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From the Editor

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From the Editor

In his recent book, *Dear Church: A Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the U.S.*, Lenny Duncan reminds us that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is 96 percent white—the whitest in the land. The colleges and universities affiliated with that church body are much more diverse, and are continuing to diversify quickly. And yet, most if not all of them remain historically, predominantly, and persistently white institutions.

What is more, even if our student populations and (more slowly) faculty and administrator populations are increasingly “including” underrepresented groups, that “inclusion” is only the first step toward the *full* inclusion, the sense of belonging, and the equal justice that we want everyone on our campuses to experience. How do we teachers and administrators at historically, predominantly, and persistently white institutions turn from the white privilege and even the white supremacy (in the broadest sense) in which so many of us have been schooled, and from which we receive a legion of cultural and material benefits? How can our campuses become spaces in which people of color thrive and where white people get re-formed into antiracist allies?

These are difficult questions, and our responses must be courageous and ongoing. This summer, I was honored to join Dr. Monica Smith, Augustana’s inaugural Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, as part of a campus cohort attending the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Institute at Villanova University. One lesson that I learned more deeply there is just how painful and recursive (a Christian might add, *repentant*) the healing of racial truth-telling is. There is no way of going forward toward full inclusion and equality without going back through the stories that we have told about our country, our religious heritage, and our institutions.

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Leaders at my institution proudly speak of our founding as a Lutheran college for immigrants and others who did not have access to higher education. This year, we also commemorate a national Black Power Symposium that was held—not without controversy—on our campus fifty years ago.

While we rightfully tell these positive stories, we also need to return to our blind spots, exclusions, and injustices, however unintentional they were and are. For example, while celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of our Black Student Union at homecoming last year, it became clear that a number of our alumni of color had little ongoing relationship with the college. Some graduates hadn’t set foot on campus since graduating fifty years ago, even though they still live just a few miles away. They came “home” for the special BSU homecoming event, but did not otherwise think of our college as a *home* for *them*. Why not? Our work is to keep asking and answering that question as truthfully as possible.

It is in that spirit that the planning committee organized the 2019 Vocation of a Lutheran College conference under the theme: “Beyond Privilege: Engaging Diversity, Inclusion and Equity” and that the authors put forward the following essays. They are written by faculty, diversity officers, chaplains, and provosts; by white folks and persons of color; by males and females and non-binary persons. We hope that together they inspire and structure the truth-telling work of moving from diversity to full inclusion and equity for everyone on our campuses.

