

Stations of the Cross: A Reflection Walk on Wyoming's Racial History

A Journey of Suffering, Solidarity, and Hope

Using the *Stations of the Cross* to reflect on Wyoming's racial history offers a way to engage with moments of suffering, perseverance, and the ongoing struggle for justice. While Wyoming is often associated with its frontier past, its racial history includes the displacement of Indigenous peoples, Chinese and Black labor struggles, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and ongoing issues of inequality.

I offer this approach to walking Jesus' final path to death as a way for you to listen for what God is calling you to do and be.

- Rev. Chris Galagan,
Deacon

How to Use This Guide

- **Location Options:** Walk at a historical site (e.g., Heart Mountain, Wind River Reservation, Fort Caspar/Fort Laramie, Rock Springs), a church campus, or a park. If your church has icons of the Stations of the Cross, it may be completed within that sacred space, as well.
- **Reflect at Each Station:** Pause, read the reflection, and spend time in silent prayer or discussion. If doing this as a group, take turns reading the reflections aloud and allow wait time at each station.

Opening Prayer

God of justice and mercy, as we walk this journey, open our hearts to the suffering endured by marginalized communities in Wyoming's history. Help us to remember, repent, and work for justice. Amen.

The Stations of the Cross

First Station: Jesus is Condemned to Death – *Condemned Without Justice*

Suggested Location: Beginning the walk

- **Reflection:** Just as Jesus was unjustly condemned, beaten, and tried in an unjust court, so also were Indigenous tribes in Wyoming forced off their land and Japanese Americans were interned during WWII.
- **Prayer:** Lord, may we stand against unjust condemnation and work for truth. May we recognize those in our community whose ancestors were wronged, and open our eyes to their needs today. **Amen.**

Second Station: Jesus Takes Up His Cross – *Bearing Unjust Burdens*

Suggested Location: A marked path or road

- **Reflection:** Chinese immigrants who helped build the Union Pacific Railroad, Black cowboys and settlers who helped develop the land, and Indigenous people who traded with and supported early settlers carried the burden of discrimination, exclusion, and violence while building Wyoming's economy.
- **Prayer:** Give us the courage to lift the burdens of those who suffer injustice today. May we be brave enough to stand up to those who wish to suppress our neighbors.

Third Station: Jesus Falls the First Time – *A People Betrayed*

Suggested Location: A rocky or uneven area

- **Reflection:** The Rock Springs Massacre (1885), where white miners slaughtered at least 28 Chinese workers, burned their homes, and forced hundreds to flee, as well as Wyoming's early adoption of exclusionary laws that mirrored national anti-Chinese sentiment is a reminder of America's betrayal of its ideals.
- **Prayer:** Lord, forgive us for the times we have failed to protect the vulnerable.

Fourth Station: Jesus Meets His Mother – *The Strength of Family and Community*

Suggested Location: A place with benches or a resting spot

- **Reflection:** At Heart Mountain, families supported each other despite the humiliation of imprisonment. The Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho have continued to preserve their culture, language, and traditions despite systematic efforts to erase them. Black families in Wyoming's early settlements, such as in Cheyenne, established businesses and churches, despite laws to discriminate against them.
- **Prayer:** Help us to nurture communities of love and resilience, and honor those whose strength has brought them through adversity.

Fifth Station: Simon of Cyrene Helps Jesus Carry the Cross – *Acts of Solidarity*

Suggested Location: A bridge or intersection

- **Reflection:** The Heart Mountain Fair Play Committee resisted injustice, and many allies have stood up for Wyoming's marginalized communities, such as tribal leaders advocating for sovereignty and civil rights activists challenging systemic discrimination. Wyoming was also the first to grant women the right to vote in 1869.
- **Prayer:** May we be like Simon, willing to bear the burdens of others.

Sixth Station: Veronica Wipes the Face of Jesus – *Dignity in the Face of Oppression*

Suggested Location: A reflective space with water or shade

- **Reflection:** Those who preserved history—like Wind River elders sharing oral traditions or those who fought for Japanese American reparations—restored dignity to the oppressed. Let us recognize moments of compassion and the role of faith communities in offering sanctuary and support for oppressed groups.
- **Prayer:** Teach us to honor and protect the dignity of every human being.

Seventh Station: Jesus Falls the Second Time – *Struggles Continue*

Suggested Location: A difficult path or incline

- **Reflection:** Even after their release, Japanese internees faced discrimination and lost homes. Indigenous tribes on the Wind River Reservation face economic hardship, health disparities, and battles over land and water rights. There is continued exclusion of people of color in Wyoming's political and economic structures.
- **Prayer:** Lord, help us persevere in the fight for justice. Grant that every person may enjoy a fair portion of the riches of this land.

Eighth Station: Jesus Meets the Women of Jerusalem – *The Role of Women in Justice*

Suggested Location: A site honoring women or families

- **Reflection:** Indigenous, Black, and Asian American women in Wyoming have led efforts for education, voting rights, and cultural preservation. Women are often at the forefront in preserving cultural traditions and passing down histories often ignored in mainstream narratives.
- **Prayer:** May we listen to the voices of women who call us to justice.

Ninth Station: Jesus Falls the Third Time – *More Setbacks, More Struggles*

Suggested Location: A place with a historical marker or plaque

- **Reflection:** Wyoming continues to struggle with racial disparities in policing, education, and health care—reminders that injustice is not yet defeated. There are disparities in law enforcement, and challenges faced by Indigenous youth in Wyoming's education system.
- **Prayer:** Give us endurance to keep fighting for a just world.

Tenth Station: Jesus is Stripped of His Garments – *Stripping Away Dignity*

Suggested Location: A barren or open space

- **Reflection:** Japanese internees were stripped of their homes and belongings, and Indigenous children were stripped of their heritage in boarding schools. Black and Chinese histories have been erased from Wyoming narratives, and the lasting impact of past discrimination has resulted in generational poverty and land disputes.
- **Prayer:** May we work to restore dignity to those who have been marginalized.

Eleventh Station: Jesus is Nailed to the Cross – *The Ultimate Sacrifice*

Suggested Location: A significant or solemn location

- **Reflection:** The 442nd Regimental Combat Team, made up of Japanese American soldiers from internment camps, sacrificed their lives for a country that had imprisoned their families. Indigenous children were removed from their homes in order to assimilate into a culture that was not their own, and stripped of their language and customs. Death and suffering occurred because of the color of skin.
- **Prayer:** Lord, may we honor those who have suffered injustice by saying their names, remembering their stories, and telling the truth.

Twelfth Station: Jesus Dies on the Cross – *Lives Lost to Injustice*

Suggested Location: A memorial or quiet area

- **Reflection:** Many lives were lost due to racial violence—from Chinese miners in Rock Springs, lynchings of Black men, and Indigenous people in forced removals. There are a myriad of consequences of systemic policies that have left marginalized communities with fewer resources and opportunities.
- **Prayer:** Help us to mourn, remember, and act to prevent future injustices.

Thirteenth Station: Jesus is Taken Down from the Cross – *Honoring Those Who Suffered*

Suggested Location: A museum or historical site

- **Reflection:** The Heart Mountain Interpretive Center, Indigenous cultural sites, and historical markers work to keep the past alive so we may learn. Indigenous and minority leaders work to reclaim their history and advocate for justice.
- **Prayer:** May we be a people who remember, teach, and honor truth.

Fourteenth Station: Jesus is Laid in the Tomb – *Awaiting Justice and Resurrection*

Suggested Location: A place of hope, such as a church or community center

- **Reflection:** Healing is possible, but it requires acknowledgment and action. Reconciliation efforts in Wyoming continue, ensuring that Wyoming's history is told truthfully and that all communities have the opportunity to thrive, but there is still much work to be done.
 - **Prayer:** Lord, guide us in the work of justice, healing, and hope.
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Closing Reflection

Leader or Participant: Just as Christ rose from the tomb, we believe in the resurrection of justice and dignity for all people.

All Respond: Lord, help us to build a world of truth, healing, and love.

Closing Prayer (Attributed to St. Francis)

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:

where there is hatred, let me sow love;

where there is injury, pardon;

where there is doubt, faith;

where there is despair, hope;

where there is darkness, light;

where there is sadness, joy.

O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

Amen