

**If you are neutral in situations of injustice,
you have chosen the side of the oppressor” – Desmond Tutu**

The above quote is a very powerful thought provoking comment. How should we deal with injustice?

Last week Compass on the ABC reminded us of White privilege and White fragility. The current BLM protests have reinforced the message of White privilege that we so easily access and take for granted with regard to justice, including a range of other government and non-government services often denied or made difficult for people of color.

Racism is so engrained in society due to the lens through which we are encouraged to view the world, that we often fail to see the more subtle injustices that are easy to unthinkingly perpetrate. Attitudes don't change quickly as they are often embedded in our senses of self and identity that becomes increasingly covert as we grow up. Thus, the few changes that we do see tackling racism are often behavioural rather than attitudinal. For example, politicians in the USA are now talking about banning police from chokeholds that have killed many black people. I suspect this won't change the attitudes of police officers towards race. Attitudinal change can mainly come from ongoing contact with the people that seem to be most obviously racist, certainly not by criminalizing chokeholds! When I see historical statues being defaced and torn down, I'm reminded of the fact that people of color have so little power to change anything and are thus reduced to these symbolic acts which do little to create any beneficial attitudinal change towards them.

Its painful to hear politicians linking the destruction of statues to a destruction of history when their very existence obliterate the true history of Australia, which has been constructed through the lens of white supremacy that we have inherited. Unfortunately dominant discourses are rarely challenged, so they render other views as impotent and invisible.

So where is our voice against racism? There are the grand gestures of active protests, but they frequently only encourage behavioural rather than attitudinal change. The message of Compass about White fragility was that its easy to justify the status quo as politicians did the other day when they declared that protesters were attempting to eliminate our history, while the very existence of the statues provide a powerful statement that ignores most of Australia's history. We rarely encounter people who actively disagree with us, as our friends often share common values and attitudes. However, when we do encounter people with strong racist views, often coming from both family and friends, we may be reluctant to speak up as it feels so futile. However, staying silent only reinforces the dominant white message many people perpetrate. I've stayed quiet many times when I realize that the chance of changing another's strong view is so unlikely, that it feels like a waste of time. Yet, silence merely reinforces that racist view as it assumes agreement. Recently, I've been getting into the habit of simply saying: "I have a very different view from you." Following a brief explanation, there is often a very strong rejoinder reinforcing the racist view. However, I don't want simply to get into an argument, as strong views don't seem to change through argument. So I quietly say: "I'm not going to argue with you about race, but I just want you to know that I disagree with you so that you don't think everyone see the world the way you do." This response may not be much, but somehow it feels more authentic than saying nothing.

I found the following table quite challenging and perhaps worthy of discussion if we were able to discuss it in a group.

Jac Brown (June 2020)
Member of Pitt Street Uniting Church Congregation



**OVERT
WHITE SUPREMACY
(Socially Unacceptable)**

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