

Wanted: Stories About Racism

Stories are an important way that communities make meaning of the world in which we live. Whether they are biblical stories, fairy tales, children's stories, classic literature, murder mysteries, romance novels or histories; they help us figure out who we are, why we are, why we behave as we do, and what our purpose is. We each carry our own story within us, and sometimes we share a chapter here and there with others. When we do, we build connections or bridges. We don't always understand each other's stories, but in the telling we begin to recognize the humanity we share with one another – we develop empathy and compassion for one another and even begin to love one another.

In this time of heightened awareness of the ugly wounds and scars of racism that tear people apart, it is more important than ever that we share our stories. In particular, stories of how racism and culturally created difference have impacted us. Racism affects everyone negatively. No one is immune to it, even though some of us attain certain cultural and economic benefits from it. No one, however, truly benefits from racism, because it ultimately destroys human community. In theological language, it leads to death and denies life.

At St. Philip's, we are a Church community with the great blessing of members from all around the world, representing peoples of many different cultures and skin tones. What can we do to live into that great biblical standard set for us by the Apostle Paul of being a community where there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, but all are one in Christ? How can we be a part of the healing of the nations? What can we do to face the evil of racism head-on and say: "no more"?

One powerful thing we can do is hear each other's stories. We don't need to comment on them, question them or do anything other than take them in and let them become part of our own stories. **I would like to invite you to *write down part of your story*. Do you have a story of how racism has touched your life: an incident, an inherited sense of self, how it makes you feel about yourself or others, economic or legal impacts ... just to mention a few possibilities?** It could be just a sentence or two – or maybe a few paragraphs. You might want to identify yourself in the story, or keep it anonymous. All I ask is that your story is about you, not about anyone else.

I will be collecting your stories and publishing them on a (soon-to-be-created) page on our parish website. One of the damaging aspects of racism is that trust becomes hard to achieve, so I know it is a big ask for some of you to be courageous and share your story with others. Nevertheless, let us all trust that in Christ, we can indeed be made one holy and loving community in God. Let's build some bridges, as we carefully begin to tear down the fences that separate us.

Please send your stories to me at mjstuchbery@gmail.com

Fr. Mike