/">http://www.feministmormonhousewives.org/2014/10/god-of-the-margins/</a>
Zandra Vranes and LaShawn Camille, <i>Wander No More</i> (forthcoming 2018)	

We also recommend the following articles by LDS scholars:

Edward Kimball, “Spencer W. Kimball and the Revelation on Priesthood” (BYU Studies 2008)	<a href="https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/spencer-w-kimball-and-revelation-priesthood">https://byustudies.byu.edu/content/spencer-w-kimball-and-revelation-priesthood</a>
Paul Reeve, “My View: Black Lives Matter, Mormon Lives Matter,” <i>Deseret News</i> (2016)	<a href="http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865663240/My-view-Black-lives-matter-Mormon-lives-matter.">http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865663240/My-view-Black-lives-matter-Mormon-lives-matter.</a>

	html?pg=all
Peggy Fletcher Stack, “39 years later, priesthood ban is history, but racism within Mormon ranks isn’t, black members say,” <i>Salt Lake Tribune</i> (2017)	<a href="http://www.sltrib.com/news/5371962-155/39-years-later-priesthood-ban-is">http://www.sltrib.com/news/5371962-155/39-years-later-priesthood-ban-is</a>
Lester Bush, “Mormonism’s ‘Negro Doctrine’: An Historical Overview,” <i>Dialogue</i> (1973)	<a href="https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_Vo8No1_13.pdf">https://www.dialoguejournal.com/wp-content/uploads/sbi/articles/Dialogue_Vo8No1_13.pdf</a>
Paul Reeve and Ardis Parshall, BYU’s Neil A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, podcast on “Race in Mormonism in the 19th Century” (2015) or Paul Reeve, BYU’s Redd Center lecture on whiteness.	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zkwVge7Qa8">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-zkwVge7Qa8</a> <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38ghAZpmVL4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38ghAZpmVL4</a>