The Open Door Community

HOSPITALITY

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Providing hospitality to the homeless and to those in prison, through Christ's love.

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October 1997

Walking the Way

The Walk to Emmaus: Luke 24:13-35

by Ed Loring

I. The Dream

The next time you are in a grocery store please go to the section that has the spices. What variety and what beauty! Then remember Marco Polo (1254-1324) who traveled to Asia and birthed the dream of spices and silk—enough for all—in the East.

The dream turned to hunger. By the end of the next century Christopher Columbus carried in his ships not personal ambition alone, but European desire for gold and land and newness of life—enough for all.

When Columbus reached America he believed he had reached Asia. He found gold and he found land—more vast than the human imagination could create. He also found Arawak people and he turned them into slaves. Columbus' faith and European belief burned across war weary countries from Spain to Norway and England too. A sea route to Asia had been found! "There are gold and silk, spices and land—enough for all!" This was good news for rich and poor alike.

And so the American Dream was born. A dream and a hope about gold and land and newness of life—enough for all. In 1540 Ferdinand Desoto made a trip along the Mississippi River and into the southern range of the Appalachian Mountains. He emerged singing a song that shaped the South: there is gold in those mountains! and the Indians (as he referred to them) have it.

European nations began to organize themselves around the reports from the explorers: gold and land—enough for all. Europeans, rich and poor, began to hunger and dream, to compete and scheme for a taste of the abundance, for gold and land.

There were problems, not insurmountable problems, but problems. The vast lands had inhabitants: wild, savage, uncivilized, heathen inhabitants, the Europeans said. And this land was not Asia after all. It was a New World! And according to mythic lore, just being discovered. Empty, vast, plenteous, beautiful, rich, gold, tobacco, and food just beyond the James River. But laborers were needed. In fact Europeans could not handle the job alone. Workers, workers, and more workers had to be found. And they were.

Have you seen the Sunday newspaper? There are more advertisements than news texts. That is the gold. According to the propaganda there is enough for all if you have a credit card. There are conflicts over widening Ga. 400 in Sandy Springs and Highway 9 in Roswell. That is the vast land, once Cherokee land, now car-choked land, and we are fighting each other over it. Have you seen the "Help Wanted Section?" That is the American need for workers. Not much, not many, lots of high tech work, but the unskilled and the Cherokees, the Africans and the elderly are not needed. Are not wanted. There is just not enough for everyone, some seers say.

While Murphy and I were at the Presbyterian Women's Conference in July the powers of darkness marched our homeless friends away from the Municipal Market where they had been sleeping with welcome for many months. They were told that the Municipal Market is a gold mine ready to bring in the middle class for a spicy cup of coffee and a spacious shopping experience. Our homeless friends, including Jesse Tree, were told: "Be gone or go to jail!" "Don't let me catch your butt around here again." "You dirty little lazy homeless heathens, you scare the white folks and the Tiger Woods people. Get the hell outa here."

In our work we lose land every day. Those who pursue the gold will not share the space. Our homeless neighbors are herded away into hiding places or carted off in the name of public safety to jail and prison.

II. Not a New Story: The Trail of Tears

A terrible thing happened in Georgia in 1828, one hundred and sixty nine years ago and one hundred and one years before the birth of Martin Luther King, Jr. A little Cherokee boy sold to a white trader a big beautiful gold nugget. Lightning struck, wild fires burned ravenously, the word spread faster than at a Billy Graham Crusade. Rapacious white men, hog-faced and famished for gold, covetous for their Red neighbors' land, spewed into the north Georgia mountains. They carried guns, and they killed the Cherokees when they stood in the white man's way. They carried fire and they burned the log homes and drove the people from their land. They carried lust and hate, for the Cherokees, like most Indian Nations, had fought with the British in the American Revolution. So the whites pillaged without guilt, raped without shame.

But not everyone did. Samuel Worcester and Elizur Butler, Christian missionaries, did four years in prison at hard labor for refusing to abide by the Georgia laws, passed in the early 1830's to strip the Cherokees of their treaty and constitutional rights. These Christian white men stood in solidarity with the molested Cherokees. Always an option. Always a possibility. Always a cross.

Like our brothers and sisters who slept at the Municipal Market, the Cherokees were no match for the power of the state and the anarchy of the lust for gold and land. Congress, too, had grown ready to get rid of these Red people who could not be kept in slavery and who occupied land needed for the Cotton Kingdom and gold mines. Ten years after the child sold his gold nuggets, the final phase of Indian Removal was set to begin.

The Trail of Tears

Andrew Jackson is among the most violent, racist, gold-and-land-hungry European-American, white leaders ever to rise to power in the United States of America. He was a Presbyterian. I have preached in the church he built for his wife Rachel at his slave-based plantation—The Hermitage—outside Nashville, Tennessee. He was a land speculator, a business man, a military hero because of his ruthlessness to Native Americans, and not only a gentleman slaveholder, but a slave trader as well. He, like Oliver North and Ronald Reagan in our Nicaraguan policies, subverted the democratic system. Oliver North by Congress; Jackson by the U.S. Supreme Court. When the court ruled in favor of the Cherokees, he said, "Let them enforce it." He lent encouragement to the outlaws, murderers, and thieves. "Go for the land," he said. "Dig for the gold."

So most European Americans were prepared and most white Georgians were jubilant when the U.S. Army under the command of General Winfield Scott rumbled into the north Georgia

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("Walking the Way," continued from page 1)

mountains to make the way safe for gold diggers and secure for land speculators. He came in May, 1838, 10 years after the Cherokee child, near Dahlonega, sold the gold piece. Scott had 7,000 troops, well armed and ready. Betwen May and October they captured the Cherokees in north Georgia, west Tennessee and North Carolina. Some escaped and their descendants live in the Smoky Mountains today. Seventeen thousand did not. They were put into stockades like homeless people who are caught asleep under bridges. But these cages were even worse, and many people starved to death.

On October 1, 1838, a Death March began. General Winfield Scott had 645 wagons for the 17,000 men, women and children. Most had to walk all the way to the farm-poor land that the white fathers were allocating to them in what we today call Oklahoma. At that time the name reflected the treaty agreements: Indian Territory.

The Cherokee people walked the way under bayonet and gun from New Echota, Georgia, and Murphy, North Carolina. They stumbled and collapsed outside Chattanooga, Tennessee. Across the mountains to Nashville they marched contiguous to Andrew Jackson's plantation. The winter was severe; yet on they marched. As the icy winds blew and the rock-hard earth froze, feet bled, frost bite chewed, and people accounted worthless by white America died deaths in humiliation with what dignity could be scratched from their skin. The troops yelled and screamed to get moving and to keep moving. They pushed the points of their bayonets at mothers whose dead children were strapped on their backs. The soldiers forced lovers and husbands and wives to come along faster even as they held the dead bodies of their beloved in their arms. The ground was too hard for burial on most days and hard to find under snow, sleet, and ice.

On they moved. A Death March dying. Into the town of Hopkinsville, Kentucky, where White Path of Ellijay, Georgia, died, then across the Ohio River, through Anna, Illinois, across the Mississippi River to Springfield, Missouri, then south to Fayetteville, Arkansas, until they finally reached Tahlequah, their new home. The Cherokees built a Trail of Tears and a road of Death. People along the route and in the towns came out to gawk; some yelled ugly racist epithets; not a few rifled through the Native Americans' belongings, meager though they were. And they stole what they wanted and they spilled laughter like vomit. Some farmers charged a toll for these despised American people to cross their land. A few cried and hung their heads in woe and shame. Always an option. Always a possibility. Always a cross.

Four thousand Cherokees were walked to death over the 1,000-mile forced migration. A fourth of those on the Trail of Tears died walking the way. In the moving novel, The Education of Little Tree: A True Story, Forrest Carter vividly tells the tale told by a child the age of the nugget seller:

> GRANMA AND GRANPA wanted me to know of the past, for "if ye don't know the past, then ye will not have a future. If ye don't know where your people have been, then ye won't know where your people are going." And so they told me most of it.
>
> How the government soldiers came. How the Cherokee had farmed the rich valleys and held their mating dances in the spring when life was planted in the ground; when the buck and doe, the cock and peahen exulted in the creation parts they played.
>
> How their harvest festivals were held in the villages as frost turned the pumpkins, reddened the persimmon and hardened the corn. How they prepared for the winter hunts and pledged themselves to The Way.
>
> How the government soldiers came, and told them to sign the paper. Told them the paper meant that the new white settlers would know where they could settle and where they would not take land of the Cherokee. And after they had signed it, more government soldiers came with guns and long knives fixed on their guns. The soldiers said the paper had changed its words. The words now said that the Cherokees must give up their valleys, their homes and their mountains. They must go far toward the setting sun, where the government had other land for the Cherokee, land that the white man did not want.
>
> How the government soldiers came, and ringed a big valley with their guns, and at night with their campfires. They put the Cherokees in the ring. They brought Cherokees in from other mountains and valleys, in bunches like cattle, and put them in the ring.
>
> After a long time of this, when they had most of the Cherokees, they brought wagons and mules and told the Cherokees they could ride to the land of the setting sun. The Cherokees had nothing left. But they would not ride, and so they saved something. You could not see it or wear it or eat it, but they saved something; and they would not ride. They walked.
>
> Government soldiers rode before them, on each side of them, behind them. The Cherokee men walked and looked straight ahead and would not look down, nor at the soldiers. Their women and their children followed in their footsteps and would not look at the soldiers.
>
> Far behind them, the empty wagons rattled and rumbled and served no use. The wagons could not steal the soul of the Cherokee. The land was stolen from them, their home; but the Cherokees would not let the wagons steal their souls.
>
> As they passed the villages of the white man, people lined the trail to watch them pass. At first, they laughed at how foolish was the Cherokee to walk with the empty wagons rattling behind them. The Cherokees did not turn their heads at their laughter, and soon there was no laughter.
>
> And as the Cherokees walked farther from their mountains, they began to die. Their soul did not die, nor did it weaken. It was the very young and the very old and the sick.
>
> At first the soldiers let them stop to bury their dead; but then, more died — by the hundreds — by the thousands. More than a third of them were to die on the Trail. The soldiers said they could only bury their dead every three days; for the soldiers wished to hurry and be finished with the Cherokee. The soldiers said the wagons would carry the dead, but the Cherokee would not put their dead in the wagons. They carried them. Walking.
>
> The little boy carried his dead baby sister, and slept by her at night on the ground. He lifted her in his arms in the morning, and carried her.
>
> The husband carried his dead wife. The son carried his dead mother, his father. The mother carried her dead baby. They carried them in their arms. And walked. And they did not turn their heads to look at the soldiers, nor to look at the people who lined the sides of the Trail to watch them pass. Some of the people cried. But the Cherokee did not cry. Not on the outside, for the Cherokee would not let them see their soul; as they would not ride in the wagons.
>
> And so they called it the Trail of Tears. Not because the Cherokees cried; for they did not. They called it the Trail of Tears for it sounds romantic and speaks of the sorrow of those who stood by the Trail. A death march is not romantic.
>
> You cannot write poetry about the death-stiffened baby in her mother's arms, staring at the jolting sky with eyes that will not close; while her mother walks.
>
> You cannot sing songs of the father laying down the burden of his wife's corpse, to lie by it through the night and to rise and carry it again in the morning—and tell his oldest son to carry the body of his

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HOSPITALITY

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Ed Loring–Correspondence
Elizabeth Dede–Resident Volunteer Co-ordinator; Guest Ministry; Hardwick Prison Trip
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Open Door Community
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The Open Door Community's

Fall Appeal 1997

Dear Friends,

This time of year is traditionally a season of change and new beginnings. For the Open Door Community it has been that kind of autumn—we have gone through many transitions: Hannah Loring-Davis, a member of this community from its very beginning, has gone off to school at Guilford College in Greensboro, North Carolina. Dick and Gladys Rustay, members since 1989, are off on a six-month sabbatical, visiting family and friends, and volunteering at Reba Place in Chicago. And the renovations of our kitchen and dining room have finally begun, with the ancient walls, floors, ceilings, and equipment torn out to be repaired or replaced! So we are learning new ways to live without these vital parts of our community.

However, there are some constants in our lives: we are thankful that our faithful God is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow. And we have come to know this God through the many friends and supporters who surround us. Even without the stove for cooking hot grits, God—manifest in Jesus—still comes to us at the Butler Street Breakfast in the guise of a stranger, a homeless man, woman, or child, who is joyful and thankful for a blueberry muffin, although it's not quite as satisfying as a bowl of grits.

And your generous support and ongoing love and care for our community, and our homeless and imprisoned friends, make it possible to live this life to which we've been called. You encourage us and help us to believe in our God who promises never to leave us or forsake us.

Through all these times of change, you are here, and as the seasons change and cold weather comes with its special needs for shelter, clothes, and food, we pray for your continued support through your prayers, time, and money.

With love and thanks from all of us at the Open Door Community

KATRINA GUETTLER/ JOHN SWEET

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Eric Ebeck Jim Thurston James P. Sinkfield M. L. Randon

Leo E. McGuire murphy davis

Meals

Hooray! We have begun the long-awaited construction and renovation of our kitchen and dining room (anticipated to take at least two months). Without a functioning kitchen, we are in need of some particular help. If you can help us figure out how to serve 16,000 - 20,000 meals without a kitchen and dining room, we would love to hear from you!

We need...

- large quantities of fruit and meat and cheese sandwiches on whole wheat bread for our bag lunches.
- muffins to serve with our sack breakfasts.
- help with supper meals for the household (25 - 40). Could you help us by bringing in a meal to share with us or prepare a one-dish meal we could warm up in an apartment-sized oven?

If you can help, please call Brenda Smith, our Volunteer Coordinator, at 874-9652.

We wished safe and happy travels to Dick and Gladys Rustay who began a much-needed six month sabbatical in September.

ADOLPHUS VICTRUM

Casualties of War on Crime:

Fairness, Reliability, and the Credibility of Criminal Justice Systems

Part II - conclusion

by Stephen B. Bright

(Editor's note: Attorney Stephen Bright is the Director of the Southern Center for Human Rights located in Atlanta, Georgia, a nonprofit, public-interest human rights organization which focuses on the human rights of prisoners and those facing the death penalty in the South. This is the continuation of a piece we ran last month, reprinted from the "University of Miami Law Review," January, 1997, with permission from the author.

Part I of this series concluded with a discussion of how many criminal justice systems lack the most basic components of fairness by not having fair and impartial judges, and prosecutors free from political influence.)

Many states still lack indigent defense systems to provide representation for poor people accused of any types of crimes. Numerous articles and studies make clear the pervasiveness of the problem in all types of criminal cases and the reasons for it: the grossly inadequate funding of indigent defense systems, lack of public defender programs in many jurisdictions, the lack of independence of defender systems, and the low standard for effective assistance established by the Supreme Court in Strickland v. Washington.

The lack of commitment to the Sixth Amendment's promise of a right to counsel is starkly illustrated by the following account of a capital trial in Houston, Texas:

Seated beside his client — a convicted capital murderer — defense attorney John Benn spent much of Thursday afternoon's trial in apparent deep sleep.

His mouth kept falling open and his head lolled back on his shoulders, and then he awakened just long enough to catch himself and sit upright. Then it happened again. And again. And again.

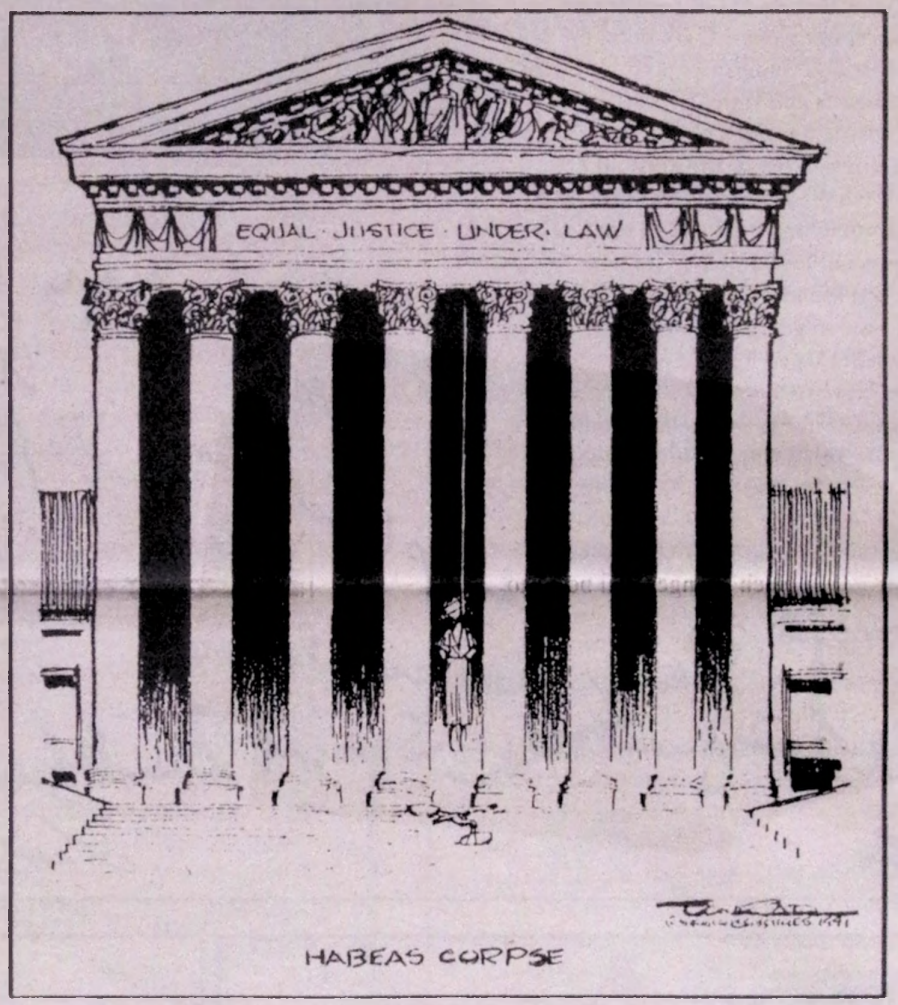
Every time he opened his eyes, a different prosecution witness was on the stand describing another aspect of the Nov. 19, 1991, arrest of George McFarland in the robbery-killing of grocer Kenneth Kwan.

When state District Judge Doug Shaver finally called a recess, Benn was asked if he truly had fallen asleep during a capital murder trial.

"It's boring," the 72-year old longtime Houston lawyer explained. This does not offend the Sixth Amendment, the trial judge explained, because, "[t]he Constitution doesn't say the lawyer has to be awake." The Texas Court of Criminal Appeals apparently agreed with this analysis. It rejected McFarland's claim of ineffective assistance of counsel, applying the standard set by the United States Supreme Court in Strickland v. Washington.

But George McFarland is not the only person condemned to die at a trial where his defense lawyer slept in Houston, the city responsible for more executions than any other jurisdiction in the country. Calvin Burdine and Carl Johnson both had the misfortune to have attorney Joe Frank Cannon assigned to defend them. They are among ten clients of Cannon who have been sentenced to death. Cannon has been appointed by judges in Houston to numerous criminal cases in the last 45 years despite his tendency to doze off during trial. Carl Johnson was executed on September 19, 1995.

When one city — the capital of capital punishment — has three cases involving sleeping lawyers in which the death penalty was imposed and all were upheld by the state's highest court, it speaks volumes about the lack of commitment to fairness. But equally shocking examples are found throughout the country. A study of homicide cases in Philadelphia, which rivals Houston for its high number of death cases, found that the quality of lawyers appointed to capital cases in Philadelphia is so bad that even officials in charge of the system say they wouldn't want to be represented in traffic court by some of the people appointed to defend poor people accused of murder. The study found that many of the attorneys were appointed by judges based on political connections, not legal ability. Philadelphia's poor defendants often find themselves being represented by ward leaders, ward committeemen, failed politicians, the sons of judges and party leaders, and contributors to the judge's election campaigns.



Other studies have found the same poor quality of representation in capital cases in one state after another. The National Law Journal, after an extensive study of capital cases in six Southern states, which account for the vast majority of executions, found that capital trials are more like a random flip of the coin than a delicate balancing of the scales because the defense lawyer is too often ill trained, unprepared . . . [and] grossly underpaid. The American Bar Association concluded after an exhaustive study that the inadequacy and inadequate compensation of counsel at trial was one of the principal failings of the capital punishment systems in the states today.

Despite these major deficiencies in the criminal justice systems, Americans are being told that the answer to the crime problem is longer prison terms, harsher conditions of imprisonment, greater use of the death penalty, less due process and less judicial review. The United States incarcerates a greater percentage of its population than any country in the world. Thirty-eight states provide for the death penalty, and over 50 federal crimes are punishable by death. More people were executed in the United States last year than in any year since the reinstatement of capital punishment in 1976. The United States is one of only five countries in the world that has executed children in the last six years. The others are Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen.

People are being imprisoned for longer periods of time in harsher conditions. Politicians have eliminated educational and vocational programs for prisoners, removed exercise equipment from prisons, and resorted to various types of primitive measures of punishment—such as the chain gang, breaking rocks with sledge hammers and digging ditches—to show how tough they can be.

There has been virtually no debate among politicians about the wisdom of these measures—whether they constitute an effective crime control policy, whether they will actually make Americans safer in their homes and on the streets. Nor has there been any discussion of the importance of the fairness and the integrity of the system, the importance of the Bill of Rights, and the question of what kind of society we want to have and how the least among us are to be treated.

Although long prison terms and death sentences may be the results the public wants, ultimately citizens will have little respect for courts that bend with the political winds. And no one can be expected to trust or respect judgments obtained at trials where the accused was not adequately represented.

A fair process is essential to ensure that decisions made in the criminal justice system are as well informed and as reliable as humanly possible. Before the execution of Horace Dunkins by Alabama in 1989,

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when newspapers reported that Dunkins was mentally retarded, at least one citizen who sat on Dunkins' case as a juror came forward and said she would not have voted for the death sentence if she had known of his mental limitations. Because of the poor legal representation that Dunkins had received from his court-appointed lawyer, evidence of his mental retardation was not presented to the jury. The jury was unable to perform its constitutional obligation to impose a sentence based on a reasoned moral response to the defendant's background, character, and crime, because it was not informed by defense counsel of his disability. Nevertheless, Dunkins was executed. Fairness also matters because of the importance of keeping improper influences, such as racial prejudice, from influencing the outcome of cases.

Nevertheless, Congress drastically limited one of the most fundamental safeguards which protect individuals from unlawful imprisonment or execution, *habeas corpus* review. *Habeas corpus* is the mechanism by which a person convicted in a state or federal court may petition the federal courts for review of a conviction or sentence on the grounds that it was obtained in violation of the Constitution. In an effort to increase the number and speed of executions, Congress eliminated funding for the death penalty resource centers, which provided lawyers to the condemned in *habeas corpus* proceedings, and passed the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996, which places new, unprecedented restrictions on *habeas corpus* review.

For the first time in the nation's history, Congress has imposed a statute of limitations on petitions for *habeas corpus* relief. The Act also prohibits federal courts from granting *habeas corpus* relief unless the decision of the state court "involved an unreasonable application of clearly established Federal law." The act also severely limits when a federal court may conduct an evidentiary hearing, and prohibits second or "successive" petitions for *habeas corpus* relief except in very narrow circumstances.

The provisions of the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act represent a decision that results are more important than process, that finality is more important than fairness, and that it is more important to get on with executions than to determine whether convictions and sentences were fairly and reliably obtained.

Such a system produces results—convictions and death sentences—but it does not produce justice. The criminal courts of the United States are courts of vengeance and revenge, but they are not courts of justice. To change this, judges must be selected on merit, and be insulated from political pressures. Public defender programs must be established and adequately funded to provide competent legal assistance to poor people accused of crimes. Finally, all parts of the community must be involved in the process.

Such changes will begin to come about only when there is a realization that demagoguery on the issue of crime is not making citizens safer, that the Bill of Rights is not a collection of technicalities, and that everyone has an interest in the fairness and integrity of the courts.

In Robert Bolt's play, A Man for All Seasons, a young man argues that laws that are inconvenient or unpopular should not be followed; indeed, he would "cut down every law in England [to pursue the Devil]." Thomas More responds: "[a]nd when the last law was down, and the Devil turned round on you — where would you hide . . . all the laws being flat? This country's planted thick with laws . . . [do you] really think you could stand upright in the winds that would blow then?"

This concludes our two-part series from Stephen Bright on the casualties of war on crime.

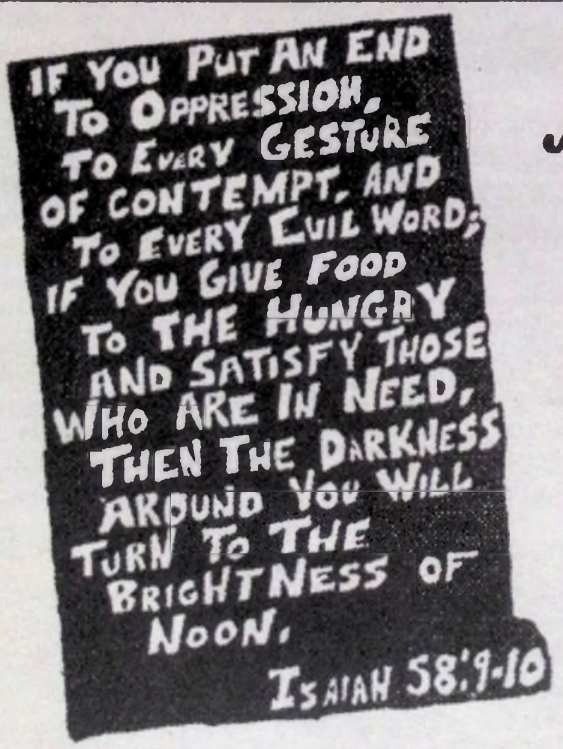
Good-bye, Dr. Jann

KAREN GAGE

Dr. Jann with Open Door Novice, Jim Hinshaw, after one of the Wednesday night clinics.

We are sad to say good-bye to our good friend Brigitte Jann, head of the Department of Rehabilitative Medicine for Emory University Hospital. For the past two years, Dr. Jann has directed a weekly Wednesday evening clinic at the Open Door. She left in September to return to her family home near Zurich, Switzerland, and she will continue her work in a hospital there.

We are grateful for the healing mercy of this friendship that has blessed so many of our homeless friends with loving care, and for the journey she has shared with our community.



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Gloria Bromell-Tinubu: If You're Not Loving Your Neighbor, You're Not Loving Yourself

with Elizabeth Dede and Adolphus Victrum

Probably the aspect of life and work at the Open Door Community that I love most is the wonderful range of people we meet, and the experience we have of the abundant life God promises to us. Several months ago Gloria Bromell-Tinubu came to the Open Door to speak with us about politics in the city, and we were especially drawn to her because of her strong, active resistance to the Urban Camping Ordinance passed by City Council and used to remove, arrest, and imprison homeless people from their only home– the streets of Atlanta.

At the time of her first visit to us, I was deeply moved by her compassion, her honesty and depth of soul, her confession of faith, and the richness of her life. I knew that I wanted her to tell her story for the readers of Hospitality. Since then, she and Adolphus and I have tried to get together, but it was difficult to connect with our busy schedule at the Open Door and with her commitments to family, teaching, city government, and now her candidacy for Mayor of the City of Atlanta.

Her credentials are impressive: Gloria Bromell-Tinubu is a tenured professor of economics at Spelman College; she has been the District 12 City Councilperson on the Atlanta City Council since 1993; she is the founder of the Atlanta Cooperative Development Corporation, past co-chair of the Georgia Women's Political Caucus, and co-chair of the citywide Code Enforcement Task Force. In addition to each of these roles, Gloria Bromell-Tinubu has been married for 21 years and is a committed and caring mother of four children.

Early on Sunday morning, September 7, 1997, Adolphus and I went to Gloria's home for coffee and an informal interview. We asked one question: Who are you now? We were richly blessed with the following story.

Gloria Tinubu with Adolphus Victrum during a recent visit to the Open Door Community.

To talk about who I am now requires that I talk about where I come from, because that has defined for me, in large part, who I am today.

I was born in rural South Carolina to two wonderful people, Beatrice and Charlie Bromell. I am the seventh of eight children. I have five older brothers, one older sister, and a younger sister. And I was actually born on an old plantation. We lived on various former plantations when I was growing up. My father was a farmer and a care-taker of the plantations that we lived on, and my mother was a maid and a cook.

I remember in high school staying on Milton Hall plantation, and it was way back in the woods on a long dirt road, and the bus would come and pick us up and take us to school. But I remember the thing that was so meaningful to me was to realize that on that plantation perhaps even my great, great grandmother and grandfather and ancestors had lived there and walked in this dirt. I always felt very close to my ancestors here in this country because of that experience.

I also felt rebellious in some ways and angry about the way things were. That defined who I was for life because it made me want to work to effect change in the lives of people, particularly my people, but also people in general. That set the stage for who I am today.

My father, although he got only to third grade, and my mother to sixth grade, were both brilliant people. My father could do anything; he could make anything; he could fix anything; he could handle anything. He was tenacious and stubborn and hard-headed. And my mother would say, "You're just like your daddy." My daddy was known to be the kind of person you just did not mess with, or anything that he loved, or anything that belonged to him. He had a reputation for being no-nonsense in the community.

My mother, on the other hand, was just the opposite. She was sweet sister Bea who went to church every Sunday, cooked, hugged and kissed people, and just loved everyone a lot. I think I have a little bit of both of them in me. They both have gone on now. (My mother passed away five years ago and my father two-and-a-half years ago.) But when I look at myself, hear myself, see myself, I really see them; they are living on through me.

Growing up, I always felt I was called to serve and to do God's work. I knew that the Creator must have had that in mind because it made it possible for me to do the things I've done in my life.

While I always knew my parents were not wealthy, I didn't realize how poor we were until I got to college, where they said I qualified for all this poor people's stuff. When I finished high school I didn't know how I would go to college. I even considered going into the military to be sure that I could get a college education. None of my brothers and sisters had gone to college before, but I knew it was something I wanted to do, I needed to do, in order to be able to serve. At the last minute my counselor told me about a scholarship, the Herbert Laymen Fund, available for poor minority students. We quickly applied; I was awarded the scholarship, and I started college at the University of South Carolina.

I wanted to be in a Blacker environment. You see, I grew up in the segregated South, so I had no exposure to white people. I wanted to go to a place where I felt not on the margin, but part of the mainstream. I finished my freshman year and transferred to Howard University. When I started college, I majored in drama because even from elementary school I used to write plays, direct plays, and be in charge. I did some acting, too, and drama was a natural for me. I didn't know what else to major in. I figured I would major in drama, set up a community theater in my home town, and use it as a way to bring people together to deal with political and economic issues. So that was my dream: to get this Bachelor of Fine Arts in drama, direct, write, and use plays as a vehicle to pull my community together and to solve problems. I realized in my second year at Howard that I had the drama thing down pat, but I didn't know anything about political economics, and therefore I didn't feel I was prepared to go back and serve in the way that I had hoped.

A friend told me that I really should major in agricultural economics, and I asked, "What is that?" I later got some brochures from Clemson University; they had a program in that area. So I hurried up and finished my undergraduate degree in three years instead of four. I had discovered what I really wanted to do.

I graduated with honors and came back to my home town, looking to start the work. I applied to Clemson, and in the interim, I taught at my former high school for a year. That was very interesting because I had only been away for three years, so there were kids who had been in the ninth grade and knew me. They were in 12th grade or 11th grade now, and it was a wonderful experience because they knew me as Gloria on the basketball team. I taught everything—whatever was left over—journalism, history, etc.

I finally heard from Clemson. They said, "Why would you want to major in agricultural economics? Besides, you've never had a college course in economics. We need you come up and explain this to us." I went up to Clemson and, of course, I walked into a room filled only with white men. Here I was this little Black country girl from Plantersville. I had to explain to them why it was important for them to admit me into this Master's program though I'd never taken an economics course. I convinced them that I wanted to get the degree to research a problem in my community that had never been researched before.

You've heard of heir's property when people die without a will, and the property gets handed on from generation to generation. That was prevalent in my community. The land my father lived on was heir's property, and as a result he could not borrow against it. The Clemson men thought that was interesting. They admitted me conditionally. I had to take some undergraduate courses over

the summer and continue some more undergraduate and graduate courses in the fall. I did well, and they admitted me fully after the summer and the first semester.

I went on and did some wonderful research. We looked at the entire state of South Carolina and researched whether heir's property was prevalent mostly among Blacks, with people who had very little education, whether it was a phenomenon on the east coast of the state, or in the Piedmont. We found that it was prevalent state-wide and directly related to the lack of education. Because Blacks had less education, it was more prevalent among them. We got a lot of media coverage: all of the newspapers reported the findings from my Master's thesis. We were able to get one of the state legislators to introduce legislation to try to help clear up this issue. Of course the bill sat in committee and didn t go anywhere because a lot of the state legislators got their property through heir's property; they would buy out the interest of one of the heirs and force the sale. The heirs couldn't afford to buy the property themselves. I was able to publish a couple of articles and present some papers on that subject.

While I was at Clemson I met my husband, who is from western Nigeria; he is Yoruba. I still had a year left on my master's, and he was finishing up a master's in engineering. We were married in my parents' front yard in Plantersville. It was a cultural wedding. I made our African clothes. I used to sew a lot. I would come home from school, make an outfit, and wear it the next day. My mother taught me how to sew. I love to do that, but I don't have time anymore.

My husband got a job in Atlanta, and I finished up at Clemson and moved here. In 1982, I decided to go back and get my Ph.D. By that time, we had two children, a one-year-old and a three-year-old. But that was the time I was ready mentally to go ahead and get the degree.

I moved to Clemson, while my husband stayed here to work and maintain our house here. I moved into married student housing with my children—a single parent; my husband would come up on Saturdays. I started in August and found I was pregnant with my third child in September. I finished my first year, went to summer school, finished on a Friday, and had our baby on Sunday. I started again in the fall and didn't drop out. The Creator just gave me a focus, presence and peace of mind. My kids were a source of energy: they fed me. They gave me reason and purpose. In my fourth year I got pregnant with my fourth child. So I had these little stairsteps. I was pregnant when I took my preliminary exams. God gave me a state of mind to focus.

I had my son in November, and Spelman College recruited me, and I started teaching there in January of 1986. My youngest child was two months old at the time. I did the finishing touches on my dissertation, and graduated in August of 1986. I've been at Spelman since then and became tenured in 1991. Three years ago I became chair of my department. This past year I took a year off to decide what I want to do in my life: to pursue academia or public service.

Since the 1980's I've been involved in the Fulton County Democratic Party, Georgia Women's Political Caucus, the State Democratic Committee, and more recently with the Neighborhood Planning Unit. Then I ran for the first time in 1989 and lost. I ran again in 1993. I've been partly in public service and partly in academia. I love them both, and I'm willing to challenge in them what I think is not helpful and not healthful.

I've started a couple of books that are designed to challenge the mainstream thinking in economics from Adam Smith that says that people are motivated by self-interest. I believe that theory is contrary first of all to the Word of God, and then to nature. There is an abundance, and people are created to be more cooperative than competitive. While the world is very large, we are very close to each other. What one country does affects another. What one city does affects another. We need to look at our interdependence, our commonness, and the fact that there is enough to go around. We have to be good stewards. There is plenty of land, and enough for people to have shelter and food. It's a simple matter of distribution and a willingness to share and not be greedy. I want to appeal to our higher selves and not to our baser selves. That is the theoretical side.

My thesis for the other book is more practical: how do we use a cooperative strategy to revitalize inner city neighborhoods? I see cooperatives as a way to benefit people who have limited resources; by pooling their resources, they get more from them. I'm very involved in cooperative economics. Through the city I've set up the Atlanta Cooperative Development Corporation. We're interested in converting apartments to cooperative ownership housing (our first project is converting Colony Creek Apartments, where my husband and I first lived), and showing people how to develop cooperative businesses to deal with the employment problems people face, particularly in labor pools, where they are exploited and used as slave labor.

I came to public service because I always felt called to it. I've always lived in District 12 since I've been in Atlanta. I believe in participatory democracy. The citizens entrust us with the stewardship of resources for our common good. I'm a citizen, not a king- or queen-maker. I'm like everyone else, and I've made a decision to serve. I didn't come looking for a job. I have a life and a career. I came to my work because I wanted to give and to make a difference.

In this part of town we seem to be disrespected by businesses that come to the city. We have not gotten the kind of services from city government that we feel we should have. When I thought about running for office in 1988, my tenure committee at Spelman said, "You're so active in community involvement. You really need to reduce that and write and publish more articles." I thanked them for the advice and ran for office. Somebody had to do it. I lost by 120 votes. Actually it wasn't a loss because after the election we were able to prove that there was voter fraud on the part of my opponent. But we didn't have the resources to show 120 votes. The Superior Court judge agreed that there was fraud, but not enough to call for a new vote. My opponent's colleagues called him a crook, and I was introduced at public engagements as the Councilwoman from District 12. When I ran again in 1993, I won with no problem.

I came to elective office with the intent to bring change and to make a difference: to give people a voice that they hadn't had before. I've been able to open a district office for my constituents where they can interact with their representatives without having to go downtown. A lot of our code enforcement work is out of that office. Garden clubs meet there. We've set up an organization for the redevelopment of Stewart Avenue, which operates from that office. The community is really using it and working to affect change. So many great leaders have emerged from this community over the past four years, and the community feels very confident that it can fight for its rights. We've removed drug traps and prostitution from our corridor, and we've been able to attract new, healthy business.

Why am I running for mayor? I said, "Somebody's got to run for this seat—somebody with the right heart and head." A year and a half ago several people approached me about running, and I decided that this was serious. There were other things going on in my personal and family life with teenage kids that I needed to make right. So I began a fast a year ago. I didn't initially attempt to go on a 40-day fast, but I decided to do it as long as I needed. The fortieth day was the day the Olympics began here in Atlanta in 1996. I came off the fast with a sense that internally I was ready to handle the race, but I had to have support from my family, both my husband and my children.

Often in our lives we allow things to happen that show that we don't truly love ourselves because if we did we wouldn't allow those things to happen. Through the fasting, meditating, and praying I came into a greater love for myself and a greater knowledge of myself. This allows me to do what's needed within my family and in my community. The scripture says, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself." If you're not loving your neighbor, that means you're not loving yourself. God shared that with me while I fasted. We've got to love ourselves individually and collectively as a people. I've always loved my people, but there were still some things that I didn't have together in myself—perhaps shaped by parental relationships, or scars from my past that had not healed. You've got to get those things healed, or they'll stay with you forever. While I had all these accomplishments, there was still that thing that kept me from going to another level with my life. This past year I started a lot of healing in my personal life. When I finally came to an understanding of love for myself, then I was able to love other people more. That is powerful.

No wonder our kids are running around shooting and killing each other. There is a serious problem in terms of self-love. We can never build enough jails or hire enough police officers to teach our children self-love. It's not class-related; it doesn't matter how much money you have. There is a poverty of the spirit in our young kids which leads to most of our problems. We will be able to provide for the physical needs of people, but we've got so much work to do spiritually because we've allowed that part of our humanity to just dry up and wither away. So we are incomplete because we've excluded a very key part of our humanity. You can't say a lot of this in political realms because people don't understand. We must be able to touch people's hearts again and be spiritually connected. While we may be different in how much money we have, the color of our skin, what we eat, and what we don't, what is common among us is that constant spirit: the Creator is the same today, as it was yesterday, and forever. That unites us.

Obviously, people who write and pass legislation like the Urban Camping Ordinance can't love homeless people because they don't love themselves. They really don't love who they are. We've got to let people know that it's okay to love yourself. If you're doing some things that make you

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Still Hungry for Revenge

by Murphy Davis

(Editor's note: This sermon was preached in James Chapel, Union Theological Seminary, New York, on April 10th 1997.)

1 Corinthians 1:17 - 25 (NRSV)

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

On January 9, 1985, Roosevelt Green was strapped into a large, oak chair, in cell block H-5 in a prison in rural Butts County, Georgia. In the name of the people of Georgia, by the order of the Superior Court of Monroe County, he was electrocuted until dead. Roosevelt was a convicted murderer, and he was my friend.

At ten minutes after midnight on that cold winter night, Roosevelt walked calmly into the execution chamber, and made the following statement:

"The night after I was arrested and taken to the Monroe County Jail, one of the jailers looked at me and said, 'Boy, the life of two n-_-g-g-_-r-s still ain't enough to make up for one white life.' I didn't believe him on that night," said Roosevelt, "I thought he was wrong. But tonight I know that he was right. He spoke for this society, which is racist from top to bottom. I will die before you tonight because I am Black, and because I was with another Black man who killed a white woman. But my life will not be enough to satisfy you. You will kill me and still be hungry for revenge. One thing you cannot make me do is to hate you. I'm not going to hate you even though you kill me. I forgive you, for you are blind; I will die with peace in my heart."

I have to say that all his life Roosevelt Green was not so calm, so eloquent, or so focused. He was born in Minter, Alabama, and he grew up expecting nothing in his life but stoop labor in cotton fields or driving a pulp wood truck. His life was violent and brutal, and what little he seemed to be able to lay claim to was stolen from him by the violence and brutality of Alabama plantation life. Ending up on death row in Georgia was really not such an illogical twist of history for Roosevelt.

When I first knew him, he was almost literally bursting with rage and with bitterness, and with plenty of good reason. That rage made him a sitting duck for white guards, who found ways to taunt him and pick at him, and watch him run wild in response to their games, so his life became an endless round of fights and cell block altercations, and stun guns and attacks, and mace and time in the hole. Many of the times I went to visit him he had on leg irons, or his hands would be clamped to his waist with waist chains, or he would have his hands cuffed behind his back. And of course there were times when they didn't let him come out at all.

But over the years that he lived in prison and waited for his death, Roosevelt was not still. He formed some very important and lasting friendships inside and outside of prison. One of his friends used to call it "Out there in minimum security." He particularly nurtured a relationship with a man named Billy Mitchell, who was also executed. But together with his friends, Roosevelt would try to think this thing through. He and Billy would sit together for hours and contemplate life and meaning and their particular lives. And then they'd write to friends on the outside, or visit, and then they'd come together and talk some more.

I remember the day when I went in for a visit. "I think I've got this figured out now." Roosevelt said. "One of the ways this system keeps itself going is by depending on me to respond in certain kinds of violent ways. So you know what I can do? I can choose not to respond." Now maybe that sounded like a simple thing, but what that represented in the life of Roosevelt Green was a very important turning point—a time when he stepped back from his own life and took a look at the brokenness, at the sin, at the places of deep woundedness, and his part in all of that. And he decided to take another turn. He decided that it was possible in his own life to break the cycle of violence and bitterness.

Not that Roosevelt had become an angel or a saint. He had not finished his life work. What he did do was to struggle over a period of years with how to pull together the shreds of his own tortured life, and piece together some semblance of human dignity and integrity. And he was definitely breaking a cycle that was laid out for him by refusing to hold up his end of the process any longer. He was being healed by God's loving and patient mercy. And he became the subject of his own life and history. He became a whole new person.

The state of Georgia told us they executed a monster that night: someone who was no more than subhuman. The Ku Klux Klan gathered outside the prison, and they held signs, and screamed epithets. About 30 miles south of the prison, a bar in Macon had a Roosevelt Green Party with free drinks for everybody at the time of death, and a happy hour for the rest of the night.

The truth is that on January 9, 1985, we killed a child of God: a human being, a seeker of mercy and truth, who had found deep healing in his own life. He had learned that the struggle for healing and liberation is the beginning of new life and the basis for hope. He had gained depths of hope for the human family, in spite of his own, cruel death. I wish I could say that there was a happy ending to this story, but you have to know that in this struggle, we celebrate life and the good news where we find it.

The execution chambers across the United States of America have killed 405 human beings since 1975. The chambers wait today for another 3,200 men and women and children. They are all a part of that great river of unnecessary suffering that flows through human history. We hardly hear of the people on death row, or know their names, because they are shuttered and forgotten places. There doesn't seem to be much reason to listen to the people there. They are most often people of color, often ugly, almost entirely men. Often they are people with brain-damage, or retardation, or mental illness, and always, always, they are poor.

They are convicted, and most often guilty of terrible acts of violence against another person or persons—not necessarily the worst violence among us (Lord knows, this society adores violence). But rather they have been convicted of the wrong kind of violence: violent acts in the wrong places, in the wrong circumstances, and against the wrong people—all of it having to do with race and class and social status, political expedience, and whether or not it's an election year. All of this creates a particular context in which we begin to think of them as disposable people. People whom we are better off without. People for whom there is no hope.

So why should we listen to Roosevelt Green? There are so many other good causes that clamor for our attention, so many deep needs. This is not a very appealing thing to do, and they are not a very attractive set of people. When we look to death row it pushes us to the outer limits of our compassion and our theology. Besides, it's hard enough in these days to defend, advocate, or stand up for *any* poor people. And when we get down to death row, we're generally talking about *guilty*, poor people. But still there are great resources to grapple with ethics around the death penalty. In every great faith tradition, we are admonished to compassion, to

welcome the outsider and the stranger, to mercy. These are high ethical norms in most traditions, and some even teache that the poor are the ambassadors of God. But isn't it interesting that at the very heart of the Christian faith is an act of state execution? Isn't it amazing that the very sign and symbol for us that identifies us and our faith and our sanctuaries is a cross? An instrument of state execution? Jesus was an agitator, a homeless wanderer, a vagrant, probably a panhandler, an outlaw. He was laughed out of town by sophisticates, chased out of town by business interests, and he was finally accused by the law and prosecuted, and condemned. He was sentenced to death and executed by a legal process, by the good, established authorities of his own day.

But we're always trying to make this story into something else. We do it sometimes with our translations, but we do it in so many ways as we imagine this story. We're so quick to slap Jesus on a golden cross and put him on an altar between two candlesticks, instead of looking at his limp, bloody, dead body hanging, executed, on a cross, on a landfill, between two other criminals.

The Christian faith takes us straight to death row. There's no way around it. I think it's fair to say that the condemned of our day, and of every age, the executed ones, are a lens for us for our theological, political, social, economic analysis. The function of state execution is central to the Christian faith. We try to get around it by the way we translate our scriptures, stripping Jesus of his historical identity, his political identity, his human story.

Let me give you an alternative translation of our scripture, from I Corinthians 1:17-25:

I was sent to tell you this story, not by using abstract concepts, but telling it simply, so that Jesus' death in the electric chair doesn't lose its full power. Now this conversation about the execution of Jesus the Jew by the state is ridiculous to anybody outside the community of faith. But to those of us who are part of the Beloved Community, it's a source of God's power. The Hebrew sciptures say this: "I'll tear to shreds the scholarly papers of the tenured professors. I'll pull the plug on the ones who have all the answers on their computers. Then what comes of the brightest of scholars? Where does that leave the Ph.D. candidates? What's even left of the sharp debaters?" God has a way of showing us that our best intellectual efforts are still pretty lame, if not absurd. Since by human intellect we haven't been able to understand God, God's wisdom has been to work through this story that seems downright foolish. And through people who hear it, and take it to heart, and live it out.

So while church members are always looking for some amazing proof, and secular people want to see measurable results, here we are, talking about Jesus, a Middle-Eastern Jew who was strapped into the electric chair. Now most church people have a problem with this. For some of them it's flat out insulting; and most secular people just think it's stupid. But for those in the Beloved Community, whether they be church members, or workers, or scholars, of whatever race or class, for those in the Beloved Community, this Jesus, this condemned Palestinian Jewish criminal - this is God's power and God's wisdom. This story is God's power and wisdom for whoever gets the point and joins the movement. And bear in mind that even God's foolishness is wiser than the best of human wisdom. And even God's weakness is stronger than everybody else's strength put together.

Maybe that's not quite how it comes out in Greek classes in the seminaries. I'm not sure, but I want to make the point that the cross has become abstract because it is not what we use to execute people anymore. We use the cross to make gold jewelry. We use it to make ourselves feel at home in sanctuaries and places of worship. We sell it. But the cross was not so attractive to the people following Jesus when they saw him hung up on it in occupied Palestine: no more attractive than the electric chair is to us today. (When the electric chair was invented and first used in New York in the early 1900's, they didn't talk about electrocuting people. They talked about being "Westinghoused!")

What might have happened to church history, if we had consistently referred not to "Christ crucified," but to "Jesus the Jew executed by the state"? It could even give us some change of consciousness about our relationship to the state and how easy that becomes for us. It might even give us some different ways in our days to think about those who are today our candidates for execution by the state. Or maybe it could even help us consider our consent (either by our active support, or by our silence, and either will do quite well) for the right of the state to function as executioner.

Yesterday, April 9th, was the 52nd anniversary of the execution of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Union Seminary claims that great Christian martyr as a part of its cloud of witnesses. It is so important to remember his execution in the Flossenberg Nazi Prison Camp, and to remember that the death penalty functions efficiently as long as we think about it as something we do to other people -- people who are not like us. But Bonhoeffer is one of us, and we honor him. The history of Nazi Germany reminds us that once we set a death machine in motion, we can move the lines, and move the lines, and include more and more offenses to be punished by death. That is exactly what has happened since the reinstitution of the death penalty in this era of U.S. history.

The death penalty is the ultimate expression of a prison system that is carefully designed to control the poor and especially people of color. It undergirds and reinforces our more generalized punitive and hateful treatment of the poor. In these days, homelessness is almost a non-issue. In these days, violence against women is almost ho-hum to us. And this hideous charade of welfare reform is pretty much a done deal. Pressure on illegal immigrants is practically unquestioned. Underlying our growing numbness and inability to act on all of these issues, the death penalty is defining and delineating and sorting out the "bad" poor. We are pummeled with images until we begin to have a general revulsion, even without thinking. We assume the poor are scary; the poor are a potential threat to us; the poor are animals; the poor need to be put away; the poor need to be controlled; the poor probably need to be dead.

We have come to a point where facts matter very little. The realities of human history in our context are subordinate to a kind of coded call-and-response from the political mass market. We hardly know how to even assess the brutalization of the death penalty on every person that it touches and on the soul of our people. There is a famous prosecutor in Eastern North Carolina, Robeson County, who made it into the "Guinness Book of World Records" as the "deadliest D.A." because he won so many death penalty cases. His name is Joe Freeman Britt, and he is now a Superior Court judge. In his days as a prosecutor, he used to teach other district attorneys how to persuade juries to vote for death. He said this in his teaching: "There is a little flicker in each person that says we should preserve human life. It's the job of the prosecutor to extinguish the flame." This is a studied process to create hopelessness.

Our deadly hopelessness and despair have made the poor mere cannon fodder for our aimless, destructive, death-dealing political war games. We know we're on the wrong path, but we seem paralyzed to do anything about it, or even ask the right questions about the nature of our dilemma. So rather than doing hard and tedious work, we continue to spend our resources on a failed system, and go on creating even deeper damage and pain and brokenness. Roosevelt Green had the audacity to find and celebrate the triumph of human hope and dignity and friendship shaped out of the shambles of his life. And he looked back and said, "The problem is that you will kill me and still be hungry for revenge."

We are hungry. And every time we whet our appetites with rituals and institutions of hopelessness that turn our sisters and brothers into objects, and rob them of their dignity and humanity, we create deeper cravings within ourselves. And we consume the bread, as the prophet says, that does not satisfy. We're hungry, but we more often settle for the Wonder Bread of American consumer culture instead of the Bread of Justice, the Bread of Life.

We're thirsty. But we settle for the cheap wine of separation and blame and condemnation, rather than the Cup of Liberation, the Cup of Salvation. From the executed criminal named Jesus we are offered bread that fills our hunger, sets our feet on the justice journey, and welcomes us into the Beloved Community. The cycle of violence and domination is broken. From Golgotha, the Place of the Skull, we are offered food and drink. An instrument of execution becomes for us the deepest sign of love and forgiveness and hope.

REBECCA CONRAD

Murphy Davis is a Partner at the Open Door, and the Director of Southern Prison Ministry in Georgia.

Gruesome, Isn't It?

by Gabriella Boston

Throughout history, elected governments and despotic rulers alike have taken the lives of their own citizens in the name of God, revolution, justice, and/or freedom. For instance, during the French Revolution, in the wake of modern French society, people were executed left and right, simply for belonging to the "wrong" class, or for being engaged in "subversive" activity, meaning that the current leaders felt threatened by them. The trials, if there were any, were phoney and the guilty verdict was as inevitable as death and taxes. The convicts went on to the guillotine, the quick and painless death machine of those days. Thousands of people would gather on Place de la Revolution to witness the executions. It was an animated event. The crowd was waving tricolor flags, cheering, and laughing. This was show time—no doubt about it. The drum roll sounded and one prisoner at a time, hands bound, walked up to the guillotine. For a few seconds the crowd became quiet, but then, as the huge, sharp blade came down on the prisoner's neck, separating head from body, there was an explosion of laughter and screams of excitement. During one period of the French Revolution, the Reign of Terror, over 20,000 people were executed during a six month stretch. Gruesome, isn't it?

Over two hundred years later, as the only country in the western world, the United States of America still uses the death penalty as a form of punishment for severe crimes. Over thirty people are executed every year and that number will probably increase since the Supreme Court recently made it more difficult to appeal. Over 3,000 people are on death row. A majority of these prisoners are poor and about 40 percent of them are African Americans. The South is over-represented in the category of capital cases, with Texas leading the way with close to 500 people on death row.

Methods of execution range from firing squad and hanging to lethal injection and electrocution, and in some states the prisoner has the right to choose. However, the painless death machines of our age aren't always so painless. Take the electric chair, for example. Recent studies show that there is reason to believe that prisoners remain conscious after the electricity is shut off, and that death comes slowly while they're suffering from near-boiling organs and third degree head burns. Gruesome, isn't it?

Most people in this country seem to agree that the death penalty doesn't have a deterring effect on criminals. They don't think that hanging a person in Montana will deter a man in Florida from committing an atrocious crime, like murder or rape. In fact, if capital punishment had a deterring effect, there should be fewer severe crimes in this country, than, for instance, in modern-day France, and that's not the case. Instead, there is more violent crime here than anywhere else in the western world. Now, we don't want to be compared to China or Iraq, but as far as the death penalty goes, we have more in common with these nations than we'd like to think.

So, if the death penalty doesn't help society by deterring criminals from committing heinous crimes, what is its purpose? Vengeance? A sense of closure and comfort for relatives and friends of the victims? This may be part of the purpose, but it turns out that most Americans don't think that vengeance is a legitimate reason to sentence somebody to death. As in France in the late 1700's, and most other societies for that matter, people feel that it's important to express themselves as to what is right and wrong. We'd like to feel that we are working toward a common goal—a better society. No wonder the poor, starving Parisians were happy to see the rich, oppressing nobility get the old ax. They wanted a society where everyone, not just the wealthy, could eat. Never do we feel more united and close-knit as a people as when we face an enemy, and we don't always have to look beyond our country's borders to face a foe. When we look at a convicted murderer or rapist, we see an enemy—an evil person who has hurt someone and potentially could harm our own family and friends. So, united we stand, as moral watchdogs, expressing as clearly as we can that murder and rape are wrong. It is unfortunate, however, that we feel the need to murder in order to get our message across.

Most people agree that the justice system favors some defendants over others—rich over poor and whites over Blacks—that capital punishment seldom deters criminals from committing crimes, that executing a convicted murderer doesn't help families of victims much in their grief, that it is highly probable that innocent people have been executed and that the United States is the only western country that still uses the death penalty. Still, a large majority of Americans advocate the death penalty. With all this in mind, we can only conclude that this is an emotional standpoint, as opposed to a rational one. We may pride ourselves on being the richest and most powerful country in the world, but as a society that rules and judges on emotional grounds, we simply cannot call ourselves civilized.

Gabriella earned her Master of Political Science from the University of Lund in Sweden, and she serves as a Copy Editor of Hospitality.

Angels

I know there are angels,
all over the earth.
They take care of people,
children since birth.

From Mother Teresa,
they are very alive.
Those four loving angels,
of Nine Ninety Five.

- Ed Potts

[Editor's note: A tribute, in honor of Mother Teresa, to the Missionary of Charities sisters who run a home for women with AIDS near the Open Door (995 St. Charles Ave.)]

"Walking the Way"

(continued from page 2)

youngest. And do not look...nor speak...nor cry...nor remember the mountains.

It would not be a beautiful song. And so they call it the Trail of Tears.

[pp.40-42, modified from original for inclusive language or gender change]

III. The Walk to Emmaus (Luke 24:13ff.)

In the Easter story of the Road to Emmaus, we meet the doubly oppressed. The disciples were Jews under the calloused thumb of the Romans. And they were people of The Way. They had believed in Jesus and his movement for liberation and redemption. Everything had been taken from them. They were sad, depressed, defeated and walking the way to Emmaus – a seven mile trek. This man and woman were dealing with their grief and loss by remembering and then sharing the story of Jesus with a third person, a stranger who had joined them. They had hoped for newness of life. Now the power of death called for by the rich and religious and sanctioned by the state and powerful had dashed God's promises.

The stranger, knowing that life is a journey of suffering and a question of hermeneutics, began to do an action-reflection piece with the forlorn disciples. "Is it not necessary for the messiah (the church, the Cherokees, the homeless, the prisoner, the advocate) to suffer?" he asked. Then the stranger went to the Exodus Story and told of the suffering struggles it took to come out of Egyptland and the long way to walk across the desert. He continued with tales of Isaiah and Jeremiah, told of Hosea and Amos, mentioned fiery women prophets and courageous children, the prophetic texts of which were lost when the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD – not unlike the destruction of New Echota, the Cherokee capital, in 1838. But each story, from Moses to Jesus the Jew condemned by the state, told of walking the way into suffering so that others might have a home and justice.

Then the stranger got ready to depart. The disciples said, "No, stay with us; the day is getting dark." He came into the home and he ate with them. He took the bread, gave thanks, and shared it with his hosts. Suddenly, they recognized him and he disappeared.

Walking the Way

Walking the way: this is our task. When we respond to the cry of the poor, "Stay with us; the day is getting dark;" or "Eat with us, the time for supper is at hand"—then we will recognize him, and suddenly he will disappear.

We will be injured by those who are hungry for gold, lusting for land. There is not much we can do to stop the gold rush or break down the plantation and the removal system. But we will:

Invite the hungry into the Butler Street Church basement
We will feed and shower hundreds
in our dining room and our shower room
We will suffer and share with the poor and Native American and African American and Women and Children and those white men who have learned of their poverty and have joined walking the way.
We will tell the stories of the Cherokees and ask their haunting question: "How can a good country be built on stolen land?"
We will visit Shaky who is dying at Grady Hospital.
We will speak and play and watch as Dennis tilts and folds and almost falls off the concrete steps soon to be surround by steel bars and brass locks.
We will tell the tale of Moses, the stories of the prophets, the amazing grace of Jesus the Jew, and

We will come to table after a long and tiring time
walking the way
sharing the bread
passing the cup
giving our lives

Ed Loring is a Partner at the Open Door Community.

"Gloria Bromell-Tinubu"

(continued from page 7)

not love yourself, then you need to stop so you can love your neighbor. If you keep doing what you've been doing, you're going to keep getting what you've got. If you want to change, then you've got to make some conscious decisions to stop accepting the way things are. You've got to fully love yourself so that you can love other folk. That's the only way we can move forward.

That's what Dr. King was talking about when he said we should be accepted for the content of our character, not the color of our skin. The Creator made a difference so that we could know what it means to love our individual and collective selves. In this city, we've got to deal with loving our neighbor. If we can do this, we will see a difference in our community and a change in our kids. In even the poorest neighborhoods, where adults engage in the lives of kids and provide support, crime rates are next to nil. Even though the kids are poor, they have people who love them, support them, and are family for them. That's what we have to be—family. We've got to provide safe havens for our kids and for the adults who will be present in their lives.

I believe that every human being should be afforded the basic necessities of life. That should be a guarantee. I don't care whether you work or not. You're a human being—period! Basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing should be provided for anybody. That is evidence of a civilized society! We're backing away from that. We do more for animals. You know, we have humane societies for animals. We make sure that animals aren't abused, aren't homeless roaming the streets! But we look at other human beings, and we say, "Lock 'em up! Put 'em in jail because we don't want to see them." Homelessness insults our humanity. People who favor the Urban Camping Ordinance are really saying, "Homelessness is too painful to see." They don't realize it, but what they're saying is, "We can't stand to see this."

The spirit that needs to be waked up in them is the one that feels that pain, that knows homelessness is insulting to our collective humanity. We could end homelessness tomorrow, but to do so, we've got to line up our ability with our willingness. We are able; but people have just not been willing. It's that simple. You don't need a Ph.D.

Elizabeth Dede and Adolphus Victrum are Partners at the Open Door Community.

WE ARE OPEN. . .

Monday through Saturday: telephones are answered from 9:00am until noon, from 2:00 until 6:00pm, and from 7:00 until 8:30pm. The building is open from 9:00am until 8:30pm those days (Both phone and door are not answered during our noon prayers and lunch break from 12:30 until 2:00). Please call in advance if you need to arrange to come at other times. **On Sunday we are open from 7:00am until noon.** Sunday afternoon our door is answered until 5:00pm.

* * *

OUR MINISTRY. . .

SOUP KITCHEN: Wednesday-Saturday, 11am-12 noon
SUNDAY BREAKFAST: Sunday morning at 910, 7:15am
BUTLER ST. CME BREAKFAST: Monday-Friday, 7:15am
SHOWERS & CHANGE OF CLOTHES: Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, 2-4pm (Be sure to call; schedule varies)
USE OF PHONE: Monday-Saturday, 9am-noon, 2:00pm-5pm
CLARIFICATION MEETINGS: Alternate Tuesdays, 7:30-9p.m.
WEEKEND RETREATS: Four times each year (for our household and volunteers/supporters), next retreat is our Advent retreat, December 5 - 7.

Our Hospitality Ministries include: visitation and letter-writing to prisoners, anti-death penalty advocacy, advocacy for the homeless, daily worship and weekly Eucharist.

If you have found Hospitality helpful and would like to know more about the Open Door Community, please fill out, clip and send this coupon to **The Open Door Community * 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE * Atlanta, GA 30306-4212.**

____ Please ADD to the Hospitality mailing list.

____ Please accept my tax deductible donation to the Open Door Community.

____ I'm interested in volunteering. Please give me more information.

____ I would like to explore a six to twelve-month commitment as a Resident Volunteer at the Open Door. Please send more information.

Name_____

Address_____

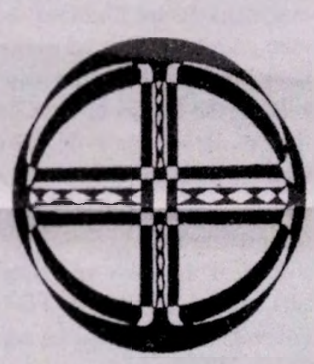
City_____ St___ Zip_____

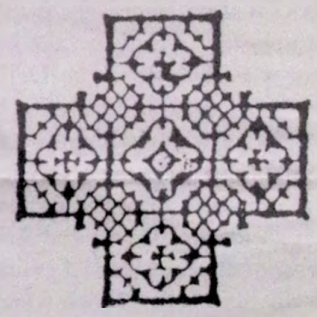
Phone_____

Open Door Community Worship

We gather for worship and Eucharist on Sunday evenings followed by supper together.
Please join us!

October 5	Open Door Worship with the Jubilee Community, Comer, Georgia *No Worship at 910*
October 12	5 p.m. Worship at 910; Joyce Hollyday, preaching Following supper together, Joyce will sign copies of her latest book, Then Shall Your Light Rise: Spiritual Formation and Social Witness
October 19	5 p.m. Worship at 910
October 26	5 p.m. Worship at 910





RITA CORBIN

Are You Moving?

Bulk rate mail is not forwarded by the U.S. Postal Service. Send Hospitality, 910 Ponce de Leon Ave., NE, Atlanta, GA, 30306-4212, your new mailing address as soon as you know it. Please enclose the mailing label from your most recent issue.

Thank you!

Open Door Community Needs

JEANS
T-Shirts
Men's Work Shirts
Quick Grits
Carpeting
Cheese
Coffee
Multi-Vitamins
MARTA Tokens
Postage Stamps
Underwear for Men
Men's Shoes (all sizes)

Sandwiches
Chests of Drawers
Box Springs and Mattresses for Single Beds
Table and Floor Lamps
Lightweight, Folding Ping Pong Table
Soup Kitchen Volunteers*
Butler St. Breakfast Volunteers*

Disposable Razors
Women's Underwear
Toothbrushes
Deodorant
Vaseline
Towels
Socks
Shampoo
Men's Belts
Washcloths

* *contact our Volunteer Coordinator, Brenda Smith at 404-874-9652*

From 11am til 1:30pm, Monday through Saturday, our attention is focused on serving the soup kitchen and household lunch. As much as we appreciate your coming, this is a difficult time for us to receive donations. When you can come before 11 or after 1:30, it would be helpful. THANK YOU!