



Beyond the Colour A reflection upon Stephen Lawrence and racial prejudice

Participants: Readers 4, Mimers 8,

Resources: Music and/or percussion instrument, 4 bunches of flowers, to include at least one rose in each. Bowl

(Music plays as Readers 1-4 enter, two to each side.)

Reader 1 An ancient Jewish rabbi once asked his pupils how they could tell when the night had ended and the day was on its way back.

Reader 2 “Could it be,” asked one student, “when you can see an animal in the distance and tell whether it is a sheep or a dog?”

Reader 1 “No,” answered the rabbi.

Reader 3 “Could it be,” asked another, “when you can look at a tree in the distance and tell whether it is a fig tree or a peach tree?”

Reader 1 “No,” said the rabbi.

Reader 4 “Then what is it?” his students demanded.

Reader 1 “It is when you look on the face of any woman or man and see that she or he is your sister or brother. Because if you cannot do this, then, no matter what time it is, it is still night.”

Mimers 1-4 enter slowly to different areas and/or levels. They remain very still.

Reader 4 It is still night for many people in our world.

(During the next four lines, the mimers, in turn, change their stance to indicate despair or rejection e.g. turning away, sinking to the ground, putting head in hands. It should be a simple gesture and done with dignity. Music or a slow drumbeat could accompany it.)

Reader 1 For those who are taunted and told they don't belong.

Reader 2 It is still night.

Reader 1 For those who feel their differences somehow make them wrong

Reader 3 It is still night.

Reader 1 For those who've lost a loved one in an act of senseless hate

Reader 4 It is still night.

Reader 1 For those to whom the sympathy has simply come too late

Readers 2,3&4 It is still night.

(Music plays or continues as Mimers 5-8 enter slowly each with a bunch of flowers which they put on the ground near the centre. They walk off slowly. Mimers 1-4 remain where they are.)

Reader 1 On 22nd April 1993, Stephen Lawrence was killed in a racist attack. Here is what three of his Christian friends had to say after the event.

Reader 2 “We cannot begin to express the feelings that we have experienced from that day onwards, both individually and as a group. The events of that day have affected all our lives. Things that were

once so important now seem trivial in comparison. How can we concentrate on what would normally be the more important aspects of our lives, like education and exams, when one of our friends has just been murdered because of the colour of his skin? ...Is it really only the few who commit the act of murder who are at fault? It is us who built the world we live in...this is what we have done with God's free will."

Music fades.

Reader 3 Sometimes those of us who have had nothing to do with Stephen Lawrence just want to get on with our lives.

Reader 4 What has it got to do with us?" we ask ourselves. "It happened a long time ago."

Reader 1 "Can't we just forget it? After all, it wasn't our fault."

Reader 2 "There will always be evil people in the world. Do we need to depress ourselves by being reminded of this sad fact?"

Reader 3 But what about those for whom it is still night? Not just the family and friends of Stephen, but *all* those who have suffered at the hands of others. Do we not want to support them and show there is daylight too?

Reader 4 Let's listen for a moment to a some little known facts – something that will remind us that day *can* follow night, that human nature has another side.

(If desired, in the same simple and dignified manner, Mimers 1-4 could mime the actions of the story as it is told.)

Reader 1 It came to light that a man saw Stephen and his friend on the fateful day of the attack. When he realised Stephen had been hurt, he and his wife went to try and help him. As Stephen lay dying, the wife cradled him in her arms, repeating to him, "You are loved, you are loved," even though she didn't know him.

Reader 2 In those last moments, the man found that he had some of Stephen's blood on his hands.

Reader 3 When he returned home, he carefully washed his hands in a bowl of water. Instead of throwing the blood-stained water away, he took it into his garden and carefully poured it over a rose that was growing there. This important gesture would be a reminder that the spirit of Stephen lives on.

(Mimers should return to their original positions.)

Reader 4 "Who acted like a neighbour?" Jesus asked the people who had listened to *his* story of the man beaten and left to die.

Reader 1 "The one who showed him kindness," they said.

Reader 4 "Then go and do the same," he replied.

(If desired, the story could be read from Luke: 10 25-37)

Reader 1 And the one who showed kindness in Jesus' story –the Samaritan – belonged to a different race from the person he helped.

Reader 3 The couple who stayed with Stephen when he was dying were from a different ethnic background from him. They were strangers.

Reader 4 In the book of Leviticus, the Jewish and the Christian Bible it says: "And if a stranger should live in your country, you must do him no wrong. The stranger who lives with you shall be as the home-born among you, and you shall love him like yourself."

Reader 1 More than two thousand years after those words were written, a school child from London wrote these beautiful words:

Reader 2 *very slowly*

Beyond the colour there is a being.
Beyond the race is a person.
Beyond their culture there is an identity.
Behind every smile and laughter
There is the pain of living.
Beyond life there is a new beginning.”

Reader 3 We are going to end by remembering all those who suffer as a result of racial prejudice with some words from the Hindu scriptures.

(Music plays as the following words are spoken. During the last of the lines, Mimers 1-4 slowly stand and move to the flowers. Each pulls a rose from the bunches. They form a small circle and, in unison, hold the roses up high with both hands to form one bunch. They remain in this pose until the end. It should be done slowly and timed so that the coming together takes place during the last two lines.)

Reader 4

“We are birds of the same nest,
we may wear different skins,
we may speak in different tongues,
we may believe in different religions,
we may belong to different cultures,
Yet we share the same home – our earth.

Reader 3

Born on the same planet,
Covered by the same skies,
Gazing at the same stars,
Breathing the same air,
We must learn to happily progress together,
Or miserably perish together.

Reader 4

For we can live individually,
But we can only survive collectively.”

(Music continues for a few moments before all exit slowly.)