



Worship across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multiracial Congregation

Gerardo Marti

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Many scholars and church leaders believe that music and worship style are essential in stimulating diversity in congregations. Gerardo Marti draws on interviews with more than 170 congregational leaders and parishioners, as well as his experiences participating in worship services in a wide variety of Protestant, multiracial Southern Californian churches, to present this insightful study of the role of music in creating congregational diversity.

Worship across the Racial Divide offers a surprising conclusion: that there is no single style of worship or music that determines the likelihood of achieving a multiracial church. Far more important are the complex of practices of the worshipping community in the production and absorption of music. Multiracial churches successfully diversify by stimulating unobtrusive means of interracial and interethnic relations; in fact, preparation for music apart from worship gatherings proves to be just as important as its performance during services. Marti shows that aside from and even in spite of the varying beliefs of attendees and church leaders, diversity happens because music and worship create practical spaces where cross-racial bonds are formed.

This groundbreaking book sheds light on how race affects worship in multiracial churches. It will allow a new understanding of the dynamics of such churches, and provide crucial aid to church leaders for avoiding the pitfalls that inadvertently widen the racial divide.

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