



Nothing Lost in Translation

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“Black life is precious.”

“Black Lives Matter” has this slight nuance when translated into Korean, highlighting a more implicit understanding of the credo. “Black life is precious.” The cries and conviction of the movement need no translation however, as thousands of protesters have taken to the streets of Seoul recently in solidarity with those demanding racial justice in the United States.

But not just in the Korean capital. From Mexico City south to Buenos Aires, Argentina. Throughout the UK and Europe. In Nairobi, Kenya, Karachi, Pakistan and Manila, Philippines, throngs of [protestors filled the streets](#) chanting they, too, believe Black lives matter.

They march in support of U.S. protestors, but also because demands for justice for people of color, for migrants, for indigenous communities, resonate around the world. They too are calling for an [end to police brutality and militarized tactics](#) against impoverished and marginalized communities.

Our cries are their cries.

In his [Letter from a Birmingham Jail](#), the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., explained to white clergy why the troubles of that city mattered to him. He said, “I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny.”

Then as now, King recognized that the civil rights protests of American Blacks echoed other global rights movements across Africa and Asia, in South America and in the Caribbean. All were “moving with a sense of great urgency toward the promised land of racial justice.”

When describing the mutuality of international partnerships, Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) sometimes uses the African concept of [ubuntu](#), which King himself evoked in later

addresses: “Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be.”

The Apostle Paul used the image of the body to describe how we all depend inextricably on each other. “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ,” he wrote. “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (1 Corinthians 12:12 and 26, NRSV).

Partners from around the world [have told us](#) they share in the suffering of the U.S. The All Africa Conference of Churches declares, “We join the churches in the USA to continue advocating for justice and peace in America and condemn sinful systemic racism.”

They also share how they are suffering. The National Council of Churches in India writes, “We feel it in our bones when we relate it to the violence that is meted out to Dalit people in India every day. We need to root it out altogether. Count on us.”

We need each other, they say.

We know asserting “Black Lives Matter” doesn’t deny that other lives are also precious, but rather declares that Black lives need our critical attention now. Similarly, without diminishing the urgency of U.S. suffering, we must heed the Macedonian call to attend urgently to those suffering from state violence around the world. Indian religious minorities attacked by Hindu nationalists. Poor communities in the Philippines targeted under the government’s Anti-Terrorism Bill. Palestinians on the verge of losing hope if Israel annexes occupied West Bank land. African migrants being trafficked, abused, and abandoned at waypoints across the Mediterranean. Indigenous West Papuans being persecuted under Indonesian control.

We can’t be fully ourselves until these lives are fully themselves too. Global solidarity makes sense in any language.

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