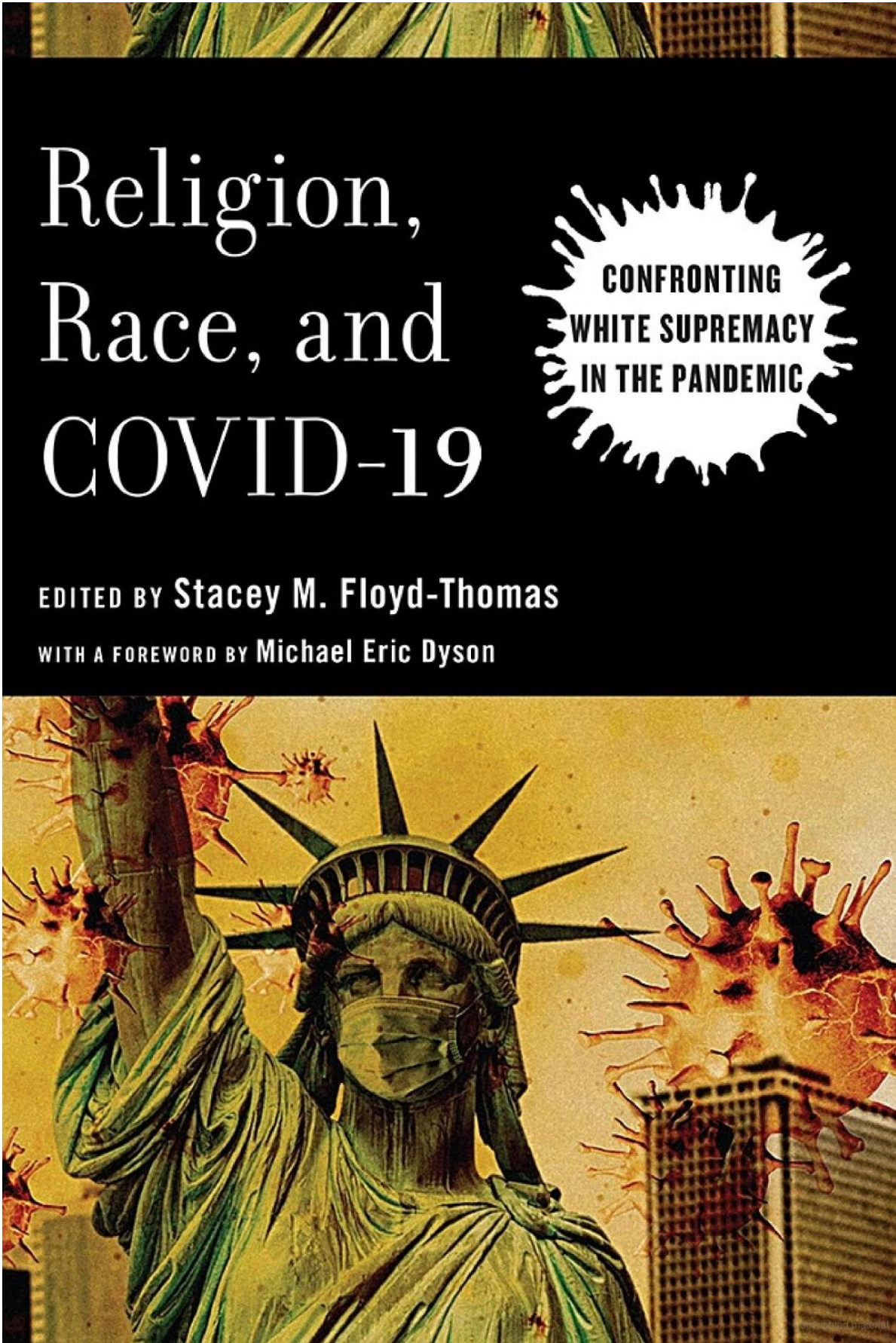


Anthology explores racial inequities during COVID-19 pandemic

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Credit: New York University Press

Professor Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor and associate professor of ethics and society at Vanderbilt, has edited and published "Religion, Race, and COVID-19: Confronting White Supremacy in the Pandemic" (New York University Press, 2022), an anthology exploring the countless challenges, racially charged acts, setbacks, triumphs and newfound hope through the eyes of individuals living through one of the most pressing, perplexing social crises in recent memory—namely, the global COVID-19 pandemic.

"The year 2020 offered us great hindsight for how to ascertain how life matters most to us," Floyd-Thomas said. "To be mandated to stay at home; to witness culture wars, social unrest and COVID-19 plague, our minds and bodies yielded a moment marked by paralysis, turmoil and death.

"We were not only dealing with racism, but also that of a literal plague, and as scholars, we desperately needed a way to find catharsis," she said.

By the summer of 2020, Floyd-Thomas assembled a wide collection of professional colleagues from [diverse backgrounds](#) and various disciplinary approaches from across the nation to collaborate on the edited volume. Each scholar was invited to contribute original essays based on their particular research expertise as it best related to the book's titular subject matter.

The book's chapters include "Who's Saving Whom?: Black Millennials

and the Revivification of Religious Communities" by Melanie C. Jones; "Love Crafts Countries: Loving beyond the White Divide—A Story of Blackness, Korea, and Transformative Power on the Damascus Road" by Blanche Bong Cook; and "Toxic Religion, Toxic Churches, and Toxic Policies: Evangelicals, 'White Blessing,' and COVID-19" by David P. Gushee.

"It's a multifaceted, multidimensional scholarship that is public-facing," Floyd-Thomas said. "It is the work of over 10 scholars engaged and trained in the life of the mind to find means to make life more sustainable for communities that find themselves unattended to in scholarship, on the underside of history and ravaged by the everyday forces that threaten human flourishing."

The work examines how the nation's younger generations found community in a virtual space, racial reckonings within the Black and Asian American populations, and how churches and places of worship evolved. "We saw these major events happening from our couches and in moments where we could not gather; we saw our Millennials and GenZers leading us," Floyd-Thomas said. "And if it weren't for their moral leadership, the rest of the world would not have been paying us any mind.

"While not without precedent as a [deadly virus](#), COVID-19 represents a pandemic of unprecedented magnitude—totalizing and ubiquitous in creating a death toll that is not only biological, but perhaps also sociological, technological, ideological and psychological," she said.

"This book seeks to examine this moment for its [religious significance](#) through an exploration of how different groups recognize, reconcile, redeem and resurrect a sense of both human and ultimate significance as they confront this death-dealing reality that is seemingly beyond human control."

Floyd-Thomas and her colleagues plan to continue research on the subject in the future to help the world remember a historic era and the racial disparities that emerged.

"We promised not to give up on the work or each other. This book is a testament to that," Floyd Thomas said. "It is also to do three things simultaneously: define the moral crises in our midst; denounce the hurt and harm that has befallen many people—most especially communities of color—in the past few years since the onset of the pandemic; and imagine future pathways to avoid replicating and reinforcing past mistakes."

Provided by Vanderbilt University

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