



Dr. Phillip Klinkner

Continued Struggles in Race Relations

Dr. Phillip Klinkner is a political scientist, blogger, and author. He is noted for his work on American politics, especially political parties and elections, race and American politics, and American political history. He is currently the James S. Sherman Professor of Government at Hamilton College in central New York. In his book, *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of Racial Equality in America*, Dr. Klinkner and his coauthor Rogers Smith argue America's record of race relations cannot be categorized as consistent, gradual advancement toward equality but rather as a series of dramatic moments where multiple factors aligned to advance or hinder progress. The book was the winner of the W. E. B. Du Bois Institute's Horace Mann Bond Book Award and was named as a semifinalist for the 2000 Robert F. Kennedy Book Award.

Introduction to the Continued Struggles in Race Relations Video

In *Continued Struggles in Race Relations*, Dr. Phillip Klinkner confirms that the vestiges of racism for many people of color remain and have not been eradicated. Nor have the practices of institutions in the United States been aligned with democratic ideals of liberty for all. Dr. Klinkner argues that the advance of equality has been unsteady with brief and isolated periods of improvement and long steady stretches of stagnation and retreat.

Video

Watch *Continued Struggles in Race Relations*, <http://www.gcorr.org/video/continued-struggles-in-american-race-relations-2/> (11:48)

Discussion Questions

1. What were the three periods of improvement for racial equality in U.S. history? During these periods, what were indicators of progress in equality?
2. From the 1940s, how did advocates for equality make comparisons between the fight for democracy abroad and the lack of democracy for African Americans in the United States?
3. After the wars, how did retrenchment, retreat, and roll-backs increase inequality for African Americans? Why did racist ideology make a comeback after the wars? How was such racist ideology expressed?
4. Based on Dr. Klinkner's research and our own knowledge, what role has the U.S. Christian churches and other religious institutions in the struggles for racial equality? If you were grading the church on forwarding racial justice, what would that grade be? Why?
5. What lessons have the abolitionists taught us in the face of hopelessness in dismantling racism? What can we learn from William Lloyd Garrison, quoted at the end of this session?

Closing Prayer in Unison

Light a candle as a reminder of the Holy Spirit's presence.

Almighty God, thank You for opening our eyes to the relationship between history and our lives today. May we lengthen the stretches of advancements in equality. May we speak up, loudly fighting, and acting quickly, shortening the long periods in which little progress is made against racism. Amen.

On this subject, I do not wish to think, or to speak, or write, with moderation. No! no! Tell a man whose house is on fire to give a moderate alarm; tell him to moderately rescue his wife from the hands of the ravisher; tell the mother to gradually extricate her babe from the fire into which it has fallen; —but urge me not to use moderation in a cause like the present. I am in earnest—I will not equivocate—I will not excuse—I will not retreat a single inch—AND I WILL BE HEARD.

~ William Lloyd Garrison, 1831

Session 6: Continued Struggles in Race Relations

And you must be responsible for the bodies of the powerful—the policeman who crack you with a nightstick will quickly find his excuse in your furtive movements . . . You cannot forget how much they transfigured our very bodies into sugar, tobacco, cotton, and gold.

~ Ta-Nehisi Coates, Between the World and Me (2015)

Check-in

Ask about everyone's week, along with prayer requests for joys and sorrows.

Open with Prayer