

ABSTRACT

I have heard the cry of my people:
An Inquiry into Racism within the Roman Catholic Church
in Trinidad & Tobago 1943- 2012

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The Catholic Church has often operated according to ideologies, which negated the humanity and dignity of people of colour. This thesis is a contestation of sorts as it aims to highlight, examine and analyze racism within the Roman Catholic Church during the time period 1943-2012. In this thesis I investigate the written and oral history of the Church. I also examine the effect of imagery in religious spaces and the effect that exclusive practices have done in socializing racism in educational institutes. Based on interviews with various respondents; and a review of the literary works of fellow clergymen, I examine the ways in which racism is produced and experienced within the Church, and offer recommendations for change.

Racism in the Catholic Church in Trinidad and Tobago manifested itself in the early history of the Church in the Caribbean – from its relationship with the indigenous peoples, its presence in slavery and in the pivotal role it played in society during colonial times. Racism is acutely tied to class in Trinidad and Tobago. It was part of the lived experience of the first Caribbean priests and the collective experience of the first religious men and women of colour. It is apparent in its educational institutes, particularly the ‘prestige schools.’ It is also produced through its iconography, worship and work spaces, and in the everyday life of

Catholics . It is further revealed in subtle behaviours; such as glances and gestures, as well as overt behaviours like speech, and acts of violence, by Church members of all walks of life. The ecclesial classist racism continues to evolve, though it is never sufficiently addressed.

Keywords: Gerard Andrew Tang Choon; black and racism; ecclesial classist racism; Indian and racism, colourism and Church, Roman Catholic Church, Trinidad and Tobago