

# Wild Goose or White Goose: Raising POC Concerns

**Kenji Kuramitsu**

The purpose of this resource is to share with festival leadership some of the experiences of people of color<sup>1</sup> (POC) attendees of Wild Goose Festival, to frame these experiences in their historical contexts, and to suggest concrete changes.

Although the creation of this resource was inspired by community-building with other POC both during the festival and afterwards<sup>2</sup>, I'm not writing for the experiences of all people of color at the event. I am reflecting from my own personal and cultural vantage point as a Japanese American seminary student and antiracism educator working primarily in LGBTQ Christian spaces. I recently joined the creative team discussions to choose a theme for next year, and I hope to return as a speaker for a third year in July 2017. I have taken the time and energy to compile this docu-

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<sup>1</sup> People of color are people whose ancestry comes from parts of the world that were/are subject to colonialism and race-based exploitation. In the American context, this is generally understood to include people of African, Asian, Arab, Latinx, and other indigenous descent.

<sup>2</sup> I am particularly grateful for the feedback of Jade Perry, Matt Morris, and Rachel Virginia Hester, and other people of color who helped to improve this document.

ment without compensation because I care about the ongoing success of Wild Goose, and the flourishing of the racial minorities who attend. I am not a random gadfly or a disaffiliated cynic, but someone who really believes in the redemptive and holy potential of this festival

As I write this, the popularity and potential of Donald Trump's Presidential campaign is, to most of us, terrifying. To many POC, Trump confirms long-held suspicions about the hidden prejudices of white America. As board member Brian McLaren recently reflected, "America is exceptional in its racism. People of color know this all too well...Our whole way of life has been framed by white privilege and white supremacy. We have political, cultural, and even theological ways of remaining oblivious<sup>3</sup>."

White supremacy is indeed the foundational organizing principle of American public life, and has been the most consistent animating force in our country's history since America's inception. People of color are watching white nationalist fervor unfold before our eyes, and it feels especially important now that we increasingly address these matters, in whatever ways we can.

In the hopes of helping Wild Goose become a more fully prophetic and spirit-filled event that challenges these norms, I would like to suggest several concrete shifts that have the potential to alter the ways that POC currently experience the festival. I want to acknowledge the steps organizers have already taken to address racism in this space – allowing us to teach a Racial Justice Institute, for instance, and making a concerted effort to re-

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<sup>3</sup> Brian McLaren, "Black Lives Matter," brian d. mclaren, July 25, 2016, accessed July 25, 2016, <http://brianmclaren.net/archives/blog/black-lives-matter.html>.

cruit diverse speakers of color – while simultaneously encouraging a more structural analysis.

For all the amazing things that happen at Wild Goose, many people of color are actually afraid to come into this space. Although the festival’s whiteness is an enormous stumbling block to many communities of color, relatively simple changes can be put into motion to make this less true. Please read on if you are interested in hearing more<sup>4</sup>. Below are five points of background information to have in mind when thinking about creating positive racial change at Wild Goose<sup>5</sup>. We will conclude with a list of practical suggestions to continue to shift in a more redemptive direction.

## **Integrating Whiteness**

To my knowledge, Wild Goose’s creative team, before an influx of people of color about a week ago, had one person of color as a member of this group. As far as I could find online, there is not significant representation from communities of color on the festival’s Board of Directors. It seems clear that Wild Goose is dealing with the same racial representation problems that plague many progressive Christian organizations. Rather than denying this by

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<sup>4</sup> I realize this document is unsolicited. I am grateful for festival leadership’s openness in receiving it, in the spirit of continued growth and positive change.

<sup>5</sup> 1) Creating change from a place of whiteness  
2) Physical/geographical considerations  
3) Cultural appropriation  
4) White spatial ownership  
5) Individual versus structural change

pointing to our areas of success, acknowledging the current situation may help us move forward.

I believe festival leadership is very open to trying to make Wild Goose a more “diverse and inclusive” place. I have heard the language of “getting” more people of color to come to the event. While I am encouraged by the recognition of the festival’s racial diversity problems, there is an inherent difficulty with this particular model.

The problem is, if we begin this representation and racial justice work from a starting place of white group centeredness, and then try to “integrate” how things are already currently run to make things more colorful, we will be starting from a less than ideal place. We see this problem in both Emergent circles and in many “multiethnic churches” – in these settings, by operating primarily through white cultural assumptions and upper leadership, even with diverse voices involved, white culture often becomes measurably normalized in preaching, music, worship style, and service length<sup>6</sup>.

If we are not starting conversations for racial change with the leadership of people of color, establishing authentic change will be that much more difficult. Without serious, foundational changes at the hands of white leadership (the kinds we will address below), most of the event attendees will continue to be overwhelmingly white, and POC will continue to experience marginalization.

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel Camacho, “Do Multicultural Churches Reinforce Racism?,” Daniel José Camacho, February 9, 2016, accessed July 23, 2016, <http://www.danieljosecamacho.com/blog/2016/2/9/do-multicultural-churches-reinforce-racism>.

## Location

While I understand the difficulty logistically of finding a space to hold Wild Goose and that there is now a 5 year long established relationship with Hot Springs, it must be acknowledged that the festival location is not a place that is very easily accessible or welcoming for many POC. The Nazi/swastika and confederate flags flying in town and the skinheads and local residents rolling up and down Hot Springs' main street to intimidate attendees are particularly obvious and immediate sources of discomfort and danger.

The greater question of minority comfort in the "outdoors" is relevant here, too. I myself was a Boy Scout and learned to appreciate camping and the woods from an early age. This is not the story of many people of color, who have learned to feel distinctly unsafe in these spaces. Black people in particular were long systematically barred from public park and protected wilderness access by the government and vigilantes<sup>7</sup>. One parks scholar refers to this legacy of violence in terms of terrorism and state-sanctioned lynching at these locations as "the history of wilderness as a site of trauma for black bodies<sup>8</sup>."

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<sup>7</sup> Tanya Golash-Boza, "Why America's National Parks Are so White," AlJazeera America, July 23, 2015, accessed July 23, 2016, <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/7/heres-why-americas-national-parks-are-so-white.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Collier Meyerson, "Here Are the Reasons Why Black Americans Don't Visit State and National Parks," Fusion.net, June 7, 2016, accessed July 23, 2016, <http://fusion.net/story/310329/here-are-the-reasons-why-black-americans-dont-visit-state-and-national-parks/>.

These indelible wounds are very real, and even today affect how many POC experience or think about attending Wild Goose. As one black presenter and first-time attendee blogged afterwards, the POC present in this space could “see spirits<sup>9</sup>” that white attendees wouldn’t notice. This is something to keep in mind for white folks, or non-black folks like myself, who otherwise never would have to think about these historic experiences.

Finally, there is the question of getting to Hot Springs physically. Police officers, as the festival opened, shot and killed Philando Castile and Alton Sterling, the former at a gas station and the latter during a traffic stop<sup>10</sup>. Many POC I spoke with mentioned these and other specific events, expressing discrete terror at whether they would be threatened with death when traveling to the festival by car. This compounds more ordinary financial factors preventing wide access for communities of color to this relatively removed location.

The fact that POC speakers receive the most travel and housing money to aid getting to the festival is a testament to the economic situations our communities are experiencing. For the most part, speakers (or attendees) cannot afford to take time off work and pay to travel to this place for free, we will see skewing towards older and whiter demographics.

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<sup>9</sup> Collier Meyerson, “Here Are the Reasons Why Black Americans Don’t Visit State and National Parks,” Fusion.net, June 7, 2016, accessed July 23, 2016, <http://fusion.net/story/310329/here-are-the-reasons-why-black-americans-dont-visit-state-and-national-parks/>.

<sup>10</sup> The impromptu Main Stage space for grieving and addressing these killings, curated on-site by festival organizers, was a phenomenal example of curating the kind of intentional lament that we will suggest below.

## Cultural Appropriation

The cultural appropriation<sup>11</sup> by white attendees of POC's cultural markers and traditions is something that viscerally affects us, especially first time festival goers who are in touch with their cultural/ancestral identities. We joke about this, because although it is painful, it is so common at Wild Goose to be ridiculous, nearly in the realm of parody.

There is nothing wrong with sharing cultural artifacts, music, cuisines, and ideas across different people groups – these long-established histories of exchange are a gift to each of us. However, when white attendees consistently boast Tibetan prayer flags and Chinese kanji, hold African drum circles, teach and apply Indian Henna and Yoga, and boast dreadlocks, without any actual Tibetan, African, black, or Indian people present, these symbols become an especially potent reminder of that lack.

The message to many of us is that our cultural products are welcome, but that we are not; and that these traditions and garments look most beautiful on white, European bodies, which are able to own anything. The appropriation of not only cultural symbols but also of Eastern Asian and indigenous religious traditions continues to serve as a precise point of pain for people of marginalized cultural and racial backgrounds who attend.

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<sup>11</sup> Cultural appropriation is when members of a dominant culture tokenistically adopt cultural markers and traditions of a culture that has been colonized by that dominant group.

## White Spatial Ownership

I know that the “Wild Goose” is a Celtic metaphor for the Holy Spirit, and that the spiritual predecessor of the Goose is the UK’s Greenbelt festival. Most POC understand that part of celebrating this particular image of the Holy Spirit (above the plethora of non-European metaphors for the Holy Spirit – Ch’i, Gi, and Ki from East Asia, the Great Ancestor from West Africa) indicates our entrance into a traditionally white-owned and policed cultural and religious space.

This psychological fortitude plays out in white attendees feeling entitled to use our deeply treasured cultural markers without understanding their history, and extends to control exerted over our very bodies. Uninvited touches of skin and hair by white people were a common experience shared by many POC, in conjunction with wholly unsolicited and inappropriate comments about our physical appearances, family structures, racial backgrounds, or geopolitical conflicts in our ancestral countries of origin. In general, people of color who attend Wild Goose are psychologically girded beforehand for the intense whiteness of this space, prepared to encounter micro-aggressions<sup>12</sup> more consistently than mosquito bites.

Online reflections from white attendees often reflected a sense of being home at the festival. One prominent pastor tweeted that Wild Goose is most “safe” space he could think of. This is absolutely true for many people, particularly white folks, recovering

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<sup>12</sup> Micro-aggressions are the everyday verbal and nonverbal slights, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile or negative messages to minorities of different identities based on marginalized group membership.

from spiritual abuse or evangelical/fundamentalist church harm. Around the time this tweet went out, a group of the people of color at Wild Goose were holding a spontaneous healing circle from the fear and instances of racism we had experienced at the festival – feeling very much unsafe. It is a brave act for many people of color to come to an environment that is very much catered to white cultural norms, and this too must be acknowledged.

## Friendship is Not Enough

Wild Goose is built on relationality: friends hear about the event from friends, are invited to speak by friends, are brought on board in an organizational capacity because, more often than not, a friend opens some door or otherwise persuades a newcomer that they are welcome. This is especially true in event-planning contexts that rely heavily on volunteer, and older leadership.

At no point am I ascribing sinister motivations to the festival's mostly white organizers and founders. However, sociologists have consistently demonstrated that our social networks in the United States are overwhelmingly intra-racial. That is, most Americans tend to stick with their own ethnic groups in terms of intimate and casual friendships. Social segregation along racial lines is especially heightened for whites, who are most likely to speak with, read, live near, work with, befriend, and have sex and children with other white people<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Robert Jones, "Self-segregation: Why It's so Hard for Whites to Understand Ferguson," *The Atlantic*, August 21, 2014, accessed July 23, 2016, <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/08/>

Because of this context, the leadership of Wild Goose and the attendees happen to be majority white. By no one's intentional fault, the very real consequences of this situation are that people of color have been widely excluded from non-tokenizing<sup>14</sup> or ornamental roles in festival leadership or participation.

It must be recognized that individual friendships with “cool” or “safe” people of color, or person to person “racial reconciliation” are not enough to make this festival safer and more accessible for our communities as a whole. Alongside transformative personal relationships, we need simultaneous structural shifts that will address systemic racism. Let's turn there.

## Concrete Suggestions

So what are some practical, structural changes that Wild Goose can undertake to more fully welcome POC? Below are a few definite suggestions that would help make the festival more safe and inclusive for people of color. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list – and not meant to be some sort of list of demands – but a starting point for these engaged conversations. I more than welcome the feedback and correction of other POC, and interested parties.

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[self-segregation-why-its-hard-for-whites-to-understand-ferguson/378928/](#).

<sup>14</sup> Tokenism is the policy making a casual gesture towards the inclusion of POC to create the appearance of racial diversity and to deflect accusations of racism, while avoiding significant structural change.

## Create a POC advisory board or otherwise intentionally listen to POC

In response to many recent racially traumatic events, an organization I work with which serves the needs of the children of LGBTQ parents<sup>15</sup> recently created a POC advisory board in order to be more intentionally formed by non-white and antiracist perspectives. There is no reason why Wild Goose could not have such a group, or why festival organizers have not solicited official feedback or formed a listening group to address the implicit racism that POC experience there. As Paulo Freire has written, the only effective path towards healing from dehumanization “is a humanizing pedagogy in which the revolutionary leadership establishes a permanent relationship of dialogue with the oppressed.”<sup>16</sup>

A group like this would ideally be comprised of POC who have lived through one or more Wild Goose Festivals, and who are committed to the event’s future success. A small stipend or other *negotiated* monetary compensation or other recognition should be paid to this group to honor the emotional labor and cost/time investment of POC who are sharing insight acquired from experiences of their own marginalization. I know several individuals who would be interested in being a part of such a group, and would be happy to help make those connections.

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<sup>15</sup> COLAGE.org

<sup>16</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 30th ed. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000).

## **Offer scholarships to people of color**

If travel/admissions/housing scholarships could even be offered in a similar way to the “Lead Now” cohorts or volunteer teams in terms of reduction of festival admission, this would be an enormous help for POC. Many people of color are unfortunately unable to attend each year for financial reasons, and whatever is possible in terms of a formal scholarship fund or program would be helpful.

## **Continue to support antiracism initiatives like the Racial Justice Institute**

The daylong Racial Justice Institute<sup>17</sup> (RJI), which debuted this year, was a pre-festival all day antiracism training facilitated by a group of educators working with Evangelicals for Social Action (ESA). This was a needed and powerful space, and more of this content needs to explicitly curated by the festival. This framework can be expanded to include events or a formal track during the festival as well, not just before. Perhaps an RJI festival-long “track” similar to the Lead Now cohorts, or a melange of these two programs, could be initiated. As the Lead Now cohorts are almost entirely white, could we develop adjacent or conjoined programming for people of color wanting to engage in this work of discernment, justice, and Spirit?

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<sup>17</sup> I had a wonderful time co-facilitating this space, and I am grateful for the leadership of Micky ScottBey Jones in organizing it. For more info on the RJI: <http://wildgoosefestival.org/2016-festival/pre-festival-events/rji/>

## **Curate racial conversations that are geared towards people of color**

White people do need to learn about systemic and individual racism. This is something that Wild Goose has attempted to address in both of the festivals I have attended, from white audience-geared “Racism 101” type trainings to more formal spaces to organize radical white allyship. However, if Wild Goose wants to demonstrate that people of color are welcomed and valued in this space, leadership should invest in the creation of intentional programming sessions and tracks *for people of color in particular*; to scheme, heal, and otherwise talk about race and racism in our contexts. This is related to my next suggestion.

## **Create a physical space for people of color**

Holding physical space with other people of color during our healing circle was an incredibly sacred thing. The psychological and social drain of being constantly in the minority at this event takes a significant toll, and radical new life and energy emerged from intentional time spent together.

This year, we had to organize an impromptu meet-up through our own means. In future years, I would suggest that a physical tent space or other “safe/sacred space” be held for POC, featuring auxiliary programming and gathering opportunities specific to people of color written into the schedule. This could be organized and supported by both festival leadership and volunteer attendees, and serve as a physical, formal marker of the intentionally antiracist and positive movement that Wild Goose is choosing to center. Honoring and protecting this space would psychologically help buffer some of the connotations of White spatial and cultural

dominance that the festival conveys to many POC, and encourage new visitors from multiple communities of color.

### **Establish an official antiracism/white ally “chaplaincy” role**

During our POC healing circle, several white folks agreed to volunteer to hold that space for us for several hours, standing a bit away from the tent in order to let random wanderers know that this was a private conversation for racial minority attendees. This act was an enormous blessing to us, using privilege to offer healing and protection to those who needed it. The white allies who hold space for us, call out instances of racism, and, as in 2015, ask the festival’s neighbors to take down their Swastika flags, are doing such important work at this event.

Now, the story of other people of color is not mine to tell, and I am not going to share here any of the details of our healing circle. However, I will say that many people of color at this festival were deeply afraid to even walk through the town of Hot Springs safely, out to restaurants, to stores, and back to hotels, particularly at night. This is a fear many white attendees never have to think about. Often, we relied on one another as people of color to walk each other places safely, and asked our white friends for help when possible. However, I wonder what would it look like to have a white volunteer team be available to safely walk POC around town, especially at night. This “Safe Walks” program would also be a strong potential aid to women and sexual and gender minorities who attend Wild Goose.

Wild Goose already has a team of volunteer chaplains with an established tent who will offer healing prayer or on-site pastoral words, in addition to a formal space set up for other volunteers

who offer palm readings and dream interpretation. It would be transformative to recognize and support a team of white folks, organized as formal “antiracism chaplains” or “white accomplice/ally team,” who volunteer to do this work – trusted individuals who we could ask to walk us places safely, guard our healing gatherings from casual and sinister interruptions, or otherwise have painful conversations that we don’t need to have. This would serve as a phenomenal way for the festival to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to the work of racial justice.

### **Consider a change of venue**

I realize part of the magic of Wild Goose is disappearing into the cell-signal free and dappled Smoky Mountains for a week of outdoor practice and presence. I know leadership is wrestling with the tension that if Wild Goose is to remain away from significant urban centers, this will continue to psychologically affect and deter many potential attendees of color. I hope that a genuine openness can flourish in regards to conversations about change of festival location, particularly to hallowed parks or other beautiful open and outdoor spaces that are closer to major urban centers.

### **Release a statement acknowledging the contexts of historic racism**

Wild Goose currently includes a statement of explicit welcome for all regardless of gender identity on their site<sup>18</sup>. This was not the case just a few years ago, leading some in the transgender com-

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<sup>18</sup> <http://wildgoosefestival.org/safety-community-guidelines/>

munity to voice pain at this omission<sup>19</sup>. Today, the explicit welcomes of trans folks into this space – and advertising of a local rally opposing anti-trans state legislation<sup>20</sup> – does not go unappreciated.

Might Wild Goose similarly publicly profess support for Asheville's #BlackLivesMatter rallies, particularly as Jai Williams was killed there by police on the day the festival began? While race is listed on the festival website as an identity protected from harassment, Wild Goose should also issue an explicit statement on their website and share it on social media, as happened with transgender welcome after HB-2<sup>21</sup>, acknowledging the traumatic racial dimensions of the festival's context.

To simply say “all are welcome” without offering an explicit invitation to POC – in a physical location, cultural setting, and national context that is historically racist – is not enough. We must move past cries of “All Lives Matter!” to structurally address tangible circumstances of exploitation and oppression. One possible way of framing this statement could be something like:

*We want to acknowledge that for a variety of factors, especially because of the wider white supremacist society in which we live and because our own unconscious and intentional conforming to this pattern, Wild Goose Festival has historically*

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<sup>19</sup> Kristin Rawls, “Wild Goose Festival’s (Mostly) Welcoming Spirit for LGBT Christians,” Religion Dispatches, August 3, 2011, accessed July 23, 2016, <http://religiondispatches.org/wild-goose-festivals-mostly-welcoming-spirit-for-lgbt-christians/>.

<sup>20</sup> <http://wildgoosefestival.org/wild-goose-supports-equal-protection-under-the-law-and-calls-for-community-action/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://wildgoosefestival.org/allarewelcome/>

*been unsafe for and to many people of color. We recognize how the wilderness has historically been a site of violence and trauma for black people in particular.*

*We ask our white attendees in particular to be aware of the nature of cultural appropriation how their performance of marginalized cultural markers (dreadlocks, saris, Native headdresses etc) negatively affects our attendees of color. We grieve the killings, attacks, and violent rhetoric that has afflicted many communities of color this year, and are actively investing in antiracism work and spaces. We welcome you especially to this space, in the hopes that you might find respite here.*

Indeed, because we live within a colonial context in a white supremacist social system, unless we are intentionally and actively subverting this with antiracism in our event planning, we will be re-creating racist structures and patterns even in our most beloved work. To explicitly name these trends is powerful in disrupting white supremacy.

## **Curate non-English language content**

For example, curate even a modest selection of Spanish language programming. There are many potential individuals and speakers in the progressive spaces that Wild Goose is interested in tapping into who can present in Spanish. This tent space and content creation would allow festival organizers to tap into new professional and relational networks, while making more room for people of Latin American descent to access Wild Goose. While not all Latinx people speak Spanish, a simple step in this direction would potentially diversify attendees and demonstrate a much more

multicultural emphases on the part of festival outreach. While there is established precedent in terms of other conferences and events successfully moving in this direction, Wild Goose has the potential to step forward in this leadership in a powerful way here.

### **Invite more non-white oriented musical acts**

This festival's POC healing circle was held during a headlining musical act. Most of us were not disappointed to miss the Indigo Girls, a musical artist popular instead to many white attendees. Music is a big part of why people enjoy and return to Wild Goose. I understand that financial/volunteer aspects are at play here, but the intentional consideration of musical acts that are popular among communities of color would be a welcome change. This could extend to smaller musical performances as well, specifically continuing outreach to bands specializing in music indigenous to communities of color (eg. Latinx worship, gospel music) without having only white artists perform these genres. I would suggest the Christian Community Development Association<sup>22</sup> (CCDA) as one potential resource for looking at how a sort of sibling space is doing this work.

### **Compensate the labor of women of color volunteering for the festival, and speakers of color**

Women of color live and die every day at the intersections of oppressions along the fault lines of both race and gender. Their spe-

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.ccda.org/>

cific labors for a majority white festival and board need to be especially valued and at least formally acknowledged. This would demonstrate substantial radical and anti-racist commitment to the flourishing of POC.

This must be part of the conversation about not paying speaker honorariums, as well. It feels to many POC speakers, in many ways, exploitative, to bring us into this context without any compensation, and I think this policy is worth interrogating with an antiracist lens. It must be understood that it's not unfair to pay "some" and not others when there are racialized and gendered power dynamics at play here. This apparent inequity is an instance of equality feeling like oppression to advantaged groups. This shift would help feature more POC speakers at the festival, and formally institute an antiracist policy in festival booking process.

## **Create and respect spaces for lament**

The most powerful spaces at Wild Goose for many marginalized people were those organized explicitly around lament. Although some were planned ahead, such as the Black Lives Matter memorial, many of these events were unplanned and organic, generating from random moments of emotional pain, and a group creating and holding intentional space to address it. I would suggest the CCDA again, and the work of the Reformation Project<sup>23</sup> as

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<sup>23</sup> Here is a recording of the Reformation Project's Transgender Day of Remembrance session at #TRPinKC: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVCwUQgD4bc>. For more on the work of The Reformation Project, visit <http://www.reformationproject.org>

examples of organizations prophetically holding these spaces for intentional lament.

In my experience, whiteness cannot exist as boldly alongside organic lament. For this reason, many dominant culture folks can be uncomfortable with public expressions and spaces for grief and lament. Last August in Montreal, North Carolina, during a memorial held for slain victims of that summer's AME terrorist attack in Charleston, a white Christian minister stood in his pew, disrupting the service to shout: "Dylann Storm Roof! Say his name!"<sup>24</sup> The unspeakable violence of naming/honoring this (living) murderer, in a space to mourn deaths caused by racial hate, speaks to a wider discomfort that many white folks have when it comes to interacting authentically with spaces for intentional lament. At Wild Goose, I love how we don't always give into this fragile need to rush from lament to praise songs, twisting tears into forced dance. I hope we continue to support more frank workshops and worship spaces<sup>25</sup> that create these spaces for lament, and communicate this commitment to festival content creators, through theme information or other means.

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<sup>24</sup> Tawna Denise Anderson, "That Time 'Dylann Storm Roof' Got a Shout-Out at an MLK Event," *Soula Scriptura*, August 23, 2015, accessed July 25, 2016, <http://soulascriptura.com/2015/08/that-time-dylann-storm-roof-got-a-shout-out-at-an-mlk-event/>.

<sup>25</sup> <https://inotherswords.com/2016/07/11/hinges/>

# Where Do We Go From Here?

Why do many POC return to an environment that is so overwhelmingly white, especially in a time when doing so is not only physically and emotionally taxing, but potentially dangerous? First, it should be acknowledged that many POC, for reasons outlined above and others, do not come back. Others of us return. Speaking only for my own experience, I prepare myself before the festival for the inevitable moments of racial pain and wounds that will manifest here. The whiteness of progressive Christianity in general and of Wild Goose in particular is acutely painful to be exposed to. However, in this same place, I experience countless electrifying conversations, holy coincidences, and special moments of worship, lament, joy and fellowship that are just unmistakably drenched with the animating, healing spirit of God. Wild Goose teaches me to shout, dream, disrupt, and play again, and it is a balm to my sin-sick soul.

Wild Goose brings together some of the most prophetic and brilliant minds alive, and is a place where I have experienced moments of distinct Christian hope, particularly when it comes to challenging all forces of dehumanization that the Gospel opposes, including racism. I sense incredible redemptive movement here, and am eagerly looking forward to more moments of cruciform growth. I want to see more, and to *be* more in this journey together. Committing to making Wild Goose more open to POC leadership and participation would be a good and healing thing for all of us who care about the Goose's future success.

I hope that the ideas raised in this document might serve as a part of leadership's already-existing discussions, and that this re-

source might be considered in conjunction with ongoing conversations about theme selection for next year. I invite further dialogue and interaction with all interested parties through email (kenjukuramitsu@gmail.com), phone, or other social media (@afreshmind).

Warmly,  
Kenji Kuramitsu