

2021 05 02 – Let Us Love One Another

1 John 4:7-21 (The Inclusive Bible)

Thank you Jackie for sharing your story with us. We are just beginning Asian Heritage Month and so today we are spending some time listening to the stories of Asian-Canadians. Jackie, her siblings and their partners are first-generation Canadians. Their story is one of choosing to immigrate to this country and then learning what it means to be at home in a new place. We are grateful that they have found acceptance and welcome here in Canada, and, in particular in Swift Current, but it is important to know that there are Asian-Canadians whose stories are quite different. (see [Where is Home?](#) by Jackie Orola-Ravino)

Kim Uyede-Kai is a fourth generation Japanese Canadian. She is also a member of the United Church and is currently working on the staff of the Shining Waters Regional Council in Ontario. In March of this year, Kim spoke at an online event sponsored by the Centre for Christian Studies. Her topic was [The Pandemic of Racism](#). I want to share parts of her story with you today.

During her reflection, Kim told how her ancestors arrived from Japan in 1900 and then farmed and fished on what we now know as Vancouver Island. They prospered until the 1940's when they suddenly became "enemy aliens" or "the yellow peril" in the eyes of their government and were therefore incarcerated. Their land and all their belongings were taken and sold. When the war ended, Japanese Canadians were not allowed to return to the west coast. They had to travel east; but even in that direction, they were not always welcome. Kim

explained that Toronto had an unwritten rule that Japanese travellers were not allowed to disembark from trains as they passed through the city. Kim did note that the Canadian government has now apologized and even offered financial reparation to the survivors of the World War II internment camps.

Kim went on to say that “racism and the dehumanizing of people always rises in times of global and domestic economic greed and crisis.” She gave historic examples of the African slave trade, the exploitation of Chinese men during the building of the North American railroads and the fact that the only jobs for educated Black men in the early 1900’s were 72 hour shifts as porters on trains. Then Kim mentioned the more recent violence and harassment against Asian Canadians during the outbreak of the SARS virus in 2003. And even more recently, the rise in anti-Asian racism as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

I know we like to believe that racism doesn’t exist in Canada, but the Chinese Canadian National Council recently published a report called [*A Year of Racist Attacks*](#). This report states that 1150 attacks against Asian Canadians have been reported one year into the pandemic. 11 per cent of those incidents contained violent assault or unwanted physical contact and 10 per cent included coughing or spitting. I’m sure there have been many more unreported micro-aggressions like the time that a group of white people saw Kim and her friends waiting to enter their elevator and quickly exited in order to avoid close contact.

Racism and, in particular, anti-Asian racism is still a very real issue in this country. If you have found yourself calling the COVID-19 virus the “Chinese Flu”

or even if you heard a friend or relative say it and didn't rebuke them, then you are helping to spread prejudice against our Asian Canadian neighbours.

In today's scripture reading Jesus said:

Beloved, if God has loved us so,
We must love one another,
God dwells in us,
And God's love is brought to perfection in us.

And later in the same passage Stacie read:

We love because God first loved us.
If you say you love God but hate your sister or brother, you are a liar.
For you cannot love God, whom you have not seen,
if you hate your neighbour, whom you have seen.

Hate is a pretty strong word, but I would suggest that fear and misunderstanding can often lead to hate. It is important that we are aware of our thoughts, our words and our actions in relation to people who are different than us. It is important that our relationships begin with mutuality and respect, with compassion and understanding and, most of all, with love.

It is true, that sometimes, even with the best of intentions, we can hurt others with our ignorance. I'm going to leave the final words of my reflection to another Asian Canadian. Her name is Rev. Sunny Kim and these words are from a recent blog that was published on the United Church webpage. She said:

As an ethnic minority, I should confess that it is more difficult to deal with well-meaning progressive White people than with blatant racists. I am not afraid of the latter because they know where they stand on the issue, and so do I. It is more difficult to deal with progressive White people because their racism is so subtle that only ethnic minorities can feel it. I know, it is

indeed difficult. That is why I need humility from my White siblings. I don't want them to be discouraged that they sometimes hurt us without realizing it. However, I need them to be humble enough to ask for guidance. When in doubt, ask. <https://united-church.ca/blogs/round-table/racism-and-white-allies>

And so I pray, may we ask for guidance with humility, compassion and love.

Amen.