



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT
PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

Season of Racial Healing, Justice, and Reconciliation

*There have been times that I thought I couldn't last for long
But now I think I'm able to carry on
It's been a long, a long time coming
But I know a change is gonna come, oh yes it will
~Sam Cooke*

Picture it (think Sophia Petrillo), Montclair, NJ, late summer 1942... a bright young Black girl is heading off for her first year of college, leaving behind all of her friends and family. She has been accepted into the Bachelor of Sciences program at Fisk University in Nashville, TN, one of the nation's highest-ranked Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Her future looks very bright indeed. Imagine the thoughts going through her head as she boards the train at New York's Grand Central Station. What must she have been dreaming of? Six-hundred and forty-two miles (and twelve hours) later her train arrives in Louisville, KY and she's told she has to move to the Jim Crow car for the duration of her trip, another 400 miles. What happens to those dreams then?

Now imagine four years have gone by and this young woman has graduated with high honors. However even though in 1864 Rebecca Lee Crumpler had become the first African-American woman to become a physician in the United States, *this* young woman would never know that privilege. Black women weren't allowed to be doctors during this time.

Fast-forward to late summer, 1977. Another bright young Black girl is heading off for *her* first year of college; she has also been accepted at Fisk University. Though she has already experienced race riots at West Haven High School, which occurred annually for decades, she doesn't personally experience much in the way of racism in the South. Some things, however, are glaringly clear; 1) the fact that she has to travel across town to West End Avenue, near Vanderbilt University, to dine out because the only restaurants on Jefferson Street, home of Fisk, Tennessee State University and



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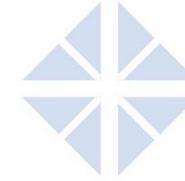
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Meharry Medical College, are KFC, Popeye's and Church's Chicken, and 2) while traveling with the track team annually to Tallahassee, Florida for the FAMU Relays, how eerily quiet the bus got when passing through Mississippi and Alabama at night.

That first young girl was my mom, the Rev. Gladys Kee Whitney; the second is me. Mom went on to succeed in life, despite all of the obstacles she would face. A lab technologist at the VA Hospital, then teaching lab technology, chemistry, human physiology and biology in New Haven Public Schools, eventually becoming an administrator in that system. Upon retirement she became executive director of Mary B. Ashford Senior Center, housed in what was formerly St. Andrews Episcopal Church, New Haven. Finally, at the age of 70, she was ordained a deacon in ECCT.

My mom once told me she would wake up every day and think, "What are they going to do to me today?" While that still breaks my heart, I know a change is gonna come.

--Lisa W. Yarbor, St. Luke's New Haven

Resources: Sacred Healing Film Series: July 30, Aug 6, Aug 13 at St. Paul's, Wallingford, 5:30 - 9 p.m. Film, followed by facilitated conversation. [Details & register here.](#)

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@alegriainports.net.

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