

Like us, you may be following the events in Ferguson, Missouri with a variety of emotions—perhaps sadness, anger, confusion, or even apathy. There are many folks who have written extensively and with great insight and wisdom in understanding and interpreting what’s happening in Ferguson, and how we as Christians and a people should be responding.

We appreciated a few blog posts from Black friends on giving a backdrop to the tensions in Ferguson:

- This is Why we are Mad (<http://jezebel.com/this-is-why-were-mad-about-the-shooting-of-mike-brown-1619522935/all>)
- An interview with John Perkins (http://www.christianitytoday.com/amyjuliabecker/2014/august/john-perkins-sin-of-racism-made-ferguson-escalate-so-quickl.html?&visit_source=twitter)
- Recent posts by IV colleague Sean Watkins (<http://smwatkins.com>).
- You need to hear this interview with an African American pastor in Ferguson (<http://www.npr.org/2014/08/14/340422502/ferguson-pastor-this-is-not-a-race-issue-this-is-a-human-issue>)
- Rob Dixon posted: 12 things white people can do now because Ferguson (<http://qz.com/250701/12-things-white-people-can-do-now-because-ferguson/>)
- Also, this is also a super helpful sermon Brenda Salter McNeil gave this past sunday: <http://vimeo.com/103682976>
- (This is the video Brenda Refers to in her message: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GVaU8qm2LhQ>)

A few of our colleagues in the region (and outside) have also written their thoughts and reflections on these incidents, including: (this is not an exhaustive list)

- Kelly Joiner (<http://kcjoiner.wordpress.com/2014/08/19/5-lessons-on-grief-that-help-me-love-my-black-friends/>)
- Dora Yiu (<http://dora4yiu.wordpress.com/2014/08/18/ferguson/>)
- Erna Hackett (<http://feistythoughts.com/2014/08/16/the-unacceptable-silence-of-asian-american-christians-in-response-to-ferguson/>)
- Jon Hietbrink and Howie Meloch (<http://www.releasetheape.com/three-ways-to-engage-with-ferguson/>)

What are questions of engagement for you and your students?

- In what ways has God been helping you understand what is happening in Ferguson? (this is a question we can ask all students—not just Black students)
- Where do you feel angry or in grief over the events in Ferguson?
- In what ways can our ministry and communities on campus be places of reconciliation and healing for our campus?

When I was in elementary school, I kept a journal. I wrote all my thoughts, dreams, and inventions. There's also a poem I wrote about slavery. It shares my pain over people being treated poorly after one glance at their face. My poem expresses my sadness over not meeting relatives that were killed, hung, and raped. I want to be shocked that I was processing these thoughts in elementary school but that's the life I led as a young Black girl in America.

Today I continue to feel sad but more than that I get angry. I don't just get angry in "big" moments like this. There are "small" moments that happen far too often. The anger feels like strength; it's much better than hopelessness. So as a Black woman the anger comes but as a Christ follower I pray for peace. I earnestly pray for love, forgiveness, and grace. I cry out for more of Jesus so that I can hope again.

My prayer for our Region is that we continue seeking the Lord for the Black community when the newsfeed stops posting and the blogs aren't being written. I pray we start with ourselves. Who is influencing your life? Who is not present in your community? I also pray we look at our fellowships and regional staff picture. This is the second time in my short time with InterVarsity that there has been one Black staff in our region. Do we care? Do we care enough to respond in how we engage students? Leaders? Ministry partnership development? My prayer is that we will respond beyond the time the dust settles. My fear is that we won't.

-- Mattie Madrid

How can you engage the issues in Ferguson as a staff worker and pastor to students?

- **Educate Yourself:** If you don't know, educate yourself. Read the articles posted above and follow the news.
- **Acknowledge the Bigger Picture:** Recognize that this is not just an issue that a young Black man was shot, but it reveals a deeper schism and cancer in our society and the injustices that brothers and sisters in the Black community carry with them, in their souls—day in and day out. Give yourself permission and invite your community to lament for the injustices that are both systemic and in the hearts of people. Brenda Salter McNeil links to this lament (<http://www.therustylife.com/2014/08/a-song-of-lament/>)
- **Be Physically Present:** Feel free to walk in local protests in solidarity with the people in Ferguson—these are places where we can hear stories and enter into the pain that many of our Black brothers and sisters carry. (Check out your campus BSU or ASA facebook groups to see if they are organizing events you can help support)
- **Seek the Counsel of our Urban Projects:** Our hope is ultimately in the gospel. We believe that the gospel is the only response to hopelessness and depravity. Our friends who run urban projects have done good work in engaging issues of injustice. What are ways you can create a discipleship process through these issues in partnership with our urban projects?
- **Seek God:** Since our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh but against principalities and powers, don't stay engaged in discussions of who is to blame and what laws need to be changed. Your leadership is to call students to seek God in their emotional response (whether they are angry or apathetic). Most of our (non-Black) students may be ignorant or apathetic, lead them to understand the power of sin and evil in our world.
- **Disciple and Reach Black Student Leaders:** All of us are responsible to make disciples of and empower Black student leaders. This is not a unique ministry for a select few of us, we all bear responsibility to open our eyes to the field, ask the hard questions of who is not in the room, and make disciples of all people. Eddy Ekmekji and Mattie Goins are BCM staff who can work with you and your students (or your Area) to do good BCM work. As a region, we have one Black staff. While we can give many excuses as to the challenges of recruiting and supporting Black staff, we are still responsible to examine ourselves, address systemic reasons regarding these challenges, and seek God for Black staff leaders.

What are practical next steps you can take?

- **Subscribe:** Actively look for people on facebook at twitter who are actively posting information, responses, etc to the events and start to follow them. (Kathy Khang, Sean Watkins, Brenda Salter McNeil, Erna Hackett)
- **Read:** Read things being posted with an opened mind. Read things you are unsure of. Read things you aren't sure you agree with. Just read so that you know what the dialogue is about.
- **Pass it On:** Post a link, send an article, share a blog with your friends, pastors and those in your networks. One of the most valuable things we offer as InterVarsity staff is our reality of having our feet in many different worlds. In the social media world, news and information tend to be very insular as people only spread around news that seems "relevant" to them. As InterVarsity staff, we have the privilege of existing in a diverse social space with access to a diversity of social opinions and commentaries. Our churches, our pastors, our friends need us to bring the stories that are viral in one community (i'll bet there are things circulating through the InterVarsity cyber sphere that members of your churches might never see because they don't run in those circles. You have the opportunity and responsibility to create "information cross over" by bringing the "viral stories" into your "unaware circles".)

“**If you can't fly, then run,
if you can't run, then walk,
if you can't walk, then crawl,
but whatever you do,
you have to keep moving forward.**

– Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

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