



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT
PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

"...racism is one of the fastest-spreading and most fatal cancers humanity has ever known.... What gives me hope is a simple truism. Once we lose hope, we are guaranteed to lose."

How to Be an Antiracist, Ibram X. Kendi (One World, NY: 2019. Pg. 238)

I was in third grade when I met Martha, a new third grader to my school. Like me she wore a well-ironed dress to school, white anklets and Mary Janes, hair neatly combed and tied in pigtails. Where we differed was that Martha had had most of one of her legs amputated and she used crutches to get around. I was fascinated by how dexterously she used those crutches. She told me that she had used them as long as she could remember. She could do most anything she wanted but she couldn't hang upside down on the horizontal bars of the playground equipment the way I could. I would hang upside down and she would swing as we talked of all the things third grade girls talked about in those days—how leggings itched in the winter, how boys were smelly, what would we have for dinner.

I didn't think about the color of Martha's skin because she wasn't the first African American I'd met in my little town just across the Mason-Dixon Line in Pennsylvania. There was a whole street of African Americans in my town, mostly older, who provided homes for their grandchildren and grandnieces and –nephews so that they could go to school in unsegregated classes (this was the 1950s).

What "woke" my eight-year-old sensibilities to the concept of racism happened in the spring of our year together. Martha confided to me one day that she was going to get a prosthetic leg so that she could walk just like anybody else. We were so excited, imagining that she would be able to hang from the playground bars with me. The day came and Martha walked into class with her new leg and only one crutch--

The leg was white.



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The leg was white.



Martha had been given a leg the color of my pale skin, not her rich brown. She saw the shock on my face--it was too expensive to have a leg painted brown; the government wouldn't pay for it. Martha didn't come back for fourth grade and I never saw her again after that year.

My hope is that Martha grew up with the same courage and perseverance I remember in her. Without it we would both be lost.

--The Rev. Diana M. Rogers, Priest-in-Charge, Holy Advent, Clinton

Suggested Resources (thx to Suzanna Roman)

The Summer 2019 issue of *Connecticut Explored* magazine has several articles pertinent to our work, including "How Segregation Happened in West Hartford", "The Federal Government and Redlining in Connecticut" and "No Day at the Beach" about segregated access to the shoreline. Connecticut Explored is a history magazine published quarterly (www.ctexplored.org).

There is an interesting project with a terrific website on the Ancient Burial Grounds in downtown Hartford. It is called "*Uncovering Their History: African, African-American, and Native-American Burials in Hartford's Ancient Burying Grounds, 1640-1815*" and can be found at <https://www.africannativeburialsct.org>.

The Center for Action and Contemplation has featured Black Women Mystics such as Jarena Lee and Dr. Barbara Holmes in its emails in July. Here is a link: <https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/2019/07/>

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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