



# URBAN CURRENT

## #AllLivesMatter

**N**o one can deny our troubled racial history. Lies, broken treaties, and firewater pretty much defined our relationship with the American Indians as the new nation took shape. Others came, and the Germans, the Irish, the Italians, the Chinese — all had their troubles encountering the majority populations of the day.

There was slavery, Jim Crow laws, the KKK, the lynchings deep into the 1900s, segregation, and various expressions of discrimination. We are paying for our fathers' sins.

The last six months America has been consumed with two grand juries and the protests related to them. You have to be a robot not to be moved by the genuinely tragic deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner.

And people have been responding. Here is a sample Facebook response: "All police aren't bad. All blacks aren't criminals. All whites aren't racist." That anyone thought this needed to be said is scary.

Headlines like "NYPD Publicly Executes Eric Garner for Illegal Cigarettes," and quotes in news stories saying, "It is open season on black people" go practically unchallenged in the mainstream media. *Unrelenting* and *inflammatory* are how I would describe that kind of news coverage that sends the message, "White cops are racist; whites are suspect."

Has anyone checked the word *prejudice* in the dictionary lately? Why bother with witnesses, autopsies, and forensic evidence? Attempting to find justice without finding the truth leads us nowhere.

White people seem drawn to either of two poles. They either become guilt-ridden parrots of the liberals and media narratives, or they think black people should get over it with a glib, "everybody has equal opportunity in our country so what's the problem" attitude.

I don't speak as a disengaged, ill-informed spectator. I'm not a liberal talking head. For over half a century I've been engaged with

the African-American community developing innumerable personal relationships before there were reconciliation rallies. For the better part of four decades, I have pastored a multicultural congregation. I can tell you I've been profiled. I've been frisked against the side of my car in my own neighborhood.

But just as it would be unreasonable to deny we have troubles and racial turmoil, it is also unreasonable to ignore two grand juries, who, under media and community pressure that's hard to fathom, worked their way to certain conclusions.

And it is unreasonable to ignore black-on-black mayhem in cities across the nation.

And it is unreasonable to ignore that a 13 percent African American population accounts for almost 40 percent of U.S. abortions.

So how are we, especially those of us who believe in Jesus, to respond and do right?

First, let's admit all lives matter! That's Gospel! If we have not acted in accordance with God's value system, we need to repent. If we have not spoken up for the voiceless, the downtrodden, the oppressed, the marginalized, the weak, we should beg God's forgiveness.

Scripture brings balance. The Christian life is not self-centered. It is about sacrificing for others. The more ego-driven we are, the more we are steeped in American culture, the less Christian we are. The more Christian we are, the less we will fit into our culture, particularly as it presents itself in polarization, hostility, neglect, or denial of truth.

We are not called to tolerate. We are called to love. People who love, listen. We need to hear each other. Agree, disagree, see it differently; we need to hear each other. We need to appreciate each other's stories, histories, views, perspectives, pains, vulnerabilities, doubts, and fears. Black people should not have to suppress their history, personal experiences, concerns, and trepidations in order to relate to white believers.

The Sunday after the Ferguson grand jury decision, I commented on how difficult and emotional situations such as these often drive us into corners — the corners of our perspective, opinion, prejudice. Corners can be places of isolation, shadowy and dark.

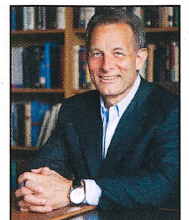
I said then, "I am calling you out of your corners in the name of Jesus. Come out of your corners of anger, suspicion, conservatism, liberalism. Come out of your law and order corner, your civil rights corner. Come out of the corner of victimhood or political correctness. Come out of your corners of frustration, guilt. Come to the center.

"Jesus is the center, full of grace and truth. We need grace to be humble, to listen, to forgive, grace to be whole. We need truth, all of the truth. Truth is light. Truth protects us from the darkness of deception, personal agenda, prejudice.

"Grace and truth are the balance. Grace and truth represent spiritual, intellectual, emotional maturity.

"In the center, I am more likely to have my presuppositions and prejudices identified. In the center, I am forced to ask new questions and answer uncomfortable questions. In the center, I will grow, becoming more like Christ, gaining a broader perspective. In the center, as Jesus' disciples, we share pain, disappointments, fears, anger, frustration but also love, encouragement, forgiveness."

We are to model reconciliation to the world. It doesn't mean we see everything the same way. It means we all kneel at the same cross as we humbly embrace Peter's exhortation: "Let everyone be sympathetic, harmonious, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit" 1 Peter 3:8 (NASB).



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