

Dear Colleagues and Friends:

Watching the Canadian women's hockey team win the gold medal game last night, I was reminded of a time when I was in Gjoa Haven, Nunavut, a few years ago. Some of the people wondered if I was related to Hayley Wickenheiser, who had done a hockey clinic for the kids of the community. They thought I looked like her. I'm not sure that I do, but then again, they didn't really know that many people of my race.

Despite this little story, I realize that as a white Canadian, I don't really understand what it feels like to live as part of a racial minority.

There was a small item on an inside page of the Globe and Mail earlier this week, telling of an incident in Halifax where crosses were burned on the lawn of a bi-racial family. I was shocked – by the incident, and also by the minor nature of the coverage it got. A couple of days later, there was a larger article, describing the nooses that hung from the crosses, and the racial taunts that went along with them. By that time two young men, brothers, had been charged with this hate crime.

I'm sure that we don't know the full story yet, but I suspect that no matter what information comes, it will remain incomprehensible. Others in our office – including our Moderator – have been troubled by this incident too. We talk about it but can't make sense of it.

It's terrible to think of something like this happening in Halifax. I might be tempted to take some small comfort in thinking that Halifax is quite a long way from where I live, except that I can't kid myself that the problem is only in Halifax.

Recently a friend in my own neighbourhood in Toronto told me that her child had come home from school asking about the word "nigger". She had seen it written on the wall of the school. The mother had a hard time knowing what to say. How do you explain to a child what this means, and why someone would do that?

It's the last week of Black History Month. We have had several rich learning and worship experiences here at Church House. At home, having read "The Book of Negroes", by Lawrence Hill, over the Christmas holidays, I'm now reading, "I am My Father's Son", by Lawrence's brother Dan. I feel as if I've learned quite a bit. I realize that there is much that I still do not understand.

Peace be with you.

Nora