

Reflective Activity: Engaging with Different Perspectives

Please begin this activity by watching this [8-minute video](#).

1. What is positionality?

Reading: Stone, Selina (2023) *Tarry Awhile: Wisdom from Black Spirituality for People of Faith: The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2024*. SPCK. Please read the Introduction and Chapter 1 (Darkness).



"We all have a lens, we all have something that we foreground, and a particular point of departure." (Tim Judson)



In the video, Tim Judson refers to the different lenses, or points of departure, from which we each engage in theological reflection. Another way of speaking about this is in terms of social and cultural location, or positionality. These terms are used to highlight that our background, life experiences, and so forth, influence our perspectives.

In her introduction to *Tarry Awhile*, Selina Stone (2023) begins by describing her own social and cultural location:

"I write this book as an African Caribbean woman born and raised in Birmingham. I am the granddaughter of four formidable Jamaicans who arrived in Birmingham in 1963. They raised their children in the working-class inner city where my parents were born, got married and raised me and my siblings. I grew up as a Pentecostal Christian, which means this tradition is core to my experience of Christianity and of Black people's faith. But my understanding of both would expand and grow in subsequent years. My introduction to the Church of England came primarily through my church primary school, but most significantly through community organising in an Anglo-Catholic parish in Brixton. My understanding of the kinds of Christianity Black people identify with was broadened in this place as I watched a Black woman, in robes, lead this majority-Black congregation."

Reflection Questions

- A) How do you think Stone's positionality is reflected in Chapter 1 of *Tarry Awhile* (e.g. how might it have influenced the issues she focuses on and the questions she asks)?
- B) How might you describe your positionality?
- C) What issues are you most passionate about, and how might this have been influenced by your social and cultural location?

2. What is privilege?

Reading: McIntosh, Peggy “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” In *Peace and Freedom* (July/August 1989)
(https://med.umn.edu/sites/med.umn.edu/files/2022-12/White-Privilege_McIntosh-1989.pdf)



“Often there are these blind spots and these presumed senses of agency that I carry, which are actually very privileged.” (Tim Judson)

Peggy McIntosh (1989) writes: “I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was ‘meant’ to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless [rucksack] of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.”

Reflection Questions

- A) Describe your initial thoughts and reactions to the reading.
- B) What “special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks” would McIntosh say are in your rucksack?
- C) How might the contents of your rucksack differ from others within your TEI?
- D) How might the contents of your rucksack differ from others across the UK?



3. Identifying and challenging universalizing norms

“We live and move and have our being in a way that is universalizing white Western norms [and] needs to be interrogated.” (Tim Judson)

Reflecting on her childhood, Peggy McIntosh (1989) draws attention to how Western education systems teach students to view their lives as “morally neutral, normative, and average, and also ideal.” One of downsides of this is that it can limit the desire to engage with non-Western ways of thinking and approaches to knowledge.

Reflection Questions

Reflecting on your own educational experience to date, what aspects do you think McIntosh might point to as being portrayed as:

- A) ... neutral?
- B) ... normative?
- C) ... average?
- D) ... ideal?

4. The value of engaging with different perspectives



Reading: Reddie, Anthony G. (2020) "Preaching the Bible: is this the kingdom of heaven?" In *Is God Colour-Blind? Insights from Black Theology for Christian Faith and Ministry*. Revised and updated edition with a new afterword on why Black Lives Matter. SPCK.

"I've always found that community is a lot richer if you have people who are very different rubbing shoulders with one another, learning from one another if they're willing to." (Tim Judson)

Tim Judson speaks of different perspectives and approaches as enriching, and he references Chapter 5 of *Preaching the Bible* as an example of this. In this chapter, Anthony Reddie offers a new perspective on Matthew 25:14-30 that is informed by Black theology.

Reflection Questions

- A) What are your thoughts on Reddie's chapter?
- B) What do you see as the potential value of engaging with different perspectives for faith and community?