



2022
LENT SERIES

AUTHENTIC
DIVERSITY &
JUSTICE
WORKING
GROUP

STRUGGLING WITH WHITE PRIVILEGE AND FOLLOWING JESUS

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So Jesus said to the Judeans who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." John 8: 31-32

"I was never taught that in school." This is a refrain I hear often from people as they wrestle with learning and histories that were not their own. It is a refrain I say to myself often – usually in lament, sometimes in anger. I am often frustrated by the things I did not know – do not know. And just as often I want to blame someone else for this. It was my ethnic and racial privilege to learn my culture's history in a school of people who looked like me, who spoke my language and had names that were familiar to me.

Even Bible stories, like the ones from John, were shaped to steer me towards the dominant white Christian narrative. The paintings of Jesus in our learning spaces did not reflect a person of middle eastern descent nor did we engage in an understanding of the Jewish religion and culture that shaped him. "I was never taught this in Sunday School."

There are many stories that are not, cannot be told in school. It is simply not possible to put all the learning that needs to happen in middle or high school civics and most Sunday school teachers do not have the time to engage a deep dive into world religions. However, it is possible to share more than one perspective.

And it is possible to begin now. We have agency to learn now. And we have resources, books, documentaries, learning series, lectures, and podcasts with which to do so.

Learning is a lifelong goal, as is anti-racism work. I may not have been taught this in school but I get to learn now. I commit to reading books, fiction and nonfiction, from authors of different ethnic backgrounds. I commit to learning the histories of friends and neighbors that were not included in my public school curriculum. I commit to advocating for these histories to be included in school curricula now – public and private - because we can no longer pretend that we don't know.

Indeed, I may not have learned about the Dakota people on whose homeland my elementary school was built, but I am learning now. It is not easy, this learning. Most discipleship practices aren't. But Jesus reminds us that truth – the truth of colonization and racism; the truth of immigrant histories and indigenous wisdom – the truth that we are all loved and valued members of God's creation - will set us free.