

FREE

HOSPITALITY

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Atlanta, Georgia
Permit No. 1264

The Open Door Community – Hospitality & Resistance in the Catholic Worker Movement

Vol. 35, No. 5

910 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE Atlanta, GA 30306-4212 404.874.9652 www.opendoorcommunity.org

July-August 2016

Through Many Dangers

By Murphy Davis

*Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come.
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far;
And grace will lead me home.*

I sat in a tiny circle with John Wayne Conner and his sisters Cynthia and Linda and we sang several verses of “Amazing Grace.” The verse above is my favorite and it seemed so appropriate in the hours we said good-bye to John before he was led off to his death at the hands of prison staff on behalf of the People of Georgia.

For surely John had come through *many* dangers, toils and snares; as had Linda and Cynthia. Their lives have been a series of unmitigated disasters. It was hard to listen to their stories: even the funny stories and the happiest memories were often in the context of how they hid out in the woods to escape the violent rages of their father and his attacks with fists, water hoses, tree limbs, guns and knives. Their grandmother had often told them, “When my boy came back from [World War II], I never knew what they done to him. Who came back wasn’t my boy.” The best of the siblings’ memories had to do with their clinging to each other for safety and protection. Their mother, Beatrice, is gone after a life filled with violence and terror at the hands of her husband. Their other two brothers are dead: Carroll Herman “Buster” Conner II was murdered. Jack shot himself in the heart; Jack’s wife killed herself a few days later; their daughter shot herself exactly a year after her father’s death. But the remaining living siblings have faithfully clung to each other with a fierce love and determination. It was a privilege to be a part of their small circle that vibrated to the end with love and the resolute will to survive life with hope and courage.

John Wayne Conner was sent to death row in 1982. Imagine it, thirty-four years waiting to die. For some people like John, death row is just a continuation of the path they’ve been on all their lives. Who ever cared if he lived or died? He knew nothing—*nothing*—in his life before prison of kindness, tenderness, loving support or structure. After he repeated the sixth grade for the fourth time he just left school: 15 years old and unable to read or write. They always said he was “slow,” but there was no such thing as special education classes or particular help for a student who could not keep up in the school system of Telfair County, Georgia. It was only after he was sentenced to death that the resources were made available to understand that John was intellectually disabled, brain injured (from repeated head trauma that came with the family violence), mentally ill and seriously addicted to alcohol and drugs. Without those resources through his childhood and without intervention by anyone in the community (though everyone knew about and feared the violence of Carroll Conner), John learned the family pattern of violence and self-medication. Out of school, he went to work with his dad, who

was a tree surgeon. Of course this meant spending most of his time with the man who had beaten, tortured, humiliated and threatened him all his life. Carroll Conner had introduced all of his children to alcohol and drugs when they were 12 or 13 years old, and John (called Shorty by the family) learned well. He also learned that any and every kind of conflict could only be settled with violence.

Little wonder that a drunken argument was likely to turn into serious violence. His last fight with his friend J.T. White was murder, and it earned him a three-day trial with a jack-leg “defense” lawyer and a fast ticket to death row. You would think this would pretty much be the end of the story. But John Wayne Conner spent 34 years in a controlled and structured environment doing everything he could to make amends for the earlier years of his life and the harm he had done to others. He learned to read and write. He joined a cell block Bible study. By watching some of the deeply disciplined and committed prisoners like Billy Moore, Nathan Brown, and Warren McCleskey, he slowly and deliberately learned to live without violent retaliation as a way of life. Believe me, learning to be a peace keeper on death row is nigh on to impossible. But God is able to work miracles in the lives of those who truly work to turn around and “go home by another road.” The gospels call this by the Greek word *metanoia*, “a change in one’s way of life resulting from penitence or spiritual conversion.” (Oxford Dictionary) It implies walking down a road in one direction and turning around to go in the opposite direction. And that is what John Wayne Conner did. Who would have thought it possible?

In a more structured and ordered environment where he had regular meals, a regular place to sleep, people on the inside and from the outside who befriended him, taught him, believed in him and were kind to him, John Wayne Conner changed. This was no “jailhouse conversion” of the sort that skeptical prosecutors are ready to cynically dismiss as designed for sympathy. This is change that was a matter of how John lived 24/7 for 34 years. He learned to read and write pretty well. He learned—with help from Josh Bishop and a show on educational television—to draw and paint, and he sent paintings to all of his family and friends, lawyers and prison staff—beautiful landscapes with rich,



John Wayne Conner

Looking for the Dead

June 21, 2016

By Peter Gathje

The rumor was she was dead. Even a location was given: found lying face down at the end of Beale Street. One guest told me and then several others corroborated the story. She’s dead. A Manna House guest, one we have had serious difficulties with over the years.

So the phone call to the morgue with its fancy “Medical Examiner” name had to be made. If she was dead, it was likely no one would claim the body. If she was dead, we would want to do the funeral.

I called, not sure if they would tell me if she was there. A volunteer suggested I introduce myself on the phone as “Doctor Gathje.” I said, “I think they might even be more open to sharing information if I go with ‘Reverend Gathje, pastor at Manna House.’” After all, I do have an internet ordination for just such occasions. “Reverend” might open a door or get me information withheld to mere mortals.

The person who answered was very polite and helpful. I don’t know if “Reverend” made a bit of difference to her. I do know that I heard the faint clicking of a computer keyboard immediately after I introduced myself and offered the name of the possibly dead guest.

“No one here with that name.”

“Thank you. That’s good news. Thank you.” And then I added a ministerial, “Have a blessed day.”

Not dead. But where might she be? No one had seen her in her usual haunts the past few weeks. Maybe she’s in jail. I checked the Shelby County Kiosk where you can look up those imprisoned. There she was. Her mug shot with her defiant anger was posted along with a list of charges.

“She didn’t go down easily,” I said. “Four counts of aggravated assault.”

Kathleen tentatively tried to find a redemptive purpose in all of this. “Maybe this time they’ll keep her long enough to get her stabilized with some meds.” Then she realistically added, “But really I don’t have much hope for that or after.”

I thought of Gary Smith’s book, “Radical Compassion: Finding Christ in the Heart of the Poor.” He tells a story of a fight that broke out between two people on the streets. One man pulled a knife on the other. Smith writes, “The potential victim then shouted at the knife wielder, in a voice that echoed off the tall buildings and over the 2 a.m. traffic noises, ‘You can’t kill me motherfucker. I’m already dead.’” Smith continues, “Many consider themselves dead because no one ever told them about the beauty of their lives.”

Earlier I had come across Mary Oliver’s poem, “The Summer Day.” Her poem ends with, “Tell me what do you

Through Many Dangers continued on page 6

Looking for the Dead continued on page 7

We Need To Walk Together



By Catherine Meeks

A few days ago, waiting in an auto repair shop for my car to be checked, I had an opportunity to witness a very sad conversation. All of the people in the room were African American women. The first part of the conversation was about how the workers at this particular well-known auto shop chain were inefficient and incompetent. All of the staff there is African American and this conversation resonated with deep tones of internalized oppression, which often makes it possible to see African American vendors as substandard no matter how well they

listen to this conversation without pointing out to them that they sounded much like another set of voices that held to the view that African Americans were the cause of their problems and that we were getting too many opportunities. Had I chosen to enter into their conversation, I would have reminded them of the Jim Crow rules and all of the other efforts that were made to keep African Americans in their place. A place of servitude and poverty designed to assure that white supremacy would rule as long it chose to do so.

It was difficult not to point out that those bearing skin of color in this country continue to suffer, whether they are the descendants of

We stand at a pivotal point in this country. We have a chance to remember that all human beings are worthy. We can stand against the oppression of anyone who falls victim to it and not just with those that we choose. We can decide that "othering" stops with us. We can decide to see each person as our sister or brother. This can be true regardless of their color, ethnic origin, political affiliation, socio-economic status, sexual orientation or religious perspective. We can repent of the age-old habit of declaring someone as less than ourselves by placing them in the category of the other and then refusing to see them as an equal human person who

We stand at a pivotal point in this country.
We have a chance to remember that all human beings are worthy.

perform. While this was disturbing, the conversation got more animated when it moved on to their other great concern.

Their next topic was immigration, and they lamented about how all of these strangers are coming here from everywhere because they know that they can prosper in America. They went on to elaborate about how much the immigrants are hurting all of us. It was the usual lament about the immigrants getting free services, taking our jobs and making life more difficult for us.

It took a great deal of restraint to simply

former slaves or of immigrants. But instead I chose to listen and to ask myself why they were having this conversation and what keeps them from being able to see?

Sadly enough the answer is simple. They have lost their capacity to have empathy for the other. Their experiences of being the outsider and the other have left them unable to identify with those who suffer a similar plight. They have allowed themselves to be captivated by the cultural rant of blaming the victim and they cannot see how the web is woven around them as well.

deserves all of the same things that we want for ourselves.

Those dear ladies in the car shop are not bad people; they have just allowed themselves to be seduced by the present day rhetoric and have not allowed themselves to think deeply about how they have been treated. They need to change their minds, which is what repentance is about. We all need to join them in changing our minds regarding the almost instantaneous manner in which we jump to a place of judgment that makes it harder to express true empathy and discour-

ages us from being able to walk hand in hand with our suffering sisters and brothers.

This present moment is not really a surprise. We have been heading in this direction for quite some time now. But we need to decide whether or not we will survive as a human family or perish as a large collection of polarized groups. We have a choice. ✦

Catherine Meeks is a community and wellness activist and an active member of the Open Door Community. She taught African American Studies at Mercer University and is the retired Clara Carter Acree Distinguished Professor of Socio-Cultural Studies at Wesleyan College, the author of five books and a columnist for The Telegraph in Macon, Georgia. (kayma53@att.net)

Please Help!



We need gently used running and walking shoes for our friends from the streets.

Men's shoes sizes 11-15 are especially helpful.

Thank You!

HOSPITALITY

Hospitality is published by the Open Door Community, Inc., an Atlanta Protestant Catholic Worker community: Christians called to resist war and violence and nurture community in ministry with and advocacy for the homeless poor and prisoners, particularly those on death row. Subscriptions are free. A newspaper request form is included in each issue. Manuscripts and letters are welcomed. Inclusive language editing is standard.

A \$10 donation to the Open Door Community would help to cover the costs of printing and mailing **Hospitality** for one year. A \$40 donation covers overseas delivery for one year.

Open Door Community
910 Ponce de Leon Avenue NE
Atlanta, GA 30306-4212
www.opendoorcommunity.org
404.874.9652; 404.874.7964 fax



The Eucharist table at 910 after the Vigil for Life at the Death of John Wayne Conner.

Calvin Kimbrough

Newspaper

Editor: Murphy Davis
Managing Editor: Eduard Loring
Photography and Layout Editor: Calvin Kimbrough
Poetry Corner Editor: Eduard Loring
Associate Editors: Catherine Meeks and Pete Gathje
Copy Editor: Julie Martin
Proofreaders: Gladys Rustay and Julie Martin
Circulation: A multitude of earthly hosts
Subscriptions or change of address: Sarah Humphrey

Open Door Community

For more information about the life and work of the community, please contact any of the following:

Gladys Rustay: Jackson Prison Trip
Dick Rustay: Dayspring Farm Coordinator
Lorna Mauney-Brodek: Harriet Tubman Foot Clinic Coordinator
Eduard Loring: Street Theologian: Atlanta & Baltimore
Nora Leslie: Administration and Finance
Nelia and Calvin Kimbrough: Worship, Art, and Music Coordinators
Sarah Humphrey: Coordinator for Administration, Volunteers, Hardwick Prison Trip and Resident Volunteer Applications
Murphy Davis: Southern Prison Ministry

The Lie of War and the Way of Just Peace: From Just War to Just Peace

By Weldon Nisly

In a heart-breaking yet hopeful June letter to the scattered Open Door community, the leaders of the Community shared a discerning word about the transition to come. Their letter concluded:

We live in dark days with the reality of perpetual war and ever-increasing violence and greed. But we are a people of engaged hope: everywhere that sisters and brothers join together to agitate for justice and in service to the poor and exploited, the light of hope shines on our path to lead us toward the Beloved Community.

This is a prophetic word for all of us in our current climate of endless war. It expresses a hard word and hopeful truth that I hold in my heart for the Beloved Community as I join you in agitating for Just Peace.

As a tribute to the Beloved Community of the Open Door, with this article I begin a series of reflections on Just Peace for *Hospitality*.

long, dark, and shameful corridors of time reserved for those who possess power without compassion, might without morality, and strength without sight. Now let us begin. Now let us rededicate ourselves to the long and bitter, but beautiful, struggle for a new world. This is the calling of the [children] of God.

King knew the cost of breaking silence and confronting the principalities and powers of war. Exactly one year later, he was killed by these imperial powers for exposing the lie of war.

Lest we dismiss this prophetic word as being for another war and time, we do well to hear it anew (web search: MLK “Beyond Vietnam” sermon at Riverside Church in New York). King’s Word from God pleads to be heard and heeded today as much or more than a half century ago.

America’s penchant for war and pretension of Just War is tragically evident and tragically evaded. Our permanent war culture is beholden to the white Jesus of patriotic Christians. The Black Jesus of the Gospels calls us to Just Peace not Just War. A paradigm shift essential for our country, church and communities is to abandon Just War and live Just Peace.

passion for peace – *Pax Christi* confronting *pax Americana*.

Sojourners editor Rose Marie Berger tells the story of how she and Dan conspired to go off-script in a National Cathedral event remembering the U.S. bombing of Hiroshima. In a highly scripted Cathedral commemoration, Rose Marie went off-script to read from Thomas Merton’s “Original Child Bomb,” an anti-poem summed up in President Truman’s words, “We found the bomb and we used it.” Then Dan went off-script by proclaiming, “Violence only exists with the help of a lie. Today in America, [the] church, to our great shame, has perpetuated the lie.” Good Christians were greatly disturbed, not by the lie, but by Dan and Rose Marie, who dared to reveal the lie. They were banned from the Cathedral for naming the lie and fracturing the good order of the day (<https://sojo.net/articles/catholicism-made-pope-francis-possible>).

In biblical time and in our time, prophetic voices confronting the lie of violence with the Truth of the Black Jesus fracture good order and disturb good Christians. Being disturbed forces us to make a choice: banish the Truth to uphold the lie or uphold the Truth to banish the lie.

Called to Contemplative Just Peacebuilding

I grew up on an Iowa farm in a sectarian conservative Mennonite community that kept distance from “the world” by eschewing “politics.” I was formed in strong extended family life and biblical faith, with our identity being disciples of Jesus in the Church. It meant an unwavering commitment to *nonresistance* as The Way of Jesus. This was most clearly manifested through conscientious objection to war, which meant that Mennonite young men refused to be conscripted into the military. This Mennonite Christian way of life and faith grounded me in Jesus, the Bible, and a Beloved Community far removed from the world.

As a teenager, I ran into a problem. I was fascinated by “the world” and filled with questions pushing me beyond the boundaries of my Mennonite community. A restless resistance awakened within me a political consciousness that confronted my communally established apolitical nonresistance. I found a deep tension in my inner being. On the one hand, I felt pulled toward rejection of my sectarian Mennonite faith and community that seemed to live by rule-enforced boundaries with little tolerance for questions or exploration. On the other hand, I felt drawn deeper into God and “The politics of Jesus” and to people and communities who shared that journey.

A series of life-changing decisions led me along the latter path without entirely rejecting my community of origin. I married Margaret and found that marriage provided some freedom from my childhood Conservative Mennonite Church. For a time we didn’t attend Church and later became members of a larger stream of the Mennonite Church which opened further freedom. I attended the University of Iowa, studying economics and political science to explore how the world works. Then I became a political organizer in Iowa and quickly learned much about the best and the worst of politics. I learned that there was truth in my Mennonite community’s critique of the world and reason for eschewing politics. I also learned that there was a safe simplicity in my sectarian Mennonite faith that was blind to what was good and needed in the world. Even more, I learned how injustice was inflicted on the most vulnerable people and violence was foisted on the world by our dominant white Christian culture.

In a series of Spirit-filled discerning encounters and experiences, I was clearly called into ministry in 1973. Over



Weldon Nisly teaching at the Open Door Community.

Calvin Kimbrough

Our nation’s endless war is a desperate attempt to kill “the light of hope [that] shines on our path to lead us toward the Beloved Community.” Endless war is rooted in the lies and violence of Just War Theory. Just War is just war waged against poor and oppressed people at home and around the world.

In a defining sermon on April 4, 1967, Martin Luther King Jr. decried America’s interwoven sins of racism, materialism, and militarism leading to spiritual death. King confessed that the fierce urgency of the time compelled him to break silence about the war in Vietnam by confronting our warring ways and connecting them with racism and materialism. He concluded:

We still have a choice today: nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation. We must move past indecision to action. We must find new ways to speak for peace in Vietnam and justice throughout the developing world, a world that borders on our doors. If we do not act, we shall surely be dragged down the

I use the image of “white Jesus” with reference to the Jesus claimed by white American Christians. Jim Wallis, speaking about his new book, *America’s Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and a Bridge to a New America*, says, “If white Christians in America acted more Christian than white, black parents would be less fearful for their children.” I use the image of Black Jesus that I am learning from none other than the Open Door’s Ed Loring.

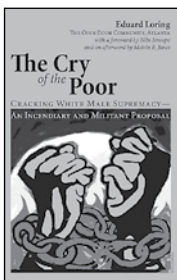
In future columns I will explore a vision for Just Peace as a paradigm shift away from Just War. In this inaugural *Just Peace* article, I offer a word about violence and the lie of war and share a little about myself and what God has set before me for life and ministry.

The Lie of Violence leads to War

“Violence only exists with the help of a lie,” proclaimed the prophetic priest and peacemaking poet Daniel Berrigan, on the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima. Berrigan died in late April a few days before his 95th birthday. In death as in life, he inspired many of us with his poetic, prophetic

The Lie of War continued on page 7

The Open Door Community Press Books



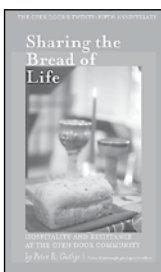
The Cry of the Poor
Cracking White Male Supremacy —
An Incendiary and Militant Proposal

By **Eduard Loring**
foreword by Nibs Stroupe
afterword by Melvin Jones
99 pages
paperback
\$10.00 suggested donation

The Festival of Shelters
A Celebration
for Love and Justice

By **Eduard Loring**
with Heather Barger
preface by Dick Rustay

66 pages
19 color photographs
Paperback
Free for the asking



Sharing the Bread of Life
Hospitality and Resistance
at the Open Door Community

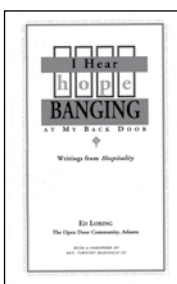
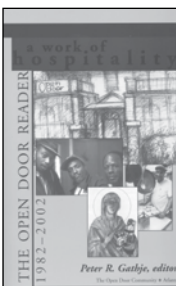
By **Peter R. Gathje**

272 pages
45 photographs
Paperback
\$10.00 suggested donation

A Work of Hospitality
The Open Door Reader
1982 - 2002

Peter R. Gathje, editor

384 pages
Bibliography and Index
Paperback
\$15.00 suggested donation



**I Hear Hope Banging
at My Back Door**
Writings from *Hospitality*

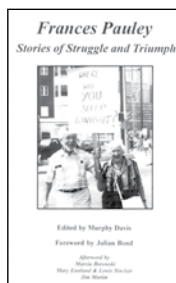
By **Eduard Loring**
Foreword by Rev. Timothy McDonald III

82 pages
21 photographs
available only online at
www.opendoorcommunity.org

Frances Pauley
Stories of Struggle and Triumph

Edited by **Murphy Davis**
Foreword by Julian Bond

89 pages
28 photographs
Paperback
\$3.00 suggested donation



to order:
The Open Door Community
910 Ponce de Leon Ave., N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30306-4212
404.874.9652 ext. 101
www.opendoorcommunity.org

*If funds are not available,
copies will be sent at no expense.*

poetry corner



Julie Lonneman

Contemplative Just Peace Prayer

Beloved sisters and brothers,
let us become Contemplative Prayer for Just Peace!
I know it is not easy or likable or comfortable.
I know my head and heart are full of loud messages.
I get little just peace.

And yet....
And yet, contemplative prayer....
And yet, contemplative prayer
helps me distinguish loud messages of love
from loud messages of violence.

Contemplative prayer keeps me from the "f" word of violence.
The "f" word populates the violent language of the land.
The three-fold "f" word — fight, flight, freeze
— turns the loud messages of our heart and head into violence.

Contemplative Prayer — the heart of Contemplative Just Peace
— exposes the crass violence of Just War as just war.

Contemplative Prayer lives into a world beyond war,
beyond fight, flight, freeze.
Contemplative Prayer is our fragile frail real union with God
and all that is God's and all that is.

— **Weldon Nisly**
July 4, 2016

Weldon Nisly is a retired pastor of Seattle Mennonite Church and a faithful peacemaker and justice seeker. (nislyweldon@gmail.com)

*Hospitality welcomes poems from people in Georgia prisons or living on the streets in Georgia.
Send submissions to Eduard Loring, Open Door Community, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave. N.E., Atlanta, GA 30306
or by email to hospitalitypoetrycorner@gmail.com.*

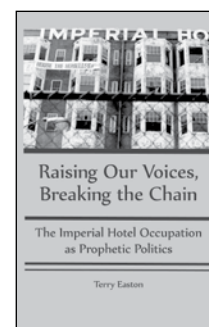
New!

Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain
The Imperial Hotel Occupation as Prophetic Politics

By **Terry Easton**

Terry Easton is associate professor of English in the College of Arts and Letters at the University of North Georgia. His dissertation on Atlanta's day laborers, Temporary Work, Contingent Lives: Race, Immigration, and Transformations of Atlanta's Daily Work, Daily Pay, won the Constance Coiner Dissertation Award of the Working Class Studies Association. In addition to holding a firm commitment to bridging the chasm between the academy and the streets, he strives to eradicate classism in America.

\$10.00 suggested donation



Raising Our Voices, Breaking the Chain is an authentic, powerful, moving retelling of an epic time in the history of Atlanta when the issue of homelessness was taken to another level because homeless activists and advocates said, "Enough is enough," and occupied the Imperial Hotel. This occupation caused the city fathers and business community to rethink how they addressed the issue of homelessness, and, if only for a season, housing the homeless and affordable housing was on the lips of the powerful. A once-perceived voiceless and powerless people were empowered and changed the housing landscape of Atlanta. This book is a must-read for anyone who believes that the power of the people can change the discourse and direction of a city.

— **Rev. Timothy McDonald III**, Pastor, First Iconium Baptist Church, Atlanta

Available Now! The Open Door Community 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., N.E. Atlanta, GA 30306-4212
404.874.9652 ext. 101 *If funds are not available, copies will be sent at no expense.*

Jesus Discipleship and Buddhist Peacemakers on Peachtree Street

By Eduard Loring

I

Over the years I have hoped and prayed that the Christian Peacemaker Teams would name the unUnited States of America as a war zone. A few weeks ago Murphy and I were in Baltimore, hugging and playing with the apple of our eye, Miss Michaelalala (named for the great Atlanta peace activist Michael Vosburg-Casey). After church I drove to the neighborhood where Freddie Gray lived out his short life in the prison of poverty and slavery for being male and Black — a sure death warrant for many. I was shocked. Unprepared, though Willa and Brenden and the articles in *Enthusiasm* taught me much.

I could hear a call to drive (doors locked) into this war zone. Earlier that week on *Democracy Now*, I had seen pictures of the devastation in Daraya, Syria as the UN attempted to get medicine and baby formula (no food) into the city. Well, here before me in Baltimore I saw the rubble and burned out buildings. I beheld children and decrepit elders older than Dick Rustay. Children playing in the street. Idle men “hanging out.” Old people sitting in trash and emptiness. No such place of abandonment and barless cages have I ever seen in Atlanta. Though in the city too busy to care, poverty strangles. The poor die. The Other Atlanta, like The Other America, is a war zone.

Republican policies are crafted to kill the poor. For instance, the refusal to expand Medicaid. Why? Don’t you know? Obama is Black. Can’t get rid of him. Let’s kill ten people a day in Georgia and let rural hospitals close. Why, this is better than our “legal constitutional” killing machine — the death gurney. Maybe no drones blasting the rural hospitals, just benign neglect with the insidious intention to let them die in their disease. And this is among doctors WITHIN BORDERS! I am not laying the blame for this murderous war in the unU.S.A. on the Republicans alone. They make it part of their platforms. We are all a part of the public policies of our war against the poor. We are all guilty and responsible. We no longer have Dan Berrigan. What shall we do?

On Wednesday, June 15, Donald Trump brought his gang of thugs and hateful white supremacists to Atlanta, rallying at the famous Fox Theater.

Yes. War and the rumors of war kill the poor, maim the homeless, and as I write, Georgia is executing more brothers and a sister at a faster rate than any other state in the country. John Wayne Conner was executed July 17 — a man Murphy has been visiting for 34 years.

Someone asked us the other day what we had accomplished in our 40 years in the streets and prisons in Atlanta. Well, using a telemetry tool, we are failures. Or as Murphy has said since the election of Ronald Reagan, “As much of our work has been to stop social injustice as it has been to establish social justice.” Nonetheless the NRA and its deformed followers think we are fools. Our governor believes each of us at the ODC should carry a weapon. Atlanta is a war zone.

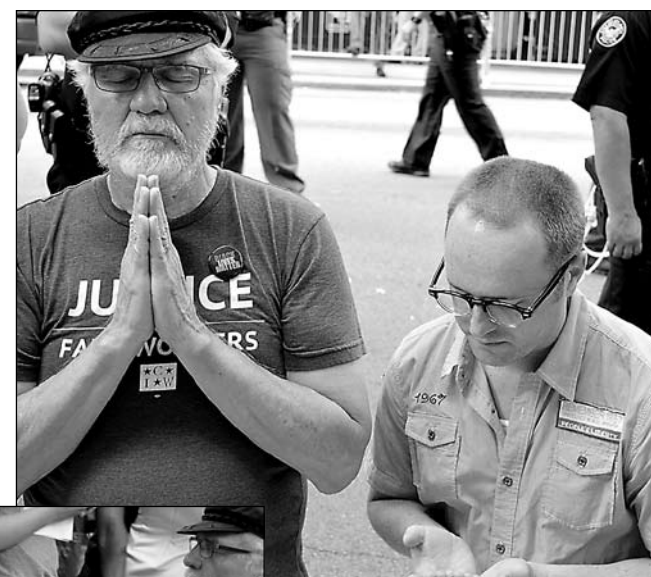
II

On Wednesday, June 15, Donald Trump brought his gang of thugs and hateful white supremacists to Atlanta, rallying at the famous Fox Theater. Joining him was a large number of young white males and a scattering of young Black

males — no doubt the progeny of Judge Clarence Thomas.

That morning, many of the white characters formed by *Gone With the Wind* and the New South of Pitchfork Ben Tillman and Strom Thurmond attended a high-dollar Buckhead *fund* raiser for the golf-playing billionaire at Charlie Loudermilk’s house (a home?). He, a favorite of the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce and Central Atlanta Progress, hosted a gathering for \$2,700 per entry and \$25,000 for a picture beside the Trump. Then on to the rally.

Eddie Barr and I joined the rally to lift our bodies and blare our voices against the words and policies of Donald Trump. The Progressive side of the street was filled with protesters. *The mix was horrible*. Arriving at Peachtree from Ponce, our first encounter was with a group selling tee shirts screaming in bold blood-red: F... Trump. I stopped to protest. I was bellowed at for protesting the ugly dehumanization of Trump. Some bystanders believed I was a Trump supporter and told me to get the f... out of there. I felt a deep sorrow. The Beloved Community? The disciplines of the Spirit? Love is the only solution? Nonviolence of word and deed? (The only pistol I saw over the two hours was holstered by an African American wearing a Ron Paul tee shirt who continued to walk up and down the sidewalk on the anti-Trump side. Why?)



Photographs by Heather Gray

Above: **Eduard Loring** and **Josh Noblitt** kneeling in prayer.

Left: They are joined by others.

Don’t misunderstand me. Hundreds of people of goodwill and love made up the majority of the Trump rally. One of my favorite signs, and there were many of them, proclaimed, “Love Trumps

Hate.” Yes. In Deed. The problems of the language of dehumanizing rage (“Shoot Trump, Shoot Trump”) and the fist-fighting and shoving was mostly young white males on both sides of the aisle. The protest rally was a failure in the forward movement of the political revolution that is going on in this besieged land. Rather, the language (the mouth speaks what the heart is full of) and the violence are bitter fruits of lives without discipline and values of commitment and liberation. I don’t think a one of them have been formed by the great spiritual contents of Amy Goodman and *Democracy Now* or Heather Gray and her writings. We might be for Bernie, Hillary, or Jill Stein, but if you use the means of the Republicans, Trump, the KKK, rich Christians in an age of desolation, or of our client state Israel, we are doomed. That will lead to just another change in the same power structure of evil and oppression.

After a few fights and the tensions growing hotter, the filth of tongues and the clench of fists multiplying, I decided to do what I learned from Weldon Nisly of Christian Peacemaker Teams — means he practiced in the war zones of Iraq. Weldon, my mentor, put his body in the midst of unU.S.A. war for the sake of peace and the Iraqi people.

I went searching for my brother Josh Noblitt. He is a

Along the balcony and the railing of the porch at the Georgian Terrace, banners called for coital action with Trump. I was embarrassed. I never saw one symbol of the Christian faith and I only saw one ordained minister — my good friend, a Methodist gay activist and pastor. Why? Only two of us from Democratic Socialists of America did I see. Why?

DSA is an organization to which I give great allegiance. Like all the secular organizations and many faith-based groups as well, many devalue a communal inward journey. We of radical discipleship believe with Peter Maurin, Jesus, Gandhi, Buddha, Dorothy and Jeremiah that only the inward journey can be the basis of a political revolution. William Stringfellow names this “the politics of spirituality.” Che Guevara, a revolutionary using guns and killing, was a Marxist leader who embodied the inward change (new consciousness) to move into solidarity with the workers. He was a medical student. He had a terrible wound: respiratory damage, severe when anxious or intense. Like Harriet Tubman and her “fainting spells.” Without a wound, without a suffering place in mind or body, how could you care? Why not live the “good and polite bourgeois life of the American Way of death?”

Jesus Discipleship continued on page 7

Through Many Dangers *continued from page 1*

vibrant colors. His imagination enlarged his world beyond the concrete and steel cage that held him all those years and he shared the fruits gladly. And for many years John was the “house man” on his cell block. This meant that he stayed out of his cell much of the day to clean, fix things and buff the floors. When the warden brought visitors back to death row, he always took them to “Conner’s cell block.” He knew it would be meticulously cleaned and that John would be happy to share his art gallery. When the guards needed something fixed, they took it down to John’s cell. One of them testified, “John Wayne Conner is worth saving.”

Indeed, John’s deep and enduring change was witnessed and reported by a large number of prison employees who risked the wrath of the system to stand up for John and speak of what a help and an asset he had been for all of his years in G-House. A former warden stopped to visit John and passed along his personal cell phone number to speak up for Shorty in any way he could.

But as these things go in Georgia, none of it mattered. The Board of No Mercy (known publicly as the Board of Pardons and Paroles) does not grant clemency these days. Speaking to them about redemption and conversion — about restoration and change — is like speaking to a brick wall. They are the political appointees of several Republubbba governors who have no interest in interrupting the old Southern tradition

of ritualized violence against the poor. They are an institutional embodiment of the damaged and twisted soul of Carroll Conner. It is a sick and self-defeating system that has helped to bring us to the sad state of affairs in the U.S.A. today.

Because “good Christian people” have been silent as our nation has executed some of the most vulnerable among us; because the institutional church has chosen willful ignorance and timidity in the face of state violence from prisons and execution chambers to systemic and widespread police violence on the streets; because the urgent cries to stop the “Schools to Prisons Pipeline” has fallen mostly on deaf ears; because highly educated “moral” citizens have had *nothing* to say as basic American civil and human rights have been shredded by state and federal courts and the Congress of the United States in the name of “expediting death row appeals” or “keeping us safe from illegal aliens or terrorism” (cf, Bill Clinton’s Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act or George W. Bush’s Patriot Act, just for starters); because we did not act when we had the opportunity to make a difference, we are descending into deep chaos and the very real threat of fascism.

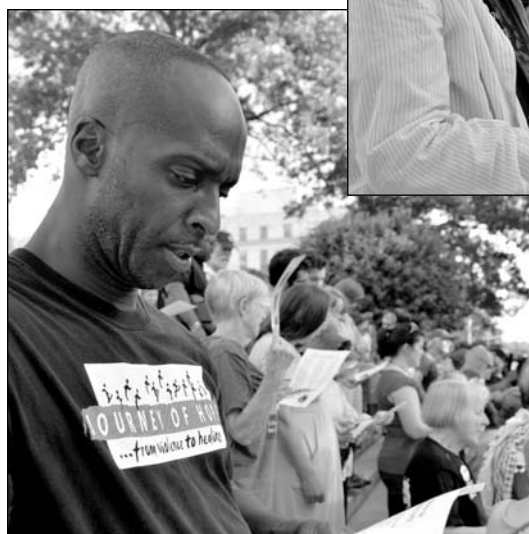
So pardon me if I correlate the execution of John Wayne Conner and the Republican National Convention. A very ugly spirit has gripped the soul of this country, and we who consider ourselves defenders of human rights and human dignity and basic fairness and decency have allowed it to happen. If

we claim to be surprised that a strongman speaking like Adolf Hitler announces that he is the Only One Who Can Save Us, then we are kidding ourselves. At the moment we decide that any human being is disposable, we have stepped onto the slope that slides toward a murderous tyranny. We are responsible for the mess we are in.

As I looked over John’s letters from the past 34 years I noted that almost every letter was signed: “Well, sis, I’ll let you go for now. God bless. Your bro John.” I am thankful to be a living witness to John’s restored life — a testimony to the ongoing hope that no human life is beyond the possibility of transformation. This man was judicially “written off” in 1982; he was given up for dead. But as he sometimes said, “God ain’t through with me yet.” In his final days he sat with his friends, family and lawyers as a tower of strength and steadfast faith. He comforted his sisters and thanked his lawyers. He was not afraid. His execution was noticed and mourned by the people who knew him — his remaining family, his friends on death row, prison staff, and advocates who knew of him and his transformation. John Wayne Conner was my bro; remembering him and his story will always help me to keep my hope alive. ✦

Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community. (murphydavis@bellsouth.net)

Vigil for Life at the Death of John Wayne Conner



The Open Door Community hosted a vigil on the front steps of the Capitol to call for the abolition of the death penalty at the time of John Wayne Conner’s execution. *Above left: Dick Rustay leads the reading of names of the 56 men executed in Georgia since 1983, following the reinstatement of the death penalty in 1976. Left: Kevan Whiteside reads from the list. Below left: Members of the Youth Theological Initiative at Candler School of Theology joined us for the vigil. Above right: Murphy Davis remembers John Wayne Conner. Right: Lauren Kay Bush calls for the end of executions. Below: Eduard Loring gives the Charge and Benediction.*



Photographs by Calvin Kimbrough

The Lie of War and the Way of Just Peace *continued from page 3*

four decades God set before me various ministries having to do with poverty and injustice, service and peace, pastoral and birthing new bridging ministries. We lived in intentional community in Philadelphia where I worked with the Mennonite Central Committee peace office on nuclear disarmament. We lived in Cincinnati where I pastored a Mennonite congregation and was involved in Witness for Peace and Pastors for Peace in our U.S. war in Nicaragua, and the Network of Biblical Storytellers (www.nbsint.org). More recently we have lived in Seattle where I was pastor at Seattle Mennonite Church for almost two decades before retiring in late 2013. During these years, I helped establish a community ministry in our neighborhood (<https://www.seattlemennonite.org/community/>), and helped found the Mennonite Catholic Bridge-folk movement (www.bridgefolk.net). And I served with Christian Peacemaker Teams (www.cpt.org) in Iraq in 2003 and 2014 as well as returning to Rutba, Iraq, in 2010 with a peace team to thank the medical caregivers who saved our lives when several of us were injured in the early days of our U.S.-led war on Iraq. That story is told in a book entitled *The Gospel of Rutba: War, Peace, and the Good Samaritan Story in Iraq*, by Greg Barrett, a writer who returned to Iraq with us in 2010 (<http://www.thegospelofrutba.com/>).

Over my ministry lifetime I have been deeply blessed by many wonderful mentors, teachers, spiritual guides and friends, including Ed Loring (whom I first met on a Witness

for Peace delegation in Nicaragua in 1984!) and Murphy Davis. My spiritual formation has been particularly shaped by the Franciscan Richard Rohr, by Catholic Sisters, by Benedictine monastic spirituality and becoming an Oblate of Saint John's Abbey in Minnesota, and through Contemplative Spiritual Leadership training with the Shalem Institute.

My spiritual journey and ministry on The Way with Jesus and the Beloved Community has taught me that: First, our primary task is to listen to what God is setting before us and live into it as fully and faithfully as possible. Second, if someone's not throwing rocks at your house, you're not living the Gospel (not surprisingly, I learned this from Ed Loring who proclaimed it to me and my Seattle Mennonite congregation). Third, the trajectory of my life and ministry has evolved from being an intense activist to being a contemplative activist to being an active contemplative.

While I have retired from pastoral ministry, I cannot retire from following Jesus or my call to Contemplative Just Peacebuilding. This calling includes sharing reflections on Just Peace with you the Beloved Community of the gathered and scattered Open Door Community. ✦

Weldon Nisly is a retired pastor of Seattle Mennonite Church and a faithful peacemaker and justice seeker. (nislyweldon@gmail.com)

Jesus Discipleship *continued from page 5*

political activist and a pastor at St. Mark's Methodist Church. Found him in the crowd and suggested we go to the front of the police line and kneel down with our faces toward the crowd and in the location of continued taunts, shoving, and the throwing of blows. He was ready. We did so. Shortly, a man from Boston who follows Trump rallies stood beside us with a megaphone. He sang peace songs and used words of comfort calling for an inner peace and self-control in the midst of the disturbances. I knelt with my eyes closed until my knees could take the concrete no more. When I looked up, to my amazement, five young folk sat around us in Buddhist prayer positions. We sat and attempted to practice silence (the new sacrament — Thich Nhat Hanh) 'til a Trump supporter joined us and wanted to argue. Suddenly a downpour ensued. We got up. Most of the crowd sitting out the rain. Shortly the

rally was over. Trump and his minions had gone elsewhere to damage the common good. Eddie Barr and I, soaked, went to find a late lunch.

Thich Nhat Hanh, a Christian Engaged Buddhist, notes that taking sides against the oppressor without love and compassion for the oppressor will never bring about a real change. Was Thomas Merton murdered because he came to see that Christianity and Buddhism must meet and lead us to a "double belonging" for peace to come to Vietnam? The Church? The world? An unU.S.A. Christian Peacemakers Team? Why is Richard Rohr pulled toward non-dual world religions? Why did Pope Ratzinger embrace "The People's Pope" Francis? ✦

Eduard Loring is a Partner at the Open Door Community. (edloring@opendoorcommunity.org)



Meinrad Craighead

Looking for the Dead *continued from page 1*

plan to do with your one wild and precious life?"

How can persons so abused, so hurt, so damaged, move from being "already dead" to knowing their beauty and that their life is precious?

Not every story has a happy ending. So I am going to sit with this one for a while. The guest is not dead; but she's in jail and facing serious prison time. Prison is rarely redemptive.

I know that somewhere beneath her struggle with mental illness and the horrors she has experienced on the streets

there is a precious beautiful child of God. Or as a guest told me, "She's a knucklehead, but she needs love too." God, I pray, may love find her. ✦

Peter Gathje is a professor and Assistant Academic Dean at Memphis Theological Seminary; a founder of Manna House, a place of hospitality in Memphis; and a longtime friend of the Open Door. (pgathje@memphisseminary.edu)

Join us as a Volunteer



Calvin Kimbrough

Samantha Gowing, a student at Davidson College, joined us for the summer as a Resident Volunteer. We have appreciated her smile and her leadership.

Live in a residential Christian community.

Serve Jesus Christ in the hungry, homeless, and imprisoned.

Join street actions and loud and loving nonviolent demonstrations.

Enjoy regular retreats and meditation time at Dayspring Farm.

Join Bible study and theological reflections from the Base.

You might come to the margins and find your center.

until January 15, 2017
Contact: Sarah Humphrey
 at opendoorcomm@bellsouth.net
 or 404.874.9652 ext. 101
 For information visit
www.opendoorcommunity.org

Please Help!

The Open Door needs **2,000 sandwiches** to serve each week!

We need **meat with cheese** sandwiches (no bologna, pb&j or white bread, please) individually wrapped on **whole wheat** bread.

Thank You!



Open Door Community Ministries

Coffee & Sandwiches: Tuesday, 8:30 a.m.
Soup Kitchen: Wednesday, 9 a.m.
Women's Showers: Tuesday, 11 a.m.
Men's Showers: Wednesday, 9 a.m.
Harriet Tubman Free Women's Clinic: Tuesday, 7 p.m.
Harriet Tubman Medical Clinic: Wednesday, 7 p.m.
Harriet Tubman Foot Care Clinic: Wednesday, 7 p.m.
Mail Check: Tuesday & Wednesday, during serving;
Monday, Thursday, Friday & Saturday, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.
Use of Phone: Tuesday & Wednesday, during serving
Prison Ministry: Monthly trip to prisons in Hardwick, Georgia, in partnership with First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville; monthly Jackson death row trip; and pastoral visits to death row and various jails and prisons.

Sunday: We invite you to join us for **Worship** at **4 p.m.** and for supper following worship.

We gratefully accept donations at these times:
Sunday: 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.
Monday: 8:30 a.m. until Noon and 3 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.
Tuesday: Noon until 8:30 p.m.
Wednesday: Noon until 6 p.m.
Thursday: 8:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.
Friday and Saturday: We are closed. We are not able to offer hospitality or accept donations on these days.

Our **Hospitality Ministries** also include visitation and letter writing to prisoners in Georgia, anti-death penalty advocacy, advocacy for the homeless, daily prayer, weekly Eucharist, and Foot Washing.

Join Us for Worship!

We gather for worship and Eucharist at 4 p.m. each Sunday, followed by supper together.
If you are considering bringing a group please contact us at 404.874.9652.
Please visit www.opendoorcommunity.org or call us for the most up-to-date worship schedule.

- August 7

4 p.m. Worship at 910
Hiroshima/Nagasaki Remembrance
Dick Rustay preaching
- August 14

4 p.m. Worship at 910
Eucharistic Service
- August 21

4 p.m. Worship at 910
Catherine Meeks preaching
- August 28

4 p.m. Worship at 910
Eucharistic Service
- September 4

4 p.m. Worship at 910
the Singing Labor Movement
Calvin Kimbrough leading
- September 11

4 p.m. Worship at 910
Nibs Stroupe preaching
- October 30

4 p.m. Worship at 910
Bishop Robert Wright preaching



Calvin Kimbrough

Clarification Meetings at the Open Door



Daniel Nichols

For the latest information and scheduled topics, please call 404.874.9652 or visit www.opendoorcommunity.org.

Medical Needs List

Open Door Medical Cart

ibuprofen
acetaminophen
Lubriderm lotion
cough drops
non-drowsy allergy tablets
cough medicine (alcohol free)

Foot Care Clinic

Epsom salts
anti-bacterial soap
shoe inserts
corn removal pads
exfoliation cream (e.g., apricot scrub)
pumice stones
foot spa
cuticle clippers
latex gloves
nail files (large)
toenail clippers (large)
medicated foot powder
antifungal cream (Tolfanate)

We also need volunteers to help staff our Foot Care Clinic on Wednesday evenings from 6:45 - 9:15 p.m.!

Needs of the Community



Autumn Dennis

we need
T-Shirts
2XL-5XL

Living Needs

- ☐ **jeans** 30-34 waist and 46-60 x 32 long
- ☐ **women's pants** 16-24
- ☐ cotton footies
- ☐ socks
- ☐ **sweat pants** 1x-3x
- ☐ work shirts
- ☐ hoodies
- ☐ belts 34" & up
- ☐ men's underwear M-L
- ☐ women's underwear
- ☐ **reading glasses**
- ☐ **walking shoes** especially sizes 11-15
- ☐ baseball caps

Personal Needs

- ☐ shampoo (large)
- ☐ toothpaste (small)
- ☐ toothbrushes
- ☐ lip balm
- ☐ nail clippers
- ☐ disposable razors

Food Needs

- ☐ fresh fruits & vegetables
- ☐ turkeys/chickens
- ☐ **sandwiches: meat with cheese on whole wheat bread**

Special Needs

- ☐ **backpacks**
- ☐ **MARTA cards**
- ☐ postage stamps
- ☐ trash bags (30 gallon, .85 mil)
- ☐ **a home for every homeless person:** every woman, man and child
- ☐ **an end to executions and mass imprisonment**

Do you have a garden? Can you share some fresh produce for the Open Door Welcome Table? **Thank you!**