

Let Us Be Empathetic - We need to go back to the beginning - the root

Gloria Howard-Geraldo
July 2020



Dr. Thomas G. Walsh: Our next panelist, who I am happy to introduce, is also from Minnesota. Mrs. Gloria Howard-Geraldo has actively worked for years with the Rotary Club. It's a wonderful organization. So, I invited Mrs. Gloria Howard-Geraldo to share with us her thoughts.

Good morning everyone. Thank you for having me. I just want to pick up where Rev. V. J. Smith gave his five Rs. Before we get to that, though, the one thing I would like to add is that we need to rewrite the narrative. We need to go back to the beginning. What I'm seeing is the root. We have to get to the root of it. We can do all these things; we've done some of them before. We will see some change; but will it be lasting change? Will it be a rewrite of the narrative? I think not. I think we'll be back here again. If we do not reconcile for over four hundred years ago and just come to the fact that, yes, it happened, this is how this country was built. But we can change what we are doing moving forward.

So, I'm looking at it from that standpoint. It's a very difficult conversation to have. Many people would like to start with the sixties and Martin Luther King, Jr. Well, no; it began a long time before that. So we definitely have to go back to the very beginning. We have to educate everyone on America's history. Before moving to Minnesota, I thought most children in school were getting much of the African-American experience in America through their history lessons, but when I got to Minnesota, I found that that was not so. I used to teach and going into the classroom, and some of the children... I was in a predominantly white area and I had a young lady, she was a sophomore, I believe, and this class was for children who needed a little extra help, and she was just a beautiful, beautiful spirit.

She came to me one day and she said, Miss Gloria, why is your hair so curly? So, I explained it to her; and she said, Can I touch it? I said, Of course you can touch it. She said, What do you put in it? And I explained that to her. And I had a white teacher come up to me and say, Why do you let her touch your hair like that? I said, Because she needs to know what it feels like. She needs to know what I do with it. These are all things she is going to need to know going forward in her future because she is going to run into many African American women with many hair textures. And with that curiosity, if I help her feel that today, imagine what that is going to do for her in the future.

I just look at it and think that if we educate others about where we come from and how we got to this point as a nation, it will be much easier for us to begin implementing the Five Rs, because they will be implemented out of empathy, out of compassion, out of love for our brothers and sisters, out of love for our country, out of love for what we want for our future generations, who have to carry this forward.

I am just overwhelmed at the fact that UPF is here and is working with all those who can help us make this transition and make a difference. I want to thank you for that. And again, I just want everybody to think about... We have to go back to the roots. If you're not sure about that -- anyone out there--start doing some research. Start talking to those that can help you understand it. Because we have to be empathetic with one another and understand where each is coming from. These are generational narratives that have been placed within us individually and in us as a society as a whole. So, that's where I am today. Thank you.

Thomas Walsh: Thank you very much indeed Mrs. Gloria Howard-Geraldo for those excellent comments and insights. Indeed this conversation is about root causes and about narrative. "Narrative" is a word we use a lot in recent decades; it's about giving the story of what happened. Indeed we need to listen to the narratives and search together. This is what we hope to do, in some small way, through this, and you are helping us to do that in this webinar.