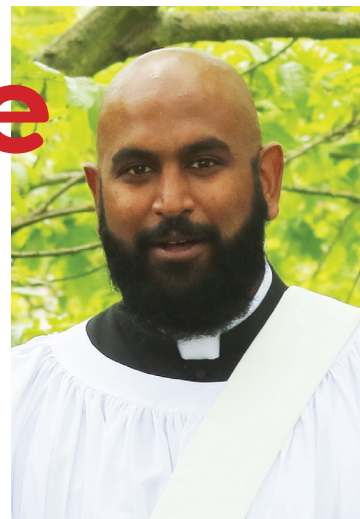


Why racial justice should matter



The Rev Rajiv Sidhu asks us to make racial justice a key part of the way we share God’s love

HANDS up if you would like to be treated as black and brown people are in your area?

I wonder what your response is. The response speaks into why racial justice matters, especially to the Church. In a post-George Floyd world, the issue of racism has once again come into the spotlight.

Recently, the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Task Force and its report ‘From Lament to Action’ has shone a light on areas for the Church of England to reflect on.

Theologian and philosopher Cornell West describes justice as “what love looks like in public”. Yet this issue is nothing new. There is at least 30 years’ worth of public grappling with the issues of discrimination based on ethnicity and race within the church.

There was even the creation of materials for spaces to speak, listen, and disagree well with each other, in small study style groups in ‘Seeds of Hope’ and ‘This Passing Winter’ in 1996. The Church of England has a long challenging history with race and racism which continues to this day.

Today, nearly 100 per cent of all global majority secondary school students report they

have experienced racism in their lifetime nationally.

This is children who go to school and struggle with the colour of their skin. Children who come home and say to their parents that they want to change their name because nobody can pronounce it.

‘Our faith compels us to be with the oppressed and marginalised’

It is children who want to scrub their skin with scourers so it is not as dark, just to stop the taunts. Children who hate their hair because it makes them different.

It is children who will say that they prefer their white parent, and because they have a white parent can say they are white, because to be anything other than white is to live a life of persecution and injustice – because that is what they see on Newsround, denying a whole section of their heritage and inheritance in that one rash yet entirely logical decision.

These parents dig deep to point out that if people can say “Tchaikovsky” and “Schwarzenegger”, they should be able to say “Sugirtharajah

and “Olu Segun”. They learn ways to guide their children to accept their skin for what it is and accept themselves for who they are.

And this is repeated in homes across our diocese. How can we claim to live, pray, and serve with “the least of these”, when (at the time of writing) our diocesan page on social justice does not include racial justice? When we have yet to engage with Black History Month?

Our faith compels us to be with “the least of these”. The oppressed and the marginalised. So, what does that look like?

Go back to the question at the start of this article. What is your honest response? Sit with it and reflect on it. Take the time to find and listen to those who speak from the margins.

We need to acknowledge the lived realities of those who are excluded for simply being who they are. To listen and learn from their experiences. Only then can we discern how to live, pray, and serve all in our midst.

Justice is “what love looks like in public”. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. And that’s why racial justice should matter to the church. Amen.