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

Vol. 40, No. 2

PO Box 10980 Baltimore, Maryland 21234 404.290.2047 www.facebook.com/ODCBalt/

March / April 2021

Work, Prayer, Protest — Votes Death Penalty Abolition in Virginia

By Lauren Cogswell Ramseur

On Monday, February 22, 2021, after 413 years and 1,390 executions, the Virginia House and Senate voted to abolish the death penalty in Virginia. When we moved to Virginia 10 years ago, we joined the movement for abolition — my husband as a capital defense attorney and me as an advocate and pastor. We worked, prayed and protested for this day, but year after year prosecutors continued to charge people with the death penalty, people continued to be executed, and the abolition bills failed. All of the pieces finally came together in 2021 and this spring our governor has indicated that he will sign the bill abolishing the death penalty in Virginia. We are rejoicing in God's light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1:5)

The last capital trial in the state of Virginia was in September 2020. The defendant was acquitted of all charges and walked out of court a free man after a judge determined him to be innocent. He was freed due in part to policies enacted decades prior to ensure that people charged with capital murder were given competent defense attorneys. In 2002, Virginia established capital defender offices that provided poor people, mostly people of color, competent and dedicated legal representation, the kind of representation that previously only rich, privileged people could afford. That innocent man

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and the darkness has not overcome it.

was freed because of the hard work of an amazing defense team (led by my husband) of attorneys, mitigation experts and investigators. There has not been a new death sentence imposed by a jury in Virginia in 10 years. These defense teams have made the execution system obsolete. After 400 years of executions the death docket is finally closed.

The last person to be murdered by the state of Virginia was William Morva in 2017. His story is tragic. He was suffering from severe mental illness and his family wasn't able to get him the mental health care he needed. He was arrested when he couldn't open the door. His family hoped that in jail he would finally get the mental health care that he needed, but this didn't happen. William was paranoid that he was being poisoned and was sent to the hospital for treatment of physical symptoms. He was convinced that the hospital doctors were trying to kill him, so he escaped the hospital in a paranoid fear for his life. During his pursuit a sheriff's deputy, Corporal Eric Sutphin, and a hospital security guard, Derrick McFarland, were shot and killed by Morva. William was captured and imprisoned again, he was convicted of capital murder and the jury sentenced him to death. While in prison, William continued to suffer from severe mental illness and

Jesus Was a Victim of the Death Penalty



Pax Christi USA

schizophrenia. The minimal treatment that he received did little to curb his active psychosis. Leading up to his execution date, there were many public demands for mercy and for his sentence to be commuted to a life sentence. Rachel Sutphin, daughter of Corporal Eric Sutphin, publicly begged the governor to spare her father's killer. I took my children, then ages six and four to the governor's office to deliver a petition for clemency signed by church leaders from across the state. Despite the amazing attorneys at the Virginia Capital

Representation Resource Center who argued all his appeals and organized to save his life, all clemency attempts failed and in July 2017, William Morva was the last person the state of Virginia executed. At the vigil that night, we gathered with a dozen others outside the gates of the prison and prayed for mercy to make its way into the depths of our broken justice system.

For the past 413 years, abolitionists have been praying, protesting, lawyering, advocating for life in the face of this barbaric practice. It is on the shoulders of these women and men that this day has come for Virginia. Murphy Davis, who graduated from Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Virginia, was one of the great leaders in the movement, leading us, teaching us and inspiring people across the country to work for abolition. Her song echoes in my heart, "Ain't you got a right to the tree of life?" Among this movement for abolition were advocacy groups like Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty and the Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy, organizing people of faith across Virginia to advocate for abolition. An electoral wave paved the way with the Virginia house, senate and governor's office all turning

Work, Prayer, Protest continued on page 7

What a Friend We Have in Jesus!

John 15:15-17

By Art Giles

Arthur Lee Giles, a prisoner on Alabama's death row, died from cancer on September 30, 2020. His heart still sings.

I seldom hear a Christian brother or sister speak of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as a friend; as the Bible tells us, "We did not choose Him, but He chose us and calls us His friends"! I have no other choice than to say, Jesus, He's my dear friend, because of the unconditional Love, Goodness and Faithfulness that He has shown and still is showing toward someone undeserving like me. Why? In 1978 I was 18 years old and I committed a terrible crime against humanity, and in 1979 I was sent to death row. At that time I was as ignorant and stupid as one could be, and upon my arrival, two cells up from the cell I was put in was a guy by the name of Jesse Morrison, who was the first person to truly befriend me! I ask you to please hold my friend and brother in heart and in thought as I go forth here. Even though I thought I knew our heavenly Father back then, I did not. I only knew of Him, because how can a person who could barely read, write and spell and had never read the Bible, only had muddled over a few verses here and there, truly say they know God, huh?

One late night in January 1981, I was lying awake in my bed thinking about my situation and my life, feeling totally afraid, lost and despairing like I never felt in my life before. Suddenly our heavenly Father came to mind, and the thought of whether or not He would listen to me if I got up and tried to pray. I finally talked myself into getting out of bed, crying uncontrollably, hoping my next-door neighbor couldn't hear me. I just fell to my knees and started praying like I never prayed before, and recommitting my life to Christ and promising Him that I will learn who He really is and what He's about, meaning reading my Bible in its entirety from front to back. I can't tell you how long I was on my knees praying, but I can tell you that when I did finally get up, I felt a great warmth and a sense of relief and peace that I had never known before. At that time, I didn't know or understand what I had done, but looking back at that night now, I know and fully understand. Which reminds me of a song I love today that says, "Trading my sorrows, trading my shame, I'm laying them down for the joy of the Lord!" and also reminds me of 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 and Psalm 30:5. Not to mention "The Lord looked down from his sanctuary on high, from heaven he viewed the earth, to hear the groans of the prisoners and release those condemned to death!" (Psalm 102: 19-20)

What a Friend continued on page 7

“It’s a sin to build a nuclear weapon”

Christians and Nuclear Annihilation

By Rosalie Riegler

On August 6, 1945, the world changed forever. That is the day of infamy when the United States killed 80,000 Hiroshima citizens with the world’s first atomic bomb used in war times. A second bomb three days later killed 40,000 in Nagasaki and more than 100,000 from radiation throughout the island. An already defeated Japan surrendered. President Harry Truman was jubilant. Catholic Worker co-founder Dorothy Day asked all to “Put on sackcloth and ashes, weep, and repent” as a new evil had been launched on the world.

Since these fateful days, millions of people have marched to protest nuclear arms and thousands have been imprisoned, trying to rid the world of this unbelievable menace. And it is truly unbelievable — actually unthinkable — as we simply can’t imagine its power. So most of us don’t.

Most of us ignore this documented reality and the trillions of dollars spent in developing it, money which could be used to feed the hungry and give shelter to the homeless in an unstable world. Nuclear weapons are at the root of this instability, truly the “taproot of violence” because they give empires like the U.S. and Russia and China their power. Even their presence inspires fear and solidifies strength. That’s why the seven nuclear weapon-building countries in the world don’t want to give it up.

Many Christians continue to join others in alerting the world by protest and advocacy for abolition. They protest with their bodies to change their country’s foreign policy to one of peace instead of war and preparations for war, believing along with the late Fr. Richard McSorley of Georgetown University that “it’s a sin to build a nuclear weapon.”

Foremost among Christians have been the Plowshares activists who warn starkly against nuclear madness by engaging in nonviolent and usually symbolic civil disobedience, for which they often serve long jail terms.

So it was with heartfelt joy that peacemakers throughout the world celebrated when the United Nations finally and formally declared nuclear weapons illegal with the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). Since its proposal in 2017, 86 countries have become signatories and 52 have ratified it. It came into effect on January 22 of this year.

Celebrations of the treaty in the United States included



Brian Kavanagh

photos superimposed on New York skyscrapers, a car caravan around the Federal Building in Chicago and many other local remembrances. There is also broad interfaith support. The Friends Committee on National Legislation published a Joint Interfaith Statement when the UN Treaty came into force. Read it and see its endorsers at <https://www.fcnl.org/updates/2021-01/joint-interfaith-statement-entry-force-treaty-prohibition-nuclear-weapons>. The Vatican has long spoken out against nuclear weapons and was among the first to sign on and ratify the TPNW. Since then, Pope Francis has firmly and repeatedly condemned their very possession.

On January 22, the Catholic Committee of Appalachia and Pax Christi USA offered an on-line retreat for Nuclear Disarmament that concluded with a Mass offered by Bishop John Stowe, OFM of Lexington, Kentucky. By participating, I learned of many Christians in the southern U.S. who work to abolish nuclear weapons, particularly Steve Baggarly and Kim Williams of the Norfolk Catholic Worker.

Our task now is to grow grassroots support so that our U.S. Congress is forced to change course and sign the UN

treaty. Yes, it’s an uphill battle, but if we have any hope for our children, it’s a campaign we must join.

The *Nuclear Resister*, a newspaper and on-line presence dedicated to serving prisoners for peace and eliminating the nuclear threat, has published a list of actions we can take, many of them already in progress. Convince your local and state governments to lobby Congress to adopt the treaty, as I did last year. (Write me at riegler@svsu.edu for details and action plan.) Protest financial institutions that invest in nuclear arms. Gather with other peacemakers at military bases, federal buildings, public squares, overpasses and universities to protest those who invest or participate in nuclear weapons activities. See the back cover of <http://www.nukeresister.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/NR196web.pdf> for more ideas and join with <https://preventnuclearwar.org/> and <https://www.icanw.org/> to publish your actions so that others will join you.

At the conclusion of the Appalachia anti-nuclear retreat, we said together this Pax Christi prayer. Please pray it daily if you can.

Breath of All that Is, preserve us from our own madness.
Direct us away from dealing destruction to others,
A path which leads to the ruin of our selves and our world.
Protect us. Jesus Christ, Beloved,
Show us your precious face in all others,
You in us, and we in each other, from all places.
Speak to us. Speak through us.
When we worship power, control, money,
When we cannot forgive, or shove pain onto others,
Call us.
Light the fire of Love.
We will not be afraid,
For You are with us always.
Amen, amen, amen. ✠

Rosalie Riegler 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.

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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Homegoing
A Celebration of Murphy Davis’ Life
is available online:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kp0i7-INvv0&feature=youtu.be>

Newspaper

Founding Editor Murphy Davis
Managing Editor Eduard Loring
Photography and Layout Editor Calvin Kimbrough
Poetry Corner Editor Eduard Loring
Associate Editors Pete Gathje and Catherine Meeks
Copy Editor Julie Martin
Proofreaders Nelia Kimbrough and Julie Martin
Circulation A multitude of earthly hosts
Subscriptions or change of address David Payne
(davidpayne@opendoorcommunity.org)

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



Murphy Davis ¡Presente!



Murphy's Heart

Love, Justice and the Tree of Life

By Hannah Murphy Buc

This eulogy was shared at the Bartimaeus Kinsler Institute on February 13, 2021.

Thank you, Bartimaeus Kinsler Institute for honoring my Mama Murphy in this way. It's wonderful to be with you today as we remember her together.

One hundred fourteen days ago, Murphy Davis's heart stopped, her breath stopped, and she died. She did not want to die. She was prepared, but she never did get ready. But even in death, she was her true and authentic self — a woman on a mission to set the world right. To restore the earth and the goodness thereof, and to make sure that everyone she knew experienced the love that she had to share.

Murphy was my Mama! And when I became a mama seven years ago, I began to understand her heart, and who she truly was, in a completely new way. I realized that the love she had for me as her only child was the same love that had poured into her relationships with men and women on Georgia's death row. It was the same love that she had spread, thick, across the circles and processes of community life at the Open Door Community in Atlanta, Georgia, where she and my dad, Ed, lived and worked for 35 years before recently moving to Baltimore. It was the love that she had mixed into soup pots and holiday meals for homeless people



Alison Reeder

Ed, Hannah and Murphy at Hannah and Jason's wedding in 2012.

themselves. And this clarity flowed into her work and her relationships.

Mama wrote and spoke of her faith as "simple, even child-like." It was through this faith that she engaged the world. In the late 1970s she began visiting and building

This love was Mama-Bear love, love that carried with it both passion and protection, and the absolute commitment to protect, heal and restore.

for all of those years. This love was Mama-Bear love, love that carried with it both passion and protection, and the absolute commitment to protect, heal and restore.

Dorothy Day is well known to have said that "Love is a harsh and dreadful thing" — because it demands so much of us as both givers and receivers. The love of Murphy Davis was a Mama love — a love that insisted on excellence, clarity and purpose. A love that centered the experiences and the voices of the oppressed and elevated the stories of those whom she befriended on Georgia's death row, or the mothers, sisters, uncles and children of prisoners that she drove, month after month across the years, to visit with their loved ones in prisons in far-flung rural areas in Georgia. She asked after family members by name, she remembered birthdays and anniversaries of death — and she loved by Re-membering in contexts where all of the cultural powers dis-membered family, connection and home.

Her love was often perceived as gentle and kind, but I can personally attest that there were boundaries that were not to be crossed without receipt of a very loving tongue-lashing. But that was her power — she offered a love that for many across the decades of her ministry was a love of healing and restoration; many who never felt seen or heard experienced recognition and acceptance in their relationship with her. And the experience of recognition came with a clear knowledge that the stamp of her love meant a commitment that she would fight for justice on your behalf.

The fullness of her love was the foundation of her own freedom. In his forward to her recent memoir, Bryan Stevenson describes Mama, saying, "Murphy Davis is an extremely rare free person." From a young age, she experienced a level of clarity and conviction that most never even imagine for

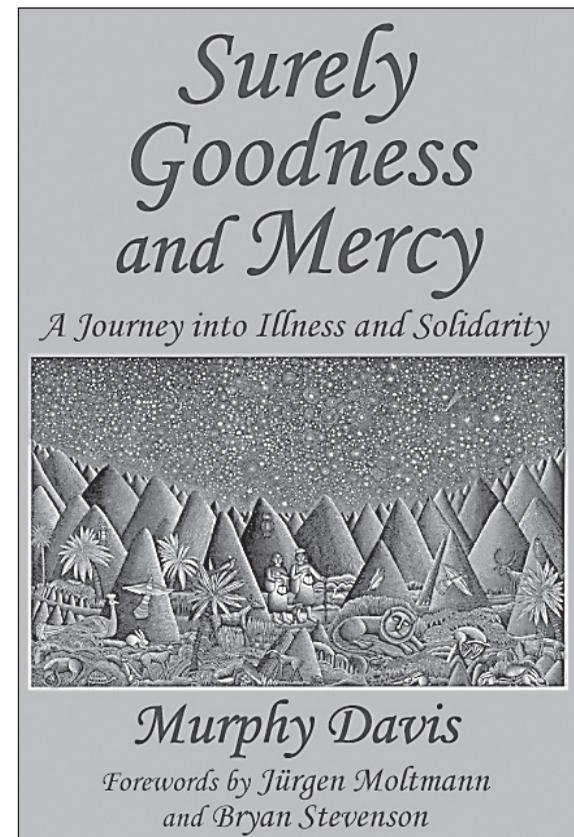
friendships with the men and women on Georgia's death row. She befriended their families, lawyers, mitigation specialists, and, after fighting for their lives, she and her beloved, my Daddy and her partner, would sit with them during their final hours before execution. Over and over, she did this work.

From her own cancer diagnosis in 1995, and the ensuing 25 years of living with her own illness — which at many points involved intense physical suffering — she continued to engage the suffering of her friends on Georgia's death row, her companions in community and activists across the country. She approached this work with beginner's eyes — not out of naiveté for sure, but out of an indescribable ability to walk through hell and find newness, laughter, joy and hope in the midst of suffering, sadness, fatigue and hopelessness. And to wake each day with love to give and hope to share. Her heart may have stopped, but her love never will!

At protests, vigils and worship services, Mama often led music. With the strength of her music leader voice, she would call out, "Ain't you got a right to the tree of life?" The tree of life pulls sustenance from the soil and gives oxygen to the world — this is the embodiment of love. And this is what she would ask us each today: Ain't you, ain't we got a right? The tree of life is among us. Shall we lean on it, cover in its shade, gather strength from one another? Shall we work for reconciliation, shall we repair the harm we have done to one another? Are you ready to claim the love and the joy that IS the TREE of LIFE? ♣

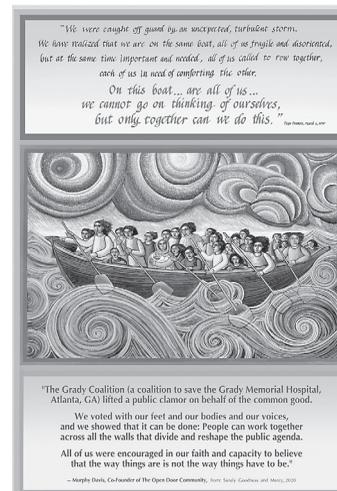
Hannah Murphy Buc is on the faculty at the University of Maryland School of Nursing where she teaches undergraduate nursing and is the Program Coordinator for the school's new Restorative Justice Program.

Open Door Community Press



Surely Goodness and Mercy
A Journey into Illness and Solidarity
by Murphy Davis
to request your copy contact
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404.290.2047
PO Box 10980 Baltimore, MD 21234-0980

From artist John August Swanson, who created the beautiful cover art for **Surely Goodness and Mercy**:
"Murphy Davis' book is so powerful and moving that it inspired me to use a quote from it along with Pope Francis's quote on my new poster Storm."



The poster sells for \$15 and can be ordered at:
<https://temp.johnaugustswanson.com/product/storm2020-poster>

Seeing in a New Way: Carter G. Woodson

By Nibs Stroupe

“We will teach ourselves about ourselves.” Carter G. Woodson said this as he and his colleagues formed the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) in 1915. He had been through white prestigious universities (University of Chicago and Harvard), and at both, his professors demeaned the idea of Black history as valuable or worth studying. One of those professors, Edward Channing, indicated that “the Negro had no history.” In response to his own experience and to the arrogance of “white” culture, which sought to cancel Black culture, Woodson later founded Negro History Week in 1926. Because of these efforts and more, he is known as the “Father of Black History.”

He was born in 1875 in Virginia. Both of his parents had been held as slaves. His father, James Henry Woodson, was not a “good” slave — he refused to accept the idea that he was not a human being, that he was destined to be inferior to those classified as “white.” James Henry was often beaten by the enslavers, and on one such occasion, he returned the beating to the enslaver, and then ran for freedom. He found it in the form of the Union Army in Virginia, which he joined. Woodson’s parents scraped up enough money to buy a small tobacco farm on the James River in Virginia, and Carter worked there. Neither of his parents were able to read, but they knew the magic of reading, so they sent their children to a local Freedman’s School when they weren’t working on the farm. As white supremacy regained strength and wiped out such schools and sought to crush Black humanity yet again, Carter Woodson moved to Huntingdon, West Virginia, to work in the coal mines. During this time, one of the miners, Oliver Jones, opened his home to fellow African Americans as a “tearoom,” where they could be themselves and could read books and articles and discuss them. Here Woodson’s heart caught on fire for books and for the intellectual life.

Woodson worked in a local Black high school, saved his money and enrolled at Berea College in Kentucky, where he attended part-time while he worked. Berea was one of the few colleges in the South that welcomed Black students to

academia altogether because he felt that the atmosphere was not conducive to free thinking. He received a grant from the Carnegie Foundation for \$25,000 to support the ASNLH and the study of Black history. This enabled him to hire staffers, including a young Langston Hughes, and to keep the price low for the *Journal of Negro History*, so that as many people as possible could have access to it.

In 1926, Woodson and his colleagues started Negro History Week, choosing the dates of February 12-19 because they encompassed the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (2/12) and Frederick Douglass (2/14). Woodson did not just “pronounce” this celebration — he sent out messengers to all his contacts in the field of education, and several states and the



Carter G. Woodson | Library of Congress

In 1926, Woodson and his colleagues started Negro History Week, choosing the dates of February 12-19 because they encompassed the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln (2/12) and Frederick Douglass (2/14).

attend with white students. He graduated from Berea in 1903, one year before the state of Kentucky sought to close Berea if it continued to admit Black students. Berea appealed that decision to SCOTUS but lost, and it became a segregated college for 60 years.

Woodson continued to teach and to educate himself, getting a Master’s Degree from Chicago and a Ph.D. from Harvard (only the second African American to do so — who was the first?). In 1915 he and four friends at the Chicago YMCA founded the ASNLH. Their goal in doing this was to affirm the humanity and culture of African Americans at a time when the “white” culture was doing all that it could to deny it. They also developed the *Journal of Negro History* to publish scholarly studies of Black life and Black history. Both of those organizations continue to this day because they focused a bright light on the power and life of those classified as “Black.”

In 1920 Woodson went to teach at Howard University and to serve as Dean of its Liberal Arts School. He had tremendous clashes over white supremacy with the last white president of Howard, and he left after only a year. He then taught at West Virginia State University before leaving

cities of Baltimore and Washington, D.C. adopted it. The idea struggled in the 1940s but regained strength in the 1960s, and in 1970 Kent State University changed it to “Black History” and stretched it out to a month. In 1976 President Gerald Ford proclaimed February as “Black History Month,” and so it has continued.

Here are the words that Woodson used to describe the need for Black History Month, a need that continues today, not because African Americans have internalized “inferiority,” but because white supremacy is so deeply ingrained in our national culture. I apologize for the lack of inclusive language here, but I have left the quote as it was:

“If you can control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his action. When you determine what a man shall think you do not have to concern yourself about what he will do. If you make a man feel that he is inferior, you do not have to compel him to accept an inferior status, for he will seek it himself. If you make a man think that he is justly an outcast, you do not have to order him to the back door. He will go without being told; and if there is no back door, his very nature will demand one.”

Woodson’s target in founding Negro History Week was American people of African descent, and Black History Month remains a powerful educational tool for African Americans. Yet, in this age of surging and raging white supremacy, those of us who are classified as “white” would do well to learn from Black History Month. As the pandemic and the wintry disaster in Texas have taught us, those of us classified as “white” do not own the world as we thought we did. We should seek to learn from those who have survived and thrived in a hostile environment, people like African Americans and Indigenous people. We may be siblings after all. ✦

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. (nibs.stroupe@gmail.com)

The Box



Carlos Cortez

“I am opposing a social order in which it is possible for one man who does absolutely nothing that is useful to amass a fortune of hundreds of millions of dollars while millions of Men and Women who work all their lives secure barely enough for a wretched existence.”

— Eugene V Debs | June 16, 1918

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The Middle Passage Through Athens Courtrooms

By John Cole Vodicka

“One might have hoped that, by this hour, the very sight of chains on Black flesh, or the very sight of chains, would be so intolerable a sight for the American people, and so unbearable a memory, that they would themselves spontaneously rise up and strike off the manacles. But, no, they appear to glory in their chains; now, more than ever, they appear to measure their safety in chains and corpses.”

— James Baldwin, writing to Angela Davis in 1971.

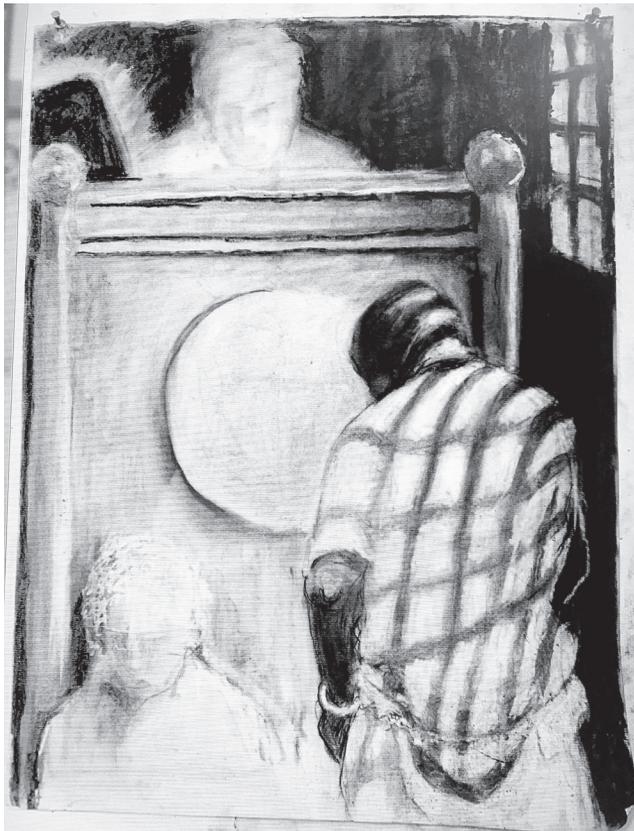
Early each weekday morning, prisoners in the Clarke County jail scheduled for court appearances are brought to the jail’s sally port to be cuffed at the hands and ankles and then wrapped in a belly chain. One by one the prisoners board a sheriff’s department van, which will transport these men or women from the jail off Lexington Road to the courthouse on East Washington Street in downtown Athens. Once there, the van enters a secure garage-like area adjacent to the courthouse where the prisoners disembark and are led into holding cells, remaining in shackles and chains. Eventually, deputies will line up groups of prisoners, usually six to eight at a time, and lead them to a basement security elevator that will take them upstairs to Magistrate, Municipal, State or Superior courtrooms. Once these prisoners shuffle into the courtroom, they are instructed exactly where they should sit on wooden, pew-like benches. In most Athens-Clarke County courtrooms, the prisoners are made to sit four to six feet apart. Once the prisoners reach their designated seats, sudden loud and unsettling banging and clanging sounds echo throughout the courtroom. The sounds of metal on wood, metal rattling against metal. Glancing across the aisle from the visitors’ gallery, an observer can’t help but notice that three of every four chained prisoners is African American.

Over the course of the next several hours, these prisoners are called, one by one, to a podium that stands just inside the rail separating the court officials from the gallery. Prisoners seated on the bench on the front row have a 15-foot “walk” to make their way to the podium; others sitting farther back have twice that distance to travel. Many are barely able to take what seem like baby steps with their feet cuffed six inches apart and their manacled hands bound at the waist. Some need to be steadied by a deputy as they wobble to the podium. Others will have the deputy pull their orange or gray pants up over the crack of their butts.

“Raise your right hand to the best of your ability,” someone will instruct the prisoner/defendant standing hunched over at the podium with T-Rex-like arms. At best, a finger or two shoots up from the defendant’s manacled hand.

In almost every instance, prisoners who appear in Magistrate, Municipal, State or Superior Court have not been convicted of the charges for which they were jailed. And remember, defendants in Municipal and State Court have been charged with *misdemeanors* only, including traffic offenses. Even the prisoners charged with more serious felonies or probation violations in Superior Court haven’t yet been convicted and are presumed innocent. Yet here they all stand, in open court, chained and shackled, wearing stenciled “Clarke County Jail” uniforms and jackets, white socks on feet planted in orange plastic sandals.

While a case is being heard, lawyers from the public defender’s office will introduce themselves to the prisoners who remain sitting on the benches, and attorney-client conversations will ensue. There is virtually no privacy, no confidentiality afforded to them. Any defendant sitting nearby,



Rodney Grainger

even observers sitting yards away on the other side of the gallery area, cannot avoid hearing lawyers advising their clients on what to do, what not to say, what deal can be reached with an admission or guilty plea.

Once a half-dozen or so cases have been resolved, those prisoners will be lined up and led out of the courtroom to the key-controlled elevator, brought down to the basement’s holding cells and eventually put onto a van to take them back to the jail. Only at the jailhouse will they be unshackled. Meanwhile, another batch of humanity in the courthouse’s holding area whose cases have not yet been heard will be brought up to the courtrooms, directed to the benches. Another round of clanging and banging. Another group of mostly Black women and men.

Prisoners in the courtroom must signal a deputy if and when they need to use the bathroom. Usually a deputy will ask out loud, “Number one or number two?” Number two requires, mercifully, that the handcuffs and chains be removed once the prisoner reaches the bathroom, which is located at the end of a hallway some 60 feet away from the gallery area of the courtroom.

In court, the shackled defendants are not allowed to talk to one another. They are not allowed to speak with, even gesture to a friend or family member sitting on the other side of the gallery aisle. “If you’re talkin’ you’ll be walkin’ — back down to the holding cell,” a deputy informs the prisoners.

Earlier this year, while observing in State Court, the great-aunt of one of the defendants angrily told me, “It looks like slavery days. It ain’t human and it ain’t right.”

Let’s remind ourselves.

In 2015, 25-year-old Freddie Gray was arrested in Baltimore for allegedly “possessing a switchblade.” His hands and feet were shackled and he was placed in a police van. He was not seat-belted in. While the arresting officers were taking Mr. Gray, an African American, to jail, they drove the van at excessive speeds, stopped the vehicle abruptly on several occasions and swerved from lane to lane. They could hear Freddie Gray bouncing around like a pinball in the back of the van. After being transported to a hospital, Mr. Gray died, his neck broken.

In 2017 it was revealed that 40 pregnant women confined in the Milwaukee County Jail were forced to give birth while their hands and feet were shackled to the hospital bed. (Last year Georgia Governor Brian Kemp, following the lead of other states, signed into law a bill prohibiting the shackling of pregnant prisoners in state and county facilities.)

Also in 2017, 92 Somali immigrants being detained by ICE were chained for 46 hours on an airplane in a botched attempt to deport them. There wasn’t a working bathroom on the plane; the detainees were forced to urinate in cups and bottles or on themselves.

In 2018, 62 immigrants from McAllen, Texas, were arrested on misdemeanor charges of crossing the U.S. border illegally. All 62 were brought en masse into court, shackled and chained, to plead guilty and be deported.

Only in the last several years have court rulings — including one from the U.S. Supreme Court — limited the use of shackles on juveniles. In 2016 the High Court forbid the “indiscriminate shackling of juvenile defendants.” Today 31 states prohibit the mandatory shackling of children.

Three years ago, the Federal 9th Circuit Court of Appeals issued an opinion condemning the shackling of adult offenders, particularly those who were pre-trial detainees. One of the judges wrote: “A presumptively innocent defendant has the right to be treated with respect and dignity in a public courtroom, not like a bear on a chain. . . . The fact that the proceeding is non-jury does not diminish the degradation a prisoner suffers when needlessly paraded about in a courtroom, like a dancing bear on a lead, wearing belly chains and manacles.”

In 2018, however, the U.S. Supreme Court threw out the 9th Circuit Court’s ruling, rendering it moot.

Still, there are some jurisdictions around the country that do prohibit mandatory shackling of adult detainees appearing in courtrooms — Hawaii; Portland, Oregon; San Diego. In these places, judges are deciding on a daily and individual basis whether restraining a defendant serves a commensurate need.

Said one California jurist: “People have a right to be treated as individuals and as human beings even if they are accused of committing crimes, particularly if they have yet to be convicted of committing those crimes.”

And a Colorado judge wrote this *70 years ago*: “The presumption of innocence requires the *garb of innocence* and regardless of the ultimate outcome, or of the evidence awaiting presentation, every defendant is entitled to be brought before the court with the appearance of dignity and self-respect of a free and innocent man.”

Last year, Reuben Cahn, a public defender in San Diego federal court, said about shackling pretrial prisoners in a way that could apply to what we observe every day in the Athens-Clarke County courtroom: “It’s shocking to see people bound hand and foot, it’s something from the Middle Passage or Jim Crow era. It’s humiliating and demeaning. It tells defendants that all the rights the courts *say* people have — the right to be tried by their peers and the right to a fair trial, that they are innocent until proven guilty — that all of that is meaningless.”

Here in Athens, Georgia in early August, 64-year-old Peter Giachetti, his feet and hands cuffed and bound with a belly chain, stood to answer to the charge that he obliterated his family’s television set with a hammer, and told the judge: “Your Honor, my pants are falling off. Can somebody pull them up for me, please?” ♦

John and Dee Cole Vodicka and sons were Resident Volunteers at the Open Door Community in 1985-86 and 1992-93. John founded and, for 15 years, directed the Prison & Jail Project in Americus, Georgia. Today he is an activist, writer and community organizer who lives in Athens, Georgia. (johnvodicka@comcast.net)

Her Own Pilgrimage

A Review of *Pillar of Fire*

By Dee Dee Risher

Pillar of Fire, Joyce Hollyday's new book and first novel, is many things. It is a novel of witness to a little-known history, a fast-paced story with some fantastical and mystical twists to keep you turning pages, and a tale of resistance to oppression and the Inquisition. It is imaginative in the best way, with enough unlikely coincidences to remind one that this is a tale, not a psychological character story or a detailed historical novel of specific lives. It features strong and unconventional women (and men), showcases some little-known biblical stories, and retrieves medieval societal and church history—both their repressive and violent as well as liberative elements.

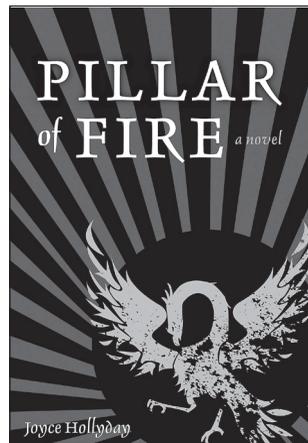
Pillar of Fire is set in the late 12th- and early 13th-century Europe and Middle East, specifically Constantinople and Egypt. The church is at a critical juncture and has already made the wrong turn. The Crusades, with all their aspirations toward conquest, looting and power cloaked in hypocritical theological rationale are underway, and Christianity as Empire is in full swing. It is an age of deep misogyny, intolerance, corruption, prejudice and persecution toward “the other.”

Clarissa is only thirteen when she flees a forced marriage and the only home she has known in an English manor. This plunges her into a world she has never seen — a murder, the hovels of dirt-poor villagers, a wandering minstrel who befriends her and independent nuns who take her in. Clarissa finds she is not destined to be a nun, however religious her inclinations. She is destined to go on her own pilgrimage, and that journey takes her over the French mountains into Italy, on to the foot of Mt. Sinai — the historical monastery of St. Catherine — then back to coastal France.

As *Pillar of Fire* unfolds, Hollyday is also trying to retrieve the best of insurgent history for us — the little-known history of the Beguine movement, a name given to many communities of lay women who, against all convention, lived independently all over Europe. They were mystics and disciples marked by visionary spirituality, cottage industries which supported their simple community life, and a deep commitment to serve the poor. All this is told through the narrative of Clarissa, her family and the many companions and refugees who become part of her world — and who challenge and reshape her childhood faith. We see women who are powerful mystics and pastoral leaders, and who become powerful channels of the Spirit in the locales in which they settle.

A lot is happening in the panoramic story. Hollyday takes some asides to retell some Scriptural stories of women that are mostly overlooked (some of which are also relayed in her nonfiction theological classic, *Clothed with the Sun*). Through the character of Galorian, an English knight (ironically the person Clarissa was slated to marry), readers journey to the Crusades, Egypt, back to Rome and the beginning Inquisition. Finally, Galorian defects to join groups of faithful men who critiqued the excesses of the Church — and who in some ways paralleled the Beguines. There are definitely some plot reaches, which I found delightful to just go with, captured as I was by the history and story being told. There is a lot of powerful theology lodged in the text as sermonettes and teachings.

However fascinating the women, men and unconventional communities portrayed in *Pillar of Fire*, there is always lurking in the background the immutable power and male authority of the Roman Catholic Church. One knows there will be a show-down. The question is: What choice shall be



Announcing **Pillar of Fire** A novel by Joyce Hollyday

In an age of intolerance, compassion can be dangerous. *Pillar of Fire* captures the stunning witness of the medieval mystics known as Beguines. Amid the intrigues of kings and knights, against a panorama of church corruption, Crusader campaigns and Inquisition trials, these bold women followed their faith and broke all the rules.

“Joyce Hollyday weaves a fabric of adventure that gallops across Europe to Sinai and back. Retelling the gospel story in a feminist key, *Pillar of Fire* is a compelling mirror for our own times and consciences.” —Elaine Enns and Ched Myers, authors, *Healing Haunted Histories*

For more details and ordering information, please go to:
<https://wipfandstock.com/pillar-of-fire.html>.

made, and what Power will prevail? That, oh reader, I leave to you to unravel.

Hollyday says that she hopes to reach a few different audiences with the novel. “I was prompted to write *Pillar of Fire* by some young women in my church community. *The Hunger Games* was being filmed around Asheville, where I was living, and they were bemoaning the fact that Young Adult literature rarely tackles issues of faith. I had them very much in mind as I was writing. I hope *Pillar of Fire* will be an empowering read for young women. But I also hope it’s a good read for radical, progressive Christians of all types, as our convictions are rarely reflected in literature and should be. Additionally, the Beguines are hardly known here in North America, and should be.”

Pillar of Fire is an engaging read. In it is enough to make a more traditional Christian ponder the connection between faith and the revolutionary commands of Jesus to love the outcast. The history unearthed is also unconventional and alternative enough to kindle hope in a heart that believes the faith may be beyond redemption. And frankly, I loved that it was a light and fast read — entertaining, sometimes whimsically improbable, and yet also true in the deepest ways. I’m grateful to the young women who charged Joyce Hollyday to write it, and I’m glad she answered that call. It was a gift to learn about the Beguines and their attendant compatriots — historical communities of strong, resilient and faithful women. Those are the stories I want to be a part of myself, and of which I never get enough. ✦

Dee Dee Risher (she/her) is a writer and editor, facilitator and activist. She wrote *The Soulmaking Room* and edited *The Other Side* and *Conspire!* magazines. She is a founder of the *Philadelphia Alternative Seminary* and *Vine and Fig Tree*, an intentional Christian community. She works at *Project HOME* building resident leadership and supporting the *organizational Diversity, Equity & Inclusion* initiative, and is a trainer with *Roots of Justice* antiracism collective.

poetry corner



Alison Reeder

A Prayer for the Reckoning

Oh God,
whose spirit rests in the contours
of Indigenous lands,
whose breath rises in the streets chanting
“Black Lives Matter.”
whose rage boils when the cross
is raised as weapon,
whose being is re-imagined by the honey bees,
the mycelium, and the snow covered cedars.

We stand at a time when
the powers of death are gasping for air.
We are witnessing the ways that
Christianity’s tentacles have bound themselves
to patriarchy, nationalism, and white supremacy.

For many of us rooted in this tradition,
this is a moment of reckoning with its violence.

We watch in terror, but not shock,
grief, but not despair,
trembling with the question ...
What does it mean to be a Christian?

We ask you to hold us in this tension.
Help us ground in our bodies
and remember our histories and yearnings.

Send us Shiphrah and Puah
to summon our courage of disobedience
and resistance to empire’s demands.

Send us Miriam
to remind us to sing and dance
and trust the waters
as the walls come crumbling down.

Send us Mary and Magdalene
to help us tend to bodies
and the places of death
despite the risks and fears.

May the red, white, and blue behind our altars
come down
and the blue eyed, blond hair Jesuses
be removed.

May we find church instead
in the small and prophetic,
entwined with justice, community,
and liberation.

May guns be beaten into garden tools.
May history be studied
and ancestors be summoned.
May we pray for the nonviolent collapse
of the US empire.

And may the remnants of these prayers
be on our hands
and woven into our lives in the days to come.

Amen

— Lydia Wylie-Kellermann and Kateri Boucher
1/20/2021

Lydia Wylie-Kellermann is the editor of *Geez* magazine and of the recent anthology *The Sandbox Revolution: Raising Kids for a Just World* (Broadleaf, 2021). She is a writer, activist and mother from Detroit, Michigan.

Kateri Boucher lives in the *Detroit Catholic Worker* and also works for *Geez*.

Work, Prayer, Protest — Votes: Death Penalty Abolition in Virginia *continued from page 1*

blue and under Democratic control beginning in 2019. Awareness of the need for criminal justice reforms led to the election of several progressive prosecutors in some of Virginia's most populous jurisdictions and those prosecutors spoke openly about their opposition to the death penalty. The Black Lives Matter movement and growing prominence of Black legislators and leaders brought heightened awareness to racial injustice in the death penalty. Finally, our voices were so clearly heard that our governor made abolition part of his legislative agenda for 2021.

In the last, gasping breaths of the death penalty, Republican legislators tried to water down the abolition bills with amendments establishing mandatory life without parole sentences for those convicted of capital murder. Thankfully, the legislators stayed strong and did not vote in favor of these mandatory life sentences. The Republican opposition paraded horrific stories of suffering by the victims of murder in order to generate support for their positions through fear and hatred. Several democratic delegates spoke truth and life into that room, drowning out those voices of fear and retribution. Seven Democratic legislators shared their own deeply personal stories of how their own loved ones had been brutally murdered, yet they nevertheless did not believe that the death penalty was the way to heal the brokenness of our society. Rachel Sutphin appeared before the legislative committees and testified that another



Lauren Cogswell Ramseur (center) leading the vigil at William Morvia's execution.

murder would not honor her father's life, nor bring her any peace. The personal and powerful stories of these people who had themselves suffered greatly yet were opposed to the death penalty, brought abolition to its final successful vote.

Justice rolls down like waters. (Amos 5:24) When the death penalty was abolished, the money saved by abolishing it and the capital defender offices was reallocated to establish a new public defender's office in Chesterfield County, a sub-

urb of Richmond. Chesterfield is the fifth largest county in Virginia and was the largest one without a public defender office. This is a huge victory for justice for the poor that is a result of the abolition movement.

When Governor Northam signs the bill to abolish the death penalty, there will not be enough room on the platform to hold all the people who gave their lives, time, resources and dedication to bring about abolition. We have taken a step toward being a more humane and just society here in Virginia because of all of us: the protestors in the street, lawyers in the courtroom, teachers in the classroom, pastors in the pulpit, voters at the ballot box and representatives in the legislature. Come, the tree of life has shade for all of us, and the table of justice is spread with a plenty. Come gather 'round and let our rejoicing be heard in every state across our nation. The death penalty will be abolished. ✦

The bills to abolish the death penalty were signed into law by Governor Northam on March 24, 2021.

Rev. Lauren Cogswell Ramseur is the Co-Pastor of Voices of Jubilee, an abolitionist community of hope in connection with the youth imprisoned at the Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center in Richmond, Virginia. (www.voicesofjubilee.org)

What a Friend We Have in Jesus!: John 15:15-17 *continued from page 1*

I'm an only child and I was raised in church by my dear mom, who was a God-fearing and hard-working woman all her life. When I lost her in 1991, God rest her soul, I felt like I had lost the only thing I had in this world. I share this with you because I want you to truly know and understand, not only the blessed Love and Goodness of our dear Lord my friend, but also what an awesome God we serve, huh?

In 1981, I wrote a church in Chicago asking for a pen friend and a couple weeks later I received a letter from a Mr. Pearson, who was married and served in World War II. In 1987, I wrote a church in Kentucky requesting the same and a Mr. Clark, who is a few years older than I and had just gotten married, wrote me. When I called the Pearsons when my dear mom passed, I remember his wife telling me that she will never try to take the place of my mom and went on to say that if I ever needed someone to talk to that she was there for me, calling me son as we closed the call. Just as the wells of my eyes filled with tears then, they do now sharing this with you here. The Pearsons have been surrogate parents to me for 38 years and I am proud to call them my dad and mom. I lost my dear step-dad this past December. Dad was 90 years old and I have no doubt he is resting in the comfort of Abraham's bosom along with my dear mom.

The Clarks even stepped up in their support for me when I gave them the sad news about the passing of my dear mom! They have a daughter, Kelli, and son, Kristian, both grown and married themselves now and Kelli has a son, Warren, and just gave birth to a daughter, Merritt, last month. So I am a happy and proud great uncle now, huh? Yes, Mr. Clark and his blessed wife have been long loyal and true friends and family in this old heart of mine for 30 years now. As the Bible tells us, "God sets the lonely in families, He leads forth the prisoner with singing, but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land!" (Psalm 68:6)

I would be doing these two people a great disservice if I didn't mention them! In 1996 I was blessed with an attorney,

Ms. Phinney, who represented me for 17 years and through her in 1999 I met Mrs. Hall who helped her on my case. Today Mrs. Phinney and Mrs. Hall both are long-proven and dear friends of 21 and 18 years, and Mrs. Phinney is now married to her dear and loving mate Mrs. Carrie, whom I had the blessed privilege to meet and am so very proud to call my dear sister-in-law and added blessing in my life.

Remember I asked you to hold my friend Jesse Morrison in thought? Jesse founded the organization Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty. In early 1997, Jesse asked me to help him start a PHADP group and we did with me as co-group leader and just before he got off of death row later that year, he asked me would I take over the group. In spite of being afraid of such a leader role, but due to me feeling that I owed my brother so much, I had no choice but to say yes, because he was the first person our heavenly Father placed in my life here on the row. He not only emphasized the importance of education to me but also took on the role of big brother and mentor to me, inspiring me to be the best person that our heavenly Father always wanted me to become.

And I am eternally grateful to Mrs. Collins and Mr. Jim, her husband, for their role in PHADP and their encouragement and support when I was the group leader and their friendship and continuing support to this very day. Not to mention, I will always pay special homage to my late brother, Jesse Morrison.

I shared these blessed people with you because I truly believe our heavenly Father placed them in my life at a specific needed time and for a special purpose. Because a big part of each one of my blessed earthly friends here are a part of me and the person that I am today. As Plautus said, "Nothing but heaven itself is better than a friend who is truly a friend!" and each one here has my endless thanks as I deeply utter every day to our dear Lord, my heavenly friend! Who chose me as His friend (John 15:16-17), even before the beginning of the creation of the world! (Ephesians 1:3-14)

When I reflect upon the countless blessings He has and still is bestowing upon me today, turning back isn't an option.

I ask you, when was the last time you strolled alone with your dear Lord our friend and chatted and shared great laughter with Him, huh? If it has been a while, I encourage you to take a little time out and take a walk with Him, because like any other friend we have in our life would, I have no doubt He misses that personal time with His dear friend — You!

2 Thessalonians 2: 16-17: "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work." ✦

*A beautiful memorial service was held for Art in North Georgia at Nacoochee Presbyterian Church where Anne Hall, a former para-legal become longtime dear friend, made arrangements with the minister who had been Art's spiritual advisor over the years. Art did **not** want to "cremain" in Alabama, and I love his being in my native Georgia, his ashes sprinkled in the beautiful memorial garden there. Art would have been overjoyed about Georgia's November election.*

*As outside co-coordinator of the inmate-founded Project Hope to Abolish the Death Penalty in Alabama (1995-2000), I met Art through PHADP co-founder Jesse Morrison. Through treasured friendships formed via letters, phone calls and visits with PHADP folk, I've experienced the deep truth: we are **all** "more than the worst thing we've ever done." And we are called to follow Jesse's urging: "Be the Other Voice" for abolition!*

*Judy Collins,
PHADP Advisory Board Member
Fredonia, Alabama*

Grace and Peaces of Mail

Dear Murphy,

Congratulations! Your book is published, and I have received three copies. Thank you and thank you for your friendship. You are an amazing person. I am glad to know you and to be your and Ed's friend.

Be healthy and courageous in these difficult times, especially in your country: "Black lives matter" and "God first."

Love and Grace
Yours ever,
Jurgen Moltmann
Tubingen, Germany

Dear Ed & Murphy Davis,

Thanks for sending me a copy of your book, *Surely Goodness and Mercy*. I truly enjoyed reading it and also it was an amazing read!

While reading it I was touched emotionally by your book. It made me smile, laugh and even cry at times as well. *Surely Goodness and Mercy* is indeed by far a favorite for me.

Currently I'm finishing a prison sentence here in Memphis. I've read your book twice already and I'm sharing it with other prisoners now so they can read it also.

Thanks for everything you all do, if there's anything I can assist with let me know. Greatly Appreciated.

Blessings & Peace,
Brian Reed
Memphis, Tennessee

Dear Murphy & Ed,

We are keeping the postcard on the table to remind us to pray for you both.

God's gift of peace and comfort be with you both.

We appreciate your monthly "mini-visit" (card). Now and then I see Ed pacing the hall of Bailey Hall ranting and raving like a preacher about the latest social ill.

Grace & Peace,
Judy & Lee Bowling
Columbia, South Carolina

Dear Eduard, Murphy and family,

I and my husband had the good fortune of sitting next to Eduard and Murphy at a Poor People's Campaign meeting in Washington, DC and chatting with them. Soon after that, we met again, marching at one of the PPC marches in Washington.

We shared stories about our lives, values and visions. We shared with Eduard our stories about the Labor Movement and Bill sent him a book, *Labor's Untold Story*. We shared mutual feelings about the needs for changes in the U.S. healthcare system and that their daughter was a nurse, teaching at the School of Nursing, and I am a retired Community Health Nurse. We had hoped to get together again, but that didn't happen due to our active lives.

We subscribed to *Hospitality* and have kept up with the excellent writing and work of Eduard, Murphy and colleagues. The history of your work and life is inspiring.

We realized that our brief interactions with Murphy were a gift. Murphy, you conveyed to us a magical, multidimensional message of wisdom, calm strength, purpose beyond yourself and affection for people. The warmth of your smile is imprinted in my mind and gives me inspiration to embrace the struggle with joy for life and the vision of a just and peaceful world.

With admiration and deep appreciation,
Shayne Dizard and Bill Kajola
Silver Springs, Maryland

Dear Ed,

I have been thinking of writing you ever since I learned of Murphy's death. Today, I received the Open Door calendar and Murphy's letter. I cried. Grief seems to compound, as both of my parents died this year, as well as several other friends. Yet, I am bolstered by memories, as you must be too. I want to share with you a treasured memory of Murphy.

In 1984, Joseph and I were part of the worshipping community on Sunday nights at the Open Door. I was trying to figure out the route my life should take – thinking about community and what we ought to do. One day Murphy and I had lunch at a little café in Decatur. As we talked Murphy told me, "God doesn't use guilt to get us to do things." That wisdom has stuck with me and guided me in countless circumstances. It was my joy to serve God as a public school teacher for 30 years. Guilt would have sent me in another direction and outside of God's will. I can still hear Murphy saying so emphatically, "God doesn't use guilt."

As Christmas and a new year approach, I am filled with hope. We rest in the assurance of heaven, and work for God's Kingdom to be made manifest on Earth. I am praying strength and comfort for you.

Sincerely,
Becky White
Lilburn, Georgia

P.S. We made a gift to New Hope House in memory of Murphy. I remember being there with y'all the night Warren McCleskey was executed — another precious (and painful) memory.



Rita Corbin

Dear Ed,

I have been thinking so much of you, the family, the Open Door Community. I am so sorry for our great loss, dear Murphy. I know your heart is broken, and I trust the Open Door to carry you through these days, day by day. I hope you feel the support of so, so many lives you have touched — and Murphy's spirit also in your heart and house.

Love,
Trish Stefanik
Germantown, Maryland

Dear Ed,

How difficult it must be to lose the life partner who has so faithfully shared the calling that you have each pushed throughout your lives! I am sure that prisoners and families all over Georgia and beyond are grieving her death. Having read her book, I am grateful that she is no longer suffering.

Am sure you have many friends and your dear Hannah who can offer you comfort and loving presence.

Our hearts grieve with you.

Love,
Molly & Pat Morgan
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

So very grateful for the recent mailing and Murphy's message (ODC Christmas Calendar and Appeal) which will echo down all the years left to us — and to humanity. It resonates with us very strongly and I want to really take on her challenge (it's also from Jesus) "to continue the struggle for justice." We want to make an occasional donation. Thinking of you a lot and praying that this Christmas you will know safety and peace in all ways and always.

Paul & Hazel Heppleston
United Kingdom

Open Door Community,

Hello, I want to thank you for sending me Murphy Davis' "letter of the deepest gratitude." I am a friend of John August Swanson, the artist of the cover of Murphy Davis' book, *Surely Goodness and Mercy: A Journey into Illness and Solidarity*.

I appreciate the little calendar you have enclosed for me, too. I have also received my second issue of *Hospitality*. Thank you very much.

I find myself incarcerated in Centinela State Prison with a sentence of 160 years. I was wrongfully convicted of a murder and three attempted murders.

I have been corresponding with John August Swanson by mail for the past few years. A few months back I received the book stated above. I truly admire all that Murphy Davis has done throughout her journey of life and I am also so grateful for all that you at the Open Door Community continue to do.

Know that all of you are in my prayers, thoughts and forever in my heart. My condolences to all of you for your loss of the amazing Murphy Davis. I am touched for all every single one have managed to do for all of us incarcerated, for the poor, and those who suffer from severe illnesses. May God continue to bless all of you in abundance. Now and forever more, Amen.

May this New Year be filled with health, justice, freedom, healing, and many more blessings.

Please keep me in your prayers as well as I will do also.

In Christ's Love, Yours Truly,
Noe Hernandez, Prisoner
Imperial, California

Dear Ed,

You remain on my mind as you approach this Holy Season with a huge hole in your life. I have no words that are adequate, but I want you to know that my love for you and Murphy is unabated, and my gratitude to God for you both and the ministry you represent will always be a guiding light for me.

In the love of Christ,
Vernon Broyles
Louisville, Kentucky

Dear Ed & Hannah & Open Door,

My heart goes out to you on the passing from this life of Murphy.

What a large hole she left. I was honored to be able to witness the fruit of her spirit so evident in the Memorial and life-affirming service. Thank you for sharing her.

I am enclosing a check to cover two books (*Surely Goodness & Mercy*) — one for me and one for a person of your choosing.

Grace & Peace to you,
Laura Urban
Baltimore, Maryland

Dear Ed,

Murphy's own beautiful words sent with the Open Door calendar remind us of her recent passing. John and I are so sorry for the loss of such an incredible person and can't begin to imagine the void in your life.

Yours was a beautiful, unique partnership that we hope will bring you joy in its memory.

Bless you as you carry on the work that you do. You are certainly the example for a meaningful Christmas.

Sincerely,
Linda & John Jones
Raleigh, North Carolina