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

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June 2015

## A Revolution of the Mind and Heart A Litany

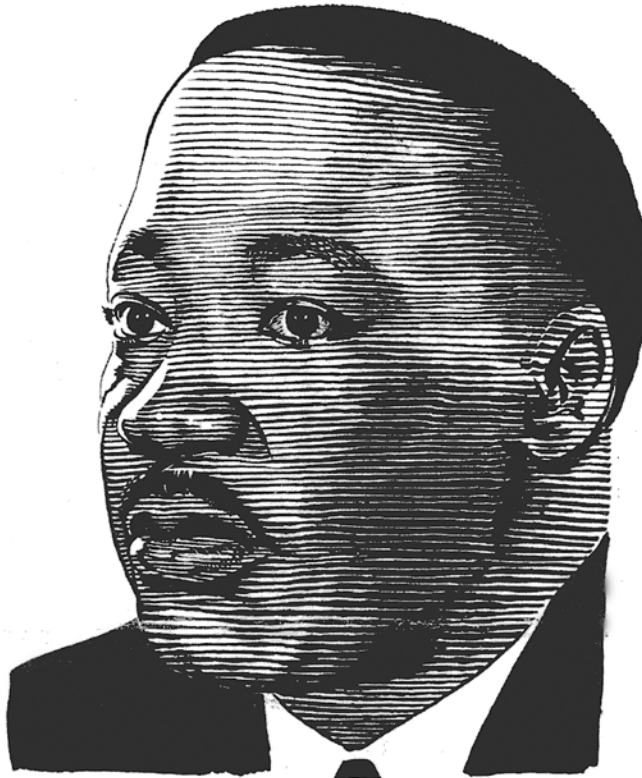
By Carlton Mackey

*Carlton Mackey is Assistant Director of the D. Abbott Turner Program in Ethics and Servant Leadership and Chair of the Ethics & the Arts Initiative at the Emory University Center for Ethics, and a friend of the Open Door Community. He is the creator of BEAUTIFUL IN EVERY SHADE, a grassroots empowerment movement affirming and celebrating the beauty found in every human being (www.beautifuleveryshade.com). He preached this sermon at the Open Door Community during our Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration on Sunday, January 18.*

Every year my understanding of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. evolves. It is as if who he was becomes clearer to me, and I realize that it will take a lifetime for me to fully understand who he was. Dr. King was a true revolutionary. But the revolution didn't simply have as its objectives obtaining the right to vote or giving popular speeches. The revolution didn't have as its ultimate goal bringing down segregation. The revolution then and now, I believe, was a revolution of the mind and heart.

I believe Dr. King wanted folk to actively engage in a process of reformulating the way they thought and felt about themselves. In a society where your ancestors had been enslaved, in a society where you couldn't vote, it's not hard to see how people might begin to think of themselves as second-class citizens. It's not hard to see how people might begin to think of themselves as inferior to other members of society. So I believe the first step in the Civil Rights Movement was revolutionizing the mindset of the Black folks. It was about getting people to see and understand themselves in a new light. Therefore, I believe that certain aspects of the Black Power Movement were essential in advancing King's efforts. What was required was a movement that would raise the consciousness of a generation. Black people needed to see themselves for who they were and not simply for how they were being treated. Black people had to see themselves as people worthy of more, as people who *were* more, and as people who must not wait, who must not waiver, and who must be willing to sacrifice much. People had to incrementally begin to see their own strength. King, in his own way, but much like the Black Power Movement, had to be the herald of the banner that said "Black is beautiful." He had to convince people that they were also rightful heirs of all that was put forward as the American Dream.

As rife with problems as the "American Dream" is to people who are oriented to social justice, it was key to the Movement. Connecting Black people to the American Dream dared Black folks to see themselves as genuine Americans. And it required America to see that the ideals that it was seeking to protect had embedded in those ideals the very people America sought to deny. In essence, what was required was a rethinking of what it meant to be American by elevating



Kerry Dugan

the word *American* itself from an ideal to something real. It meant mentally and physically "reducing the distance" (Ed Loring) between races. It meant having to rethink what the concepts of superiority, beauty and the purity of whiteness meant by forcing the world to see what, in actuality, the ugliness of these concepts looked like when they were acted out. By having much of this broadcast on national television, people were able to come face to face with what even the complicity of holding these ideals in one's heart looked like in action.

The brilliance of the Movement is that it showed that latent, harbored racism built on the false premise of superiority even in one's head is no different than what happened in real time on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma or on the streets of Montgomery. The only difference is that the latent racism has not yet had the opportunity to express itself. The harbored belief of superiority or fear has simply not yet had the opportunity to show what it is capable of doing. You haven't yet had to come face to face with it. King just hadn't yet shown up in *your* town to "cause trouble." You haven't had a Black man try to date your daughter. You haven't had a Muslim family looking to buy a house next to you. You haven't had a chance to come face to face with a teenage Black boy in a hoodie on a rainy day while *you* were "on patrol" or on neighborhood watch. You just haven't had a chance to come face to face with a six-foot, 300-pound Black man standing on a sidewalk. You haven't yet had to deal with *harbored* fear. But what would happen if you got the chance?

In times like these, friends, we have a chance to revisit

Based on John 15

By Murphy Davis

*Leader:*

I love you just as the Holy One has loved me; abide in my love. You will abide in my love when you live as I have taught you — in solidarity with the poor and in resistance against the power of oppression, the violence against women and police violence against Black people.

*People:*

**This is my commandment: Love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down our lives for our friends. You are my friends if you live the life of radical love in healing friendship with the poor that I have taught you.**

*Leader:*

Seek Justice and right relationships. Break down systems of domination and servitude. Wash one another's feet. Become servants to one another in friendship.

*People:*

**"Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love." (Martin Luther King Jr.)**

*Leader:*

I do not call you servants any longer, because servants do not know what those who control them are doing. No, I call you Friends; because I have not come to control you but to set you free to live as disciples. That's why I've told you everything I have learned from the Holy One. You are FREE because you know the Truth.

*People:*

**You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the God of Love will give you whatever you ask in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.**

*Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door Community.*



Daniel Nichols

A Revolution continued on page 6

# The Rebirth of Black Rage in the Age of Obama

By Catherine Meeks

*"We must continue to remind ourselves that in a free society, all are involved in what some are doing. Some of us are guilty, but all of us are responsible."*

— Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel

In 1966, when psychiatrists William Grier and Price Cobbs published *Black Rage*, there was no reason to believe that almost five decades later we would be experiencing the expression of Black rage that we are today. Grier and Cobbs had this to say in the foreword of their book: "Black rage is the result of our failure, after 300 plus years, to make it possible for Blacks to find a sense of identity, a sense of self-worth, to relate to others, to love, to work and to create." And they went further to say,

People bear all they can and if required, bear even more. But, if they are in present-day America they have been asked to shoulder too much. They will be harried no more. Turning from their tormentors, they are filled with rage. (*Black Rage*, p.4)

Forty years after the publication of *Black Rage*, Barack Obama became President. Many young Black folks who had never voted before found their way to the polls. They were sure that a deliverer had come. Life for them would be better because a person who looked like them had the highest job in the land, and for the first time in a long time, there was a sense of hope in the air. But this sense of hope was built on the shakiest of foundations. These young Black people face systemic ills that go beyond the possibility of being corrected during the life span of any one president. The blight in their cities,

the crime, the poor education, the lack of jobs, the family distress, the impact of mass incarceration and the overall sense of being abandoned has flourished in their neighborhoods for far too long.

The young people filled with hope and standing in lines to vote could not have imagined that their deliverer did not belong to them. They did not understand that having skin color in common is not enough to transcend the boundaries of the power of the empire. They did not realize that Barack Obama belonged to the empire in ways that he would not and could not transcend.

None of us knew that Obama would be disrespected more than any other president in the history of this nation; or that his election would unleash a deeply buried layer of white rage that most of us had nearly forgotten existed. The white rage that used to come into play when mobs went to drag an accused Black man out of his house to lynch him for whatever crime

## So the young Black people who were waiting to see the new day for their lives only got the chance to see that hope die before it could be born.

they chose to assign to him. The rage that made it possible for white men to bomb a church, killing innocent little children, as we saw in Birmingham. The rage that resisted every advance that Black people tried to make toward becoming full and complete citizens in this land. We forgot that rage until we began to pay attention to the way that President Obama was being talked about and resisted in every manner by far too many people for it to simply be a matter of political disagreement.

And if we did not believe that race was at the root of some of the resistance that Obama was encountering in trying to do his job, we only had to pay attention to what



Brian Kavanagh

was being said about the First Lady and their lovely children. So the young Black people who were waiting to see the new day for their

a sustainable path as we move forward, we have to understand one another and we have to build new ways of living together or we will perish together. All of us are responsible to look for these new paths. We have to point the way to the youth. They need the love and support of all who are capable of such gifts. The law enforcers need to be purged of the folks who are not capable of doing their work without doing harm, and those who are trying to protect and serve need to be supported. Those who are not protecting and serving need to be held accountable in all ways necessary until every person in a uniform understands that abuse of no one will be tolerated.

Cobbs and Grier have cautioned that it is challenging for the oppressed to determine "what part of their problems, discomforts and deprivations is caused by their own inadequacies and what part by their place in society." This dilemma also leads to rage. Part of the work that lies before us is that of teaching the young better ways to navigate the journey of

lives only got the chance to see that hope die before it could be born.

But that miscarriage led to rebirth. Black rage! And why do we act surprised? What in God's name did we expect to happen? It seems very likely that the uncontrolled expression of aggression from too many law enforcers toward Black people and Black men in particular is a part of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century expression of white rage, and the burning and looting by young Blacks is an expression of Black rage. Neither of these paths can be supported. But it is imperative to understand them both.

Let me be clear: The call to understand is not about acceptance. But in order to build

discerning the difference between personal and societal responsibility, and how to use the energy generated by their rage in better ways. The other part is to work tirelessly to create a society that is trying to become the Beloved Community. ✦

*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.*

## 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.

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Calvin Kimbrough

*Lorna Mauney-Brodek cares for the feet of a friend from the streets during the Harriet Tubman Foot Care Clinic.*

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# A Personal Testimony: The History and Violence of Christianity, Part 1

By Heather Gray,  
with commentary by Eduard Nuessner Loring

*This is the first in a series of collaborative articles by Heather Gray and Eduard Loring. The original texts are courtesy of the Justice Initiative, a project of Heather Gray. Some text has been underlined by Eduard Loring for emphasis for Hospitality readers.*

## Introduction

In relation to recent violence in the Middle East, President Barack Obama reminded the world of the violent side of Christianity, as with the Crusades, and he was wise to do so. He, unfortunately, did not mention the violence wrought by the illegal invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003 that likely accentuated and/or precipitated the increased violence we are witnessing today. Yet right-wing Christians in America angrily denounced Obama for providing this historical fact about the Crusades and the violence of Christianity.

Some Christians, perhaps most Christians, choose not to look at themselves and the history of their religion with a critical analysis. Nor do we look at how Christianity has been used as a tool to exploit other cultures largely for the purpose of colonial and/or capitalist economic expansion.

**Eduard Loring:** I did my Ph.D. dissertation at Vanderbilt. The use of the Gospel to control slaves for their labor and submissiveness was a central part of my work. The slaveholders and the Confederacy lost the War for Freedom 1861-65. Their Christianity did not help them because God was/is on the side of freedom and slaves.

When President George W. Bush espoused rhetoric about faith-based this and faith-based that and plans to further erode the separation of church and state, I yet again became aware of the dangers of organized religion.

**EL:** I agree. Religion is ideology for the status quo or as Marx famously wrote, “the opiate of the proletariat.”

After 9/11, Bush told us he was going after terrorists. If Bush was so concerned about those who support and practice terrorism, then he needed to scrutinize how right-wing Christians here in the U.S. have supported terrorists historically, both in the U.S. and internationally. And further, I thought “Good, maybe this means he’s going after domestic terrorists like the KKK!” I know it was wishful thinking on my part!

**EL:** Yes, the mainline white denominations in the U.S. have not gone after the Ku Klux Klan. As James Cone writes in *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*: How could White Christians (sic?) allow the cross to be turned into a symbol of terror against Black folk, most of whom were fellow Christians. Very few have gone after the Confederate flag, and the first national flag of the Confederacy is today the basis of the state flag of the rogue state of Georgia. Have you read the works of Robert Lewis Dabney or James Henley Thornwell? Two blocks from the Open Door Community the Druid Hills Presbyterian Church has a stained glass window honoring James Henley Thornwell, the theological founder of the Presbyterian Confederate States of America. Rev. Gary Charles of Central Presbyterian of Atlanta said on May 7, 2015 at the Open Door

Community that Dabney and Thornwell are still shapers of every important justice issue we deal with in the South. Following contemporary pro-slavery theologians like Billy Graham, many in the African American Church have become influenced as well. One of the outcomes in our day is the Prosperity Gospel which lived long, long ago in the bank accounts of slaveholders in the South and New York City.

The French sociologist Emile Durkheim was a leading scholar on religion and wrote *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* in 1912. British professor Gordon Lynch writes that “*Durkheim’s first key move in analyzing moral life was to locate it not in the private inner conscience of the superego, but in collective life. ... Belief, as he argued, was not a matter of personal opinion or private religious experience, but ‘belongs to the group and unites it.’*” (*The Guardian* 2012)

What seems to be important for us humans, according to Durkheim, is the collective experience of religious belief, such as needing to be part of a group that thinks in much the same way that we do. This, then, is of greater importance than the personal belief itself. It certainly has its compelling appeal. It could also be called a “tribal” appeal under the guise of Christianity.

Nevertheless, the challenge I think is the tendency of various religious groups to think that only their faith is the correct one and therefore they critique and diminish other groups that hold different religious beliefs. This is certainly true with Christianity. As scholar Shadia Drury has noted, “*It is no exaggeration to say that Christianity has succumbed to a form of arrogance that is extravagant in its recklessness and conceit.*” (*Terror and Civilization*).

**EL:** This statement is true for me, too. One of the most important verses in the New Testament for me and a short creed for my faith (which I always say as I listen to another creedal expression: Bob Dylan’s “I Believe in You”) is Jesus saying “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.” (John 14:6A) But I despise and do not read or quote “No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

Much of the arrogance of Christianity comes from Jesus himself as he is portrayed in the Gospels: Belief in him is the road to God and it essentially does not matter what you do, it’s what you believe.

**EL:** This is a false reading of the synoptic gospels and the Book of James. Paul, the Pharisee and Roman citizen, led the faith in this direction as do upper-class Christians. But this is emphatically NOT Jesus. If it were, he would never have been put to death.

Shadia Drury notes that much of what Jesus espoused is reflected in this brief summary: “*Not believing what Christians believe makes you evil, regardless of how you conduct yourself.*” *Demonizing the opposition is an age-old*



abhmuseum.org

“*Souvenir Portrait of the Lynching of Abram Smith and Thomas Shipp, August 7, 1930 by studio photographer Lawrence Beitler. Courtesy of the Indiana Historical Society.*” —from *America’s Black Holocaust Museum*.

*Christian tactic; it has its foundation in the identity of sin with unbelief which was used effectively by Jesus.*

**EL:** There are a number of healing stories and parables that simply contradict this assertion. Ms. Drury seems to have a cross to grind.

“*If you admit your wickedness and repent, you will be saved; if you do not admit your wickedness and refuse to repent, you will be damned. These are the only two options.*” (*Terror and Civilization*)

**EL:** Not true. At the Open Door Community, a primary text for our faith and politics is Matthew 25:31-46. Going to heaven or hell is not based on faith. It is based on making and practicing a preferential option for the poor regardless of faith or political party.

Christians have much to atone for in their long and egregious history because of this tendency toward exclusivity and arrogance.

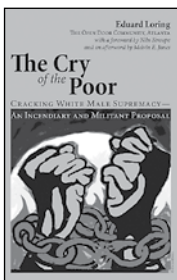
**EL:** Absolutely. Not only atonement, but reparations for the African Americans and poor whites that have been used and enslaved and imprisoned for the economic benefit of middle- and upper-class whites. I would add our long and egregious history of White Supremacy Patriarchal Heterosexism.

Have Christians done some good as well? Yes, but this community is divergent at best. ✦

*Heather Gray is the producer of “Just Peace” on WRFG-Atlanta 89.3 FM covering local, regional, national and international news. She lives in Atlanta, Georgia and can be reached at hmcgray@earthlink.net.*

*Eduard Nuessner Loring is a Partner at the Open Door Community.*

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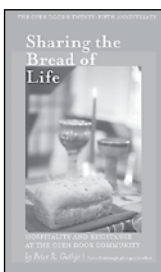
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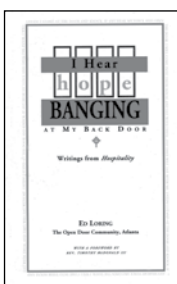
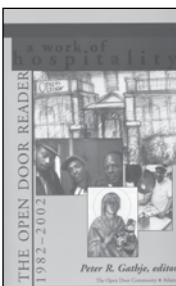
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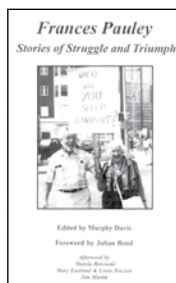
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# Listen: The Heart's Way of Peace

By **Weldon D. Nisly** ObISB

"Listen carefully, my child, to my instructions, and attend to them with the ear of your heart."

—Joan Chittister, *The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Prologue, 3)

"Welcome," Khairy greeted us with a warm smile and outstretched hand. "What brings you here?" A young Ezidi man offered an openhearted welcome in English, even though he was one of thousands of IDPs (Internally Displaced People) in a UN refugee camp in northeastern Iraq. A university computer science student in Mosul, Khairy fled for his life when Mosul was overtaken by ISIS weeks earlier. Fluent in English, Khairy became our guide and interpreter, showing us around Bajid Camp. We were invited into the tent of an Ezidi family to listen to their story of loss and suffering at the hands of ISIS.

Last fall I was in Iraqi Kurdistan with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) to listen with the ear of my heart. CPT is committed to listening as a way of peace: listen to invitations from people living in war and accompany them in seeking peace; listen to children who have lost much and have little, still overflowing with love and joy; and listen to people's loss in war and longing for peace. CPT ([www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org)) has been a listening presence for peace in Iraq since 2002, first from Baghdad and, since 2006, from Sulaymaniyah in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, at the invitation of and in solidarity with local people of peace.

When I arrived at the Sulaymaniyah International Airport in Iraqi Kurdistan, I was welcomed by Mohammed's warm smile and gracious greeting. A school teacher and



[www.traveliraqikurdistan.com](http://www.traveliraqikurdistan.com)

of war. We were involved in a car crash in the desert and were saved by an Iraqi doctor who refused our money, even though his little Rutba hospital had just been bombed by the U.S. He challenged us, "Go and tell the world about Rutba." In January 2010, we returned to thank our caregivers in Rutba. They welcomed us with joyful hearts; we thanked them with grateful hearts. It was a mutual listening with the ears of our hearts in peace.

In Iraqi Kurdistan in September-October 2014, we listened as Muslims, Ezidis, Christians and Kurds pledged to work together for peace. Accompanying a human rights delegation to Dohuk, near the Syrian border, we listened to a Kurdish woman of diplomatic wisdom speak passionately with the governor of the region and compassionately with

## Being present in peace is to listen to cries of the heart connecting peoples around the world.

leader of CPT's Iraqi Kurdistan Team, Mohammed helped me begin to listen to Kurdish life in the midst of war. One evening, walking along a busy street, someone on a motorcycle yelled, "Welcome to Suli" (Sulaymaniyah). As we travelled across Iraqi Kurdistan, a checkpoint guard, hearing we were CPTers, waved us on with, "Welcome to Kurdistan." We were frequently welcomed with tea as we listened to heart-wrenching stories.

The ISIS crisis erupted in Iraq in August, with ISIS gaining control of one third of Iraq and Syria. ISIS leaders are Muslims who listen to extremist interpretations of the Qur'an to justify violence against others. U.S. leaders listen to voices of war, using bombs to "degrade and destroy" ISIS. Our leaders are Christians who listen to extremist interpretations of the Bible to justify violence against others.

War's leaders are not listening with the ear of the heart to Benedict's invitation: "This message is for you, then, if you are ready to give up your own will, once and for all, and armed with the strong and noble weapons of obedience do battle for Jesus, the Christ." (Chittister, Prologue, 3)

Being in Iraqi Kurdistan in peace is to have the ears of one's heart opened to the instructions of Benedict and Jesus. Being present in peace is to listen to cries of the heart connecting peoples around the world. Benedictine spirituality opens our hearts to listen in peace to others and receive them as Christ.

In Iraq, we whose country waged war on theirs were received as Christ by victims of war. I have been in Iraq twice before with CPT and was received as Christ both times. In March 2003, during the early days of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq, I was in Baghdad with CPT to live with Iraqi victims

the displaced Ezidi people. We listened to lively children who playfully followed us in the IDP camps. We listened to traumatized Ezidis tell of missing family members as we documented more than a thousand missing women and girls abducted by ISIS. We listened to angry people who called for bombing to stop ISIS. We listened to languages we don't know: Kurdish, Ezidi, Arabic. Conversations in multiple languages call for constant translation and careful listening, making it impractical to translate every word into English. Nevertheless, to listen in peace with the ear of the heart is to know in one's heart what is said without knowing the language spoken.

Being at the Collegeville Institute from December to April, praying with the Saint John's monastic community and meeting monthly with Oblates has deepened my commitment to listen to the heart of Jesus, Benedict's heart, other hearts, and my heart as I reflect on stories from Iraq and from four decades of peace and pastoral ministry. After Morning Prayer with the monks, I ponder in my heart this listening prayer: "God, I listen for a word or work that you offer to me today. God, I listen for a word or work that you offer through me today."

If there is one word that captures Benedict's Rule it is his first word: Listen! To listen is as much a way of being as doing, as much a way of the heart as work of the ear. To listen to others with the heart is to listen to the Divine in the other and to listen each other into peace. Listening leads us to the Divine and into Divine Obedience. Thanks be to God! ✠

*Weldon Nisly is a retired pastor of Seattle Mennonite Church and a faithful peacemaker and justice seeker.*



# The Christian as “Incessant Revolutionary”

William Stringfellow  
Essential Writings

Edited by Bill Wylie-Kellerman

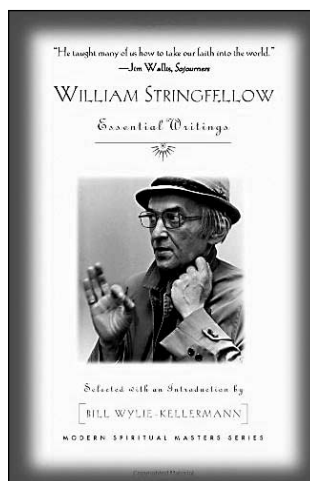
Orbis Books  
Modern Spiritual Masters Series  
192 pages

Reviewed by Peter R. Gathje

I first heard of William Stringfellow and started reading his books when I was working on my dissertation about the radical Catholic peace and justice activists Daniel and Philip Berrigan. On my first visit to Jonah House, Philip Berrigan recommended that I read *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land*. Stringfellow had not been on any of our reading lists for courses in Christian ethics at Emory University. I soon found out why. Stringfellow was not an academic writing for other academics. Instead, he developed a theology and ethics rooted both in the Bible and in social movements for peace and justice.

If you want to gain a clear vision of American culture and its death-dealing ways while also finding a way to live fully and resist death, read this collection of writings.

Stringfellow brought together biblical vision with social critique, and from both he fashioned a compelling case for a Christian practice of resistance to death through a vibrant commitment to authentic human life. Here was a theologian and ethicist who addressed with biblical clarity the death-dealing nature of racism, poverty and war (among other issues) while providing a foundation for discipleship organized around Jesus' call to fullness of life. I could see why Philip Berrigan regarded Stringfellow as essential reading.



Stringfellow to give us the heart of this excellent theology. Though Stringfellow died in 1985, and wrote his most important works in the 1960s and '70s, his writings remain lively and helpful for contemporary Christian life.

Kellerman brings out the main contours of Stringfellow's concerns by organizing the selections around major theological and ethical themes: Word, Jesus, Spirit, Sacrament, Church, Empire and Living Humanly. This gives a

Bill Wylie-Kellerman's *William Stringfellow: Essential Writings* provides an excellent introduction to Stringfellow's biblically grounded theology and ethics. If you want to gain a clear vision of American culture and its death-dealing ways while also finding a way to live fully and resist death, read this collection of writings. Kellerman has deftly edited selections from

those concerns as part of a larger story, a biblical story of powers and principalities given over to the power of death. In this, he is the forerunner of Walter Wink and others who have developed this essential part of New Testament theology. Stringfellow also brought out the image of Empire from biblical stories. The importance of this image has only increased over the years, and is being addressed by contemporary scholars such as Wes Howard-Brook in his *Out of Empire*, an excellent in-depth development of Stringfellow's theme.

Stringfellow moves beyond biblically based social critique to develop the alternative of Christian discipleship, a life given to living humanly and to resisting the powers of death through commitment to life as given in Jesus Christ. Stringfellow's ethic is Jesus-centered; it takes seriously that Jesus' life and teachings are resources for contemporary discipleship. This is not done as a simplistic and moralistic "What would Jesus do?" Rather, Stringfellow invites us into the tenor and text of the life of Jesus. Jesus calls us into maturity as humans, into the freedom of the Gospel over against the narrow and death-dealing strictures of conventional life. Stringfellow writes, "The Christian is an incessant revolutionary. He [sic] is always, everywhere in revolt — not for himself but for humanity. . . . The Christian as revolutionary is constantly welcoming the gift of human life . . . by exposing, opposing, and overturning all that betrays, entraps, or attempts to kill human life."

If you are looking for a book that is solidly biblical, unsparingly realistic about our condition in this society and at the same time inspiringly hopeful about how we may live as disciples of Jesus, you cannot go wrong with Kellerman's *William Stringfellow: Essential Writings*. ✦

*Peter R. Gathje is a professor and assistant dean at Memphis Theological Seminary; a founder of Manna House, a place of hospitality in Memphis, Tennessee; and a longtime friend of the Open Door.*

## Daily Misery and Suffering on Death Row

By a Death Row Prisoner

This is what we face nowadays. People talk bad about prison food, but when I came here to death row in the 1990s the food was pretty decent. It was cooked well, and though it might not be steaming hot, it was warm. We had real beef, real pork, real fish, real chicken, and lots of fresh fruit and vegetables. The portions were of good size as well and the food was cooked done and on clean trays.

Our meals now are served on insulated trays that have holes in them leaking dirty dishwater on the food. The bread and cake are half raw. We used to get real eggs — boiled, fried or scrambled. Now it is instant eggs, and though the directions say mix powdered eggs with milk, they use water.

We usually only have one kind of meat. It is canned and I'm not sure what it is. The portions are small. You go hungry unless you have money to spend on their profit-making store. The veggies are canned squash, carrots and potatoes. They are very seldom rinsed off. Dump and serve. Pinto beans and navy beans, half cooked, dirt and all. The food is cold.

Chicken and rice — one chicken mixed with rice will feed twenty. Where is the chicken? We get bones and skin to make up for the meat. Soybean patties and sausages have no flavor. The prisons up north used to serve them until they were forced to stop serving Vitapro ("dog food") Patties.

Store profits used to provide us with four cookouts a

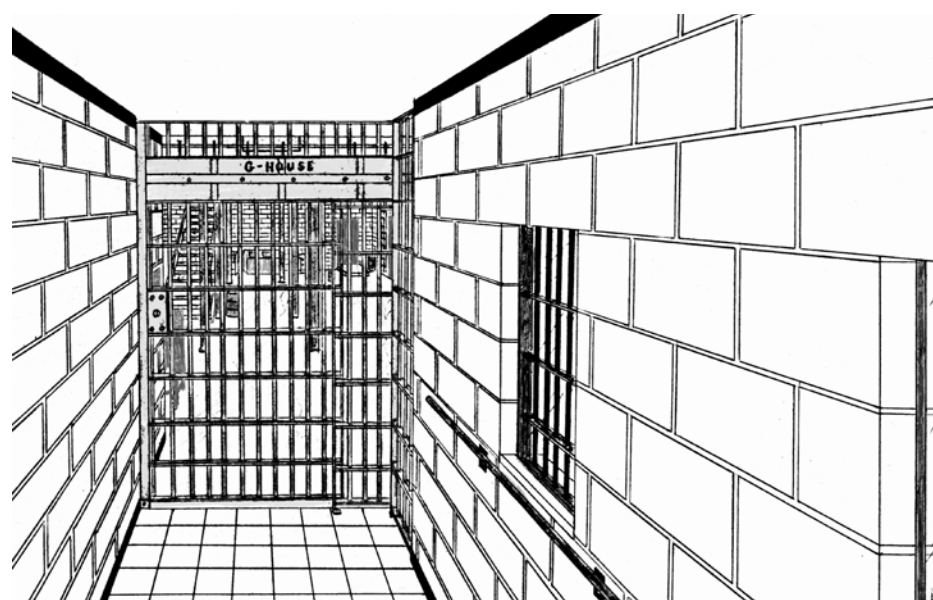
year, tennis shoes twice a year, and weave craft and art supplies. We get nothing now. Where are the profits going? The only thing we get are inspections and tour groups.

It used to be people came in to see how we lived, how we used our time. We could be in bed or whatever as long as we were not nude. Now we must always be fully dressed and people are told not to talk to us. We are a show. We are like monkeys in a cage, poked and prodded at. We used to stick together; now we had rather stab each other in the back while pretending to be friends.

On death row, living conditions are inhumane.

On death row, living conditions are inhumane. No heat, and moisture dripping from the ceilings, running down the walls, seeping from the floors, mold everywhere. We don't work outside, yet our clothes look like we do.

Life goes on! In the past, if we were ill and needed to be



Eddie Crawford

seen we turned in a sick-call slip. Next morning we were up at Medical. Dental the same way. Every six months we got our teeth cleaned. Now it may be a week before we are seen by Medical. I got my teeth cleaned last year after trying for three and a half years. I had three teeth that needed fillings. One gives me trouble now.

Well this is life on death row. We are at the bottom of the pile in all respects. ✦

## A Revolution of the Mind and Heart *continued from page 1*

Dr. King's tactics. We have the opportunity to take part in another societal, revolutionary movement of the mind. We have the opportunity to dare to ask the questions of others and ourselves: "Who are you? What are your fears? How did they get there? What are you capable of doing?"

Those questions aren't just for everyone else. Those aren't questions just for those we want to deem as the bad guys — the "racists." Though the Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts were passed, we still need to ask "What kind of world do we want?" We are positioned to ask "Who are *we*, as Americans, as white people, as people of color, as allies?" We are also positioned to think about who we want to be. We have the opportunity to think about how we see ourselves and how much rage or self-hatred we in this room are carrying as a result of bearing the weight of the negative way people see us, and to think about the consequences of that.

I'm reminded of the story of one they called a demoniac in a place called Gerasa. (Luke 8:26-37) If you will allow me some poetic license, some creative interpretation, I'd like to retell the story.

You are in the town of Gerasa, a small province right outside of Amman, the home of a man who is said to be stone-cold crazy, a man who is out of his mind, who has no idea who he is. He lives up in the hills among the tombs, where people have given up on living. It is said that he is in a constant state of rage. He has detached himself from the community (or perhaps he was forcibly removed); but the community knows exactly where he is. They can see him. They can always point to him, make fun of him from a distance, observe his behavior. And though they cannot bind him physically, though they have tried repeatedly, his own mental bondage and isolation give them a level of control over him.

The story goes that, after spending an entire night out at sea, very early one morning Jesus and his disciples landed in the country of the Gerasenes on the side of the hill where the demoniac lived. Just as John helped Jesus out of the boat and James grabbed the rope to tie the boat to a tree, a big black figure appeared. Caught by surprise, Simon Peter reached for his sword, Andrew jumped behind a bush and Jesus stood poised right where he was. The demoniac ran toward Jesus and threw his hands in the air. Matthew got ready to apply an NYPD-style chokehold.

Then there was silence. When the men gathered themselves they saw the man bowed down at the feet of Jesus crying and pleading for his life. Somehow this big scary man

For each of us there are thousands of voices: voices living in our heads and in our spirits that are constantly speaking. These voices oftentimes take over our lives and influence our behavior and our decisions. These voices speak so loudly that we can barely hear our *own* voice. If asked the question "Who are you?" our response may as well be "We are Legion."

There are voices from the media constantly bombarding us, telling us who we are. And the most obvious take-away is we certainly aren't good enough: We are too black; we are to be feared; we deserve to be in bondage. Voices that say that we're too illegal, that we need to be sent back; but oh, on second thought, we need you to work. Voices that say that we're too fat and we should apologize for taking up space. Voices that say we're too gay and our unions should be banned. Voices that say mental illness is a crime. Voices that say we



Brian Kavanagh

are too poor and we are not welcome. Voices that say we don't deserve to be insured, protected, loved, cared for. Voices that say we're lazy and just need to work harder — until we're dang near crazy!

But as my grandma would say, "Thank God for Jesus." Thank God for liberating our minds. Thank God for seeing us for who we are and not for what they call us. Thank God for seeing us for who we are and not for our circumstances. Thank God for the gift of art and creative expression and its

<sup>34</sup>When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled, and told it in the city and in the country.

<sup>35</sup>Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus, and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. <sup>36</sup>And those who had seen it told them how he who had been possessed with demons was healed. <sup>37</sup>Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them; for they were seized with great fear.

I find it interesting that the word *fear* was never used to describe the community before the man was healed. You would think they would be afraid of the man when he was

at his wit's end and he was up on a hill howling at the moon and out of his mind. But apparently that fear was minimized because they never really had to get too close to him. He didn't live in their neighborhood. As long as he was marginalized to the outskirts of the community, he was fine. As long as he didn't live in the tourist district, he was fine. Even though he was "crazy" and didn't have a house or wear any clothes, as long as he was guarded, as long as he was causing harm only to himself, as long as he wasn't shooting folks in the neighborhood ....

Once you have become awakened, you can see the tomfoolery for what it is. Once you know what is going on in the world around you more clearly, you can see the connection between poverty and race and how what is happening in Palestine is connected to what is happening in America. When that awakening happens, we move from isolation to community. And because of what we know and what we have been through, we are compelled to do whatever is in our power to liberate others. Our light begins to shine, and others — maybe even those who have not had the same experiences we have or who may not have the same skin tone as ours, who may not have been possessed by the same demons as us — join us in our cause. *Then* we will be feared the most.

Luke never tells us what the man's name actually was. At first, this troubled me. I mean, who was this man literally? Who was the man Jesus could see for who he was underneath, the man Jesus approached with no fear? Who was this man who may have had a family? The man who used to smile? The man who was part of a community, who had a name and an identity and a purpose? Now I'm not troubled by it. Now I see this text as an invitation. It is an invitation to go find out.

Journey well. May you find YOURSELF, and give them something to really be afraid of. ✦

### I find it interesting that the word *fear* was never used to describe the community before the man was healed.

had been brought to tears. The disciples were amazed. Jesus asked, "What is your name? Who are you?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." (A legion of the Roman army was some 3,000-6,000 soldiers.)

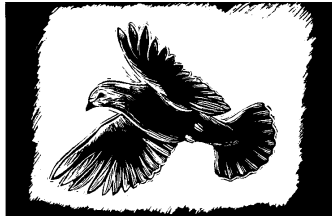
That is a crazy story, right? There is a crazy man living without a home up on a hill among the tombs with a bunch of other people who have given up on living. What does any of this have to do with me? How can I apply this to my life? The answer is startling because the whole thing is wrapped up in the demoniac himself. As it turns out, this is a story about you and me. The demoniac is you and me, and just like the demoniac among the Gerasenes, most of us have hundreds if not thousands of voices in our head — demoniacs seeking to claim our identity — telling us who we are; bombarding us with messages about our beastly nature, our brute strength, our dark skin, about our savagery and the fact that we are not clothed; and reminding us that we don't have a home. Attempts are constantly made to bind us in chains, to lock us up, and to a great extent we have lost touch with who we really are.

ability to subvert standard narratives by helping us envision new possibilities for the world. Thank God for the Open Door Community for bearing witness to the truth and for seeing people for who they are. But most importantly, thank God for giving us just what we need to empower us to see ourselves as children of God, created in the image of God.

And this is what I think is one of the understated legacies of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He was a revolutionary whose revolution was of the mind and heart. His ability to choose love over hate and fear, his ability to keep his mind in the midst of so many voices shouting at him — literally thousands of voices — and not become possessed by them, was truly revolutionary.

He helped people to see themselves — their true selves. But Lord have mercy! Once your eyes have been opened and you have been set free, once you know who you are, once the rage is gone, once you have silenced the voices, once your consciousness has been raised, you will be feared more than ever before.

## poetry corner



Julie Lonneman

## Women's Prison Every Week

Lockers, metal detectors, steel doors, C.O. to C.O., different forms, desks—*mouth open, turn*—so slow I use the time to practice patience, grace, tenderness for glassed-in guards. The rules recited as if they were the same rules every week: I can wear earrings. I cannot wear earrings. I can wear my hair up. I cannot wear my hair up. I dressed by rote: cords in blue or brown, grey turtleneck, black clogs. The prisoners, all in grey sweatshirts, blue jeans, joked I looked like them, fit in. I didn't think about it, until I dreamed of being shuffled in and locked in there, hustled through the heavy doors. In the dream the guards just shook their heads, smirked when I spelled out my name, shook the freezing bars. Instead of nightly escorts out, I'd stay in there forever. Who would know? So I went to Goodwill, spent ten bucks on pink angora, walked back down those halls a movie star. When I stood at the front of the class there rose a sharp collective sigh. The one who said she never heard of pandering until the arraignment, said *OK, I'm going to tell her*. Then she told me: freedom is wasted on women like me. They hate the dark cotton, jeans they have to wear, each one a shadow of the other their whole sentence. *You could wear red!* she accused. Their favorite dresses, silk slips, wool socks all long gone, bagged up for sisters, moms—maybe Goodwill, maybe I flicked past them looking for this cotton candy pink angora cardigan, pearl buttons. They can't stop staring, so I take it off and pass it around, let each woman hold it in her arms, appraise the wool between her fingers, a familiar gesture, second nature, from another world.

— Jill McDonough

*Jill McDonough taught incarcerated college students through Boston University's Prison Education Program for 13 years. Her work has appeared in Poetry, Slate, the Nation, The Threepenny Review, and Best American Poetry. She directs the MFA program at UMass-Boston.*

*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](mailto:hospitalitypoetrycorner@gmail.com).*

## Join us as a Resident Volunteer



Calvin Kimbrough

*Laura Miller, a student at Goshen College, has come to spend the summer as a Resident Volunteer. Welcome Laura!*

**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.**

**Contact: Sarah Humphrey**  
at [opendoorcomm@bellsouth.net](mailto:opendoorcomm@bellsouth.net)  
or 404.874.9652 option 4

For information and application forms visit  
**[www.opendoorcommunity.org](http://www.opendoorcommunity.org)**

## Please Help!



we need  
**backpacks and shoes**

**Men's shoes  
sizes 11-15**

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



**Thank You!**

## 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

**Soup Kitchen:** Tuesday & Wednesday, 9 a.m.  
**Women's Showers:** Tuesday, 9 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  
**Retreats:** Five times each year for our household,  
volunteers and supporters.  
**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:**

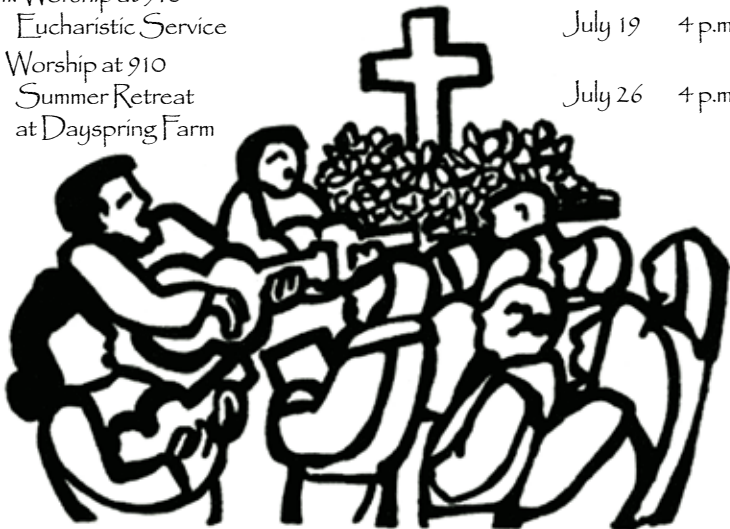
**Sunday:** 9 a.m. until 3 p.m.  
**Monday:** 8:30 a.m. until Noon and 3 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.  
**Tuesday:** Noon until 8:30 p.m.  
**Wednesday:** Noon until 6 p.m.  
**Thursday:** 8:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. and 5 p.m. until 8:30 p.m.  
**Friday and Saturday:** We are closed. We are not able to  
offer hospitality 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 option 6.  
Please visit [www.opendoorcommunity.org](http://www.opendoorcommunity.org) or call us for the most up-to-date worship schedule.

June 7	4 p.m. Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service	July 5	No Worship at 910 Summer Retreat at Dayspring Farm
June 14	4 p.m. Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service	July 12	4 p.m. Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service
June 21	4 p.m. Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service	July 19	4 p.m. Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service
June 28	No Worship at 910 Summer Retreat at Dayspring Farm	July 26	4 p.m. Worship at 910 Eucharistic Service



Rini Templeton

## Clarification Meetings at the Open Door

We meet for clarification  
most Thursdays 3 - 5 p.m..



Daniel Nichols

For the latest information and  
scheduled topics, please call  
404.874.9652 option 8  
or visit

[www.opendoorcommunity.org](http://www.opendoorcommunity.org).

## Medical Needs List

### Harriet Tubman Medical Clinic

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

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