

NUNS & NONES | SPRING 2022

The Roots of Land Injustice

"LAND JUSTICE FUTURES" COURSE
COLONIZATION, RACISM, AND RE-IMAGINING SOLIDARITY

DISCUSSION GUIDE #2

Opening Prayer

Let us take a moment to give gratitude to the land on which we sit. Let us also give thanks for all those who have tended this land well: the Indigenous stewards who have lived in relationship with this land since time immemorial, and for those who have immigrated here since, whether through force or by choice. Give time to pause here. Let us now name aloud the Native Nation(s) on whose land each of us now sit.

After a few moments of quiet reflection, say together:

God of all Creation and God of the oppressed, enliven our hearts this Lenten Season with a true desire for repentance and renewal. Guide our discussion today, that we might be open to seeing new ways of restoring our relationships with the earth and with her past, present, and future stewards. We ask this through Jesus, who heals and restores and renews.

Review of Session

The legacy of racism and colonialism on this continent, rooted in the Church's Doctrine of Discovery, has led to ongoing land dispossession and vast inequalities of wealth and wellbeing in the United States. Much of the property and wealth held by our religious communities has come about in large part due to unjust laws and policies specifically designed to enable white institutions to inherit and amass land and wealth at the expense of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC).

In order to work toward a just distribution of land and wealth that benefits all, including the Earth herself, it is important to understand the injustice of our current land system. When we know the roots of the problem, we are better able to imagine land legacies rooted in solidarity and regeneration.



Reflection (15 minutes)

Consider quietly journaling for 5 minutes with the following prompts, then sharing with a partner or the whole group for another 10 minutes.

- What emotions/feelings did this workshop bring up?
- Where and how in my body do these emotions present themselves?
- If there's discomfort or resistance, spend some time exploring it. What needs might be present that this feeling is trying to care for?
- Do I hold any strong beliefs that this workshop challenged?
- Where am I being called to go deeper?

Discussion Prompts (30 minutes)

- What new information did you learn / perspectives did you gain from this session?
- Regarding the history of land theft and dispossession of BIPOC in this country, what do you think Nikki Sanchez means when she tells white people, "This history is not your fault, but it is absolutely your responsibility."
- What concrete steps might we take toward acknowledging the harm we as a Church and as a community have done through our active participation in systems that have done so much damage?
- What responsibilities might we have to respond to BIPOC calls for reparations, "landback," and repair?
- What do we know about organizing efforts being led by youth of color in our town, city, region? What do we know about local food security efforts, land/water defending, mutual aid societies, or cooperatives in our vicinity?

"This history is not your fault, but it is absolutely your responsibility."

– Nikki Sanchez



Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

“He came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house.’ And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, “He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner.” But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, “Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over” (Luke 19: 1-10).

Theologian and anti-racist advocate Jennifer Harvey talks about the importance of white Christians in the U.S. using the phrase “WWZD - What Would Zacchaeus Do?” instead of the once-popular “WWJD - What Would Jesus Do?” While Jesus was a member of an oppressed class of people within the Roman Empire, Zacchaeus was a man of some privilege. Harvey encourages Christians who have experienced the privileges of economic and social status — due in large part to the unjust theft of land, labor, and resources from Black and Indigenous peoples — to put themselves in the shoes of Zacchaeus, and imagine what it would look like for us, concretely, to “repay it four times over.”

More Resources

We are always updating the Land Justice Futures participants page with helpful resources for further study and support. Visit www.nunsandnones.org/ljf-participants and click on the corresponding session.

“Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over.”

—Luke 19:10
