

Sorry, Megyn Kelly, Jesus wasn't white—and thank God

By [Adam J. Copeland](#)

December 13, 2013

This week, Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly, in a [segment](#) about the race of Santa Claus, reported a bomb shell. No, it wasn't that this Christmas, in support of Obama's socialist policies, not just Rudolph's nose but his entire face will be painted red.

Kelly said, "I mean, **Jesus was a white man too**. He was a historical figure; that's a verifiable fact."

[Douglas John Hall](#) tells a story when reflecting on the character of American culture and Christianity. Hall, after giving a lecture, was challenged by an angry American who insisted Hall's theology was objectionable. The questioner said he'd never heard so much "**un-American stuff**" in his life. Hall responded, explaining that since he's Canadian, he wasn't sure what the questioner meant by the phrase, "un-American."

The questioner responded, "*That's easy, un-American just means un-Christian.*"

The danger of assuming Jesus looks just like me is pretty simple: Jesus is not just like me. He's not American. He's not white. He's neither a member of the NRA nor PETA. He never took a position on a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage.

Jesus was a first-century Palestinian Jew. He had dark skin. Forensic scientists think he might have looked [like this](#).

That said, I wish Megyn Kelly—or at least the panelists, for goodness' sake—would have addressed two curious points on Jesus and race.

First, why does it make some (most?) white people uncomfortable to think of Jesus as black?

Second, why does every culture make Jesus into their own image?

There are Celtic images of Jesus with red hair, African drawings of Jesus with dreadlocks, and Chinese artwork with Jesus wearing a flowing Asian robe and

sporting a long goatee. Of course, there's also [touchdown Jesus](#).

Such depictions of Jesus help make him real for millions of believers—real not in a historical sense, but in a trust/faith/spiritual practices sense. Icons depicting Jesus' image enhance the prayer life of many Christians around the world. In these cases, *historical accuracy isn't the point*.

On my best days, from my position of privilege, I long for a Jesus who comforts me spiritually *and also makes me somewhat uncomfortable in my own skin*.

In *God of the Oppressed*, theologian James Cone argues that Jesus is black not because of his skin color, but because he was a *Jew*—a powerless minority in Roman-occupied Palestine. [For Cone](#), Jesus' blackness comes from Jesus' identification with the oppressed, by virtue of his stature with those in low social positions and his eventual crucifixion.

Ultimately, I'm less concerned with Megyn Kelly's confusion about Jesus' historical skin color than I am with anyone's assumption that Jesus was about continuing power and privilege.

Jesus always stands with those on the margins of society; he was neither white nor privileged.

Originally posted at [A Wee Blether](#)