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We -R - One Diversity

# ADVICE ON RACE RELATIONS FOR THE CHURCH

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# MY THOUGHTS AS A BLACK WOMAN

All my clients and other secular organisations that have contacted me over the last couple of weeks all share one thing in common and that is the fear of getting it wrong and the impact that will have on them and their organisations.

My response is always very simple and always the same, "saying nothing at all for fear of offence is not advisable." Whilst I am not in a position to speak for all black people, what I can give is my thoughts and context. In this moment we as a race want to see that the church is publicly in support of three things 'love, justice and equality' for our lives. We do care about all lives but right now we are pleading with the world to see and say that it is no longer acceptable for anybody to treat black people with the continuous and systemic racial discrimination that has been experienced for generations.

God allows the human emotion to be expressed without judging and right now, we as a collective and unified race are having our emotional human moment. We are angry that black people are being killed more often and treated disproportionately worse than other ethnicities in the USA and other places around the world. We are also genuinely scared that something could happen to us or the lives of people we love. I have a 9 year old son that in 10 years' time could be out in the street jogging where he could be mistaken for a criminal and shot dead just because of the colour of his skin. Most importantly we are tired of nothing changing and are demanding (peacefully and unfortunately in some cases violently) for equality for ourselves and for the generations to come..

We are not saying that every white person is a racist, we do not need white people to apologise or feel guilty for being white; equally we are saying that not all black people are model global citizens or good people, individuals are broken in many races and cultures but that is not what this is about. We want to be heard, understood and helped by all races and cultures so that we can get to a place of unification, in order to move the narrative forward and start looking at solutions.

Long term change in my view cannot come from politicians or new government laws and legislations, yes they will help, but I believe that this type of change can only come from changing people's hearts in order to change people's minds. We all know Jesus is that answer, so the church has a critical role, responsibility and opportunity to show people the right and humane way of living. God created colour and culture he wanted diversity, John 17 says, 'Father make them one as we are one', this is our opportunity to show how God can turn the wickedest heart into the most beautiful soul and change hearts, minds and lives.

# MY ADVICE AS RACE RELATIONS CONSULTANT

Now my advice to pastors based on my experience as Managing Director of my own Equality, Diversity and Inclusion consultancy is as follows:

- **Do Not Stay Silent**

You can agree that all lives matter but at this moment we are focusing on black lives! The bible says “love your neighbour as yourself, there is no commandment greater than these.” With this in mind would you kneel on the neck of anyone? If so would you kneel on that neck for almost 9 minutes hearing that person say that they cannot breath and ignore them! Is that LOVE? Staying silent on this issue is not an option, as christians we must show the world that wrong is wrong!

- **Create A Message That You Have Written**

I know it is scary and you are possibly frightened of getting this wrong, i completely understand but this is not the time for fear. Search your heart and draft a message that you want to communicate. Then ask a trusted person from within your church or network that comes from the black ethnicity group to read it and pull it apart if they have; and rewrite it until it feels right. Then be fearless and release it to your congregation and the public, be prepared not everyone will agree, that is ok and expected.

- **Start To Make Change That Matters**

If you have not done so already reach out to the black members of your congregation and ask them how they are feeling, what their views are, and what they would like to see in regards to change. Yes the conversation maybe uncomfortable but we all have to start to get comfortable having uncomfortable conversations if we are ever going to find solutions and unity.

- **Take Action**

Once you have identified the areas within your church where you can make changes to address the issue of race relations and have found some short, medium and long term goals you must own this plan and actions as the leader of the church. You can have a team that helps to drive the mission of reform and unity but you should be the visible executive sponsor to ensure that change happens. A possible goal within this area could be to simply look at and make sure that the leadership team reflects the diversity of the congregation.