

Editors'

This issue of CCGNews, by the decision of the editors Drs. Will Cohen and Christian Krokus, and in line with the message of the Provost (and current acting President) Dr. Jeffrey Gingerich excerpted in the adjacent grey box, offers reflection on the University's history of mock slave auction fundraisers that came to the attention of many of us for the first time when Ms. Glynis Johns, founder of the Black Scranton Project, presented archival material on it at a Community-Based Learning (CBL) Zoom meeting in late February. Following an introductory piece by Dr. Cohen, two students, Tiannah Adams and Koebe Diaz, both juniors and cabinet members of the Black Student Union, share their reactions, reflecting on the experience of Black students on campus today, and encouraging the University to continue taking steps on the path of healing. Ms. Johns encourages attending both to the troubling areas and to the bright spots of our history with racial justice, using what we learn to tell a more accurate story about ourselves in order to be able to move forward most constructively. Finally, Fr. Patrick Rogers of the Jesuit Center reflects personally on his own learning curve, points us toward Catholic and Jesuit resources for addressing the sin of racism, and calls us to empathize with those who suffer its sting. The work of truth and reconciliation is many-

By Will Cohen

From the 1950s through the '80s, student clubs and university offices at the University of Scranton held mock "slave auction" fundraisers that as far as we can tell were not intended to hurt anybody. They were meant to be fun – a way for college students to play for a few hours at either having control over, or being controlled by, another human being . . . and all for a good cause (e.g., the yearbook). And people apparently did have fun, to go by the popularity of these events; a great many high schools, colleges and other institutions across the country held them for years, and some still do hold them today under different names.

Suffice it to say that the ethics of holding such events are questionable on multiple grounds. As the University continues to reflect on them and explore their history and context we will gain further insight.

to be unpleasantly surprised by such input from others that rates us less highly than we would have thought. This is what enables us to change, to grow. The 20th century French Jesuit patristic scholar Jean Daniélou aptly defined sin as “the refusal to grow”. If we tell a too uncomplicated story of ourselves as being invariably good and kind and generous,

: I was helping host the event where the news was dropped, and I was in complete shock at first. Although it was explained during the event, I wasn't aware of what it actually was. Once I did more research, it started to impact me. I expected everyone around me to be in shock and to be as angry as I was. When I didn't receive that response it made me more angry, but also, I guess, it gave me a sense of loneliness.

With people close to me, like in my inner circle there was a lot of conversation and it was comforting because it was like, "Okay, they can understand me," but outside of that there was really nothing being done. There were no conversations happening outside of that and, like Tiannah said, it did make you feel alone because no one's talking about it, so how do you know if your feelings are even that valid?

: It was an invalidating experience because you don't know if you're overreacting or if this is something that actually deserves to spark outrage.

: The atmosphere that is created at the University is kind of like there's no racism here: "Everything's good, everyone loves each other." A few days after we heard the news, or maybe even the day after, however, I saw people I'm friendly with posting about how much they love the University: "I love it here," "What an amazing community," and it really broke my heart, because when something like this happens that directly affects me it doesn't seem to resonate with them and they don't seem to feel any sympathy.

Living in the dorms, you sometimes hear racial slurs being yelled and shouted. Being the only Black person on your floor, you find yourself wondering whether to say something – "If I say something, will it just make things worse?" But if you don't say anything then you're the one that has to carry the burden of hearing those things. You don't know what others are thinking and even to try to find out can be uncomfortable, so you feel

alone. When those interpersonal racist incidents or things like the mock slave auctions come up, it takes an emotional toll on a person. I found that the first year, if you're lucky you can ignore some of the racist things that happen, like the micro aggressions, the little things. But it starts to pile up and after a while it gets to be too much and the things that you used to be able to tolerate, they set

courses, but we wanted to ensure that we're learning about Black figures across the board.

I've found trust within individual faculty members.

: I know they might be working on this now, but having a separate admissions event for Black students and other students of color so that they'll be able to be familiarized with the campus before orientation would be nice.

: It's important to hear from your Black

I saw that these kinds of events had happened in
Northea

Downtown has always been a hub – Black people were working in the Hotel Casey; they were domestic workers, day laborers, moving coal. As that historic

