

WYF_Ep88_BestOf_Daniel Hill

Rasool Berry: [00:00:00] Hey y'all, it's Rasool Berry. Thanks for joining me on this special *Best of Where Ya From?* episode. We went back and selected some of our favorite conversations to share with you so that no matter when you started listening to *Where Ya From?*, you could check them out. Today, I wanted to share our episode with Pastor Daniel Hill from season one.

I love Daniel's story not only because he is so passionate about justice in the church and in our society, but because his story illustrates so well the heart of where you're from. Daniel's eyes were opened to what he never saw before because he listened to the story of another. His story offered hope to me that people can change when they listen with an empathetic ear to the experiences of those around them. So thanks for listening and enjoy this *Best of Where Ya From?* episode featuring Daniel Hill.

Daniel Hill: I think that's the easiest way to bottom line what race is, that it's a story about human value. [00:01:00] God says human value is tied to our image and likeness of God, right? The Bible says human value is tied to the doctrine of the Imago Dei. Race says that your value is not tied to the Imago Dei. It's tied to where you fall on the racial hierarchy.

Daniel Ryan Day: This is *Where Ya From?*, a podcast for those who believe it's important to stop and listen before we speak. Join us as we ask another Christian thought leader where you're from and discover how their life experiences and expertise, even if we may disagree with something they say, offer us an important perspective that's worth thinking about.

Rasool Berry: Welcome to *Where Ya From?*. I'm Rasool Berry. We all have blind spots in our lives. Like when we can't see a stain on a shirt, or a mark left on our face. But blind spots can cause damage too. Like a blind spot when you're driving that causes a car accident. And then there are blind spots in our beliefs or experiences. And those can be even more difficult to see.

On this episode of *Where Ya From?*, we want to think about what happens when those blind spots prevent us from seeing racial injustice and inequality. Today, I'm talking to Daniel Hill about his journey in discovering his own blind spot. It all started when a friend asked Daniel to learn about Daniel's own culture, something he didn't even realize he had.

This was the beginning of a process that led to what he later called becoming "white awake". And as we will find out today, he was not always aware of racial hierarchy or his own internal bias toward men and women of color. Let's

begin with asking pastor and author Daniel Hill about overcoming his blind spots on where you're from.

Daniel Hill: I was 24. I was working at a large church here in the suburbs, and I was officiating a wedding. And it was a White woman and a man whose parents were from immigrants from India. And he said, hey, you're going [00:03:00] to get a deep dive into Indian culture. And so that night before the wedding rehearsal, you know, they had all the kind of Indian cuisine and dancing and music.

And it was a real cultural immersion for me. And it was a very magical experience for me. So, I went to thank him for inviting us and, uh, this is a gregarious guy who very rarely talked about serious things. But when I went up to him and I said, hey, thank you so much for this. I'm so grateful to have been able to see your culture and I lament that as a white person, I don't have a culture, so this was a real gift to me.

And he got very serious, put his hand on my shoulder and he said, "Daniel, not only do you have a culture. But when your culture comes in contact with other cultures, that almost always wins. One of the greatest gifts you could give me for my wedding is to actually get serious about learning your own culture."

And then he went back out onto the dance floor and kind of left me standing there. But that, of all the moments where I could have seen it, for whatever reason, that was the one where God, God just kind of broke something open in that. I was actually more offended than anything. . .

Rasool Berry: Really? So I was going to ask, how did that feel?

I don't want to overstate the like, [00:04:00] yeah. Uh, well, you know, it felt because I was so naive about it that I really did believe I didn't have a culture. And then to not only think I had a culture, but to believe that all white people from all European countries could somehow be lumped into this idea called white culture.

And then that he was kind of insinuating that there was kind of a power dynamic. Like at every level, I felt kind of offended by his suggestion. And so, if I'm being honest, it was less of a learning posture, more of a defensive posture of wanting to discredit what he had said. But that really needing to understand what he had said, again, the kind of journey of my kind of quote unquote "white awake".

Rasool Berry: So what was the thing that was what you thought, uh, your faith was emphasizing and teaching.

Daniel Hill: Growing up?

Rasool Berry: Yeah, prior to. . .

Daniel Hill: Yeah, I would say, you know, the term we use for now is colorblind. I would say that's the term my dad who was a pastor didn't use that term. But I feel like the secular version of colorblind the Christian version are similar but slightly different. So, I would have had the Christian version. The Christian version, which is not all wrong, yt's just [00:05:00] partially dangerous. But the Christian version kind of minimizes racial cultural differences, right?

It says we're all human beings We're all made in God's image. We're all sinners in need of a Savior, right? And so the commonness of humanities which should be emphasized and then there's kind of an asterisk in there that like talking about racial cultural differences actually makes the problem worse. That you're bringing up unnecessary kinds of hurts and pains when really what we should be focusing on is the common experience.

Rasool Berry: I've heard that. And even focusing on the gospel, that it's a distraction.

Daniel Hill: Yeah. I would say those are two different things. Yeah. Yeah. I think the colorblind approach is kind of basing itself on kind of, yeah, focusing on the commonality. And then I do, I think there's a whole another issue of like the way we talk about the gospel that also I think kind of hinders our ability to have these conversations.

Rasool Berry: In the sense of as it related directly to the issue of race and ethnicity, it was like, hey, let's just focus on our commonness, not our distinctions. And then if you had to say like in that time period, how you understood [00:06:00] the essential core message of Christianity to the world, what would it have been before this experience? Before that conversation on the wedding day tour.

Daniel Hill: Yeah, right, the kind of theological conversion that we go through, kind of deepening the gospel, right? Um, so yeah. It's like separate but linked, right? So I would say in a word probably it's justice. Sadly still in a lot of white evangelical spaces in particular, which is kind of what I've formed, anything that's around, anything that's outside of just spiritual justice of us being made

right with God, anything that kind of touches the social realm is often seen as kind of a social gospel that's outside of the core dimension.

Not only outside of the core dimension, the gospel, but even potentially kind of a threat to it. So, you're right. Like to be able to have the spiritual equipment needed to have these conversations, you actually have to have a deeper understanding of the gospel than we often have. And I definitely think those two things are related for sure.

Rasool Berry: Okay. So, you had this mindset coming in of emphasis on commonness and whatnot. Then you have this abrupt confrontation on, uh, at [00:07:00] this, uh, wedding.

Daniel Hill: Yeah.

Rasool Berry: And so then what do you do after that conversation? Like that challenge that you were given, you know, the gift that you can give me to learn about your culture and understand that it's power. What did you do with that?

Daniel Hill: It was a long process. I understand better what was happening now looking back than I did during it. Um, the initial confusion that happens, I started asking around in my own circles, my own white Christian evangelical circles. And what I realized is just people in my circle just didn't talk about stuff like this.

They didn't talk about culture. They didn't talk about race. So, there was one of two responses. It was just straight-out confusion. Like, what are you asking? I don't even understand. Or there was this thing we had just addressed where like, there's kind of this programming we have that if you're talking about race or justice kind of issues, something about that feels dangerous.

So I would alternate between kind of just indifference and then kind of suspicion within my own circles. And so that actually felt confusing in a way that it hadn't before. Because I hadn't been thinking about it, so I wasn't aware of that. But now that I was trying to understand, and while I was still in a defensive posture, I was trying to [00:08:00] understand. And it just was not being talked about in the circles I was in.

Rasool Berry: And what was it exactly that you were trying to understand in those conversations?

Daniel Hill: Uh, well, I was trying to understand, uh, biblically, how to think about culture. And then I think more significantly trying to make sense of the

American system of race from a biblical perspective was something that there was just zero resources within the evangelical community.

Rasool Berry: So, it's almost like that moment gave you an awareness of wait a minute. Like there's stuff going on. About how our differences. . .

Daniel Hill: Right. And there's stuff happening in our world right now. Right. And my Christianity doesn't know how to speak to it. Exactly.

Rasool Berry: So then you start asking and then initially it sounds like there wasn't a whole lot of help. So then what do you do?

Daniel Hill: So I really did take kind of a crooked journey because it actually led to a faith crisis for me, honestly. Because I had to go outside of the church to start studying race. And when you study race outside of the church, you find that people are very antagonistic about religion. Because the general perspective is that religion has made the matters way worse than they already were and has been a complicit partner [00:09:00] to a lot of the chaos that's been created. And so honestly, there, there was this period of a couple of years where as I was learning about race and learning how the church didn't talk about race, it did kind of start to elicit this question of me of like, "Are you Christian just because it's what you grew up in?"

You know, and if you would have grown up in India, would have you been Hindu? And if you would have grown up in the Middle East, would you have been Muslim? You know, and, um, I used to always thought, no, but I started to wonder, am I only a Christian because I grew up in a white setting, right? Because when I got outside of that white Christian bubble, there was so much hostility about white Christianity.

And so, so it was, I can summarize now, but the reality of it was a two-to-three-year journey of trying to make sense of it. That in order to understand the problem of race, I had to go outside of the church. And every time I try to come back into the church to make sense of it, I would be received kind of with, again, either indifference or skepticism or even outright hostility.

Rasool Berry: That's wild. Okay. So, so then, you know, it sounds like there's still, you're hitting walls. You're hitting walls. When, when do you experience a breakthrough with all this?

Daniel Hill: Well, [00:10:00] um, I'm gonna like risk oversimplification here. But what I started realizing was that Jesus I had grown up in white evangelical spaces wasn't big enough to have these conversations. And when I learned about

race outside of the church, I realized that without Jesus, there's no way to have these conversations.

Rasool Berry: Okay. Now there's some people that'll hear you say the Jesus that I grew up with wasn't big enough. And that can go in a whole lot of different directions. Explain, cause some people might say, are you saying that Jesus isn't big enough to deal with race? Wait a minute. What do you mean by that?

Daniel Hill: The Jesus I love is the one, the Colossians 1 Jesus, who's over all things and reconciling all things to himself. I just think, uh, that I didn't get to learn that full of Jesus growing up. Again, for one, even when we've addressed one of them, this, this kind of false dichotomy between spiritual transformation and social transformation is I think an affront to Jesus, right? He's so clearly integrated those together, and how he preached about the kingdom and taught about the kingdom and lived out the kingdom.

Um, I would say the ideology of white [00:11:00] supremacy is one of the greatest threats to kind of the soul of our country and most white Christians have no idea how to think about that biblically. Which means to me, they don't have a big enough Jesus. Because the biggest threat that's facing us all of our country, there's not even like elementary understanding of it within the white Christian church, generally speaking.

And to me, that's a sign like we can't fight this thing. Jesus is the one who's fighting this. We need to join Him. But the fact that we don't even know it's a fight and that we don't know how to join the fight to me says we have too small of a view of Jesus.

Rasool Berry: Got it. Got it. Well, I want to get there, but first I want to kind of, cause like you said, that was a two-to-three-year journey. You wanted to incorporate some of these things you were learning into a new phase of ministry. You know, share tell us a little more about that.

Daniel Hill: Yeah, well at the time diversity was kind of the main thing I was trying to pursue. I started a little satellite thing in the city through that and a big part of our goal was to like start diving more deeply into content ideas of culture diversity and social justice and stuff like that. So those were very central facets for it.[00:12:00] We were just having very little luck, you know No matter how much I talked about no matter how much I pushed for it.

Rasool Berry: What were your expectations of what you would see happen when you got there?

Daniel Hill: You know, honestly, I had just such a naive understanding of like, I thought the separation was just because nobody was trying, right? Like I thought segregation within the church was because nobody was trying or nobody was talking about it. And so, I mean, if I'm being honest, that was back when the matriarch was popular, right? And so I had like very much a messianic kind of complex where I thought I'd be the Neo, you know, right? Like show up in the city and everybody be like, where has this church been?

You know, and like perfect percentages of each racial group come together in harmony, you know, within the city. So, I think I probably did at some level think all those things were going to happen. Because I preached on it every single week. We talked about it nonstop. That was the complaint that came back was that I had lost sight of the gospels.

I talked about cultural diversity so much as well as just as so much. Um, so yeah, I was all in. But even still it was, yeah, I had made almost no dent whatsoever. So, I realized this was a much bigger thing than I had given it credit for.

Rasool Berry: And then what did you call it?

Daniel Hill: Metro 212.

Rasool Berry: And why did you call it Metro?

[00:13:00] Um, Bill Hybels used to use this analogy of 212 degrees that that's kind of where water turns to steam. So it's kind of the point of transformation. So, it's kind of this idea of like we're in the city, we were pursuing transformation together. It's a way to kind of merge together a couple images.

Rasool Berry: That's a pretty. . . yeah, that's a pretty bold, and you know, huge expectation. That this is going to be the turning point. And so when did you realize, wow, this is not like going. . . Like, there's usually an event or a moment where you, you know, as a leader of like leading something where you go, this isn't it, this isn't doing it. When did you realize that?

Daniel Hill: Well, I, you know, I mean, I knew pretty quickly. It was a working in the sense that it grew very quickly, but it was all white, you know. And so it was obvious that there was a lot of white people who agreed with me that we should have a culturally diverse thing in the city that pursue transformation.

So, at a superficial level, I knew we weren't accomplishing the vision we had hoped for. But it was when there was a black leader in the city who saw what

we were doing. And he invited me to meet with some core pastors. There's four pastors from the different big [00:14:00] racial groups in the city. So there was a black pastor, white pastor, Korean American pastor, Puerto Rican pastor.

And again, I had my kind of neo moment. I thought I was going to come in there and explain this to them. They're going to be like, Oh, wow, this is amazing. Where have you been? Right. So, I shared with this vision where we're trying to do and where I was getting stuck at the Puerto Rican pastor went first and he said, I'm trying to listen to you, but everything you say is so paternalistic. It's really hard to stomach. And I'm embarrassed to say I had never heard the term paternalistic before. So if I wouldn't have seen his face, I wouldn't have known if it was a positive or negative term. But it was clear from his intonation that it was a negative term. Um, so I wrote that down in my notebook.

Don't be paternalistic. Well, look up paternalistic and then don't, don't be paternalistic.

Rasool Berry: What, what, what is it?

Daniel Hill: Um, paternalistic is, it's, it's rude in the sense that you think you're above somebody else. That you think you're fundamentally superior. So that even if you're equals, or in this case I was younger than them, but you still feel like in a fatherly kind of a way, you can tell people what to do and where they should go.

Rasool Berry: Cause you're just kind of the answer. . .

Daniel Hill: Yeah. [00:15:00] That you've got the answers and that they need those answers. Um, then the Korean American pastor went next and he said, you keep talking about cultural diversity. But everything I heard you say was in kind of a black-white frame. Like, do you have, I mean, do you have any idea how broad of a term Asian American is? Do you have any idea how many different countries and histories and even intercultural kind of conflicts that represents? Like, tell me what you've done to understand that.

And I was like, yeah, learn everything about Asian history. All right. That was like my second, you know, and then, um, the white pastor next thing he said, if I had a dollar for every white person who thought they were going to save the city, I'd be a rich man by now. So if you're even here in five years, I'll be shocked.

All right. Stay at least five years. And then the black pastor went last and he actually said um, I think it's noble what you're trying to do. But even if you

could figure this out, like the segregation still goes so deep in Chicago. Black people never go to a church pastored by a white person. So you just be. . .you could save yourself a lot of harm if you just like kind of bailed now. So I think that's when I realized like yeah I'm, not some gift to the city, and I'm not entering into something where this isn't [00:16:00] already being wrestled with. Like this is a centuries old sinful, diabolical, dark kind of history that's here. And, um, I need to like, stop trying to save everything and like, you need to go on a pretty serious journey of learning now.

Rasool Berry: That sounds like a very hard meeting. Like, 0 for 4, right? Like. . . yeah, right, right. But I think I need, I

Daniel Hill: Yeah, right, right. But I think I need, if there would have been any ambiguity, I might have kind of heard something different. So I think it was really important for me to realize, like, I'm not part right and part wrong or close to just need to tweak something. And so I needed something that, I mean, you're right. It was very hard. It was also ultimately very transformational. I needed something very stark like that to shake me out of my sense that I was close to seeing it.

Rasool Berry: Got it. So, okay, so you pick yourself up from that, you know, that, that truth telling session and then what do you do with that? What happens to Metro 212? What do you, what's the next step?

Daniel Hill: Um, yeah, I feel like that was when I really started to understand privilege for the first time. Because I [00:17:00] wanted to just kind of sink back. I don't talk about white privilege all that much. But I think the concept of privilege, um, uh Reverend Julian DeShazier, you know, this is in the book. He's a pastor and activist from the South side. And he says, privilege is simply the ability to walk away. And I think there's more to it than that, but there really is something kind of profound about that. But I do, I felt God say, there's a reason, like your awakening is something and it's scary. And I think awakening is, it's cool in one sense, but it is scary, right? It's like, if you've been in the dark for a long time, the light is actually kind of a scary thing. Right. I mean, it's like. Yeah. It's overwhelming.

Um, so I had this sense that I was to go on kind of a new kind of a journey. But it was pretty scary. Jesus was causing me to calling me to kind of step out into the unknown with him.

Rasool Berry: Now you use the word privilege, you know, break that down for us.

Daniel Hill: Yeah. I just, for me, the most important part of privilege when it comes to the white journey is just staying in the conversation. I think because, white people's survival is not [00:18:00] at stake based on the system of race. So we can think about it or not think about it. It's literally just purely theoretical for us. So it's a privilege to decide whether we want to theoretically engage with this or not. Whether we want to choose to stay in conversations, whether we want to choose to be in it for a little while and then walk away when it becomes uncomfortable. I actually think that's the most common and powerful form of privilege that gets exercised.

Rasool Berry: When we come back, Daniel Hill will describe the experiences that led up to one of the scariest moments of his life. When his speaking out about racial injustice led to hate mail and death threats. You're listening to *Where Ya From?*.

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Thank you for your help and keep listening for more of *Where Ya From?*. [00:19:00]

Rasool Berry: Welcome back to *Where Ya From?*. I'm Rasool Berry. Before we hit play on part two of my conversation with Daniel Hill, just a quick reminder that the show notes are available in the podcast description. There you will find not only the talking points for today's show and links to our social accounts, but also links to Daniel's books, *White Awake* and *White Lives*, as well as a link to a special edition of *Our Daily Bread* titled *This Far by Faith*.

This is a free digital download celebrating the legacies of the Black Church. The download is yours for free. Just copy the link in the podcast description or visit our website whereyafrom.org. That's where y-a from dot o r g. Before the break, Daniel described a humbling moment in his life, a rough meeting with four pastors that was life-changing for him.

Daniel said he was tempted to run and hide, and if he could have [00:20:00] foreseen a moment in his life when he would have received hate mail and death threats, he may have quit. But he had a sense that God was waking him up to something he needed to understand. And so he began to do some more research and discovered that even the term race was much more complicated than he expected. Let's pick up on the story there. You're listening to *Where Ya From?*.

Daniel Hill: So, so the phrase that all the race scholars used was, um, that race is a social construct. Um, and that was super confusing for me. Because the idea that race is a social construct means that human beings created it. All right. And so I actually thought that was a challenge to theology. So, I resisted that language for a long time of race is a social construct.

I realized it totally is. So like when I'm talking with descriptions I say if there's one word you would associate with yet the word race. It should be the word evil. Everything about the system of race was evil. [00:21:00] And that's an important starting point. And I think we use words carelessly sometimes. I think when we use race, we shouldn't use it interchangeably with like ethnicity or culture, you know. We call a multicultural church, a multiethnic church, a multiracial church. We use them all interchangeably.

I think the word race, when understood correctly, should be thought of exclusively as an evil word. Um, it's a system that we created where we divided up human beings into groups, right? I think it's probably a fairly objective statement to say the two greatest sins of our Western World that our nation within it, the two greatest sins we ever committed was, in minimum, displacement some might called genocide of native people. Um, and then the system of slavery, right? The system of transatlantic slavery.

It's the two most grotesque, barbaric, far-reaching, dehumanizing, diabolical kind of things that have happened. And the system of race was really created to make sense of those, right? And I think that's the easiest way to bottom line what race is. That it's a story about human value that says this is how it is in direct contrast with God. God says human value is tied to [00:22:00] our intellect image and likeness of God, right? The Bible says human values tied to the doctrine of the Imago Dei. Race says that your value is not tied to the Imago Dei, it's tied to where you fall on the racial hierarchy.

There's a racial hierarchy that said whiteness is inherently superior to all other human beings. It said blackness is inherently inferior to all other human beings. And it continues to say that any other national background finds its value on this hierarchy between white and black. So it's not just a white and black conversation, but it is a white and black poll. Superiority is associated with whiteness. Inferiority is associated with blackness.

Race is built off of that. That's what the social construct is. It was to justify genocide, and conquest and it was just used to justify slavery. And in, you know, so lots can be said but in a nutshell it comes down to this hierarchy, right?

Rasool Berry: Yeah, and those are very like you said you just kind of compressed hundreds of years of history. And those are heavy things to try to figure out. What does that mean for today?

Daniel Hill: So one of the things we're trying to do is [00:23:00] understand historically how the story was used to kind of justify these kind of far reaching kind of sinful structures. But how the stories that made those work are still out here. They still are part of the kind of fabric of our, you know, different institutions, right?

So, education will be one of the places where you can very clearly see the nerve of racial hierarchy still at play. Um, the other kind of social science synonym that gets used for the nerve of racial hierarchy is implicit bias, right? So implicit bias is that we have these images of this kind of goodness that we associate with whiteness. These kind of images of badness or dangerous or less than or within educational settings. Historically blackness has been associated with the least intelligent, right? Which I hate to say that but that's always been part of the nerve racial hierarchy, right? That because this narrative says black people are less intelligent, more dangerous less capable more, you know It's all bad. This isn't more. . .

Rasool Berry: And I think that's what uh, in the Brown vs. Board of Education, uh, trial that the, uh, black [00:24:00] sociologist, Dr. Kenneth Clark was demonstrating with the doll experiment. Where he was showing how this narrative, uh, was actually impacting black children. To point, you know, they always have a black doll and a white doll and say which one is smarter. The black child would pick the white dowel. Which one is better, good, they would pick the white doll. Yeah. So that's. . .

Daniel Hill: A couple of year ago, Anderson Cooper did a revised kind of version of that to see, and he worked with a famous sociologist. And what they found is that basically nothing's moved. That, that it's heartbreaking. We showed it at church. It was actually a really difficult moment.

We showed you this precious little black girl. And you've got five pictures. And he says which one's the smartest, and points to the lightest skin. And he says, which one's the dumbest? And she points to the darkest skin. He says, which one's going to do the best in life? And she points to the lightest skin.

To put an exclamation point on that, we had a family at our church, black family at our church, who was like, that can't be true. That can't be true. That can't be true. Their daughter was four at the time. So they brought their, they went home and this is a two parent [00:25:00] family where they tell their

daughter how wonderful she is all the time. And they went home and redid the test and their four year old daughter did the exact same thing.

Pointed to the white girl as the one that's going to do the best. That's the prettiest. That's the smartest. Um, and so that's where you start to see like this, this is not some politically correct kind of thing where we're trying to talk just right. This is kind of a principality or stronghold that kind of gets into hearts and minds in terms of who's valuable and who's not.

Rasool Berry: Yeah, one of the things you talk about in the book that kind of, I think, paints a picture in a very, very personal way is a young lady named Stephanie. That, uh, I think, uh, was mentioned by the author, Dr. Tatum in her book. Maybe if you tell that story, it can kind of help people see how that narrative of racial hierarchy or difference plays itself out.

Daniel Hill: She told the story of her parents. They both grew up in poor, impoverished settings. They got married, really wanted to make sure their kids had access to a higher level of education that they had than they had. And the impoverished school section moved to Wheaton out here in the Chicagoland area. [00:26:00] Um, which we're still at a point in history where Good schools is always going to be an all-white school, right? That's just a, it's, we have these kinds of code words now, but you know, you have to go to an all-white setting, generally speaking, right. To get to the access to the kind of social services that are associated with human flourishing.

And so the parents decided to move to Wheaton. And, um, when Stephanie was in third grade, um, she was at the dinner table and mom said, how was school today? So Stephanie said good. And Stephanie said, oh yeah, a bunch of my friends got tested for the, um, advanced placement track within the school. I was like, did you get tested for it? She's like, no, I don't know why.

And like her mom's heart sunk, you know? And so, because Stephanie had been the highest scorer ever since kindergarten in her classes. So, mom went in. School teacher didn't know why she didn't get it. Principal didn't know why. Everybody was just like, sorry, just somehow it was an oversight. They had Stephanie take it.

Stephanie had the highest score in her test, in her school. Got immediately bumped up to the advanced placement thing. So, Stephanie, who's now a doctor said, [00:27:00] that was the most critical moment of my life. Because if my mom didn't catch that, I would not have gone to the Advanced Placement track.

And it wouldn't have mattered from that point forward what I did. I would have had no chance to stay on the academic track necessary to eventually become a doctor. And so do I think that the teacher was racist? Do I think the principal was racist? No! In fact, I'll bet you if you would have asked that teacher, if you would have asked that administrator, they would have said, we care deeply about diversity.

But you can very clearly prove that there are these biases that are associated with assuming certain kind of students will do better and certain kind of students will be worse. And so it's the accidental forms of this. It's the unnamed forms that actually become more dangerous in a lot of ways, right? It would be a nice simple story if there was a KKK person behind the curtain saying, we're not going to let the black students do it. It's actually more dangerous that's in hearts and minds in an unchecked kind of a way.

Rasool Berry: Now you mentioned this in spiritual language, talking about principalities. Um, is that like hyperbole? Is that being extreme? Or is that. . .

Daniel Hill: When I talk about we don't have a theological lens, [00:28:00] at the most basic level, Jesus calls himself truth, right? John 14:6, I am the way, the truth, and the life. John 8, you'll know the truth and the truth will set you free. At the most basic level, the devil is thought of as a liar. Right. It said in multiple places, that's John 8. He says in three ways. The devil's a liar. His native tongue is that of lies, which is really profound way to talk about how evil works. That's got a native language and it's native language is that of lies. And it's the father of lies. Right. So anyway, there's an individual lie that there's something demonic about that. I think it sounds so supernatural when you talk about that, but it's kind of like how the *Screwtape Letters* works. Right? It's kind of just like showing that like, darkness is real. It's like around, right? And it works through division. It works through trying to get us separated from the truths of God.

So, I think an individualized dangerous enough. But this notion of the father of lies, like I think that gets to like, where are lies clustered up? Where are lies swarmed together? Where have lies kind of enmeshed in such a way where that that's, that's how I would think biblically of what a stronghold is or principality is. Is wherever you see kind of a [00:29:00] fathered, protected swarm of lies together. And that's what makes race so uniquely dangerous is. A single person who believes that somebody's less than is dangerous enough. But when you've got a whole family that thinks of that lie, when you've got a whole town that thinks of that lie, when you get a whole generation of people who buy into that lie. When it becomes multi-generational and the lie continues to get passed from generation to generation to generation, that that's to me when something's a

principality. When something that should be so basic to expose and reveal is actually so difficult to reveal. . .

Rasool Berry: And then it builds narratives and stories and even the way we look at history and the way we look at the present all gets shaped through that lie. Now the other thing that was insightful and eye-opening to me is you talk about how this lie or this stronghold doesn't just impact negatively people of color, or black people. Use you actually use this word white trauma to talk about how [00:30:00] very people who one would consider like the privileged group are actually also in a significant way harmed by it. How is that possible?

Daniel Hill: So for one, I mean, lies are dangerous, right? And so, if this is true, that this lie is being broadcast all the time, and we've just never paid attention to it, like, just at a very minimum, means we're living under a milieu of lies, and are just oblivious to it, right? I mean, that has to do, even if we can't detect what the damage is, that just has to do damage, right? That you're living under lies. That's one of the big differences of being a racially conscious person of color, right? At least you're aware the light like life is super hard like navigating those lies. But at least you know they're right. In some ways Like you could say that there's a sole advantage and that with a starting point of like you see what you're up against, right?

So for us to be in this and not even realize we're in it is one kind of danger. I think the other danger though is this is where the truth and lies thing I think becomes very important because the history of race is very ugly, honestly. And [00:31:00] And it would be bad enough to not tell it to just to pretend it didn't happen. That's actually a form of lying to not tell it. But unfortunately many of us have been brought up in a system that doesn't just ignore the past it actually retells the story of the past.

Rasool Berry: Okay. So what is the trauma that you you say that this causes to white people?

Daniel Hill: Yeah, it's and I want to acknowledge. That's a controversial term calling it white trauma. So it comes from Mark Charles, who's a native theologian and he just wrote a book with Soong-Chan Rah, and it's called *Unsettling Truths*. So he differentiates clearly like somebody who's traumatized in the oppressed, the one who's the, victim in something. That's trauma, right?

Like that's the danger we've been using this term is to like associate what happens to the oppressor with what happens to the victim. But he actually, it comes out of a very personal place where he developed this. Um, he was, when he was a teenager, he was driving his car and he got in his accident and his brother got killed in the accident.

And so clearly his brother is the one who was, I mean, [00:32:00] he died, right? But like that did something to him, right? It traumatized Mark in a certain kind of way to have to have been on the other end of the one who is complicit with this. And in his case, of course, that was accidental, right? But it's something to live with.

So, what Mark says is when white people discover what white people did to get to where we are, for a lot of people, they're going to be in denial and not even want to interact with it. They're just going to minimize whoever's saying it. But for those who get past that and start interacting with the history as it is, it's, there's a traumatizing kind of reality to it, right?

Like the brutality of slavery, right? This is another one where I was often taught that like, yeah, slavery was not great, but that's how a lot of black people became Christians. There was a lot of good to it too. There was nothing good about slavery, right? It was brutal. Constant rape, right? It was constant torture.

It was dehumanization constantly, right? It's all the worst things that could happen in a human experience, right? And this happens when white people watch, you know, these movies about slavery, you know. And it's traumatizing to be like that You feel like dissonance, right? That can't be what [00:33:00] really that can't be what was normal, right? But it was what was normal, right? But it's so far disconnected from the kind of sanitized versions that we've learned of it that it's kind of traumatizing to come face to face with what really happened.

Rasool Berry: Got it. Got it. Okay, so you start to grasp this better, and more. So, you know, and you say okay my time in my previous ministry in the suburbs is coming to an end. So, what do you do? What's your next move to live in that reality?

Daniel Hill: I'm not, I'm not recommending this is the path people would take. Um, I started a church. Um, but there was a reason for the people often say, why didn't you just go work at a black church or Latino church? I think that's totally fair to say, but I loved and do, I loved the Bible. I knew the Bible was the answer to this, but I was also aware of the fact that the way I was learning the Bible in white-centric circles wasn't enough, right. Ray Balky says, "If you read the Bible with a middle-class lens, you'll always get a middle-class application." So, it's just this notion that [00:34:00] like, what questions you're asking, what you're looking for will filter. It's not that the Bible is not true. It's just that we sometimes draw from it just at the limit of what we want to hear from it.

So honestly, I felt like I needed to preach my way into a deeper understanding of the gospel. So that's really why I started this. I really didn't know if this church was going to work, but I knew I needed to like preach in such a way where it wasn't like our Sunday services weren't being measured by how fast are they growing, are we hitting all these metrics and all these kinds of things. Because that was going to dilute the experience of like just honest, hardcore discipleship kind of stuff.

Rasool Berry: All right. So I know, you know, so you're going down this road and you're starting a church and then this thing happens in Chicago that, um, not only the city, but the nation takes notice of and you kind of find yourself with some national attention. Uh, what happened?

Daniel Hill: So, there was, um, a situation where a teenager, Laquan McDonald, got killed when he shouldn't have. Um, and what made this one particularly egregious was that there was a, multi-tiered coverup [00:35:00] between the police department, the district attorney, the mayor. Um, and so when it finally came out that not only he had been killed, but that there had been this immense coverup, there was kind of this immense backlash within the city. Particularly in the black community of just kind of once again, this history of

you know, kind of cover up an abuse of power. Um, yeah, so there was a prayer vigil with some black pastors where I was invited to share. And when I prayed for repentance, there was a number of national kinds of things that they're including CNN. So they asked me to come on CNN after that, which felt weird. Because there were all these black pastors that prayed similar kinds of things. But the fact that there's a white pastor there, you know. So, they asked me to be on so I asked all the black pastors first I wouldn't have done it if they didn't tell me to do it. But one of them said you're gonna say what we say from the pulpit every single Sunday, but they're not gonna listen to us. So take advantage of it go on this and like, you know, tell the truth. . .

Rasool Berry: Okay. And so you talked about lament while you were there. And what ended up happening when you explain and you're asking God's forgiveness [00:36:00] for this passive racial injustice and as a white person and how do people react to that?

Daniel Hill: Yeah. It's what set in motion. What's kind of the stage two of my adult life call is. Um, all I talked about that is that, yeah. White Christians should be repentant for the complicity we've had with this. And um, the level of outrage. Because I'd only been in smaller circles up to that point So the fact that this was set on a national level the outrage was just, it was so strong.

Rasool Berry: The outrage about Laquan McDonald's death?

No. The outrage of white Christians to me saying that white Christians need to repent. Um, I got so much hate mail. Non stop calls, death threats, everything. It was coming from white Christians. So that's when I realized that repentance is a word that Christians love in every arena except for race. So, when it comes to race, it's got a totally charged kind of feeling to it, which I think again comes back to the truth and lies.

There's not an environment in the entire country that's more difficult to tell the truth about race than in white evangelical [00:37:00] settings. And so that's what I learned after the Laquan McDonald thing, is if you try to talk about race and repenting for where we've been, nobody will get madder than white Christians.

Rasool Berry: Okay. Um, you talk about, as opposed to in the past where you kind of first went off into this journey to fix it, to come into the city. In the book, you talk about going from what do I do to what do I see.

Daniel Hill: Yeah.

Rasool Berry: Why is that an important transition for people?

Daniel Hill: Yeah. So, I think there's like one enormous hill we have to get over where we just even like moving from apathy and indifference to actually caring about it. So like that's one big awakening there is just to move from apathy to that. But once we actually care, what we have to realize is we've spent our whole lives not paying attention to this thing. And so there's this monstrous reality that we just don't understand. And so once we actually care, that's not the end of the journey, that's the very beginning of the journey. And so we need to become graduate students of what this thing is and how to think about it biblically.

Rasool Berry: That was Daniel Hill, the author of [00:38:00] *White Awake* and *White Lies*, inviting us to become more educated about this major cultural blind spot we call race. And to move from apathy to action in fighting for a biblical understanding and practice of justice for all. This is *Where Ya From?*. I'm Rasool Berry. And remember, it's not just about where you're at, it's also about where you're from.

This show was produced by Mary Jo Clark, Daniel Ryan Day, and Jade Gustafson, and was engineered by Gabrielle Bauer. I also want to give a quick shout out to John and Curtis for their help in supporting and promoting *Where Ya From?*. Thanks y'all.