

***Living into God's Dream: Dismantling Racism in America* by Dr. Catherine Meeks**

**Book Study Guest
Discussion Leader**

Chapters 3 & 4

Lauretta Grier

Live: 11/5 @ 2-3 PM

Online: 11/8 @ 7:30-8:30 PM



*For 6 weeks in October and November leaders from the community will guide both a live and online book discussion on “**Living into God's Dream: Dismantling Racism in America**,” a collection of essays edited by Dr. Catherine Meeks. Each guest leader(s) will post a reflection on a chapter(s).*

Reflection *The reflection for Chapters 3 & 4 is from Lauretta Grier*

Chapter 3: Why is this Black Woman Still Talking about Race?

Chapter 4: It is So Hard to be Black in America

“We must return and claim our past in order to move toward our future. It is in understanding who we were that will free us to embrace who we now are.” Quote from the book: **Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome-America's Legacy of Enduring Injury and Healing**; Author Joy DeGruy, PH.D.

After reading both chapters, the summary conclusion that I came to is that we can't say enough about the role our history has played in producing negative perceptions and images that have shaped our behavior. We rarely look at our history to show how African Americans have adapted behavior over the centuries to survive the effects of slavery, the Jim Crow era, blatant intimidation by hate groups, and institutional racism. We also discount how the effects of false beliefs and fears have continued to shape the behavior of White Americans.

Chapter 3 states, “*Racial healing is the foundation upon which justice and reconciliation can be built.*” But the rush to reconciliation, without clearly understanding the different journeys that African Americans and White Americans have to take, can result in inauthentic discovery. For African Americans, this journey is based in emotional pain and gut-wrenching events. It has its roots in the history of slavery and today in daily micro-aggressions toward them that collectively affect self-esteem and self-image. While small acts are survivable, over time, they can lead to internal oppression. The following quote illustrates this, “*For centuries, African American people have struggled with projection of a false reality based on the notion of white supremacy. Black hair, skin and ways of living in the world have been presumed inferior as all things white were considered normative or desirable.*” Many African Americans have managed to create a life of reasonable stability (resilience) in this country, but the reality of living where a raced based assault can occur at any time can have a major impact on them. On the other hand, White Americans can experience race based behavior as inappropriate or unacceptable. They can be very understanding of why racist behavior occurs, but this is experienced at a cognitive level and has a different history for them. It does not affect perception of self and can be discussed as a conceptual framework separate from self and behavior. This is apparent with the concept of white privilege. Many White Americans can’t see the advantages of privilege, let alone see how it influences their perceptions or behavior. But African Americans and White Americans must both see the value of their own paths and the impact that their experiences have on forming authentic relationships.

The journey toward healing and reconciliation lies in our abilities to accept the legitimacy of each other’s journey facing racism. If we truly can integrate our hearts and minds, we can move to establishing the “Beloved Community” by developing a place where people can truly see the face of God in one another.

Biography

Lauretta Williams Grier

Lauretta retired from the Federal government in 2004 after 36 years of Federal service. She worked at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (DHUD) for 26 years in several management and professional positions in training and employee development, employee assistance and health, and organizational development. Her first ten years were spent at the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Food and Drug Administration as a Biological Laboratory Technician in Histopathology. While working at NIH, she went to college and received an AA. in Mental Health, a BA. in

Social Welfare-Counseling, and a MA T in Counseling. This later led to a highly competitive internship at DHUD.

Her most noteworthy accomplishment at DHUD was becoming the first Departmental Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Director. In this position, she wrote the first policy and program procedures and through the EAP provided counseling and referral services through a network of counseling professionals to all employees nationwide. Most memorable for her while working as the EAP Director in 1995, was providing counseling services to survivors and family members who survived the Oklahoma City bombing. She worked tirelessly in the immediate aftermath and it took nine years to restore surviving employees back to health and full service. For this work, Laretta received many awards and was given the American flag that was flown over the new Federal building in Oklahoma City on May 3, 2004.

Laretta's passion has always been to make a difference in lives of women and children. She has counseled and mentored many in the community and the workplace. After retirement, she worked for the Calvert County Health Department-Substance Abuse Program where she taught "Guiding Good Choices" to parents and teens. This passion is also reflected in all of her volunteer work on the Citizen's Review Board for Children in Prince Georges, and Calvert County for 19 years, two terms of the Calvert County Family Network Board of Director's, twelve years as a member, education chair, health chair and Vice President of Concerned Black Women, a member and officer of the Southern Maryland Community Network Board of Directors for several terms, a member of Closing the Gap Coalition, a member of the Calvert Library Foundation Board of Directors and many other volunteer activities. Most recently in March, 2017, Laretta was named in a book among other women as "Inspiring African American Women of Calvert County."

Laretta was born in Washington DC and grew up there. She moved to Calvert County in September, 2000 with her husband Barry. She has two daughters, a son-in-law, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. She is a charter member of Tri-County Maryland Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. In her spare time, she loves floral crafts and collecting dolls (350 at last count).