

***The Cry of the Poor, Cracking White Male Supremacy an Incendiary and Military Proposal*** by Eduard Loring (Open Door Community Press, Atlanta, [www.opendoorcomm@bellsouth.net](mailto:www.opendoorcomm@bellsouth.net), 2021)

By TONI FLYNN

A young man once approached me at a Religious Education conference. I was handing out issues of the LACW newspaper. The young man stood before me for a long agonizing moment, staring at the word *Agitator* splashed across the cover page. Tears filled his eyes as he turned away empty-handed muttering, "I'm a poet not a prophet." He sadly hadn't met Eduard "the Agitator" Loring, poet *and* prophet. Fortunately for me, I have met and befriended Eduard Loring and his beautiful, brave wife, Murphy Davis.

This winter day finds me at St. Andrew's Abbey with nothing more in hand than a pencil and a legal pad, fulfilling my promise to Jeff Dietrich to read Ed's most recent book and write a personal review. "It'll be a piece of cake," Jeff assured me. "It's not even a hundred pages long." Of course Jeff refrained from warning me that each page would rip through my gut, break open my already cracked heart, re-route the patterned grooves of my brain, and set my soul on fire.

At first, the second half of the book title offset me. I could grasp *The Cry of the Poor* but *Cracking White Male Supremacy an Incendiary and Military Proposal* left me quivering in the dust. I asked myself if this book was going to be all fire and brimstone and no hope. The archaic phrase "Don't judge a book by its cover," prompted me to open the cover and begin at the beginning with the Foreword and Introduction.

Before reading further, I set the book down and remembered one of my earliest encounters with Ed Loring. At the time, I was employed at La Casa de Maria, a peaceful and serene retreat center in Santa Barbara, California. A silent meditation retreat was coming to a close and I was helping make preparations for a Catholic Worker retreat to begin later that same day. One of the silent retreatants ran up to me in a panic. "There's a crazy gardener in blue

jeans standing on top of a big rock outside of our meeting hall. He's yelling 'Repent! Repent!'"

I went to investigate the situation. The "situation" turned out to be Eduard Loring, shouting into the silence, beaming and beckoning with all the enthusiasm of John the Baptizer. His prophet admonishments no doubt were intended for the Catholic Worker early arrivals but it proved quite catastrophic for the meditation group. Later, when Ed learned about the silent retreat, he himself repented and apologized to the meditation group in a very poetic fashion.

As I continued to read *The Cry of the Poor* I found that it broke through my own silences of soul, disturbing my personal peace. It's a hard book to read. Ed states cold facts and names names the good, the bad, and the ugly. He confronts us (and doesn't spare himself in the process) with our individual and societal sins of commission and omission. Ed demonstrates how we collude with white male supremacy and other equally uncomfortable realities of times present and times past. He addresses the injustices committed against native peoples and shines a harsh light on the shameful history of black slavery and current acts of bigotry. He upholds the dignity of women and those in society who are still shunned including people who are gay, lesbian, poor, imprisoned. He writes poetically. He writes prophetically.

Now then, my name is Toni and I'm a hopeless romantic. I'm guilty of reading the epic novel and watching the epic film *Gone With the Wind* multiple times over the years in the hope that the ending will one day magically change and Rhett Butler will "give a damn." Eduard Loring has absolutely shattered the rose-colored glasses through which I've enjoyed this story. He reveals in his book the darker truths interwoven into the fiction of *GWTW* and I really wish, for my own selfish reasons that he wouldn't have agitated over it so much. He puts it all out there and I am thus forced to confront some of my romantic illusions.

In chapter 13 of *The Cry of the Poor*, Eduard Loring poses many burning questions about food and table. "With whom do you eat? Where do you eat? What do you eat? Where did your food come from? Ed

further writes, “The beginning of the road to maturity and a just society is eating at a Welcome Table.”

Jerry Zawada, a Franciscan priest and man of peace, and I once spent a lonely Christmas together as prisoners of conscience at the Crisp County jail in Cordele, Georgia. To our surprise, Ed Loring drove the long distance from Atlanta to sit at a table with us in the jail library. A great storyteller as well as writer, Ed told us the story of Christmas. He emphasized it as a dangerous story about a dangerous journey, for the Holy Family, for the Magi, for the Holy Innocents, and for all of us to follow. He prayed with us and transformed that worn out library table into a Welcome Table. By the last pages of *The Cry of the Poor* it becomes clear that Eduard Loring is not so much about fire and brimstone as he is about truth and hope and about a Welcome Table where everyone is invited to sit down together, no exceptions.

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