

‘Unchained’: What Christians Need to Know About the Generational Trauma of Racism

The American Association of Christian Counselors (AACC) has made racial reconciliation a major focus of its 2017 World Conference, which is currently being held at the Gaylord Opryland Resort in Nashville.

On Wednesday, a newly formed commission focused on racial reconciliation gathered clinical, academic and religious leaders to discuss, strategize and pray for the nation at a time of heightened racial tension.

The commission was formed to advise the AACC on how it can best guide and train its network of nearly 50,000 mental health professionals, Christian counselors, church leaders and other caregivers to foster racial reconciliation. Recently produced AACC curricula has focused on African-American and Latino communities, as well as policing issues. The group committed to reconvene in 2018 in a public and online forum with the hope of exponentially multiplying the impact of their work and research.

Michael Crear, executive director of the Multicultural Division of the AACC and a member of the commission, said that, when it comes to race, “true forgiveness, true repentance, true respect” can only be offered and received by “grasping the love of Christ.” He added that racial reconciliation must go even further than “a color thing to a spiritual, heart thing.”

A documentary presented by the American Bible Society (ABS) called “Unchained: Generational Trauma and Healing” was debuted Thursday evening to a standing-room only crowd. A therapeutic experience in and of itself, the panel discussion

that followed on racial reconciliation dissected the issue and welcomed audience comments.

AACC executive board member Dr. Michael Lyles voiced that racism must be explicitly identified by the church as sin, otherwise “we’re not asking a question that Jesus can answer, and that perpetuates the generational problem.”

When asked by an audience member about the AACC’s perspective on recent racial controversies and the government’s role in the solution, AACC executive board member Dr. Diane Langberg replied, “there’s a call to the church here that is way beyond what government not only is doing but can do.”

The American Association of Christian Counselors is committed to supplying the church with the tools needed to fulfill that call.

“Today, we called 7,000 mental-health professionals to get directly involved in building bridges of healing across America’s racial divide,” said Dr. Tim Clinton, president of the AACC.

The AACC is the world’s largest and most diverse association of Christian counselors. Its conferences feature some of America’s leading mental health experts, clinicians and ministry leaders. The AACC equips thousands of Christians to care for hurting people and overcome the persistent stigma associated with mental health challenges. More than 7,000 mental health professionals and ministry leaders—including leading psychologists, psychiatrists, professional counselors and marriage and family therapists—are gathered this week in Nashville for the AACC’s biennial World Conference.