

***Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God***  
by Kelly Brown Douglas



**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

provided by  
Metro-Urban Institute and Continuing Education, Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

1. **Locating Ourselves** (20 min) – SMALL GROUP (work in groups of 3 or 4)
  - a. Do you consider yourself to be white or a person of color? How often do you and what causes you to think about your own skin color / race?
  - b. In her discussion of Trayvon Martin, Kelly Brown Douglas observes that Black bodies are frequently assumed to be guilty and subject to practices of evaluation not used on other bodies, even to the point of putting black victims “on trial” in media and public conversation. Is there a time when your eyes were opened up to this?
2. **Problematizing the Theological Tradition** (20 min) – LARGE GROUP
  - a. Douglas draws strong comparisons between the social classification and crucifixion of Christ and the social classification and lynching of black people:

“The Matthean question today might be, ‘But Lord, where did we see you dying and on the cross?’ And Jesus would answer, ‘On a Florida sidewalk, at a Florida gas station, on a Michigan porch, on a street in North Carolina. As you did it to one of these young black bodies, you did it to me.’” (*Stand Your Ground*, pp. 179-80)
  - b. This is a powerful connection between an image that is at the heart of Christian identity and heritage—and the current context of deep and racially-charged suffering. What does her comparison evoke in you? What would be at stake if our faith communities took this analogy seriously?
3. **Looking Ahead to New Ways of Thinking and Being** (20 min) – SMALL GROUP (work in groups of 3 or 4)
  - a. In her book, Douglas refers to white Baptist minister Michael Bledsoe, who suggested, “if the victims of these stand-your-ground crucifixions were white, . . . no doubt . . . the white churches would speak up. Remaining silent . . . was to cooperate with evil.” (*Stand Your Ground*, p. 199)
  - b. Imagine that our churches and communities could be places that affirm the Incarnational value of black bodies and end the silence (and thus complicity) in response to instances and patterns of racism. What would this look like? What thoughts and strategies do you leave here with today?