

STATEMENT

11th March 2021

Has the Western world reached its nadir? Are we witnessing the expunging of the 'colour line'?



Following the Interview of The Duke and Duchess of Sussex by the Queen of Questions, Oprah Winfrey, on the 7th March 2021, the chair of the Movement for Justice and Reconciliation, Rev. Alton Bell is imploring the Monarchy to see this as an opportunity to bring about real lasting racial reconciliation by addressing the issues arising from the past using models of Christian reconciliation.

In 1903, the sociologist and political activist, W.E.B. Dubois, suggested that the problem of the 20th century would be that of the 'colour line'. He made these utterances at the start of the period of reconstruction for the Black community after 300 years of white hegemony and domination.

Martin Luther King, the great agitator for Black suffrage in America, stated that 'injustice anywhere is a threat to Justice everywhere' and his dream was that **"one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."**

The events of 2020 have called into question the notions of equality, justice and what brotherhood really looks like, when Black people are being slaughtered on the altar of 'white supremacy' because of the colour or shade of their skin.

Is the **'I can't breathe'** plea, uttered by George Floyd as he took his last breath, on the 25th May 2020, with the knee of Derek Chauvin on his neck, a divine call for those who are trapped in the ship of white supremacy sailing rudderless on the great ocean of post modernity and cultural bigotry, to recognise that the 'colour line' is not just shifting, it is being erased?

The great Western European Empires, of Britain, Germany and Spain, introduced a pigmentocratic system that located people in the hierarchy of society according to the hue of their complexion. And posited in the minds of the former slaves that the zenith of being truly human and the model to aspire to, is that of 'whiteness'. These include European features such as 'straight flowing hair, straight nose and a particular skull size. Although the theories of white supremacy, which were underpinned by science and religion, have been debunked, the western psyche, which has been galvanised by a veneer of racial supremacy, is harder to erase.

Hence, when Donald Trump, the former President of the United States of America bellowed from Capitol Hill that he wanted to 'Make America Great Again', was he really saying that he wanted to go back to the days when whiteness ruled supreme? Similarly, when Woodrow Wilson endorsed the racist film 'Birth of a Nation' shown in the east room of the White House on 18th February 1915 and saw as a consequence of its premier, the resurgence of the Klu Klux Klan, was he also harping back to halcyon days?

When HRH Prince Harry Windsor, Queen Elizabeth II's grandson and sixth in line of succession, married a mixed heritage African American woman May in 2018, the world hailed this as a turning point for racial equality and tolerance. During the service, a Black American Bishop, Michael Curry, preached a rousing sermon about the power of love to change the world. He stressed the point that 'true love will liberate people and heal their sin sick soul.' And that when Jesus was asked which commandment is the greatest, his reply was: **"people should 'love the Lord their God with all their heart, soul and mind and the second is to love their neighbour as themselves.'"** One year and eight months after their fairy-tale wedding, Harry and Meghan quit Britain citing among other things, the behaviour of the British press and their constant harassment of Meghan.

It is obvious that Bishop Curry was speaking prophetically. The marriage of Harry and Meghan was not just about a young couple falling in love and marrying, but it was a turning point in history. Fulfilling the dream of Dr Martin Luther King Junior, where the descendent of a slave and the descendent of a former slave owner sat in one of the most prestigious edifices of the former worldwide empire and declared their unconditionally love for each other.

Has 2020 seen the demise of white hegemony?

The genie is now out of the bottle. The killing of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter Movement, the toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol, the taking of the knee at football matches to stand up to racism, means that the whole issue of colour is out into the open and is being discussed from the local workingman's club to the monarchy. **Now is surely the time to face the great issues of injustice in our history, without which there will never be reconciliation and a radical change in attitudes.**

The Movement for Justice and Reconciliation believe that only by honestly and openly acknowledging and sharing stories of our past, can we do justice to the true complexity of past, present, and future, and the sometimes-uncomfortable role that Britons have played in global history since the 16th century.

MJR has a particular concern for the legacy of slavery, the effects of which can be seen in the social situations of many families living in predominantly migrant areas of British cities today. Our own research demonstrates the link between colonial slavery and present-day issues of health and education faced by members of these migrant communities. On 9th March HRH Prince Charles visited a Black Majority Church, in North West London, Jesus House, and extolled them for the great work they and the BMCs are doing in Britain. He also stated that the last time he visited that church, eleven years previously, he learned the acronym, P.U.S.H, which means 'Pray Until Something Happens'. And that he has been 'pushing' since he learnt it. MJR's desire is to help the British monarchy to continue to P.U.S.H until the systems that hold one person superior and another inferior, are finally toppled.

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For more information about the Movement for Reconciliation and Justice visit www.mjr-uk.com