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

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**May 2019**

## “Tell the Truth and Shame the Devil” (Horace Tribble)

A Series on the Gospel, Part 1

By Eduard Loring

The Christianity Problem: The Church Cannot Swear to tell the Truth, The Whole Truth, Nothing but The Truth, So Help Us God.

Problem One: Housing and the truth of the gospel. We cannot tell the truth about housing because of our captivity in Christian circles and church. We do not want to lose friends and not influence people. But housing, slavery and freedom are central to the life of discipleship.

First, I wish to shed my light as to how we get to know the truth. Then why Christians cannot tell the truth about housing.

“What is Truth?” sniffed Governor Pilate as he shuffled from the interrogation room. (John 18.38, adapted)

How Disciples Discern the Gospel Truth for Discipleship. Well, let's turn to the good book:

“Then Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, ‘If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.’” (John 8.31-32. NRSV, emphasis added)

“To the Jews who had believed in him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’” (John 8.31-32. NIV, emphasis added)

“So Jesus said to those who believed in him, ‘If you obey my teaching, you are really my disciples: you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’” (John 8.31-32. GNB, emphasis added)

“So Jesus said to the good white folks who had come over to him, ‘If y'all stick by what I've said, you are honest followers of mine. You'll understand the truth, and the truth will liberate you.’” (John 8.31-32. Cotton Patch, emphasis added)

Why is truth central to the gospel message? Because the fruit of truth, all the truth, nothing but the truth, so help us God, is Freedom, or better, as Clarence Jordan translates the Greek, Liberation. Jesus is living and teaching about truth. And we are open to all sources of truth, including the truth beyond what the Gospel gives us: our experiential, scientific, philosophical and economic truth. Freedom tends to be an abstract philosophical term to many white types. Liberation is concrete, political, revolutionary for the Black Jesus types. The aim and purpose of Jesus' life, teachings, crucifixion/lynching and his life today is to provide a way of life for the oppressed and the oppressor (Black and white together/white and People of Color together) to be free, liberated from their captivity to the powers of the Domination System. For example, to liberate prisoners and prison guards from Mass



Robert Hodgell

Incarceration, which is a spoke in the iron wheel of white supremacy. This liberation is a revolution in the human heart, the church and the social order. The gospel's intent is liberation. Following liberation, and only following liberation, come the beautiful, graceful relationships of reconciliation and peace.

In the Black Jesus context this means, racially speaking, liberation for white supremacists and people of color. Politically speaking, liberation will be achieved when the USA is no longer an Empire, and we live in peace and harmony under our shared vine and fig tree. “We shall overcome. Black and white together.” Paul, the Ph.D. in Pharisaical studies and citizen of the Roman Empire, says it best of all: “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5.1 ESV)

The human situation is dire. We are born into slavery or, as Nibs Stroupe names it, “captivity” or, as Thomas Merton says, “We are born dead.” Some prefer the term sin, but sin is too weak a word and moralistic a term for the cage of self and the cages of culture and society in which we serve the God of the Super Bowl who is the God of Wall Street and capital-

**Tell the Truth** *continued on page 7*

## At the Margins

Black Jesus in the Resurrection

By Nibs Stroupe

Easter came so late this year that I still have an opportunity to write about the power of the Resurrection here in May! Wow — the Resurrection goes forth! Though I was raised on the Cross as the central doctrine of the church, in my adult years I've come to shift that centrality to the Resurrection. I'm perplexed as to why the church has a cross as its central symbol rather than an empty tomb, but having grown up in the white supremacist violent culture of the South, I understand that we who are classified as “white” believe that violence is at the heart of God. So, no wonder we center on the cross; it is our understanding of life — someone must be killed in order for there to be reconciliation. I'll try to take on these two doctrines of Atonement and Resurrection in another article, but for now let's stick with the Resurrection as the central driving force of the church. It certainly was that in the Gospel narratives — it was the Resurrection that changed and fired the disciples, not the crucifixion. Indeed, at the crucifixion, all the male disciples fled in terror and despair. Only the women disciples stayed with Jesus until the end. The Risen Jesus, however, fired them all up and sent them out to take on the Roman Empire.

**The primary witnesses to the Resurrection were people at the margins: women.**

Given this background of the Resurrection, I want to write about its possibilities in our lives. The first thing to note is that the primary witnesses to the Resurrection are people from the margins: the women. All four Gospel accounts have various women as the primary witnesses. In a patriarchal society in which the life of Jesus took place, we can imagine how difficult this fact was: The testimony to the Resurrection depends on those whose testimony would not be allowed in the courts without male corroboration. How irritating! Black Jesus seems to hang much of his revolutionary power on those whom the society says are untrustworthy, but then this was true of his entire ministry. Why should it be any different in his life-changing resurrection? Black Jesus lived his life, death and resurrection at the margins. The primary witnesses to the Resurrection were people at the margins: women.

Many commentators seek to blunt this inconvenient truth by pointing out that the only reason that the women are the primary witnesses to the Resurrection is that they happened to be at the right place at the right time. They came to the tomb of Jesus not to find the Risen Jesus but to anoint the body of a dead Jesus and give it a proper burial. They came

**At the Margins** *continued on page 7*

# Introducing Nibs (Gibson) Stroupe

## Board Member of the Open Door Community

By Lee Carroll

*In 2016, when several elder partners in the Open Door Community “retired,” the decision was made to transition the organization into a much smaller residential community of three people (Ed Loring, Murphy Davis and David Payne) and to relocate from Atlanta to Baltimore. At that time the community also created a new kind of Board of Directors to lead the organization into the future. This is the first in a series of short articles which will introduce the ten current members of the Open Door’s Board. Each article is a brief spiritual biography pointing to the gifts and values that directors bring to the ongoing mission of the Open Door Community. The series begins in this edition and features the newest Board member and Treasurer, Nibs Stroupe.*

When asked if there was any one defining issue that has shaped his life and service as a Presbyterian minister, Nibs Stroupe quickly responded, “Racism and white supremacy!” Indeed, one needs only to look casually at his life story to see that his response was on target.

Born in Memphis in 1946, Nibs grew up in a low-income, single-parent family in Helena, Arkansas, a small town on the banks of the Mississippi River. In reflecting upon his early years, he openly acknowledges that he absorbed many of the values of white-dominated, Southern society in those pre-desegregation days, including the assumption that white people are inherently superior to Black people. While Nibs was graciously supported and encouraged by the people of the Presbyterian church where he and his mother were members, he also

recognizes, sadly, that many of his notions of white supremacy were learned from his church. The rest of his life has been dedicated to unlearning those values and seeking racial justice.

His unlearning process began partly due to the influence of Vera Miller, a Jewish woman who taught him in high school. She introduced Nibs to Alan Paton’s novel *Cry, the Beloved Country*, which depicts the struggle for racial justice in South Africa. In the years since, he has sought to confront white supremacy in his own life, church and society.

Nibs went to Davidson College (North Carolina) in 1964, and after one year there he transferred to Southwestern at Memphis (now Rhodes College). His questions about race deepened during his college years, and for the first time he established life-changing friendships with African Americans. In time he became involved in the struggle for civil rights in Memphis during the years leading up to the 1968 assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Within days of that tragic event, Nibs received his B.A. in Philosophy at Southwestern.

Following college, he attended Vanderbilt University Divinity School (Nashville, Tennessee), thinking he would pursue a career in higher education. But before completing his degree he became convinced of the immorality of the Viet Nam war, and in protest, he surrendered his student deferment from military service. He was immediately drafted, but declared himself to be a conscientious objector to war. Instead of prison, he opted to do alternate national service and directed a halfway house in Nashville for men being released from prison.

Two years later, Nibs resumed his theo-



Caroline Leach

logical education at Columbia Theological Seminary (Decatur, Georgia), transferring there because he now wanted to pursue pastoral ministry instead of a career in academics. He excelled at Columbia, finishing first in his class. During his years there he and Caroline Leach (also a Presbyterian minister) were married.

Following graduation in 1975, he was ordained by the Presbyterian Church U.S., and he and Caroline served with the St. Columba Church of Norfolk, Virginia (1975-1980) where they were the first clergy couple in their denomination to serve a congregation as co-pastors. They then lived in Nashville for two years, where Nibs worked with the Southern Prison Ministry.

In 1983 Nibs and Caroline were installed as co-pastors of the Oakhurst Presbyterian Church in Decatur, Georgia — a struggling biracial congregation of about 40 active members located in a transitional neighborhood. There they championed strategies designed to maintain the congregation’s

biracial membership — opening the previously locked church doors to the neighborhood, utilizing art to emphasize the importance of Black culture, and ensuring that Black members were in positions of leadership alongside white members. Over the next 34 years Nibs and Caroline helped transform the culture of Oakhurst Church into a vibrant, diverse, nationally recognized congregation that has grown to about 300 members.

Throughout his spiritual pilgrimage, Nibs’ life has been enriched by key people who befriended and guided him: Ed Loring (Open Door); his wife, Caroline Leach; Inez Fleming (elder at Oakhurst Church); Larry Lacy (professor at Rhodes College); Walter Harrelson and Don Beisswenger (professors at Vanderbilt); and Shirley Guthrie, Ben Kline and Erskine Clarke (professors at Columbia Seminary).

Nibs has written five excellent books and numerous articles. One of his earlier books, *While We Run This Race*, co-authored with Inez Fleming (Giles) in 1995, addresses the question of why white supremacy remains a powerful issue in U.S. society and offers ways to dismantle its grasp upon our lives. His most recent volume, co-authored with Catherine Meeks and scheduled for release in September 2019, tells the story of civil rights icon Ida B. Wells.

Nibs was honorably retired by the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 2017 following a distinguished career of 42 years in ministry. In retirement he continues to write and engage in anti-racist activism. His work with the Open Door Community embodies his continuing quest for justice and peace. ♦

*Lee Carroll is an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and Associate Professor Emeritus of Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia. He is the current chair of the Board of Directors of the Open Door Community.*

# HOSPITALITY

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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.

## Open Door Community

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Michael Galovic

*On Good Friday, Baltimore was the site for an Open Door Community extended family gathering. Michael Galovic came from Asheville, North Carolina, and Heather Bargeron and son, Oscar, came from Philadelphia, to join Murphy and Eduard; their daughter, Hannah, and granddaughter, Michaela, for Eucharist and dinner.*

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**Eduard Loring:** Activist/Advocate/Ally  
**David Payne:** Office Manager

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

# James Cone's Cross and Lynching Tree

By Catherine Meeks

*I was thrilled when Catherine Meeks told me of her Lenten Teaching on James Cone's The Cross and the Lynching Tree. The number of white folks attending portends hope for the Beloved Community! I have noted over the past few years a number of churches using Dr. Cone's groundbreaking new narrative book during Lent. First Baptist in D.C. engaged this text during Lent this year. Baltimore Presbytery did so last year. When I attended, four of us whites were off the moon for the evening. I have been saddened over the years that Black Liberation Theology has been primarily located in the academy. Cone's first book, Black Theology and Black Power, was published in 1969 after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s death. The Black Power Movement was not yet shattered and the Black Panthers still had breath until J. Edgar sent in FBI henchmen to do what they do well, like many men in blue: kill Black men and women. Cone's The Cross and the Lynching Tree, a most demanding and suffering read, is bringing Black Liberation Theology into the churches, Black and white, into the pews among those who self-select and have the guts to face ourselves, Black and white, in the truth of the New Narrative. In Dr. Meeks' essay below, you will read a witness to the Cross, the terror of the Lynching Tree and the Resurrection of the Black Jesus in white supremacist America. Thank you, Catherine. Thank you all who attended the Lenten series.*

—Eduard Loring, Managing Editor

Though it took James Cone only ten years to write *The Cross and The Lynching Tree*, he said that it was a book that he was writing all his life. And those of us who read it can sense the weight of the compulsion that pushed him forward to getting it done. While Cone faced a fair amount of challenge regarding the writing of this book, the most profound one was that the book dealt with the world in which he lived, matured and managed in some ways to escape. The dehumanizing and unsafe world of the African American in the early 1900s provided an undying memory for him of the danger that existed for his father, brothers and himself, and the fear that he felt every time his father came home later than was expected. These experiences and memories served as the foundation for this book as well as his other work. But it is in *The Cross and The Lynching Tree* that he realized that he had finally merged the troubling threads that had haunted him for decades about the relationship of the lynching tree and the cross and what that meant to him. He wanted to make sure that he communicated what he had come to understand about their relationship in a way that was "good enough" for readers to understand the importance of embracing their troubling messages.

Two of our Episcopal churches in the Diocese of Atlanta decided to respond to the challenge of the book by organizing a five-Sunday Lenten study which I was invited to lead. It was an amazing, wonderful and challenging experience. When I agreed to do it, I had thought that there might be a handful of folks who would be interested and that we would have a small group conversation format for the class. Much to my surprise, over 100 parishioners showed up for the first two sessions. Following those sessions, it tapered off a bit but there were always 75 to 80 folks in a class. Despite the size, we managed to have very robust discussions and for the last two sessions I used a town hall meeting format with each table crafting the most pressing question that the members of that table wanted to put on the floor for discussion. This format gave folks a chance to ask questions that I might not have thought to address.

One of the most striking questions was, "Why would

African Americans choose to be Christian given the way in which religion was used to support slavery, lynching and the overall supremacy system?" That question prompted me to remember reading about Sojourner Truth being so puzzled when she stood outside of a church filled with white people and heard them talking about Jesus. She wondered how they found out about Jesus and concluded that they were not talking about the Jesus that she knew. So, the Jesus of the slaves and ex-slaves and even African Americans today who have



Crucifix carved by a prisoner at Angola in Louisiana.

**"Why would African Americans choose to be Christian given the way in which religion was used to support slavery, lynching and the overall supremacy system?"**

a deep and abiding faith is not the Jesus of white religion. This is a primary point that Cone makes. White theologians such as Reinhold Niebuhr and others who were vocal about things such as the Holocaust were unable to find the courage to speak about lynching and seem to have had no ability to understand how lynching and the Cross were connected. African Americans, whether slave or free, understood that Jesus had been crucified just as they were being crucified. He did not deserve it and neither did they, and it was their ability to identify with that suffering by one who did not deserve it that helped them to live.

The Jesus of Black sufferers was not trying to be supreme. That Jesus was the one "who did not say a mumbling word" as he was being lynched and yet was to be raised triumphantly in a world that was beyond the reach of suffering and white supremacy. Black folks living in this land of terror had to hold onto something bigger than the slave master's God. Their heads heard what the master said about God and the ways in which the words of scripture were being used to keep them from "keeping their minds stayed on freedom," but their hearts did not listen. No wonder white people had in the past and continue to have such difficulty understanding what goes on in Black churches. The authentic Black religious

experience is grounded in the understanding that the Black back is against the wall and there is nobody there to offer help but Jesus and he can be counted on to deliver.

While there were many other moments in the encounter that we had together over those five weeks that cannot be covered in this space, it is important to note a couple of other things that arose out of our time together. Some of the participants felt that they were being "browbeaten" because we engaged in an unapologetic discussion of the ways in which slavery, lynching, the prison industrial complex, the death penalty and 21<sup>st</sup>-century police killings are connected. It is difficult to look at the many ways that lynching continues today. We have to choose to be completely honest and look at the ways in which structural racism continues to undermine the lives of black and brown people as it keeps their backs against the wall. The denial of health care, good housing and adequate education; neighborhoods that do not receive needed public services; and the overall lack of economic opportunity represent a modern-day reign of terror for the descendants of the lynched.

It was at the end of the session in which I talked about all of this that one white person came up to me to express how some of them were feeling browbeaten and felt that whites "should get some credit for showing up for the class." This expression of white fragility is tiresome. Black and brown people do not have the privilege of feeling browbeaten. There is no day when race can be on the back burner of our lives and we can decide when and where we enter a discussion or to take a moment to pay attention during Lent or Advent. Also, no one gets credit for showing up except as God gives us credit for trying to do the work that we need to do so we can become liberated from the oppression that keeps us from being free. This is true no matter what our race happens to be.

Finally, let me say a word about going forward. Many of the participants said very clearly that they will never be the same again after having read this book.

My response to that is Glory be to God for the courage and commitment of our brother James Cone, who was willing to bare his heart and soul to the world in a way that created a document that makes folks different when they encounter his words. In addition to my thanksgiving, I asked the members of the class to stay close to their own heads and hearts as they go forward and to make sure that they stay awake for their ways of participating in present day lynching and to seek to become "a half-shade braver" each day. ♦

*Catherine Meeks is the Founding Executive Director of the Absalom Jones Episcopal Center for Racial Healing, and the retired Clara Carter Acree Distinguished Professor of Socio-cultural Studies and Sociology from Wesleyan College. She has published six books and is editor of Living Into God's Dream: Dismantling Racism in America (2016), which focuses on racial healing and reconciliation. She and Nibs Stroupe are authors of Passionate Justice, a book about the life and witness of Ida B. Wells for our time, to be published in September. She writes for the Huffington Post and is a regular contributor to Hospitality. She is involved with prison work, visits on death row and works for the abolition of the death penalty. (kayma53@att.net)*

# Baltimore

## A Further Learning: Chilled to the Bone

### Preparation: Woodruff Park (Troy Davis Park) 2

By Eduard Loring

*Some say the world will end in fire,*

*Some say in ice.*

*From what I've tasted of desire*

*I hold with those who favor fire.*

*But if it had to perish twice,*

*I think I know enough of hate*

*To say that for destruction ice*

*Is also great*

*And would suffice.*

— Robert Frost

*I have learned the wrath of the wind.*

*Chilled bones. Iced marrow. Bitten flesh. Numb finger tips.*

*Frigid feet.*

Yet

*My Soul held fast: warm.*

*My Heart was hot.*

Thank you God of Fire who burns the wrath of the wind.

— Ibo Lorinski

1983 was a very long time ago:

Average cost of new house - \$82,600

Median price of an existing home - \$70,300

Average income per year - \$21,070.00

Average monthly rent - \$335.00

Black unemployment rate - 21.2%

Homelessness in Atlanta - 5,756

Georgia death row population - 122

Growing out of our Night Hospitality Ministry at Clifton Presbyterian Church in 1979 and our founding the Open Door Community in 1981, by winter of 1983 we were in a push to open shelters in downtown churches. We named our work The Shelter Movement. Over a five-year period a number of churches responded: Central Presbyterian gave us their gym, and Bob and Phyllis Bevis organized the volunteers. Carolyn Johnson and I trained the volunteers. And continuing: Trinity Methodist, All Saints Episcopal, First Presbyterian, Druid Hills Presbyterian, and Morningside Baptist. Others followed under other auspices.

Our actions were many, varied and daring. Our aim was to teach Atlanta about the thousands of brothers and sisters in Atlanta who had no safe place to live. No housing. Finding warm, safe shelter with bathrooms for folks at night was our aim. There is no housing shortage in the U.S. The shortage is money for those who are poor. Very cruel, death-dealing and stupid system. Wealth is the cause of poverty. We hoped, prayed and agitated to change Atlanta. We wanted people, especially those who confessed the Way of Jesus, to engage homeless people like the Humane Society and its supporters advocated for dogs and cats. The spiritual answer to people wandering outside with no place to go is to encourage people to imagine that homeless folks are dogs. If so, there would be no homelessness.

This article is about the chill factor in my experience, which is a part of the experience of all who work with and fight on the streets for friends without housing. Now, I was chilled to the bone on our escape from Patterson School for Boys. Only got warm after two hours in bed hugging my beloved Pit Bull dog, Jody. (She had to wear a muzzle outside the house, for she lived her blood line.) But this night at Woodruff Park was unequaled by any cold I experienced until

I moved to Baltimore.

In the winter of 1983 we organized a "sleep-in" at Woodruff Park. A Coca-Cola-funded park which has been a ground zero of contested turf between the white supremacist elite, their African American cohorts and Georgia State University versus poor people, especially Black homeless folk and their allies.

We put the word out on the streets: Come spend the night at Woodruff Park. We will provide a blanket for everyone. We prayed for 100. Well, you know this 12-baskets-of-leftovers Black Jesus we follow. When we arrived at 6:30 p.m., the lower end of the park was full of cold, hungry, hurting human beings named "worthless" by bankers, "takers" by Paul Ryan and his mentor Ayn Rand. A better epithet is "children of God" or "the oppressed" or "our Jesus who comes in a stranger's guise." What do you say?

Delighted were we by the cold, bedraggled crowd. We held the rally. Murphy led the singing of Freedom Songs. Rob prayed, I preached and we all professed our horror at homelessness. Around 9 p.m. we were ready to give out the blankets. Bitterly chilled air now whipped around the skyscrapers as we prepared for the night in this concrete canyon. The station wagon full of blankets was hidden two blocks away. Rob Johnson went to get the vehicle as I announced where we would distribute the blankets and the area of the park where we hoped folk would sleep.

Now, please, with a sympathetic eye read this. We advocates were a group of well-to-do, highly educated, barely experienced White Christ southerners. The streets had yet to teach us the meaning of the Cross: a slow, cruel and evil lynching tree, the location of sorrowful joy and our redemption. The streets, early on in our journey, especially through the politico-spiritual insights of Murphy, taught us to draw the lines between prisons, the death penalty and homelessness as public policy, white supremacy control and human beings transmogrified into things, like chattel, the objects of gold diggers.

Rob pulled up in the station wagon. A riot ensued. People yelling, "Blankets! Blankets! Get out my way." Pushing, shoving, cursing. I was pushed up against the back of the wagon. I shouted at the top of my lungs, "Get back. Get back." The suffering crowd shoved even harder. I screamed, "Rob, get the wagon out of here." I pushed back and screamed again, "No blankets tonight. No blankets. Get back. Let me go."

I was the most hated white man in Atlanta that night. Folks howled and screamed right back to me. I will not repeat the epithets I caught in my ears and more importantly in my heart. I was dumbfounded. "What shall I do? What can I do? What may I do?" Not much, clearly. The black night shrouded above us, stars crying. I was devastated.

Most dispersed. Back to icy, abandoned buildings or frigid cat holes or to walk the biting cold streets all night long. A few stayed. A few consoled me. A few, blanketless, slept on park benches. (I said this was a long time ago.) I encouraged the allies to go home and get a night's sleep. We had to serve the Butler Street Breakfast and the Soup Kitchen the following day. I would stay. I had to stay. Murphy and Rob and Carolyn went home to our babies. To get ready to cook the grits and soup in a few hours.

I stayed all night. As a sign of my failure and symbol of my repentance for being so stupid and cursed by my white innocence, I took off my coat. No blanket. No coat. I could not believe the cold. An hour later, pain hit my bones. I wept.

I was in harm's way. I suffered like a person on the streets suffers every night and all day long. I was embedded in the Cry of the Poor. I was changed and took a small step into solidarity with the poorest of the poor. To this day I am angry. I hate homelessness and I feel distrust of those who have grown accustomed to homelessness. To most today, homelessness is a natural condition of hundreds of thousands of our fellow citizens. Just a part of the landscape in urban and rural locations. We who are disciples of the Way know that the majority of these sisters and brothers are baptized believers. Do our baptismal vows have any meaning to us beyond the saving of our souls? I think not. Will white America ever house the homeless? I think not.

The streets and the human suffering, despair, hunger, cold by winter, hot by summer are my cross and my empty tomb. My suffering. My joy. The streets invite you to come as well.

Thirty and more years later, Murphy, David and I moved to Baltimore. We took a small piece of the Open Door Community along with us. Or more truthfully, the Open Door Community claimed us. We cannot let go. Here I have met cold, a wind chill factor and suffering I have not known before.

Next month I will conclude with the beginning of this series. Baltimore: A Further Learning: Chilled to the Bone. I am honored if you have read thus far. This is not a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing. My writings witness to a street-truth. My truth. The truth of a remnant. Thank you. ♦

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## HOSPITALITY

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# A Call to Liberation

*Review of James H. Cone*

## Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody: The Making of a Black Theologian

By Peter Gathje

In this time of Trumpian toxicity, James Cone's Black theology remains a crucial resource for those who seek a faithful grounding for resistance and hope. Cone's story about the formation of Black theology in the crucible of Black experience in the racist realities of the U.S., including the church, is revealing, inspiring and indicative of the work still to be done.

To a white man who seeks to be a disciple of the Black Jesus, Cone offers a bracing call to conversion and commitment to racial justice. A starting point for that conversion is to acknowledge and enter deeply into Cone's assertion that reverberates through this book and all of his writings: "Any theology in America that fails to engage white supremacy and God's liberation of black people from that evil is not Christian theology but a theology of the Antichrist." (Cone, 18)

James Cone's books, beginning with *Black Theology and Black Power* and culminating in *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, consistently explain, examine and evaluate Christian theology from the standpoint of Black experience. The Sam and Dave lyric that gives the title to Cone's memoir reflects Cone's love for Black people, and the necessity in his bones to tell the truth from within his Christian faith. Cone seeks to share the truth that God is Black and that God loves Black people. God's love is why Cone sings with Sam and Dave, "Baby, I'm so proud, I'm really gonna scream out loud, I can't hold it any longer, your love talk is getting stronger." Cone's anger about white supremacy, anchored in his love for Black people and the Black God, moves him to tell us even when he "Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody."

Cone's theological "love talk" and his story of how it got stronger as he struggled and wrote and fought to create space for Black bodies and voices in the work of theology is at the center of his memoir. He writes, "I resolved to speak about God in a language that empowered black people to love their blackness and to reject whiteness." (75)

If you come to this book hoping for details about Cone's life, a careful self-examination of his life choices, relationships and activist work, you will be disappointed. This is a book about Cone's commitment to writing Black theology in order to provide a theology-informed resistance to white supremacy, to rejecting a false Christianity premised upon a white God and a white Jesus who endorse a white supremacy, which is the status quo in the USA today. "Black theology is a language about God that comes out of black experience" Cone writes, and his focus is on showing that "being black and Christian could be liberating." (89, 91) Cone was set on fire by Black suffering and by a Black determination to not be defined by that suffering. He turned to the blues and spirituals, and writers like James Baldwin, and preachers like Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X to craft a Black theology that supported the dignity of Black people and called for their liberation. In later life he also drew upon and learned from womanist theologians. They directed him to the particular oppressions of Black women, but also the dangerous ambiguity of theological language about suffering and the cross. In what he names as his favorite of his books, *The Cross and The Lynching Tree*, Cone developed his theology of suffering and the cross so that those become "God's critique of power — white power" and an inversion of the world's value system, so that what the cross sought to destroy emerges with the beauty of Black lives and Black religion. This beauty demands respect, which Cone says is at the heart of his theology, "For me, everything I wrote addressed respect, and that still is my main concern." (107)

**Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody**  
The Making of a Black Theologian

By James H. Cone

Orbis Books  
2018

JAMES H. CONE



Said I Wasn't  
Gonna Tell Nobody

that I will know "that we are all of one blood, brothers and sisters, literally and symbolically" and that what I do to Blacks I do to myself? (143) If I read Cone's *Said I Wasn't Gonna Tell Nobody* with my heart open to the grace of the Black God, then there is hope that to those questions I can answer, "Yes!" ♦

Peter Gathje is Vice President for Academic Affairs/Dean of Memphis Theological Seminary, and a founder of Manna House, a place of hospitality in Memphis. He wrote *Sharing the Bread of Life: Hospitality and Resistance at the Open Door Community* (2006) and edited *A Work of Hospitality: The Open Door Reader 1982 – 2002*.

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I find in Cone's story and in his theology a clear path to follow as a white person who seeks a way forward from years of white supremacist distortions and destructions of the Gospel, which fed racist oppression that denied respect for people of color. Cone is clear that he did not write for white people and was not concerned by what white people might have to say about his books, and yet Cone reveals why whites need Black theology. Why? Because otherwise as white persons, our lives, our theology, is hopelessly determined by "whiteness," which has existed only to oppress and destroy, and so stands squarely against the will of God and the work of Jesus, which are for human flourishing.

Cone argues cogently and passionately in each of his books that "American white theology ... has basically been a theology of the white oppressor." (*Black Theology of Liberation*, 4) To leave that white theology behind requires that I embrace that God is Black, and that Jesus is Black, because to be Black is to stand with those who are oppressed and to be engaged in the struggle for liberation. Whiteness cannot be saved because it is fundamentally opposed to God and to humanity. Cone invites people to celebrate a liberating truth: "Jesus was stronger than his crucifiers. Blacks are stronger than whites. Black religion is more creative and meaningful and true than white religion." (167) Why? Because those who have suffered wrong are stronger than those who impose wrong. Why? Because God stands with, identifies with, those who suffer, not those who impose suffering.

And even more importantly, God's way and thus the way of Black faith is to respond to suffering by creating new life, reflected in spirituals, the blues, Black art and literature, and Black religion. The beauty and strength of Black people, tested in suffering from and resistance to white supremacy, provides the loving and hopeful ground for believing "Black Lives Matter" and organizing and acting in that truth.

As a white person, this is the test James Cone helps me to face. Will I affirm, without qualification and without hiding behind theological abstractions about "All Lives Matter" that "Black Lives Matter"? Will I enter into the theological reality and meaning Cone so powerfully has articulated, that God is Black, and that Jesus is Black? That is to say, will I be open to receive a gracious redemption, as Cone writes, from my blindness and open my eyes to the terror of white deeds so

## The Box

### Whitey On the Moon

A rat done bit my sister Nell  
With Whitey on the moon  
Her face and arms began to swell  
And Whitey's on the moon

I can't pay no doctor bills  
But Whitey's on the moon  
Ten years from now I'll be paying still  
While Whitey's on the moon

You know, the man just upped my rent last night  
Cause Whitey's on the moon  
No hot water, no toilets, no lights  
But Whitey's on the moon

I wonder why he's uppin' me?  
Cause Whitey's on the moon?  
Well I was already givin' him fifty a week  
And now Whitey's on the moon

Taxes takin' my whole damn check  
The junkies make me a nervous wreck  
The price of food is goin' up  
And if all that crap wasn't enough

A rat done bit my sister Nell  
With Whitey on the moon  
Her face and arms began to swell  
And Whitey's on the moon

With all that money I made last year  
For Whitey on the moon  
How come I ain't got no money here?  
Hmm, Whitey's on the moon

You know I just about had my fill  
Of Whitey on the moon  
I think I'll send these doctor bills  
airmail special  
(To Whitey on the moon)

— Gil Scott-Heron

# Your Clothes are Killing Us!

By Rosalie Riegle

When is the last time you wore a sweater labeled "Made in the USA"? Probably years, unless your clothing is even more vintage than mine.

I've been buying most of my clothing from thrift shops for ages, trying to live simply. Then one of my daughters persuaded me to watch the documentary "The True Cost," and I realized that clothing — how and where it's made and how it is distributed and disposed of — is a huge justice issue! So it's more than just simplifying my personal buying habits; I have now resolved to buy *only* used clothing and to avoid buying any more leather shoes or boots.

Here's why. In my lifetime, the manufacture and distribution of what we put on our bodies has totally changed. In 1960, the U.S. produced over 95% of its own clothing. Today it produces only 3%, with the rest outsourced to developing countries such as Cambodia and Bangladesh. We now consume a whopping 500% more clothing than we did two decades ago, and it is much less expensive, making it a true throw-away for many consumers. "The True Cost" showed me that "fast fashion" — buying ever cheaper, ever more disposable clothing — kills people all over the world.

It kills the workers — mostly women — who work for low wages under horrible and unsafe conditions in Bangladesh and other poverty-stricken countries. If workers try to organize, factory owners frequently retaliate, and the police violently quell the protests if workers take to the streets, because their countries want the money the fashion trade brings.

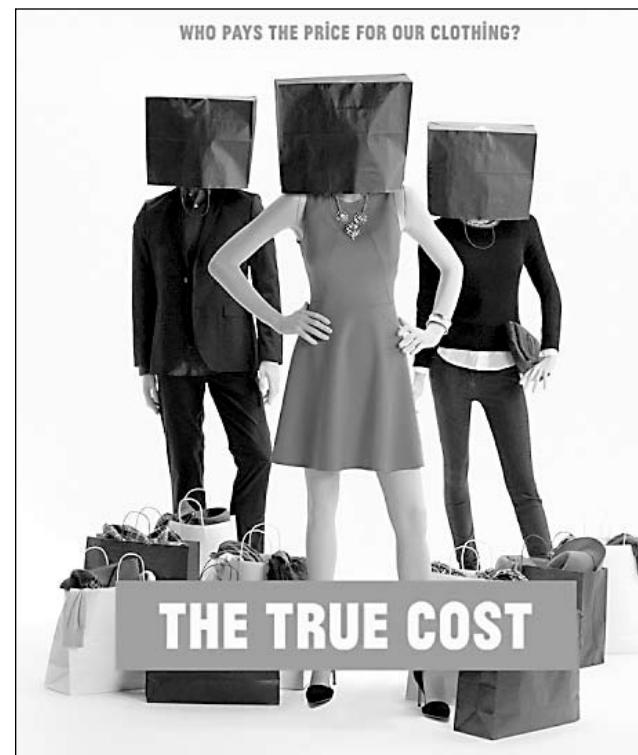
The world's attention was drawn to the workers' plight by the 2013 factory collapse at Rana Plaza in Bangladesh, a tragedy which killed 1103 and injured 2500 more. But our memories are short, so Andrew Morgan and Michael Ross made "The True Cost," a riveting documentary widely available through Netflix, Amazon and hopefully, your neighborhood library. Ask them to order it if it's not!

Every time we purchase a piece of clothing, we contribute to a system that denies millions of workers a living wage and a chance to raise their children in safety, to say nothing of the thousands and thousands of U.S. jobs that were lost when our clothing industry was outsourced. Consumers may think they are winning because clothing is more and more available and less and less expensive, but the only winners are the global corporations that own and control the capital and move it around to maximize their profits.

Fast fashion kills with chemicals that poison the land used to grow cotton as well as the lungs of the farmworkers. It pollutes the rivers and ultimately the ground-water and the oceans, especially with the noxious chemicals used to tan leather. And ultimately it pollutes the landfills of the world, which is where the vast majority of this fast fashion ends up, now that it's so inexpensive and supposedly therefore disposable.

I remember being in Kampala, Uganda years ago and seeing street stalls selling used clothing from the U.S., all washed and tidied up after being shipped there in bales and making money all along the way. I felt good about this because at least people in Africa were supporting themselves and had nearly new clothing to wear. But now I know that this second-hand commerce is only the tip of the iceberg in a vast mountain of pollution clogging the world's landfills, particularly in Haiti, where many of the bales of unwanted clothing end up.

When you watch the movie, you'll see the problem, but will probably feel helpless in the face of so much misery. "What can we do as individuals?" *Hospitality* readers can, and probably do, already shop at thrift stores or use the clothing room of a Catholic Worker house. But you all know people — especially young people — who spend way too



much of their time shopping at the inexpensive fast fashion stores like Walmart, H&M, Zara's, and Target. So make sure your junior highs and high schools show the movie. Ask your youth group to show and discuss it in light of its obvious justice issues. Host a showing at your church and in your living room and, in the discussions, get your audiences involved and ask them to spread the word, especially to teens. Tell them there are at least five things all consumers can do:



Clifford Harper

- ♦ Commit to wearing whatever they buy at least 30 times, to break the "clothes are disposable" habit.
- ♦ Slow their fashion cycle. No one has to wear something new every day.
- ♦ Use their clothing dollars wisely by purchasing from responsible manufacturers committed to Fairtrade standards, such as brands like People Tree and those listed on the True Cost website.
- ♦ Detox their wardrobe by buying only from those committed to Greenpeace's Detox Programme. (<https://tinyurl.com/y366b8no>)

- ♦ Join the millions already in the fashion revolution and make their voice heard by asking questions of the companies who produce what they wear. (<https://www.fashionrevolution.org/about/get-involved/>)

Remember what Noam Chomsky wrote years ago? "If you assume that there's no hope, you guarantee that there will be no hope. If you assume that there is an instinct for freedom, there are opportunities to change things, there's a chance you may contribute to making a better world. The choice is yours."

Make it. ♦

*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.*

## poetry corner



Julie Lonneman

## The Good Samaritan

The story unfolds, as if it is about the other.  
But it turns out that we are the other.  
The person in need is in fact us,  
And we must reach out to ourselves.

For only in serving the other,  
Are we serving ourselves.  
We are as much in need,  
As those in whom we see need.

The Gospel is not just about thinking,  
But more about action in righting wrongs,  
For in addressing wrongs,  
We are making things right in ourselves.

It has never been about ourselves,  
And yet it always has been.  
For we only become truly ourselves  
By becoming the other in all things.

— Michael Thomas Marsden

*Michael Marsden is Professor of English, American Studies and Media Studies; Emeritus Dean of the College and Academic Vice President Emeritus at St. Norbert College. He is a longtime financial supporter of the Open Door Community and an occasional poet.*

## “Tell the Truth and Shame the Devil” (Horace Tribble) A Series on the Gospel, Part 1 *continued from page 1*

ism, whose primary attribute is love of Mammon and sexual pleasures. This God of the Super Bowl is the white male God of the American confession “In God We Trust” on our paper money. We are born dead. How can we kill the God of White America? How shall we find life, abundant life, and what is the cost to be alive and emancipated from our human slavery?

The biblical translations offer many choices and we must choose which one to take to heart and practice. The scriptures offer contradictory narratives; at times, we hear calls for violence, at times, shouts for peace and nonviolence. The Hebrew Scriptures can call for deadly and terrorist actions. For instance, in the second week of Lent we read: Yahweh is speaking to Abraham the father of our faith, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates.” How many Palestinians killed this week by the Israeli Military? How many death threats has Ilhan Omar received this week? How many Islamophobic sermons has Franklin Graham preached this week? Nope. The land belonged to the Canaanites and was not God’s to give, for in Jesus, God is no respecter of persons. The Exceptionalism of Israel (God’s Chosen Nation I) and the Exceptionalism of America (God’s Chosen Nation II) are false, vicious and violent lies. God is not on the American side. But the ideology, based on readings of Scripture, continues to cause war and death, white supremacy and horror. And Pilot sniffling, asking, “What is the truth?”

Choices. Choices. This is your land; this land is my land. From the Nile to the Euphrates, from Ireland to Bamberg, this land belongs to you and me. Or this land belongs to the White Christian Nationalists. In America there are two sides on a large coin: pro-slavery/abolition. Pro-War/anti-War. Cultural status-quo/resistance. White/Black. Housed/Homeless. Gated communities/ghettos. Not the buffet of the Golden Corral, but

more choices than we can digest. To choose liberation one must take sides within the Bible and within history and within contemporary life. Which side are you on?

How do we, Disciples of the Palestinian Jesus of the first century and the Black Jesus of the American Centuries, discern the truth for our way of life and death according to the written Gospels?

NRSV “*If you continue in my word . . . you will know the truth.*”

This translation of the Greek written gospel, a language Jesus never spoke, is one choice. Especially for theologians and people who see Bible study as a primary response to discipleship. Now, Jesus never wrote a book. Why? He was worried that people would sit around and study his book all the time rather than living the life of The Way. But this is what happened. What about a Wednesday night Justice Study? Or, as at the Los Angeles Catholic Worker House, a weekly Culture Critique?

NIV “*If you hold to my teachings, . . . then you shall know the truth.*”

GNB “*If you obey my teaching, . . . you will know the truth.*”

Cotton Patch “*If y’all stick by what I’ve said, . . . you’ll understand the truth, and the truth will liberate you.*”

We have choices. We can continue in Jesus’ word, hold to his teaching, obey his teachings and stick by what he said. But that is not all. What does the way he lived his life have to do with the homicide rates in Baltimore and Chicago? And where should we find our home on earth?

Jerusalem is where Jesus was lynched. Have you listened to “Up First” this morning? Washington, D.C. is a location of murder and war-mongering and lies; and on the other hand, the location of hope and the mitigation of Moral Death. Do the life and teaching of Jesus have any input to the choice

of location — our zip code? How we live? With whom we live? Where we live? Oh, the choices of where to buy or rent in this land of the American Dream. And still there are vacant lots where we can build a house and perhaps a home. And what about the poor? Should they be able to get out of the ghetto? You, our homeless readers, how do you choose the streets upon which you wander and hide? Does truth tell you where to pitch your cathole? In which abandominium to lay your weary body down at night?

Discipleship is to follow the Way of Jesus. That is, most, but not all, of Jesus’ teachings, and to be formed by his character and values, which are evidenced by the way he lived. Of course, we cannot literally follow the way Jesus lived. Many of us have spouses and a fair number of us have children. Family life changes everything. Therefore, we cannot and should not literally follow the way Jesus lived as closely as possible, as one of our mentors proposes. No Way Jose. The proposer of such a life was a man, celibate, no children and no financial concerns. For those of us who claim “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (I Cor. 2.2), discerning how to live our lives with Jesus in very different life circumstances from the young, Jewish, Palestinian man, single and dead at 33 years of age, is an existential riddle. A Black Jesus theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, proclaimed, “When Jesus calls you, he bids you come and die.” Wow. (see Reggie L. Williams’ *Bonhoeffer’s Black Jesus*)

This gospel series, “Tell the Truth and Shame the Devil,” will continue next month. Please share your responses. ♦

*Eduard Nuessner Loring is an Activist/Advocate/Ally at the Open Door Community in Baltimore. (edloring@opendoorcommunity.org)*

## At the Margins Black Jesus in the Resurrection *continued from page 1*

out of loyalty to the one who had transformed their lives. It was women’s work, after all, and no men chose to do it. (Why not? A primary question that must be asked here. The men had an opportunity to be at the tomb, but they chose not to come). Yet, we can’t settle for this answer of coincidence because there is a more definitive answer in John’s Gospel, where Mary Magdalene comes to the tomb alone. In the other Gospel accounts, Mary comes to the tomb with other women, but in John, it is Mary by herself.

Mary is captured by death — we must be clear about that. As a marginal person, she has internalized the definition that Rome rules the world, that its word is final. Rome has killed Jesus, and it’s over; he’s dead, and it’s over. She comes to the tomb of Jesus in John 20, not looking for a Risen Jesus, but rather for the dead body of Jesus. Because of her captivity to death, when she sees that the stone has been rolled away from the tomb, she doesn’t think: “Hallelujah! Jesus is risen from the dead!” No, she thinks that someone has stolen the body. She runs back to get some of the male disciples to help her find the body of Jesus. Peter comes with her, as does the male whom John calls “the one whom Jesus loved.” In a testosterone-driven narrative that begins the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of John, Peter and the other disciple (presumably John) race to the tomb. In this context, the author of John seems to want to say that “the other disciple” ranks in the same authority as Peter. At any rate, these two guys get the male stuff out of the way, and then they leave the tomb of Jesus. It is important to note that these male disciples are at the tomb, but the Risen Jesus chooses not to appear to them. They are in the right place at the right time, but Black Jesus chooses not to appear to them at this time.

Black Jesus waits until the males have departed to make an appearance, and he chooses Mary — no coincidence

here, no right time at the right place narrative here. Black Jesus waits to bring his risen self into eyesight to someone at the margins of life: Mary Magdalene. Like another Mary at the birth of Jesus, this Mary is being asked to carry the news of a new life to her despairing and downtrodden colleagues — it is Black Jesus at the margins. Mary is no saint in this narrative — no romanticizing of the margins here. Life at the margins is difficult and full of suffering, and Mary has internalized death’s definition of herself and of life — there is no meaning or life beyond the domination and violence of Rome. So when Risen Black Jesus appears to her at the tomb, Mary cannot recognize him. Her perceptual apparatus will not allow it. It’s not that Mary perceives that it is Jesus and refuses to acknowledge him. Rather, she thinks that he is the caretaker of the cemetery. She sees him and talks with him, but she cannot recognize who he is. She is unable to recognize Risen Black Jesus because she knows that death and Rome reign, and there is no such thing as new life.

Those of you familiar with this story will know how Mary comes to have the stuff of recognition: Risen Black Jesus calls her name, “Mary.” And that stuff of recognition will preach. The fundamental truth about the Resurrection, the fundamental truth about Risen Black Jesus, the fundamental truth about our lives — no matter our age or the age in which we live — the fundamental truth is that Risen Black Jesus is standing right in front of us, coming to us from the margins of life. He is calling our names and asking us to recognize him and to recognize ourselves as children of God, not as children



Adrian Kellard

of Rome or whoever the dominant power is. This story of the Resurrection gives us a huge hint about how to improve our perceptual apparatus: Risen Black Jesus is at the margins. That’s where he began his life — born to a teenager pregnant before marriage who almost received the death penalty, born on the streets, an immigrant seeking asylum from the government soldiers. That’s where he lived his life — owning no home, dependent on the kindness of strangers, calling people on the margins to be his followers. That’s where he experienced his death — suffering the death penalty on a cross by the Roman Empire, deserted by most of his closest followers, feeling like a motherless child. That’s where he experienced his resurrection — in a graveyard, choosing to appear to the woman on the margins. He was making this bet, and it paid off. The woman carrying the water, the woman at the margins of life was stunned to hear that she was the primary witness to this new life. The woman named Mary, seen as mentally ill in Luke 8, dismissed by the later church to be classified as a sex worker — she is the primary witness, and she is at the margins of life. And she continues to run to tell us, as she told the male disciples on that day of death: “I have seen the Lord!” So let it be with us. ♦

*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 Justice, a book about the life and witness of Ida B. Wells for our time, to be published in September. He writes a weekly blog at [www.nibsnotes.blogspot.com](http://www.nibsnotes.blogspot.com). (nibs.stroupe@gmail.com)*

# Grace and Peaces of Mail

Dear Ed & Murphy,

I was very much moved by Murphy's article on Separating Families. It caused me to look at things in a new way, something I always value, I wanted to share that new view in a song. Words come easier than melodies these days so I wrote it based on a Buffy Sainte-Marie song which I hope you can recall. The bridge was inspired by another of her songs.

Thanks for the insight and for all you do.

Love,

Charlie King

Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts

P.S. My partner Candace kicked in for the socks.

## What Will We Do For These Ones?

*Based on Buffy Sainte-Marie's Now that the Buffalo's Gone  
New words by Charlie King.*

Can you remember the day  
That you had watched in dismay  
The news that our nation, with shameful intent  
To punish asylum, repel immigrants  
Stole children away from their grieving parents  
And you feel in your hearts for these ones?

Did you think we were crossing a line?  
Or leaving our best selves behind?  
But over and over from earliest days  
We have stolen the children and sold them away  
To reap a grim profit or teach them our ways  
And what did we do for these ones?

When we auctioned off husbands from wives  
When babies were torn from their sides  
When indigenous children were locked up in schools  
Forbidden their languages, culture and tools tell me  
Who reaped the profits and who wrote the rules?  
And what did we do for these ones?

And where in our history books is the tale  
Of the genocide basic to this country's birth  
Of how slavery's chains were replaced by the jail  
Of souls separated who wander the earth

Oh it's all in the past we could say  
But we see it still happening today  
The trauma that haunts and the damage that's done  
At the stroke of a pen or the point of a gun  
When parents are torn from their daughters & sons  
Can you see it's all happening again?

Dear Editor:

Thanks to Nibs Stroupe for his excellent reflection on sexuality and the Christmas story. The context of patriarchy was very much a part of the story. And still is.

One suggestion: In referring to Bathsheba, Nibs identifies her as a "woman forced to commit adultery by King David." Actually, she was a "woman raped by King David." Not unlike Harvey Weinstein, David took what he wanted because he was entitled. Bathsheba had virtually no choice in the matter. David got her pregnant and then had her husband killed to cover his tracks. "Adultery" may have been the consequence for David, not Bathsheba, but his sin was sexual assault.

Keep up the excellent work spreading the Good News.

Blessings,

Marie Fortune  
Crossville, Tennessee

*Marie Fortune is founder of JustFaith (formerly the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence) in Seattle. She has retired with her partner, Dr. Anne Ganley, to Crossville, Tennessee.*

Dear Murphy, Ed, and Open Door Community

When *Hospitality* arrives, newspapers and tv take second place.

Sending lots of love and justice passion from Atlanta,

Don Saliers  
Atlanta, Georgia

*Don Saliers retired as the William R. Cannon Distinguished Professor of Theology and Worship at the Candler School of Theology of Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and is a longtime friend of the community.*



Rita Corbin

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your faithfulness.

I appreciate the thoughtful and provocative writing in your publication. I especially enjoyed Joyce Hollyday's reflections on Mary Oliver's legacy. She (Mary O) provides almost daily inspiration for me in her poetry — gratefulness and wonder — so needed in the midst of news that can leave me/us in despair.

Blessings,

Vicki Morgan  
Eugene, Oregon

Hi Ed and Murphy,

God's richest blessing to both of you. I hope you are both feeling well. I just wanted to make you aware of my friend Rev. Jack Sullivan. Jack is a murder victim family member and a member of the Journey of Hope Board. He is the former Director of MVFR and is now the ED of the Ohio Council of Churches. He is a great man, and when I was reading the latest *Hospitality* I thought about Jack, who would embrace your honoring the Black Jesus, Dorothy Day and Martin Luther King Jr. Jack will someday be known as the preacher of the abolition movement I believe. I have traveled with him on Journey to Nebraska, Texas, Uganda, and last month to Belgium for the 7th annual Congress Against the Death Penalty.

I love your video of feeding your great soup and meals to the needy. I am also involved in the Emergency Cold Weather Shelter program that our church helps sponsor.

Love and Peace,

Bill Pelke

Anchorage, Alaska

*Bill is the founder of Journey of Hope, a witness for the abolition of the death penalty and an active member of Murder Victims' Families for Reconciliation. We have been friends and worked together for many years.*

Murphy,

I've been reading *Hospitality* for years and continue to appreciate your ministry and your witness to what is important. I just finished reading "When a Person Is an IT" and felt inspired by your words. I believe that God smiles often when she/he sees your faithful work for justice in our broken world. "Learning the names and telling the stories" is a wonderful challenge for all of us — me in particular.

Thanks!

Wallace Johnson

Hickory, North Carolina

*Wallace Johnson is a retired Presbyterian minister. He and Sally live in Hickory, North Carolina.*

Great news on the recovery of your [surgical wound], Murphy. What's under the skin counts the most. And when you wrote in "When a Person Is an IT" that "when we dehumanize others we forfeit our own humanity," you grabbed me!

Grateful,

Ed Crouch

Seattle, Washington

*Ed Crouch is a retired Social Worker and an occasional contributor to *Hospitality*. He and Gail (a retired UCC pastor) live in Seattle.*

## Open Door Community Needs:

- Granola bars
- Stamps to write prisoners
- Prisoner support and prisoner family support
- The Hardwick Prison Trip: hosts, drivers, cars and vans in the Atlanta area.

### And now the great warm and hot weather needs:

- Tee shirts Sm/med/large/1X/2X. Lots and lots of them. We recently received a box from a partner-in-mission who went from thrift store to thrift store purchasing tee shirts for our guests. Thank you.
- White crew socks are particularly popular.
- Soon we will reduce the coffee and add lemonade and tea. One-gallon jugs are our need. In the summer we can serve up to 12 gallons a week.
- We always need financial support. Without you, the Open Door Community would not exist.

If you'd like to help,  
Murphy, David, Ed, Simon, Erica and Tyrone thank you all.

I used to be an "AB" (able-bodied), above-average R.N. Family Nurse Practitioner-Physician's Assistant, with a missionary mind. Please read *The Roots of Plenty: tales from the hippy peace corps* — best book ever. I wonder if you'll agree? Now I am a "D" person — disabled (spinal-cord and brain wrecked, 6-wk coma). A speeding v8 wrecked me and my v4 and my daughter's and grandchildren's future.

So "brother's keeper" needs to expand responsibility. We need to dissolve borders, weaponry, militaries and hierarchies. Training, teaching, studying, learning, researching, curing, healing, caring, planting and clean-air, universally-accessible-transporting, participating at least part-time, in a health-giving team will lead us to the Peace, Love, Health, Respect and true response-ability we all need and want to support.

Yours Truly,

Joy Wade (R.N.-F.N.P.-P.A)  
Redding, California