



PRESBYTERY OF SAN DIEGO
SPIRITUAL. MISSIONAL. RELATIONAL.

A Reflection:
When our hearts change, the world will change.

A racist assault against one person is an assault against us all. And it reverberates around the world. It comes with a heavy cost.

Racism is antithetical to God's kingdom. It hides in the shadows, whereas God's kingdom shines its light. Racism destroys and kills, whereas God's love brings new life. Racism is built upon hate. God's kingdom is built upon generating love.

Racism is an assault on the God-given dignity of human beings. It undermines our strong biblical belief that everyone is created in the image and likeness of God, by God, out of love and for love. And it disavows that God's human creation, regardless of color, is good, "very good." Aren't we to love our neighbors as Christ loved us: selflessly and sacrificially? But to hate and kill a brother or sister because of color is to hate God. Such disregard for God's good creation is disregard for God's sovereignty and love and creation.

We have every right to protest this inhumane conduct that has far too long found its way into our institutional life together. We suffer systemic injustice, and one way it manifests is in these heinous murders.

So what do we do? I can share with you what God has laid on my heart. In silence and solitude, I pray that God leads you to do all that you can do to cure this cancer. My journey is not your journey, but we can encourage each other.

First, God is laying on my heart to **repent**. It's only when I change the direction of my heart more toward God and away from my broken self that I can root out the racism still alive within me. Vestiges of it haunt me in the form of a still, small voice within, saying, "It's not your fault. You're not a racist. You're not privileged. Etc." It's a move to being defensive that convicts me of these vestiges. Racism – in whatever form: systemic and personal, is one thing as the church of Jesus Christ we should not tolerate. We can help each other, in our repentance, to take a strong stand against racism.

Second, I've talked to many of our brothers and sisters of color these past several days. They don't want me to "fix" anything. They want to know I **care** and have some appreciation for their history and hurt. They want to know I love them. That's **compassion, empathy**. They want to know I stand with them in solidarity. I do. The apostle John stood in solidarity with Mary and Jesus at the foot of the cross in the midst of severe injustice and the unspeakable cruelty. John felt their pain. As people called by God, we are called to do the same. I will.

Third, I will speak less and listen more. When threatened by Jezebel, Elijah fled to Mount Horeb. (1 Kings 19) There he sought God. He was quiet. He listened. And he finally heard God speak in a still, small whisper. Elijah heard, understood, and then went and did. I intend to enlarge my friendship circle to include more diversity and to learn from them. Included in that friendship circle will be authors of good books on racial issues, which I will read. Speak less and listen more.

When our hearts change, the world will change. With God, all things are possible. I still have hope.

LET US PRAY. Dear Lord, during these troubling times, let your Word comfort us, embolden us, and lead us to do what's right. Let us be peacemakers. Let your righteousness be our aim. We repent of our silence, our complicity, and our hesitation to love our "brothers and sisters" of *all* colors – as you love us. Unconditionally. Selflessly. Sacrificially. During these hard times, teach us. Give us sight to see our blind spots. Open our hearts. Soften them and turn them anew toward you, and may your love, ever new, change our hearts so that we embrace all brothers and sisters, and their dignity as children of God made in your image and likeness. As you forgive us our sins, may we in turn extend patience, forgiveness and peace to one another. Help and lead us to "do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with you."

AMEN.

Michael Mudgett
Executive Presbyter
Presbytery of San Diego

P.S. Below, I've included a list of some books that might be helpful on these issues. I've also listed a class pastor Karla Shaw will be teaching entitled *Racism and the African American Experience*.

BOOK LIST

1. *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* by Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith (explains the history from a sociological perspective)
2. *Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?* by Beverly Daniel Tatum (defines racism, white privilege, etc.)
3. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* by Michelle Alexander (gives a good perspective on what is happening in our criminal justice system)
4. *The Third Option* by Miles McPherson (a lighter read about relationship)

5. *God of the Oppressed* by James Cone (father of Black Theology--explains that perspective).
6. *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
7. *Strength to Love*, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
7. *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, Robin Diangelo
8. *Just Mercy*, Bryan Stevenson
9. *The Sun Does Shine: How I Found Life, Freedom, and Justice*, by Anthony Hinton
10. *So You Want to Talk About Race*, by Ijeoma Oluo
11. *I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*, by Austin Channing Brown.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Rev. Karla Shaw, Point Loma Community Presbyterian Church: "I am going to be reoffering the class on "Racism and the African American Experience" for those who are interested beginning Mondays, June 8, 15, 22, and 29 from 9-10:15 am. This is the same class I taught 8 or so years ago that became the launching pad for our *Continuing the Conversation* group (CTC). If anyone is interested, please email me directly for a Zoom link (karla@pointlomachurch.org). The class will help explain African American history and the role of the church, it will help define racism and other terms people may have heard floating out there like "white privilege" and it will paint a picture of our current context and why there is so much anger. This is a very BASIC class, so make sure people know that. I want to make sure those that are just stepping into the conversation feel comfortable sharing."