RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY 2022

RACIAL JUSTICE:

WHAT'S IT GOT TO DO WITH ME?

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JohnnyGreig/istock

INTRODUCTION

"Do not lie to each other,
since you have taken off your
old self with its practices
and have put on the new
self, which is being renewed in
knowledge in the image of
its Creator. Here there is no
Gentile or Jew, circumcised
or uncircumcised, barbarian,
Scythian, slave or free, but Christ
is all, and is in all."

Colossians 3: 9-11

Welcome

Welcome to this year's Racial Justice Sunday (RJS) worship material and resources, which have the theme: 'Racial Justice Sunday: What's it got to do with me?' This is very much a call for all Christians to engage in the righteous struggle for racial justice because racial justice is everyone's business. As we shall see in this resource, the Bible has a lot to say about justice because as God's Word, it reflects God's heart for justice. It can be argued that we should love justice because God does! Racism and racial discrimination are justice issues because they deny basic justice and human dignity to women and men who are made in the image of God. Equally, they are sinful because, among other issues, they assume all are not equal before God and are not part of God's family.

The murder of George Floyd in May 2020 has been described as a *Kairos* moment for the Church, and it led to much soul-searching and a desire on behalf of many to see change. However, some in the Church were left befuddled and struggled to engage with the conversations that emerged from that tragic event, as well as protests and the clamour for real change. This resource has been written with that cohort specifically in mind because the work to end racism requires a collective response with all sections of the Church fully engaged in this task.

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For those who have previously not engaged with RJS because they did not feel equipped to do so, this resource will provide them with the tools to play an active role in this work. For those who have argued that their churches do not have Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic people in their congregations, so do not have a 'problem', this resource suggests that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people should not be considered 'problems', and shows that the hostile attitudes towards them are also found in churches that do not have them in their congregations.

Indeed, diversity in a congregation is no barometer for acceptance or hospitality. (Moreover, history shows that far-right, anti-immigration parties do as well, if not better, in areas without a significant minority ethnic population. As such, churches in these areas have an important role to play in encouraging these homogeneous communities to be more accepting and understanding of difference, inclusion and change.)

For those who worship in Black-led churches that have Black majority congregations, and so for whom racism within the church is negligible, racial justice is important because it addresses the racism in situations, places and spaces that congregants inhabit outside of Church. As such, this material equips Churches with the necessary tools to address these situations.

Who is this resource for?

As the preamble points out, racial justice is everyone's business and RJS should not be regarded as an onerous matter to be avoided, but an opportunity for churches to focus on the three 'R's of 'Remembering', 'Reflecting' and 'Responding':

- 'Remembering' the importance of racial justice
- 'Reflecting' on human diversity and thanking God for it
- 'Responding' by working to end injustice, racism and ignorance through prayer and action.

How this resource can be used

This publication is divided into two sections; the first contains a range of materials that will enable churches and congregations to carry out an act of worship or a service focusing on racial justice. This resource has been designed to be used by Christians of all traditions and churches of all denominations, as befits the ecumenical nature of Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. Consequently, a great deal of the first section is presented in an 'a la carte' format that allows worship leaders to select the hymns, prayers, sermons and worship activities that enable worship leaders to prepare gatherings that will enable congregations to celebrate RJS in a more profound way.

This resource also includes a liturgical format for those more used to a particular structure to their acts of worship and services and have ensured that there is also an inclusivity and ecumenical feel to this material.

The second section provides churches, congregations, parachurch groups and individuals with information, ideas and activities that enable them to continue the conversations that may emanate from RJS. Users may also find it beneficial to read this section prior to exploring the 'worship' material as this may enable them to put together a richer, more creative, and insightful act of worship.

This section includes invaluable information exploring racial justice from a biblical as well as sociological perspective. It also contains the reflections, opinions and racial justice journeys of a cross section of people from Ireland, Scotland, Wales and England; all of whom speak of the importance of racial justice within their context. Finally, there is a glossary containing a breakdown of the terms and terminology linked to racial justice that will demystify the subject for the uninitiated, as well as upskill the learned.

Richard Reddie
Director of Justice and Inclusion,
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

Contributors

This resource is very much the product of ecumenical cooperation and partnership between Christian church denominations, parachurch organisations and groups, and individuals in Wales, Scotland, Ireland and England – the four nations.

In the early spring of 2020, just before Britain and Ireland went into the first COVID-19 lockdown, a cross section of individuals linked to the major church denominations from across the four nations met to discuss the possibility of the creation of a joint resource that would have one central racial justice theme for the 2022 Racial Justice Sunday. In the past many individual organisations produced their own resources for the Racial Justice Sunday, but it was felt that a single resource with a particular theme would enable the churches to better concentrate on the work to combat racism and injustice. This resource is the product of that collaboration, and the following individuals are to be thanked for their sterling contributions:

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SECTION 1:
WORSHIP MATERIAL

Prayers

PRAYER FOR JUSTICE

Mighty, and everlasting God.
As Your people come into your presence,
We are thankful for your graciousness, your mercy, and your love.
We continue to remember all those adversely affected by the COVID pandemic,
We pray that your Holy Spirit will be present with them,
To comfort and to heal; to sustain and be reconciled, one with another.

We remember all those who are hurting, disadvantaged,
and impacted by racial prejudice.
We also remember all those who have suffered at the hands of injustice,
May your Holy Spirit be present with them,
To comfort and to heal; to bring justice and reconciliation,
one with another.

Faithful God, we commit this service into your hands,
We pray for every participant and every listener,
That you will empower them with your strength,
That they might be courageous to say and do what is right and just,
and that your good and glorious, magnificent, and righteous name
might be praised,
We pray in the name of your selfless son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen! Amen! And Amen!

A RESPONSIVE PRAYER

In the stillness we pray...
(Response) Creator God, hear our prayer

Creator God, when the disciples got into their boat, it was dark and Jesus had yet to come to them.

We pray for those who experience the absence of security because your peace has not yet come to them. We remember in our hearts and pray for those whose countries are in the midst of the war, famine, persecution.

In the stillness we pray...
(Response) Creator God, hear our prayer

Whilst the disciples were in their boat the sea became rough.

Creator God, we remember and pray for those who are in the midst of national and international storms, and for those in whose hands lie the way that makes justice and peace.

We also pray for those we know whose battle is against personal storms: difficulties, challenges, hurts, confusion and uncertainties which are overwhelming.

Forgive us for our apathy and compliancy. May we who profess to be followers of Christ, willingly do what we can to work towards justice and peace, for people both within and outside of our communities and the country in which we live. May we too be willing to share in the joys and pains of those here who need us.

In the stillness we pray...
(Response) Creator God, hear our prayer

When the disciples saw Jesus walking on the sea, they were afraid. Jesus said, 'It is I. do not be afraid.'

Creator God, we remember and pray for those who live in fear;
in fear of abuse; in fear of loneliness; in fear of the future.
And for those of us who live with fear each day.

May we remember the words of Christ – 'It is I, do not be afraid.'

As we begin another day may we keep our hearts and our minds fixed on you and rejoice in you.

In the name of Christ. **Amen**

Scripture verses

SCRIPTURE VERSES THAT CAN BE USED

Hosea 12:6
But you must return to your God;
maintain love and justice,
and wait for your God always.

Romans 12:21
Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Proverbs 22:2
Rich and poor have this in common: The LORD is the Maker of them all.

Acts 10:34-35
Then Peter began to speak: "I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right..."

Colossians 3: 9-11
Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator. Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Proverbs 31:8-9
Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves,
for the rights of all who are destitute.
Speak up and judge fairly;
defend the rights of the poor and needy.

Acts 2: 1-12
When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. Utterly amazed, they asked: "Aren't all these who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!" Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

Micah 6:8
And what does the Lord require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God

Amos 5:24
But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Isaiah 1: 17
Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless;
plead the case of the widow.

Hosea 12: 6
But you must return to your God;
maintain love and justice,
and wait for your God always.

Psalm 82:3
Defend the weak and the fatherless;
uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.

Hymns and worship songs

HYMNS AND WORSHIP SONGS THAT CAN BE USED

Be Thou my vision
Beauty for brokenness
Bring forth the Kingdom
Brother, Sister let me serve you
Christ, be our Light
Cry Freedom! In the name of God, and let the cry resound
Extol the God of justice
From those forever shackled
God forgave my sin
God of freedom, God of justice
God, Your justice towers
God's Spirit is in my Heart
Great God and Lord of the earth
How good it is, what pleasure comes
How shall we sing salvation's song
Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets
Jesus head with deep compassion
Lord of all hopefulness
Let us build a house where love can dwell
My love for You
They will know we are Christians by our love
This is amazing grace
True religion
With the Lord, there is mercy and fullness of redemption

Sermons

CROSSING THE BRIDGE OF JUSTICE LEADS US TO THE LAND OF PEACE

SHERMARA JJ FLETCHER, PRINCIPAL OFFICER FOR PENTECOSTAL, CHARISMATIC AND MULTI-CULTURAL RELATIONS

The recent event of the COVID-19 global pandemic has exposed a national and global underbelly of polarity, division, and civic unrest. There has been the resurfacing of alarming health, race, and class inequalities, the racially motivated stabbings, and attacks of Muslim women in France and America as well as the senseless and tragic murder of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, which sparked anger, disgust, and protest across the globe. Racism has also reared its ugly head in Britain, particularly in the context of the politically polarising and divisive ordeal of Brexit. Justice has been crying from streets across the world, and disillusionment and lethargy have clogged the hearts of humanity and the quest for peace is now urgent. However, the quest for peace, equality and equity cannot exist without crossing the bridge of justice and this short sermon will offer two bridges that need to be crossed to help the Church get there. These are crossing the bridge of personal prejudice and crossing the bridge of fear and silence.

Justice has been crying from streets across the world, and disillusionment and lethargy have clogged the hearts of humanity and the quest for peace is now urgent.

Crossing the bridge of personal prejudice

The stain and sin of racism, discrimination and prejudice should not reside in the attitudes and hearts of Christians, and the 21st century Church, but unfortunately, they do. However, this is not a new issue and was even experienced by Jesus as a member of the occupied and oppressed Jewish community living under Roman imperialism and which was perpetrated amongst His disciples and in particular Peter.

Peter was a church leader who had earned his theological stripes in Judaism. And if that was not enough, he had even spent time with Jesus in the flesh, had walked on water and personally experienced his forgiveness after denying Christ, yet he had a narrow racist attitude towards the gentiles which fluctuated depending on the crowd and its level of importance (Galatians 2:12). We can learn a lot about God's attitude towards racism, discrimination, and prejudice through Peter's story. God was not interested in all of Peter's accolades, church accomplishments and directly called out Peter's attitude making it clear that he should not call anyone common or unclean (Acts 10:15, Acts 10:28). This revealed a universal Gospel that was radically inclusive and an intolerance for any form of antagonism towards the advancement of different people coming into communion with God and flourishing. The recording and correction of Peter's attitude shows that it is possible for the Church to be prejudiced and that it is not acceptable to perpetrate prejudice masked behind theology, culture, church establishment and positions. Peter's correction and revelation also provides hope for perpetrators of prejudice that change is possible, and that God is also lovingly concerned about their heart condition.

Which leads to the second bridge that needs to be crossed in pursuing justice.

Crossing the bridge of fear and silence

In the face of injustice and in particular racism, do we have the confidence and determination to resist the temptation to remain passively silent and maintain the status quo? Well, Jesus condemns the religious rulers of the day for this passivity in Matthew 23:23 stating, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness.

These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others”. It is interesting that Jesus does not hold to account the politicians, guards, or tax collectors, but explicitly speaks to the religious leaders of the day. Jesus’ condemnation also challenges the Church and its leaders to take seriously their responsibility to implement an inclusive environment where all equally flourish, and challenge injustice in the world and church.

Which raises the critical question, what are we focusing on? Are we solely focusing on shiny six-point church growth strategies, how we can sustain our church cultures and income whilst neglecting the weightier concerns of unjust laws that deplete people’s lives and the injustices that effect the people in our pews? The impact of standing up and dealing with weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness is evident in Queen Esther’s life and timeless declaration “if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:16). Esther’s decision to resist the temptation to remain silent saved generations from genocide and ethnic cleansing motivated by racism (Esther 3:8). Esther forsook her privilege, societal benefits and used her power to benefit nations. In fact, this decision can particularly encourage those who work in the racial justice space or hold responsibility for racial diversity in their institutions to step out in boldness and courage.

And finally, as we struggle with our responsibility to address racial injustice in the church and wider society, whilst living in the tension of “the already, and not yet”, I leave you with this question on which to reflect. When you deal with and uproot any attitudes of racism, discrimination, and prejudice in yourself and/or institution, what does your voice have the power to save and what does your silence have the power to enable?

WE ARE ALL ONE IN CHRIST, OR ARE WE? (EPHESIANS 2 :19-22)

REVD MANDY RALPH, MINISTER, CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

In life, if we are honest with ourselves, we know all too well, that there are insiders and outsiders. The welcome mat is dusted off and laid out for some and not for others. Some people are accepted, others are rejected. If you know and experience acceptance, it is a nice and secure feeling. On the other hand, maybe you have experienced rejection and exclusion, and it's not so nice, it's frustrating, disheartening, disillusioning and hurtful. In some of the rural villages I have ministered in even after 30, 40 years unless you were born there you are still referred to as an incomer, – *'Aye see these interloupers!'*

But how does that feel when you are excluded, an outsider because of the colour of your skin, because you look different? We read in Ephesians of how we are all one in Christ. Interesting concept or a reality, or non-existent when it comes to our church communities? As you reflect on the passage from Ephesians and how God's word speaks to you, maybe you are thinking what significance does it have on Racial Justice Sunday? You may also be thinking what does Racial Justice Sunday have to do with me? The answer is everything. For it is about acceptance before God and acceptance of one another.

Sometimes when we use that phrase ['We are all one in Christ'] what we are actually doing is closing down the conversation, especially when it comes to inequality and racial injustice.

Within Christian communities you often hear the phrase: *'We are all one in Christ'*. By faith we are assured of this as we are all part of the body of Christ. Jesus walked among us and knows us only too well, our complexities and our frailties. Therefore, let's not kid ourselves that we can use the phrase to our own ends; when we use it to paper over uncomfortable discussions or to prove we are right in our stance or as a line of defence. Sometimes when we use that phrase what we are actually doing is closing down the conversation, especially when it comes to inequality and racial injustice. 'We are all one in Christ – so we don't need to address this.' But the person on the receiving end is still excluded, for their voice has not been heard, in fact it has been silenced.

Jesus walked and shared by example, we are tasked to do the same, to follow in Jesus' footsteps, to go in faith in what unites not what divides. So, when we say, 'What does Racial Justice Sunday have to do with us?' – Everything! It's up to us as Christian communities to set a good example, to walk the talk, putting our faith into action in fighting racial injustice, and God wants that from all of us, not just a select few. For we are all made in the image of God, yet we are all also unique.

In Scotland we have a great saying – *'Wur aw Jock Tamson's Bairns'*. In faith *'Wur aw God's bairns'* – children of God. For loved the same by God. So, let's treat each other equally and respectfully, understanding that as Christians we all have a role to play regardless of the colour of our skin in addressing racial injustice, both in our congregations and communities.

VOICE WITH THE VOICELESS (MARK 11: 15-1)

REVD WALE HUDSON ROBERTS, JUSTICE ENABLER, THE BAPTIST UNION OF GREAT BRITAIN

Jesus came to the Temple prepared and equipped to confront the merchants.

The Temple was more than the religious centre of Jewish life. It was the governing institution of Israel. The centre of Israel's political life and power. Let us not forget that it was at the Jerusalem Temple, that the High Priest held court and presided over the powerful Sanhedrin. It was at the Temple that the priestly elite obediently represented their own interests. It was at the Temple that the priests issued pronouncements and decisions that affected the life of every Jew in Israel. The Jerusalem Temple was the centre of Israel's economy. Its central bank and treasury. The depository of immense wealth. Indeed, so much of the activity of the Temple hinged upon buying and selling and various modes of exchange. The Jerusalem Temple had become an economic institution, not a religious one.

This is highlighted in the exceedingly high incomes of the priests. Their privileged status contradicted the biblical understanding of egalitarianism. There is an interesting account in the Rabbinic writings that reinforces this regrettable position. Ancient writings suggests that the price of sacrificial doves had become so unreasonably inflated that the worshipper was unable to afford them, which could result in supplicants staying away from the Temple in shame, and therefore making no offering at all. This in turn would have a chilling impact on Temple revenues and the priest's own income. It seems that because of this, the price of doves dropped by about 99 per cent. That the costs could be dropped so drastically while the merchants still made a profit gives a sense of how disgracefully inflated the price of doves had become under the Temple oversight. These insights possibly provided by Josephus illustrate how corrupt the Temple had become.

It had become a Temple for some not for all.

It had become a Temple for the rich, not the poor and rich.

It had become a political and economic powerhouse facilitating the wealth of a few and not a religious space that gave voice to the voiceless.

So, here is the question. What are the similarities between the misuse of Temple power and the misuse of Church power; in terms of churches failing to speak with the voiceless?

The disempowering of the voiceless, is the first:
Temple dues guaranteed the priestly class a privileged status beyond most Jews. However, their misuse of power pushed them to engage in practices by which they enriched themselves. These unjust practices had become part of the Jerusalem Temple narrative, disempowering the Jewish voiceless.

Disempowering the voiceless has become a normative practice in some of our churches. Far too many of our churches appear reluctant to give voice to the voiceless. This means Black and Brown congregants struggle to find belonging, women are overlooked because they are women, those from within the LGBTQ community are invalidated and the rights of the disabled undermined. Churches often describe such exclusionary behaviour as unconscious bias. I believe it is largely conscious.

The second similarity between the Temple and Church concerns the normalising of injustice:

Josephus, when providing an analysis on the unjust Temple experience, by referencing the insistence of the priests to collect the tithes from the working-class Jews, helps the reader to reflect on how unjust Temple practices had become. This practice, though heinous and totally unjust, had gradually became acceptable and therefore normal.

Churches often describe such exclusionary behaviour as unconscious bias. I believe it is largely conscious.

It is weird to think that unjust behaviour can so easily become normative within society and our local congregations, but they can and so often do. For example, discouraging and in some cases preventing women from preaching or occupying a leadership position, is unjust. But in some of our churches this prohibition, often theologically justified, is normative and fully acceptable.

The third similarity is the extent of the injustice:

The Temple context suggests that the priestly elite were made very wealthy by the people's Temple dues. Priests received a portion of every Temple sacrifice and offering. Now given the number of pilgrims on 'high' holy days could swell into their tens if not the hundreds of thousands, (pause) this represented considerable wealth. The extent of the injustice was not just normative and disempowering it had become institutional, embedded in the Temple structures, processes, and culture. It was extensive big time. But this is how discrimination works, particularly institutional discrimination. It seeps into the fibre and culture of the congregation and goes undetected, sometimes for decades and when it is exposed it becomes our problem and we who represent the 'othered' are problematised.

So, how then did Jesus seek to dismantle this institutional injustice? Injustice in the Temple that can be characterised by its extensiveness, normality and acceptability and its disempowering consequences?

To answer the question, we return briefly to Mark who reminds us that Jesus returned to the Temple the day after His demonstration, seemingly still filled with outrage at the exploitation of His people. He then recounts, that of all the areas of the Temple environs that Jesus could have chosen, he chose to locate Himself opposite the Temple treasury. Now, when a poor widow made her own contribution. Jesus took this as an opportunity to denounce a system that made those who had nothing feel they had no choice but to contribute their last or risk being excluded from God's blessings. This system was focussed on filling its own coffers.

By denouncing the priests for their injustice in the Temple, Jesus shows it to be guilty of one of the worse sins in the Hebrew Bible: mistreatment of the widow. The sin that would lead to the Temple's destruction.

It was not long after this episode, Jesus echoes Jeremiah's pronouncement, namely: **the Temple would be destroyed for failing to treat people in the image of God.**

When all the events surrounding Jesus' demonstration at the Temple in Mark chapters 11- 13 are considered, it is obvious that Jesus had the destruction of the Temple in the forefront of His thinking. Just Look at the chronology; immediately before even entering the Temple He declared destruction on a fig tree. It can be no coincidence that in several biblical texts destruction of a fig tree is symbolic of God's judgement for discrimination and injustice. Also note, when His disciples emerged from the Temple and noticed that the fig tree had died, Jesus responded by telling them that if they were really serious and committed to transforming their situation they had the agency to throw the mountain in the sea, if that was their choice; (pause) no coincidence that He uses the word mountain to capture the complexity and consequences of sin exemplified in the Temple. So, back to our question, how did Jesus dismantle Temple injustice?

Firstly, robustly:
Many liberation theologians argue that His destruction of the fig tree illustrated how He dealt with injustice, and we know how He dealt with the fig tree. I totally get and agree with the symbolism captured by those who threw the statue of Edward Colston into the Bristol Harbour. For what that picture represented was an emphatic no to institutional racism; I am glad that the statue is now going to be relocated, (Lest we forget). The imagery of the statue being thrown into the Bristol Harbour was appropriate. This image of a slave owner situated in the heart of Bristol, validating, and affirming colonialism and racist practices, deserves its place in the harbour.

How does this apply to Church life? Ridding the Church of injustice is important and necessary; however, this is a process. It does not happen overnight. The more we as leaders journey with our churches and embody just values, the greater the capacity of our churches to robustly deal with injustice. Our roles as servants of Jesus is to journey with the churches we have been called to love and through the building of relationships, ongoing conversations, theological dialogue and sheer love, eventually lead the Church to a place where most of the worshipping congregation can confidently and robustly say 'No to patriarchy', 'No to racism', 'No to classism' and 'No to homophobic practices'.

How did Jesus deal with the Temple injustice?

Secondly with creative anger:
Again, let us return to Mark, who makes it very clear in the Temple narrative that Jesus is not shy in coming forward with His expressions of disgust towards injustice in the Temple. He lambasts the priests denouncing them as crooks. Listen to what He said: 'You den of robbers….' This scathing expression used by Jesus comes directly from one of the most bitter attacks against the Temple in all the Bible, namely, God's declaration upon the Temple of Jerusalem. In this passage, the word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord was a radical ultimatum: Israel's upper class ends its rampant corruption, it ends its oppression of the powerless and the poor, or the Temple will be destroyed.

'I would rather come across like an angry Black man than a White man who appears to be disengaged from issues of justice.'

Not long ago I was asked to deliver a presentation in which I compared the theology of Revd Dr Martin Luther King Jr and Sam Sharpe (a Jamaican Baptist Pastor, a freedom fighter against enslavement). After the presentation, a colleague approached me. He thanked me for the presentation and then proceeded to say, 'I must say though, you came across like an angry Black man.' I said thank you, 'I would rather come across like an angry Black man than a White man who appears to be disengaged from issues of justice.' My colleague was not happy. But then my intention was not to make him happy.

Musa Dube, a Black female theologian from Zambia, captures the essence of the response of Jesus and His creative anger. She said: 'I don't think a church can fully become anti-racist or anti-sexist, or anti-homophobic or anti-tribal until every member of the church is able to express creative anger at injustice, reflecting the character of God. It is ultimately, angry worshippers that change the culture of church, creating a space for all not just a few.'

We see this anger against injustice and a commitment for a new world in the lives of people like:

1. Ella Baker
2. James Baldwin
3. Stokely Carmichael
4. Malcolm X
5. Rosa Parkes
6. Betty Shabazz
7. Valerie Amos
8. Kofi Annan
9. Revd Dr Martin Luther King Jr
10. Jesus Christ

Their strategies, fused and undergirded by a real sense of anger, supported their commitment in bringing real change to an unjust world. I believe this sense of righteous indignation provides the fuel to continue to challenge injustice within our churches and give voice to the voiceless. So, here is the question for leaders seeking to give voice to the voiceless in their churches. How can you cultivate a congregation who by their creative anger are compelled to be a voice with the voiceless?

Thirdly and finally, Jesus was willing to go the cross.
Let us not forget the words; 'kept looking for a way to kill him '(Mark 11v 18). James Cone in his book, 'The cross and the lynching tree' argues that the lynching tree is a viable symbol for reflection on the cross of Jesus. He claims that the cross placed alongside the lynching tree could help us see Jesus in a new light. The cross and the lynching tree both share the common heritage of inspiring hope and vision, despite the oppressors designs to arouse fear and stifle the anticipated reality of justice. The cross and the lynching tree are symbols that represent both death and the promise of redemption, judgement, and the offer of mercy, suffering and the power of hope. Both represent the worst in human beings and at the same time an unquenchable ontological thirst for life that refuses to let the worst determine our final meaning.

The crucifixion of Jesus, spurred on by Jesus' commitment to justice, seen in the Temple narrative is both a symbol of death to injustice (fig tree) and a symbol of hope for justice (the cross and the resurrection).

The ministry of Jesus combines both darkness and light, death and resurrection. Therefore, repentance, lament, death, resurrection and hope signal just inclusivity for the oppressed and the oppressor. The ushering of a new kingdom are the hall marks of an anti-discriminatory church and Union.

Conclusion:
Giving voice to the voiceless is not easy. It is challenging, sometimes sacrificial of self and family. It calls primarily for the letting go of privilege, power and ego. But it is the way of the cross, and frankly it is the only way we can create a just world and just churches.

BUILDING A MULTI-ETHNIC CHURCH – ACTS 13 V 1-3

RICHARD REDDIE, DIRECTOR OF JUSTICE AND INCLUSION, CHURCHES TOGETHER IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

One of the Bible's fascinating qualities is the way certain events and activities are 'hidden in plain sight' and Acts 13: 1-3 is a great example of that. In the previous chapter, the writer of Acts explains how Antioch, a city in Syria, was an early stronghold of Christianity, and it was here that the followers of Jesus were first called 'Christians'. We also read how these Syrian-based Christians had such love for their brothers and sisters in Christ that they provided help to those who were struggling elsewhere as a result of a famine.

In the first verse of today's reading, we are presented with the names of the prophets and teachers who led that thriving Antioch church. Five individuals are named: Barnabas was a Cypriot, and Saul was from Tarsus, which is modern-day Turkey. Then there is Manaen (who we know little about except that it says he 'had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch'). That Manaen became a Christian having lived with a tyrant like Herod reveals a lot about God's mercy and grace. However, the two individuals that are really interesting are 'Simeon called Niger' and 'Lucius of Cyrene'. In Latin, the term 'Niger' means 'Black', and Bible scholars suggest that Simeon was a Black man, probably an African Gentile who had moved to Antioch, and met with Jesus. While Lucius was from Cyrene, which is modern day Libya. In the same way that Christian tradition suggests 'Simon of Cyrene', the man who carried Jesus' cross, was Black (Mark 15:21), Bible scholars also assert the same for Lucius. So, what we see in today's reading is that Christianity, which has its origins or roots in Jerusalem, soon has its most dynamic presence in a Syrian-based church that is being led by believers from Asia Minor, Africa and the Mediterranean.

These men were not there to make up numbers, or to add colour to proceedings, but were using their God-given abilities to lead and build up the church in Antioch.

If we were to describe the Antioch Church in modern-day language, we would say that it was a diverse church with a diverse leadership. What is interesting is that we often think of terms such as diversity, equality and inclusion as new-fangled ideas. While the writer of Acts does not mention that actual word 'diversity', we do we see it in action. The Antioch Church has worshippers from parts of Africa, Turkey, Cyprus, Jerusalem, Greece and Syria – what was then all of the known world. What is more, it had equality: the believers were all considered to be sisters and brothers in Christ and of equal status. Moreover, it had the best form of inclusion imaginable; it had Black people not only in the congregation, but also in leadership positions within the church – Simeon and Lucius for example. These men were not there to make up numbers, or to add colour to proceedings, but were using their God-given abilities to lead and build up the church in Antioch.

This was powerful, prophetic stuff that is radical even by today's standards. Churches today are still debating the issue of diversity, while the Antioch church almost 2,000 years ago, was just getting on with it. What is more, we know that this was part of God's plan, because the Holy Spirit was moving so powerfully in that church. It seems that every action or decision taken by the Antioch Church, was led by the Spirit. In verse 3, we read that the Holy Spirit says: 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.' These two are then sent from the Antioch Church, not the church in Jerusalem, which was considered the headquarters, but that particular church, to do God's work in Cyprus. So, there must have been something singularly amazing about that church; it was undoubtedly 'on fire' for God.

...while God does not have a problem with ethnic difference, some human beings do, and the history of our world is sadly full of instances where people have been separated or treated unfairly on the basis of their skin colour, and the Church has been complicit in this sinful behaviour.

We can see that the Antioch Church welcomed people of all races from different places. These Christians truly had all things in common; they were united in Christ and in their diversity, and were a community of believers. In this country, we tend not to use the word 'community' in reference to Christianity. For instance, we rarely refer to the 'Christian community' in Britain, in the same way we would the Sikh, Hindu, Muslim or Buddhist communities. Some would argue that it is right that we do not use the term 'community', because while all Christians have that one thing in common (a belief in Jesus Christ), some would say that we are not truly united, not only in terms of our theology, but also how we treat our fellow believers.

British missionary activity in 19th century sought to systematically share the 'Gospel' with those in the former British Empire. Although a great deal of this activity has come in for much scrutiny (and criticism) over the last several decades, an obvious consequence of this effort is that many Black and Asian Christians in Britain have their roots in the old British Empire, now the Commonwealth. One of their massive contributions to the British and Irish church has been the way they have bolstered the Christian faith on these shores, and we should be thanking God for this. Statistics reveal that Christianity is really growing in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America, and in this country, in the places that have experienced immigration. Yet, sadly, what the Church should see as a blessing from God, it has sometimes spurned. Those Black people who came to Britain as part of the Windrush Generation often experienced rejection and marginalisation, and that racism is still a feature today.

But if we read the Bible carefully, we see that God does not have a problem with diversity or difference. If God did, God would have made us all the same. In Genesis 1:27 it says that we are all made in God's image, and as such there is only one race, the human race. We may have different skin colours, but we are one people. But, while God does not have a problem with ethnic difference, some human beings do, and the history of our world is sadly full of instances where people have been separated or treated unfairly on the basis of their skin colour, and the Church has been complicit in this sinful behaviour.

Yet, I believe that if we could truly emulate the Christian unity that took place in the Antioch Church, the world would come running to the Church, because everyone would see (and know) that Jesus Christ has the power to bring all people together – to unite them. We live in a time where there is so much disunity – there is a lot of head-scratching about how we can become a more united, cohesive, integrated and harmonious society.

...the other question has to be, has the Spirit been speaking to us, but maybe we have not been listening, or deliberately ignoring him, arguing that God could not be in these new-fangled ways of thinking and activities?

The Antioch church, which was really being led by the Holy Spirit rather than Barnabas, Saul and the other three prophets that were mentioned earlier, was bringing people together, uniting them in Christ. The question for us is, what is the Holy Spirit telling the Church today about diversity and unity? And the other question has to be, has the Spirit been speaking to us, but maybe we have not been listening, or deliberately ignoring the Spirit, arguing that God could not be in these new-fangled ways of thinking and activities? As today's Scripture reading shows, this thinking and these practices are as old as the Christian Church, and if led by the Holy Spirit, can transform the Church. How many potential 'Simeons called Niger' or 'Lucius's of Cyrene' are in our churches today? Women and men with giftings and abilities that the Holy Spirit wants to use to further God's kingdom. And let's face it, it is not as if the church in this country is in a strong position to disregard what God has put before it.

What was amazing about the Antioch church was that it did not appear to hold meetings, establish commissions or committees or write reports about how some Christians should be treated: led by the Holy Spirit, it just did the right thing, and as a result, God blessed that church in so many ways. Let us be people who listen closely to the Holy Spirit and put into practice what God is calling us to do.

Simple worship activities

Tomato seeds

Give everyone in the church a handful of tomato seeds. Ask them to hold them in the palm of one hand and to squeeze that palm as tightly as possible. How does it feel? Do the various sharp edges of the seeds cause pain to that particular hand? Encourage the person to then pour the seeds into the other hand and get them to observe what impression has been left on the palm that had grasped the seeds. Are there any marks? Have the seeds left any of their colours on the hand. Racism causes pain and often scars a person (sometimes permanently).

As tomato seeds can be planted in February, encourage congregants to plant the seeds in a pot at home and watch them grow. As we all know, growth requires the appropriate environment and treatment and invariably results in change. Think about the ways growth and development can bring about individual or collective change.

What does racial justice look like?

In small groups, encourage members of your congregation to discuss what racial justice looks like in church and society. Regarding society, this would be in education, the criminal justice system, employment, healthcare etc.

Telling our stories

It is important that churches talk about racial justice, and Racial Justice Sunday is a great opportunity for this to happen. In pairs, encourage attendees to talk about how they responded to the murder of George Floyd in May 2020.

'Pew' shuffle

It can sometimes be the case that where a person sits in a church is reflective of how comfortable they feel about being in that church. Those who feel (or are made to feel) like 'outsiders' invariable sit at the back or to the sides, and rarely at the front. It is suggested that during the early part of the service, the leader encourages the entire congregation to move seats – if a person is at the front, they must move to the back or sides and vice-versa. However, the one caveat is that a person cannot sit next to a person they normally sit with or close to. This should be followed by an opportunity to have a talk with a new neighbour about one of the topics found in the Racial Justice Sunday resource. Not only does this provide everyone with a new perspective on the service, but it also enables congregations to break out of their comfort zones and speak to someone they may never have properly spoken to before.

Liturgy

Prayer Ideas

These can be used at various points within liturgies or as stand-alone prayers. Once we see where material from others is coming from, we could easily shape a specific liturgy or symbolic act for use in worship.

"Ever present God,
you called us to be in relationship with one another
and promised to dwell wherever two or three are gathered.
In our community, we are many different people;
we come from many different places,
have many different cultures.
Open our hearts that we may be bold
in finding the riches of inclusion and the treasures of diversity among us.
We pray in faith. Amen."

– Revd Dr Martin Luther King Jr

Intercessory Prayer

God our Maker,
in whose image and likeness each of us has been created,
with a human dignity worthy of respect.
Listen to the cry that rises from every corner of this fragile earth,
from our human family.

To world leaders and decision makers,
grant the wisdom to reach beyond boundary and border.
May our common humanity drive policy
and foster peaceful dialogue and constructive collaboration.

To those who misuse their power or take power from others,
through violent action or hateful speech.
Grant mercy and grow in them a humble heart of compassion,
peaceful dialogue and constructive collaboration.

To the innocent ones robbed of dignity, possession, or shelter,
to the victims of these forces who have had life taken from them,
we entrust them in your everlasting arms, O God,
that are wide enough to embrace all of Your creation.

Confession

Merciful God,
You made us in Your image,
With minds to know You,
With hearts to love You,
With wills to serve You.
But our knowledge is imperfect,
Our love inconstant and immature,
And our obedience incomplete and self-serving.
Help us day by day grow in Your likeness,
Which is so widely displayed in the diversity of creation.
Help us to understand our own prejudices and narrow mindedness.
Help us to love our neighbour as we ourselves long to be loved.
Help us to serve others with humility and gratitude.
Do not hold our sin against us,
but help us to repent of outdated and inappropriate world views.
Help us to mature in our thinking, loving and serving.

Adoration

God of all,
You alone are worthy of praise,
from every mouth
in every nation and time.
You created the world in Your infinite grace,
and by Your everlasting love redeemed it.
Hold us to the shared task of loving one another
as You have loved us.

Gathering Prayer

We come from scattered lives to this place,
seeking unity in the Spirit,
seeking the grace of the Christ of all people,
seeking the peace of the God of All.
God's people have gathered,
in our glorious diversity and difference,
as God created and intended.
Let us worship God together.

Call To Worship

God our Maker
You call us here to worship You together.
To bear witness to Your creativity
seen, heard and found in all who gather.
We are all Your children,
bearing Your divine image,
shaped by Your imagination and breath.

You have gifted us with
the beauty of difference
the blessing of diversity
the pleasure of individuality
and the bond of love and peace.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,
who crossed boundaries and borders,
help us to love our neighbours and break down barriers in our communities.
Wounded Healer,
who made blind eyes see and deaf ears hear,
enable us to perceive the reality of racism,
bigotry and racial injustice in ourselves and our society.
Prince of Peace,
Inspire us to celebrate difference and reconcile division
and help re-imagine this world as a place where justice and peace kiss and
freedom abounds.

Prayer

Maker of all
You painted into being all heaven and earth,
Creatures and all living things,
With such depth of diversity –
shape, size, colour, uniqueness and giftedness

help us to recognise Your Divine Image in stranger and friend,
to see Christ in the displaced and dehumanised,
that we might recognise their dignity
and act with Your passion and zeal
to see justice, equity and love abound.

Prayer

When we do not listen to the cries
Give us ears to hear

When we do not recognise racism and injustice
Give us eyes to see

When we do not speak truth to power
Give us voices to declare...

[This prayer can lead into songs like 'For Everyone Born A Place at the Table' or 'Let us Build a House'. Songs that are already sung in many Church of Scotland congregations, and are part of a widely shared hymnody repertoire.]

Racial Justice reflection

BASED ON JOHN 17: 21-23

FATHER PHILIP THOMAS SUMNER, CATHOLIC ASSOCIATION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE AND ROMAN CATHOLIC RURAL DEAN OF OLDHAM AND TAMESIDE

21 "May they all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

22 The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one,

23 I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

These, of course, are the words of Jesus praying for His disciples as He's about to go to His death. But His prayer is surely for all of us too. It's a prayer for a true communion of people, that's to be seen in the relationship of the Trinity itself, where we can speak of oneness, even when there's clearly difference.

The ethnic mix of many of our communities has changed so much in recent years because of the movement of peoples. And hateful racism is not simply targeted at Black footballers on social media. Immediately after Brexit, the number of racist incidents rose significantly across the country and all too many people saw newcomers as unwelcome. It's not without reason that footballers and others in this country have been 'taking the knee' since the murder of George Floyd in the United States.

Back in the year 2000, Pope John Paul II suggested an aim for the beginning of the millennium that he thought the rest of us might share. Like Jesus in the Gospel, his prayer was that we achieve a 'spirituality of communion'. He described this as being able to see God shining on the face of the brothers and sisters around us, to know how to "make room" for people who are different, and to bear "each other's burdens".

In a recent book called "The ungrateful refugee", Dina Nayeri, speaking from personal experience, argues that the most urgent need for a migrant or a refugee is to belong to a place. She says that this is achieved by existing communities allowing newcomers to change them on their native soil. But this is true not just for migrants or newcomers but also for people who are seen to be different from the majority.

People pray and take a knee for nine minutes and 29 seconds in memory of George Floyd on the first anniversary of his death, May 25, 2021

We would do well to remember the different aspects of institutional racism described by Lord MacPherson in the 1990s. One of these is when established groups in society exercise their power in such a way that people, from different backgrounds, feel that they don't really belong. The phrase, "We've always done it this way," is one I sometimes hear, and it betrays an unwillingness to be changed on our own soil. Sadly, the requirement of the majority can all too often be, "When in Rome, do as the Romans do!"

But, to enable people to belong usually requires us to think differently and to listen more to the ways that others might do things if they were given the opportunity. Pope Francis, in a letter he wrote this year to mark 'Migrants' Day' called us to "build communion in diversity, to unify differences without imposing a depersonalized uniformity."

Ranta Images/istock

SECTION 2: LEARNING MATERIAL ON RACIAL JUSTICE

History

RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY – A HISTORY

Racial Justice Sunday began in 1995 and for many years was celebrated in Britain and Ireland on the second Sunday in September. The actual catalyst for this event was the tragic killing of Black teenager, Stephen Lawrence, in Eltham, South London on 22 April 1993[i]. Stephen was returning home with a friend when he was attacked and killed by a group of White youths. The subsequent police inquiry was seriously flawed – at one point, the police even spied on the Lawrence family[ii]. The bungled nature of the investigation led the then Labour Home Secretary, Jack Straw, to announce the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. The subsequent Macpherson Report concluded that the investigation into Stephen's killing had been "marred by a combination of professional incompetence, institutional racism and a failure of leadership". Specific officers in the Metropolitan Police were named and the entire force was criticised[iii].

Stephen Lawrence's murder was one of many racist killings of Black and Asian young people at that time, such as Ricky Reel, Roland Adams, Quddus Ali and others.

The Lawrence family were churchgoers and attended Trinity Methodist Church in Plumstead, Southeast London, and it was this connection that encouraged the Methodist Church to take an interest in this case[iv]. Prior to that, its racial justice team had often encouraged the Methodist Church to engage more in addressing racism within Church and society, but the Lawrence case plainly demonstrated that racism was not a benign force that could be tolerated, but something that 'killed'. Stephen Lawrence's murder was one of many racist killings of Black and Asian young people at that time, such as Ricky Reel, Roland Adams, Quddus Ali and others[v]. What characterised all these cases (at the time) was that no one was convicted of these killings.

Aside from these killings, Britain at that time was awash with overt and covert forms of racism, which led to the increased struggle of many Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people to obtain justice and equality in the criminal justice system, employment, education, (mental) health and other public policy-related areas[vi]. Moreover, the preponderance of far-right/extremist groups, witnessed high levels of race-related hate crime, which was often unaddressed by the forces of the law[vii].

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i https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26465916

ii https://www.stephenlawrence.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Stephen-Lawrence-Timeline.pdf

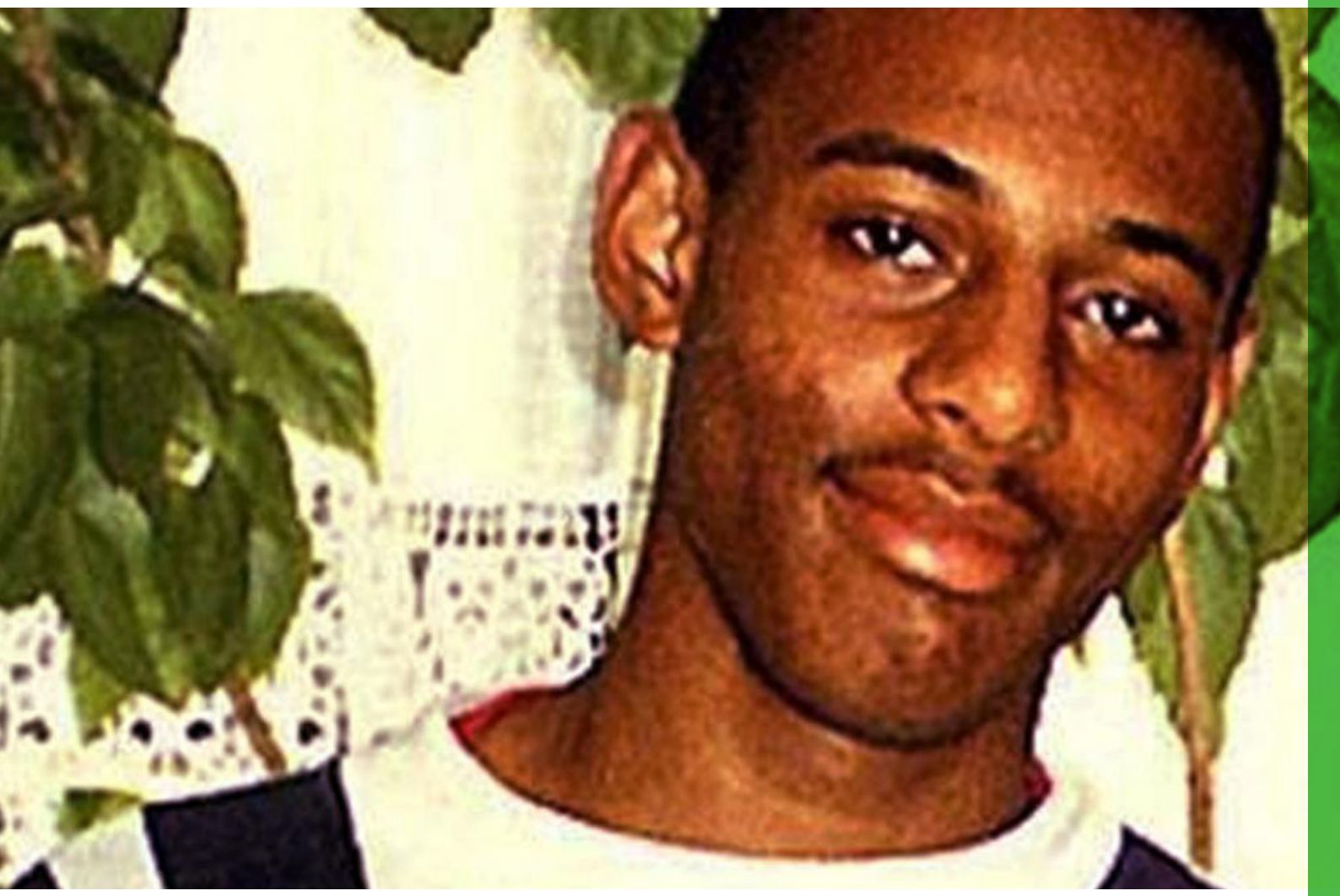
iii https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/feb/22/macpherson-report-what-was-it-and-what-impact-did-it-have

iv https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/profile-neville-and-doreen-lawrenc-all-they-want-is-justice-1166368.html

v https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-28447168

vi https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/race-report-statistics

vii https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/file/Preventing%20Racist%20Violence.pdf



Stephen Lawrence, who was murdered in London on 22 April 1993.

However, other forms of non-Methodist church-related racial justice work had been taking place long before the tragic killing of the young South Londoner. For instance, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) took a keen interest in racial justice *per se* for several decades. As the British Council of Churches (BCC), it established the ground-breaking Community and Race Relations Unit (CRRU) in 1971 to help tackle some of the structural issues linked to racism and the struggle for justice in society.

The CRRU made monies available through its 'Projects Fund', to help organisations fighting forms of racism, many of which were Black and Asian. The CRRU also received money from Christian Aid which supported various efforts to combat racism in Britain and Ireland at that time.

In the 1990s, the CRRU was replaced by the Churches Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ), which took more of a dynamic approach to addressing issues of injustice in Church and society. It made monies available to address everything from investigations into Black deaths in police custody to providing bail money to those arrested on immigration issues.

Equally, in the early 1970s, the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales established the Catholic Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ). The Commission worked for more than 10 years promoting awareness and good practice across the Catholic community in Britain. In 1984, the bishops approved the establishment of the Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ), a lay-led and Black-led organisation that would bring Catholics of all backgrounds together to work for racial justice.

While the Methodist Church initiated RJS, CTBI embraced the celebration a few years later and took the lead in commissioning material to mark RJS. This meant that there was a theme for each year, and given the ecumenical nature of CTBI, all denominations and groupings that were CTBI members, were encouraged to use this material. The prime movers in what could be considered the Halcyon Days of racial justice work were the Revds David Haslam, Arlington Trotman and Andy Bruce, who ran the Churches Commission for Racial Justice, and the Racial Justice Network respectively.

[George Floyd's] murder had a massive impact on race relations and became a *Kairos* moment for both church and society on both sides of the Atlantic.

Even after both entities ceased in 2010, CTBI commissioned specific individuals to produce materials for RJS. For instance, Richard Reddie, current CTBI Director for Justice and Inclusion wrote material for RJS in 2013, which explored Revd Dr Martin Luther King Jr's, 'I have a dream Speech' on its 50th anniversary. Moreover, Revd Dr Inderjit Bhogal, who now takes forward CTBI's Church of Sanctuary work, wrote resources on Churches of Sanctuary for RJS in 2015. All this material, which can be found on the CTBI website in the archives section, is still relevant, given that we continue to grapple with these issues.

In 2017 it was agreed that RJS should be moved from September to February. This was a direct swap with Education Sunday which had previously taken place in February. The rationale behind this was that from an educational perspective, September could be better linked to the start of a school year. (It should be noted that schools in Scotland begin their academic year in August, and not September, akin to England and Wales.) As a consequence, the first Racial Justice Sunday event took place in February 2018, and again in 2019 and 2020.

The year 2020 marked the 25th anniversary of RJS in Britain and Ireland and plans were afoot to celebrate this significant anniversary. However, akin to many other events and activities, COVID-19 intervened and scuppered all plans. In the midst of the pandemic, George Floyd, an African American man was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis, USA in May 2020: this murder had a massive impact on race relations and became a *Kairos* moment for both church and society on both sides of the Atlantic. In Britain and Ireland, it led to a number of church denominations, para church groups and Christian organisations issuing statements condemning racism and making a commitment to challenge racism within their structures as well as society.

Theology

'WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT RACIAL JUSTICE'

PROF. ANTHONY REDDIE, DIRECTOR: THE OXFORD CENTRE FOR RELIGION AND CULTURE, REGENT'S PARK COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

In a very strict sense, the Bible has nothing to say about 'Racial Justice'. The reason I say this is because the concept of 'race' – the notion of fixed, hierarchical, biological differences between people from which the sin of racism emerges, did not exist in biblical times. Racism, i.e., racialised forms of discrimination that is expressed in policies, systems, structures and practices, arises from forms of scientific 'racial' thinking of Europeans.

If the Bible has nothing strictly to say about racial justice, it nevertheless, has a huge amount to say about the radical equality between people, communities, and nations, irrespective of whether human beings are ethnically or culturally the same or are different. The 'Doctrine of Creation' in which the Godhead declares that all humanity is created in the image and likeness of God, speaks to a radical form of equality in which all human beings are more alike than unalike. (Gen.1:27). Given the ways in which notions of 'race' and racism has sought to divide humanity into arbitrary categories, in which 'some' are more important than 'others', this doctrine remains one of the major biblical teachings that refutes any sense of superiority for some and inferiority for others.

If the Bible has nothing strictly to say about racial justice, it nevertheless, has a huge amount to say about the radical equality between people, communities, and nations,

Many biblical scholars have pointed to the significance of Black people within the sacred story of God's interaction with humankind (i.e. the Bible) and as a means of promoting ideas of reconciliation and living together in unity, in a world that transcends racism.

Cain Hope Felder, a famous and respected African American New Testament scholar, in his commentary on the story of Pentecost identifies the references to Mesopotamia, Pamphylia, Egypt and parts of Libya near Crete as being places connected with Africa. Dr Felder states that, 'indeed, the physiognomy of the Elamites of Mesopotamian archaeological reliefs shows them to have been a dark-skinned people with hair of tight curls. The modern academy has unfortunately zealously sought to "whitewash" all inhabitants of the ancient "Near East" in the vicinity of the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers.'

Felder and others are asserting both a Black presence in and a Black, African-centred form of interpretation for reading the Bible. The work of these scholars is important for racial justice because they are challenging that idea that Black people of African descent might be seen as backward 'heathens' who were civilised by White European missionaries, as Black people have always been a part of God's redemptive story.

Here is difference at the heart of this event. Pentecost shows that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that creates the Church, is one that affirms our cultural and linguistic differences.

The people are transformed, but their differences – the uniqueness of their identities – does not disappear. Many of these people at the heart of the story are Black, so being Black is important and should not be relegated or downplayed, as being of no consequence or value.

The lesson we learn from Pentecost is that racial justice is not about being 'colour blind'. Rather, a biblical vision of racial justice appreciates our cultural, ethnic and language differences, but does not assume that some cultures, traditions, and languages are superior to others. In effect, there is unity in diversity. Pentecost shows that the Holy Spirit does not eradicate our differences rather, the Spirit celebrates them. Life in the Spirit is living as Christians and being one in Christ in fellowship with each other.

Life in the Spirit is about being unified in community with each other. While a biblical view of racial justice is one that affirms our differences, being 'in Christ' is also about going beyond the ways in which we are different. So, that in a real sense, the human made boundaries that sometimes divide us into hierarchies (something racism does so potently) are overcome as life in Christ can take us beyond what it means to be linked to a particular identity. The status that is often linked to particular identities (being male or being a Jew for e.g.) are exploded. The Spirit does transcend all this. (Gal. 3: 28). A biblical view of racial justice is one that balances the need to celebrate our differences alongside a commitment to a form of unity in which notions of hierarchy around social difference, are overturned. Oftentimes, we assume that there are tensions in acknowledging and not seeing ethnic and cultural difference. Underpinning the Christian commitment to racial justice is the fundamental belief that all human beings matter and that God's love in Christ, is one that is seeking to reach out to and redeem all humanity. Christian faith, building on the Doctrine of Creation, not only asserts that all of us are created in God's image and likeness, but that God so loved the whole world that God sent God's son to save all persons, irrespective of any social, political, or cultural difference. (John 3:16).

The fulfilment of God's purposes for all humankind sees a multitude around the throne of God, in equality and unity, where all peoples are brought together across whatever may have divided them while on earth. (Rev.7:9).

In conclusion, the Bible does not address issues of 'race' for this concept did not exist in biblical times. But given that human nature has not changed, and that conflict and rivalry between people who are considered different does exist within the Scriptures and in our contemporary world, the Bible remains the essential resource that guides Christians into a way of loving and respecting others. We love others because God first loved us. (1 John 4:19).

RACE, IDENTITY AND BLACK LIVES MATTER

BY REVD DR ISRAEL OLUWOLE OLOFINJANA, DIRECTOR OF THE ONE PEOPLE COMMISSION, THE EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE

The death of George Floyd in May 2020 happened at the beginning of a global pandemic. Whilst the issue of racial injustice has been with us perennially, the pandemic did help the global community to be more conscious of the suffering that many people of colour have been facing for decades. In this short reflection I want to look at the issue of race and identity from a theologised anthropology and offer some reflections on why it is imperative that the Church engages with Black Lives Matter.

The pandemic, with the effects of decimating human population globally is helping us to reflect on our mortality. If human life is by nature finite, then what makes us human? Another way to frame that question is – if our lives are temporal, what makes it valuable or useful? The Evangelical Alliance have dedicated some series of podcast to explore what it means to be human in today's world. However, the question about our humanity is not a new one and one classical example we can draw from is Greek mythology, literature and poems. Homer's epic poem in the Iliad wrestles with the questions of mortality and identity. The ten-year war or siege which Homer tells a fraction of, introduces us to different characters who battle with this question of what makes us human and valuable. For heroes such as Achilles, Hector, Ajax, Penthesilea, Aeneas and Nestor physical strength and battle skill to fight well is what makes them valuable, therefore forms their identity. But Homer explores another human dimension to the story which is love. For Paris (also known as Alexander), it was moving with his heart for a beautiful woman named Helen of Sparta that made him feel human. Helen herself had to decide against the odds whether she was Helen of Sparta or Helen of Troy. This is again an identity question. Helen of Sparta meant she was reminded of her political marriage to Menelaus the King of the Mycenaean, while Helen of Troy symbolised romance for her despite the complexities.

But there is another human element that Homer's Iliad explores and that is wisdom. Odysseus typified this human trait in his cunningness which actually helped to tip the balance of the war in the favour of the Greeks. The godly-inspired Trojan Horse that assisted the Greeks to win the war was down to Odysseus craftiness and wisdom. But there is yet another side to the whole story and that is the divine angle in the anthropomorphic interventions of the Olympian gods and goddesses in the saga such as Aphrodite (the goddess of love), supporting Paris against the other goddesses Athena (goddess of war) and Hera (goddess of women, marriage and family), who were enraged with Paris's choice of Aphrodite and therefore vouched their support for the Greeks. If the question of what makes us human is not a new one, what sort of questions about our humanity are we asking today? There are questions around sexuality and identity in the whole conversation around homosexuality and heterosexuals. There are also questions around gender and identity in the public discussions on transgender issues. We also have questions around disability and identity and lastly, we have questions around race and identity.

The latter is the one I want to focus on in this section because of the murder of George Floyd which has led to the resurgence of Black Lives Matter (BLM). The Black Lives Matter movement like any of the other issues highlighted above has become politicised and controversial. Some people view it as controversial because they think saying that Black Lives Matter means saying other lives do not matter.

We are all bearers of God's image irrespective of colour, nationality, social status, ethnicity, religion or culture. This means, that our humanity is rooted in God not like Homer's view of demi-gods (half god and half human), but that our human identity is derived from God.

Let me start to unpack this by reflecting on the issue theologically. Firstly, an anthropological view of Scripture affirms that all – that is everyone – are created in God's image (See Genesis 1:26; 2:7). We are all bearers of God's image irrespective of colour, nationality, social status, ethnicity, religion or culture. This means, that our humanity is rooted in God not like Homer's view of demi-gods (half god and half human), but that our human identity is derived from God. We bear God's image because we are the signature stamp of God's creation therefore all lives matter. All lives matter to God and are valuable because we are God's handiwork. This is in contrast to other ancient accounts that pictured humans as either slaves of the gods manipulated and used, or that human beings were created as an accident of the gods. Our humanity also bearing semblance to God also reveals a collective human identity therefore a shared identity. African philosophy of Ubuntu makes this point clearer when it says:

> My humanity being caught up, is inextricably bound up to, in theirs. We belong in a bundle of life. We say, 'a person is a person through other people.' It is not 'I think therefore I am.' It says rather: 'I am human because I belong.' I participate, I share.[viii]

Ubuntu makes it clear that our human identity is not an individual one but a shared one. The effect of the virus is making us realise more than ever before that if we are going to survive we have to do it together in the face of our mortality. Having established this collective human identity, affirming that all lives do indeed matter, how does the rhetoric of Black Lives Matter factor into this? If we agree that all lives do indeed matter and we share this understanding that we have a shared humanity rooted in God, then it should concern us all when Black lives are made cheap. Black lives are made cheap when not seen as human, enslaved, colonised, indentured, raped, exploited, seen as inferior, marginalised, oppressed, lynched, segregated, disproportionately imprisoned, murdered, and neo-colonised. The best way to understand the message of Black Lives Matter theologically is through Paul's body metaphor, "If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26 NRSV).

viii Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (London: Random House, 1999), p.35.

Black Lives Matter is saying that people of African descent worldwide as part of the human race are suffering from various forms of injustices therefore their pain matters. Will our collective humanity seek to understand this pain and respond, or will we neglect that part of the human family? For the Church, this is an even more pressing issue, because if we fail to address the hurt in God's family, that is the body of Christ, we are inadvertently neglecting ourselves.

But some will say, how can we engage Black Lives Matter which uses Marxist ideology and critical race theory? This is a question of what we use as our sources of theology and how we engage them. It is not good enough to reject Marxism as a social theory because it has roots in communist thinking, neither is it right to dismiss critical race theory because of its worldview of oppressed and the oppressor. The Old Testament gave us some insights on this, for example, Moses took the advice of his father-in-law Jethro on leadership delegation despite the fact that he was a priest of Midian (See Exodus 18). The liberation of the children of Israel from Babylonian exile came as a result of Cyrus, the Persian (See Isaiah 45:1-3; Ezra 1:1-4). Esther's story is perhaps more succinct in that whilst it was a non-Jew (Haman) that plotted their destruction, it was also a non-Jew that delivered them (King Ahasuerus). Paul in the New Testament engaged Greek literature, poetry and philosophy even quoting from them to make the gospel message relevant to his audience (See Acts 17:23, 28 and Titus 1:1).

It is not good enough to reject Marxism as a social theory because it has roots in communist thinking, neither is it right to dismiss critical race theory because of its worldview of oppressed and the oppressor.

The history of Christian theology also reveals that the question of how Christianity engages with culture is not new. Many of the early Church Fathers debated this, for example, Justin Martyr (c.100-c.165 AD) explored the parallels between Christianity and Platonism, while one of the African Church Fathers, Tertullian (c.160-c.225 AD) asked the question, 'what has Athens to do with Jerusalem? What relevance has the Platonic Academy for the church?' (In his *de praescriptione haereticorum* On the Rule of the Heretics). Modern theology[ix] also wrestled with this question of Christianity and culture as European, or to be precise, German theologians such as F.D.E Schleiermacher (1768-1834) and Paul Tillich (1886-1965) in their attempt to make Christianity relevant during the Enlightenment period engaged the prevailing cultural reasoning of the day. Richard Niebuhr's (1919-1962) highly influential book *Christ and Culture* was a continuation of this debate setting out five approaches to culture: Christ against culture, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture and Christ the transformer of culture.[x]

If the Church is going to be relevant today and be able to speak into issues of racial inequalities, we must seek to engage intelligently Black Lives Matter despite the fact that they use Marxist ideology and critical race theory. The Church cannot afford to engage Black Lives Matter from an arm's length.

ix Modern theology is the theological enterprise that developed within the European context of the Enlightenment period in the eighteenth century. It sought to engage the intellectual reasoning of that time.

x Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (1951).

It is important for the Church to engage Black Lives Matter because it raises the question around the issues of race and identity for many, particularly young people. If the Church is going to make the gospel relevant to millennials and Generation Z, then we have to engage some of the concerns of Black Lives Matter. During the Windrush period (1940s-1960s), the UK Church lost a generation of African Caribbean youth because they saw how the church mistreated their parents therefore many of them turned away and embraced for example Rastafarism which speaks to their identity issues. If the Church does not engage the concerns of Black Lives Matter, we will not only lose Black youth, but also white youth and other young people, because Black Lives Matter is a multicultural international movement.

Questions for Reflections and Group Discussions

- How has Coronavirus forced you to think of your own humanity?
- How is your church or organisation creating safe spaces for people to lament about justice issues?
- How will you or your church (mission agency, workplace) participate in tackling issues of racial justice?
- How should the church seek to engage Black Lives Matter?

How should the church seek to engage Black Lives Matter?

Policy

HOW RACISM WORKS

BEVAN POWELL, EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ADVISOR, METHODIST CHURCH

Introduction

In considering how racism works and its impact, it is important to define what racism is, its origins and impact on individuals, families and society. 'Race' as a concept has its roots in the Transatlantic Slave Trade and western colonialism, which drove the idea of an innate White superiority, power and privilege. Central to this concept is the idea of an inherent inferiority of Black and Brown people, which gave justification to the enslavement of millions of African people. The legacy of these systems continues to drive division, racial inequality and exclusion in our society today.

Race is a social construct driving racial stereotypes, negative attitudes and belief toward Black and Brown people, this also includes biases (both conscious and unconscious). The concept of race is biologically meaningless and has no scientific foundation. Equally the term has no biblical basis and indeed is counter to the Gospel;

> 'In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in union with Christ, and we are all joined to each other as different parts of one body' (Romans 12:5).

In its report Faithful and Equal of 1987, the Methodist Church defined racism as:

> "Allowing prejudice to determine the way power is used to the personal, social or institutional detriment of ethnic minority individuals or communities."

Many Christian denominations, including the Church of England and the Methodist Church have stated, racism is a sin.

Racism in the Twenty First Century

For many racism is overt and more easily identified in terms of offensive name calling, hate crime, repressive government policy (the hostile environment, immigration policy, the Windrush Scandal), and the flagrant denial of services or products. However, much of this overt form of racism has been challenged and suppressed by legislation and changes in societal attitudes towards racism. Nevertheless, in the twenty first century as progress is made in tackling overt racism, more subtle forms of racism exist and covertly permeate and destabilise British society. These subtleties, many of which stem from our institutions and organisations, are just as pernicious and debilitating as overt forms of racism. Therefore it is essential that critical vigilance is adopted, to identify, challenge and remove these more subtle forms of racism, which induce suffering, fuel racial inequality and disparities.

Implicit Bias

Unchallenged implicit or unconscious bias is another mechanism that facilitates the ongoing prevalence of covert racial inequality and disparity. These hidden biases can include stereotypes, negative attitudes and assumptions towards Black and Brown people. These biases can impact decision making, policy and strategy formation, design, implementation and use of technology based systems. The following section provides a brief insight into the subtleties of racism as it affects:

1. **The Criminal Justice System**
2. **Structural Racism in Healthcare**
3. **Bias In Technology**

1. The Criminal Justice System (CJS)

When exploring the issues of racial inequality and disparity, the Criminal Justice System (CJS) is often identified, and rightly criticised as having disproportionate and negative outcomes for people from Black and Brown communities. The CJS is made up of a number of institutions including police, courts, prison, youth offender institutions, all of which have the legitimate power to take away an individual's liberty of freedom.

The Government's annual 'Youth Justice Statistics' (published in January 2021) showed that more than half of all young people in youth custody were from Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) communities. David Lammy MP described the situation as a national scandal.

In its 2018 report, the Ministry for Justice's 'Statistics on Race and the Criminal Justice System', stated:

> 'In general, minority ethnic groups appear to be over-represented at many stages throughout the CJS compared with the White ethnic group. The greatest disparity appears at the point of 'stop and search', arrests, custodial sentencing and prison population. Among minority ethnic groups, Black individuals were often the most over-represented. Outcomes for minority ethnic children are often more pronounced at various points of the CJS'.

2. Structural Racism in Healthcare

The following examples highlight the issues of structural racism and racial inequality within the healthcare system:

a). In response to the government's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED) report, the British Medical Association (BMA) said: 'Although it confirms that we don't yet have racial equality in the UK, it fails to acknowledge structural racism as a key factor in racial inequality. Building on our members' experiences, our research and our evidence submitted to the Commission, we believe it is necessary to acknowledge the role of structural racism in racial disparities. This will address the root causes of racism in healthcare and help put in place a successful plan to move forward'.

The BMA stated that over a number of years it had built 'a wealth of evidence and knowledge on the significant impact that racial disparity can have on health outcomes. For the medical profession, this translates into inequalities in treatment, experiences, and opportunities for development'.

b). The 2020 report 'Confidential Enquiries into maternal deaths and morbidity', produced by MBRRACE-UK for the NHS, uncovered the alarming fact that Black women were statistically four times more likely to die during childbirth, whilst women from Asian backgrounds were three times more likely to die, than White women in the UK.

3. Bias in Technology

a). A growing body of evidence has shown that oximeters, which are usually clipped to a person's finger to measure oxygen levels, can overstate the level of oxygen in the blood of people from BAME backgrounds. This can have devastating consequences for patients from these communities suffering from COVID-19. The situation is further exacerbated as research has shown that during the pandemic, people from BAME communities were of greater risk from COVID.

The UK Government has launched a review into whether medical devices are equally effective, irrespective of a patient's ethnicity. However, doctors from the BMA have asked that the inquiry go further and explore structural issues within healthcare which may disproportionately affect people from BAME communities and potentially lead to further inequalities in health outcomes.

b). Research over the last decade has demonstrated that many automated facial recognition systems are racially biased. These systems inadvertently privilege White skin tones, as they are primarily data-driven with a dependence on largescale datasets. Imbalanced datasets (i.e., photo images) with less representation from people from BAME communities, would train facial recognition systems to be less accurate for people from Black and Brown communities. The majority of available largescale face datasets were over representative of White males and under representative of people from BAME Communities. Many law enforcement agencies across the world use automated facial recognition systems, this includes law enforcement agencies in the UK.

In June 2020, IBM shelved their research on facial recognition technology that they had been developing for law enforcement agencies, due to fears of racial bias and civil rights abuses. IBM stated that the artificial intelligence systems used for this technology needed further testing for bias.

REFLECTION ON THE IMPORTANCE OF RACIAL JUSTICE FROM AN IRISH PERSPECTIVE/CONTEXT

DR DAMIAN JACKSON, PROGRAMME OFFICER – IRISH COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Racial Justice is not a term that has much of a presence in public or churches' discourse in Ireland. There are several reasons for this, perhaps the main one being the fact that up until the last two decades both jurisdictions in Ireland have been overwhelmingly White. That has changed since then, less so in Northern Ireland, but there are a few other reasons for a lack of engagement with racial justice. The history of emigration has deeply marked the Irish psyche, and combined with our image of ourselves as a country of welcome, there has been a reluctance to look honestly at the lived experience of people from ethnic minorities, and even recognise that there may be injustices or prejudices to address – "How could we be racist? We experienced discrimination when we had to emigrate so we would never do that to others."

If the way we worship on a Sunday morning is controlled by only one group of people in the congregation, and Sunday morning at 11am is the most segregated time of the week, how can we hope to speak on matters of racial justice in wider society?

This naiveté is perhaps surprising given our history of physically and socially excluding "troublesome" populations such as the traveller community, "fallen" women, people with mental health issues through physical separation, usually by institutionalisation. Sure enough, the pattern has been repeated for "troublesome" people seeking international protection through the establishment of the direct provision system twenty years ago, which institutionalises them and separates them from the general population in accommodation centres.

Nevertheless, there is a reluctance to engage with this issue, evidenced in pushback in responses to a survey we (the Irish Inter-Church Meeting, in collaboration with Evangelical Alliance Ireland and VOX magazine) are running at the time of writing.

While most respondents welcome the survey there is a substantial minority who say we are "stirring up division". Is this a case of mistaking diversity for division? This is particularly evident in responses to open questions about White privilege or Black Lives Matter, both of which elicit strong responses and seem to be touching areas that are very sensitive.

My sense is that this is because questions about White privilege and the work of the Black Lives Matter movement both critique a conception of racism as solely an individual's vice. They seek to examine how it also functions systemically to maintain (current) power structures which favour the "White Irish/British/Northern Irish" population – and this is a survey within the Irish churches where 89% of respondents self-describe as committed Christians.

These responses should prompt us as Christians to consider some fundamental questions about our own identity and what it is grounded upon. Beginning with our relationship to Church: what is the purpose of Church, and who is it for? Do

'Hands across the divide'; peace sculpture in Derry

we cling tightly to control of "how things are done" in Church, or do we look at it as a place where a diverse group of people, all image-bearers of God, gather to worship in ways that reflect their whole selves?

Unity is not uniformity, nor is recognition and discussion of diversity a stirring of division. The only way to unity is through a recognition and celebration of our diversity, as we see in Acts chapter 2:9-11.

To move towards this unity we need to hold more lightly to the way things have always been – our most fundamental identity is secure in Christ. If we feel attacked when we hear of someone's experience, that is a sign that we probably have some work to do. If the way we worship on a Sunday morning is controlled by only one group of people in the congregation, and Sunday morning at 11am is the most segregated time of the week, how can we hope to speak on matters of racial justice in wider society?

WHY WE SHOULD ALL FIGHT AGAINST RACIAL INJUSTICE!

DR FRANKIE ASARE-DONKOH, CONSULTANT: POLITICS & GOVERNANCE/MEDIA & COMMUNICATION/LEADERSHIP & STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT, CARDIFF, WALES

Racial justice is a subject many would not want to talk about in Britain. The overwhelming reason for this is simple – many do not believe that there is racial injustice in British society, a denial which has continued for years, thus subjecting many from the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups to perpetual 'second-rate human' treatment. From schools to workplaces, in the criminal justice system, within the police services, in academia and in sports, discrimination against Black and minority people is a common occurrence.

By 2017, the proportion of BAME youth in prison rose from 25% in 2006 to 41% (The Lammy Review, 2017). Data from the Home Office also indicates that between April 2018 and March 2019 there were four 'stop and search' for every 1,000 White individuals against 38 for every 1,000 Black individuals (Home Office, 2020).

Looking at the education sector which I am more familiar with, statistics indicate that in 2018, there were 14,000 White male professors against only 90 Black male professors in UK universities and colleges (Advance HE, 2018), and by 2020 no real change had taken place to improve the situation; hence out of the 21,000 professors as high as 85% (17,850) were White, 6.47% (1,360) Asian, and only 0.67% (140) Black. British universities employ between zero and two Black professors yearly, and at the governance level, only 75 out of 3,600 university governing board members are Black (HESA 2020).

With regards to student successes, 11.2% Black students leave higher education without a qualification compared with 6.9% White students. In 2019/20, there was a difference of 18.3 percentage points between the proportion of White and Black students getting a first or upper second-class degree. There is also a huge disproportion existing between BAME and White pupils entering further or higher education. BAME students account for only 26% of all undergraduate students in England (Alexander & Shankley, 2020), and worse still, they are less likely to attend any of the 24-member Russell Group universities classified as world-class, and research-intensive universities.

There are too many barriers faced by BAME people in accessing all kinds of services, including mental and other health support, besides social amenities which many lack, and this impacts very negatively on their lives.

The level of disparities and injustices in British society is so glaring in most situations hence there is no difference in the lives and wellbeing of BAME people in Wales. In one Welsh university, statistics from its own data indicate that in 2017/18 academic year, 1,732 (93.3%) White people were employed as against 91 (4.9%) BAME employees, while in the 2018/19 and 2019/20 academic years there were no improvements with White employees representing 85.9% and 89.5% respectively, while BAME employees covered only 12.7% and 9.8% respectively.

At a recent employment interview I attended, the panel was all-white, and I could see clearly from their postures that my fate had been long determined even before the interview took place; and I was not surprised that within a few hours afterward, I received an email that I was not successful at the interview. From my personal experience with job applications, more often than not the shortlisting for interviews and appointments favoured White people because majority of the panel members have been White.

There is adequate confirmation since the 1999 Macpherson Report that existing, long standing institutional rules, culture, and habits prevent equity from being fully realised, especially by BAME people. Many people from BAME groups have suffered due to societal and institutional bias.

Despite these glaring injustices and disparities suffered continually by BAME people in the UK, many are scared to talk about the situation, or just refuse to accept the status quo. And the sad aspect is that the continued silence of the majority who should speak about these but are not, worsens the situation. What many refuse to understand, however, is that injustice to any human being is injustice to all, since there are always some snowballing effects on the larger society.

Despite these glaring injustices and disparities suffered continually by BAME people in the UK, many are scared to talk about the situation, or just refuse to accept the status quo.

People must begin to learn to understand other people's culture and develop positive attitudes towards cultural differences. The lack of this cultural competence leads to unconscious bias where people, based on their own culture, lifestyles, and stereotypes, treat people from other cultures inhumanly.

No matter the colour of one's skin, we must all remember that we are humans, God's creation with the same value. We need to live in peace with mutual respect and understanding of each other's culture. And let's remember that there can never be peaceful co-existence of human beings anywhere without justice and equity. Therefore, we must all join the fight against injustice and discriminations within society.

NO LONGER THE SAME!

DION-MARIE WHITE, YOUTH WORKER AT THE HEBE FOUNDATION, SOUTH LONDON

As a Youth leader and mentor, the murder of George Floyd sent a wave of sadness, fear, imposter syndrome and mistrust to those I worked with closely on a daily basis.

It broke my heart to see the changes that had occurred, yet I knew more than ever I needed to be a listening ear, a shoulder to cry on, a hand to hold and their biggest cheerleader. All the while, fighting an internal struggle of my own. As a mixed heritage young woman who identifies as Black 98% of the time... that 2% made me feel very unsettled.

For the first time in 26 years, I questioned if I had a place or a voice to speak up against this injustice. Would I be called out by the 2% who actually acknowledged my Caucasian roots. Would I be seen as the "angry Black woman" by my Caucasian counterparts. All these questions as if I hadn't been deeply affected by racial abuse growing up.

So why did their opinions matter? Why did I suddenly feel like I had to pick a side. I always understood it was never Black vs White or Us vs them, but simply wrong vs right; just vs unjust.

So, despite the discomfort and the uncertainty...I remembered that first and foremost I am a child of God. I asked myself, whose side was I leaning on? Surely, I was leaning on the Lord's side. I was on the side of our Heavenly Father. A God of justice. A God who has called me to lead and to mentor people. Many of whom are Black and if they feel like they can't breathe; then it is my role, to hold their hand and allow them to inhale and exhale.

To remind them that their life is full of purpose and their existence always matters. It mattered before they were born. It mattered last year, it mattered last month. It mattered last week. It mattered yesterday, it matters today and will matter for all eternity.

I chose to inhale and exhale with them knowing that we are in this fight for justice together. Even though things are no longer the same...we shall overcome in Jesus' name.

"No longer the same"... the death of a Black man which became a catalyst for change. The words, "I can't breathe" etched in our memories as the heart-breaking wake up call.

"No longer the same"... we shall remember his name... George Perry Floyd Jr.

MY JOURNEY

MAJOR JONNY SMITH, INTERCULTURAL MISSION ENABLER, THE SALVATION ARMY

My journey towards an intercultural desire and understanding started in 2001. I had moved to Camberwell, south London, to train for two years as a Salvation Army officer. However, I had baggage! For the previous 29 years of life, I had simply hung out with people who looked like me! The only understanding I had of life in a place like Camberwell, was through the papers, which I now see were incredibly misleading!

After two years of training, which also included getting married, myself and my wife were appointed to Southwark Salvation Army community church, where in a hyper diverse community, we were handed a diverse church community and a leadership team that was reflective of this. With my background, it took much time (and patience from others) as my understanding of what was required to be part of a multicultural church started to be unveiled.

One of the key reflections that I have is that there is a real requirement as a disciple, to be willing to enter other peoples' cultures, as much as you perhaps expect them to enter your own! I always say that this is not just an essential good idea for ministry in any setting, yet a God idea lived out by Jesus (John 4 would be a great example of Jesus living out an intercultural way).

As I started to pray, live out, and preach about an intercultural way, I found it of crucial importance to find safe places to say how I was feeling, and to ask many questions around cultural differences. Equally, I needed to encourage people to find safe spaces where questions and feelings that they had, could be talked through. Myself and my wife were at this church for 10 years. There were incredible times and tough and challenging times, yet the whole journey has played a huge part in my passion and desire for intercultural mission.

As I started to pray, live out, and preach about an intercultural way, I found it of crucial importance to find safe places to say how I was feeling, and to ask many questions around cultural differences.

There are two pieces of Scripture that have become so important to me on this journey. Genesis 1 talks about us all 'being made in the image of God'. As I have met people from all around this world, so my image of God has been expanded and gone from the White, long haired and blue-eyed Jesus, to a completely diverse one. What a gift that God has given to us in the UK, that his image is before us in any people that we meet!

The other piece of Scripture is Revelation 7 which gives a beautiful image of heaven, where 'people from all different cultures will come together and worship God.' Jesus made it clear to us that we are to, 'pray for the Kingdom to come on this earth as it is in heaven'. (Matthew 6) Therefore, we passionately need to be making Revelation 7 a tangible reality in our neighbourhoods! When people can see that the church, the foretaste of what will be, is diverse, then I firmly believe that this gives that community an incredible hope!

And how our communities are in need of hope my friends! I would challenge anybody reading this to observe the community in which your church gathers. Ask yourself two questions...one, does the gathered represent the wider community that we are in?

And two, does our leadership team reflect the gathered? If not, then I would simply encourage you to desire this intercultural journey, and in so doing, help Revelation 7 to become a tangible reality in your neighbourhood!

I am completely convinced that if we are to be modelling the kingdom of heaven here on this earth, then we need to be passionate about intercultural living! It is not enough to just tolerate one-another, we need to be willing to enter each other's spaces. We need to be willing to be mutually inconvenienced. And when we do this, we start to create, together, a beautiful and larger story than perhaps what we started with!

'Jesus as Dread'; The 'Dread' Christ is one who sides with all oppressed people in their struggle against anything denying them full humanity. From 'The Christ We Share' [USPG 2012]

RACIAL JUSTICE REFLECTION

GABRIEL DEDJI, DEGREE STUDENT AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON, STUDYING POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, AND PUBLISHED AUTHOR OF 'THE ESCAPE: A TALE OF CHANGE AND REVOLUTION'.

In early 2020, I had grown very interested in the history of Black empowerment. I was reading articles, books, watching videos and learning about different areas on the topic because of the sheer number of race-related events that had occurred in the few years prior (e.g. Windrush Scandal, Ahmaud Arbery's death and the re-appearance of Boris Johnson's past racist remarks etc.).

Whilst none of the history I was reading could change the terrible effects of these recent events, I understood that it all showed alternatives and solutions to the problems that were at their root. Others were also making this same realisation. A whole wave of young people across the world were using self-education as a mechanism for social change. We had seen it with the climate protests, campaigns for class equality (during Britain's 2019 General Election) and other important issues. The empowerment of Black people and the push for racial equality was also being treated with the same keen interest by many young people and the Black Lives Matter protests only brought this movement into full view.

A whole wave of young people across the world were using self-education as a mechanism for social change.

The general consensus was that the purpose of all of this reading and research was for young people to work towards a better future. More importantly, many of us want to see change in our lifetimes that progresses beyond just not being racist; rather, we would like to live in a world that is actively anti-racist. To quote Malcolm X: 'Progress is healing the wound!'

As a society, it is important that we listen to these concerns and begin to realise this progress fully to make a better world for our young people and those who will be born into the world that we leave them with. Whilst reading the history of people like Fred Hampton of the Black Panther Party, you begin to realise that the battle for racial equality is never beneficial for only one group, but for people of all life experiences. Through his work and influence in Chicago, many – from all different races and backgrounds – were able to have access to free healthcare, free breakfasts and free education. Even today, a lot of campaigns for racial equality relate to problems of class, gender, age and many other aspects. These campaigns try to deal with peoples' direct needs (e.g., Black Minds Matter offering free therapy to Black people in 2020).

Young people understand the intersectionality of these issues and attempt to ensure that all are included in their battles for equality. Therefore, whilst some may be afraid to involve themselves in these discussions because they do not feel that it relates to, or means anything to them, they should understand that racism is just one head of a hydra that preys on the world as a whole. It is only through working together that we can face the roots of these problems and make a better, more positive world for all of us.


suteishi/istock

WHAT'S THAT GOT TO DO WITH ME?'

PHILL MELLSTROM: WORSHIP DEVELOPMENT WORKER – CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

For a long time, I didn't really recognise what racism was. Growing up in the 80s I didn't see many people around that didn't look like me, other than people playing sport on TV, or on MTV and album covers. The hangover from my parent's generation of whitewashing, meant noticing difference felt a bit awkward, and acknowledging difference wasn't something at that time to be celebrated.

Although my experience wasn't one of fear or suspicion of other cultures, it took some time to recognise that there was a shift in what was appropriate in terms of humour or reference, and although it was a long way from anti-racism, there was to an extent, an emerging awareness. Everyday life was being influenced by different cultures – food, clothing and music were obvious areas where cultures overlapped, influenced and fused, and more people from different ethnic backgrounds were moving to where I lived. As I became more aware of other cultures, ethnicities and backgrounds within my sphere of influence, it felt exciting and vibrant.

The specific endemic of sectarianism that was so prevalent in my native Glasgow, made the issue of racism even more complex. Deep-rooted fear of difference drove destructive responses of suspicion and violence. For me, there needed to be a creative response and through studying jazz at university, I began engaging with the stories being told in musical forms of jazz and hip hop. I began to understand that there was heritage and narratives that were different, diverse and important, and certainly not mine to appropriate. Over the years my approach to difference and diversity has remained open, welcoming and accepting of any invitation to engage in dialogue or to co-create. It felt cool, creative, and progressive.

Until the murder of George Floyd.

I changed my profile picture, on social media, made an effort to find anti-racist quotes and post things that felt like some kind of act of solidarity. After that initial response, and some conversations over a bottle of wine with friends, the silence crept in. Not because I thought it wasn't important enough, it's just, life kind of got in the way. Racism didn't acutely affect me as I continued to move through life without difficulty because of my background, heritage, and skin colour.

It was in the midst of this apathy that I began to understand more about privilege, systemic racism and anti-racism. I began to realise more that silence was an unacceptable response and it was necessary to be intentionally and actively anti-racist, rather than passively not racist. I have responsibilities as someone who is part of systems and cultures, to influence and strive for justice and equity.

"I began to understand that there was heritage and narratives that were different, diverse and important, and certainly not mine to appropriate."

As a member of a wonderfully diverse society and culture in contemporary Scotland, there are more and more opportunities to engage with issues around ethnicity, diversity and inclusion. As my children become more aware I have to consider even more so how I talk about all of this, how I behave and live with some kind of integrity to values that are generous and inclusive. In my work, I regularly consider how to use language and practice in worship and mission that is inclusive, anti-racist and ethically sound, but it's all too easy to let it end with the powering down of my laptop.

Like the great jazz musicians of our time – who find harmony in spaces of dissonance, and weave elegant melodic lines through complex chord changes and time signatures – I hope to find my way through the changes, discovering beauty, solidarity and opportunity to creatively make a difference as I journey.

MY IRISH EXPERIENCE AS PART OF THE IRISH ETHNIC MINORITY AND A CHRISTIAN

DARE ADETUBRERU, PASTOR, RCCG KINGDOM CONNECTIONS, DUBLIN, IRELAND; MEMBER OF DUBLIN CITY INTERFAITH FORUM, MEMBER OF THE GARDA NATIONAL DIVERSITY FORUM AND CO-FOUNDER TYT SOUL, TYRRELSTOWN

28 **Peter told them, "You know it is against our laws for a Jewish man to enter a Gentile home like this or to associate with you. But God has shown me that I should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean**. (Act10:28 *NLT*)

I am very happy to be involved in the Racial Justice Sunday initiative, happy because I firmly believe in, and actively promote, racial justice based on the teachings of the Bible, as exemplified in the conclusion of the Apostle Peter from the vision God had given him about race relations. For me racial justice is about "no longer thinking anyone is impure or unclean".

To my knowledge Racial Justice Sunday is not widely acknowledged in Ireland, but the importance of this initiative cannot be overemphasised, particularly because of the timing.

I say this because significant inter-race relations have only come to the forefront of Irish societal life within the last 25 years due to large influx of immigrants. Prior to that, the nation had been made up of largely a heterogenous White population. And the Church had had to grapple with the issue of sectarianism. This relative recency presents the opportunity to shape Racial Justice positively using the experience gained from other geographies, but it also presents the challenge of replicating the ills observed abroad if nothing different is done.

As a Black migrant to Ireland, the question of racial justice has been brought forcefully home, notably by two separate tragic killings of Black youths about 11 years apart. The positive aspect of these unfortunate events was that in the first case, several civil society organisations, schools, along with their principal and pupils, labour unions, cross party members of Parliament, religious institutions and the police organised a 5,000 strong rally to demand justice and declare "Never again". The more recent killing is still being grappled with, but I believe there is enough societal goodwill to overcome this hurdle as well.

Many civic organisations are actively creating solutions that could contribute to Racial Justice, e.g., "iReporting" tool by INAR (Irish Network Against Racism)[xi] The Police have recently created the Garda National Diversity Forum made up of mainly non-police members with the aim of helping to implement hate-crime policy.

xi **https://inar.ie/**

Black women at a charity event.

Creating racial justice requires action, while it is early days in Ireland and the wheels of culture could move ever so slowly, every little step will count. The action needs to be embraced by all the cross section of society if it is to be effective, as exemplified above.

However, I believe the Church is called to agency with urgency.

29 **"So I came without objection as soon as I was sent for..."** (ACT10:29 *NLT*)

The Church must lead in doing and saying, **God has shown us that we should no longer think of anyone as impure or unclean.** Our silence is very loud.

Practical action

STEPS TOWARD RACIAL JUSTICE IN BRITISH AND IRISH CHURCHES

The appalling murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, USA in May 2020 brought sharply into focus the issues of racism and structural inequality, and heralded the further escalation of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement on both sides of the Atlantic. Within Britain and Ireland, it has forced churches to address the issue of racial justice and the need for greater equity, inclusion and diversity within their structures.

In the aftermath of the US killing and the resulting BLM protests, many Christian denominations and parachurch groups in Britain issued statements condemning the death. The more cognisant ones juxtaposed what took place in the USA, with what has been occurring on these shores, and called for greater racial justice in a British context. It must be noted that far too many churches initially failed to make connections between the situations in the USA and the UK, which speaks volumes of how racism is viewed by many churches on this side of the Atlantic. Moreover, it should not be lost that these events took place in the very year British and Irish churches marked the 25th anniversary of Racial Justice Sunday, which was established to address the racism in Church and society.

Pre-step

There is an old adage which says that "confession is good for the soul", so prior to taking the first step, the Church must acknowledge that racism exists within its structures, akin to society. It must then seek to adopt a zero-tolerance attitude to racism, in the same way it has done toward child protection/safeguarding on child protection measures. (Once the scale of that appalling problem was presented to the churches, they were forced to act with policies and procedures to ensure it did not occur within their places of worship. It can now be argued that no "right-thinking" Christian would ever question the need for such a response, irrespective of the numbers of children worshipping at a church.) Interestingly, those in positions of authority or leadership within the church did not have to make much of a theological case for these actions; the importance of what they were doing was self-explanatory and obvious. For matters that will be outlined later, this has sadly not been the situation for racial justice.

As a country, we currently have laws and policies which encourage (and at times, enforce) equality and inclusion. While some in the Church may not have an issue with these being implemented in society, they invariably question the need for any to be applied within the Church. This paper is not the place to discuss the myriad arguments concerning the nexus between church and society; suffice it to say – for reasons that will be explained in the "steps" – the Church has singularly failed to address racism and inequality in this country.

It is germane to contrast the Church in Britain with its US counterpart on racial justice matters. It is important to note that the US Church was at the heart of the civil rights (racial justice) movement in the 1950s and 60s. What is more, virtually every Black "rights" leader in US history, with the exception of the Muslim, Malcolm X (whose father was a Baptist preacher), was inextricably linked to the Church and the struggle for Black equality. The question we need to ask ourselves in this country is how can the Church play a prophetic, leadership role to those in society when it fails to acknowledge the racism that is right under its nose?

Most racial justice practitioners linked to the Church will argue that racism is a sin and abhorrent to God. The Scriptures reveal that we are all made in the image of God, and science reveals that there is only one "race" – the human race. "Race", as we come to understand it, is a human construct. The irony is that the Church played a key role in assembling this false construct, yet it now struggles to engage with the efforts to undo a lot of its handiwork.

Below are four obvious steps and a fifth one linked to methodology, which will help the Church on the racial justice journey. Like all journeys, progress may be far from straightforward, but it can be achieved with courage, faith and determination. The following steps include:

1. **Hearing stories – breaking the silence**
2. **Repentance and lament**
3. **Education**
4. **Training**
5. **Methodology**

1. Hearing Stories – breaking the silence

Once churches acknowledge the reality of racism within their structures (as well as in society), it is important that they break the silence by hearing stories of racism, inequality and prejudice. They do this by first allowing those who have experienced it firsthand, to talk about it. It is important that one hears from those who have experienced these issues, and safe spaces and forums need to be created which enable Black people to candidly share their experiences of all aspects of this – in both Church and society. Their "experiences" could take the form of poetry, art, music or prose. If they choose simply to talk in a public forum, those listening should solely "listen" and not use the occasion to question or second guess anything being said. The Church should also create spaces in which others can explain the myriad reasons why they were reluctant to discuss racism, especially prior to George Floyd and BLM. However, these forums should not be spaces to question the reality of racism in Church or society – these should be accepted "givens".

2. Repentance and lament

Having broken the silence and heard a range of stories (most of which should be from Black people), the next obvious step is that of repentance with lament at the core. There is a rich and powerful tradition regarding lament in the Christian Scriptures, as well as in various societies down

the centuries. Lament is regarded as a crucial facet in the forgiveness process or any action with redemptive purposes. However, in this context, it is inextricably linked to racial justice, equity, honesty and truth telling. Therefore, the churches should lament for:

a. Perennial inactivity – it is appalling that it had to take the tragic killing of a Black man in the USA for some British churches to publicly assert that racism exists (in this country). Racism did not begin with George Floyd's death – nor sadly will it end with it. What is all the more troubling is that over the years, some churches have deliberately allowed "race" to fall off the agenda. Many have changed the job descriptions of racial justice workers so that their roles now encompass less controversial equalities issues. Others have allowed Racial Justice Sunday to become an event that they do not need to celebrate.

b. Perpetuating a colour-blind theology – arguing that God does not see colour, hence neither should we. If one fails to acknowledge colour or "race", then it also means that one does not admit the reality of racism. (However, these "colour-blind" Christians invariably take it for granted that God, in the form of Jesus, is White. See "Step three".)

c. Failing to address the racism and inequality that has existed within church structures since the Windrush "West Indians" first began attending British and Irish churches in the late 1940s. This has resulted in rejection, hurt and division within the Body of Christ.

d. Linked to the latter is the reluctance to affirm the faith, giftings and skills of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Christians who stayed in the Church, despite its racism.

3. Education (formal and informal)

The third step builds on the previous one and encourages churches to examine their structures and systems of working, to see how they mitigate against equality and inclusion – and then take action. For mixed congregations, the most obvious step would be to apply the optics test for leadership. If photographs of the leadership team do not reflect the ethnic composition of the congregation, change must occur.

However, any change must not be tokenistic, and anyone brought on to the leadership team must be given the appropriate training and assistance to demystify certain practices and activities, so they can play a valid role in the decision-making process. For instance, it would be disingenuous to invite Black and Brown faces onto something such as a Parish Church Council (PCC) or some such committee without ensuring they know how these forums work. Training or guidance should be provided as a rule of thumb – no one should be made to ask for it, as some may be embarrassed to do so. It is the case that church leadership teams still include Black people on such committees to "show" racial balance, yet are content that they remain silent due to them not knowing how the rules work.

The racism we now see in society has a lot of its roots in African enslavement and the colonialism/"empire" that followed. History shows that the Church was inextricably linked to all these enterprises, often allowing Christian Scriptures to be twisted (or excluded) to justify these practices. It is not enough for the Church to solely talk about William Wilberforce and his fellow Christians in the Clapham Sect and their work to end the slave trade as a way of redeeming or overlooking this history. There is a need for greater education and understanding of the Church's role over the centuries and how these behaviours and attitudes currently inform its engagement with Black folks today. It is important that Christians explore this via "historic truth telling", using theology and educational resources which will undoubtedly tell unpalatable truths about what the Church did and did not do.

Such education should lead to the need for the Church to be more inclusive in worship and activities. The most obvious thing would be to have hymns, worship songs, liturgy and prayers that speak of the diversity found in God's creation and the importance of justice and equity. There is a growing tradition in the USA, Africa, the Caribbean and Britain among Black Christians artistes to write songs that explore their lived experiences, which speak of the need for justice and transformation.

However, some of the aforementioned activity is as much about what churches do, as what they stop doing. For instance, there are still a number of hymns and worship songs which make references to colour in unhelpful ways. Hymns with words describing "sinners being washed until they are white as snow" or "sin being black" must be avoided. Additionally, events looking to encourage unity often sing the famous hymn "Amazing Grace", written by the former slave trader, turned preacher Revd John Newton. It is important to note that this hymn has nothing to do with slavery/freedom, nor is it an apology from Newton for his role in enslaving Africans, but a paean to God for forgiving him of his blasphemy and ungodly behaviour while being in the navy.

Equally, churches should steer clear of using images in material, or around worship spaces, portraying a "White Jesus" as this is little more than White supremacy. This Aryan portrayal of the Lord became popular within the Black Christian tradition during enslavement, as White folks encouraged Black people to revere the image of a "Blue-eyed, Blond haired" saviour – who looked like many of their earthly slave masters. (Conversely, the devil was portrayed as having dark skin.) If the historical Jesus was a first century Palestinian Jew, there is little evidence that he looked anything like these Aryan depictions.

Linked to this would be opportunities to tell stories about Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Christians and their achievements. This can start with those who resisted enslavement or fought against unjust colonial or imperial enterprises, right up to contemporary figures who have helped to shape the spiritual and political climate in Britain today. In particular, those women and men who have been at the forefront of the struggle for racial justice and equality in Church and society.

What is more, churches should no longer display any semblances of the "missionary mindset" which believed Black folks had nothing to teach, but everything to learn.

They must also explore the way they present themselves on a website, via social media or in the flesh. Some churches appear ashamed of their large "Black and Brown" congregations and have "Whitened" them in publicity to make them look less diverse – and more attractive to potential White attendees. Black visitors to Churches still comment that they do not receive the effusive greetings given to their White peers by either those providing the welcome on entry, or the church leader on departure.

Churches must also explore who sits where in the worship space and ensure that "traditional seating preferences" do not mean that Black and Brown congregants do sit in the "cheaper" seats where they are physically marginalised. In older churches, certain attendees claim a stake on a "family" seat, which members of their families have always used. (These seats are invariably the best in the house.)

4. Training

Closely linked to education is the need for improved training for leaders and those with leadership positions within the church. In most churches, little is done or achieved without the blessing of the leader – this would also include a commitment to racial justice and equity within the church. Change must be both top down and bottom up, and have those with real power within the church at its core, leading it.

The first action should involve training, which should take place at Theological College for all those seeking to become church leaders. However, those currently serving in leadership must enrol on courses which focus not solely on "unconscious bias" but "anti-racism". The former tends to look at personal attitudes and behaviours, while the latter also equips a person to challenge incidences of racism and find ways of changing racist situations. (In the past, many church leaders had to be "dragged kicking and screaming" to these activities, and their participation and learning always reflected that original mindset.)

Closely linked to that would be the need to study Black theology (of liberation), which is the "self-conscious attempt to undertake rational and disciplined conversation about God and God's relationship to predominantly Black of African descent across the world, looking at the past, the present and imagining the future". It is important that all church leaders are equipped to engage seriously with a cross section of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic peoples – "on their various levels" in ways that are not insincere or patronising.

Equally, leaders should also see it as their responsibility to find ways of equipping congregants with the tools to handle the racism that exists in society. Churches must take a greater interest in those racial justice issues

impacting Black folks and provide practical help on issues such as "stop and search" and unlawful deportations. In terms of the former, they should run sessions on what Black Christians should (and can do) when stopped by the police to ensure they know their rights. Equally, they could facilitate conversations between the communities affected and the police, to avoid George Floyd-like scenarios. They should also join organisations such as the Churches' Refugee Network (CRN) to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers in Britain and Ireland are treated with dignity and fairly.

Also, irrespective of where they are, and the ethnic composition of their congregations, churches need to engage in addressing serious youth violence. If they are not in an area where this is an issue, they must partner with those that are, and help them financially with things such as "knife bins". This shows Christian solidarity and amity.

5. Methodology

These steps must be embedded within a methodology that is underpinned by accountability, targets/success indicators, timescales and racial justice champions.

Accountability

The leadership team must take full responsibility for all aspects of these steps and ensure that they are embedded within the culture and 'work' of the church. The leadership team, especially the church leader, must 'own' this initiative, and ensure that their sermons, hymns, prayers and the like regularly have a racial justice dimension. It is important that this is cascaded throughout the church and once again, 'bought into' by the entire congregation. This means that if the church leader leaves, this work has so permeated the life of the church that it continues unabated.

Racial Justice Champions

It is suggested that churches appoint 'Racial Justice Champions'; a group of people who will ensure that all of the above are carried out in a timely, efficacious way. Ideally, this group should be an ethnically mixed one that also includes representatives from the leadership team. (These roles should be akin to child protection/safeguarding roles within the church – and taken as seriously as those.) These individuals, who should all be passionate about the racial justice; they must also be emotionally empathetic, yet firm when it comes to ensuring accountability. (They will ensure that all targets are met and hold people to account if they are not met.)

Targets and success indicators

It is important to build in targets/metrics to this process on which the church is able to gauge success. Targets invariably concentrate minds and provide an overall goal, and it would be prudent to use a 'SMART'-like approach to this work. For instance, an obvious target could be making the 'leadership team' more diverse. For this to occur, there is a training dimension, as well in some instances, the possible need to wait until an AGM to vote people onto a PCC or leadership group.

Akin to the above, it is important for churches to know explicitly 'what success looks like' for their church on a range of issues. These should be shared with the church, and it may be the case that the church can publish a regular progress report, which is shown to the entire congregation who are part of this joint effort toward equity, diversity and inclusion.

Timeframe

Churches must agree a time frame in which these steps must be carried out. The first two steps are sequential, while the third and fourth steps can be carried out concurrently, as there are real synergies between education and training. It is suggested that the entire process can be completed in less than a year – possibly a lot sooner; the first step can take several months, while the second should take around a month. The third and fourth steps are more time consuming, and as with everything of an educational/training nature, must be reviewed and updated.

Key moments in the calendar

Churches should take advantage of key moments in the church/societal calendar which will aid them in this work. For instance, all churches must take Racial Justice Sunday (RJS) seriously and use this day, which is the second Sunday in February, to Remember, Reflect and Respond to racial justice matters.

- Remember the importance of racial justice
- Reflect on human diversity and thank God for it
- Respond by working to end injustice, racism and ignorance through prayer and action.

This should be linked to marking events such as Black History Month (BHM) in October; it is important to know as much as one can about those in a congregation, and BHM is a great way of doing this.

Other key moments also include Stephen Lawrence Day (22 April), Windrush Sunday (the Sunday closest to 22 June), the annual Refugee Week and Sanctuary Church Sunday, both in June.

Post steps – the continued journey

As a result of all of the above, churches should become safe spaces where racism is discussed and then addressed in ways that bring about change. Among other issues, the work to address racial justice will enable churches and Christians to take the right steps towards the much-vaunted desire for racial reconciliation. (Unfortunately, churches have sought to effect racial reconciliation without any commitment whatsoever to racial justice, and this has failed miserably. Some of these efforts have badly missed the mark, especially activities such as "curry goat and choir" evenings which masquerade under the title of "international evenings". These ham-fisted activities, alongside the one-off "apology" events that lack substance and the ability to transform a situation, have no role to play in this process.)

There is little doubt that this is not a moment for indecision or indifference. The young people who are taking forward the BLM protests in this country have displayed a boldness, which coupled with their energy and creativity, which has changed the narrative on racism, inclusion and how we see ourselves as a country. Churches need to take a leaf out of their book, and do likewise. So, as previously stated, this is a time for courage and determination, and for the Church to apply both, as it steps out in faith on the racial justice journey.

dimarik/istock

SECTION 3:
RACE GLOSSARY

Race Glossary

COMPILED BY EDWINA PEART AND DORA CZIBIK, QUAKERS IN BRITAIN AND JENNIFER LAURENT-SMART, THE SALVATION ARMY

The purpose of this resource is multifaceted. It is offered at this time when racial division in society and in faith communities has once again risen to the fore. Alongside this is the need to understand current thinking about the roots of this deep-seated fault line, the history and thinking that has guided previous attempts to work towards solutions, and ways in which language use has framed and guided such action. A definitive and complete assessment of terms is not possible. However, what is presented here is an overview of some of the terms that have gained prominence in anti-racist/racial justice work, the development of strategies and theories that shed light on processes and relations that need to be understood to enable progress. It is ultimately a conversation aid to open discussion and a resource that indicates fields in which the terms originated and where further information might be found. Some terms are adapted from other countries, fields of scholarship and activist movements, we use them in a British/European racialised context. By the time you have access to this resource some of the definitions and explanations offered will be out of date.

Race

It makes sense to start from the term 'race' itself and recognise the contested nature of it. My favourite explanation comes from Stuart Hall, "Race is the centerpiece of a hierarchical system that produces difference. It is a system of meaning, a way of organising and classifying the world."[xii]

There are no genetic, biological and physiological characteristics included. This is because attempts to anchor race in this way are untenable. There is no scientific basis for race, instead bias has been built into science. It has done so in the service of empire, of European expansion. We recognise the biological trace (pigmentation) that remains significant in categorisation. This is a "crude, physical signifier." Hall also notes that ethnicity, nationality and sometimes religion are used as synonymous for race.

Ally

This term, once viewed as a positive way to support anti-racist work has recently been challenged. It used to describe: Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognise their privilege and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice, with the understanding it is in their own interest to end oppression, including that which they benefit from.

Currently, the power relationship between allies and victims is viewed as problematic by some. It can indicate commitment and work for change, but not equality/equity. It is an accusation made against some abolitionists[xiii].

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xii Hall, S. (2017) The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity and Nation. Harvard University Press

xiii Dabiri, E. (2021) What White People Can Do Next: From Allyship to Coalition

Anti-Racism

The work of actively opposing racism by advocating for changes in political, economic, and social life. Anti-racism can be an individualised or collective approach, set up accordingly in opposition to racist behaviours and impacts.

Anti-Racist

Someone who is supporting an antiracist policy/practice through their actions or expressing antiracist ideas. This includes the communication and demonstration of philosophies that racial groups are equals and supporting policies/actions that reduce racial inequality.

Bias

Bias is a prejudice in favour of or against a thing, person, or group compared with another in a form considered to be unfair. Biases can be held by an individual, group, or institution and can have negative or positive consequences. There are types of biases:

1. **Conscious/explicit**
   Attitudes/beliefs/behaviours we are aware of and engage intentionally.
2. **Unconscious/implicit**
   Attitudes/beliefs/behaviours often formed outside of conscious awareness. This can be related to the prevalence and historical nature of how such attitudes were formed. It can indicate deeply held beliefs that have become unquestioned and normalised. Unconscious bias can be incompatible with conscious, expressed values.

Black

This term has been and still is used to describe some or all of the people of African, Caribbean, African American descent and often people of mixed heritage. It has a history in the UK of being used as a political umbrella term to also include people of South Asian origin. This generality is no longer as widely used as it was and specificity is preferred. It is often capitalised.

Black and minority ethnic (BME)

An old but still acceptable term to describe people from minority ethnic groups who may be – but are not necessarily – Black, Asian or visibly different from the majority population. It also emphasises that everyone has ethnicity, even the majority group. The term encompasses people from a wide range of communities with huge cultural, social linguistic, religious and political differences. It refers to a shared political experience rather than skin tone, emphasising shared experience and resistance to colour-centred racism. The term has attracted criticism for denying South Asian cultural identity. An alternative that is sometimes used is BAME.

BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic)

This umbrella term has attracted much criticism recently, usually because it is characterised as an administrative or official category that allows organisations and groups to tick a box indicating diversity. The terms also emphasise some ethnic groups whilst excluding others. (See: UKME Global Majority Heritage.)

Black Lives Matter
A non-political, non-partisan, non-violence platform. Standing together in solidarity across the globe to change the world, kneeling together for peace and unities asserting Black people are treated humanely and fairly. Declaring the human right to receive racial equality, social and criminal justice in the societies we live, and to receive parity as full citizens of the country and as a nation. Committed to dismantling the harm that racism causes. It is an affirmation of Black people's humanity, contributions to society, and resilience in the face of deadly oppression.[xiv] Founded in 2013, it is now a member-led global network of many country chapters.

Coalition-building
Identifying shared interests, working together or separately in pursuit of common goals.

Coloured
A colonial term used to emphasise difference and unequal status. The term is still used by some people who mistakenly believe it is less harsh than the term Black. It also has links with the apartheid system in South Africa, referring to people of mixed heritage. In this context it is acceptable if it is the term of choice. In the UK is it unacceptable.

Collusion
Acting in ways that perpetuate oppression and/or prevent others from working to eliminate oppression.

Colonialism/colonisation
The invasion, dispossession, and subjugation of a people. Invasion need not be military; it can begin—or continue—as geographical intrusion in the form of agricultural, urban, or industrial encroachments. It results in the dispossession of lands from the original inhabitants, often legalised after the fact. Inequality is institutionalised with benefits flowing to the invader at the expense of indigenous peoples. The legacy of colonialism and its ongoing expression characterise power relations in most of the world today.

Critical Race Theory
The critical race theory movement is a collection of activists and scholars interested in studying and transforming the relationship between race, racism, and power. It questions the very foundations of the liberal order, including equality theory, legal reasoning, enlightenment rationalism, and neutral principles of constitutional law. It began in the law, but has spread to many disciplines including education, politics, sociology. It contains an activist dimension working to ascertain both how society organises itself along racial lines and hierarchies, and to transform it for the better.

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xiv Taken from BLM UK, https://blacklivesmatter.uk/

Basic tenets include: race is a socially constructed rather than biologically natural category; racism (in the US and UK for example) is normal and is the ordinary experience of most people of colour; societal advances or regressions for people of colour tend to serve the interests of dominant White groups; periodic changes to racialisation reflect the needs or interests of dominant White groups; no one label can adequately capture an individual's life; people of colour are uniquely capable of speaking to their experience.

Cultural Appropriation

Theft of cultural elements—including symbols, art, language, customs, etc.—for one's own use, commodification, or profit, often without understanding, acknowledgement, or respect for its value in the original culture. A current issue is that of the Benin Bronzes – thousands of brass, bronze and ivory sculptures and carvings – more than 900 of which are housed in the British Museum, which has come under increasing pressure to return them. Germany has recently agreed to return the ones they have. Britain has committed to house a permanent exhibition in Edo in discussion with Nigerian colleagues.

Culture

A social system of meaning and custom that is developed by a group of people to assure its survival, adaptation and development. It includes values, beliefs, philosophy, behaviour, styles of communication and material objects. It is fluid and changes.

Decolonisation

Active resistance against colonial powers towards political, economic, educational, cultural, psychological independence and power that originate from a nation's own indigenous culture.

Diaspora

This term originally referred to the dispersion of Jewish people beyond Israel. It now includes the dispersion or spread of any people from their homeland. It usually references involuntary movement such as the removal of Africans through the Atlantic slave trade but also recognises war, famine, disaster and so forth as drivers of dispersal.

Diversity

This term covers any dimension that can be used to differentiate individuals and groups of people from one another. It can be based on protected characteristics outlined in the 2010 Equalities Act (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation), and also dimensions such as language and class. It also involves different ideas, perspectives, and values. Its breadth means it is often considered inadequate as a strategy, often the issue is not difference but inequality.

Dual Heritage
Currently the term preferred by people whose parents are from different ethnic, cultural or national backgrounds. Some people of dual heritage may also choose to identify themselves as Black because having for example one parent who may be White and one parent who may be Black, would not prevent the individual experiencing racism based on the colour of their skin. Some individuals in this group may choose to be recognised by their parent's nationality e.g. Anglo-Nigerian.

Ethnicity
A division that places people into smaller social groups based on characteristics such as shared cultural heritage, language/dialect, political and economic interests, history, and ancestral geographical base. It sometimes exists below the national group, sometimes across nations.

Equality
A situation in which all are treated fairly and have the same opportunity. It is often described as a right. Recently it has been criticised as failing to account for structural, systemic and individual obstacles that mean treating people in the same way will not necessarily produce the same outcome. There is a move towards equity.

Equity
This describes proportional fairness and is often linked to justice. Without equity, inequality will persist and those who are most vulnerable will remain or become even more vulnerable. This is often illustrated in relation to the necessity for the Black Lives Matter Movement. Without equity inequality will persist.

Inclusion
Authentically bringing traditionally excluded individuals and/or groups into processes, activities, and decision/policy making in a way that shares power.

Indigenous People/Indigeneity
Populations composed of the existing descendants of the peoples who inhabited the present territory of a country wholly or partially at the time when persons of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them and, by conquest, settlement, or other means, reduced them to a non-dominant or colonial condition; who today live more in conformity with their particular social, economic, and cultural customs and traditions than with the institutions of the country of which they now form part.

Intersectionality
Many experiences cannot be understood within the traditional boundaries of discrimination as they are currently constructed and understood. The intersection of various aspects of identity interacts in ways that often marginalise certain groups. Exclusion cannot be addressed by simply adding in the missing demographic. It is the intersectional experience that speaks to the specific form of subordination.

The term comes from the legal profession in the US and marks erasures, i.e., those who have been left out in terms of having their specific reality represented. It most often looks at the ways in which racism, patriarchy and class structures interact. It can also be used to illustrate how power and powerlessness interact.

Islamophobia
literally an irrational fear of Islam or Muslims, but with a wider meaning of any belief, policy or action that discriminates against or incites hatred towards Muslims or which caricatures Muslim people and culture.

Microaggression
Everyday verbal, nonverbal, actions and patterned behaviours, slights, snubs, or insults that are intentional or unintentional, which undermine or stereotype, communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to persons based upon their membership of a marginalised group. In some environments this has become more common as overt racism becomes less so. The term is contested as it minimises impact.

Mixed Race
A current preferred term alongside **Mixed Heritage,** which additionally avoids contributing to the construction of race. Some prefer the specificity of their parents' nationality, e.g. Anglo-Nigerian.

Non-White
Non-White presumes that White is the norm, and that any deviation is considered not 'normal'. It is better to use Black/Asian instead.

People of Colour
A currently preferred umbrella term (particularly in the US) for referring to anyone who is not White. It is an inclusive and unifying frame which can be useful politically. It is also criticised for its lack of specificity.

Political correctness
Often abbreviated to 'PC' it is term that has been used to describe the deliberate avoidance of forms of expression or actions that are perceived to exclude, marginalize, or insult groups of people who are socially disadvantaged or discriminated against. It has since been used by the right to chastise actions that are deemed overly zealous in their endeavour, especially with the phrase 'Political correctness gone mad'!

Positive Discrimination
It is unlawful to select someone solely on the grounds of their age, race, ethnicity, religion or belief, gender or disability. Exceptions to this rule come under the Equality Act as Occupational Requirements i.e. a women support worker in a half-way house for abused women.

Prejudice
Is a preconceived judgment or opinion. Prejudice may be positive or negative, however it is not based on any fact or sound evidence.

Racialisation
The process by which a society or a group creates races.

Racism
Any act, programme or practice of discrimination, segregation, persecution or mistreatment based on race or ethnicity. This term recognises the disadvantages conferred on some people and the privileges given to others based on this judgement. It differs from prejudice as it includes power.

Racial equity/equality
The absence of organisational, institutional, individual and structural barriers experienced by people based on perceptions of race, ethnicity or religion that have impeded and or denied access or opportunities as a result.

Institutional Racism
The ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different groups. Their effect is to create advantages for White people and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as Black, Brown or people of colour.

The Macpherson Report definition
"Institutional racism is the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. It persists because of the failure of the organisation openly and adequately to recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership."

Systemic Racism
A web of economic, political, social, and cultural structures, actions, and beliefs that systemise an unequal distribution of privilege, resources, safety and power in favour of the dominant racial group at the expense of all other racial groups.

Theological Racism
Uses religion to justify the unequal distribution of power. It can be traced to the imperial mission of Christianity which alongside mercantilist expansion resulted in the exploitation and subjugation of people across the world.

Reparations
The term means making amends or repairing the damage that was caused. At its essence is an issue of justice as it seeks redress for the wrongs that were committed. There are various models for reparations with regard to the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism. They acknowledge that racism that took root during this epoch endures until today.

UKME/Global Majority Heritage

This is the preferred term that some, especially the Church of England, use as an alternative to BAME. It is deemed to be more inclusive, and is said to capture the greater diversity that exists in society, as well as indicating more clearly the status and position of the different groupings.

White Fragility or Insecurity

This connotes a defensiveness and discomfort on the part of a White person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice.

White Privilege

This denotes the relative advantages racism affords to people who are identified as White, irrespective of whether White people recognise them or deny them.

Woke

A term that has African American roots which denote someone who is conscious or aware of racial prejudice and discrimination. The term has since been used pejoratively by those on the right to signify someone who is overly sensitive to certain socio-cultural and race-related issues.

Books & resources for further studies

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RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY 2022

RACIAL JUSTICE:

WHAT'S IT GOT TO DO WITH ME?

CTBI is committed to developing ties and communications with other Christian churches throughout Britain and Ireland, strengthening fellowships with each other as well as deepening understanding of different denominations and their diversity or identity. It provides information and guidance to bridge understanding of issues in today's society and develops publications and free resources with other organisations and members to offer reflection, prayer and study materials to celebrate key Christian events. As an agency of the churches through the four nations, CTBI strives to ensure churches work more together, less apart.

This resource is a call for all Christians to engage in the righteous struggle for racial justice because racial justice is everyone's business.

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