

As a slogan, “Black Lives Matter” (BLM) sounds like a truism. Who would contest that? A Christian perspective affirms that everyone is valuable and deserves dignity and justice. Concern about African Americans facing violence at the hands of the police seems entirely justified, especially in light of the appalling video of the arrest of George Floyd.

But things are complicated. BLM is not just a slogan, it is a movement which appeals to Marxism and claims to “make space for transgender brothers and sisters... disrupt the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement” and “foster a queer-affirming network”. It has links with Planned Parenthood — the largest single provider of reproductive health services, including abortion, in the U.S.

What’s more, BLM is movement which began in the U.S., and while it has been adopted around the world; the situation in Australia is not the same as that in the U.S. and the concerns do not transfer directly.

To complicate things further, the BLM movement has been associated with violent riots in the US as well as protests around the world which contravened public health advice and led authorities to fear a second wave of corona virus infections.

So, how do Christians in Australia respond to BLM?

We should be wary of the ideological basis of BLM. It has explicit connection with Neo-Marxism which has a long history of seeking to subvert and “de-Christianise” Western culture. BLM is linked to movements which work to undo basic structures of the created order (marriage, family, gender, sanctity of life and property rights) and destabilize Western culture. (See the useful [article](#) “Cultural Marxism: Imaginary Conspiracy or Revolutionary by Rob Smith from Sydney Missionary and Bible College).

Yet, even Marxist ideology offers insights! Economic and social structures impact people in all sorts ways. Terms such as “structural racism” and “white privilege” are provocative, but name real phenomena. We should not dismiss these insights.

Smith points out, the problem is not that Marxism (even cultural Marxism) has nothing to teach us but that “its diagnosis is superficial, and its cure fatal”. It systematically suppresses any theological perspective, so it is unable to see the deepest levels of the human predicament. Its agenda is disruptive and destructive, with almost no constructive proposals. (That is why it is so hard to work out what many of the protests are actually asking for).

Christians should not imagine that our agenda is to preserve Western society. We are committed to the common good, but consumerism, technological triumphalism and neo-liberal economics do not necessarily serve that good. Jesus does not endorsement our current culture, though aspects of it reflect a Christian heritage. We should have a more compelling critique of our culture than Marxism provides and be able to offer a richer life-affirming vision of human life. The hope of the Kingdom of God surpasses cultural revolution.

More importantly, we need to see why BLM connects with Indigenous people in Australia. European colonisation involved terrible evils, and the continuing history of dispossession, mistreatment and injustice — including the more recent “stolen generation” — have left deep scars. Past hurts still raw carry over into the present disadvantages and are often reinforced by continuing mistreatment.

People from Australian first nations face appalling levels of incarceration and deaths in custody. They are far more likely to be charged with a crime, less likely to be offered bail and more likely to be imprisoned than non-Aboriginal in Australia. The NSW population is about 3 per cent indigenous but more than 30 per cent of prison inmates are Aboriginal. Despite the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, rates of indigenous deaths in custody have risen and seem not to be consistently investigated.

The reasons for the levels of imprisonment and death in the indigenous community are complex and solutions are not easily to hand. Noel Pearson said on Q&A on ABC TV a few years ago “some of the profound indicators of our problems – children alienated from parents, the most incarcerated people on the planet Earth, and youths in great numbers in detention – obviously speak to a structural problem”. The issues in the criminal justice system reflect a host of other ways in which Aboriginal Australians have worse health status, housing, education and employment than the rest of Australia.

Meanwhile, Indigenous Australians often get the impression that non-Indigenous Australia is not listening. Responses like “It’s all in the past” or “All live matter” can sound dismissive and make the BLM narrative more convincing and its ideology more attractive.

The church, knowing our reconciliation with God and each other, should take a different stance. We can listen, genuinely, and empathise. We can pray, and we might also protest. A few years ago the Gospel, Society and Culture Committee produced [a paper on reconciliation](#), with more suggestions about actions for churches. You might also look at the [resources](#) Common Grace provide to help Christians and churches pursue reconciliation.