



George Floyd's death has effected a global exposure of just how black people feel about the discrimination they habitually experience in a way that I've not witnessed before, writes Justice Enabler Wale Hudson-Roberts.

To better understand this, we have created a new blog to share the perspectives of both black and white Baptists on racial justice.

In his poem *A Dream Deferred*, the poet Langston Hughes asks what happens to a dream that finds itself deferred – in his case, a dream deferred because of racism:

*What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over
Like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?*

On Monday 25 May, the life was choked out of George Floyd by a white police officer's knee, defiantly asphyxiating his beautiful black body - in the full gaze of a watching public. It took the police officer just eight minutes and 46 seconds to complete this brutal killing, but it certainly did not defer George's dream. Instead, it launched his dream with explosive power.

Thanks to mobile technologies, unimaginable only a generation ago, live images rapidly circled the globe, and the whole world witnessed the 'lynching' of yet another unarmed black man by a law enforcement officer.

In this distressing footage - as one African American philosopher and cultural critic, Cornel West, put it - the world glimpsed a reality that is far from exceptional for black communities in America. The terrifying truth is that, for black Americans, this does not amount to a significant deviation from 'normal'.

Black bodies have repeatedly had the life strangled out of them, from the day they first arrived in a so-called 'New World' - whether extracted by hard-labour under chattel slavery, whether reinforced by segregation under the Jim Crow legislation of the 1930s (which denied black people equal rights in the southern states of America) or by public lynching. These are realities that must never be forgotten.

None of this can be side-lined as an exclusively American problem. The UK has its own terrifying histories of racist brutality. Sadly, it has taken the inexcusable death of George Floyd to alert white people everywhere, forcing them to dig deep into their collective psyche, and to begin to root out some of the endemic discrimination that still lurks only a smidgen below the surface. On an unprecedented scale, protests expressing the anger and longing for change, have finally catapulted race onto the public agenda across a broad spectrum of British society.

George Floyd's death has effected a global exposure of just how black people feel about the discrimination they habitually experience. For the first time in my life, white people have had little choice but to listen. The truth that 'Black Lives Matter!' is self-evidently a matter of justice – and it will never go away unaddressed.

At the heart of this new series of blogs is a space to listen. Writers from many different perspectives present their stories. Some re-visit their own part in creating and maintaining

discrimination. Others recount their experience of being on the receiving end of the very same discrimination. These are all stories that need to be heard.

This blog encourages followers of Christ to grapple with fundamental issues of truth: what it is like living as a person of colour in the UK in 2020, and what it is like from a white perspective to begin, under the Rule of Christ, to address the distortions created by unchallenged privilege and power.

It is unlikely that these blogs will make easy reading, but this is a matter of justice that is deliberately designed to challenge our intuitive preference for ease. Our hope, in the Racial Justice Hub, is that these blogs and the stories they tell will kindle and sustain new and continuing commitments to justice, both in our churches and in society more widely.

In the spirit of the poem I quoted in my opening paragraph - we want to ensure that this dream is never deferred again.

Wale Hudson-Roberts is the Justice Enabler of the Baptist Union of Great Britain.



The Baptists Together Racial Justice Blog launched in Black History Month 2020, and can be accessed here: baptist.org.uk/rjblogs