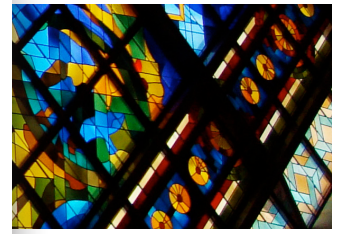




40 DAYS OF ENGAGEMENT on Anti-Racism



DAY 18

Migration & Racism

Sun Do Hyun



Learning

I'd like to begin with my own experience of living in Canada as a recent immigrant from Asia. As a racialized visible minority, I've developed racial justice sensitivity to protect my family and myself from being harmed or mistreated due to skin colour and ethno-cultural background. I feel vulnerable when exposed to increasing anti-immigrant sentiment and the White nationalist movement in Canada. This includes false information about refugees and immigrants, and controversy around the Quebec law banning religious symbols for workers in public positions (which I see as targeting mainly visible ethno-cultural minorities). As someone who speaks English as a second language, I've been working hard to overcome the "no Canadian experience" label, and to perform my work effectively—to the degree that people might see beyond my accent and recognize my abilities.

Why do migration and racism matter? Since the very beginning of human history, people have

been moving from one place to another for different reasons. Migration has been part of the human experience for many years. The global phenomenon of migration, refugees, and asylum seeking has increasingly become one of the most pressing social, economic, and political issues in many countries. You may remember major migrant and refugee crisis in the past years such as the [Syrian refugee crisis](#), the [Rohingya refugee crisis](#) in Myanmar, and the [Central American migrant caravans](#) in 2018.

Many immigrants, foreign workers, refugees, and asylum seekers today are people of colour from non-Western countries. They bring their own religious and cultural backgrounds with them. Populations and governments of the host country may have different responses and attitude toward migrants. Some people consider those coming from other countries and cultures to be threats to national identity and security, and as competition for jobs. Some may be indifferent; they don't care much

Many people flee from war and violent conflicts in their country, looking for a safe place, protection of their human rights, and support for better life. People also choose to move to other countries seeking better opportunities and possibilities for well being. This is due to economic globalization and the gap between the "Global North" and "Global South."

about it unless they experience an inconvenience or personal challenge. Some may show hospitality and kindness to newcomers, and embrace the intercultural challenge as an opportunity for growth and transformation. In general, however, migrants who belong to racialized groups are vulnerable to racism and hostility in various forms, including racist rants, physical violence, discrimination, exploitation, and other mistreatments and injustices.

I believe that issues around the refugee crisis and global migration are not relevant to only a few countries or regions, but to all countries and continents. The global community needs to work together to address violent conflicts and poverty in certain regions, and to promote human rights, racial justice, and the well being of refugees, foreign workers, and immigrants living in different countries.



Faith Reflection

The Bible is full of stories of moving, taking risks on the road, and migrating. You may know the stories of Abram and Sarah, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, the Exile to Babylon and returning, and also of Jesus and his disciples. We can find stories of both hostility and hospitality, exclusion and inclusion.

One example of hostility is found in the Book of Ezra and Nehemiah. The people of Israel tried to rebuild their society after returning from the Exile. As part of separating themselves from other ethnic and cultural elements, they found out all foreign women who had married Israeli men and sent them away with their children ([Ezra 10](#)).

There are also numerous stories of welcoming others and working together for better life for all. For example, there is the story of Ruth, Naomi, and

Boaz ([Ruth 1-4](#)). Naomi and her family migrated to Moab first seeking food when there was famine in their homeland; Ruth later became an immigrant to Bethlehem. Both women experienced the hardship of becoming foreigners and immigrants in other countries. What about Boaz? He seems to have understood why Ruth, the Moabite woman, immigrated to a foreign society where she would hardly be welcomed. He recognized her needs, and he decided to embrace her as part of his life. Later in the Bible, a son of Ruth and Boaz became the grandfather of King David.

Yes, there are stories of both hostility and hospitality; and one may wonder what the underlying message of the biblical witness should be. I believe that the stories of compassion, hospitality, and inclusion are the ones we are called to live into.



Children's Activity

Tell children and youth the stories of migration today. You could share your own or your ancestors' story of moving to new places or countries if applicable. You could talk about the refugee crisis by using resources such as books, articles, pictures, or videos. Here are some suggestions on how to speak to children about refugees:

- [How to Talk to Kids About Refugees](#)
- [Teaching About the Syrian Refugee Crisis](#)

- [From Syria to Canada: How One Boy Found a Home on the Ice](#)
- [What Is a Caravan of Migrants?](#)

I'd like to share some stories of immigrants in my region of Saskatchewan:

- [Black on the Prairies](#)
- [A Muslim Teacher in Regina](#)
- [My Farmland](#)

Tell children and youth Bible stories of migration. Some people in the Bible left their homeland in response to God's calling for a greater purpose. Others were forced to move to other places due

to famine, personal conflict, or war. For Jesus and his disciples, traveling and taking the risk of becoming a stranger/guest was part of their ministry of carrying the gospel of God's beloved community to others. Help children connect the Bible stories with contemporary stories of refugees and immigrants. There are numerous videos of Bible stories, including:

- [Abraham and Sarah](#)
- [Moses and Exodus](#)
- [Story of Ruth](#)
- [Following Jesus](#)



Group Commitment

Having explored the theme of migration and racism, I'd like to invite you to go little further into deep reflection on the topic and your own experience and understanding.

Regarding the reactions and attitudes toward immigrants or refugees, there are often two different frameworks: the "ecology of fear" and the "ecology of faith" (*Asylum-Seeking, Migration, and Church*, Susanna Snyder 2012).

The ecology of fear is a vicious circle in which fear generates anxiety, negative discourse, hostility, and restrictive policies. This

anti-immigrant sentiment is easily coupled with racism.

I appreciate the United Church's commitment to anti-racism and intercultural ministries, consistent with the ecology of faith in which people of different backgrounds and identities are embraced as they are. Yet, sometimes I ask myself critical questions about our attitude toward refugees and immigrants. Do we welcome those migrants simply because we feel bad for them and have a desire (or duty) to help those in need? If this is the case, we may be in danger of being paternalistic and expecting them to be assimilated into the

dominant culture. Is it because we see newcomers according to the potential benefits they could bring, such as contributions to the domestic labour market and international trade? Then we may be in danger of relapsing into exploitation and a utilitarian perspective on migrants.

I'm still learning and trying to understand the underlying mindset of what it truly means to welcome and embrace newcomers. I'd like to invite you to take this opportunity to reflect on the complicated dynamic of global migration and racism as well as your own experience and understanding.



Advocacy

When it comes to migration and racism and other social issues, I have particular understandings of human nature. On the one hand, I believe that every human being has inviolable and equal dignity and freedom that should be respected by others. On the other, I see that humans are vulnerable and finite, and therefore in need of help from others, no matter who they are and where they live. In other words, humans live in relationships with others and have a responsibility not only for themselves, but for

others. I think those principles could be an underlying framework for our advocacy about migration and racism. Here are some suggestions:

- Organize a book study, seminar, or public discussion on migration, refugees, and other relevant social justice issues.
- Offer Bible study in your community of faith. Explore the Bible stories of both hostility and hospitality, and connect those stories with contemporary issues of global migration.
- Create spaces where Indigenous peoples, newcomers, and established citizens engage one another in various ways, such as cultural festivals, support groups, and language classes.
- Advocate human rights and the just treatment of foreign workers and refugees in your community.



Born and raised in South Korea, **SunDo** became a United Church minister in 2016 (admitted from the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea) and has been in congregational ministry in Saskatchewan. SunDo is passionate about working toward Truth & Reconciliation in Canada, helping the younger generation find home in Christian faith and community, welcoming people of different cultural backgrounds and gender identities, and making the wider community a better place for everyone.

