

Thought for the Day on BBC Radio 4
5th May 2020

I Long for the Day

It's two years ago this month since the death of George Floyd, a man killed by a police officer in Minneapolis. The incident, captured on phone screens went viral and spread around the world, as many of us were confined in lockdown.

His death caused outrage at the open injustice. People felt helpless and anxious and it felt like the world was in flux.

It seemed, if only for a few months to change so much. The stories and experiences of black people in Britain revealed bias and damaging stereotypes. Actresses, Lawyers, and Authors expressed often through tears and anger a desire for acknowledgement, of not just historical injustice, but also of discrimination that continues today; in subtle and obvious ways in our institutions and communities.

In Viola Davis's new biography 'Finding me', her listed achievements include an Academy Award, a Primetime Emmy, and two Tony Awards. She's the only African-American to achieve this Triple Crown of Acting. She recalls that early in her career when asked who she was?, she replied 'I'm the little girl who ran from school in third grade because the boys hated me, because I was.... Black'.

I often find myself in settings where I'm the only person of colour, navigating peoples hopes and fears at my existence in that context.

The book, 'The Good Immigrant' is inspired by this question of why society often sees people of colour as bad immigrants, for example job stealers, benefit scroungers and undeserving refugees until, they earn extraordinary achievements by for example winning an Olympic medal; when they somehow become good immigrants, with seemingly little in-between.

I long for the day when my appearance isn't a fascination, but my heritage and background an asset, a gift that makes up a rich and diverse Britain.

I long for the day when the lived experience of those who've endured discrimination, is behind us.

I long for the day when people can engage openly and honestly about the existence of prejudice that is learnt, inherent, and benefits them, but that is wrong.

The apostle Paul proclaimed 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus'.

I long for the day when these radical words about the life and love of Christ - himself an asylum seeking refugee, create fresh energy, new perspectives and a determination to make

Paul's words resound, the day when our stories of injustice no longer threaten our society, but strengthen it.