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# HOSPITALITY

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**Open Door: A Prophetic Discipleship Community Honoring The Black Jesus, Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King Jr.**

**Vol. 39, No. 6**

PO Box 10980 Baltimore, Maryland 21234 404.290.2047 [www.facebook.com/ODCBalt/](http://www.facebook.com/ODCBalt/)

**June 2020**



## Joseph Echols Lowery A Gift for Our Days

**By Murphy Davis**

A giant among us has fallen. Dr. Joseph E. Lowery has died at the age of 98. “Doc” Lowery, as he was often called, is best known as a co-founder, with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) in 1957. The goal — in the wake of the victory of the Montgomery bus boycott — was to “redeem the soul of America” through nonviolent resistance by coordinating protest actions especially throughout the South, but also in all of the United States. Lowery was pastor in Mobile, Alabama when Dr. King came to pastor Dexter Avenue Baptist in Montgomery; while in Mobile he led the bus boycott in that city. It was out of this shared leadership that he joined King and Abernathy to form SCLC.

When Dr. King was killed in 1968, Rev. Abernathy became president of SCLC. In 1977, when Abernathy resigned his leadership, Dr. Lowery, who had moved to

white man to start up the electric chair again. So that they did. There was intense public scrutiny and press coverage because it was the first execution in Georgia since Bernard Dye was electrocuted in 1964 (under a small plaque in the Reidsville prison tower that said “You can be sure if it’s Westinghouse.”) By 1983, the electric chair had been moved to the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Center in Jackson, along with the entire population of the men on death row.

Smitty’s execution was well covered by the press — local, national and international. His lawyer was my dear friend John C. “Jack” Boger, who defended him brilliantly. But it was determined long ago how this would go down. And on December 15, Smitty died.

By the summer of 1984, the interest in the execution circus had died down. As the death watch for Ivon approached, I realized that I was the only local person on the outside who even knew Ivon Ray Stanley. I knew him well, actually, and I was working on helping his mother, grandmother, brother

Thank God that we had this great gift of his leadership and vision for 98 years — and for the legacy he leaves us. We must appropriate this legacy and miss no opportunity to stand up for justice.

Atlanta to become Pastor of Central Methodist Church, became the next president. We were so blessed that his years at SCLC overlapped with our active years in Atlanta. When he retired, he founded the Coalition for the Peoples’ Agenda and took up a whole new era of leadership in a way that particularly included the aim of the abolition of the death penalty and mass imprisonment. Of course there are hundreds of stories from those years, but I want to remember a couple of stories that are more personal to us.

In the summer of 1984, Georgia scheduled its second execution in the post-Furman era, of Ivon Ray Stanley. In December 1983, they had killed John Eldon Smith, a white man. Because the Georgia death penalty had been overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court on the basis of racial discrimination, it was important that the state push forward the case of a

and sister get from Central Florida up to Jackson for their last days with Ivon. By that time, I had been in the press quite a lot and I was sort of seen as “Miss Goody Two-Shoes.” “Oh yeah,” as one prosecutor said, “she’ll say something good about any murderer.” (I resisted saying, “But I’ve never said anything good about you!”)

I needed help. I called Doc Lowery and of course he said yes, of course he would help. We made the plan that I would set up a pastoral visit for the two of us to go down to talk with Ivon. Rev. Fred Taylor drove us down to the prison in the SCLC station wagon. Then on the next day, Dr. Lowery would go to the Georgia Pardon and Parole Board which held the singular power to grant a stay of execution,

**Joseph Echols Lowery** *continued on page 7*

## Raw Courage Rizpah’s Vigil

**By Joyce Hollyday**

*This is the third in a series of reflections on biblical women, launched in January 2020. It is based on 2 Samuel 21:1-14.*

It is a terrible, terrible time. Famine has a stranglehold on the land, and the casualties are piling up. No end is in sight, and no one can predict how much longer it will persist — or how many people will be dead when it is over.

This catastrophe, according to Scripture, was brought on by the violent actions of men. King Saul had slaughtered a multitude of enemies, including many Gibeonites, and was finally done in by the Philistines, who killed three of his sons and badly wounded him in battle. Rather than suffer further pain and humiliation, Saul threw himself on his own sword. The next day the Philistines decapitated his corpse and fastened it to a public wall, along with the bodies of his sons.



Rizpah

Meinrad Craighead

Saul’s death was bad news for a number of people, but especially for his concubine — his sexual slave — Rizpah. Saul’s son Ishbaal accuses Abner, the commander of Saul’s army, of raping Rizpah. Let’s be clear that the accusation has nothing to do with concern for Rizpah or an acknowledgment of her humanity; this is a case of violation of the king’s property. Furious at the charge, Abner transfers his loyalties from the house of Saul to the house of David, Israel’s new king, and a bitter and protracted war ensues.

**Raw Courage: Rizpah’s Vigil** *continued on page 7*

# Let's Have a Real Conversation on Reparations

By Catherine Meeks

A few weeks ago, Virginia Theological Seminary invited me to talk about reparations as part of a program remembering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and highlighting their new reparations initiative. I was delighted because it provided me an opportunity to reflect upon the many ways in which I believe this conversation needs to be reimagined.

Typically, those institutions who benefit the most from slavery and who wake up enough to realize that they need to do something about that history will begin with looking for the descendants of the slaves who helped them or were connected to them in some manner. Along with this often is a string of apologies and other public statements that reflect their shame and sorrow for the past. Some academic institutions will offer scholarships to those descendants, others study their history and produce voluminous volumes of documentation of that history, which more often than not will be bound in beautiful covers and placed on the shelves of their libraries. All of these efforts sound good and make the participants feel better about themselves and their institutions, but they are a miserable failure when it comes to speaking to the profound issues of systemic racism and the long-term commitment to the systems that will make sure that current racist practices continue to last for generations to come.

the stolen labor and lives that resulted from the system of slavery. And the part of that conversation that I detest the most is when someone asks, "Are we going to give Oprah Winfrey, Barack Obama, or other successful African Americans a check?" When I hear that question being asked, it is clear to me that the person asking it has no intention of having the conversation about this issue that is so sorely needed.

First of all, there is no amount of money that the descendants of slaves can be paid to fully compensate for the loss of freedom, personhood and all of the opportunity to be the persons that God sent them to the earth to be. What would be the proper amount? What is a life worth? I believe that it is past time to stop and take a deep breath about this issue and to change this conversation to be about the real issue of creating a society where true equity and justice exist and where the descendants of slaves from now on will be seen as equal participants and partners in the American

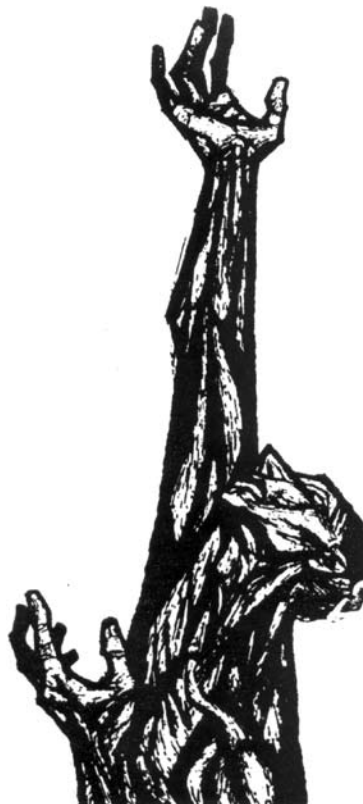
to work to facilitate it. They need to change their approach to education so they no longer continue to support the process of sending young graduates from their institutions out into the world who will continue to reinforce the status quo and its systems of oppression and repression.

Let's talk about providing health care, making sure that everyone has access to decent affordable housing and access to education that prepares them to live in the world, creating good transportation systems so that folks can get around, providing living wages for all workers, and the freedom to vote without suppressive influences, and all of the other matters that contribute to making it truly possible to pursue living a liberated life. This is the reparations conversation that I want to have. All of us know full well that there is not going to be any massive check writing campaign to benefit descendants of slaves; the major corporations have already been the designated ones to benefit

do nothing to really change the system. The investment in this system as it is at this moment is reflected in the ways in which the handful of folks talking about reparations approach it. Their actions are designed to safeguard that system, and when we begin to start a genuine conversation to address the issue, this current system will be threatened, as it should be. So those folks who are trying to address this issue need to realize that their very first step is to interrogate themselves about their commitment to the system that created the problem in the first place.

As a descendant of African people who were kidnapped and held as slaves in America, I don't want someone trying to compensate me. I want them to work to create a country where my descendants will never have to fear being dehumanized, undervalued and treated as a tenth class citizen because of their skin color ever again. They need to use their white skin, power and money to make this turn. When we begin this conversation, the angels will rejoice along with all of us who love justice. ✦

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Robert Hodgell

Those folks who are trying to address this issue need to realize that their very first step is to interrogate themselves about their commitment to the system that created the problem in the first place.

There is also the approach to reparations that begins with discussing how many slave descendants will get checks when somebody, perhaps the government, begins to pay for

enterprise. It is time for the systems to be changed. It is time for the very institutions that want to offer apologies to take a stand for this type of change and to go a step further

from that type of government generosity and we know that continuing to engage in the conversation at that level merely prolongs the longevity of the basic commitment to

## HOSPITALITY

**Hospitality** is published by the Open Door Community, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland. The Open Door is a Prophetic Discipleship Community Honoring the Black Jesus, Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King Jr. 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 helps 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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Banksy

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Please join us on **Facebook** for the continuing journey of the **Open Door Community** in **Baltimore**. Thank you. David, Eduard and Murphy.



# Dorothy Day: Inspiration for the Open Door

By Rosalie Riegle

Who was Dorothy Day? And how did she inspire the Open Door? First, I'll share with you a brief introduction to her life and that of the Catholic Worker movement she and Peter Maurin founded, followed by the connection Murphy Davis and Ed Loring made with her and how that connection changed their lives — and therefore perhaps, yours.

Dorothy was one of four children born in Brooklyn, NY on November 8, 1897. Her father was a journalist and sometimes unemployed, so the family moved often, finally settling in Chicago. The Days were not religious, but Dorothy was serious and thoughtful as a teenager, and she and her sister Della received permission from their parents to be baptized in the local Episcopalian Church. She later became quite secular, however, as the Christianity she found as a scholarship student at the University of Illinois did not resonate with her growing beliefs in the social gospel and a leftist political orientation that included pacifism.

After sophomore year, she dropped out of school to become a writer, so where did she go? To Greenwich Village, of course! There she spent a turbulent young adulthood, writing about social justice for leftist periodicals and drinking with the likes of Eugene O'Neill and other radicals. She was jailed for her support of women's suffrage and protested to stop the U.S. from entering World War I. Later she published her only novel, a thinly disguised autobiography where she confessed to an abortion. She was also mysteriously drawn to Roman Catholicism and often found herself visiting the immigrant churches that dotted lower Manhattan. Finally, she settled down happily on Staten Island with biologist Forster Batterham, an anarchist and a confirmed atheist.

Dorothy was overjoyed when she learned that she was pregnant, and it was this joy that first brought her to God. When their daughter, Tamar Therese, was born in 1927, she had her baptized as a Catholic and soon afterwards was baptized herself. In her spiritual memoir, *The Long Loneliness*, she writes that her conversion was a mystery, that she was just called by grace. And in fact, I see much of her life and the lives of those she touched as products of grace.

Forster was an anarchist, so he wouldn't marry her, much less marry her in the Catholic Church, and so they parted with tears and recriminations, and she remained celibate for the remainder of her life. One of the joyful things I learned while interviewing people who lived with her is that she and Forster were again close at the end of her life and that he would visit often, as old friends do.

Dorothy battered around alone for the first years after her conversion, Tamar in tow or left with her sister Della. She felt as if she was in a desert, estranged from her secular Village friends, and knowing few Catholics. In 1932, while covering a leftist-organized strike in D.C., she visited the Shrine of the Immaculate Conception and prayed fervently that God would send a way to unite her faith and her life work as a writer for social justice. She returned to New York and there was Peter Maurin on her doorstep! God seemed to have answered her prayers in a pretty direct way!

Peter was very different from Dorothy, both in temperament and training. He was an educated French peasant and former Christian, steeped in traditional Catholicism and well versed in its social justice documents. In long conversations, he introduced Dorothy to Catholic social thought and showed her that her life-long desire for justice and peace had strong Christian underpinnings. In short, he gave her exactly what she needed: intellectual depth and a biblical spirituality to confirm her consistent and enduring commitment to nonviolence and the necessity of easing the plight of the poor.

Peter proposed a three-point program by which Christians could address the problems of an out-of-control capi-

talist society: an informed cultural critique which he called "clarification of thought," houses of hospitality, where the poor would be fed and housed; and rural farming communes where people could learn to sustain themselves. Borrowing an old IWW phrase, he sought "to build a new society in the shell of the old," using the papal encyclicals, the writings of European intellectuals and most importantly, the Sermon on the Mount, to give meaning to their endeavors.

Out of the collaboration between Peter Maurin and Dorothy Day grew a newspaper called *The Catholic Worker*, first published on May Day, 1933 and still coming out monthly at the original penny-a-copy price. And out of that newspaper grew the Catholic Worker movement, with farms and houses of hospitality providing meals and often lodging to those made homeless by the Depression. Subscriptions to the paper and the movement itself grew quickly, attracting young lay people who were aghast at the vast economic inequality they saw and who wanted to put their Christianity to work in the here and now. The Catholic Worker movement thrives today in more than 200 houses and farms across the country and increasingly, around the world. The early days were both exciting and trying and that excitement and trial still persist



Tina Sipula

Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin

in many of the communities, but somehow most of them persevere and they are mourned when necessity forces them to close. Donations of food and clothing pour in today, just as they did in the early years. Then and now, Catholic Workers live in the same houses with the poor they invite to their table. They embrace a voluntary poverty, so Workers receive at most only a small stipend. In the early days, Workers wrote

**"We can do this! We can start a house of hospitality and live with the poor and be Presbyterian Catholic Workers!"**

and spoke and vigiled and picketed in support of labor unions, against both sides in the Spanish Civil War, against the country's denial of entry to Jews fleeing Hitler, against World War II, against the civil defense drills of the Fifties, and in deep opposition to the Vietnam War. Today, Catholic Workers continue to not only protest our ongoing wars but also our vicious immigration policies; racism in housing and education and the actions of the police; and the lack of environmental concern that is killing our planet. They act as allies for the indigenous people of color as they fight against encroaching oil pipelines and for those who protest police killing.

Dorothy herself was arrested and jailed for protesting the civil defense drills of the '50s. She was very public in her support of the many Catholic resisters during the Vietnam

War, and her last arrest was in support of Cesar Chaves and the farmworkers. In the early days, Dorothy was well known and generally accepted, with the newspaper distributed in many churches, but because she was consistent in her biblical pacifism, she lost support and the movement was decimated during World War II, with most houses closing. But a remnant remained, and Dorothy never wavered. Peter died in 1949 after suffering a tragic decline in his mental powers. Dorothy's spirituality deepened in the '50s and she was well prepared to offer support to the nonviolent peace movement during the Vietnam War when she again rose to national prominence.

At the end of her life, she had become an icon. Her health had never been robust and her many travels as she spread the word took their toll, so in her later years she was confined to Maryhouse, the large Manhattan house of hospitality that still exists on 3<sup>rd</sup> street on the Lower East Side. There she lived surrounded by her daughter, Tamar, and loving Catholic Workers who cared for her and listened to her stories. Her death happened quietly on November 29, 1980. Some speculated that her death would be the end of the movement, but newspaper editor Peggy Scherer said, "We will always have the Gospel."

Now where do Murphy Davis and Ed Loring and the Open Door Community fit into this story? Exactly where and when they needed to, which was at the end of Dorothy's life and the beginning of the Open Door. Here's how Murphy told it to me: In the early 1970s, Murphy and Ed were newly married pastors: Ed was assigned to Clifton Presbyterian Church while Murphy worked on her Ph.D. in church history. (Ed had finished his Ph.D. at Vanderbilt Divinity School earlier and taught for four years in a protestant seminary.) In 1973, Murphy was invited to a gathering at Grailville in Loveland, Ohio, along with other women from Church Women United. Grailville was founded by members of the Grail, a group of Catholic lay women who work in service careers with an emphasis on culture, music, liturgy and the arts. In the '70s, Grailville became more inclusive of other religions and began programming with Church Women United. Murphy and her fellow women theologians fit right in, and in 1974 they convened an eight-week seminar in Loveland, designing their own curricula and featuring new feminist theologians such as Rosemary Radford Ruether. It was then that Murphy first heard of Dorothy Day and the Catholic Worker movement.

Fast forward to 1979. Ed and Murphy took the train up to New York so Murphy could do fundraising for the Southern Prison Ministry she was coordinating out of their Clifton Church. They took the opportunity to stop by Maryhouse, where Dorothy Day was now living in retirement and almost total seclusion, watched over by Catholic Workers zealous for her health and privacy. Murphy and Ed were unable to see her

that day but they met one of Dorothy's nurses, the indefatigable Michael Harank. Michael sat them down and told them the Catholic Worker story and most importantly, gave them a copy of Dorothy's memoir, *The Long Loneliness*. On the train home to Atlanta, Ed stayed up all night reading Dorothy's story of her coming to God and Peter Maurin finding her and the two of them together starting the Catholic Worker movement. Murphy grabbed the book as soon as Ed had finished and after reading it, they decided, "We can do this! We can start a house of hospitality and live with the poor and be Presbyterian Catholic Workers!"

Of course, it didn't happen quite that fast because Mur-

**Dorothy Day** continued on page 6

# We've All Come to Look for America

## The Pandemic is With Us

By Nibs Stroupe

As I write this in mid-April, I'm recognizing that by the time you read this in June, the dynamics of coronavirus ("cv" from here on out) might have dramatically changed. Be that as it may, I'm daring to write some ideas about the meaning of cv for America and our future. I recognize that "America" refers to the countries above and below the USA, but I'm struck by the song that Paul Simon wrote and that he and Art Garfunkel recorded as a duo in 1968. So I am borrowing the title of their song because as grim as cv is, it does offer us some possibility to reshape the vision of who we are. I also know that this is a "pandemic," meaning "all people," and its impact will be devastating and worldwide. China and the U.S. are the central economic and political engines for the current world, but I don't know enough about China to discuss much, so I'll focus on "America."

Here is what cv has taught us, and here is what we can still learn. The pandemic comes into a world of collapsing community, and this collapse has led us all over the world to elect and even accept "strong men" as saviors in positions of power — Trump in the U.S., Johnson in the U.K., Modi in India, Putin in Russia, and others. We have done this because as individuals we cannot bear the weight of the postmodern world, a world of collapsing community and identity. So, we have opted for tribalism in order to try to bear the weight of the world and to find identity. This collapse is partially because we have all adopted the model of neoliberalism, and while this term is used a lot, I'm basically using it in the sense that Naomi Klein defined it in her 2014 book, *This Changes Everything*. Her emphasis is that neoliberalism is a combination of the privatization of the public sphere, the deregulation of the corporate sector and the lowering of income and corporate taxes, paid for by cuts to public spending. We were already drowning, and now the tidal wave has come upon us.

While no one is quite sure what the meaning of cv is, it is clear that it has brought us and this system to its knees. We

another. Now, that survival mechanism has been taken away from her and them. And as we are now seeing, the racial disparities are glaring in the attacks of cv. Yet, it remains true that those of us classified as "white" see cv as ground-breaking, a time like none of us has seen before. My conversation with Inez reminded me that the pandemic has the potential to teach us comfortable folks a profound truth: We are not in control of our lives, and because of that, we must find ways to build authentic communities that address truth and that seek to nurture us into lives based in love, justice and equity, rather than lives based in materialism and fear.



Nelia Kimbrough | Radical Studios

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are all afraid — we don't know where cv comes from; we don't know if we will be next; we don't know if we have a future. In a world dominated by a vision of materialism as the center of our lives, cv comes to call it all into question. This is not to say that class and race and gender are no longer germane — the first studies of the effects of cv show that these categories remain powerful and viable in the pandemic. Cv, however, reminds us that we are not in control. Whereas that is not news to much of the world's population, to those of us who are comfortable, and especially to those of us who are classified as "white" and middle class, this is definitely bad news. While cv is not the great equalizer, it does get up in our faces to remind us that life — even our own lives — does not belong to us.

I was reminded of this by my friend Inez, who called me to check in on us. I asked how she was doing, and she said that she was staying in place, but that she was noticing that people classified as "white" were freaking out. She reminded me that people classified as "Black" live in this kind of fear all the time, and that she hoped that some white folk would comprehend that. She added a sobering reminder, though, that one of the ways Black people dealt with such fear and oppression was to gather in community to uplift and celebrate one

Our current anxiety over the pandemic holds great danger for us and, surprisingly, great opportunities for us. The dangers are before us: We've had two powerful plagues since 2016. One plague was the election of Donald Trump as president; the second is the coronavirus. Trump is clearly overmatched by this pandemic — indeed, my wife, Caroline Leach, calls this time of cv and Trump's incompetence the "Trumpdemic." Let us not underestimate the danger to us of the Trumpdemic — he is already looking toward the November elections as an opportunity to solidify his kingly power. While only Congress can change the date of presidential elections, we have already seen in the Republican refusal in Wisconsin to postpone the primary during the peak of cv, that the Trumpdemic seeks to be in full force. We were already driven by fear prior to cv; now we are swimming in anxiety. Let us keep that ever before us.

Yet, we must also admit some possibilities for us as the power of cv attacks our institutions and our lives. Our powerful system of materialism, corporate ownership of government and the exploitation and crushing of the poor is wobbling at the moment. We have seen inspiring leadership and courage by health care workers, first responders, neighbors and many others. Access to health care has been widened for

many people who were previously denied care. We have seen insurance companies suddenly find cash enough to waive copays and even payments for cv diagnosis and treatment. We have seen the Republicans, to whom "socialism" is an anathema, lead us into passing powerful democratic socialist measures in response to cv. The preliminary studies are showing much less pollution as the capitalist vision, which is killing the world, grinds to a halt. Why not stick with some of these approaches for our general, "normal" life? Why not temper (or even eliminate, though I'm too much of a Calvinist for that hope) our belief in the power of materialism, a belief that has led us to the nightmare of neoliberalism? Why not recalibrate everything in light of this powerful pandemic and the warnings that it brings? And, let us make no mistake, this pandemic is not the end of time. It is a warning that apocalyptic movement will come with climate change.

I recently heard from my friend and colleague Collin Cornell, who did such a great job of editing my 2017 book of sermons, *Deeper Waters: Sermons for a New Vision*. He began his e-mail this way: "What a strange and potentially transformative season we are in. I am not sure yet if this pandemic will be the final blow to capitalism and the incentive to move toward a more human welfare state — or if this will precipitate our national slide into fascism." His succinct summation of our current situation reminded me that in this fearful time, we have a crisis that presents us with great danger as well as great opportunities. It gives us fresh opportunities to re-shape the idea of America. This crisis has already provoked fundamental changes in our way of living, and I will be stunned (but grateful) if we avoid something akin to the Great Depression. The health and economic costs will be devastating, yet in this terrible time, there are opportunities to look for America. Let us all go looking for America in these perilous times. Indeed, out of the last Great Depression came Social Security, Medicare and government work for artists — let's find and produce those kinds of realities in this pandemic.

In our days of isolation, let us be thinking about and envisioning a new way of being America. Let us not turn out to be the self-centered and mean regime that we now are experiencing. Let us live that just and equitable vision that is one of our places of origin. Let us all go to look for America, as individuals and as a community. While we are away from one another physically, let us be the dreamers and visionaries that will enable us to live up to that great ideal that is part of our heart as a country: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all [people] are created equal." ✦

*Nibs Stroupe is a longtime friend of the Open Door; retired pastor and author of Deeper Waters: Sermons for a New Vision. He and Catherine Meeks are authors of Passionate for Justice, a book about the life and witness of Ida B. Wells for our time. He writes a weekly blog at [www.nibsnotes.blogspot.com](http://www.nibsnotes.blogspot.com). ([nibs.stroupe@gmail.com](mailto:nibs.stroupe@gmail.com))*



A National Call for Moral Revival  
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# How the World Changed

## The Last Four Weeks in the Border Region Between Czech Republic and Germany

By Zdeněk Rossmann

My name is Zdeněk Rossmann. I am a doctor, a kidney specialist. I live in a small town in the Czech Republic, close to the border with Germany. I have been working in a small German town, Zittau, since 2008, at first in a local hospital, now in a private dialysis centre. I love my work, I love my colleagues and nurses, I love my patients. I am one of many people that took the advantages of the Schengen Area within the European Union. Since my country joined the EU, we can cross the borders without control. We can go shopping, visit friends, take a bicycle trip or a sightseeing tour in any other country in Schengen Area without being controlled on the borders. And we can work in any Schengen country we want. After centuries of wars, violence, hostility and barbed wire around the Communist Bloc, the open borders enable the people from different countries to look at each other like friends and to create a new way of European unity.

Now, under the shadow of the coronavirus epidemic, this new unity is threatened. I will write about my personal experience in the last four weeks. About how we try to maintain the spirit of unity and humanity despite political pressure to reinstall the borders and divide the people again.

**Saturday, March 7:** My wife Kristýna, our daughter Marianka and I are leaving for a one-week vacation in Austria. In the past weeks, we have read a lot about coronavirus spreading in China, then in South Korea and Italy. We wouldn't go to the Northern Italy, but Austria seems to be safe. We plan to stay one week until the next Saturday.

**Thursday, March 12:** The Czech government announces emergency state in the whole country. The schools, most shops, most of the public buildings are closed. The public transport is cut down.

**Friday, March 13:** We decide to return back home one day ahead of schedule because we read the news about our government going to close the borders with Austria on the next Saturday. We are being controlled on the Austrian-Czech border by the police with face masks. After arriving home, we find out that we have to stay two weeks in quarantine. This decision was made by the Czech government just during our way home. I call my colleagues in Zittau, Germany, saying I cannot come to work until March 28th.

**Wednesday, March 18:** The Czech government announces that from now on, everybody who shows up outside their home must wear a face mask. But there are no face masks available. Where should we buy them? Even the medical staff in hospitals and other medical facilities don't by far have enough of them. So people start to improvise. In just few days, hundreds of thousands of face masks are being sewn by people who are on lockdown. My sister-in-law sews 120 face masks and donates them to the distribution centre in our town which delivers them free to the people who need them the most. Soon all sewing machines in the Czech e-shops sold out.

**Monday, March 23:** The Czech Minister of Interior Jan Hamacek announces that the people who work across the border, who are now called a little bit contemptuously "pendlers," (commuters, or cross-border workers) represent a danger for the Czech society, because they can bring the Coronavirus infection from abroad into our country. Therefore, starting the next Thursday, March 26, they will be allowed to cross the border to the neighboring countries, but they will have to stay there for three weeks. The families

are not allowed to come along. After three weeks, they can come back to the Czech republic, but will have to stay two more weeks in a strict quarantine, isolated from their families. They have to find an accommodation abroad for the necessary time. The Polish government makes a similar announcement. In the German regions along the border with Poland and Czech Republic, most of the doctors and some nurses are Polish or Czech. And not every one of them can leave their families for five weeks. Especially female doctors, whose children are at home because the schools are closed.

The German medical facilities are alarmed. If the Czech and Polish doctors and nurses stop working, it will mean a humanitarian catastrophe in vast regions of East Germany. The hospitals start calling for help.

I feel ashamed for the Czech government that obviously leaves Germany in trouble. In times of crisis, the old nationalistic instincts start to appear again. The *Czech* government has to protect the *Czech* people. And we don't care what happens across the border, in Germany, if we close the borders for the Czech doctors. But I *do* care. I feel I cannot leave my German friends and patients alone. I will have to move to Germany. One colleague of mine offers me a free room in his house in Zittau where I can stay during my German "exile." I tell Kristýna, my wife, that I will have to move away from the family for five weeks. She starts weeping. My daughter Marianka doesn't know yet.

**Wednesday, March 25:** The tension on both sides of the border rises. I send a message to my German colleagues saying how angry and ashamed of the Czech government I am. Germany has been such a good neighbor for us in the last years, supporting financially so many cross-border activities. And now we Czechs are leaving them in such trouble. I start thinking about what I will take with me for the next three weeks in Germany. My laptop, some books to read, my guitar. I will leave my bike at home. I will have no time to ride on it.

We exchange WhatsApp messages with our colleagues and friends in Zittau. One of them gets in contact with the Prime Minister of Saxony, Michael Kretschmer, and finally, our message and call for help reaches the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel.

Later that afternoon, she calls our prime minister, Andrej Babis, and informs him about the situation in the border regions. On the Wednesday evening, Prime Minister Andrej Babis announces that the medical staff will be excluded from the border restriction. It means we can cross the border to Germany without having to stay there for three weeks. We don't need to leave our families anymore. Many of us start weeping with relief and unpack our luggage. One of my German colleagues thanks us for our support during the last three days and writes: *In den letzten Tagen, wir haben Europa gelebt.* "In the last several days, we have been living Europe."

**Saturday, March 28:** My two-week-quarantine is over. I drive to Germany for the first time after three weeks. The main border crossing where I used to enter Germany is closed. I have to drive about 20 minutes farther toward the next open crossing. On the way, near the border, I drive past a small, concrete bunker. It was built in late 1930s to protect Czechoslovakia against the German army. It stands there in the fields by the road as a reminder of hostility and violence between the



Zdeněk, Marianka and Kristýna Rossmann

Czechs and Germans that had its peak during WW II.

The narrow road leads farther into the border woods. Suddenly, on one of the curves in the wood, I come to a police check point. I have to show my ID card and a special passing permission saying that I am a doctor. The policemen are polite. They guard that small road 24 hours a day. They let only the doctors and nurses pass. Anybody else is turned back. They wish me good luck. I am finally in Germany again.

The patients in Zittau greet me happily. *Gut, das Sie wieder da sind, Herr Doktor.* "It's good to have you here again, Doctor." On the way home that day, I see a huge hand-written poster beside the road. It says both in Czech and German: *Wir vermissen euch, Nachbarn. Stýská se nám po vás, sousedé.* "Our neighbors, we miss you." I like it much more than that military bunker.

I am writing this article on Easter Sunday. Three days ago, the Czech Ministry of Interior announced that, from the next Tuesday on, we will have to show a new special document, issued by the German Embassy in Prague. I have no idea how I get this document before Tuesday. The German embassy is closed during the Easter holidays and no one answers the phone in the Ministry hotline. If I don't have that new document by next Tuesday, they won't let me cross the border anymore. Once again, I am not sure if I can treat my patients next week. We will see.

In the last years, many things have changed in the relationships between the Czechs and Germans. The initial animosity, suspiciousness, contempt, reproaches and mutual accusations were largely replaced by tolerance, cooperation, respect and sometimes even friendship. To me, my German colleagues have always been very friendly, helpful and attentive, without any hint of nationalism. Now I can pay them back. Now I can show them that I care for them, in spite of all obstacles posed by our government that tries to protect the Czech people and nobody else.

I hope that the great idea of united Europe, consisting of people who consider themselves human beings rather than Czechs, Germans, French or Polish, will survive these difficult times. Otherwise, it would be one of the most tragic results of the Coronavirus epidemic. ♦

*Zdenek Rossmann was born in Prague, Czech Republic, in 1973. In 1993-1994, he spent 6 months as a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door Community in Atlanta. This significant experience formed the rest of his life. He has worked with Doctors Without Borders in Congo-Brazaville, and currently works in Germany as a kidney specialist. He lives in Turnov, Czech Republic. (rossmann.zdenek@centrum.cz)*

# Lasting Legacy

## Joseph Lowery and the Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda

By Milt Tambor

The passing of civil rights icon Joseph Lowery on March 27 holds special meaning for me and Metro Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America. The front page of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* described him as Atlanta's beloved preacher and the dean of the civil rights movement. In the *NY Times* obituary, he is referred to as a civil rights leader and top aide to Martin Luther King Jr. Both stories note memorable events in Rev. Lowery's incredible life, but one of his major accomplishments is casually passed over.

Rev. Lowery's activism began when, as a young Methodist minister, he led a successful campaign to integrate buses in Mobile, Alabama. He was called upon to help oversee the Montgomery bus boycott. In 1957, Lowery, along with King and Ralph Abernathy, formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which he would then lead for twenty years. He would survive several assassination attempts, including a Ku Klux Klan attack that nearly killed his wife, Evelyn. At the funeral of Coretta Scott King in 2006, in the presence of President George W. Bush, Lowery sharply criticized the administration for waging a war in Iraq despite no evidence of weapons of mass destruction. In 2008, he delivered an emotional benediction at Barack Obama's inauguration and a year later would receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

However, scant attention would be given to an accomplishment that may constitute his most lasting legacy — the 1998 founding of the Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda. This umbrella organization of human rights, civil rights, labor, women's, youth, and peace and justice groups would advocate for voting rights protection, elimination of barriers to the ballot box, criminal justice

reform, quality education, affordable housing, economic development and equal participation in the political process for Georgians of color and underrepresented communities.

In fact, the Coalition secured progressive gains on a broad range of issues. In the 1990s, Rev. Lowery, representing members of the coalition, successfully challenged the constitutionality of the Georgia state flag, leading to a major design change. In 2007, after the Atlanta mayor and city council were lobbied by the coalition, a Citizens Review Board was established to investigate allegations of misconduct by the Police Department and Department of Corrections. On behalf of 250,000 Clayton County residents lacking public transportation, a referendum was promoted, subsequently approved by voters, that earmarked a one cent sales tax for the expansion of bus and mobility services and future commuter lines for the county. In the area of voter protection, lawsuits were won against the secretary of state for unilaterally eliminating voters from the rolls and discarding absentee ballots where signatures did not exactly match. Efforts to reduce early voting periods have been thwarted while the coalition has effectively petitioned election boards in order to prevent the closure of polling locations.

After the Metro Atlanta Democratic Socialists of America got off the ground in 2005, my chapter joined the coalition. As chapter chair, I attended the weekly meetings that were open to everyone in the community. Helen Butler, the executive director since 2003, provided updates at each meeting on voter registration and education plans, town hall meetings and candidate forums and the litigation status of discriminatory voting laws and policies. Rev. Lowery attended these meetings and provided inspirational messages on what it would take to build the movement. At the end of each meeting, folks would stand up, clasp hands, and the room

would ring out with the chant, "We are the chaplains of the common good." I met many civil rights pioneers who can best be characterized as long-distance runners for peace and justice.

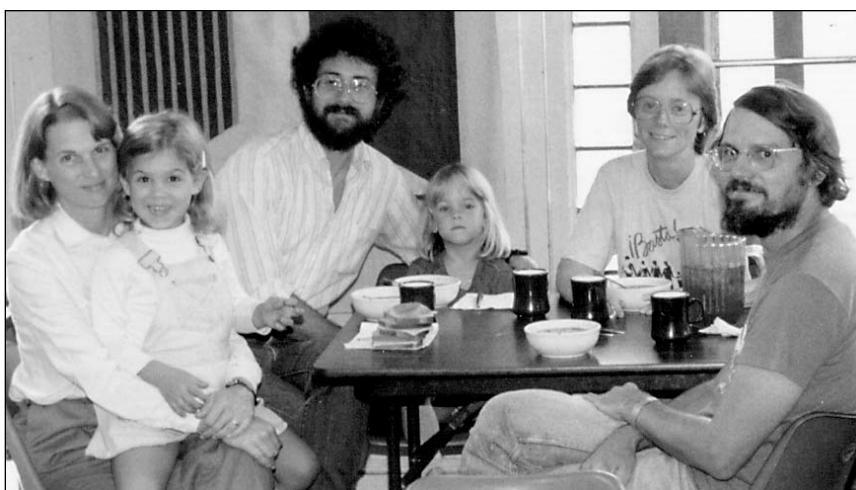
Atlanta DSA hosted one of the coalition's meetings to describe the work of the chapter, using a PowerPoint presentation called "Democratic Socialism: Equality and Democracy." Helen Butler and several other coalition activists would receive awards at the annual DSA Douglass-Debs Dinner honoring activists and their work on behalf of the community. Rev. J. Allen Milner, the coalition's treasurer, who regularly met with Dr. Lowery as his health began to fail, joined DSA. My personal connection with Rev. Lowery occurred at a meeting with U.S. Representative John Conyers, who came to Atlanta to speak at the Douglass-Debs Dinner and attend a fundraising event the chapter had organized on his behalf. I was also privileged to make presentations to coalition members on the democratic socialist beliefs and politics of MLK and A. Philip Randolph. The coalition sponsored a book signing of my memoir, *A Democratic Socialist's Fifty Year Adventure*. Our connections were deep and long-lasting. As Atlanta DSA joins in celebrating Rev. Lowery's life, we remember his never-failing commitment to peace and justice through the vital work of the Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda in democratizing governance in Georgia. ✦

*Milt Tambor is a former chair of Metro Atlanta DSA and author of A Democratic Socialist's Fifty Year Adventure. This article is reprinted from DSA: Democratic Socialists of America, April 14, 2020. A version of this tribute appears on the Facebook page of the Georgia Coalition for the Peoples' Agenda.*

## Dorothy Day: Inspiration for the Open Door *continued from page 3*

phy was pregnant with Hannah and Rob and Carolyn Johnson, their partners in planning the Open Door, had a new baby daughter. But plan they did! In 1980, Ed and Murphy returned to New York and visited Maryhouse again, with 11-month-old Hannah in their arms. And wonder of wonders — Dan Berrigan, newly out on bail from the first Plowshares Antinuclear Action, was saying Mass at Maryhouse. Murphy and Ed and Hannah attended, crowded in with many New Yorkers and visitors. Soon after the service started, someone nudged Murphy and she turned around. There was Dorothy Day! She had been carried down from her bedroom to attend this very special liturgy. "She was luminous," Murphy said. "Like I saw a light around her. Truly a blessed moment, to receive our first Eucharist at this holy liturgy with Dorothy Day."

Yes, the Spirit was moving. Soon after that, "the Presbyterian Catholic Worker" became a reality when the four partners found the perfect building on Ponce de Leon and, thanks to the help of the Presbytery, were able to purchase it. Murphy and Ed have been particularly close to Jeff Dietrich and Catherine Morris and the Los Angeles Catholic Worker and its sister houses over the years and have often attended retreats with them, hearing anew the Dorothy stories many Workers



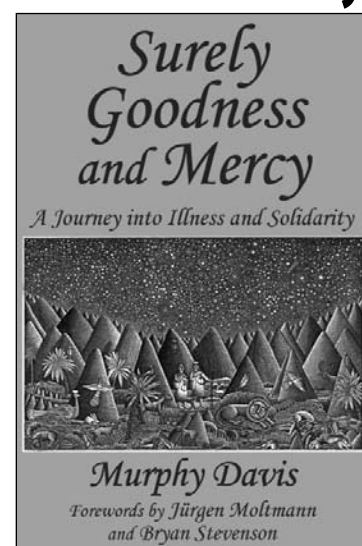
Joyce Hollyday/Sojourners Magazine

*Murphy Davis, Hannah, Rob, Christina, Carolyn Johnson, Eduard Loring in the dining room at 910 in 1982.*

have. Dorothy wrote at the end of *The Long Loneliness*, "It's still going on." Yes, both the Open Door Community and the Catholic Worker are still going on. ✦

*Rosalie Riegle is a grandmother, an oral historian and emerita in English from Saginaw Valley State University in Michigan. Now living in Evanston, Illinois and active with Su Casa Catholic Worker on the South Side of Chicago, Rosalie's latest books are Doing Time for Peace: Resistance, Family, and Community, and Crossing the Line: Nonviolent Resisters Speak Out for Peace.*

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## Joseph Echols Lowery: A Gift for Our Days *continued from page 1*

clemency, or no mercy. I did not go with them, but I know Dr. Lowery pressed them very hard about their duty to spare the life of Ivon Ray Stanley. Ivon's family was also there and poured their hearts out. I had set up a press conference at Mayor Andrew Young's office immediately after the Parole Board meeting. So Dr. Lowery's entourage walked over to City Hall to speak to the press about his meeting with Mr. Stanley and his pleas to the Board of Pardons and Paroles. Mayor Young also spoke about his opposition to the death penalty and the historic racism in its application.

As soon as we had all spoken, the floor was opened for questions from the press. To our everlasting incredulity and shame, the first question from the press was about what Mayor Young was going to do to help the Atlanta Zoo save Twinkles the Elephant. (No, I'm *not* making this up!) Mayor Young finally said, "If you folks from the press could have one fraction of interest in the life of Ivon Ray Stanley, a poor Black man with an intellectual disability, that you have in Twinkles the elephant, we wouldn't have to be standing here today begging for Mr. Stanley's life."

Of course the Parole Board didn't take long to say that Stanley would have to die. It was a painful, painful set of events. But Doc Lowery was standing firm — his jaw set and his spirit clear that we would have to redouble our efforts. He *never* failed to say yes when I asked for help. He went back to death row with me and befriended several other men. It didn't stop any executions but it was an important witness and it meant so much to a few men who had been forgotten all their lives and never ever imagined being visited by someone as important as Dr. Lowery.

Unlike most people, Joseph Lowery understood clearly the direct line from the struggles of the Civil Rights era to the era of mass imprisonment and death as punishment. He had come up under the harsh heel of Jim Crow Alabama and knew how little value was given to the lives of Black men, women and children in the criminal system. By the 1970s it had a slightly "reformed" face, but it was the same dad-blasted thing.

Another favorite moment for Ed and me was during a visit to Atlanta from Oliver Tambo, who served as President

of the African National Congress while Nelson Mandela was still in prison. He was a humble, quiet man and filled with great dignity. Dr. Lowery was making the schedule and all the arrangements for the visit. Included was a breakfast in a downtown hotel to which we were invited. When we got there, Ed and I and Ellen and Brian Spears were the only white folks in a large dining room. As we ate a hearty breakfast, Dr. Lowery explained to Mr. Tambo that he was going to meet a lot of important people during his stay in Atlanta. But he wanted to start his time off with the real workers in the Movement: "These," he said emphatically with a sweep of his arm, "these are the 'field n-gg--s', and these are the people you need to know in Atlanta."

We were never more honored to be in a meeting — to be included.



Hannah Loring-Davis

*Rev. Lowery shared a pastoral visit at the Open Door with Murphy Davis in 2002.*

I also want to add that, as great a leader for justice as Joseph Lowery was, he was at heart a pastor. After pastoring Central United Methodist Church for many years, he was moved to Cascade United Methodist where he served for many more years. He was a great preacher, which everybody knew. But he was also a loving pastor. When I was very ill in 2002, he came to visit us bringing wonderful gifts and many words of encouragement. He also had a wicked wit and could leave you laughing at the most unexpected times. There were

so many demands on his time and he travelled the nation and the world. But he took the time to visit the prisoner and the sick. It meant more to us than we can possibly say.

One of Doc's greatest joys, as most people know, was to live long enough to see Senator Barack Obama elected president. He "preached" the Benediction at Obama's Inauguration and some people were shocked that he included some famous lines (a bit paraphrased) from Big Bill Broonzy's blues song from the 1930s, "Lord, we ask you to help us work for that day when black will not be asked to get back, when brown can stick around, when yellow will be mellow, when the red-man can get ahead man, and when white will embrace what is right." He received a standing ovation.

About a year later, President Obama conferred upon him the Presidential Medal of Freedom. At Evelyn Gibson Lowery's funeral in 2013 (they were married nearly 70 years), it was told that he had turned to his wife and said, "Now honey, if you had married that boyfriend you had when we met, you wouldn't be standing here with me receiving the Medal of Freedom." Without missing a beat, Ms. Evelyn said, "Hmpff! If I had married *him*, *he'd* be the one standing here getting the Medal of Freedom." Let it never be said that as famous and beloved as he was, Evelyn Gibson Lowery held her ground and kept him on his toes!

We — all of us who knew and loved Joseph Echols Lowery — will miss him for the rest of our lives. Thank God that we had this great gift of his leadership and vision for 98 years — and for the legacy he leaves us. We must appropriate this legacy and miss no opportunity to stand up for justice. Or as Doc often said, "We must turn *toward* each other instead of *on* each other."

Memorial gifts can be made to the Joseph and Evelyn Lowery Institute for Justice and Human Rights housed at Clark Atlanta University. The mailing address is P.O. Box 92801, Atlanta, GA. ☙

*Murphy Davis is an activist pastor in Baltimore who continues to write, work with prisoners and agitate for the abolition of the death penalty and mass imprisonment. (murphydavis@bellsouth.net)*

## Raw Courage: Rizpah's Vigil *continued from page 1*

Famine settles into the land for three long years. Believing that it is punishment for Saul's massacre of the Gibeonites, King David asks their survivors what they need for expiation. They demand seven of Saul's sons. David hands over five of Saul's grandsons and his two sons by Rizpah, Armoni and Mephibosheth. Some translations say that the young men were hanged, others that they were impaled, on a mountain at the beginning of the barley harvest. We can be sure that their deaths were horrible. Rizpah — woman, concubine, property, without husband, sons, or power — is once again consigned to be a helpless onlooker in the vengeance games of men.

But Rizpah does something amazing. Moved to action by her profound grief, she refuses to remain merely a victim and spectator. Alone, in an act of defiance, the woman whose name means "glowing coal" goes to the mountain, to the distorted, sun-scorched bodies of her beloved sons. She spreads sackcloth on a rock, making herself a solitary place that will be her home for five long months. She is a victim of the sins of others, but still she makes a vigil with sackcloth, the symbol of penitence.

What a vision she must have been on that rock day after day, week after week, weary from sorrow and the task of protecting the sacred bodies that had been so dishonored. When vultures hover near, Rizpah flails her arms to scatter them. When wild beasts come with an appetite for decaying

flesh, she drives them away with rocks and shouts. In the stifling heat of day and the chilling air of night, she remains, trembling with fatigue and likely fear. Some people probably applauded the courage of this devoted mother. Others must have thought her mad. They praised or pitied or mocked her. But she never gave up.

One morning, she awakes to gentle drops of rain mingling with her tears. From the beginning of spring to the first rain of autumn, she has kept her solitary vigil. King David is so moved by her brave devotion that he gathers up the bones of his rival Saul and Rizpah's sons and buries them with honor. Rizpah, pawn in the games of vengeance between the powerful houses of Saul and David, becomes the reconciler. She who is victim of their sins offers the sacrifice that moves God to open the heavens and return abundance to the land.

Rizpah's self-imposed isolation pushed her to the depths. She used those many hours alone to weep, pray, rage, cry out and grasp for hope. And she persevered.

On Maundy Thursday my faith community remembered that, during the Passover Seder, our Jewish sisters and brothers would be remembering the ten plagues that devastated Egypt when the pharaoh refused to set free our enslaved ancestors in the faith. Water turned to blood; invasions of frogs, gnats, locusts and flies; thunder, hail and fire; the slaughter of children; epidemic diseases in livestock and

people — how could we miss the modern parallels of polluted air and water, violent storms and species lost as a result of climate change, children dying from war and hunger, and the pandemic that has the world in its grip? When we misuse the earth, when we ignore human needs, when we compete and consume rather than serve and share, the earth itself writhes and rebels in agony. As Wendell Berry wrote, "Whether we and our politicians know it or not, nature is party to all our deals and decisions, and she has more votes, a longer memory, and a sterner sense of justice than we do."

Despite how it is frequently being characterized, coronavirus is not our enemy, and we are not well served by declaring a war on it. The Sufi poet Rumi had a better insight: "These pains you feel are messengers. Listen to them." Coronavirus is a messenger. Are we listening? Are we allowing a season of challenge and a measure of physical isolation to push us to the depths? Are we willing to cry out with Rizpah and the earth itself for compassionate change? Are we devoted enough to act and pray until justice rolls down like raindrops from the sky on our famine-parched souls? ☙

*Joyce Hollyday, a writer and pastor living in Vermont, has been a friend of the Open Door for four decades. Her blog can be found at [www.joycehollyday.com](http://www.joycehollyday.com).*

# Grace and Peaces of Mail

Dear Murphy,

Thank you so much for both creating the Hardwick Prison trip and then writing the wonderful article in the January [2020] issue of *Hospitality* telling the story. What a ministry, what a gift to so many families and to the First Presbyterian Church of Milledgeville! It left me wondering what other grace-filled stories like this one are out there needing to be told and what new stories like this are waiting to be created.

With prayers for your health and wellbeing and blessings for the Open Door Community in Baltimore.

Barbara Smith  
Crossville, Tennessee

Mr. Loring,

How are things goin' for you I hope that all is well for you. I'm sorry I haven't responded to you sooner I been workin' on my plans and doin' God's will. I want to thank you for your book, *The Cry of the Poor*. It opened up my eyes a lot more. The way you wrote I thought you was black. LOL

Mr. Loring maybe one day we will become good friends and then I can call you Ed. Thank you and thank God for people like you. You have went out of your way for many people and you deserve tributes for your character, God bless you I truly love you my Brother See you soon, Bye.

W/B/S If you can.

Sincerely yours,  
Samiah Johnson  
Prisoner in Oklahoma

My Dear Murphy & Ed,

What good news, Murphy, that you can go out and walk! You sure have been through a lot. Spring is coming and "still you rise."

I'm just back from Maine for a good snowy visit with my daughter, Toby.

I hope you two are having a happy time.

At my church, Triune Mercy Center, we practice an Open Door liturgy, burning our sins and burdens (or the burden of sin) and imposing the ashes on each other. I always read the Wendell Berry poem, "At start of spring," as in our place of worship it's sacred text. I'm grateful to share that ODC practice.

John's daughter, Jill, is with us now for a week. She's a delight! Yesterday, in 45 minutes we did the pruning that'd take a man (sorry Ed) half a day. We work those hormones! And I love, love, love YOU!

Peace,  
Nikki Day  
Greenville, South Carolina

Open Door Community,

For so long I have wanted to write this letter and today is the day. I no longer would like to receive your newspaper. In it, I don't read very many feel good stories. They are mostly about hatred and bigotry. Just because you're speaking for the oppressed doesn't make it ok to hate another. Racism is racism: bigotry bigotry.

I especially don't like your stance on abortion and your disdain of the Catholic Church. Jesus, our creator, who gives life as a gift and left a church to shepherd us (because God knows, left to make our own rules, we would stray) wants us to be on the side of love and life, not hate and killing.

I know you do good work and I pray for your advocacy of the oppressed and your support of the poor, hungry and imprisoned. I pray also for Murphy's health and for a change of heart in matters of supporting all life.

God Bless,  
Jo Baldwin  
Marietta, Georgia

Dear Sirs/Madame,

Thank you so much for taking the time and devotion to disseminate information on fair and equal justice. Words can't say how much I enjoy reading your newspaper. I am a non-violent inmate serving the last years of a six-year sentence. Former professional software developer and business owner.

Please, if you can add me to your subscription list. To help out some, I enclose two stamps in supporting the cause. Would do more at some point.

Also, Great "In Our America" banner, Pls send me one.

Thank you,  
Steven Collins  
Prisoner  
Valdosta, Georgia

I think anyone reading Dan Marshall's accounting of what Dorothy said about her abortion can't help but believe that safe and legal procedures are the only way to go. I remember once, after teaching a Gwendolyn Brooks poem about abortion, asking students — most of them older — to comment anonymously on the poem and over half of them said they had had illegal abortions.

Rosalie Reigel  
Evanston, Illinois

*Rosalie is a primary writer and interpreter of the Catholic Worker Movement with her books like Doing Time for Peace and Voices from the Catholic Worker.*

Dear Ed,

I hope that this finds you and everyone on your end well. I'm not sure when this will get mailed. We have not been to the store in four weeks. The prison is locked down. The D.O.C. has brought the Corona Virus into the prisons. We have not had visits, family or legal/pastors in nearly eight weeks. Life has got so depressing. I wish I was back on death row. I'm trying to get back in court now.

Y'all take care and stay safe.  
Thank you all for everything y'all do!  
Ray Ward  
Prisoner in Georgia



Becca Conrad

Dear Murphy, Ed and Others at Open Door,

Happy Day-After-Easter to all of you. Yesterday afternoon I had plenty of time to read the recent issue of *Hospitality* because I am, like so many others, in "house arrest." It is always interesting and educational. I really appreciated the article about Ida Wells, and another good one about Jimmy Meders and those who worked so hard to achieve clemency for him. I loved the group photo that included friends Mary Sinclair and Mary Catherine Johnson. Also liked the pictures of smiling people on page 8, in "Visitors at ODC/Baltimore." Murphy, you look as though you have never been sick a day in your life!

In The Open Door Community envelope, I am sending some stamps, along with a check to help with the various works of kindness that you do, that are now more important than ever.

I know that you are trying hard to stay safe, and that you are helping others be safe too. I am hoping and praying that most of us can and will survive Donald Trump and the COVID-19 virus. They are equally dangerous, it seems to me. I am looking forward to getting and reading your book, Murphy. Hope to see you all in Atlanta on June 6th. Much love from me to both of you, and all at the Open Door.

Llewellyn Bell  
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Murphy and Ed,

The February issue of *Hospitality* arrived this week, and after reading Ed's "Murphy Update" I must write you. Please excuse the legal paper but I am traveling and what is in my heart matters, not the paper I use.

I am powerfully moved by the witness you have been to me most of my adult life. Years ago I was on the Urban Mission Committee (Along with Buddy Ennis and, I believe, Ed Grider) of Atlanta Presbytery when you came to us with the radical idea of selling your home, using the proceeds, and asking Presbytery to [join you in] purchasing a home on Ponce de Leon to serve the homeless. Only God knows the lives you have saved and changed and the witness you have been for justice and mercy.

Our daughter Laura, in conversation last week, pointed out to me what a financial return this was to Presbytery at the end.

At this stage of life, as I ponder final years and transition, your update is such a witness to God's continuing love and care. The hymn containing the words "When through the deep waters, I cause thee to go..." has always spoken to me, but you, in quoting the Isaiah passage have made it personal and real in applying it to Murphy's stage of health. In spite of — because of — the precarious situation of Murphy's health, you continue to witness to God's love and power.

So I am grateful for your witness to me personally and grateful for your years of witness as you have radically followed God's call as His servants.

Please know, Murphy and Ed, you continue in my love and prayers.

Blessings upon you,  
Nancy Cunningham  
Pinehurst, North Carolina

Beloved Sisters & Brothers in Christ,

Thank you for your faith, your work, and your story — especially Murphy's update. We will continue to hold her — and all of you, in prayer.

Would you please pray for the healing of my six-year-old grandson Louis? He arrived in the U.S. as a malnourished baby from the Congo that our Daughter Heidi was called to adopt and add to her family of seven. Last August my family moved from Richland, WA to Florida, for son-in-law Doug's work. Florida seems not a helpful place for a bi-racial family with special needs. They plan to move to PA asap. Louis will hopefully get a diagnosis for his neurological crisis soon. The plan is to seek out Johns Hopkins for treatment.

The peace of Christ be with you.  
Grant MacLean,  
Dalton Gardens, Idaho

Ed and Murphy,

You are on my mind and heart, in my thoughts and prayers this Easter Sunday. Many Easter Sundays, I find myself going to those Easter Sunday mornings when we were celebrating and sharing the Gospel in the streets of Atlanta. I reflected on those times this morning as we had to turn our car around after our parking lot service was cancelled due to rain. I pray for those that are now even more marginalized than ever before during these "shelter in place" orders.

I hope you are staying safe and strengthened by God's grace this day!

Love,  
Jennifer Walker Lee  
Cedartown, Georgia

*Jennifer and her husband, Joe Dan, were Resident Volunteers at the Open Door in 1996-7, where they met and married. They have two sons, Stephen and Michael.*