



Season of Racial Healing, Justice, and Reconciliation

"And you have seen men in uniform drive by and murder Tamir Rice, a twelve-year-old child whom they were oath bound to protect."
From *Between The World And Me* by Te-Nehisi Coates

"And looking about at those who sat around him, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers!'" Mark 3:34

I wanted to believe it was over. I *really* wanted to believe it was over. I wanted to believe that the battered bodies, the kids at the receiving end of fire hoses and killer dogs, the boycotts and marches and protests – that they all had not gone for naught. After all, the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts were enacted in the '60s, abolishing Jim Crow. Affirmative Action put into law equal opportunity for jobs and college education. We raised our kids to be color blind. And on November 4, 2008, an African American was elected president. What better evidence was there that it was over?

But soon after President Obama took office it was obvious that legislation supported by him that would benefit a large majority of Americans was blocked because he was Black. A Black woman, a good friend, told me how Obama as president was a double-edged sword for people of color; that they were so proud of him and yet, because he was president, racism had gotten worse.

So it never went away. A beloved president, beloved by many White people anyway, had run the Willie Horton ad during his 1988 campaign. 46% of those who voted for president in 2016 *voted for a racist*. The cop convicted of murdering Laquan McDonald, a 17-year-old Black boy who was shot sixteen times for carrying a knife, was sentenced to just seven years in prison, and will get out in three. He had a record of stopping and beating African American men – for traffic violations. Many of the kids in Washington who surrounded and chanted racial epithets at a Native American man playing his drum, trying to diffuse what could have been a violent confrontation,



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were wearing the red campaign hats of a racist president.

The thousands of children who were separated from their parents at the border were not White. No, America is not color blind. Often we White people think, "it's not where *I* live." But it is where I live. In 2014 a member of the Norwalk Board of Education spewed racist venom at one of the Black members of the board, and later posted more on his Facebook page. Redlining, the practice of excluding families of color from looking for houses in White neighborhoods, is practiced in Norwalk. Down the road – in liberal left New York City – is the most segregated school system in the country. Up the road, Bridgeport schools remain some of the most underfunded.

I cannot understand the experiences of people of color. I don't know what it's like to walk out of my house every day in fear. I have never had to have "the talk" with my sons: "Don't put the hood up on your sweatshirt; if you're stopped just get out of the car, put your hands on the roof and spread your legs, because you just might get shot for that faulty tail light."

The irony is that Jesus, the woman at the well, Muhammad and Abraham were people of color. St. Paul most assuredly had brown skin.

So what do I do? First, I must listen. Second, I must search my soul, discover where the racism is in me. Third, when I become aware, I must act. The Rev. William Barber says: "We must learn how our issues intersect in a comprehensive moral agenda that demands transformation of everyone – not least, of us." Of me.

Bob Giolitto, St. Paul's on the Green, Norwalk

The Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) entered a "Season of Racial Healing, Justice, and Reconciliation" for a minimum of two years by vote of its Annual Convention in October 2018. Visit episcopalct.org/season-of-racial-healing-justice-and-reconciliation/ to read the enabling resolution and for resources, events, and more. ECCT's Racial Healing, Justice, and Reconciliation Ministry Network is helping to facilitate much of the resolution's implementation. Contact the Rev. Rowena Kemp or Suzy Burke, co-conveners of the Ministry Network, at rowjkemp@gmail.com or suzy@alegiraimports.net.

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