



Yoichi Okamoto | Lyndon B. Johnson Library

August 6, 1965, the signing of the Voting Rights Act.

October / November 2025

Is Neo-Slavery Dead?

Nibs Stroupe

A Cry From the North

Joesph B. Ingle

Scandalous Love

A Poem by J. Stephen Rhodes

Witness Awarded

Georgia ACLU

Atlanta Legal Action has Broad Implications for the Nation's Unhoused

Kevin Moran

The Legacy and Witness of Murphy Davis

A Review of *A Bag of Snakes*

Cathy Harmon-Christian

Poem for South African Women

June Jordan

Letters

Prayer for Hearts of Gratitude

Lee Carroll

Is Neo-Slavery Dead?

By Nibs Stroupe

This summer marked the 60th anniversary of the end of neo-slavery in the United States. On August 6, 1965, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Voting Rights Act, which effectively ended neo-slavery in the USA. This law ratified the right to vote expressed in the 14th and 15th Amendments, and it provided for federal oversight of all elections and required federal preclearance for all changes in voting rights laws, especially in the South. The political gymnastics that were performed recently in the Texas legislature gerrymandering would have been greatly slowed down by the original wording of the Voting Rights Act, but some of its provisions were struck down by the current United States Supreme Court (SCOTUS) in 2012 and 2021.

And, yes, the most litigated amendment to the Constitution is the 14th Amendment, which basically does four things: guarantees citizenship to anyone born or naturalized in the U.S. (Trump is litigating that now), forbids states from interfering with the citizenship rights guaranteed by the Constitution, provides for due process under the law and provides for equal protection of all citizens under the law. With all of this work accomplished in the 14th Amendment, it is easy to see why it is the most litigated amendment of all in the Constitution. It was ratified on July 9, 1868.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 grew out of the 14th Amendment, and it sought to protect the voting rights of all citizens. In that sense, it ended neo-slavery in the USA, especially in the South. I say “neo-slavery” because that is a much more accurate description of life in the South from 1875-1965 than “Jim Crow.” The term “Jim Crow” mitigates the horror that Black people experienced growing up in the white-dominated South, and “neo-slavery” should replace it in the history books as a description of race history in that period. To use the term “Jim Crow” as a description of this period is to diminish the reality of the horrible repression and oppression of those years.

I learned this term from Doug Blackmon’s fine book *Slavery by Another Name* (which won the Pulitzer Prize in 2009), in which he argues that neo-slavery ended in 1946 at the end of World War II. I remember Doug coming to Oakhurst to talk with our Supper Club about his book, and he made a very powerful presentation about his thesis that the years 1875-1945 were just “slavery by another name,” hence the title of his book. Although I learned a lot from his book, I do have one disagreement with his timetable on “neo-slavery.” From my experience growing up in the

neo-slavery South from 1946-1964, the power of neo-slavery was still so strong in those years that “neo-slavery” should remain as the description for the years up to 1965, not 1946.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 had a profound effect on life in the South, as evidenced by the rapid increase of Black people elected to office. It had a long and difficult history, and its

The term “Jim Crow” mitigates the horror that Black people experienced growing up in the white-dominated South, and “neo-slavery” should replace it in the history books as a description of race history in that period.

importance was shown in the deep resistance of Southern white Democrats leading up to its passage. Perhaps only a skilled white Southern politician like President Lyndon Johnson could get it passed, and even he was reluctant to bring it to the floor of the Senate, where it originated. The civil rights marches from Selma to Montgomery changed the trajectory of that arc bending toward

justice. The march on March 7, 1965, that ended in police violence at the Edmund Pettus Bridge exploded into the national consciousness. (See Ava DuVernay’s movie “Selma” for more background on this.) A second march on March 21 drew great participation, and President Johnson scheduled the bill for a vote in the Senate, where his arm-twisting overcame a filibuster. There is a great photo of Johnson corralling his longtime friend Sen. Richard Russell of Georgia, seeking to get his vote for the bill. Johnson was not successful with Russell, but he was successful with

enough Senators that the bill passed and was sent to the House, where it passed overwhelmingly. As Johnson noted, his embrace of the Voting Rights Act meant one other great change in the South — a switch of Southern white voters from the Democratic party to the Republican party.

The Voting Rights Act was one of the signal achievements of the Civil Rights movement and of American history. Its effect was so deep and powerful that the resistance has been great since its passage, and indeed, SCOTUS has significantly weakened it over the last decade, seeking to allow white people to limit voting rights by people of color as severely as possible. The Trumpster movement is built on this white resistance to the idea that “all people are created equal,” and his push to get Texas to gerrymander



Mike Luckovich | AJC

even further before the 2026 midterm elections was an indication that he wants to hold the white majority in the House in order to further return us to a time of white supremacy and maybe even neo-slavery. As the history on the Voting Rights Act shows us, this repressive and oppressive stream runs deeply in us and through us.

For 40 years, the end of neo-slavery looked to be holding. The Voting Rights Act (VRA) had strong support on both sides of the political aisle. The “preclearance” clause of the VRA had to be renewed every five years, just in case the racism of the white South had suddenly disappeared. It was renewed every 5 years, and indeed, in 2006 under a Republican-led Congress with Republican President George W. Bush, the VRA was extended for 25 years. It looked good for the advancement of voting rights for all citizens.

In 2005, however, President George W. Bush appointed John Roberts to be the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, replacing the retiring William Rehnquist. One of Roberts’ specific goals was to strike down the VRA because he felt that it was unconstitutional, especially the “preclearance” clause. This goal of Roberts’ came despite the fact that SCOTUS had ruled in favor of the VRA. The election of Barack Obama as President in 2008 scared the clothes off of many white people in the country. As valuable and powerful as it was to many of us, to many people classified as “white,” it was an abomination. Remember Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell saying that the main goal of Republicans was to deny Barack

So, let’s be clear here — the purpose of MAGA and SCOTUS at this point is to get back as closely as possible to the pre-1965 days, when white supremacy had enough strength to make neo-slavery viable again.

Obama a second term as President? That was not just a political statement. It also welled up from that deep reservoir of white supremacy that courses through American history. Then, in 2010, the Tea Party emerged in opposition to Obama and racial equity, and by the middle of the decade, it had morphed into MAGA, with Donald Trump as its standard bearer.

In 2012, the perfect case for Roberts came along. Shelby County, Alabama (not far from Birmingham), sued in federal court to strike down the preclearance clause of the VRA, indicating that with the election of a Black president, that clause was no longer needed. The federal judge who heard the case upheld the VRA, as did the federal appellate court, but then Shelby County appealed

to SCOTUS. In 2012, SCOTUS agreed to hear the case. Roberts and his buddies on the court (Scalia, Thomas, Alito and Anthony Kennedy) argued against the 2006 action of Congress to renew the VRA for 25 years. They railed against the “preclearance” clause, especially because it was aimed only at particular states that had demonstrated racial bias in the past in their suppression of voting rights. To no one’s surprise but to the chagrin of many of us, SCOTUS overturned the preclearance clause of VRA but left the rest of the VRA intact.

That decision has caused many problems for voting rights in the country. The current shenanigans of the Texas legislature would be virtually impossible with the “preclearance” clause still intact. All of the voter purges in Georgia and other states would not be possible. The strict laws on who can vote when and even on voter IDs would not be possible.

So, let’s be clear here — the purpose of MAGA and SCOTUS at this point is to get back as closely as possible to the pre-1965 days, when white supremacy had enough strength to make neo-slavery viable again. SCOTUS has agreed to take another case for its next term: *Louisiana v. Chais*, in which redistricting most Black voters into just one district (out of 6 districts) is in dispute. Since SCOTUS ruled in 2019 that gerrymandering and redistricting is a legitimate political process, it seems clear that another pillar of the VRA will likely be struck down. If that happens, the VRA is dead, and neo-slavery may be on the way back.

How can we prevent this? Well, the answer is both simple and complex: register to vote, get others registered to vote, and then VOTE while we still can. In the 2024 Presidential election won by Donald Trump over Kamala Harris, TEN MILLION people who voted Democratic in the 2020 election did not vote. Two million of those may have voted for Trump in 2024, but there were eight million other voters who stayed home. That staying home clearly cost Harris the presidency and gave us the disaster that is the Trumpster. If we do that again in 2026, democracy is lost and neo-slavery is back. So, you know the answer. Please re-train yourself to talk about “neo-slavery” rather than “Jim Crow.” And take it out into the streets — speak up and act out. ✦

Nibs Stroupe is a longtime friend of the Open Door, retired pastor and author of Deeper Waters: Sermons for a New Vision and She Made a Way: Mother and Me in a Deep South World. 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 is managing editor of Hospitality. He writes a weekly blog at www.nibsnotes.blogspot.com. (nibs.stroupe@gmail.com)



David Sachs | SEIU

A rally at the United States Supreme Court in 2013 when the justices were hearing arguments on the Voting Rights Act.

A Cry from the North

By Joseph B. Ingle

In the eighth century B.C.E., the Northern Kingdom of Israel reached its ultimate power and wealth. The prophet Amos challenged King Jeroboam II and the elite because they forsook the way of God and became enamored with themselves.

*... (They) sell the righteous for silver
and the needy for a pair of shoes —
They that trample the head of the poor
in the dust of the earth,
And turn aside the way of the afflicted.
— Amos 2:6,7; cf. 5:11*

Abraham Joshua Heschel observes about this prophecy:

When Amos appeared in the North there was pride (6:13-14), plenty, and splendor in the land, and elegance in the cities, and might in the palaces. The rich had their summer and winter palaces adorned with costly ivory (3:15), gorgeous couches with damask pillows (3:12) on which they reclined at their sumptuous feasts. They planted pleasant vineyards and anointed themselves with precious oils (6:4-6; 5:11); their women, compared by Amos to the fat cows of Bashan, were addicted to wine (4:1). At the same time there was no justice in the land (3:10) ... and the judges were corrupt. (5:12)

Israel's actions led to God's judgement:

*Therefore thus says the Lord:
Your wife shall be a harlot in the city
And your sons and daughters
shall fall by the sword,
And your land
shall be parceled out by line;
You yourself
shall die in an unclean land...
— Amos 7:14-17*

These words come to mind because they capture the way God is forsaken in our present time and there are consequences for such apostasy. The United States government has enacted legislation that will oppress the poor, transfer three trillion

dollars to the wealthy, remove health care for thousands and imprison, due to the color of their skin, thousands seeking refuge in this country.

The United States of America through its government is engaged in a national apostasy. The incredible transfer of wealth to the rich, the creation of an imprisonment system for people of color seeking asylum, the decimation of Medicaid in the name of making the transfer of wealth fiscally possible, when it is merely an excuse for “trampling the head of the poor” — all summon the spirit of Amos to condemn this moral obscenity. “Hate evil and love good” (5:15) is the cry to us from the Lord through Amos.



Russell Vought

Chip Somodeville | Getty

There are two primary implementors of this assault on those Jesus termed “the least of these, my brothers and sisters”: Russell Vought, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget and Stephen Miller, the deputy chief of staff for policy and homeland security adviser to President

The United States government has enacted legislation that will oppress the poor, transfer three trillion dollars to the wealthy, remove health care for thousands and imprison, due to the color of their skin, thousands seeking refuge in this country.

Trump. Vought, through his previous work at the Heritage Foundation, led the effort to create Project 2025, the detailed decimation of the federal government, which includes removing 11,000,000 people from health care by 2034. Miller, having served previously in the initial Trump administration, mastered the bureaucratic ropes in order to implement a racially biased effort

in the name of opposing immigration. Since Mr. Vought has published his goals in Project 2025, and we can see how it is implemented in the recently enacted budget bill, we turn to Stephen Miller to examine his efforts.



Stephen Miller

Mandel Ngan | Getty

As a high school student, Miller wrote articles that expressed doubt about the intelligence of Mexican-Americans and railed against teaching English as a second language and making signage in his high school bi-lingual. He was influenced by Rush Limbaugh, a talk radio host who proclaimed he was not interested in being factual but was providing “entertainment.” One might dismiss these youthful inclinations if they were not confirmed and elaborated in his adult correspondence. In emails to Breitbart News he commended the website AmRen, which advocates white supremacy, and VDARE, which is a white nationalist site. Additionally, he commended The Camp of the Saints, a French

novel that describes how immigrants take over France and ruin it. All of this was clear before his first stint in the White House with Donald Trump in 2017.

After leaving the White House when Trump was voted out of office, Miller stated he wished to eradicate “anti-white racism.” He established the America First legal organization to achieve that goal. When

he returned to the White House at age 39 in 2025 via Trump's election, he became a senior policy adviser. The *New York Times* described his zeal in implementing his campaign against "anti-white racism." "... this past May, Mr. Miller, still livid and now the White House deputy chief of staff, paid a visit to the Washington headquarters of Immigration and Customs Enforcement,

Once a people are objectified, literally turned into non-human objects for control, anything may be done. Six million Jews, thousands of brown skinned immigrants, the process is the same.

where he berated officials for not deporting nearly enough immigrants. He told the officials that rather than develop target lists of gang members and violent criminals, they should just go to Home Depots, where day laborers are hired, or to 7-Eleven convenience stores and arrest the undocumented immigrants they find there."

As a result of this meeting and subsequent pressure, "ICE greatly stepped up its enforcement operations, raiding restaurants, farms and work sites across the country, with arrests sometimes climbing to more than 2,000 a day." (NYT July 13, 2025, Jason Zengerle) Obviously, with arrests at such a high rate, the question loomed large as to where to put the people of color who have been swept up by ICE. Mr. Miller and Mr. Vought designed a solution to that problem. Under the recently passed budget bill, ICE will have a budget larger than any other federal law enforcement agency. It will include 45 billion dollars for prisons for immigrants, over 100,000 people. ICE is currently holding 58,000 people in custody.

This unprecedented targeting and removal of people guilty of no crime is reminiscent of another place and time. It was a setting that provided for "the expulsion of Jews from the living space of the German people" and "from every sphere of life of the German people." The leader of this group was Richard Heydrich, a 38-year-old Catholic, who convened the

Wannsee conference to eliminate the Jews in Europe. One may object that it is not fair to compare the Duke University educated Miller with the classically trained violinist and competitive fencer, Heydrich. Yet each hailed from middle class families, one Jewish and one Catholic. Each brimmed with ruthless ambition. And each had a targeted people to control.

It is the process of identifying, arresting, imprisoning and, if possible, terminating the specified groups, that unites the two men. The "othering" of a people,



Kevin Necessary

be they Jewish or immigrants and turning them into objects, enables these men to do what they wish to the victims. Once a people are objectified, literally turned into non-human objects for control, anything may be done. Six million Jews, thousands of brown skinned immigrants, the process is the same. Heydrich and Miller are the apostles of "white makes right."

One may think that Stephen Miller's Jewishness prevents such an analysis of his actions. I think not. Stephen Miller is a Netanyahu Jew. This is a Jew who, just like the prime minister of Israel, can turn a people into objects for political gain. Whether it be Netanyahu with the Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, or Miller with

immigrants, each group is rendered non-human so inhumane things can be done to them.

The actions of Stephen Miller summon the spirit of Amos:

*Even though you offer Me
your burnt offerings
and cereal offerings,
I will not accept them,
And the peace offerings
of your fatted beasts
I will not look upon.
Take away from Me
the noise of your songs;
To the melody of your harps
I will not listen.
But let justice well up as waters
And righteousness as a mighty stream.
— Amos 5:22-24*

It is time to recall the beginning of our spiritual journey and act upon it: "You shall not oppress a ger (alien, sojourner, stranger), for you know the feeling of a ger having yourselves been gerim in the land of Egypt.

— Exodus 23:9

Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the ger (stranger) or the poor.

— Zechariah 7:10 ✦

A North Carolina native, Joe Ingle left the South after college and moved to East Harlem to join the E. Harlem Urban Year program. He spent his senior year at Union Theological Seminary visiting prisoners in the Bronx House of Detention. Upon graduation and ordination in the United Church of Christ, he came to Nashville. Ingle and others founded the Southern Coalition on Jails and Prison to work against mass incarceration and the death penalty. Too Close to the Flame: With the Condemned inside the Southern Killing Machine, is his memoir.



groovezero | Redbubble

Scandalous Love

“He (God) really likes the little vermin, and sets an absurd value on the distinctiveness of every one of them.” (from The Screwtape Letters by C. S. Lewis)

It’s bad enough that the Divine Parent listens
to the mumble of ill-considered prayers,
and delights even in
the whining for rescue peppered with smugness.

Worse still that the Almighty invites
ten-bedroom housers and multi-yacht owners
to sink to their knees,
as well as all, too, who wish they were in their shoes.

But, that the Creator of every good that ever was and will be
leaves home to go in search of the masked abductors,
the camp attendants, and the perfectors of the great lie —

Is this too much to bear, too much to carry,
as you trudge toward Golgotha?

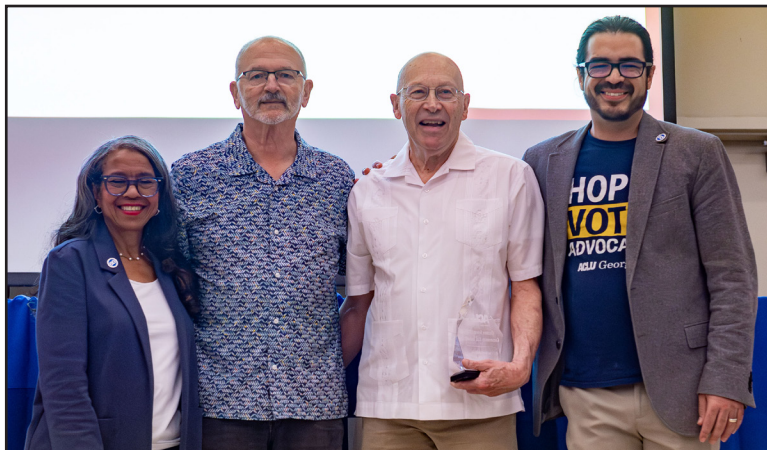
— J. Stephen Rhodes

Steve Rhodes is a poet, scholar and essayist who lives in Charleston, South Carolina. His collection of poems, The Time I Didn’t Know What to Do Next, is available from bookstores and Amazon. (www.jstephenrhodes.org)

Witness Awarded

On Saturday, September 13, The Oconee Street UMC Community Bail Initiative was recognized at the Georgia ACLU’s annual membership meeting in Atlanta. The bail fund, administered by Steve Williams and John Cole Vodicka in Athens, Georgia, regularly posts small cash bonds for indigent prisoners unable to gain their pretrial liberty.

The ACLU award acknowledged Steve and John for their “Commitment to Civil Liberties.” John and Steve are also part of a lawsuit challenging Georgia’s 2024 law that seeks to limit the bail work of non-profit organizations, including churches. That law is currently on hold after a federal judge found that it was unconstitutional. The state appealed to the Eleventh Circuit, and we are awaiting that decision.



Georgia ACLU

*ACLU executive director Andrea Young, John Cole Vodicka, Steve Williams
and Andres Lopez-Delgado, one of the attorneys in the bail lawsuit.*

Atlanta Legal Action has Broad Implications for the Nation's Unhoused

By Kevin Moran

The family of Cornelius Taylor, fatally injured when his tent was crushed by a bulldozer during an Atlanta city sweep, has filed a lawsuit against the city in Fulton County State Court. According to attorney Mawuli Davis, this legal action aims to challenge government policies concerning unhoused individuals — not just in Atlanta, but across Georgia and the United States. The lawyers described the lawsuit as a call for city leaders to treat homeless residents with respect and dignity, rather than attempting to erase their presence through swift encampment clearings. Dr. King admonished us in his 1956 sermon “On Being a Good Neighbor” that our neighbor is “anyone who lies in need by life’s roadside.” Indeed, Cornelius Taylor was our neighbor.

The lawsuit, filed by Cornelius Taylor’s sister and son, alleges that city workers failed to check for occupants before using a bulldozer to clear tents on January 16, resulting in the death of Mr. Taylor, aged 46. The encampment was cleared ahead of the Martin Luther King Jr holiday. It was located only a block from Ebenezer Baptist Church and the MLK Center. The complaint asserts that city officials wanted the area clear for dignitaries and media, prioritizing appearances over safety — a superficial solution to a systemic failure.

Attorney Harold Spence, who drafted the lawsuit, emphasized: “A tent that was occupied by a human being was crushed by this bulldozer. That’s obviously wrong. Nobody looked inside the tent, and if someone had taken 10 seconds to do so, this tragedy could have been averted. And if you don’t know what’s inside, you don’t crush it.”

Under Georgia law, municipal corporations and their officials can be held liable for negligent or improper performance of



Miguel Martinez | AJC

Family and friends escort Cornelius Taylor's remains through the streets of Atlanta on February 3, 2025.

ministerial duties. The Defendants failed to perform essential responsibilities, which directly resulted in the death of Mr. Cornelius Taylor. As a result, the suit contends that Atlanta has waived its sovereign immunity in connection with this incident. The law specifies that for neglect in performing ministerial duties, a municipality is as liable for damages as any individual or private company.

Maintaining streets and sidewalks in a safe condition is a municipal function. On January 16, 2025, in clearing the homeless encampment on Old Wheat Street, the city exposed tent occupants to injury or death by failing to ensure tents were unoccupied before proceeding. A simple check, taking mere seconds, would have prevented Mr. Taylor’s tragic death. The City of Atlanta is also charged with negligent supervision of the employee operating the bulldozer. The city’s failure to properly supervise staff responsible for checking tents for human occupancy before clearing them constitutes a breach of ministerial duty. This failure is identified as the cause of Mr. Taylor’s death. For this violation, the city is legally accountable.

Ahead of the FIFA World Cup in 2026, Atlanta has resumed clearing encampments with the stated goal of eliminating homelessness in the downtown area in preparation for the eight World Cup games next summer. Before the 1996 Olympics, nine thousand unhoused individuals were arrested and given a one-way, out-of-town

bus ticket. Similar harsh measures will likely be repeated. These efforts to remove homeless residents from Atlanta’s streets will result in further suffering for the vulnerable and marginalized. “True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it understands that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring,” Dr. King said in “Beyond Vietnam.” Charity is not a substitute for justice.

Justice for Cornelius Taylor is a test of our discipleship. We give thanks for this lawsuit, which will seek to provide some kernel of justice for the Taylor family, and we will keep you updated on the progress of the suit. ✦

Notes:

Mawuli Mel Davis is a founding partner of Davis Bozeman Johnson Law and leads its civil rights division. He has provided legal support to activists, including myself, in movements such as Occupy, Moral Mondays and Black Lives Matter. Davis graduated from the United States Naval Academy and Georgia State University College of Law, and has been honored by the Atlanta NAACP, ACLU, Urban League and Southern Center for Human Rights.

Harold W. Spence, a partner at Davis Bozeman Johnson, advocates justice on behalf of clients who have suffered injuries or rights violations. Spence developed the municipal duty strategy underpinning this lawsuit. He graduated magna cum laude from Morehouse College and holds a JD from Rutgers University.

Kevin Moran is a member of the Justice for Cornelius Taylor Coalition and a homeless advocate. He volunteered at the Open Door and serves on the Peacemaking and Justice Committee at Oakhurst Presbyterian Church. Kevin is affiliated with the Coalition for the People’s Agenda and the Beacon Hill Black Alliance for Human Rights. (moran.kevinmoran.kevin@gmail.com)

The Legacy and Witness of Murphy Davis

A Review of *A Bag of Snakes*

By Cathy Harmon-Christian

Many of us who read *Hospitality* or who lived and volunteered at the Open Door Community are familiar with some of our unhoused neighbors. Less so are we familiar or proximate to those who live on death row. *A Bag of Snakes: Selected Writings on Prison and the Death Penalty*, by Murphy Davis and Eduard Loring and edited by Barry Lee Burnside, helps to rectify that lack of proximity and also to show the intersections of the streets and prison.

A Bag of Snakes is a beautiful tribute to the work and legacy of the Rev. Murphy Davis (1948-2020) who had been gathering resources for a book on the death penalty prior to her death. Her work was carried on by many committed friends, “all of whom want to end the death penalty and prison slavery in this land of ours.” (p.1)

We discover Murphy had found the title in this memory:

Dan Berrigan came to visit us and our friends on Georgia’s death row, and he mentioned a metaphor he used in his writing and speaking: “Trying to tell people the truth about prison is like trying to hand them a bag of snakes. Nobody wants it, and it seems like a tacky thing to do to nice people — especially people you like. It’s just simply no fun — we don’t want to touch it or look into the bag. We’d rather settle for the political line.” (p. vi)

Of the 77 people executed in Georgia since 1976, much of what is shared publicly are the details of the crime for which the person was convicted and executed, along with the prurient details of their last meal. It is intentional dehumanization corroborated often by the media.

I personally like snakes and am eager to know the truth about prison and death row, so I was perfectly happy to receive this bag of snakes, but I digress. I was gifted with a copy of this book by Ed and David at the Open Door Community. Little did we know, *A Bag of Snakes* turned out to be the central text in the work I was about to do.

A Bag of Snakes Selected Writings on Prisons and the Death Penalty

By **Murphy Davis** and **Eduard Loring**
Edited by **Barry Lee Burnside**

Open Door Press
April 2024

In May 2024, I began researching and writing *The Re-Membering Project*, something that came out of my work to end the death penalty in Georgia. Of the 77 people executed in Georgia since 1976, much of what is shared publicly are the details of the crime for which the person was convicted and executed, along with the prurient details of their last meal. It is intentional dehumanization corroborated often by the media. But I wanted to know who “the executed” were — as a person, as a family member, a co-worker, a human being. To re-member they were a human being before they became a dehumanized monster.

It felt important to share a personal story, a photo, something about their legal case including mitigating factors that spoke to their humanity. But where would I find this information? I had many conversations across a network of people, but much of the details were sparse. It was simply hard and traumatizing to remember and go over the lives of the people the state kills in our name. I spent a week at the Emory University archives in Atlanta, poring through all 80 boxes in the Open Door collection. I was seeking to gather anything I could that

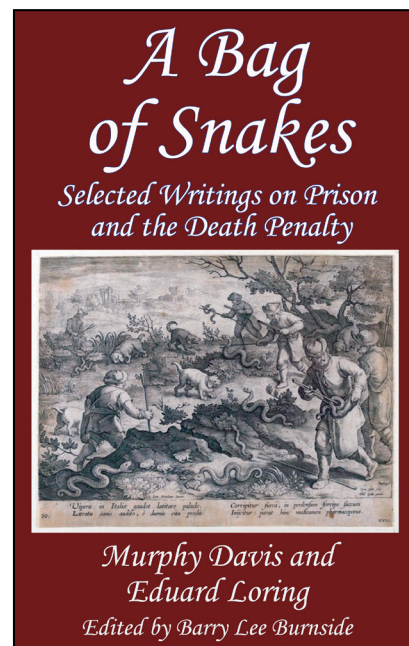
would shed light on the bigger life story of the condemned and executed in Georgia, as well as the system that did this. But by far the greatest resource I’ve found is *A Bag of Snakes*. If you looked at my copy, you’d see not only corners bent down and bits of paper stuck here, there and everywhere, but annotations across many a page.

When a person is condemned or

executed, the State has an interest in dis-membering them from our society. What Davis and Loring do in the pages of their book is re-member and tell a fuller story of the neighbors and friends they knew personally across months, years and even decades as they shared life and love and waited for each person’s capital punishment to be enacted. For example,

I knew Warren [McCleskey] over the period of those years, and I am a grateful witness to the fact that he was a stronger and more vibrant human being all the way toward his death than he had been earlier. On the day before his death he literally glowed with inner peace as he comforted the many friends and family members grieving around him. (p. 189)

Barry Burnside has gathered a rich collection of published writings of both Loring and Davis from 1982-2020 on “the criminal control system,” prison slavery, women and families, visiting, the death penalty and victims. He has also included unpublished notes for public addresses, personal commentary on Scripture and other “marginalia” of the Reverend Davis. In the second edition, I hope Burnside will include an index of names and places for



easy access for researchers like myself, or those looking up someone who is mentioned across several sections of the book.

One of my favorite parts is a passage that speaks not only to the work to end the death penalty but to the human response to violence and trauma:

We need to learn to distinguish between a normal emotional response to being a victim and the posture that we take as a people of a body politic.

Anyone who has been victimized or has spent time talking with victims of a violent crime knows that revenge is a very natural response in the grief process. 'Oh, what would I do if I could get my hands on him/her?'

On the other hand, any pastor, counselor, or psychologist knows that for the victim to find healing and become a survivor, a step must be taken beyond a fixation on revenge. In one way or another, each person must make peace with what has happened, pick up the pieces of life and go on. Revenge eventually devours us, destroys relationships and turns our hearts to stone. (p. 256)

A Bag of Snakes is meant to be read for the proximity to people we don't ordinarily know, but also for the wisdom it imparts. Thank you, Murphy and Ed, and all who contributed to it, for this important gift. If you have not read this powerful book, contact The Open Door and get your copy! ✦

M. Cathy Harmon-Christian, Ph.D., is Public Policy Director of the Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD) and a long-term advocate for ending capital punishment. (mcharmonchristian@icloud.com)



Brian Kavanagh

Poem for South African Women

In Commemoration of the 40,000 women and children who, August 9, 1956, presented themselves in bodily protest against the "dompass" in the capital of apartheid. Presented at The United Nations, August 9, 1978.

Our own shadows disappear as the feet of thousands
by the tens of thousands pound the fallow land
into new dust that
rising like a marvelous pollen will be
fertile
even as the first woman whispering
imagination to the trees around her made
for righteous fruit
from such deliberate defense of life
as no other still
will claim inferior to any other safety
in the world

The whispers too they
intimate to the inmost ear of every spirit
now aroused they
carousing in ferocious affirmation
of all peaceable and loving amplitude
sound a certainly unbounded heat
from a baptismal smoke where yes
there will be fire

And the babies cease alarm as mothers
raising arms
and heart high as the stars so far unseen
nevertheless hurl into the universe
a moving force
irreversible as light years
traveling to the open
eye

And who will join this standing up
and the ones who stood without sweet company
will sing and sing
back into the mountains and
if necessary
even under the sea

we are the ones we have been waiting for

— June Jordan

June Jordan (1936–2002) was a Black American poet, activist, journalist, and educator who became a significant voice in the civil rights, feminist, antiwar, and LGBTQ movements. Born in Harlem, she was known for her prolific writing, which spanned poetry, essays, children's books, and plays, and was characterized by its directness, accessibility, and ability to connect personal experiences with political and social issues. Jordan also founded the influential Poetry for the People program at UC Berkeley, which trained students to teach poetry from a multicultural perspective. She died from breast cancer in 2002. "Poem for South African Women" is from *Passions: New Poems*, 1979-1980.

Grace and Peaces of Mail

Ed,

Thank you for your card and the gift of the books *Surely Goodness and Mercy* and *A Bag of Snakes*. We both look forward to reading and absorbing these dynamic resources.

It is also inspiring to read the Open Door digital format.

We are involved in a local social justice program, F.A.S.T. Faith and Action for Strength Together. It is an inter-faith, grassroots, not-for-profit ministry that currently is advocating for affordable housing and water quality. A brochure is enclosed.

Recently we were able to convince the Pinellas County Commission to fund a central access to mental health resources. Previously when persons called the county support number 211, they would be given 95 phone numbers they could call. Now one number connects the person to 24/7 professionally trained and supervised triage persons who can if needed make an appointment then.

Needless to say, the current presidential administration is frighteningly destructive and cruel, and we struggle to maintain our emotional balance. Our prayers and commitment is to be among the 7,000 who do not bend the knee to Baal/Herod/Trump. We pray for the Open Door's doing justice, and we ask for your prayers for us and all who join in seeking to bring the Kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.

Peace,

Bill & Sibyl Hull

St. Petersburg, Florida

Dear Ed,

Joe Dan and I have been doing a lot of reminiscing lately, especially while he was writing his life story. How all of our paths converged causes us to believe that we, at the least, have so much to be grateful for. I am grateful that I heard you hollering down Campbell Hall and Joe Dan is grateful that he was at Woodruff Park at the right time to meet Dick and Kim Rustay. Our paths since that time have been filled with God's grace, sufficient for our struggles and our joys.

Thank you so much Ed, for your friendship. We are overwhelmed with gratitude for your support as we begin this path and journey of battling Joe Dan's cancer.

We love you so much,

Jennifer &

Joe Dan Walker

Cedartown, Georgia



St. Cedd

Ed & Company,

Your new format is appealing in appearance and fantastic content!

Tough times for Gaza & Ukraine (give away the store!?)

Hope and pray for at last a "Piece" of justice & compassion!!

Ed & Barb Kusek

Hartford, Wisconsin

Dear Ed and all who work to put together *Hospitality*,

I have received the June/July issue and I think it is *great*. The articles included difficult information, but love, kindness and compassion were evident to me — and then to hear some really good news: HB123 passed and has been signed! I agree with your pastor that Zionism murders Palestinians. Thanks for including the photo. I enjoyed reading about your beautiful encounter with Kamal!

Giving Thanks at the Gates of Hell was very informative about what Quakers and Mennonites are doing to help people deal with ICE here in Atlanta. The red-white-and-blue "flag" is special and the quote from Matthew was a good reminder that we need to love our enemies — not an easy thing to do.

Some residents here at Canterbury Court organized a demonstration nearby on No Kings Day for anyone who wanted to protest but couldn't get to the one downtown. It was a big success — flags, posters, residents plus friends and relatives, about 150 of us. Some using walkers, some in wheelchairs. USA has never been perfect but it seems to be getting worse every day since Trump was inaugurated!

With love and appreciation,

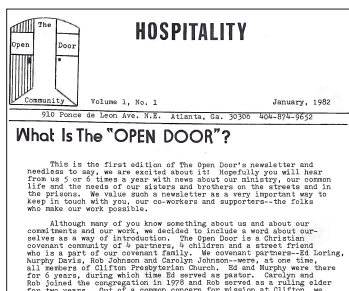
Llewellyn Bell

Atlanta, Georgia

HOSPITALITY

newspaper issues
from 1982 to the present
are now available at:

www.opendoorcommunity.org



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. Manuscripts and letters are welcomed. Inclusive language editing is standard.

Issues of *Hospitality* are posted to the Open Door Community website under the "Archives" Tab. If you would like to be notified when we post *Hospitality* issues, updates, photographs and writings on our website, please go to www.opendoorcommunity.org and at the bottom of our main page enter your email address and subscribe. Subscriptions are free.

Open Door Community

PO Box 10980

Baltimore, Maryland 21234

www.opendoorcommunity.org

Newspaper

Founding Editor Murphy Davis

Editor Emeritus Ed Loring

Editor Nibs Stroupe

Photography and Layout Editor

Calvin Kimbrough

Associate Editors Peter Gathje, Catherine Meeks and John Cole Vodicka

Copy Editor Julie Martin

Proofreaders Nelia Kimbrough and Julie Martin

Subscriptions or change of address

David Payne

davidpayne@opendoorcommunity.org

Open Door Community

For more information about the life and work of the community, please contact:

David Payne Administrator

davidpayne@opendoorcommunity.org

404.290.2047

HOSPITALITY *prays*

Prayer is the heart of a genuine Christian radicalism. — Ron Ferguson

*“Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
(1 Thessalonians 5:18)*

Prayer for Hearts of Gratitude

O loving God,
You created us to live as your grateful people.

Yet, we live far too much of our lives
 without giving thanks for your countless gifts that enrich us.
We live as though expressing gratitude to you is just a way to manipulate you.
We live as though greed and power-mongering are quite okay.
We live as though it is acceptable to ignore the cries of our neighbors,
 especially neighbors who don’t look or think like us.

Forgive us
 for ignoring our need to have you in our lives,
 for believing we can be contented without you,
 for being selfish, egotistical and greedy — just the opposite of being grateful.

So please, creator God, grant us
 hearts of genuine thanksgiving,
 minds to embody your passion for justice and peace,
 hands to serve you all our days.

As your grateful creatures, we rejoice
 that you are the companion God who dwells among us,
 that you are the faithful God who remains engaged in our world,
 that you are the God of loving kindness and mercy,
 that you are the hope-giving God who leads us
 throughout times of chaos, violence and fear.

Indeed, we are grateful for your gifts.
 the gift of this amazing and generous world our home.
 the gift of siblings and neighbors to accompany us along the way.
 the gift of your gracious invitation to love and serve you.
 the gift of truth that comes through our doxology to you,
 and especially, the gift of Jesus who is our way, our truth, our life.

Thank you for creating us to be your grateful people,
 for when we are thankful, we are faithfully oriented to your mission among us.

— Lee Carroll, 9/5/25

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



Daniel Mauk



Coloring Book | United Church of Christ