

FOR DAVIESS COUNTY DAY OF PEACE & RECONCILIATION (Public)

5 JUNE 2020, Rev. Dr. Claudia A. Ramisch

Please indulge me with three quick stories.

First: Yesterday was my dad's birthday; if he were alive he would be 97.

My father served in Europe as a weather guy behind enemy lines filing readings
to help guide the invasion and troop movements.

I didn't know that till I asked.

As with so many WWII vets, he didn't talk about it till 50 years later.

Second: In 1967, my parents watched the troubles in Detroit intensely
because my grandparents lived in the neighborhood invaded by tanks.

Like other residents, my grandparents wouldn't leave; whatever troubles,
troops weren't wanted because they weren't the answer.

I was 6 and knew something was wrong, but not much more.

Research is telling us that any unhealed effects of the trauma
of my parents and grandparents —

whether war or these other intense experiences—
have been passed on to my sister and me.

We inherit the anxieties and coping skills,

the hopes and resiliencies of our ancestors—recent and distant—
not in some ethereal form but in our bodies.

Third: The abiding desire of my heart is to be a hermit.

Ten weeks of lockdown felt comfortable and natural to me.

However, some pastors recognized their folks felt very unnatural and thought,
"Hermits are comfortable with solitude; they can help us do this."

It was a nice thought, but silly.

Yes, coping skills and vision were needed, but the conditions of lockdown
were exposing our social fault lines;

people were struggling for their lives and livelihoods not living a calling to solitude.

Why these stories?

First, just as my sister and I carry our family's unhealed traumas,
and our own personal traumas, our societal body carries trauma.

We all carry the effects of violence in our nation's history.

We still carry the effects of founding traumas, in our societal body:

From looting land from our indigenous brothers and sisters
to establishing our nation on the stolen lives and stolen work
of black and brown bodies

to describing an American Dream of meritocracy while structuring
a society of privilege and good-ole-boy networks
to the racialized structures still operative in this pandemic.

The litany is inexhaustible.

Violence has erupted again—

George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless others have died violently.

We also carry these traumas we see on our phones and TVs.

We have layered these new pains on top of everything else.

We carry the traumas of every George and Breonna;

every soldier and police officer on the line;
every raped person and every abuse survivor struggling in the crowd;
every Covid-19 doctor, every nursing home CNA,
and every lonely Covid death in the backdrop.

We carry all these in our societal body because we've not yet integrated them.

If we have any awareness and responsiveness within us, we must protest.

It's a first step toward healing.

Second, we've said, "This time is unprecedented,"
but really it's reinforced longstanding vulnerabilities
and the poor have gotten poorer.

Just when we thought we could begin restoring our lives and livelihoods...

Just as we began to reopen, an old story was in the news:

A black man dying in the street under the knee of a white man.

It wasn't so "unprecedented," was it?

Sadly, violence has begotten violence.

Property has been destroyed. Non-protestors have fomented chaos.

Heated interactions have added more deaths and traumas.

Why *are* we here again?

Previous successes and progress, have never gone far enough because

they haven't gone deep enough to trauma integration and reconciliation.

Reconciliation means to be "eyelash-to-eyelash" with another.

It is a closeness generally only experienced as babes in arms, or lovers in bed,
or penitents before God. It requires complete truth.

So if today isn't so different from yesteryear,

it's because there is still much untruth between us.

And if today *is* different, it will be because we protest *and* go further.

To step into the hope of this moment we must ask each other about our pains,
listen profoundly to each other, and then choose healing.

Our bodies need us to do three things:

To speak truth about the traumas we both carry and cause...

To dismantle structures that shape and maintain injustice...

To nurture our relatedness despite barriers of race and class
that we've created and loved too dearly.

Nonviolent teacher, Thich Nhat Hahn, says:

"[] A poet, see[s] clearly [] there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper.

Without the cloud there can be no rain; without the water,

[] trees cannot grow; without trees you cannot make paper.

So the cloud is in here. The existence of this page is dependent upon
the existence of a cloud. Paper and cloud are so close."

Black, white, and brown; gay, straight, and intersex; investor, manager, and worker;

Christian, Muslim, and Pagan; professional, volunteer, and civilian:

When we see rightly, we are so close.

Let us draw closer through truth and reconciliation.

Six-year-olds are watching today. What will leave for them to carry?