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I was at a meeting yesterday to consider a St. Louis application to a big foundation grant for truth and reconciliation. It includes changing the narrative about racism, racial healing and systemic change. It's an ambitious program and we offered some advice to the grant writer about process and proposal elements.

But beyond the advice, we talked about our own desire for truth and reconciliation. One of the women there, who was black, said that white admission of privilege and of taking advantage of that privilege would be validating for people of color. It reminded me of the book *Citizen: An American Lyric*, where Claudia Rankine describes how crazy-making it is for her to be slighted over and over, as if whites held no rancor but simply did not see her.

We Catholics don't need any grant money to hold annual Lenten reconciliation services where we would name our racist behavior. What we need is the will to open our eyes and the time to tell some stories about ourselves. When did I discount a newspaper report about police bias or housing bias or banking bias? When did I discipline a black child more harshly in the classroom? When did I tell a black person they couldn't return a purchase when I would have accepted the return from a white person? When did I take a black neighbor's account of being treated badly with a grain of salt?

We whites are fragile. We deny these small wrongs we inflict on our neighbors and we close our eyes to bigger wrongs for fear that admission of guilt will damage us somehow. And so we choose to live blind. I think in our white parishes we could create safe spaces for public confession of our bias and bad behavior. It would be a start.

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