

Why Black Lives Matter...Matters

Say the words, “Black lives matter” enough and one will inevitably be met with, “All lives matter” or, in the wake of protests, “Blue lives matter.” These counter-statements, if you will, while true, miss the point. In fact, they are more likely to deepen the racial divisions that permeate American society.

To counter, “Black lives matter” with “All (or Blue) lives matter” however well-intentioned is to resist reflecting on and acknowledging the depth and breadth of longstanding and continuing effects of racism in the United States. As a society we do not question that “blue” or police lives matter. And “All lives matter”, rooted in part by an assumption that legislation guaranteeing equal opportunity and treatment under the law equals its practice, serves only to silence the experience of minority communities for whom the promise of such laws remains more a dream than a reality.

“Black lives matter” breaks the silence. “Black lives matter” is a statement in response to a society that operates in ways that question and often denies that statement. Scores of data, readily available online and through news outlets, show people of color of all ages, genders, socio-economic status and so forth, are seen and routinely treated differently by law enforcement and the criminal justice system than white people. The result is a sad legacy of perpetual physical, emotional, and spiritual violence. A legacy “Black Lives Matter” seeks to end.

So often “Black lives matter” is taken as a challenge to be countered and is countered defensively. What if it was heard as a call? A call to listen. A call to hear about the lives of people of color without jumping to conclusions or rushing to judgement. A call to hear the source of one’s own resistance to the declaration “Black lives matter.” A call to hear, respond and be changed as a society. Jesus told his followers, “Love one another...” and a Buddhist teacher once called listening. “the most basic form of love.”

The declaration “Black lives matter” is in fact both a challenge and a call.

To listen.

To affirm.

To love.

And to change.

That’s why it matters.

Peace and blessings,
Rev. Craig