

Over the last few days my phone has been hot with people asking how it feels to be a mixed race person in the United Kingdom today. In the UK we have seen that COVID-19 is disproportionately affecting BAME people for all sorts of reasons, but mainly linked to inequality and austerity. In the USA we have seen widespread protests, police brutality, and the murder, once again of Black individuals by a systematic regime that is supported by their President.

In one way I'm glad that people are asking questions about their privilege because it is the beginning of education, liberation and change, but at the same time, I do not want to be your single point of reference for a black person's experience that can be called upon in conversations. I am not your token. I am a mixed-race queer woman. There is no one way to be Black. I am half British Jamaican, and half Chinese, but only seen as one colour or a mixture of black and white.

I realise I am speaking into a white majority space and to a white majority church. Let's be aware of this. I'm asking you to wake up, consider the realities of white privilege and to speak out. This isn't about talking the talk, but practicing anti-racism. Listen to Black and Brown voices, really listen. Educate yourself. Read. Be active, not passive - but don't speak for us or stand in front of us. Stand beside us.

I have grown up feeling rejected by this society. We are seen as less than. Everyday things, like the school curriculum is not set up for people like me and our histories. We are constantly having to accommodate ourselves to white standards. From being very small I knew it was like it to have people make personal comments about my appearance. Children in school would say "wow, isn't your hairy frizzy" which developed into "why isn't your hair straightened, it would look so much better". I was being seen in the light of white beauty standards, which is not applicable to me.

As I got older my academic ambitions were not supported by some teachers and were openly sabotaged. No-one stood up for the mixed-race girl being picked on because she was trying and dreaming of being a pathologist (one of many careers). I saw in school white children who wanted to be doctors or go to university get all the extra support, career advice and opportunities. I was left behind, having to work twice as hard for half as much.

As an adult, I can not travel to certain places for fear of my life on account of the colour of my skin. which has affected possible work opportunities. When did you last have to think about traveling to a new and exciting country but declined because you were afraid you might be called out or worse beaten up or killed? In airports, when I have box-braids I am taken to the side and searched an extra time with my hair being parted to check for drugs.

Now I understand that many people can be empathetic to such examples, and these are only a few but frankly I do not want to be in a world where children of colour have to look in a mirror and hate themselves, ignore their dreams and accept whatever reality is thrust upon them by this broken white system. I do not want them to be embarrassed about their Grandpa's Caribbean cooking smells when it sticks to their clothes, or their beautiful curly and wavy hair being called frizzy and dry like hay. I want them to feel safe walking with their friends, to not be stopped and searched because they 'fit a description' and be full of excitement and joy as they talk and sing in Patois - the language of my Jamaican family.

When I ask you to help, as a fellow member of St Mark's, I'm asking you not to just be reactive to events happening now, filling your social media with hashtags and slogans. It is a lifelong active involvement of you, white people, educating each other and calling each other out. It's about educating your children to see the absolute beauty in diversity and engage with it meaningfully. It's about educating the real history of the United Kingdom, and how people like my family were stolen

from their homes, transported to the other side of the world and sold into slavery. We cannot ignore that the Church of England has been complicit in this history and I'm asking you to listen, reflect, repent, and reconcile, moving forward together as people of God.

I don't want your pity. I am asking for change. When I walk into church and no-one looks like me I question, are we truly living out the Gospel ? and are we really building a kingdom of peace, grace, and forgiveness that really values the voices of Black and Brown people in the UK today?