



Church Women United

How Long O Lord – A Theology of Grieving in Light of Police Brutality

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In the aftermath of yet another shooting by police brutality towards innocent Black Americans and now also innocent police officers in a horribly misguided act of retaliation, I notice a creeping sense of hopelessness and helplessness surround my friends and family. Two deaths at routine stops and police check-ins in two days. Five more deaths

from a sniper in Dallas. It seems like a nearly daily message of yet another death, based on violence, racism, and guns in America with no change in sight.

For so many, especially for every black person in the country, the struggle of racial justice is akin to Job shouting and pleading “How Long O Lord!”

Are you feeling this way? Are you grieving for so many deaths across America, especially for those deaths claimed by racism and police brutality?

Dr. Yolanda Pierce says, in this linked article “A Theology for a Grieving People”, we must make room for a “Theology of Grieving”, reflecting on her own grieving in these difficult times:

“My tears started while I was sitting in a coffee shop, and they refused to stop. I gathered my laptop and purse, hurried back to the car, and sat quietly, expecting the flow to cease. And yet, tears were in my eyes on the way back home and tears stayed with me throughout the day. I have been grieving for a well over a year; grieving for Sanford, Fla; for Ferguson, Mo.; for Charleston, S.C.; for Cleveland, Ohio; and for countless other cities. I am grieving for a world that I know, irrefutably, does not value black lives — a world that does not value my life.

[...]My words fail because my words are no longer adequate. Living with terror requires more than just words. Dealing with the realities of the terrorized black body in America requires my entire soul ... and my entire soul weeps.”

Dr. Yolanda Pierce argues that our faith and our congregations and communities must have room for a theology of grieving, and for this pain. She lays these four things down that communities must in order to hold such grief.

- 1) A theology for grieving people must make room for tears, weeping, wailing, pain, and anger.
- 2) A theology for grieving people mourns the loss of those too often considered unworthy of grief, those who are the “least of these.”
- 3) A theology for grieving people offers a safe space where stories can be told and believed, so that healing may eventually be possible.
- 4) A theology for grieving people demands justice, even when the work for justice is inconvenient, painstaking, and long.

So, if you are grieving too, and if you are feeling hopeless and unconnected, this is what you can do.

- ❖ Talk with other church-goers or members of your community about what happened.
- ❖ Ask someone how they are doing today.
- ❖ Ask friends, colleagues who are black if they are okay? Or in what ways they would like to be supported in light of these events.
- ❖ Talk about police brutality in your community.
- ❖ Encourage your church, organizations, or group of friends set aside time for grieving the loss of these victims.

Whatever race and creed you might be, it is vital to talk about the realities of racism and police brutality, and to make space for grieving. Only if we show our compassion and sympathy for such tragedy, can we gather together near as children of God and live into the love and support that is needed to foster hope, resistance, resilience, and change.

July 8, 2016 / Blog