



Season of Racial Healing, Justice, and Reconciliation

"Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

—The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., Letter from the Birmingham Jail

I've always thought of my life as morally neutral, "average" in fact. I only saw racism in individual acts of cruelty and injustice, *not* in the invisible social systems that provide me with enormous advantages. Through the work the Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) is doing to address racial healing, justice, and reconciliation, I have come to realize I'm undoubtedly the beneficiary of White privilege, the *invisible* package of *unearned* assets I can cash in each day that Peggy McIntosh so aptly describes in *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack*:

- I can shop at Whole Foods, assured that I won't be followed or harassed.
- My children's textbooks testify to the existence of their race.
- I can excel in challenging situations without being called a credit to my race, a "compliment" my brilliant Black colleague recently received.

Sadly, the list goes on and I can only imagine how exhausting this reality must be, day after day, week after week, year after year. It would never occur to me to worry that someone I love might be stopped or even arrested for "driving while Black," a fate that has befallen beloved colleagues. I'm now face to face with my complicity in perpetuating a system that makes my friends of color struggle to feel the same sense of confidence and belonging I enjoy, and I long to right this wrong.

So...I invite my friends to share their experience of being Black in America, and I listen with an open heart. I'm learning all I can about the impact of racism on every aspect of life in America. I recently joined the Revs. Jane Hale, Rowena Kemp, Adam Thomas and Rachel Thomas on a pilgrimage to Alabama where we were immersed in the evolution of racism from slavery to racial terror lynchings, then to the cruel Jim Crow laws and now, extrajudicial killings and the mass



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incarceration of people of color. And I ask God to open our hearts and our minds to this sin and help us work together to create a more just world.

A Black priest I hold in the highest regard recently shared one of her dreams for the future in ECCT: That she will be able to apply for any open position and her fitness to serve will be based on her gifts as a priest rather than the color of her skin. I am committed to doing what I can to make that a reality and I hope you will join me in ECCT's fight for justice.

--Suzy Burke, St. John's Essex

Suggested Resources

- *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson
- TED talk 2012, Bryan Stevenson, "We need to talk about an injustice"
https://www.ted.com/talks/bryan_stevenson_we_need_to_talk_about_an_injustice
- TED talk 2019, Baratunde Thurston, "How to deconstruct racism, one headline at a time"
https://www.ted.com/talks/baratunde_thurston_how_to_deconstruct_racism_one_headline_at_a_time?utm_campaign=tedspread&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

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/](http://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@alegriaimports.net.



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