



Chalak Richards with a Group of Students at the Equal Justice Initiative Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama

In March, I was privileged to join a group of students and three colleagues on a trip to the Equal Justice Initiative Legacy Museum and National Memorial for Peace and Justice. I will be honest - as a non-American Black woman, I expected to be moved but detached. A guest observing a regrettable experience that wasn't really about me.

That was certainly how I felt at the beginning of our time at The National Memorial for Peace and Justice. The Memorial features monuments naming the more than 4,400 African American men, women, and children who were lynched between 1877 and 1950. I read the names with deep respect, and still, a sense of detachment. That is, until I stumbled upon my uncle's name.

He wasn't my uncle, of course. But he had the same name and it shook me. It made me intimately aware that every one of those names represented someone's mother, father, sister, brother, cousin,

uncle, friend, and so on.

I fear that many of us can view Juneteenth - a time removed, something regrettable that isn't really about us. But the truth is, Juneteenth reminds us of the truth that we also need people with the courage to carry out what the law says. Juneteenth shows us that the law said something was no longer permissible statutorily, yet happened in reality for 2 and a half years. What are the problems of our day that are not legally permissible yet carried out? Human trafficking? Sexual abuse? Unjustified and excessive force towards people of color? Environmental injustices?

My prayer is that as we celebrate the freedom Juneteenth represents, we are also moved to action for the justice issues of our time.

Isaiah 42:1-4

"Look at my servant, whom I strengthen.

He is my chosen one, who pleases me.

I have put my Spirit upon him.

He will bring justice to the nations.

He will not shout

or raise his voice in public.

He will not crush the weakest reed

or put out a flickering candle.

He will bring justice to all who have been wronged.

He will not falter or lose heart

until justice prevails throughout the earth.

Even distant lands beyond the sea will wait for his instruction."

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