



Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion

Why Continue a Journal Like This?

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A year ago we embarked on an exciting academic venture to create the first journal on religion that explored where different races and ethnicities intersected, a space where those interested in this intersection could come together to advance the discourse in new directions. When the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion* was launched, we imagined a few thousand people might stumble onto the journal, and maybe as many as 500 might become Facebook friends. Instead, the success of the journal surpassed the expectations of the publisher, the editorial board, and me as editor.

Throughout our first year, our website, raceandreligion.com, has had over 7,500 visitors viewing over 100,000 pages with nearly a quarter million hits. We presently average about 750 visitors per month, or one new reader every hour! More than 10% of our website traffic comes from outside the United States, reaching over 100 countries worldwide. The average published article is downloaded 330 times during the first three months of its appearance in the journal. The average book review has been downloaded about 150 times in its first three months. We should note that our most popular article has been downloaded over 1300 times, and our most popular book review has been downloaded more than 500 times. Every time we publish new content, more than 200 people visit our website within the first 36 hours to examine what was posted.

Our Facebook presence is just as impressive. At year's end, we surpassed 2,600 friends who subscribe to the journal, with about a hundred new friends being added to our list each month. Our friends represent over 19 countries and speak 18 different languages. Slightly more women (52%) are friends of the journal than males (44%). Age distribution is fairly even: ages 25 to 34 at 21%; 35 to 44 at 23%; 45-54 at 25%; and over 55 at 22%. We remain grateful to those who have invited their own Facebook friends to become part of the *JRER* community (and if you haven't, we encourage you to do so). What all this means is that *JRER*, in just one year, has become the largest academic religious community on the internet. You would be hard pressed to find any religious publisher with staff members working full-time on social media experiencing similar success.

The success of the journal is due mainly to the quality of what is being published. During the first year, we received 58 article submissions, of which only 21 were published. Each article was reviewed by one of the members of our editorial board along with a second scholar who is considered an expert in whatever discipline with which the submission dealt. The vast majority of the submissions accepted for publication required substantial revision prior to publication. Due to this rigorous academic process, institutions of higher education are accepting publication in *JRER* as an acceptable contribution to scholarship when considering tenure and promotion.

There is no doubt in my mind that *JRER* is meeting a long-neglected academic need. Many have submitted articles and book reviews for consideration, and we encourage all of you to do likewise. It is gratifying to witness the growth of this academic endeavor. And yet, I wonder if and hope that this is just the beginning. Any academic religious discourse that ignores the scholarship emanating from communities of color cannot be considered academically rigorous nor cutting-edge. As demographics continue to shift in favor of traditionally disenfranchised communities, as the continuation of our global economic malaise leads to more falling into dispossession, the consideration of any religious perspective from within any scholarly discipline will continue to be shaped and formed by the continuously growing communities of color. Nevertheless, voices rising from marginalized communities more often than not continue to be ignored by the academy.

During the 2010 AAR conference held in Atlanta this past November, a panel discussion took place dealing with the past, present, and possible future experiences of scholars of color within the academy. Speaking were the past chairpersons of the Committee for Racial and

Ethnic Minorities in the Profession (CREM). On the panel were Peter Paris, Kwok Pui-lan, Tony Pinn, and myself. The four papers presented that day were submitted to *JRER* for consideration. After the review process and revisions, all four papers were accepted for publication, representing the first articles of 2011. We believe that together, they represent the most current, comprehensive, and critical critique of the academy yet from the perspective of communities of color.

When we consider the success of *JRER*, obviously meeting a need felt by religion scholars of color, and when we consider the difficulties scholars from these communities face within the Academy, maybe it is time for these scholars of color to start thinking about transforming the virtual community *JRER* has created in cyber space into a physical reality. Why stop with just a journal? What would it be like for religion scholars of color to meet once a year in our own Society? Imagine an academic gathering where we are not relegated to our separate cul-de-sacs? Some of us have already begun these conversations. Although it is too premature for announcements, still, we invite you to dream with us.

Why, then, continue a journal like this? The answer is obvious: we are filling an unmet need. But even more than that, we are looking to a new future – a new *mañana*.