52 FLAMES FOR THE HUMAN FAMILY

FLAME 14 OF 52

The Welcome We Make Room For

DEAN N. MAPHENDUKA

THE FLAME OF ONE



ONE FLAME. ONE FAMILY. INFINITE GRACE.

When a name becomes a boundary

My friends, my brothers and sisters,

Imagine a community supper. A woman named Maya has been invited. Someone greets her warmly, then asks her surname. When she answers, the tone changes. "Oh," the person says. "You're from that family."

Nothing about Maya has changed. Yet an old judgment has arrived at the table before anyone has heard her story. She takes her seat and begins choosing her words carefully. She wonders how much of herself this room will allow her to bring.

Many of us recognize that moment. In one place, the barrier is the color of our skin. In another, it is our religion, the language we speak, or the tribe to which we belong.

Sometimes we share a race, a country, even a faith, and still draw a boundary around a clan or family name. We call someone a stranger whose grandparents may have lived beside our own.

The Flame of One asks us to notice where our sense of family ends, and whom we have left beyond it.

Roots that leave room for others

Our heritage can give us roots. Our languages carry affection and memory. Our faith can guide us through grief and give meaning to our lives. There is room to cherish these things while honoring the dignity of people whose roots and beliefs are different.

But when a family name decides whose voice deserves a hearing, something precious has become a boundary. When children are taught to distrust another clan before they have met anyone from it, an old division is being prepared for another generation.

No child should inherit an enemy simply because of a family name.

We can hold people responsible for what they have done without placing a whole tribe, clan, or faith on trial. A person's surname cannot tell us the contents of their heart. We must leave room to discover who is actually standing before us.

Some divisions carry real histories of injustice and loss. Those wounds deserve truth and attention. Trust may take time, and people may need boundaries. Asking for peace must never become a way of silencing someone who has been hurt.

Belonging across belief

We also need room for honest religious difference. We can hold our convictions with humility and listen to someone whose understanding of the sacred differs from ours. We can ask questions without turning every encounter into an attempt to win someone over.

At a shared meal, we can ask about dietary needs without making a guest feel troublesome. If a prayer is offered, participation can remain a free choice. Someone who follows another faith, or no religion, deserves the same welcome and care.

The Flame of One makes room for these differences within one human family. Belonging leaves us free to bring our names, our memories, and our conscience. We can meet one another with love while continuing to disagree.

A place before we prove ourselves

Back at the supper, a woman beside Maya draws her into the conversation. When Maya offers an idea and someone interrupts, she says, "I would like to hear the rest of what Maya was saying."

Maya finishes. The group considers her suggestion, and their plans begin to change. Her presence is becoming part of the life of the room. She has something to give, and she is also free to receive.

She deserved that place before anyone heard her idea. No person should have to be exceptional, useful, or endlessly agreeable to be treated as a neighbor.

And the person who judged her surname has a choice. They can listen, acknowledge the unfairness, and begin to act differently. Maya is allowed time to decide whether that change can be trusted. An apology begins a responsibility that continues after the words are spoken.

Carry this welcome into the world

This week, listen to the way people are described in your home and your circle. When someone says, "Those people are all the same," ask whether you have allowed a whole community to disappear behind a label. Speak with calm honesty when a joke diminishes another race, faith, tribe, or clan.

Consider what the children around you are learning from those conversations. Tell them the stories of their people with love. Let them also discover that another family's story can hold courage, wisdom, and kindness worth knowing.

Choose one ordinary act that makes room: learn a name properly, listen without deciding the answer in advance, or include someone in a decision that affects them. Keep showing up with that respect when there is no audience to applaud it.

May we honor our ancestors through the care we offer the living. May our convictions deepen our compassion, and our pride in our people leave room for love beyond them. May the names that tell us where we come from never prevent us from seeing the human being before us.

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Make room this week

Whose story have I allowed a label, surname, tribe, race or religion to stand in for?

What would help someone bring their whole self into a space I share?

Choose one act: learn a name properly, listen to the end, or include someone in a decision that affects them.

Watch the cinematic reflection

Hear Dean narrate this teaching and follow Maya’s story in the accompanying 9-minute, 41-second film.

WATCH FLAME 14 ON YOUTUBE

youtube.com/watch?v=x89vFUoU70Y

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