

“Read the literature.”

Those were my uncle’s words that have resonated with me ever since the week following the October 2020 General Conference. My patriarchal white male grandfather, who had ten children, gathered all of his posterity on a post-conference Zoom call to discuss President Nelson’s words in his talk “Let God Prevail.” Of particular focus was the prophet’s direct injunction: “I call upon our members everywhere to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice.” After reading that quote, my grandfather asked, “What do you think we can do to lead out in abandoning attitudes and actions of prejudice?”

My uncle Matt responded. Matt was a philosophy major in the humanities department at BYU and the only one of my grandfather’s ten children to have an interracial marriage; he married a beautiful South African woman during his time in the Peace Corps. Now, he lives in Ghana with his family.

“Read the literature,” he said. “Go to the African-American section of the library, pick out anything that looks interesting, and just read it! Listen to those voices. Here in Ghana every major historical site is a jail, where its people were held captive and enslaved. Read, and imagine what it would be like to have that be your history.”

For me, it helped to have a practical, actionable way to live the prophet’s advice to abandon prejudice, so I purchased *The Souls of Black Folk* by W. E. B. Du Bois, a staple of the African-American canon of literature. Late my first night reading it, I couldn’t tear myself from it. My heart was filled with pain, sympathy, and compassion that I had not felt before for the African-American cause.

Promoting social justice doesn’t have to be a mass event. It begins with each and every individual shedding their personal attitudes and actions of prejudice. Thus, while it may seem like a small thing, reading literature by African-American authors can be a transformative experience, helping the reader to hear deeply and connect with the unified strain of voices past and present that are advocating for true equality and real social justice.

My mother also took the invitation, reading *Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates. I went a step further and signed up for a Studies in American Literature class focused on the art and literature of the Harlem Renaissance. My training in the humanities has taught me that reading diverse perspectives can be one of the best ways to abandon attitudes of prejudice, and see the world from someone else’s point of view. This special ability of literature, coupled with prophetic guidance from the President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, is just the beginning of my journey to understand and better promote social justice, and it is one that anyone can undertake. It all begins with just a book.

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