



Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion

What It Means to Be the Next Editor of *JREER*: Diversity, Solidarity, and Balance

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I am honored and privileged to serve as next editor of the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Religion (JREER)*, which started five years ago with the audacious leadership of Miguel De La Torre, founding editor, who envisioned a new and different kind of journal in the field to pave a new ground of religious study, not dominated by Western “lenses” any more. As the *JREER*’s mission is clearly stated in the journal page, its goal is being achieved beyond expectations. Thus far the *JREER* has published so many quality articles that deconstruct one-sided, Western interpretations about race, ethnicity, and discourses in religion, and that reconstruct texts/lives of

people from a diversity of local perspectives. Given so much success of the *JRER* along with ever-growing readership worldwide, I cannot find right words to express my deep, heart-felt appreciation to all who have made possible the face of the present journal. I cannot go in passing without mentioning the members of the editorial board for their combined intellect and commitment to making this journal a top class in the field.

In fact, I never expected to become editor of this kind of journal in religion because, according to the traditional nomenclature, my field is biblical studies or New Testament studies in particular. So initially, the invitation to be editor of the *JRER* was quite a surprise to me. I checked myself to see whether I can do well with this new job. I also thought about what I have been really interested in throughout my academic journey. Then I realized that I am more than a biblical or New Testament scholar; I am a scholar of humanities who seeks a just society from a perspective of diversity and solidarity. All my publications, in one way or another, are evidence of how much I challenged Western academic traditions and their approaches to the texts and also of how I radically or unconventionally reinterpreted them through critical engagement with the world “behind and in front of the readers.” I also realized that I have been very much interested in human lives that come with complexities of ethno-racial, religious, and political discourses – which are conveyed in texts and today’s world. Otherwise, I am not interested in “aloof” academic studies that dig in history in the name of objectivity and yet prioritize certain views of history and human lives. In light of my academic journey and personal interest in humanities, I am very pleased to invest in the *JRER* through which I may contribute to a promised future of this journal in a continual basis.

With my honor and great responsibility for the *JRER*'s sustainable future, I will continue to keep the great tradition set and shown by my predecessor and a great team of the editorial board. In addition, I will reach out to many well-deserved yet neglected voices in the field from all parts of the world. I hope the *JRER* will continue to be a powerful, relevant avenue through which scholars and practitioners in religion may de(re)construct the past in a more sustainable and liberating way. I also hope that some local issues will have a global significance and invite more people to engage in them so that they may reengage their own stories/histories in a different light.

As an Asian American scholar, more specifically, as a Korean American New Testament scholar who specializes in theories of biblical interpretation and the origins of early Christianity, I have a deep commitment to make a difference, even in small ways, in the world where we live. I envision a world of justice and peace and a world of diversity and solidarity in that no-bodies are ignored or silenced because of race, ethnicity, gender, or particular beliefs. I also believe that ultimately we are responsible for making a better world through fearless and ceaseless reexaminations of what we have taken for granted for so long.

Toward that goal, first of all, I think diversity must be a key to understanding the world where all kinds of people and cultures coexist. This means no one thing (one race, one culture, one tradition, or one religion) dominates all others. Truth is revealed in multiple places, through different peoples and cultures, or in so variegated ways that cannot be even named. It is my conviction that mere differences with cultures do not automatically or necessarily constitute diversity because the latter needs to engage with the former. Differences without being engaged

with others may be naïve at best or dangerous at worst. Therefore, diversity, while maintaining differences, must be the result of ongoing dialogues between and among different groups of people, cultures, and religions. This kind of diversity I would call critical diversity – distinguished from a lifeless vase with different cut followers removed from their original places.

Second, this kind of diversity takes into account “others” seriously. That is, it provokes a sense of solidarity. We feel the same fate with others when we see the face of others. It is like saying: “I am in you and you are in me.” We are different and yet share common humanity that features solidarity, love and responsibility in our lives. I am hoping ultimately this journal will seek such a nuanced stance that keeps tensions between diversity and solidarity.

Third, diversity and solidarity in our lives need a perspective of balance that does not allow biases, prejudices, bigotries, or absolutisms in any form or content. A perspective of balance considers all kinds of methods, whether critical or imaginative in our understanding of the world and humanity. I believe that the *JRER* will be one of the best channels to provide critically-imaginative, balanced ways of reading texts, histories, and stories about race, ethnicity, and religion.

In the end, I am very hopeful of my new job as editor. I will continue to work closely with an excellent team of the editorial board. I am also very excited about the *JRER*'s ever-increasing readership in a global scale and its usefulness as well as timelessness due to top-notch articles accessible through online at free. I cannot imagine how much more the *JRER* will make an impact on the way we ponder about the intersections of religion, race, and ethnicity.