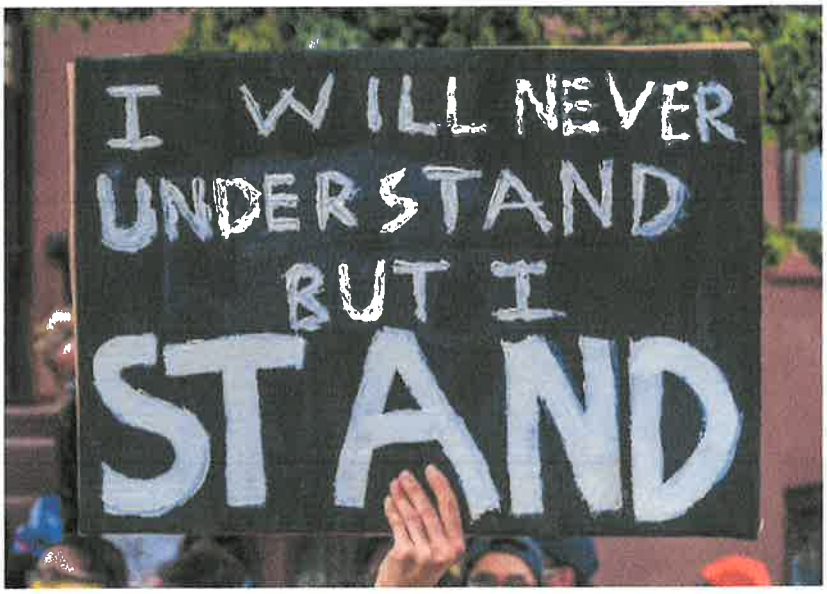
LET JUSTICE ROLL!

****

An Occasional Newsletter Produced & Distributed by the "Social Justice & Action Group" (SJAG) at St. John the Divine Anglican Church - Victoria, B.C.

ISSUE #10 – JULY 2020

HOW CAN WE OVERCOME RACISM?



"But let justice roll on like a river, and righteousness like a never failing stream." **Amos 5:24 (NIV)**

"LET JUSTICE ROLL!" is intended to educate, inform and challenge readers regarding important issues and ideas at the intersection where faith and justice meet. For the most part, the themes offered here are viewed through a Christian lens. The topics chosen focus on social concerns that many of our parishioners currently share. The short articles selected cover a diversity of issues -- *FROM* poverty/economic inequality, peace and human/LGBTQ rights, First Nations reconciliation -- *TO* environmental stewardship, refugees, racism, food security and community/international development. The political is never far away from the topics we choose to present. As Cornel West reminds us: *"Justice is what love looks like in public!"*

The ideas and opinions expressed, and or positions articulated, in the newsletter may not officially be those of the Parish or the Diocese. Your feedback is encouraged! Please address your comments to either Murray Luft (Editor) murrayrae@yahoo.com or John McLaren (Interim SJAG Chair) jpsmamclaren@gmail.com. We also invite you to submit provocative articles (already published or original) for inclusion in future ***"Let Justice Roll!"*** newsletters. SJAG's intention is to produce this newsletter at least four times per year. During Covid 19, LJR is only available in an on-line format (via the Church's web-site). M.L., Editor

LET JUSTICE ROLL #10

July 2020 Newsletter

"HOW CAN WE OVERCOME RACISM?"

With the positive feedback regarding our experimental on-line edition of **"Pandemic Issue #9"** in May, we are opting for a second electronic version of LJR, this time illuminating "**Racism/Black Lives Matter #10**. In this issue, we explore the complex and disturbing events which have captivated the news cycle for the past month or more, both in the United States and Canada. To balance the predominant U.S. perspective, we have attempted to incorporate some aspects of racial injustice from our Canadian context – showing that systemic discrimination against our First Nations brothers and sisters, as well as against Black people and other racial minorities, is a stark reality in this country too.

We have framed Issue #10 with a piece about **Rev. Bob MacRae**, former rector of St. John's, who some time ago established our distinct *"St. John's social justice culture"*. We also highly recommend the profound personal account of life in a mixed race family, provided by one of our own congregants **Diana MacDonald**. And, Martin Brokenleg's powerful article on National Indigenous Day is not to be missed. LJR #10 has benefited from the excellent interview, research and editing skills of **Sara Chu** and **Karyn Lehmann**, both members of our parish Social Justice and Action Group (SJAG). During this period of great fear, uncertainty, and both figurative and literal separation, we must recommit ourselves to fighting together for the well-being of our communities and against all forms of violence and injustice.

ML, Editor

****

Without justice and love, peace will always be a great illusion.

RC Bishop Dom Helder Camara, Brazil

Crisis Contemplation and Racism: "The Moan"

June 11, 2020 -- Richard Rohr *

Apart from a few monastic orders, Western Christianity neglected the systematic instruction of contemplative practice for hundreds of years. Yet many people naturally grow into non-dual consciousness through great suffering or great love. Barbara Holmes suggests that *"crisis contemplation"* arose out of necessity during slavery, beginning in the Middle Passage when people were transported across the ocean as human cargo. In times such as this, contemplation becomes the soul's strategy of survival.

It was a community of sorts, yet each person lay in their own chrysalis of human waste and anxiety. More often than not, these Africans were strangers to each other by virtue of language, culture, and tribe. Although the names of their deities differed, they shared a common belief in the seen and unseen. The journey was a rite of passage of sorts that stripped captives of their personal control over the situation and forced them to turn to the spirit realm for relief and guidance. . . .

The word contemplation must press beyond the constraints of religious expectations to reach the potential for spiritual centring in the midst of danger. Centring moments accessed in safety are an expected luxury in our era. During slavery, however, crisis contemplation became a refuge, a wellspring of discernment in a suddenly disordered life space, and a geo-spiritual anvil for forging a new identity. This definition of contemplation is dynamic and situational. . . .

As unlikely as it may seem, the contemplative moment can be found at the very center of such ontological crises . . . during the Middle Passage in the holds of slave ships . . . on the auction blocks . . . and in the . . . hush arbours [where slaves worshipped in secret]. Each event is experienced by individuals stunned into multiple realities by shock, journey, and displacement. . . . In the words of Howard Thurman, ***"when all hope for release in this world seems unrealistic and groundless, the heart turns to a way of escape beyond the present order."*** For captured Africans, there was no safety except in common cause and the development of internal and spiritual fortitude. . . .

The only sound that would carry Africans over the bitter waters was **"T*he Moan".*** **"The *Moan"*** flowed through each wracked body and drew each soul toward the centre of contemplation. . . . On the slave ships, the moan became the language of stolen strangers, the sound of unspeakable fears, the precursor to joy yet unknown. . . . One imagines the Spirit moaning as it hovered over the deep during the Genesis account of creation [Genesis 1:2]. Here, ***"The Moan"*** stitches horror and survival instincts into a creation narrative. . . . ***"The Moan"*** is the birthing sound, the first movement toward a creative response to oppression, the entry into the heart of contemplation through the crucible of crisis. Indeed, we are hearing ***"The Echoing Moan"*** of black and brown communities today, crying out: *"How long, O Lord, must our people suffer?"*

* ***From: Richard Rohr, CAC On-Line*** **<meditations@cac.org.>**

Understanding and Confronting Racism

By John McLaren, SJAG *

Looking back across the first six months of 2020, one can perhaps be forgiven as assuming that two crises have been all-consuming -- **COVID-19** and its often grim impacts and challenges; and more recently, the exposure of both overt and systemic racism in North America, both within and outside the realm of law enforcement, and embodied in widespread ***Black Lives Matter*** protests.

There was, in fact, a third. Given the shaky state of our collective longer term memory, it is not surprising that the New(born) Year was barely delivered when an earlier crisis, that related to the ***Wet'suwet'en*** traditional leaders standing, both figuratively and physically, in the way of a natural gas pipeline, the construction of which was proceeding without consultation with them. This apparent denial of Indigenous Title, and the use of armed police to force the issue, led to protests blocking the transport of goods and people across this country. These were barricades that some predicted would lead to the ruination of the Canadian economy, if allowed to remain in place. As this newsletter implies, there are connections between all three crises and the Christian Gospel stands in judgement of the ways in which unequal societies reflect their history of colonial power and exploitation, leading to the ongoing, conscious and unconscious, oppression of the most vulnerable in them,

In **Let Justice Roll #9,** we examined the theological, ethical, social and cultural dimensions of the COVID-19 crisis – for which there is yet to be found an effective long-term medical health panacea. In this number, we look at the corrosive effects of racism in North America, which seem to defy effective solution, despite the fact that they are fundamentally human in origin and construction. Through the lenses of a multi-ethnic group of thinkers and writers, we look at the deeply ingrained realities of both overt and systemic racism in Canada and the United States, and how they negatively affect the daily lives of those among us whose skin colour is not white, both as individuals and communities.

This issue **(LJR#10)** investigates the causes and indelibility of the judgmental ascribing of characteristics and values to others that one way or another aggrandize and privilege the dominant, and devalue others. We learn of both the deep implication of Christianity in some of its important traditions on the side of racism over many centuries, blind to the actual life, message and witness of Jesus, and all too ready to countenance as gospel biblical passages *"suggesting"* racial hierarchy. We are left in no doubt about the considered anger of those among us who to this day are made to feel different and less than human, whether outside or inside the Church (a reality which the **Reverend Martin Brokenleg** has given deep meaning from his experience as an Indigenous person). We are challenged to recognize that we cannot blithely exculpate ourselves as members of a dominant settler culture by voicing the platitude: ***"I am not a racist!"*** Only by word and deed do we become ***"anti-racist"*** -- and an active part of the cause of racial justice.

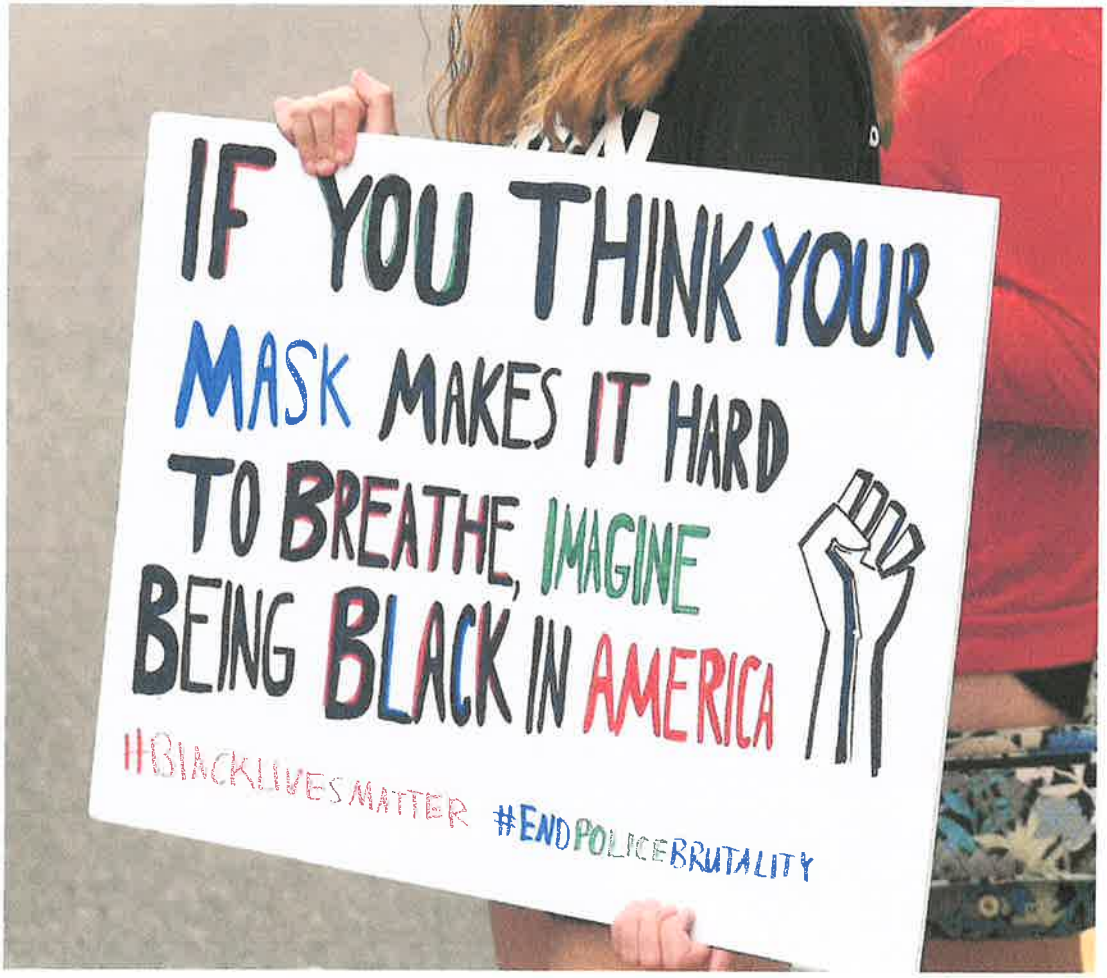
The choice of articles and commentary reflects the rather different cultural contexts in which racism manifests itself. Although the **Black Lives Matter** movement has meaning and resonance in Canada, the communities in this country that have been major targets of racism, whether explicit or implicit, are those of Indigenous heritage, as the protests over land and title and the struggles for justice for the survivors of residential school and their descendants illustrate.

This latter point has particular relevance in Sara Chu's feature on the life and ministry of **Bob MacRae**, the Rector of St. John the Divine from 1977 to 1997, under whose stewardship the parish developed a strong commitment to learning about and promoting Indigenous culture. Bob was involved in initiatives (such as Project North), one of the earliest efforts of reconciliation between Churches and

Indigenous communities.

I believe that the long shadow of racism also features in the profoundly moving story of the experience of two of our parishioners, **Diana and Bob MacDonald**, in raising and nurturing, with immense love and understanding, two children of mixed race and Indigenous heritage respectively, and the racism that those young men faced, and which took a toll on the lives of them and their family. We need go no further in realizing how potentially relevant these stories are, and should be, in the lives of all of us in this amazing parish.

Together, these pages present a major challenge to a well-intentioned and genuinely concerned congregation like ours, committed to social justice and action, when we are, at the same time, largely white, elderly, and financially secure. If we want to become more effective advocates and activists against systemic racism, how do we commit to that important goal? **Let Justice Roll #10** provides only a reflective starting point. It is surely now up to us to discuss, consider and debate how we make the ideas, challenges and initiatives suggested a spur to action in our own lives and in the Church.



* John McLaren is a retired U. Vic law professor and Interim Chair of St. John's Social Justice and Action Group (SJAG).

Archdeacon Robert Daniel MacRae *
Rector of St John the Divine 1977-1997

Archdeacon MacRae was born in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan to a family with rural roots in the province. Bob, as he was known to many, had a wide variety of life experiences in his work as a young man and this helped him later to develop dynamic ministry.

Upon completing high school Bob attended the University of Saskatchewan for two years. In the summer he did officer training for the Navy through ROTC at Royal Roads. This was his introduction to British Columbia and it led him to complete a Bachelor of Arts at UBC in 1953. He intended to study medicine. For a year Bob worked as a social worker in Yorkton, Saskatchewan. Bob was only 22 years old but looked even younger—about 15. One of his tasks was to assess the suitability of prospective adoptive parents in an era when there were many babies available. He often transported babies in his car as part of the job. He also had to investigate homes where there were difficulties and the safety of the children was in question. He reflected on how poorly prepared he was to fulfill these responsibilities. While in Yorkton, Bob attended the local Anglican church and began to feel torn between wanting to be a doctor and feeling a call to ministry.

In the summers of 1955-56, while a student at the College of Emmanuel and St Chad in Saskatoon, Bob had a student placement at St John the Divine, Quesnel, BC. He and another theology student presented Vacation Bible Schools in Quesnel and in surrounding small communities. He also looked after two churches, one in Wells (60 miles east of Quesnel) and one in Barkerville 5 miles from Wells. Bob had no car. He travelled to Wells on the "Barkerville Stage", an old van that served as a bus, and walked between Wells and Barkerville. On his first trip, a drunken fellow passenger threatened to slash Bob's neck with a broken bottle. He managed to placate his attacker but on arrival in Wells, he was immediately called to attend a suicide at the local mine. It was a shocking introduction to what being a priest could entail. In 1958, Bob was ordained Deacon and in 1959 he was ordained priest by the Bishop of the Caribou.

While a theology student, Bob met Helen Larmonth, later known as Helen Hughes. In Quesnel, he also was befriended by Roly and Vi Wilkins who were later to be long time members of St John's Victoria and caretakers in St John's Court.

Bob's first parish after ordination was Ashcroft in the Diocese of Cariboo. The parish had churches in Ashcroft and Clinton and a rural circuit including Cache Creek and about twenty small geographic points. Two years later he returned to UBC, this time to study for a Master's of Social Work. He then went to Kamloops to be vicar of a two-point parish: Westsyde and Savona (45 minutes away). In the 21/2 years he was there, Bob established a new Church of Cleopas in Westsyde (so named because the story of the road to Emmaus was his favourite) and helped St Hilda's Savona begin building a new church. Bob was always very energetic. He had an ability to inspire energy in people around him and no shortage of innovative ideas. Also while in the Kamloops area he helped establish a hostel for men and laid the framework for the Marion Hilliard Home For Unmarried Mothers. Roly and Vi Wilkins were the first house parents there.

Savona was also the place where Bob met his wife Susan. She grew up on a ranch just outside Savona and graduated in Nursing at UBC in June of 1966 and they wed in July of that year.

In the 1960s and '70s, the Anglican Church had a bigger national staff and was very involved in social policy. In 1966, Bob went to work at the national office (Church House) in Toronto. Bob joined the staff of the Council for Social Service(CSS) and was responsible for several portfolios including prison ministry, family life, and ministry to the armed forces. He helped present briefs to the Federal Government on social policy issues like abortion, family planning, death and dying. Bob was one of the staff people that presented the Hendry Report: *Toward An Assessment of the Work of the Anglican Church of Canada with Canada's Native People* to General Synod in 1969. Our church was realizing it was complicit in a destructive chapter in Canadian history. Bob and Susan soon started a family and their four daughters, Julia, Bridget, Phoebe, and Caitlin were all born in Toronto. The family attended St Timothy's in North Toronto and they helped to establish a more casual family service, which was a new idea in the Anglican church.

In the latter half of their 11 years in Toronto, Bob was secretary of PWRF, which later became PWRDF, when the church realized that Development was an important part of helping struggling Third World countries. Bob travelled internationally for a month each year, plus he made many short trips within Canada as well. He went to Nigeria, Gambia, Uganda, Kenya, India and Sri Lanka. Bob also attended meetings in Geneva for the World Council of Churches. This work reinforced Bob's strong belief that changes in social policy were crucial to helping the poor and disadvantaged in any society.

Susan became involved with La Leche League, helping mothers breast feed and it was through her that Bob became aware of the evil doings of the Nestle company. Nestle was using aggressive sales tactics to promote infant formula to Third World mothers. The World Health Organization condemned Nestle's actions. In 1977, Bob left Church House and became Rector of St John the Divine, Victoria. In the late 1970s he was instrumental in establishing INFACT Canada which did battle with corporate interests on the ethics of promoting breast milk substitutes.

Even though Bob had only a few years of parish experience, St John's and Bob were a good fit as the community was open and caring. Reading the church leaflets from 1977 to 1997, one notes a tremendous number of outreach activities at St John's.

We supported local causes such as the Rural Wedge Farm on Balmoral Street when an arsonist struck them. We gave space to Rick Sandberg's ministry to street youth, and to the Single Parent's Resource Centre. One of our members helped found Threshold Housing and we have supported it ever since. We had a prison ministry by parishioners. PFLAG had it's beginning in St John's lounge. We had Neighbourhood Networks and supported the Greater Victoria Council of Churches. We hosted Welfare Wednesday in 1994. We helped fund a new van for the Upper Room food service and our Parish Food Box became the EFS (Emergency Food Service) in 1996. We started the Alliance Club Cooking. And every year the Lenten Noon Forum, with speakers on many important topics, attracted many non-church members to our doors.

We supported international causes through Ten Days for World Development, Anglicans in Mission, and Primate's World Relief and Development Fund. In 1983, we helped host the World Council of Churches' General Assembly. Our Parish Partnership Program (PPP) helped us learn about the church in Brazil and in 1992 a group of parishioners travelled there. On numerous Sundays, we had guest preachers from places like Brazil, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Ecuador, El Salvador, Uruguay, Peru, Burma, and Mozambique. We had visitors from China's State Education Commission. We supported VIDEA (Victoria International

Development Education Association). We went on the annual Peace Walk. We supported Physicians for The Prevention of Nuclear War, Project Ploughshares, and Tools for Peace.

We made interfaith connections with Congregation Emmanuel and had Seder suppers. In 1988 we celebrated the 1,000th anniversary of the Baptism of Kiev (Russian Orthodox Church) and in 1994 we even had a course about the Sikh faith.

We were active in First Nations issues. Project North began in the early 1980s and in our Parish Partnership Program we partnered with the Diocese of Caledonia. Parishioners visited Haida Gwai in 1992. We had reciprocal visits with Haida Gwai and the Nass Valley. Climate change was highlighted many times in messages in our leaflets. One leaflet in 1990 had "Environmental Tips". Bob gave sermons in support of the Clayoquot Sound protests in 1993 and a group of church people from Victoria went to join the protest, but the forestry company decided not to come to work that day.

Bob was an incredible leader in all these endeavours. He wrote a "Letter From the Rector" in most of the leaflets and posted numerous notices of educational workshops and events. He and Susan and the whole family were very involved in the arts, especially music so we enjoyed a rich program of concerts and dramatic presentations. We helped the Youth Orchestra get started by providing rehearsal and, eventually, office space.

Bob was made an Archdeacon in 1983. In the 1990s he chaired the Long Range Planning Committee for General Synod. Bob had a gift of being able to see important trends and connections. He was a joyful person who loved his job and loved people. He bubbled over with ideas for involving his parish in the larger community, inspiring the congregation to "Be the Church in the World." In 1997, Bob retired. In 2015, he died on August 1 after a short illness. It was Bob MacRae who put St John's firmly on the path of advocacy for social justice and for that we are forever grateful.

---

* This article on Bob MacRae was written for LJR by SJAG member Sara Chu. We are grateful for the input for this profile provided by Bob's wife Susan MacRae.

****

Anger and humour are like the left and right arm. They complement each other. Anger empowers the poor to declare their uncompromising opposition to oppression, and humour prevents them from being consumed by their fury.

James Cone, Afro-American Liberation Theologian

*****

**Standing in prayers and unity for all sacred life upon our precious Mother Earth,
All sacred nations, All Father skies, All sacred waters, All sacred life.
I ask for you, Creator, to watch, hold, and love each one of your children.
Bless us for this day! *A'ho'****

By Lois Swimmer - Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
(**'Amen'* or *'I agree'* in the Lakota language.)

A Reflection – By Diana MacDonald *

As young parents in the late 60's Bob and I were filled with the optimism of our generation. Our decision to adopt was informed in part by my ecology-biology studies and by the example of others in our family, following the closure of orphanages and other institutions across Canada. We determined to enlarge our family by intermingling our "own children with pre-fabricated ones", as an eccentric friend, known as Singer Lady, put it.

We knew a little about the racial issues of the time. I witnessed the distressing visit of segregationist Alabama Governor George Wallace to UVIC, and we had read some of the literature popular at the time – Malcolm X, James Baldwin, John Howard Griffin. But we were hopeful that change was in the air, convinced that race need not be a stumbling block in the society we were becoming, and that integration was achievable personally in the microcosm of our family.

Singer Lady's reservations about adoption and genetic heritage may have been the first indication that we were naively hopeful: our inability to convince her of the unity of the human race marked our entry into unknown regions of perception of fact and truth. But convincing others has been the least of my challenges. Over the extent of this journey my chief and ongoing struggle has been to examine and re-examine my own observations and understanding of our children – and, for the purpose of this article, more specifically, our two adopted sons; and to question my interpretation of situations and relationships, interactions, motivations and intentions.

Jeremy, our son of Tanzanian descent, first experienced a racial insult at the age of 4. It was not until the neighbours confirmed the incident that I believed it could be so. As he grew up he learned to be excessively polite to law enforcement officers. He taught us what it meant to be stopped by the police for DWBB. (Driving While Being Black). Bicycling to work one day he was stopped for speeding. These are a few instances from which I concluded that racial prejudice exists. All the while, Jeremy had other difficulties, evident from early childhood. In school he was diagnosed with a learning disability. Caring teachers and psychologists kept an eye out for him. A caring policeman kept an eye out for him on High School Grad night and helped him home after too much celebrating. As I note these memories, questions of discernment arise: distinguish between "kept eye on him" and "kept an eye out for him"

There are many other questions. What was the source of the learning disability? Was it inherited? - Or was it the product of his insecurity as an adopted child – or as a child of colour? What effect did his self-perception as different from others have on his sense of himself, and as a result on his behaviour? As for us parents: how did our treatment of him differ from our treatment of his siblings? How often were we too strict; how often too lenient; what resources could we have given him to shore up his self-esteem? These are questions all parents ask themselves about their children: in addition we needed to ask, did we take too much for granted? Did we fail to take issues of race seriously?

In contrast to Jeremy, our youngest son James had an easier childhood, and he recalls few taunts about his indigenous heritage, until early adolescence. And here, when Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder violently exploded into his and our consciousness, we immediately understood its implications: medical research was uncovering the devastating impact of colonization on his indigenous ancestors. Over the 30 years since James was first diagnosed, every FASD resource available in our city and province has been made available to and used by him and us. At first the process was through the Justice department: youth courts and First Nations healing circles, custodial foster homes, provincial jails and federal prisons, treatment

centres – James once said he could write a travelogue of "Insides" he had visited. Now, under the Mental Health Act, he is in and out of forensic psychiatric hospitals and group homes. Recently, teams consisting of social workers, health care professionals, addiction workers and police have provided community care for him. His is a rather bleak history. Concerned, well-intentioned and thoughtful people in a wide array of professions have tried and tried - and tried again - to deal with a problem that is, so far, all but insoluble. James and others like him personify that problem: they are an affront to "respectable" citizens, and a target for their anger and disdain. The sad fact of FASD is that it is preventable, but not curable. But it is hard to prevent because it first afflicts those who are most vulnerable and most fearful of asking for help – impoverished, oppressed and despairing women.

James is currently in a psychiatric hospital awaiting placement in an assisted living home, where, under the latest provisions of FASD treatment, he will have an assigned "Buddy" care worker. As I write, Jeremy has had another stroke, one of several over the past ten months, the long term result of a brain injury suffered in a vehicle accident 24 years ago. The influence of racism is clear in James' case. It is less clear in Jeremy's circumstances. More questions arise - perhaps some ought to remain unasked: Did racism, which affected Jeremy from an early age, play any part in the lead-up to the accident or influence the legal decisions made in the insurance claims after the accident?

Now, with our sons both brain-injured and in long term care, I must ask one more question: is our experience of adoptive-mixed-race parenting a failed experiment? We are too close to the issue to be objective. I don't have answers but I have some observations. As parents, we thought we knew our children and were doing what was best for them. Our knowledge was imperfect. Our best intentions were marred by ego and the desire for power and comfort. The same is true in the wider society which we reflect: its achievements, like ours, have been flawed. We have seen our society taking seriously the mistakes it has made. The process is slow. Our boys may not see much benefit in their lifetimes. For us individually, it is our faith that forgives and sustains us. Over the years, while we may have hoped for miracles, we have learned that our children's journeys are theirs to travel, and our responsibility is to be there to join them when the need arises - and to love them throughout everything. And I believe that is the miracle: the bond of love which continues to exist between these two boys and their sister and brother and us, their parents. Their siblings Sarah and Simon have said that Jeremy and James have informed – and transformed - our life as a family. That is their gift to us and we are thankful. And we are thankful for our friends in realms sacred and secular, near and far, whose wisdom and encouragement make real the truth of 1 Corinthians 13 for our family and for our wider society.

* Diana MacDonald has been a member of Saint John the Divine Anglican Church since 1983. She has served as a chorister, lay Eucharistic minister and warden. She holds a BSc from the University of Victoria. She was a founding director and manager of The Greater Victoria Youth Orchestra and founding President of Victoria Baroque. In 2016, she received the Governor General's CaringCanadian Award. She and husband Bob and their four children have spent a lot of time asking questions and questioning answers.

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS DAY OF PRAYER 2020
The Rev. Canon Dr. Martin Brokenleg, OSBCn *
St. Barnabas Anglican Church, Victoria, B.C., June 21/20

The major themes for today's Indigenous Day of Prayer are sounded in the collect for the day, calling for us all to journey in partnership. The collect includes the ideals of truth and love, covenant, justice, and journeying together. Unlike most Sundays, the observance today is of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and others in the Anglican Church of Canada.

When the 2010 General Synod added this commemoration to the church calendar, General Synod gave it very high status as, "A Feast with Precedence over a Sunday." Contemporary liturgists would call today a *Solemnity.* When I was growing up it would be ranked as *A Double of the First Class.*

In the past weeks, we have watched the society south of us convulse with anger, accusation, and defensiveness over racial relationships. In the USA, the conflicts focused on the effect of racism in many social institutions such as policing. In turn, flare ups in our own parliament this week show that Canadians are looking at the place of race in our society, not only of those with African Ancestry but also the larger population with Indigenous ancestry. Friday a UK study reported that Canadian White Supremacy groups on the Internet are significant and growing.

Racism is perceived superiority or inferiority based on physical or genetic attributes like skin tone or body build. Hostile behavior and negative attitudes about others, based on race, do exist in Canada. These are pre-judgments not based on facts and are prejudices. I have been on the receiving end of discriminatory actions on several occasions.

I entered a hotel with four other flight passengers and was the only non-White person in the group. They were all given rooms immediately. Even though I had a reservation made weeks ahead, I was told there was no room in the hotel. I was sent to another hotel and it took more than an hour more for me to get checked into that second hotel.

Walking along the sidewalk in a small town, a passing carload of twenty-something White men yelled insults and racist terms at me.

When I am in a Victoria grocery store, I frequently see White women grab for their purses in their grocery carts when they see me coming down the aisle.

In Victoria shops I have been followed by clerks who are not doing so to help me make a purchase.

Brother Gene almost always pays for our purchases since he is never questioned about his credit card. I have been questioned several times and once had to wait for the clerk to call the credit card company to verify that my card was not stolen before the clerk accepted it. He did not verify the other customers' cards but they were all White.

Not long ago, as I was getting ready to lead a program at the cathedral when my LCD projector burned out. I rushed to a nearby business intending to buy another projector. In the camera department I was looking for projectors and three other customers came in after me. None of them bought anything. They were all White and I had to wait until they were all spoken to before the clerk turned to help me. I still bought the new thousand-dollar projector I needed.

I do not take any of these discriminatory slights personally. They were not hostile to me as a person.

They happened because of the systemic racism that is identified and perceived as *"normal business"* in Canada.

Several Canadians have told me there is no racism in Canada. Because of my experiences, it has taken me some time to understand what they might mean. I think they mean that they have no personal animosity toward people of other races and no awareness of reacting to someone else due to the colour of their skin. Of course, this ignores the impact of racism that is a part of institutional patterns, procedures, policies, and systems of doing business.

With racism so pervasive, what is a Christian to do? We do what we are doing today, honouring Indigenous people and Indigenous contributions to Canada. In the face of darkness, Christians hold up the light of Christ in our thinking and in our ways of living. We imitate our Lord who held up Samaritans, who interacted with Romans, and who listened to lepers.

In the collect for today, we prayed that God's people will, "journey together in partnership." Reciprocity is the bond that strengthens relationships. If you reflect on each of your friendships you will see that you give something to them and they give something to you, even if in a different form. This reciprocity dynamic is seen in all ceremonial and social actions in Indigenous cultures. When we take something we then give something back. When we are given something, we try to return the favour as soon as is seemly. Journeying together in partnership is an action of reciprocity. Even if there is not 100% agreement, being in partnership is an action of remaining together, giving one another the reciprocal gift of relationship.

The collect for today also sounds the high themes of this partnership:

- speaking the truth in love,
- walking God's way
- journeying toward justice
- approaching wholeness
- strengthened and guided by God
- growing in the full stature of Christ

No matter the struggles around us in our country and in our world, the love God has given us motivates us to journey with others in partnership. This is our responsibility and it is also the glory of the Christian community.

I saw this partnership well exemplified in the relationship of two old men who became friends in the 1920s. My grandfather, Joseph Brokenleg, was a medicine man and an Episcopalian who always wore his hair in braids. He spoke only Lakota. He rented his land to a settler, John Lattau, a German from Russia who spoke only Plattdeutsch and attended the rural Lutheran church not far away. Those two men were best friends and they spent hours and days together. They shared food and helped one another on their small ranches all their lives. They had no common language. When they went fishing one would sleep and the other would talk and tell stories. At some point they would change places with the napping and speaking. After my grandfather died, John often said how much he missed his friend. They knew how to *"journey in partnership."*

*** The Rev. Canon Dr. Martin Brokenleg is a psychologist and a former professor of Native American Studies and First Nations Theology. An enrolled member of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, he is also an Anglican priest and an honorary assistant at Christchurch Cathedral, Victoria.**

PUT YOUR SHOES ON! WE ARE MARCHING!

BY J. JIONI PALMER Jun 22, 2020 – sojo.net *

As a Black man raising two Black boys, I have had many fitful nights thinking about the slaughter of Black lives. Lives that could be theirs or mine. But more than the uncertainty outside my door, what has kept me up at night is a question repeatedly posed to me by my 5-year-old son. It is a question that causes me to worry about the souls of Black children.

He is an inquisitive and chatty child. He wakes up talking before the sun rises and mumbles as he dozes off at night. Watching movies with him can be frustrating because of his litany of questions and commentary, albeit usually amusing and insightful. His perspective is always edifying. Whenever he poses a question, I select my words carefully because no matter what I say, it'll be met with a series of follow-ups frequently analyzing my response.

"Daddy, why are white people so evil and mean to Black people?"

The first time my son asked this, I quickly reminded him of the white people in his life who are good and loving to him. He didn't skip a beat.

"Okay, why are SOME white people evil and mean to Black people?"

In subsequent months, I have wrestled with answering his question in a way that honors him and his view of the world. It troubles my head, heart, and soul to know I am raising children in a world where they might think a whole class of people are evil and mean to people like them.

I often invoke Frederick Douglass, who attended our church, for whom our meeting hall is named and where a bronze nameplate is affixed on the pew where he worshipped. Douglass is a hero of my son and he frequently asks us to read him a picture book about the man's life. I remind him that yes, some white people did terrible things to Douglass and other enslaved people. But there were many that aided the freedom cause. I also remind him that Douglass put his faith in God. He didn't just pray on his knees with his head bowed. Douglass also prayed with his feet and eyes wide open. Just like Douglass, God calls us, in our own unique ways, to put our faith into action.

This usually buys me a couple of days, maybe a week. But his initial query always resurfaces. At night when we pray as a family, I remind him and his brother that the Creator left a part of themselves in all that has been created, and the presence of the Divine is always with us.

While I find it hard to see the presence of the Divine when I watched the video of Rodney King being beaten, Eric Gardner suffocating, Sandra Bland being harassed, Ahmaud Arbery valiantly fighting for his life, or watching the ecstatic look in Derek Chauvin's eyes as George Floyd called out for his momma, I know that God is there. Not in the act of

killing, but in the act of liberation and of awakening.

God's presence can be felt and heard in the call to stand up for justice and mercy among the marginalized in this and every society. It is the same call that united enslaved Africans in the hulls of ships and slave-holding properties in the Americas. Despite their many linguistic, ethnic, religious, and political differences, they were united in their collective struggle for survival, justice, and freedom. This isn't to say they always acted in unison, but they knew that their fates were inextricably linked and their faith in the faithfulness of God bound them together.

How do I explain this to a 5-year-old? As protests swept our nation in the wake of George Floyd's lynching, my stomach churned as I lay awake at night anticipating how I would respond the next time the question was posed. That angst led me to make signs with my oldest son saying, "A Man Was Lynched Yesterday," which are planted in our front yard and affixed to our back door facing the alley. It is also what led me to decide one morning to take one of those signs and march down the middle of the streets in my neighbourhood in protest.

I sent a few text messages to friends inviting them to join and asked my wife and sons if they wanted to come along. I had no plans to compel anyone to come along, until my oldest son said he didn't want to come because he was afraid what happened to George Floyd would happen to us.

I wasn't expecting that. I wanted to cry and scream in rage. I told him I would hurt somebody if they ever tried to do that to him. I wanted to hurt somebody just to show him I would. Instead, I told him we will not live in fear. I said, "put on your shoes, we're marching." I've never been more scared for my son, but I knew this is what we had to do.

His first steps were tentative, and he refused to walk with me in the middle of the street. He dragged his feet and trailed behind. But as we stood in that corner less than three miles from the White House and U.S. Capitol with cars and trucks honking and drivers throwing up their fists, I could feel his unease fading.

"We are not alone," I intoned, while rubbing his back. *"You are not alone."*

"I know," he said stoically.

Over the following five days our numbers grew. On day three, a white family with two sons the same ages as my own showed up. My youngest shouted with glee and ran into the arms of his friend. The following day when Uncle Ray appeared, he jumped into his open arms. I know that the day will come when he will ask me that vexing question, *"Daddy, why are white people so evil and mean to Black people?"* I will probably remind him of his lived experiences, but I don't know if it will ever be enough.

*** J. Jioni Palmer is the Founder & Publisher of Thinking Good, a digital media community that helps men be their better selves. He lives in Washington DC with his wife, two sons and their two cats. Sojo.net is a daily on-line news service of Sojourners' Magazine.**

A national disgrace

By almost every measurable indicator, Canada's Aboriginal population suffers a worse fate and more hardship than the African-American population in the U.S.

Canada's Race Problem? It's Even Worse Than America's.

For a country so self-satisfied with its image of progressive tolerance, how is this not a national crisis?

By Scott Gilmore
January 22, 2015 - Maclean's Magazine *

The racial mess in the United States looks pretty grim and is painful to watch. We can be forgiven for being quietly thankful for Canada's more inclusive society, which has avoided dramas like that in Ferguson, Mo. We are not the only ones to think this. In the recently released **Social Progress Index**, Canada is ranked second amongst all nations for its tolerance and inclusion.

Unfortunately, the truth is we have a far worse race problem than the United States. We just can't see it very easily. ***Terry Glavin***, recently writing in the Ottawa Citizen, mocked the idea that the United States could learn from

	Aboriginal Canadians	African-Americans
Unemployment rate	14%	11%
Unemployment rate vs. the national rate	2.1 times	1.9 times
Median income	$22,344	$23,738
Median income vs. the national average	60%	74%
Incarceration rate (per 100,000 population)	1,400	2,207
Incarceration vs. the national rate	10 times	3 times
Homicide rate (per 100,000 population)	8.8	17.3
Homicide rate vs. the national rate	6.1 times	3.7 times
Infant mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)	11.7	12.4
Infant mortality rate vs. the national rate	2.3 times	2 times
Life expectancy (in years)	72.8	74.9
Life expectancy vs. the national average	91%	95%
Dropout rate*	23%	8%
Dropout rate vs. the national average	2.7 times	1.1 times

*20- to 24-year-olds without a high school diploma. and not in school

MACLEAN'S

Sources: Statistics Canada; Office of the Correctional Investigator; The Lancet; Health Canada; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; U.S. Census Bureau; U.S. Department of Justice; U.S. Department of Health; Centers of Disease Control: National Center for Education Statistics

Canada's example when it comes to racial harmony. To illustrate his point, he compared the conditions of the African-American community to Canada's First Nations. If you judge a society by how it treats its most disadvantaged, Glavin found us wanting.

Consider the accompanying table. By almost every measurable indicator, the Aboriginal population in Canada is treated worse and lives with more hardship than the African-American population. All these facts tell us one thing: Canada has a race problem, too. How are we not choking on these numbers? For a country so self-satisfied with its image of progressive tolerance, how is this not a national crisis? Why are governments not falling on this issue? Possibly it is because our Fergusons are hidden deep in the bush, accessible only by chartered float plane: 49 per cent of First Nations members live on remote reserves. Those who do live in urban centres are mostly confined to a few cities in the Prairies. Fewer than 40,000 live in Toronto, not even one per cent of the total population of the Greater Toronto Area.

Our racial problems are literally over the horizon, out of sight and out of mind. Or it could be because we simply do not see the forest for trees. We are distracted by the stories of corrupt band councils, or flooded reserves, or another missing Aboriginal woman. Some of us wring our hands, and a handful of activists protest. There are a couple of unread op-eds, and maybe a Twitter hashtag will skip around for a few days. But nothing changes. Yes, we admit there is a governance problem on the reserves. We might agree that "something" should be done about the missing and murdered women. In Ottawa a few policy wonks write fretful memos on land claims and pipelines. But collectively, we don't say it out loud: ***"Canada has a race problem."***

If we don't have a race problem then what do we blame? Our justice system, unable to even convene Aboriginal juries? Band administrators, like those in Attawapiskat, who defraud their own people? Our health care system that fails to provide Aboriginal communities with health outcomes on par with El Salvador? Politicians too craven to admit the reserve system has failed? Elders like Chief Ava Hill, cynically willing to let a child die this week from treatable cancer in order to promote Aboriginal rights? Aboriginal people themselves for not throwing out the leaders who serve them so poorly? Police forces too timid to grasp the nettle and confront unbridled criminality like the organized drug-smuggling gangs in Akwesasne? Federal bureaucrats for constructing a $7-billion welfare system that doesn't work? The school system for only graduating 42 per cent of reserve students? Aboriginal men, who have pushed their community's murder rate past Somalia's? The media for not sufficiently or persistently reporting on these facts? Or: us? For not paying attention. For believing our own hype about inclusion. For looking down our noses at America and ignorantly thinking, *"That would never happen here."* For not acknowledging Canada has a race problem. We do and it is bad. And it is not just with the Aboriginal peoples. For new immigrants and the black community the numbers are not as stark, but they tell a depressingly similar story. If we want to fix this, the first step is to admit something is wrong. Start by saying it to yourself, but say it out loud: ***"Canada Has a Race Problem!"***

*** From: Maclean's Magazine - January 22, 2015.**

"Why I Stopped Talking About Racial Reconciliation & Started Talking About White Supremacy"

***In a Mar. 25/20 article, U.S. writer and pastor Irna Kim Hackett noted that "Bad Theology" was responsible for much of the lack of progress on "racial reconciliation". Here's her argument:**

The term "racial reconciliation" serves the dominant culture; it serves white people and those who align with whiteness. The term reconciliation is relational in nature. And though relationships are important, the focus on relationships is anchored in white theology's pathological individualism:

Jesus died for *my* sins. // Jesus went to the cross for *me*. // I know the plans He has for *me*.

Though there is a place for the individual in theology, white theology (in profound syncretism with American culture), has distorted the Bible to be solely about individual redemption. So it is blind to the reality that when Scripture says, ***"I know the plans I have for you"***, the ***"you"*** is plural and addressed to an entire community of people that has been displaced and are in exile. All Scripture has been reduced to individual interactions between God and *a* person, even when they are actually between God and *a community*, or Jesus and *a group of people*. As a result, white theology defines racism as hateful thoughts and deeds by an individual, but cannot comprehend communal, systemic, or institutionalized sin, because it has erased all examples of that framework from Scripture.

Secondly, white Christianity suffers from a bad case of *Disney princess theology.* As each individual reads Scripture, they see themselves as the princess in every story. They are Esther, never Xerxes or Haman. They are Peter, but never Judas. They are the woman anointing Jesus, never the Pharisees. They are the Jews escaping slavery, never Egypt. For citizens of the most powerful country in the world, who enslaved both Native and Black people, to see itself as Israel, and not Egypt, when studying Scripture, is a perfect example of *Disney princess theology.* And it means that as people in power, they have no lens for locating themselves rightly in Scripture or society — and it has made them blind and utterly ill-equipped to engage issues of power and injustice. It is some very weak Bible work.

Together, these create a profoundly broken theological framework. It explains why people love a photo of a cop hugging a Black person, but dismiss claims of systemic racism in policing. It pretends that injustice is resolved when individuals hug. This was actually something that people were encouraged to do at *Promise Keeper* events in the '90s: go find a Black person and hug them. It confuses white emotional catharsis with racial justice. The two are far from each other. The movement for *Black Lives Matter* and other marginalized communities insist on addressing systemic issues, and white Christianity is pathologically individualistic. Learning must come from People Of Colour, who would clearly be the experts on issues of racism in the Church.

*** Irna Kim Hackett** currently serves as Executive Pastor at the Way Berkeley. She has recently launched a new project for women of colour called *Liberated Together*. She received her masters in intercultural studies from the Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies. She is passionate about empowering WOC leaders, and helping Jesus followers get free from white supremacy, patriarchy, and other nonsense. This article originally appeared in the publication: ***inheritancemag.com***

INSTEAD OF *'WE CAN NO LONGER BE SILENT!'* -- TRY *'WE GOT IT WRONG!'*

BY MARC ANTOINE LAVARIN - SOJO.NET *

All around the world — whether in Minneapolis or Paris — cries for justice are ringing as thousands of people take to the streets to protest that black lives do, indeed, matter. Countless new allies have abandoned the chants of ***#AllLivesMatter*** and have now joined the choir of voices demanding that police brutality against the black community be addressed.

As a black clergy person, I am particularly encouraged by the number of Christians who have finally spoken out against police brutality. For years, black people of faith have waited to see if "Christian celebrities," especially white pastors with large black followings, would acknowledge the injustices that plague the black community. Their silence was particularly offensive considering that many of these pastors have benefited, at best, and plagiarized, at worst, from the black Church tradition. However, since the recent murder of George Floyd, a large number of Christians who were formerly silent on issues of racial injustice have made the decision to speak out. Although numerous Christians have finally chosen to name racism, I am woefully skeptical of new allies who have rushed to protest without examining the ways in which their own theologies continue to nurture it. The failure to address theological racism will cause new allies to come to this moment believing that the fight for justice is merely theologically adjacent to their brand of evangelism as *"the real work of ministry."* For some, this is still just a societal issue, and not a theological one.

Prior to this moment, new allies have preached a gospel of Jesus devoid of justice. They failed to make the theological connection that Jesus and justice are, in fact, mutually inclusive. To invoke Jesus and then to invoke justice is redundant. Every time we invoke the name of Jesus, we commit ourselves to the ministry of justice. Every time we invoke the name of Jesus, we declare the psalmist's decree that justice and righteousness are the foundations of God's throne. Every time we invoke the name of Jesus, we summon the messianic prophecy that the spirit of the lord was upon Jesus, to preach the good news to the poor, to set the prisoners free from the Roman industrial complex, and to proclaim liberty to those who were oppressed. Every time we invoke the name of Jesus, we remember that Jesus was convicted of a crime he did not commit, received an unfair trial, and was sentenced to a state-sanctioned lynching on a tree. The ministry of justice is the ministry of Jesus. We cannot divorce our theology from the ministry of justice. To do so is to divorce ourselves from Jesus himself.

Something majestic is taking place in the midst of this struggle. However, in order for us to seize the moment, we must avoid the path of safe and easy allyship that doesn't require theological transformation. Truly understanding that ***#BlackLivesMatter*** means doing the work, and doing the work means returning to the work, and returning to the work requires us to pick up where Jesus left off. Over this past week, I've seen a number of people attempt to explain this current moment by reposting a viral cartoon of the Parable of the Lost Sheep. The 99 sheep hold up: ***#AllSheepMatter*** signs, while Jesus

leaves them for the one sheep who has strayed away.

While well intentioned, the ethos of the cartoon is theologically inaccurate. The Parable of the Lost Sheep is about the 99 who got it right, and the one sheep who strayed and got it wrong. For new allies, to now state that black lives matter is to also confess that you were the lost sheep who strayed away from the truth — not one of the 99 who stayed true to Jesus. Stating that ***#BlackLivesMatter*** means understanding that justice is at the heart of God, and your failure to address it requires you to return back to the fold. In order to return back to the fold, you must choose to see justice as ministry and not as a moral extracurricular. In order to return back to the fold, you must abandon your obsession with campus expansion and renew your commitment to community revitalization (and not gentrification). In order to return back to the fold, you must desert a gospel of nationalism that pledges its allegiance to an earthly king, and embrace a gospel of liberation, that kneels in solidarity with all souls and bodies that are disinherited.

So, although there are many new Christian allies who are speaking out, there are not enough who are saying the right thing. Every church that preached, *"We don't have a race problem; we have a sin problem,"* needs to apologize to their congregation for their failure to name systemic racism as the sin. Every church that settled for teaching the Christian trope of "turning the other cheek" in a way that only addresses isolated moments of individualized hate, must acknowledge their complicity in propagating institutionalized racism.

An individual's need of repentance will never be enough to redeem or rectify an entire system that is in need of salvation. It is insufficient for your church to say, "We can no longer be silent." It is time to say, *"We got it wrong."* Before your church decides to go out and protest, consider protesting your own theology that continues to intentionally and unintentionally do harm to black and brown bodies. Before taking a knee and holding a prayer vigil, consider this — there is no real substantive difference between a racist bigot holding a Bible in front of a church and a Christian holding up a ***#BlackLivesMatter*** sign with no plans to parse out the practical implementation of the holy truth of justice. So, pray for the spirit to move, and pray for the movement to start in you. Preach the resurrection, and preach the injustice of the crucifixion. Protest inequality, and protest your own theology. Beloved, this is the real work of ministry, and Justice is her name.

*** Marc Antoine Lavarin is an ordained minister, doctoral student in Educational Leadership, and a son of Haitian immigrants. This article appeared in Sojourners Magazine's on-line daily bulletin - sojo.net - on June 10/20.**

****

"Who is my neighbour? The neighbour was the Samaritan who approached the wounded man and made him his neighbour. The neighbour ... is not he whom I find in my path, but rather he in whose path I place myself, he whom I approach and actively seek."

Gustavo Guittierez, Peruvian Liberation Theologian

BLACK RAGE IN AN ANTI-BLACK WORLD IS A SPIRITUAL VIRTUE

BY DANTE STEWART – MAY 29/2020 – SOJO.NET * [2]

I can remember when it first happened — when my dungeon shook and my chains fell off. I had recently gone through a horrible experience and felt there was nowhere to turn, no one who could give voice to my ache, my pain, and my rage. I feared that many wouldn't understand. At the time, I was immersed in white evangelical church life. I had been the one selected to lead a group through John Piper's *Bloodlines* because the church wanted to be more *"diverse."* I was probably the first black person to preach there

That usually came with a badge of honour — the *"first"* usually means you're breaking barriers (or so I thought). Then Trump happened. Then the shootings of unarmed black people. Then ... the white responses in the church I was in. I was confused. *"How could they be around me and my wife and say this about black people?" "How did they not know us?" "How could they believe this?" "Why aren't we speaking about this?"*

Confusion compounded by the employer who used my abstention from the National Anthem as an opportunity to lecture me on NFL protests and oppression. Confusion compounded by the colleagues who said, *"there's no need for Black History Month,"* and another, *"there's no such thing as black theology."* Confusion compounded by another colleague who reported me for inappropriate touching after I side-hugged her while bidding her a good weekend. Maybe at that moment I forgot all the lessons my mom taught me about being careful around white women. Did she know that they see her as innocent and me as a danger? Maybe she believed the lie that Amy Cooper believed: that her whiteness is a weapon to keep a *"n— in his place."*

And then my confusion turned to rage as the comments continued. *"You are losing the gospel." "I'm not racist." "You're a social justice warrior." "I have black friends." "All lives matter." "Black men need to stop killing black men." "It's a sin problem, not a skin problem." "Jesus came to change hearts, not societies".*

Black rage in an anti-black world is a spiritual virtue. Rage shakes us out of our illusion that the world as it is, is what God wants. Rage forces us to deal with the gross system of inequality, exploitation, and disrespect. Rage is the public cry for black dignity. It becomes the public expression of a theological truth that black lives matter to God. Rage is the work of love that stands against an unloving world. Rage is the good news that though your society forgets you and works against you, there is Someone who loves you and believes you worth fighting for.

If you're more concerned about the responses of black rage than you are about a system that justifies and rewards black death, you don't love black people — you just love when they stay in their place. And that's not love, that's hate. So I wept — I wept because I felt so powerless, so vulnerable, so unloved, so hated.

In *"A Letter to My Nephew,"* James Baldwin wrote: *"Please try to remember that what they believe, as well as what they do and cause you to endure, does not testify to your inferiority, but to their inhumanity and fear."*

His words hit me with the sort of mercy, a grace as if Almighty God was speaking, when he wrote, *"You don't be afraid. I said it was intended that you should perish ...!"*

But I did not. We did not. We are still here. It was at that moment that a fire came over me. It was then that my dungeon shook, the chains of fear fell off, and the bones began to rumble, and the sinews that made flesh black began to come to life. It was not just the question, *"Lord, can these bones live?" No. It was, "Lord, where will these bones go?"*

I needed to give voice to God's action in the black experience, our suffering, and our resistance. needed to bear witness to the struggle for our freedom. I needed to give voice to being both black and Christian. I did — and I never looked back.

James Cone said after the Detroit rebellion: *"I could no longer write the same way, following the lead of Europeans and white Americans."* And don't we feel this? With white racial paranoia. With Trump. And now with black suffering in COVID-19, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd. Terror. We saw the responses to the cries of our people as many of our women, children, and men became hashtags. They praised *"black forgiveness,"* called us to speak of love when their people gave us death. Our people's blood cries out from the ground.

What does theology have to say in the black freedom struggle today? What does faith say in the face of black death? What is good news for black people in America's racial caste? Cone was right: *"I had to find a new way of talking about God that was accountable to black people and their fight for justice."*

I am black; I am Christian. We have been through hell in this country — and we're still going through it. But I too am America; this is my country. Being black in an anti-black world becomes the greatest spiritual, moral, and political task of each generation.

The journey has been long and a struggle for many of us — trying to speak of Christian faith and being black in America — but it is also empowering. We know that we come from a long tradition of black people who refused to accept the tragic belief and practices of white supremacy — the belief that we are second-class citizens, that we deserve exploitation and punishment, that we deserve disrespect and death, that we must be respectable and cater to the demands of whiteness. No. We will not.

Many will believe we have exaggerated the scope and depth of injustice. That's okay. We're fighting for hope, we're fighting for love, we're fighting to live. This world as black people experience it is not the world as it should be. All of us must give voice to the hope of a better day. There's no other way.

To love, to struggle, to fight, to pray, to embrace, to remember — these become our sword and shield. To protest violence against black people is a spiritual virtue, moral obligation, and political practice. In a world that wounds the souls of black folk, it represents the Spirit of God at work resisting the evil of white supremacy and murder with impunity. It's holy work. Through rage and heartbreak, we work. Until we are free, we can never rest.

---

* Dante Stewart is a writer and speaker whose works have been featured in Christianity Today, The Witness: A Black Christian Collective, Fathom Magazine, and Faithfully Magazine.**Sojo.Net** is an on-line news service of Sojourners' Magazine.

"IT'S ABOUT TERRORIZING US!"

Canadian Professor/Racism Expert Draws Parallels With U.S. Police Brutality

Excerpts from Prof. Ingrid Waldron's Interview with Carol Linnitt of The Narwahl!

"If this moment can be sustained through further conversations, I think there can be a breakthrough!" **- Waldron**

As a teen, Ingrid Waldron knew she had a unique outlook on life. Raised in Montreal, she spent ages 11 through 15 with her family in Trinidad, where she witnessed empowered Black people in high-profile jobs. She recalls having Black teachers surrounding her during her time in the Caribbean with the message of *"you can do it!"* But she knew the reality was much different for Black kids in Canada, in schools surrounded by White teachers telling them all the reasons they wouldn't succeed at life.

But the time Waldron had in her early teens to develop a positive self-regard still didn't protect her from how the outside world saw her. It didn't protect her from the White men who came into Burger King where she was working at age 16 and called her the N-word. *"Imagine, someone hurling the N-word while ordering a burger!"* Waldron is associate professor of nursing at Dalhousie University in Halifax and head of the ENRICH Project that tracks environmental inequality among communities of colour in Nova Scotia. Waldron also wrote the book *There's Something in the Water: Environmental Racism in Indigenous and Black Communities*, which spawned a documentary by the same name hosted by Ellen Page.

Her experience uprooting structural violence and systemic racism in Nova Scotia, which she says is often referred to as the *"deep south of Canada,"* gives her unique insight into the current demonstrations, riots, and calls for accountability after the May 25 killing of George Floyd. Floyd, an unarmed and handcuffed Black man died after a police officer knelt on his neck for eight minutes and 46 seconds. The ***Narwhal**** got Waldron's thoughts on the importance of social unrest the day after hundreds of Nova Scotians took a knee on Halifax's Spring Garden Road for eight minutes and 46 seconds.

Q: When you turn on the TV right now or read the news, what stories are you seeing and what messages are you hearing?

A: I see the same narrative that I always see when this happens, which is an unwillingness by media and government to look at the underlying issues. They look at the rioting without understanding why people are angry. Unlike a lot of people, I believe White people know exactly why we're angry. I think people are pretending not to understand. They have done that for decades. I'm cognizant that Black people are hated in this world. Our very existence is considered problematic. As a Black person, I know what hate feels like. Everybody seems convinced this is a turning point. I remain skeptical. Protests are great. It doesn't mean much unless it leads to systemic changes.

Q: Do you see a relationship between the mechanisms behind police violence and environmental racism?

A: Black and Indigenous people are not on the minds of White people. The harms that come to us are not on the minds of White people. When [Nova Scotia Premier] Stephen McNeil announced the closure of Boat Harbour last year, I thought, wow, the Indigenous community has been calling on the government to close Boat Harbour since the '80s. [Note: The Northern Pulp mill in Pictou, Nova Scotia, discharged waste into Boat Harbour in the territory of the Pictou Landing First Nation for more than a half-century until the

plant closed in January 2020]. Why would it take so long after all the activism the communities have been engaged in for this decision to be made? When it comes to addressing environmental racism, if it has a positive impact on the White community, you keep it going. Closing the mill and addressing environmental racism is often a risk for White people in power who are profiting from these industries. It's great that the mill was closed at the end of the year, but for the past several decades there was enough evidence to indicate this was harmful to the Mi'kmaq community, and it continued anyway.

With police violence, it's similar. It's different, but it's similar in that the physical and emotional impacts on Black bodies are not the kinds of things White people care about. When I look at George Floyd, I see a White policeman trying to terrorize the Black onlookers. That kind of terror is about the policeman saying: *'This is what can happen to you. I can put my knee on his neck. This is what I want you to see.'* He was not just harming George Floyd, he was harming those who were watching. The way he positioned his body—positioned directly in front of the people screaming at him to stop—there's an arrogance there. He had a knee on the neck and a hand in his pocket. It was a performance.

I'm an academic, I write books and read theory, and we make racism so complex. But it's not complex in terms of how I receive it. Emotionally and spiritually. we should focus on the body, on how policemen inflict harm on Black bodies. It's about terrorizing us emotionally in a way that keeps us caged. When I think about environmental racism, I think about terrorizing. I had a friend who said, *"Last night I couldn't sleep because I kept seeing the image of George Floyd.'"*That is what racism is all about.

Q: It feels like we are living in unprecedented times. We were already coming to grips with that in a world altered by climate change, but now with the pandemic and ongoing racialized police violence, how do you understand the way these big recent events exacerbate the vulnerabilities of minoritized and oppressed populations?

A: There is certainly a moment happening in terms of climate change and the killing and murdering of Black people and then COVID reared its ugly head and further exposed vulnerabilities. I'm thinking about these things happening—and happening close to one another. People are waking up. And people who haven't seen—or didn't want to see—disparities when it comes to income, gender, and social class are starting to get it because these things are happening one after another. This is about vulnerability and how some people are exposed to some of these issues or oppressions more than others. These people tend to be Indigenous, *racialized*, and poor.

I teach nursing at Dalhousie and the way we teach nursing needs to change, the way we teach health needs to change. Nursing wasn't historically well-equipped to deal with inequality. in 2013, I had just started in the nursing department, and I was talking about racism. I knew it was important for students to understand their patients, their races, their cultures, their different understandings of health, because people are diverse. A lot of hostility was thrown at me early on from nursing students, and they tried to get me out. One of my students said to me: *"Why are you teaching us sociology?"* There was a petition, a letter that was sent to my director, to have me removed. My director was great, and she went to the students and said, *'I reject this letter'* and explained why I was teaching what I was teaching.

You have to understand as a Black person walking into a classroom talking about race—that brings with it a certain kind of complexity. There are White men who teach what I teach and talk about racism. I'm not only teaching about racism but *I am racialized*. I wasn't

teaching this in a way that's safe—I was talking about White privilege. Students became very uncomfortable. They look at me and think what I'm saying is subjective and not objective. They will look at my White colleague teaching the same thing and think it's objective. These students look at me and think, *'I wonder if what Ingrid is teaching us is based on fact, because it's probably based on personal experience. She's probably angry. I need to dismiss this.'*

I come in with baggage that a White professor would not. Students comment that "*all Ingrid talks about is race!*" There's an impression that all I talk about is race because I'm *racialized*. And I contextualize racism—environmental racism, Black lives matter—I contextualize it to make it real for them. Right now I think people are more exposed to this reality. And I hope those students who gave me a hard time in 2013 are looking at the news now and thinking, *'Hm, now what Ingrid taught me makes sense!'*

Q: How can this moment break through to the larger change you hope to see when it comes to systemic racism?

A: If this moment can be sustained through further conversations, I think there can be a breakthrough. These are the myths about Black violence and the danger of Blackness. That is extremely embedded in White consciousness. That's what people see in the media. The media is the most powerful institution that we have. I can understand why it would be difficult for White people to have a breakthrough because of the myths that they have been fed through the media. When things are emotional and visceral, and people's hearts are softened—there is a moment that is an opportunity.

I think White people are scared to broach these topics with Black people because it's uncomfortable. They feel vulnerable; they may have to look at themselves. And sometimes Black people are very angry, and they may not be able to say what they want to say because of that anger. These are things that are difficult to break through. But right now people are vulnerable. When I think of [hundreds of people kneeling in solidarity with protesters on] Spring Garden [Road in Halifax], that was beautiful. I do wonder, is this real? It's a moment where White people were showing vulnerability. Right at that moment is where there is an opportunity to engage in a conversation that allows White people to hear Black people. That doesn't mean we will be easy on White people.

But if we want to hear each other, we have to let go of what we hold so dear. Black people are tired of explaining. White people are tired of being blamed for what is going on in Black people's lives—these are difficult things to abandon. But we can if we take that opportunity. We also have to lay down our arms. That includes Black people because of our unbridled anger at White people who don't get it, that comes across as blaming. On the side of Black people we need to truly hear people. On the other side, White people need to lay down their weapons, and the worst weapon they have is *denial*.

White people need to be able to listen to hear Black people and stop the denial because they are *weaponizing* it. That is the thing more than anything: if you don't get it then you continue doing it. Nowadays with cellphones and Twitter, for any White person to say they don't get it, they're terrorizing the Black body and mind: *I don't see it. I don't know it. I don't get you.* That's the psychological aspect of racism.

The killing of Black bodies is horrible. But telling Black people you don't see it? That is White terror. And if you don't get it, you can continue profiting—in the case of environmental racism—and keep benefiting. A lot of it is privilege. *You have to start to share. You have to give up some of that privilege. We need White people to do that work!*

**** This interview originally appeared in THE Canadian magazine* THE NARWHAL (June 4/20) *and was later republished by YES! Magazine in its on-line edition - YES.net - on June 18/20.***

NO MORE BEGGING FOR OUR HUMANITY

BY JOSIAH R. DANIELS - June 10, 2020 – in sojo.net *

I've not prayed since 2016. I'm still a Christian. I've not put my pain to paper in that same time. I'm still a writer. But praying and writing remind me of the days when I would beg. I'd beg people to see my pain; I'd beg God to do something about it.

As an adult, I've spent an inordinate amount of time respectfully trying to convince Christians and their institutions that my black life matters. I've taken that same approach when advocating for a more just society, a society in which policing and the carceral state are abolished. I've petitioned God to intercede toward that end but it seems we are stuck at verse 12 of Job 24: *"The groans of the dying rise from the city, and the souls of the wounded cry out for help. But God charges no one with wrongdoing."*

Begging for one's humanity to be recognized is painfully humiliating . Healing from that pain requires therapeutic outlets where that trauma can be expressed privately. Healing also requires publicly demanding the pain of black bodies be recognized by God, country, and the church. Demanding black people's humanity be seen is liberating not only for black people, but humanity as a whole. But making demands is a right that black people have routinely been denied. And so, as Malcolm X predicted, the chickens are making their way home to roost.

Malcolm was not a popular figure at my liberal seminary with predominantly white faculty. Black people peacefully protesting were looked at with ire, so you can imagine what many of them thought about an *"any means necessary"* approach. I began seminary in 2013 as a pacifist of the Martin Luther King Jr. variety. I graduated as something else. I lived on Chicago's West Side for the duration of my master's program, from 2013-2016. My community was heavily invested in the Black Lives Matter movement and so was I. What I couldn't understand was why my high-profile, white professors, who waxed poetically about *"faithful presence"* and *"the radicality of Jesus,"* were not also invested.

I'll never forget when I barged into a professor's office and begged him to stop criticizing Black Lives Matter protestors for being *"too antagonistic"* toward police. The conversation took a turn when he asked my opinion of his most recent book. It was a glorified screed against liberationist impulses within Christianity. Before I could answer him, he told me Drew Hart had recently tweeted a harsh (read *"accurate"*) review, challenging his interpretation of liberation theology. *"He seems angry,"* he said. I stared in his eyes, sitting across from him and said, *"He is. We are."* Angry about what? That's the question. My well-intentioned, tenured, white professors didn't know. I made efforts to explain it to them in academic papers, during office hours, and in private one-on-ones where I'd play their anti-racist therapist. But the visceral nature of racism missed them.

I begged them though. I begged them because I wanted to make a good impression so I could expand my circle of influence. If I could get them to come along, maybe they'd see the worth of my work to the church and theology, the worth of my community, the worth of blackness. I think they wanted to hear and experience all of that, but in their preferred classical key, not a bluesy one. So, I watched as white friends examined black pain and used it to become teacher's assistants, present conference papers, speak on panels or pursue PhDs with an emphasis in black studies. Turns out all the begging went unnoticed as I tried to assert my humanity. My diploma remains in the packaging in which it was sent to me.

I hated seminary. But I hated the cops in Chicago more. They imagined Chicago's black neighbourhoods on its South and West Sides to be the Wild West. And if they were the sheriffs in this scenario, the residents were the outlaws. I found this out the hard way. One of the first times they pulled me over, I was leaving a church parking lot, on my way home. Ironically, we were gathering to lament the black community's treatment by the police. We made our petitions. I prayed back then. I saw the cops at the end of the block, so I made the full stop at the sign. Just as I was ready to turn right on Laramie, a white fist pounded on the back of my trunk.

Me and my Ford Taurus were a job for five cops apparently. One stood in front of my car, two kept watch on the corner, and the other two interrogated me from the driver and passenger side.

> ***"You got any weapons in the car? Drugs?"***
>
> **I told them the truth, *"No."***
>
> ***"You ever been arrested before? Criminal record?"***
>
> **I told them the truth at the time, *"No."***
>
> **They didn't believe me. *"Why are you over here?"***
>
> ***"This is my church, I work with the youth, I'm a seminarian,"* I rambled.**
>
> ***"So, you're a priest who likes kids?"***
>
> ***"No, no, nothing like that,"* I assured them and attempted to explain, *"One day, going to get a PhD and write theology."***
>
> ***"If you're really a grad student show us your student ID."***

I obliged. I wanted them to believe me so, I begged them to believe me. Hard to say if they believed me and they never said why they stopped me, but they let me go. I got to go home.

It's true that black people don't always end up dead when encountering police. But we almost always end up wounded. It's from that wound that we demand Christian institutions, Americans, and God to see us for what we are: humans. We are ugly. We are beautiful, too. We laugh, we cry. We demand to breathe. We demand to exist.

Begging does not provide a ticket for safe passage. And demanding we be seen as human is risky because it's always met with the great American tradition of anti-black violence. But we are willing to embrace that risk. Because within our demands there is a catharsis and a holiness. It's all captured perfectly in the symbol of the burning bush or, perhaps in our current time, a burning cop car.

---

* Josiah R. Daniels' article appeared on **sojo.net**, the daily news site of **Sojourners Magazine**. He lives in Washington State and works as a job coach and advocate for people with developmental disabilities. He has written for Geez Magazine and Religion Dispatches. You can follow him on Twitter at @josiahRdaniels.