

From the Corner

Racism: Why Do We Have to Talk About It?

As a white pastor of a mostly white congregation, I am currently facilitating a study with the title “Acting Against Racism.” Often the suggestion is made that ‘we’, white people, need to get some people of color involved in the conversation. My experience has been that we think that we need people of color to help us understand racism when in fact our responsibility is to address our own racism. That may be a hard sentence to swallow for some but think about it. No, really, think about it. Our nation was built on a color line, whites on one side, people of color on the other. We denigrated indigenous people when we “discovered” the new world. Then we instituted slavery, followed later with mass incarceration.

I’ve come to realize that the work necessary to abolish racism is the work of white people.

W.E.B. Du Bois wrote in *The Souls of Black Folk* that “the problem of the Twentieth Century [America] is the problem of the color line.” That color line still exists. Teri McDowell Ott, chaplain at Monmouth College in Illinois says,

“Something happens to us when we grow up without people of color around. We are habituated to the White world in which people of color will always appear to be strange, different, and other.

Stereotypes are fed because there is no one nearby to dispel them.”

Racism in America has stolen the soul of our nation. It was white people with power who allowed the purchasing and owning of, and taking land from, people of color. White people chose segregation in education, employment, housing, income, etc. Such a choice has impeded our nation. We are apprehensive of the other, the stranger, the different-than-us because of our choice for separateness.

A rainbow is never more beautiful than when all its colors shine brightly together.

Racism kills individuals and families, young and old. Every day of my life has been infested with the sin of systemic racism, and frankly I resent those who advocate that I must remain incestuously a part of that system.

God proclaims all creation good. We cannot continue to ignore the commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves because of skin color. Systemic racism is real, and it is morally wrong. It is time to eradicate this sin within us. Conversations will be difficult. Listening will test our patience. Facing our own prejudices with honesty will strengthen our character, and confession is still good for the soul. This is our work to do and we will be a better nation for it.

I ask that you pray for me as I pray for you, that we choose to *welcome all, love all, and seek justice for all.*

Journey well,

Pastor Keith

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