

Dear Parents

This year there have been a number of high profile incidents which have highlighted just how much pain race still plays in the life of our country. The video which came out of one of the residences at a university was the latest. It was so awful and the little bit I saw on the news made me feel sick and depressed so I hate to think what people feel who have been at the receiving end of racial prejudice for decades – not to mention the poor women involved. No wonder there were such scenes of anger.

We seem to keep hurting one another and I wonder when (and if) it will end. I fear it is going to take a number of generations because many of us carry too much history around race and, whether we want to or not, we cannot help but pass some of it onto our children. In addition, they read the papers and watch the news and so they know there is this friction and they know the colour of their own skin.

I think we would want our children to grow up free from all prejudice, anger, fear or guilt around race. It is debilitating at best and dangerous at worst. So what can we do as parents to help them?

A good starting point may be to try and be honest with ourselves about how we feel about race and the issues around it. How has my individual history around race affected my thought processes at this point in my life? What am I still angry about? What do I feel guilty about? What am I afraid of? Now these things may well be things we should deal with but maybe even if we cannot deal with them right now at least we can try and be aware of them and consider how we may be affecting our children by the way we respond to things on the news etc. I do not want my emotional baggage to become my children's. Why should they have to bear it?

I do not know where those students got their racial attitudes from, which have now caused them and others such harm, but I am sure that their parents would not have wanted to harm their children. And yet they may well have been the ones who did without realising it because of their own history. One can hardly imagine what they are going through at this time as they wonder at their sons' callous behaviour.

Maybe we cannot imagine our sons doing anything so horrible but any decision they make which is swayed in any way by prejudice, anger, fear or guilt around race is unlikely to be the best one and so their lives will be affected negatively. We want the best for them and maybe there are things we could do differently, or things we could say to them, in order to help them live wisely in our wounded country.

Bishops is making an effort in a number of ways to create an open and welcoming school free of such prejudices. This is being addressed through the LO Curriculum, messages in Chapel, the Diversity and Transformation committee of Council and the confidential access of boys and parents to the BSU.

Yours sincerely

Peter Westwood

(Deputy Headmaster Pastoral)