

**Small Talk – April 19 2021**  
**Required Facial Covering When in Public – Day 269**  
**By Michael Small**

Where do you hold your tension? For me, it is my lower back. Years ago, I significantly twisted the lower back in ways that were not natural. When tense, when anxious, when confronted, I feel the muscles tighten in my lower back. They remember. Also, my tension is held in my digestive track. Quickly, when being confronted, stomach, large intestine, lower intestine constricts and yes, they remember. What is it that they remember? It is trauma.

Resmaa Menakem<sup>1</sup>, a Minneapolis-based therapist and trauma specialist addresses trauma that goes deep, trauma that is generational (up to fourteen generations). When responding to life situations from a place of trauma, we are less capable, less flexible, and perhaps inappropriate. Trauma is remembered in DNA, memory, bone, and tissue. Thus, the reality of systemic racism goes far deeper than imagined, and in part, that is why it is so difficult to resolve. We can't just solve the deep problems of racism by using our brains, problem solving, reason, thinking, and doing it the same way over and over again. We can't change persons actions by simply passing and enforcing laws. Menakem would argue that real change and real healing will only occur when the body is engaged – when the body learns new practices. He also is convinced that healing is on a continuum. To learn more, listen to Menakem's rebroadcast of "Notice the Rage, Notice the Silence" on On-Being (<https://onbeing.org/>). I highly recommend that you take the time to listen.

True change, true justice, true peace can only occur when body, mind, soul, heart, are engaged, changed, and transformed. The actions of the body embody that change. Theologically it is absolutely critical and central that the BODY is resurrected. It's not just about some ethereal mystical spirit/soul floating around – it's about the whole thing!

Speaking of change, a colleague, the Rev. Michael Piazza<sup>2</sup> wrote this morning about his thinking. He introduces us to a new word – "*Gracism!*"

*I began a new sermon series entitled Gracism yesterday. It is a coined word, but one that needs to exist in a world so poisoned by racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and other oppressive attitudes and systems. How do we become "Gracists," and how do we build a community of faith that works to replace oppressive systems and structures with "systemic Gracism"?*

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<sup>1</sup> Resmaa Menakem, MSW, LICSW. Author of *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies*. Central Recovery Press, LLC.

<sup>2</sup> From *Liberating Word: Equipping progressive people of faith to be champions for peace and justice*.

*Gracism is a different way of being in the world, another way to relate to one another, one that lives and works for equality and justice, not just because it is the right thing to do, but because it is who we ARE.*

*Dr. David Anderson used the word as the title of the book that inspired this series. The subtitle is "The Art of Inclusion," which seems to be an art we should learn and practice, especially as we prepare for the regathering of the church.*

*In the post-pandemic church, it will not be sufficient for radical inclusion simply to be a value we hold. Practicing systemic Gracism must become the guiding principle shaping our mission and our common life.*

*They say confession is good for the soul, so, if you will permit me, I will confess on behalf of us all. We progressives embrace inclusion and vehemently reject prejudice, discrimination, and intolerance. The challenge is our intellectual and moral values don't always find consistent expression.*

*To say that another way, without honest care and reflection, liberals can become as intolerant and excluding as any fundamentalist. As a church, we would NEVER discriminate against a person on the basis of their race, gender, or sexuality, but to become a community of true Gracists, we must reflect honestly on the secret and hidden prejudices of our hearts. As Gracists, we must overtly practice inclusion in our lives, our churches, and our nation.*

May we become Gracists!

In the spirit and agape love of Jesus, Michael

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