

When will we ever learn?

Thought for the Day

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Broadcast on Radio Scotland, 5 June 2020

Sadly, race is back in the headlines! First it was in the context of the one story we can't get away from, with its strange new vocabulary of Covid, lockdown, social distancing, bubbles, and clusters. No-one knows why some ethnic minorities have been so disproportionately affected, but the figures cry out for explanation. Viruses don't tend to discriminate; people do – but either way, there's something going on that we need to get to the bottom of.

And then last weekend America exploded, sadly almost literally, as riots followed the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, and the video of him being pinned to the ground by a police officer while he struggled to breathe was watched in horror across the world.

It's been said that these are the worst riots since Martin Luther King was killed, but what is truly shocking is not just the scale of the disorder, but how often we've been here before. Have we forgotten Rodney King in Los Angeles, Freddie Gray in Baltimore, Michael Brown in St Louis? Have we learned nothing from the shooting of Breonna Taylor in Louisville only two months ago?

Yesterday I saw a comment from the Muslim Council of Scotland, quoting the Last Sermon of the Prophet, "All mankind is from Adam and Eve – an Arab has no superiority over a non-Arab, nor a non-Arab over an Arab; a White has no superiority over a Black, nor a Black over a White." That reminded me of the Declaration of Arbroath, asserting, 700 years ago this year, that "there is neither bias nor difference between Jew and Greek, Scot and English", and the injunction in Exodus, three thousand years earlier, that "There shall be the same law for the native-born and for the stranger who lives among you".

How different from what is being played out in the ironically named United States, while across the world people are asking, *When will we ever learn?*

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