

DISMANTLING RACISM DISCUSSION GUIDE

VOTER SUPPRESSION

BY THE REV. APRIL CASPERSON

*Director of Diversity and Inclusion,
West Ohio Conference of The United Methodist Church*



RELIGION & RACE
The United Methodist Church

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, we are in a polarizing season in the life of the United States. Help us to better understand how our votes matter. Push us into a life of faith that supports the rights of all people. Amen.

INTRODUCING THE DISCUSSION

 [WATCH THE CONVERSATION AND READ THE SUPPORTING COMMENTARY](#)

Rep. Emmanuel Cleaver II and Erin Hawkins speak about the intersections between faith, race and voting suppression.

SCRIPTURE

JEREMIAH 29: 4-7 (THE INCLUSIVE BIBLE)

Thus says YHWH Omnipotent, the God of Israel, to all the exiles I deported from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses to live in. Plant gardens and eat what they grow. Marry and raise daughters and sons. Find wives for your sons and husbands for your daughters, that they may bear daughters and sons. Multiply while you are there. Do not decrease. Rather, seek the peace and the prosperity of the city to which I exiled you. Pray to YHWH for it, for if it prospers, you will prosper.

DEVOTION/REFLECTION

Voter suppression is a topic that some say is separate from our faith. However, God's preferential care for those who do not have voice is found throughout the biblical narrative. God often instructs God's people to "take up space" – to have a voice, to speak on behalf of the voiceless, and to ensure that all have what they need.

Jeremiah 29 outlines the specific directives God gives God's people when they are in exile: create a home, establish roots, and trust God while seeking health and wholeness for the place they are in. Voting – along with all acts of civic duty – is a form of seeking the peace and prosperity of the places we live in. Voter suppression is the act of taking away voice from the residents in an area, removing their agency and ability to make an impact on their community.

Voter suppression is a topic that has been present in the United States for generations and the issue did not disappear with the previous presidential election. Consider who in your community is being kept from the polls. What is your role as a person of faith in ensuring that all people have the ability to seek the peace and prosperity of their community?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What does Jeremiah's letter to the exiles say about engaging with the community in which they live?
- What does it mean to "seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you...?"
- Do you see any connections between voting, civic engagement and "living fully in one's community?"

