Challenging Christian Hegemony: Practical Tools for Recognizing and Resisting Seventeen Hundred Years of Christian Dominance

This issue of my newsletter is about Christian hegemony, the dominance of the western form of Christianity that came to power when the Romans made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century. It is one of the longest-standing systems of institutionalized power in the West. Christian hegemony, the everyday, pervasive, deep-seated and institutionalized dominance of society by Christian institutions, Christian leaders, and Christians as a group, has deeply shaped our lives. Some of that influence is visible in our laws, customs, beliefs and practices, and our public policy. Other parts of that influence have become nearly invisible, secularized, “common-sense” forms of knowing and being in the world.

What is the full impact of Christian beliefs and institutions on our society?

It is difficult to overestimate the impact of Christian dominance in the United States. To give just a few examples, we are currently fighting wars in three Muslim countries which began with our President declaring a crusade against an “axis of evil”. In 2009 we witnessed a Christian kill a doctor who provided abortions for women. Also in 2009 we saw the defeat of marriage equality in California in a referendum funded heavily by the Mormon and Catholic churches. In our communities Christians continue to target Arab Americans and Muslims for discrimination, exclusion and hate crimes. The examples are endless but often not seem as connected to each other nor as representative of a system of oppression deeply embedded in our society.

Although individual Christians and some non-dominant forms of Christianity have contributed greatly to human well-being, the impact of Christian hegemony has been terribly destructive, directly contributing to crusades, inquisitions, colonization, slavery, genocide, and war. Therefore this newsletter is also part of the launch of a bigger project to help people recognize, analyze, and resist all forms of Christian hegemony.

The Uprooting Christian Hegemony Project includes:

Website—www.christianhegemony.org including articles, exercises, links, resources, a blog, and a downloadable booklet

Booklet—an introduction to Christian dominance in our language and vocabulary. It is available from the website as a printed booklet or a downloadable PDF.

Book—currently in draft form—an introduction to Christian hegemony, how it operates in our thinking, behavior, public and foreign policy, how it has been resisted, and how we can challenge it.

Workshops and trainings—I have been offering talks, workshops, and trainings on the subject of Christian hegemony for Christian, non-Christian, and mixed groups for a while and will continue to provide such
opportunities for people to gather and address this issue.

Blog—short sections, inviting feedback, using articles, commentary, reviews, and other resources.

I see this as a collective project and I welcome and encourage all forms of positive participation and feedback.

NEW BOOKLET: "THE LANGUAGE OF DOMINANT CHRISTIANITY"

About "The Language of Dominant Christianity":

The language we use is an indication of the deep structures of the way we think. The vocabulary, phrasings, and both explicit and implicit meaning of English words and concepts reflect our long history and the influence of many cultures, religions, and ideas of both dominant and resistant groups.

Some of the influence of Christianity is very visible in our laws, customs, beliefs, and practices. Other parts of that influence have become nearly invisible, secularized, "common-sense" forms of knowing and being in the world. One way to identify both levels is to examine our language and the ways it represents, reflects, and reproduces Christian dominance. This pamphlet on the language of Christian hegemony is an attempt to widen the discussion about the impact of Christian dominance on individuals and institutions in the United States and in other Christian dominated societies.

"The Language of Dominant Christianity" is an 84-page booklet on the pervasiveness of Christian thought and values in the English language. The majority of this booklet is comprised of an extensive vocabulary list discussing the origin and application of specific words.

This booklet is available in a printed version and as a downloadable PDF.

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN HEGEMONY?

I define Christian hegemony as the everyday, pervasive, and systematic set of Christian values and beliefs, individuals and institutions that dominate all aspects of our society through the social, political, economic, and cultural power they wield. Nothing is unaffected by Christian hegemony (whether we are Christian or not) including our personal beliefs and values, our relationships to other people and to the natural environment, and our economic, political, education, health care, criminal/legal, housing, and other social systems.

Available now!
Only $4.95
(plus $2 shipping)
or a PDF download
for $3.50 from
christianhegemony.org

LIVING IN A CHRISTIAN DOMINANT CULTURE: AN EXERCISE

Read more...
Tell the group that you are going to read a series of statements and that each person to whom a statement applies should stand up after that statement is read. Tell the group that everyone is being asked to participate. Those who are physically unable to stand may raise their hand to indicate that they are part of the group standing.

Please stand silently if:

1. You have ever attended church regularly.

2. You ever attended Sunday school as a child, or attended church periodically, e.g. during Christian holidays.

3. You ever attended a Christian-based recreational organization as a young person, such as the YMCA or YWCA, or church-based summer camp, or participated in a program of a non-religious youth organization which was based in Christian beliefs such as the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts.

Read the entire exercise...

SUGGESTED RESOURCES ABOUT CHRISTIAN HEGEMONY

Websites

About.com: agnosticism/atheism on Christian privilege

Americans United for Separation of Church and State

Challenging Christian Zionism

Freedom From Religion Foundation

Jews On First

Islamophobia Watch

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life

Political Research Associates

Religion Dispatches

Religious Right Alert

Religious Tolerance

Sojourners

Talk to Action

Texas Freedom Network

Videos

American Holocaust (nd)

At Play in the Fields of the Lord (1991)
**But I'm a Cheerleader** (1999)

**Constantine’s Sword** (2007)

**The Crucible** (1957)

**Fierce Light** (2008)

**For the Bible Tells Me So** (2007)

**In the Light of Reverence** (2001)

**Kingdom of Heaven** (2005)

**The Mission** (1986)

**The Nasty Girl** (1990)

**Rabbit Proof Fence** (2002)

**Romero** (1989)

**Saved!** (2004)

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**LET'S BUILD A US FOR ALL OF US**

**No Room for Racism**

“We long for a country that lifts all of us up, dares to care, offers love, generosity, and justice. We reject the racism that keeps us divided. We celebrate our interdependence and our capacity to love our neighbors as ourselves.”

I am involved with a growing national network of white anti-racist educators, activists, and citizens who are outraged at the high level of racism visible in public discourse around health care reform, immigrant rights, the response to the Haitian disaster, etc. Building a US for all of us is an opportunity for white people to step up as allies to people of color. Sign the petition, join or create a local group, support the work of grass-roots organizations led by people of color. Get Involved!

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**THE OAKLAND MEN'S PROJECT**

The Oakland Men's Project operated from 1979 to 1999 doing groundbreaking men's violence prevention work locally and nationally. This is a picture of some of us who gathered January 9, 2010 for the 30th reunion of the project. Former OMP staff, board members, participants, and family members met to reconnect with each other and to reflect on and celebrate the impact of our work together over the years.
A NEW GRANDCHILD

Seen here with his mother, Amanda, Mateo Shiloha Salzman Luckey was born on July 20, 2009.