



ST. JOSEPH PARISH
THE JESUIT PARISH IN SEATTLE

Becoming Antiracist

November 2021: Voting/Veterans Day

Prayer: Lord, you have given all people one common origin, and your will is to gather them as one family in yourself. Set our hearts on fire with the desire to ensure justice for all our brothers and sisters. Empower us to share what we have received from you, that we might "rejoice in that day and leap for joy" at the coming of your Kingdom. Amen. (From [JustFaith Ministries](#))

Scripture: Philippians 2: 3-4 Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

History

Voting rights: The Fifteenth Amendment ensured all Black males had the right to vote. Jim Crow changed this. Almost all Southern states passed statutes restricting suffrage in the years 1871-1889. Various registration laws such as poll taxes were established and had devastating effects. Over half the Blacks who voted in some states vanished from the polls in 1888. In places like Alabama, for example, where Blacks equaled almost half the population, no African Americans were sent to the legislature after 1876. In addition, when Black men did vote, many of their ballots were stolen or not counted. By the end of the century, more voter restrictions and literacy tests disenfranchised Black males. The right to vote and the freedom to vote are two very different things. From: *Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome* by Dr. Joy Degruy

The Fifteenth Amendment did not apply to women, though. It would take the Civil Rights Act of 1965 to reassert the right of all citizens to freely cast their votes. From: *The Color of Compromise* by Dr. Jemar Tisby

United States Veterans: Racial discrimination in the military did not end after World War II. Laws designed to benefit returning soldiers often did not apply to Black veterans. The Servicemen's Readjustment Act, better known as the GI Bill, included substantial aid designed to help military veterans reintegrate into civilian life. This welfare program assisted GI's in purchasing homes, paying tuition for college, and gaining health coverage. The Veteran's Administration, created to disburse benefits to returning soldiers, denied mortgages to Black soldiers and funneled those veterans into lower-level training and education rather than into four-year colleges. From *The Color of Compromise* by Dr. Jemar Tisby

Institutional racism impacts health care accessibility within non-white minority communities by creating health disparities. For example, many Black veterans were unfairly denied disability pension by the union army disability pension system from 1865 to 1906. From: *40 Days of Prayer For The Liberation Of American Descendants Of Slavery 1619-2019, Commemorating 400 years of slavery and its evolution in America* by The Angela Project, Simmons College of Kentucky 2019

For further reading: Book- **I'm Still Here, Black Dignity In A World Made For Whiteness** by Austin Channing Brown, 2018. From a leading voice on racial justice, an eye-opening account of growing up Black, Christian, and female that exposes how white America's love affair with "diversity" so often falls short of its ideals.

Video link: Watch Traci Ellis: "The Exceptional Negro: Fighting to Be Seen in a Colorblind World" (approx 14 minutes):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqvZROzLPmw>

Poem: "I, Too" by Langston Hughes

I, too, sing America.
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the kitchen,"
Then.

Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed-

I, too, am America.