

Task Force on Theology of Social Justice Advocacy

Minutes

Friday, August 9, 11am PST / 2pm EST

Lallie, Sarah, Dora, Susanne, Guy, Brant

1. Prayer to ground our work today—
2. Sharing / Discussion: Reflection on our own experience and practice of the theology of social justice advocacy—Guy— 45 mins
 - a. What is my theology and how does it related to social justice advocacy?
 - b. Grew up in all AfAm Pentecostal (Holiness) tradition until age of 18
 - i. Nothing I could touch that had us do faith in action, however building blocks were there
 - ii. However, they were instructive of God’s word in Bible – I learned many things that have stayed with me.
 - c. Age of 19 in college –
 - i. stages of anger, mistrust of system, attacks on affirmative action; term “reverse discrimination” first shows up
 - ii. Apartheid boycotting SAfrica
 - iii. Spectre of Nuclear destruction
 - iv. Just beginning to understand AIDS and coming out differently
 - v. “Living a life under siege” – Republican rule in CA
 1. Reagan, “I’m not for the poor, I’m for the rich”
 - d. Multicultural setting w mom (her side is black); mixed race family members identified as black
 - i. Mom remarried when he was 2 to a white Afrikaaner from SAfrica
 - ii. Different traditions & lives were juxtaposed.
 - iii. Mom’s family was lower mid class; step father was professional
 - e. VERY devout and VERY involved in church – strict traditions
 - i. In college, peeled away ‘sugar coated’ version of his story
 - ii. took closer look about issues of church’s history segregation & asked many questions.
 - iii. Learned very limited version of US history (fables) re: slavery, racism, class
 - f. In college (UCLA) recognized he’d been mis-educated
 - i. Read original sources
 1. Seeds of white supremacy = white men always tell the truth (GWashington & cherry tree)

2. No critique of them; no questioning – ‘they were good people & slavery was limited to that time’
3. Indoctrinated and became an apologist for all kinds of oppression bec it was justified by being in the Bible
- ii. To say he was an ‘angry black man’ at UCLA is an understatement
 1. Had won every possible award in high school. Only one or two black people in his classes (always the same people)
 2. Learned about Japanese internment camps, Native American ppl, Pilgrims, etc.
 3. WHAT HAVE I BEEN TAUGHT??
 - a. This is a sham. What are others still being teaching this?
 4. History of Latin America course was a turning point for him.
 - a. Vivid memory of movie they watched – and he felt invisibled by prof who’d not given any thought to emotions it would evoke in him.
 - b. “too dangerous”
 5. Got lots of support from older students; became activist
- iii. Anti-apartheid march & dialogue/forum w administration
 1. Admin locked doors after open conversation –
 - a. “They must really think we’re dangerous”
 2. This moment was his spark – “I lost my mind”
 3. Holy Spirit spoke up – I hadn’t been an organizer before, but after this day he was.
 4. Continued to dialogue, but trust level was at different level
 5. Regretted fracturing of movement that followed
- iv. Tone became very hostile – surge of racism at UCLA
 1. Wanted to be part of the solution – connect w everyone, not interested in unequal or segregated world
 2. Ran for student govt yet was accused of rummaging through ppl’s backpacks in the library when he was doing research.
 3. Burst his bubble about how black students are treated by police
 - a. Invoked name of very powerful white man to get away
 - b. They tailed him until he drove out of the parking lot
- v. Life changing experience for him
 1. Apologized to ppl whose word he had discounted; hard to be around white ppl
 2. Found refuge with black newspaper
 3. Taught him about soc just advocacy
 - a. Don’t know how ppl are treated until you’ve walked in their shoes
- vi. In US today, we don't want to talk about slavery, reparations, truth, and history because if we do, white folks have to acknowledge the benefit accrued.

- vii. White men try to say that we (black ppl) need to be scolded, and corrected, infantilized – example of CNN panel
 - g. Age of 19 – stayed away from church for 7 years until he came back to TEC bec of what TEC says it believes it believes –
 - i. Resource from Forward Movement...
 - h. When church wasn't 'doing it right' my response was to leave – while in TEC he observed pro-LGBTQ, black Pres, black PB
 - i. But now it feels like TEC is moving backwards again
 - ii. Seems to be moving in circles again
 - iii. Now he has a stake in the church and is staying
 - i. When he believes people are wrong he'll pray and speak out – but he's not going away.
 - i. Need to resist evil – not about mental illness – but about evil
 - ii. Does believe God can change hearts and minds – that's where theol of soc just advocacy belongs.
- 3. What're the building blocks of our theology?
 - a. "Neighbor" – who is neighbor and how are we harming or helping?
 - b. Countering the white supremacist myth of white Jesus
 - c. Church is riddled w white supremacy
 - d. Being a follower of Jesus means not being afraid to tell the truth and accepting the consequences / fall out of doing so.

Preliminary comments and reactions were shared by Sarah, Lallie, Susanne, Brant and Dora.

Responses:

- Sarah--Episcopal church was also segregated. Black people upstairs. Confederate symbols in our churches. We can repudiate Doctrine of Discovery--our church played a role in that. What would it do? So deeply rooted. Needs to be addressed in doing social justice work.
- Lallie--Struck by college experiences. We soft-pedal the nation's history.
- Susanne--What is our theology teaching people?
- Brant--internal flaws; external critiques--these things are a part of who we are, not to be excised and made well.
- Dora--Thinking about American system--coming from outside.

Guy: To dismantle White supremacy and build a SJ theology is going to take a lot of work, especially when adult education is eroding; sermon time is not enough. It takes days. It should be intergenerational; when is it age appropriate? Always, but it looks different.

Best diversity training is not about making White people feel really bad. Truth and Reconciliation. Not one without the other. Don't start in the injustice. Start by defining terms.

Guy – Time for adult formation in the church is eroding – how do we do the work of dismantling white supremacy and racism?

Intergenerational learning; always age appropriate to teach history of racism – method and content needs to be age appropriate.

What are the building blocks: the prophets are still our prophets Micah 6:8

Truth before reconciliation

Start by defining terms: Justice and Love