

ISSUE #23 | JUSTICE

# FULLER



*STORY* Pastor Wendy Hu-Au, pictured above, works to cultivate hope and community in her church's East Harlem neighborhood *p. 12*  
*THEOLOGY* Articles by guest editor Dwight Radcliff and others offer insight and guidance for the church in its call to do justice *p. 34*  
*VOICE* Fuller alumni reflect on urban renewal, restorative work with survivors of sexual violence, and the movement for Black lives *p. 70*



✦ By Tony P., film, 2021.

The photographs in this issue have been selected from an exhibit at All Angels' Church in New York City. Seth Little (MAT '17), director of music and arts at All Angels', wrote the following statement at the original exhibit (it has been edited slightly for the purposes of the magazine):

*"When the pandemic hit, All Angels' responded by suspending in-person worship services and associated ministries like our weekly community meal and overnight shelter. We pivoted quickly to offer an online option for worship, and this allowed a portion of our community to maintain a visible presence together. But many disappeared from our common view during that time. In particular, guests of Community Ministries, whose primary connection to the church is tied closely to suspended programs, were*

*noticeably absent from our collective life. Some of these friends remained in touch with All Angels' through the Pathways drop-in program, but the link between these weekday offerings and the worship gatherings on Sundays was severed. Our community was fractured.*

*Now, as the pandemic slowly recedes and we assess our losses, it's clear that some perspectives have simply been missing from our midst. More than that, there's clearly*

*a need to rebuild a shared life together. We eagerly look forward to the return of certain foundational ministries, like the community meal, because they do much to ground us together. We need other means to connect, to see one another, while we wait.*

*In that spirit, the arts ministry team is pleased to present photography featuring work from our friends connected to All Angels' through Pathways. We provided single-use*

*cameras to these friends in August 2021 and curated their submissions. We invite you to look closely at the images. Pay attention to their compositions, their subjects, their perspectives. More than what you see, try to imagine the person behind the camera and glimpse the world through their eyes. Some of the photos are playful, even whimsical. Some are vulnerable to the extreme. All of them bear honest witness to someone's real experience.*

*We hope these photos serve to draw us toward one another with renewed curiosity, attention, and empathy while dignifying and celebrating the particular experience of the individuals whose photographs are featured."*

*See more from this exhibit on pp. 11, 32–33, 68–69, 88–89, and 98–99.*

# FULLER

ISSUE #23 | JUSTICE

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+ Amber Height joins a neighborhood's fight against gentrification as she envisions a future in which her community thrives. Read her story on p.16.



## + Editor's Note

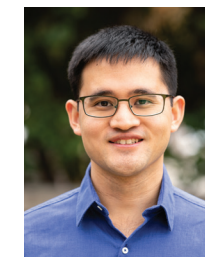
Where do we find hope in a time like this? I came across this question on my Twitter feed the other day, asked sincerely and desperately by a friend. I've heard this same question raised in some form or another many times in the last couple of years, both in person and on social media, both in the church and outside of it. Hope can feel like an elusive thing, particularly when confronting the overwhelming wrongness in our world—climate change, war, systemic racism, misogyny, xenophobia, the prison industrial complex, the list goes on. What many might see as stunning and collective inaction in the face of these wrongs only adds to the hopelessness.

I resonate. I've been gripped too by this sentiment of despair. But these days—and every day—I continue to find hope in the truth that God is in the business of setting all things right. Right, in this case, carries the deepest possible meaning of the word. God is pouring goodness, restoration, and life into every cranny and nook of creation. God has said so. In other words, I have hope that God is who God claims to be: a God of justice. (It has helped me often to remember that justice and righteousness in our English translations are the same word in the text, δικαιοσύνη.)

We see this movement of setting the world right in what God has done in the person of Jesus, of course, but we also see it today in what God is doing to animate the church through the Spirit. The kingdom over which God reigns is and will be one of righteousness and justice. And it inevitably comes, on earth as it is in heaven.

This issue of *FULLER* magazine engages with this question of justice—of what it looks like for wrong to be made right, and of how we are to be part of this work. In her illustrations, Kate Turner captures our need for divine help, from heaven to earth, in her arc of images that move from desolation to life. In the Story section, profiles of alumni Wendy Hu-Au, Amber Height, Gail Schlosser, and Autumn and Joel Gallegos Greenwich highlight the hands-on work of justice happening in local communities around the country—from refugee resettlement, to a fight against gentrification, to investing in a city's public schools and small businesses. The Theology section, guest edited by Dwight Radcliff, features articles by Fuller faculty and others that offer insights on interpreting the Scriptures with justice-colored lenses, on reorienting our dynamics of power, and on restoring the relationships we have with one another. Interviews with Nikole Lim, Andre Henry, and Chris Lambert in the Voice section showcase how hard-fought renewal can come in the wake of sexual violence, in the fight for Black lives, and in the beautification of a community. And finally, photographs throughout the magazine, curated by All Angels' Church in New York City, offer beautiful glimpses of the world from the perspectives of brothers and sisters living on margins.

As you flip through these pages, we invite you to sit both in the difficult realities of our world and also in the hope we find in it. Be encouraged, reader, by a God who takes us from wrong to right, by a God who calls us to and equips us for the righteous work of justice.



**JEROME BLANCO**  
Editor in Chief

**FULLER**  
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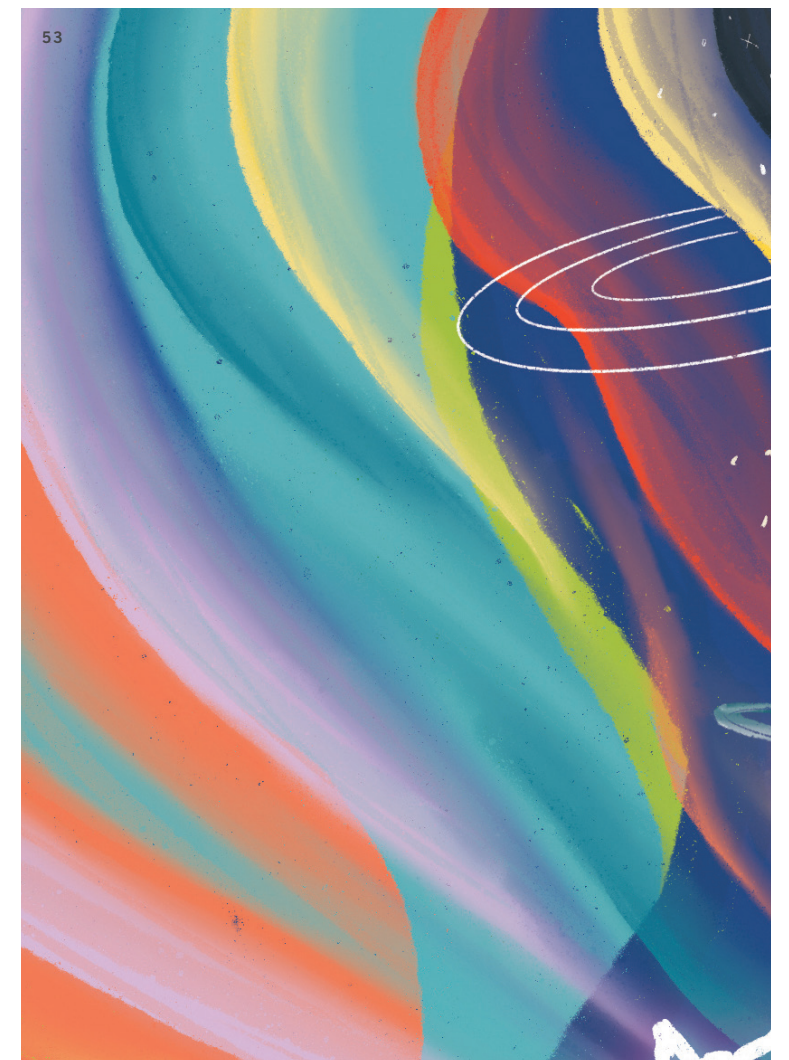
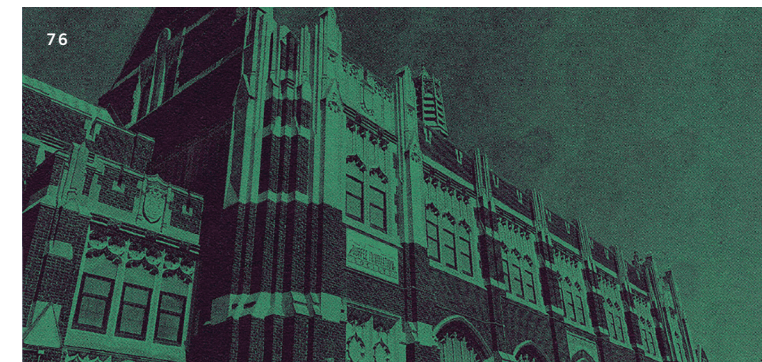
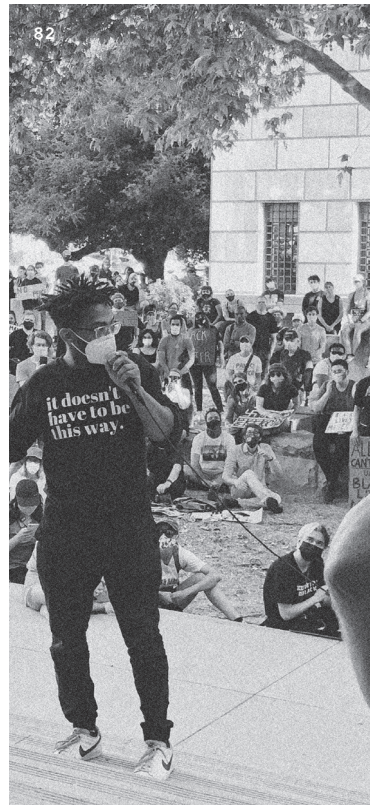
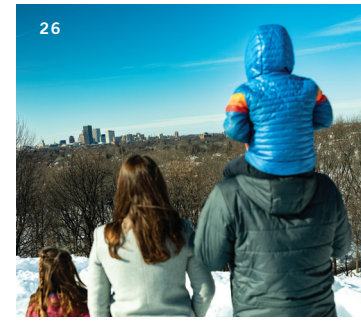
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## God's Redeeming Love and Justice

From Mark Labberton, President

## El Amor Redentor y la Justicia de Dios

Por Mark Labberton

### 하나님의 구속적 사랑과 공의

마크 래버튼 (Mark Labberton)

Is justice intrinsic or extrinsic to the gospel of Jesus Christ? In other words, is God's justice an essential dimension of the gospel or a consequence—possibly an appendage, or worse, an intruder—to the gospel? We are asking here a truth question, not a political one. The answer rests not on our political party or social agenda but on the character of the God revealed in Jesus Christ, whom we worship and serve.

In the same way that the Scriptures affirm "God is love" (1 John 4:8), they likewise affirm that "God is just" (Deut 10:17, 32:4; Ps 89:14). We are not given a choice between a loving God who makes us inwardly righteous versus a just God who makes us publicly responsible. God's essence, character, and actions include both God's love and justice, and so should ours be. The Bible makes clear that God's faithfulness relent-

lessly pursues God's image-bearers, amidst our lives of sin and death. Our loving and redeeming God delivers us from all internal and external powers that unjustly abuse or diminish ourselves or one another. Both Old and New Testament texts make this point again and again.

The Law is given as the Way to worship, that is, to live lives of worship that reflect God.

Our worship is a lifestyle to purify and display God's just and loving character within and beyond the community of faith. Isaiah 58 exposes the hypocrisy of claiming to worship God in God's household without living lives that reflect the God we worship in and beyond the household of faith. Catching God's people in self-serving acts of injustice, especially toward the poor and vulnerable, God severely rebukes them for such false

worship, and calls Israel to live its worship in ways that demonstrate the righteous and just character of Yahweh. "This is the worship I desire," says the Lord.

Jesus' manifesto in Luke 4 continues the same themes and teaches those who are disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done." The ways of God are to be our ways. Embodying God's character is to

¿La justicia es intrínseca o extrínseca al evangelio de Cristo Jesús? En otras palabras, ¿la justicia de Dios es una dimensión esencial del evangelio, o una consecuencia—posiblemente un apéndice, o peor aún, un intruso—del evangelio? Estamos preguntando una pregunta sobre la verdad, no sobre política. La pregunta recae no en nuestro partido político o agenda social sino en el carácter de Dios revelado en Cristo Jesús, a quién adoramos y servimos.

En la misma manera en que las Escrituras

afirman, "Dios es amor" (1 Juan 4:8), también afirman que "Dios es justo" (Deut. 10:17, 32:4; Salmos 89:14). No se nos da una elección entre un Dios amoroso quién nos hace internamente justos contra un Dios justo que nos hace públicamente responsables. La esencia, carácter y acciones de Dios incluyen tanto el amor como la justicia de Dios, y así deberíamos ser las nuestras. La Biblia pone en claro que la fidelidad de Dios implacablemente persigue a los portadores de la imagen de Dios, en medio de nuestras vidas de pecado y muerte. Nuestro amoroso y redentor Dios

nos libera de todos los poderes internos y externos que injustamente abusan o hacen menos a nosotros o unos a otros. Tanto el texto del Antiguo y Nuevo Testamento hacen este punto una y otra vez.

La Ley es dada como la Manera de adorar, esto es, para vivir vidas de adoración que reflejan a Dios. Nuestra adoración es un estilo de vida para purificar y mostrar el carácter justo y amoroso de Dios dentro y fuera de la comunidad de fe. Isaías 58 expone la hipocresía de clamar el adorar a Dios en la casa de

Dios sin vivir vidas que reflejan al Dios que adoramos en y más allá de la casa de fe. Al encontrar al pueblo de Dios en actos de injusticia egoístas, especialmente hacia los pobres y vulnerables, Dios severamente los reprende por tan falsa adoración, y llama a Israel a vivir su adoración en maneras que demuestran el recto y justo carácter de Yahweh. "Ésta es la adoración que deseo", dice el Señor.

El manifiesto de Jesús en Lucas 4 continúa los mismos temas y enseña a aquellos que son discípulos a orar, "Venga tu reino, hágase

tu voluntad". Los caminos de Dios deben ser nuestros caminos. Encarnar el carácter de Dios debe ser nuestro carácter. ¿Cuál es la marca de ese reino? Jesús leyendo de Isaías 61, dice,

El Espíritu del Señor está sobre mí, por cuanto me ha ungido para anunciar buenas nuevas a los pobres. Me ha enviado a proclamar libertad a los cautivos y dar vista a los ciegos, a poner en libertad a los oprimidos,

공의를 예수 그리스도의 복음으로 설명 할 수 있습니까? 아니면 서로 무관 합니까? 다시말해, 하나님의 공의가 복음의 본질적 차원안에 해당하는지 아니면 복음의 부산물이나 부작용 같은 결과라 할 수 있습니까? 저는 정치적 질문을 던지는 것이 아니라, 진리에 대한 질문을 하고 있습니다. 이 질문에 대한 답은 사회적 의제나 정치적 정당에 있지 않습니다. 그 답은 우리가 예배하고 섬기는 예수 그리스도 안에서 볼 수 있는 하나님의 성품에서 찾을 수 있습니다.

"하나님은 사랑이시라"(요일 4:8)라는 말씀과 함께 성경은 "하나님은 의로우시다"(신 10:17, 32:4; 시 89:14)라고 확인합니다. 우리의 속사람을 의롭게 하시는 사랑의 하나님과 공적 책임을 가르치시는 공의의 하나님은 나뉠 수가 없기 때문입니다. 하나님의 본질, 성품과 행위안에는 사랑과 공의가 모두 같이 있습니다. 우리도 그래야 합니다. 성경은 하나님의 형상인 우리들이 비록 죄와 죽음 가운데서 살아가지만 하나님의 신실하심이 언제나 우리를 따른다고 말씀하고 있습니다. 사랑과 구속의 하나님은 자신과 다른

사람들을 확대하고 쇠약하게 만드는 모든 세력으로 부터 우리를 건져내십니다. 신구약 성경은 모두 이러한 사실을 명백히 증거합니다.

율법은 예배의 방법, 즉 하나님을 비추는 삶의 예배를 살게 합니다. 우리의 예배는 신앙 공동체 안팎에서 하나님의 의와 사랑의 성품을 더욱더 드러내는 삶의 방식입니다. 이사야 58 장은 가정 밖에서 하나님을 드러내는 삶의 예배를 드러지 못하면서, 하나님을 섬기는 가정이라고 말하는 사람들의

위선을 폭로합니다. 특히 가난하고 연약한 사람들을 대상으로 이기적이고 부당한 행동을 하는 하나님의 백성에게 하나님은 그 거짓 예배에 대해 엄히 꾸짖으시며, 여호와 하나님의 의롭고 공의로운 성품을 나타내는 예배를 드러야 한다고 이스라엘을 부르셨습니다. 주님은 "이것이 내가 바라는 예배" 라 하셨습니다.

예수님은 누가복음 4장의 고백에서도 "나라에 임하옵시며 뜻이 이루어지리이다"라고 가르치셨고, 동일한 선편를

외치도록 하셨습니다. 하나님의 방법은 우리의 방법이 되어야 하고 하나님의 성품도 우리의 성품이 되어야 합니다. 하나님의 통치 증표가 무엇입니까? 예수님은 이사야서 61 장을 읽으시며 말씀하십니다. 주의 성령이 내게 임하셨으니 이는 가난 한 자에게 복음을 전하게 하시려고 내게 기름을 부으시고 나를 보내사 포로된 자에게 자유를 눈 먼 자에게 다시 보게 함을

be our character. What is the mark of that reign? Jesus, reading from Isaiah 61, says,

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the  
captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to set at liberty those who are oppressed,  
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.  
(Luke 4:18-19)*

This is the mission of Jesus, the evidence of the kingdom of God, and the fruit that is to be evident in the lives transformed by his teaching, life, death, and resurrection, as

well as the fruitfulness of the Spirit. Jesus' ministry is comprehensive and holistic, individual and communal, personal and public. This is the nature of God's redeeming love and justice.

As Augustine, and so many since, have argued, God's love and justice seek to transform a world of disordered love and power. The full salvation of the Lord takes the spiritual brokenness, pain, and unjust suffering of the world with the greatest seriousness. Human beings are body-souls, and the comprehensive nature of our lives in God's image intrinsically matters because of how we have been made. Our material, physical, economic, and social lives are all in view of

God's new reign in Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. God's ultimate and just judgment will destroy all remaining destructive manifestations of evil and injustice, so that what is made new can be fully and eternally alive.

This all leads to the strong affirmation that justice is not extrinsic to the gospel but intrinsic to God—to the revelation of God in Jesus and to the manifestation of God's loving and just reign through the new humanity of God's people, the church. To follow the God of redeeming love and righteousness is to follow the God of justice.

a pregonar el año del favor del Señor.  
(Lucas 4:18-19)

Ésta es la misión de Jesús, la evidencia del reino de Dios, y el fruto que debe ser evidente en las vidas transformadas por su enseñanza, vida, muerte y resurrección así como el fruto del Espíritu. El ministerio de Jesús es comprensivo y holístico, individual y comunal, personal y público. Ésta es la naturaleza del amor redentor y la justicia de Dios.

Como Agustín, y tantos más desde entonces,

han argumentado, el amor y la justicia de Dios buscan transformar a un mundo de amor y poder desordenados. La salvación completa del Señor toma el quebrantamiento espiritual, dolor y sufrimiento injusto del mundo con la mayor seriedad. Los seres humanos son cuerpos-almas, y la naturaleza completa de nuestras vidas en la imagen de Dios importan intrínsecamente a causa de cómo hemos sido creados. Nuestras vidas materiales, físicas, económicas y sociales están a la vista del nuevo reino de Dios en Cristo Jesús y por el Espíritu Santo. El juicio final y justo de Dios

destruirá todas las manifestaciones destructivas que queden del mal y la injusticia para que lo que ha sido hecho nuevo pueda estar completa y eternamente vivo.

Esto todo lleva a la fuerte afirmación que la justicia no es extrínseca al evangelio sino intrínseca a Dios—a la revelación de Dios en Jesús y a la manifestación del reino amoroso y justo de Dios a través de la nueva humanidad del pueblo de Dios, la iglesia. Seguir al Dios del amor redentor y rectitud es seguir al Dios de justicia.

놀린 자를 자유롭게 하고  
주의 은혜의 해를 전파하게 하려 하심이라 하였더라  
(눅 4:18-19)

이것이 예수님의 사명이요, 하나님 나라의 증거이며, 예수님의 가르침, 삶, 죽음, 그리고 부활로 변화된 우리의 삶이자, 성령의 열매입니다. 예수님의 사역은 포괄적이며, 전인적이며, 개인적이면서 공동체적이며, 사적이며 공적입니다. 이것이 하나님의 구속적 사랑과 공의의 본질입니다.

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+ By Shawna, film, 2021. See more from this exhibit on pp. 2-3, 32-33, 68-69, 88-89, and 98-99.

## In the Heart of EAST HARLEM

In her role as executive pastor at a church in East Harlem, Wendy Hu-Au works to cultivate hope and community in a dynamic neighborhood

Written by JOY NETANYA THOMPSON  
Photographed by KATY COOK

**O**N A SUNDAY afternoon in April 2021, a group of 30 people wearing matching t-shirts descended upon Daps Eats, a small Caribbean restaurant on 125th Street in Harlem. A live band played upbeat music on the patio while the group socialized and waited for their plates of jerk chicken. Passersby, drawn in by the lively atmosphere, stopped to dance, including several people who carried drums and jammed with the band for a while. For a small, locally owned restaurant like Daps Eats, such a scene was unheard of—but that’s why the group was there.

It was a cash mob, a regular ministry organized by Metro Hope Church NYC. “A whole bunch of us go, and we literally mob a local small business,” says Wendy Hu-Au (MDiv ’17), executive pastor at Metro Hope. “We bring cash because cash typically stays in a neighborhood longer than credit.” The party-like atmosphere of the day was no accident either. “That’s kind of the heart of a cash mob—it brings the community together. It’s a visible way to support a business.” That day at Daps Eats, the restaurant’s owner had a chance to share his own vision for his business with the group, how he wants to serve his community and bring people joy with food. “That posture is important to us,” says Wendy. “We definitely want to support people who are invested in Harlem, who care about the community and the neighborhood.” Metro Hope partners with other nonprofit organizations to put on the cash mobs, including one organization that helps the small businesses secure loans, create business plans, and learn to manage their budgets.

This kind of partnering is a natural ministry move for Metro Hope, a church whose rootedness in their community is central to their purpose. “Harlem is a huge geographical area in New York,” says Wendy, and East Harlem, where their church meets, has its own unique personality and needs. She points out that the neighborhood, which has a strong Afro-Latino community and many other cultures represented, is experiencing some changes. Grocery chains like Trader Joe’s and Whole Foods are opening locations, which “isn’t





“OUR MISSION IS TO SERVE PEOPLE WHO ARE SERVING THE WORLD. WE’RE A LOT OF BEHIND-THE-SCENES, SERVANT-HEARTED PEOPLE.”



necessarily bad,” Wendy says, but adds, “We just want to make sure people who have been here for a long time can still afford to live here and be a part of the community.” While cash mobs are a tangible investment Metro Hope makes in East Harlem, the church is constantly on the lookout for new ways they can strengthen the neighborhood.

“Because we’re such a small church, we don’t have anything like, ‘this is our “X” ministry that’s been going on for 10 years,’” she says. “It’s kind of like something happens, and we respond. We’re very flexible.” One of these responses has been partnering with Exodus Transitional Community, where Wendy’s co-pastor, José Humphreys, serves as a consultant, and whose building provides a meeting place for Metro Hope’s Sunday services. East Harlem is home to what the *Daily News* once called “Convict Alley,” where people are dropped off after leaving Rikers Island, New York’s main jail complex. “These folks are our community’s returning citizens,” says Wendy. “Supporting people who are justice-impacted is a big part of what we’re interested in.” That support takes various forms, including a monthly gathering called Writers in Process, where a Metro Hope staff member leads returning citizens through writing and conversational exercises to help process complex emotions they may be experiencing.

For a church like Metro Hope, it’s not difficult to think of ways to serve the community—or to recruit church members to help out in these ministries—because the congregation itself is already made up of people with a bent toward helping. “Our mission is to serve people who are serving the world,” says Wendy. “We’re a lot of behind-the-scenes, servant-hearted people.” The Metro Hope community is made up of teachers, occupational therapists, facilities managers, nonprofit directors, and school administrators. Since it’s New York, there’s also a contingent of artists and performers, who, Wendy says, view their work as storytellers as an act of service as well. “So that’s kind of the vibe of our church. Everyone is actively trying to make the world a better place.”

She mentions one member who works as a vice principal of a school. “They’re choosing to be a person of peace in these kids’ lives,” she says. “They don’t see the students as jobs but as image bearers of God.” Hearing about the Metro Hope community’s work in the world gives Wendy joy. “It’s the only reason I said yes to taking this role,” she says. “I’m not trying to be the pastor of a megachurch or anything. When I get to know these folks and their stories, it really gives me life. It gives me hope.”

In the early days of the pandemic, this church full of servant-hearted members went straight into action. They exchanged emergency contact information to ensure everyone was looking out for each other and established a benevolence fund to financially assist anyone going through a crisis. On Thursday nights, they came together on Zoom for intercessory prayer. One challenge, however, of having a church made up of helpers is that it can be hard for congregants to ask for

much-needed help for themselves. “We’ve given out thousands of dollars from our benevolence fund,” says Wendy, “but not because anybody has ever come to ask us for help.” As their pastor, she tries to see the unspoken needs and organize people to meet the tangible ones, while she sets her own creative energy toward meeting the spiritual needs of the community. Especially now that many have returned to a prepandemic level of busyness, Wendy is considering what Sabbath might look like for people who are often in a mode of doing and serving. “What does rest look like for the folks who care so much about the people they’re serving and are doing really hard things, like participating in the foster care system?” she wonders.

On the whole, Wendy and her co-pastor José have tried to make sure Metro Hope is a place of rest and recovery—a safe space. “If someone shows up to church and doesn’t come back until six months later, there’s no guilt, no judgment. We’re just happy to see them. And I hope that they feel that.” Metro Hope is not only a safe space for the helpers in East Harlem but for the seekers, too. Wendy points out that they tend to attract individuals who might have grown up in the church but, after a period of deconstruction, feel like they might not belong in once familiar church settings. “These folks might feel like the traditional churches they grew up in don’t fit them anymore, and they’re looking for something different,” explains Wendy. “Or maybe they’re exploring spirituality. They’re not ready to commit to Jesus, but there’s something about our church that draws them.” Sometimes they were raised in a different faith and they don’t think church is for them. “But they love so many things about Jesus,” she says. “They love seeing people who have less resources get what they need; they love seeing communities come together.” Wendy defines successful ministry to this group as simply “creating access for people to come to know Jesus and to experience the freedom or the joy” that following him brings.

As Wendy navigates pastoring an urban church like Metro Hope, she sometimes reflects back on a course she took at Fuller, *The Spirituality of Henri Nouwen* with adjunct professor Wil Hernandez. “The group’s discussions around vulnerability as a leader were probably some of the deepest conversations I’ve had,” she remembers. “It was transformative to think about how it’s not about success, but it’s about experiencing God’s grace and God’s love in everything.” From providing a safe place to land for everyone from justice-impacted folks to people looking for a spiritual home, to seeing the face of Christ in the hardworking members of her church community, to eating jerk chicken at a tiny restaurant on 125th Street, that’s just what Wendy is doing—experiencing and helping others to experience God’s grace and love right where they are, in East Harlem. ■

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## thriving UN- INTERRUPTED

Amber Height joins a neighborhood's fight against gentrification, as she holds to a hopeful vision of a future in which Black life and culture thrive

Written by **CHANTELLE GIBBS**  
Photographed by **KARLEY CARRILLO**

**W**HEN AMBER HEIGHT (MAICS '21) first began her studies at Fuller, she didn't foresee moving to the Crenshaw neighborhood in South LA after graduation to work on protecting a shopping mall. As she worked toward her degree, she originally planned to seek out farther geographical coordinates and work internationally, specifically somewhere in Africa.

"What would it look like for me to be in Africa to work on projects that protect the bodies of Black women over there?" she asked herself. "What would it look like for me to work to help someone experience dignity abroad?" But as she progressed through her program, more and more international connections and conversations with fellow students from Africa led her to see commonality in their shared experiences. The deep passion Amber had to protect and restore dignity for Black bodies was needed not only in Africa but also as close as her own backyard.

A native of Detroit, she was no stranger to walking too many miles to catch a bus for a dentist visit or a vaccine appointment. Or having to pass through unsafe parts of the city to go to the grocery store. Or wanting stable housing and dignity for Black women. Through her own writing, research, and growing friendships, Amber found a new perspective on her purpose as she realized there was much work to be done here.

By Amber's final year at Fuller, she knew she wanted to do community work. "God was calling me to make the human experience for Black people something that they could appreciate and something they could enjoy that doesn't rob them of their own humanity." Her vision was to see people in their own Black communities with access to dentist offices, grocery stores, entertainment, and shopping—all walkable, liveable, and affordable. "I know God was calling me to help make that happen."

She found an opportunity to pursue that calling when she learned from a friend about what was happening only 30 minutes away from her in Crenshaw.

Bridging the intersection of West Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Crenshaw Boulevard stands the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza, a 42-acre two-story indoor mall first established in 1947, making it one of the oldest regional shopping centers in operation in the United States. The “Crenshaw Mall,” as it’s locally known, has been a staple of the historically and predominantly Black community in South Los Angeles for decades. According to Amber, the mall represents everything from a haven for Black-owned businesses to a cultural remnant of Black experiences and memories. On numerous occasions, the mall has proudly hosted the prestigious Pan African Film Festival, the largest international Black film festival in the nation, first held there in 1996 at the since-closed Magic Johnson Theaters.

Different equity groups, with their seven-figure bids, vied to buy out the mall several times. Fears of impending gentrification and displacement, along with their own vision

for revitalization, galvanized the local Black community and leaders to thwart these bids and put in one of their own. Downtown Crenshaw Rising, known as Downtown Crenshaw for short, began as a grassroots movement bred in opposition to outside investors and a desire to see the mall redeveloped for immediate needs in the Crenshaw neighborhood from the perspectives and voices of those who live there.

Venturing with her friend to one of the Downtown Crenshaw-hosted community events frequently held at the mall, Amber watched the community gather together and heard a vision cast for “what it’s like to have peace and space at our own mall.”

Amber was in. She turned to someone near her and asked if the group was looking for volunteers or interns. Without Amber even knowing that she was speaking with the president of the Downtown Crenshaw board, an emphatically

answered “yes” turned into a phone call from the executive director wishing to hire Amber. After commuting from Pasadena to Crenshaw for several months to volunteer, Amber made the move to South Los Angeles right after graduation, half a mile away from the mall, and began her role as a project consultant with Downtown Crenshaw.

“The leadership of Downtown Crenshaw had a plan in mind as far as what we wanted to see for our community,” says Amber. These plans include a six-acre green space, a Black-centered daycare, accessible banking, and a housing model with 80 percent of units being affordable and 20 percent being market rate. Often, Amber points out, the standard is the opposite. With Downtown Crenshaw and the community purchasing its own housing and commercial properties, Amber says, “we can keep our own dollars within our own community.”

Downtown Crenshaw had raised over \$60 million in financing backed by 13,000 petition signatures and more than 300 organizations, businesses, and civic leaders. In the wake of George Floyd’s death and Black Lives Matter protests sweeping the country, as many as 150 donors, clergy, foundations, and investors stood in solidarity with Downtown Crenshaw. They put in their own bid of \$115 million with concrete hopes and a tangible business plan.

But, despite all of these efforts, the mall was sold to a development group that bought the property at a lower bid of \$111 million.

When the community found out that the sale of the mall had gone through with a bid that was lower than what Downtown Crenshaw had put in, many were devastated, but not necessarily shocked. Amber remembers being very angry. “I felt like all of this work, all of this devotion and dedication, and this is what happens. Why us?”

She speaks to the challenging balance of channeling that anger in, what she calls, the most “precise” way she can. “It’s making sure I’m praying about the anger I’m experiencing and that I use that anger wisely to justify why I do what I do.”

Amidst the hurt and discouragement, Amber realized she could use the pain to fuel the work, to remember why she had wanted to be a part of the Black-centered vision in the first place. She says, “I realized that part of the system works overtime to make Black lives feel so much hurt and pain and discouragement.” She’s found a sense of urgency in continuing to think of new ideas to stabilize the community since the work isn’t over. Today, her tasks with Downtown Crenshaw





are still tethered to that Black-centered vision, mobilizing members to build engagement through action and assisting on various communication projects pushing against neighborhood gentrification. All the while, they haven't lost hope for the mall just yet. "We're still fighting for it. It's not final in terms of us giving up." She estimates that the litigation and court process could take years.

"What does our vision mean to us as Black people?" says Amber, paraphrasing a quote by Black theologian Judy Fentress-Williams. The experience, she deduces, must be firsthand. "We want Black folks specifically to experience and embrace what it's like to live in this Black vision. That's how I kind of see this work. That we're taking the time out to love on, work for, and advocate for one another. And that's something that we can't lose sight of."

Thinking of the people who have come together and what they've accomplished leaves Amber standing in awe of her community. It's the sight of Black-owned businesses and Black life and Black culture when she walks around Leimert Park or the vibrant Sunday marketplace where dollars are exchanged for goods, then both go right back into the community—Amber defines it all as "justice."

For Amber, "Justice is allowing Black lives to thrive uninterrupted." With the latest purchase of the mall come plans for the developer to build 961 housing units. Amber says that houses around the area are priced anywhere between \$800,000 and \$1.2 million, which the average person, and specifically, the average Black person, cannot afford. "67,000 people could be displaced and most of them are Black folks. It's interrupting us."

Amber's vision of the human experience for Black people to be preserved, upheld, and enjoyed remains the same. "If we don't push back against the interruptions, many of which are death-dealing, then we will die. And it's not just a physical death, but it's a death of hope, a spiritual death. We gotta keep fighting. We gotta keep pushing."

"Once people stop interrupting our lives, then I'll be good. That's justice for me," she says. "But you keep giving me injustice, I'm gonna keep fighting you. And that's just the way it's gonna have to be." ■

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# A MISSIONAL LIFE

With a heart for intercultural ministry, Gail Schlosser works with her church and other local partners to love and serve the neighbors in her city

Written by JEROME BLANCO

Photographed by LINDSEY SHEETS

**W**HEN GAIL SCHLOSSER (MACCS '96, DMiss '12) met with Mr. Hassan,<sup>1</sup> she only had a few minutes of his time before his doctor would be in to see him. A 60-year-old Somali man accompanied by his teenage son, Mr. Hassan was one of the patients at Jericho Road Community Health Center in Buffalo, New York, where Gail volunteers as a spiritual care provider.

After a few minutes of conversation, Gail said, "Well, Mr. Hassan, you're Muslim, I'm Christian, but we both believe in a powerful God. How can I pray for you?" Without hesitation, he replied, holding up his fingers as he listed each petition, "Pray that I have health and strength. Pray that God gives me many years of life. And pray that when I die and stand before God, my sins will be forgiven."

As Gail tells the story of that exchange, she says, "I just lifted my hand in a blessing, and I said, 'Mr. Hassan, I do pray that God gives you many years of health and strength, and I pray that he will show you how your sins may be forgiven.' Then I thought, 'Okay, God, over to you!'"

When meeting with patients, Gail introduces herself as the "Soul Lady," there to offer spiritual care on top of the physical care and behavioral health services provided by Jericho Road. With a particular emphasis on serving marginalized communities in Buffalo, very often including many from the city's migrant and refugee populations, the health center is one of a handful of places where Gail serves. As the missional life pastor at Buffalo Vineyard Church, she has a hand in many areas of ministry in the city, especially those focused on fostering relationships cross-culturally.

Gail's ministry journey has always been intercultural and missional, and she's had a particular heart for connecting with and ministering among Muslims. The spark of this calling came when Gail attended InterVarsity's Urbana Missions Conference in 1984. She served on InterVarsity's staff on a number of college campuses for the five years after, before she decided to attend Fuller to pursue her MA in Cross Cultural Studies. At Fuller, she dove deep into her study of ministry and missiology but says the relationships she formed proved just as important. She shares about a weekly prayer meeting with other students that focused on cross-cultural and





“ MISSION IS NOT JUST A  
SPECIALIZED CALL ”

international ministry and also talks about the long friendship she’s had with Dean Emeritus Dudley Woodberry and his wife, Roberta, all these years. She remembers, “There were so many pastors and missionaries from around the world with so many different perspectives.” And her formation during these seasons shaped her well for the eventual 12 years she would serve in England, where she ran a Christian community center that served the local immigrant population, and for her two years in Lebanon, where she focused on outreach to refugees during the height of the Syrian Civil War. In that time, she says, “I learned the power of simply being present and listening with care.”

She served until 2015, when she finally felt it was time to return home. “I literally just said to the Lord, ‘I’d like to settle down a bit, but I don’t want to get comfortable.’” Soon after, she relocated to Buffalo to continue following God’s call on her life.

A city with large refugee communities, many of whom are Muslims—with populations of Iraqis, Yemenis, Syrians, Afghans, and others—Buffalo had a well-established infrastructure for refugee resettlement and ministry, which made it a natural place for Gail to continue ministering interculturally. Not long after she moved to the city, Gail connected with a woman who served as a consultant for nonprofits in the area, and she says, “I spent an hour on the phone with her and heard about everything going on, and then I chased all those leads and found out what people were doing. And then I asked, ‘Where could I throw in my hat?’” Now, as missional life pastor at Buffalo Vineyard, Gail partners with or is actively involved in many of these areas of ministry around the city.

She’s a teacher and mentor at BUMP (Buffalo Urban Mission Partnership), where they help young adults fresh out of college spend a year in the city working in church, nonprofit, or community development contexts, and where Gail says she “especially relishes the chance to mentor young, single women and help them cultivate rich, joyful, godly lives.” She has also taught ESL classes at Jericho Road, on top of her role of offering spiritual care to folks like Mr. Hassan. Before the pandemic, she hosted an in-person English class for five women from Iraq, Jordan, and Syria, and Gail had the delight of helping one of these women pass her US citizenship exam. Through deepening her networks and being intentional about finding ways to love these neighbors, Gail finds different opportunities to help—often assisting newly arrived families find furniture, sharing dinners with them, and being available to help in other steps in the resettlement process, sometimes by simply offering rides to the store or to doctor’s appointments.

Recently, Gail led a team from Buffalo Vineyard to help settle a family of Afghan evacuees. The Welcome Home Project involved the church finding an apartment, furnishing it, and filling the pantry and fridge for this family—as well as “walking alongside them for the first few months after their arrival,” because, Gail explains, resettlement agency assistance only lasts a few months. Of the many refugees and evacuees who arrive in Buffalo, she says, “these new neighbors need lots of TLC considering the trauma they’ve been through.”

A key role of Gail’s at the church is also to help shape the missional life of its congregation. She teaches and preaches, and she relishes the opportunity to pastor others who are discerning their own particular calls to a life of following Christ. At Buffalo Vineyard, she says, this “is not a hard sell.” She adds, “The interesting thing about our church is there are so many people already involved in missional life in their own vocations.” Many work and contribute in various capacities at Jericho Road or similar organizations around the city that minister to marginalized and underserved communities. And the church itself organizes different ways to serve their neighbors, such as the Welcome Home Project mentioned above, and especially through 5 Loaves Farm, an urban initiative that not only produces sustainable and affordable food for the community but also offers classes and job training.

For Gail, it’s important to “foster a sense that mission is not just a specialized call.” Loving one’s neighbor as a disciple of Christ is everyone’s role. She says, “What you’re doing is kingdom work—as a lawyer, as a teacher, as an architect.” As a pastor, she helps in “resourcing, equipping, and encouraging” others as they live this out.

Gail says none of us can go about this alone; we need one another for the journey. “Partnership and collaboration are key,” she explains.

She tells the story of the day she moved into her first place in Buffalo. A friend said she would take Gail to her church the next morning, and that church turned out to be Buffalo Vineyard. “I showed up,” Gail recalls, “and I heard them talking about King Jesus. They said, ‘We’re here to regularly encounter God, train each other in the faith, and effectively serve our neighbors.’” Since then, she’s been doing just that—following Jesus and loving her neighbors, in and around her community, with a church and with others committed to doing the same. ■

1. His name has been changed for this story.

JEROME BLANCO (MDiv '16) is editor in chief of FULLER magazine and Fuller’s senior content editor.

LINDSEY SHEETS is a photographer, video editor, and colorist for FULLER studio.

# CHOOSING *here*

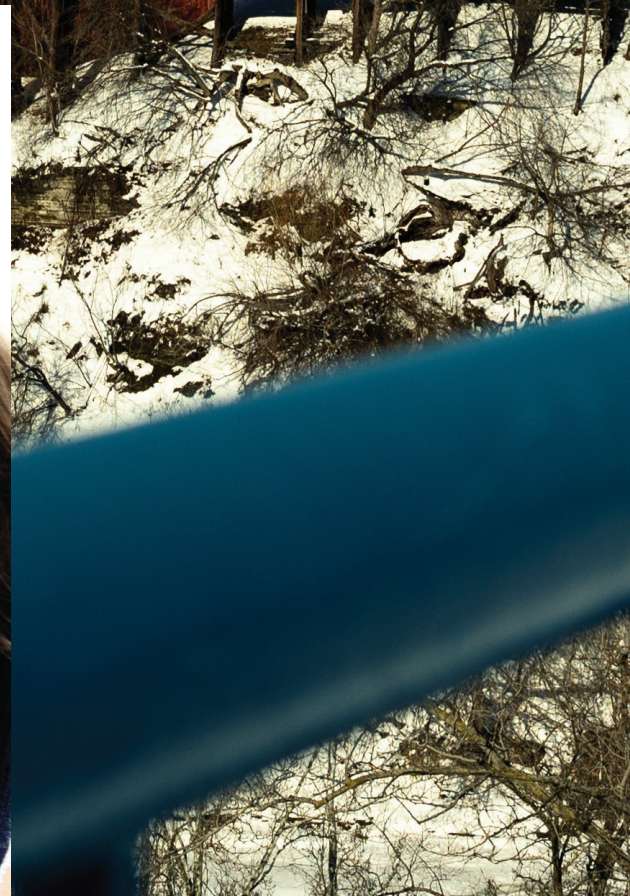
For Autumn and Joel Gallegos Greenwich, making a place home has meant engaging in a practice of presence and committing to work for its good.

Written by **JEROME BLANCO**  
Photographed by **LINDSEY SHEETS**

**I**N THE TWO-MINUTE recording, six-year-old Olive sings over the strumming of her dad's guitar.

*Standing by the river, the birds in the trees  
Watching the deer go up on our hill  
There are hundreds of fish, thousands of fish  
Of all the places, of all the places  
They chose here, they chose here. . .*

*All the baby deer, they follow their mama  
What a great mama, that sweet mama  
There are hundreds of trails, thousands of trails  
Of all the places, of all the places  
We choose here, we choose here  
We choose here, we choose here. . .*



Olive wrote her song with a little help from her dad, Joel, for mom Autumn one afternoon. Olive's gentle tune about the animals all around warmed Joel and Autumn's hearts, as it would any parent, but did so especially for its unintended nod to their family's own story of choosing home.

Autumn (PhD '10) and Joel Gallegos Greenwich (MACCS '09) were only meant to be in Rochester for a year. When Autumn was matched with the University of Rochester Medical Center for her internship—to cap off her time in Fuller's PhD in psychology program—the two made what they thought would be a temporary move. The internship led to a two-year postdoc for Autumn and rolled over into Joel pursuing a PhD in education and human development, which meant another six years. Now, Autumn is assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Rochester, while Joel adjuncts there and at

Rochester Institute of Technology. They're also involved with local organizations around the city, alongside raising their two children. Reflecting on what it's meant to choose to make somewhere home, both Autumn and Joel exude a certain joy while emphasizing a weight of responsibility that comes with being truly present in a place.

"After my PhD program," Joel says, "we were confronted with the possibility of whatever. There was no next big plan. That's when we reflected on what we wanted—and on actually being here not because of 'the next thing' but because it was something we chose to do." Autumn adds, "I had such a pull toward going back 'home' to California," where she lived most of her life. "This process of making Rochester home took a long time. It took the good part of a decade. Trying to build a rootedness took recognizing that our daughter was five years old. This

was her home. All of a sudden, you open your eyes, and you have a decade's worth of friends and community and a network—and oh, man, we've been making these roots all along."

Autumn laughs at the irony of her slow realization in light of her area of research. "I teach and research mindfulness. A big piece of that is the practice of presence and allowing yourself to be where you are. That was my main struggle—allowing myself to be where we were." But for both Autumn and Joel, to be somewhere does not mean simply existing in a certain place. Choosing home means becoming a living part of a community's story.

For Autumn, this particularly plays out in her work as a psychologist and researcher. In fact, her original draw to the

University of Rochester's program was her interest in community-based participatory research, which she explains, involves "engaging the community in the work you're doing—not just going in and out." She says the work is about "really finding out what the community wants or needs, and being able to leverage your own knowledge and resources to benefit the community." At the University of Rochester, she's had the opportunity to lean into this, as Autumn currently works with local organizations that help survivors of interpersonal violence; she leverages her specialization as she studies how mindfulness can be helpful in the context of traumatic stress.

As for Joel, he was largely influenced by his upbringing in Brazil as the son of missionaries who served—and continue to serve—their local communities there by establishing

orphanages, drug rehabilitation centers, and community centers. Joel, who emphasized in international development at Fuller, always wanted to do similar work and assumed he'd do so overseas; he shares how he'd been part of a student group at Fuller for students committing to serve abroad in some capacity. But he's found this calling, a bit unexpectedly, in Rochester. Having studied education and human development in his doctoral program, with a particularly in-depth look at the city, Joel now teaches about the opportunity gap in education, cultural hegemony, and what it looks like on personal and societal levels to mitigate these power differentials—all through the specific lens of how these dynamics play out on the local stage.

During their years of putting down roots, Joel and Autumn have learned a tremendous amount about Rochester's story. Joel says it's impossible to ignore how segregation still has a hold in the city, where a decades-long history of redlining and other racist housing policies have led to far-reaching consequences like poor health and educational outcomes, particularly for the city's Black community. "Rochester has the worst graduation rate for African American males in the country . . . and the highest childhood poverty rate among cities of comparable size," says Joel, who was involved with a local high school as a part of his dissertation research, working with and learning from students labeled "over-age and under-credited" by the district and "most likely to drop out." Having lived in several different places across North and South America over his life, Joel says, "Rochester is the most segregated place I've ever been." As someone trained in education and development, he says it only makes sense to put what he knows to use where he is: "This is the place it's most obvious in the nation. It made sense to be here."

Autumn and Joel also point to Rochester's wider story: its role in the history of suffrage, its connections with the underground railroad, its part in the rise and decline of the Rust Belt—not to mention the legacy of the Seneca people on whose land Rochester was built. All of it with its good and bad, they say, is a narrative they've jumped into by making a home here. Autumn shares, "Our daughter takes dance lessons at a place that was part of the underground railroad. There are plaques outside the building and a statue of Frederick Douglass she likes to pose with. And where I work is across the street from Susan B. Anthony's gravestone. It's a really fascinating place of so much rich history and justice movements." Autumn and Joel believe it's important to be a part of moving this unfurling story towards the good.

They care deeply that their children understand this as well. Autumn says, "Something that's important to us is to live in the city, where people are working hard for change. We wanted to

make sure Olive is in a school everyone has access to, and a school being diverse is a piece of that." Olive's school has a specific curriculum focused on the history of the place—lessons on the Rust Belt, segregation, the Seneca Nation—presented in a way that's accessible to kids at a first-grade level.

As the city's history continues to be written, their family now gets to be a part of that writing, alongside many others. Joel says, "For all the horrifying statistics Rochester has, it has an equal amount of really incredible stories and individuals who are fighting against the horrible." In addition to their other work, Autumn and Joel have also committed to supporting the Community Land Trust, which, according to them, "represents one of the most effective, on-the-ground responses to our city's history with redlining." With "development without displacement" as their motto, the Community Land Trust beautifies and develops historically redlined neighborhoods while mitigating the displacement of residents brought on by gentrification. Additionally, Joel serves on the board of the M. K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence, which—among its many initiatives—partners with local schools to "mediate conflict in a restorative manner," helping prevent student suspensions, a major factor in the graduation rate.

For Autumn and Joel, this work and this commitment to the city's transformation begins with a choice to be present. Harkening back to her focus on mindfulness, Autumn points to the writing of Henri Nouwen, whom she was introduced to during her time at Fuller. She says Nouwen's work taught her about "having different stances to ourselves and the world and the people around us," and that "in that process of paying attention—to opening yourself up to the possibility of acceptance and even awe—you can allow yourself to come close to something, like the place you live or the people around you." That intimacy, she explains, clarifies both the beauty and suffering in a moment and in a space. And in the face of that reality, one comes to the point of saying, "I want to do something about it."

"We've positioned ourselves to experience awe and compassion more deeply," Joel says of their commitment to the city and to practicing presence where they are. And while they had no plans to stay for long when they first arrived those years ago, Autumn and Joel now have roots set firmly in Rochester's soil and have made it home—becoming part of its history, its people, as well as its hopeful future. In the words of their daughter Olive, "Of all the places, they chose here." ■

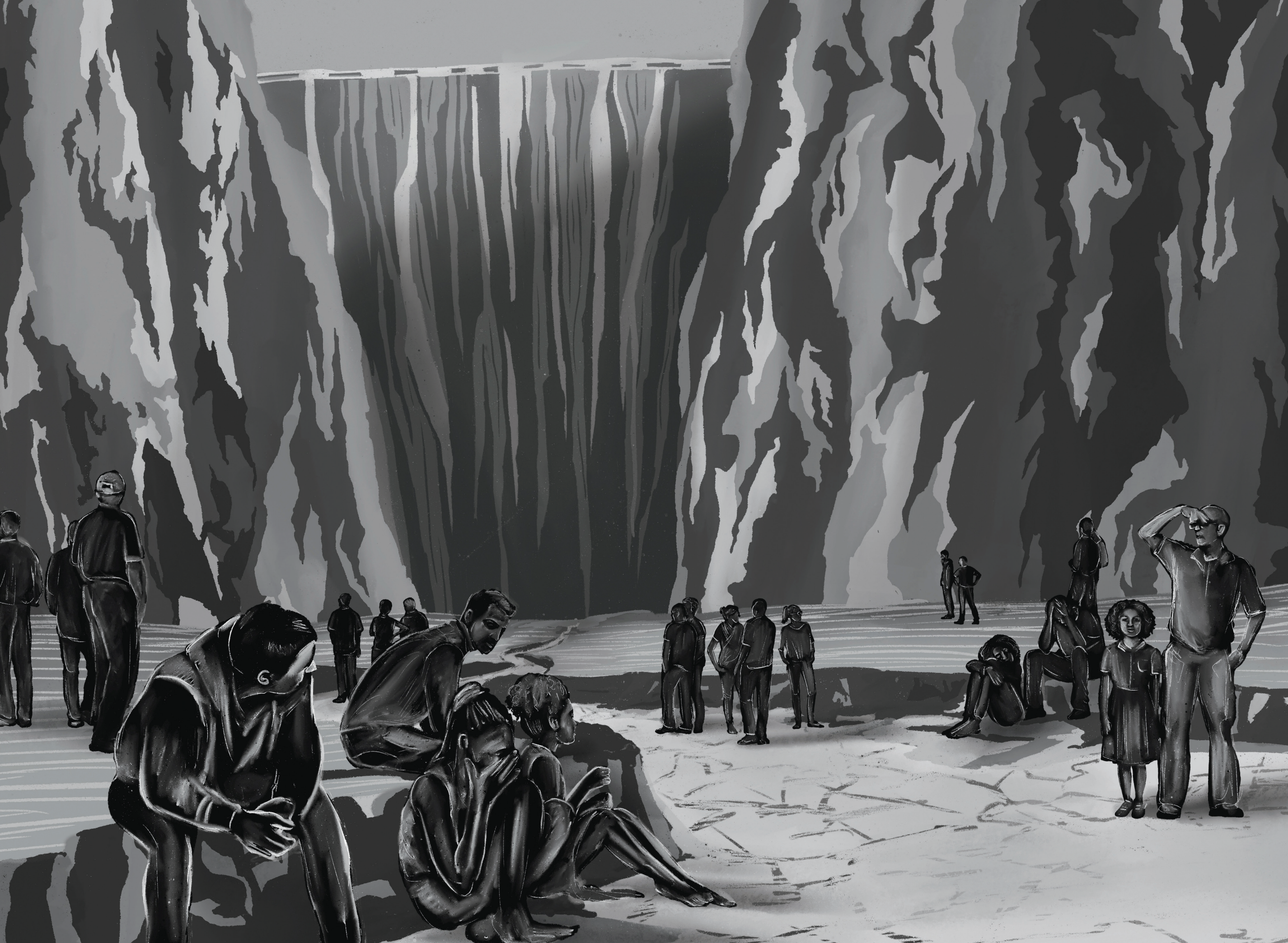
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# JUSTICE

by Dwight A. Radcliff Jr.

*He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the Lord require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?  
(Mic 6:8)*

We know both this passage and the command it contains. Micah’s words ring out in a world that is so utterly broken and full of injustice, pride, and hatred. Reflecting on World War II, Howard Thurman, in *Jesus and the Disinherited*, noted that during times of war and political upheaval, hatred is much more mainstream: “It was very simple; hatred could be brought out into the open, given a formal dignity and a place of respectability.”<sup>1</sup> He also noted that, during these times, hatred was often disguised as “patriotism.” We have recently seen our share of hatred. We have seen the damage that hatred—along with injustice and pride—leaves in its wake. It’s no wonder why Thurman calls hatred one of the “hounds of hell that dog the footsteps of the disinherited.”<sup>2</sup> Even though his words were first published heading into the 1950s, they resound eerily today.

# JUSTICIA

Por Dwight A. Radcliff Jr.

*¡Ya se te ha declarado lo que es bueno!  
Ya se te ha dicho lo que de ti espera el Señor:  
Practicar la justicia, amar la misericordia,  
y humillarte ante tu Dios.  
(Miqueas 6:8)*

Conocemos tanto este pasaje como el mandamiento que éste contiene. Las palabras de Miqueas resuenan en un mundo que está completamente quebrantado y lleno de injusticia, orgullo y odio. Reflexionando acerca de la Segunda Guerra Mundial, Howard Thurman, en Jesús y los Desheredados, señaló que durante tiempos de guerra y agitación política, el odio es mucho más común: “Fue muy simple; el odio podía ser sacado a la luz, se le podía dar una dignidad formal y un lugar de respetabilidad”. Él también señaló que, durante estos tiempos, el odio se disfrazaba seguido de “patriotismo”. Hemos visto recientemente una dosis de odio. Hemos visto el daño que ese odio—junto con injusticia y orgullo—deja en su camino. No es de extrañar porque Thurman llama al odio uno de los “sabuesos del infierno que persiguen

# 정의

드와이트 래드클리프

*사람아 주께서 선한 것이 무엇임을 네게 보이셨나니  
여호와께서 네게 구하시는 것은  
오직 정의를 행하며 인자를 사랑하며  
겸손하게 네 하나님과 함께 행하는 것이 아니냐?  
(미가서 6:8)*

우리는 이 구절과 이 구절의 명령을 모두 알고 있습니다. 미가의 말은 전적으로 부서지고 불의와, 교만과 증오로 가득 찬 세상에서 울려 퍼집니다. 하워드 텔만이 2차 세계대전을 회상하며 예수와 상속받지 못한 자(Jesus and the Disinherited)에서 전쟁과 이념 격변의 시기에는 증오가 대세가 된다고 말했습니다. “매우 단순합니다. 존경과 존엄이 없는 자리는 증오가 차지하게 됩니다” 우리가 최근에 목격한것처럼, 그는 또 이시기에 증오가 “애국심”으로 위장될 수 있다고 언급했습니다. 증오의 여파가 불의와 교만과 함께 주는 피해도 보았습니다.텔만이 증오를 “상속받지

Thurman understood that “hatred often begins in a situation in which there is contact without fellowship.”<sup>3</sup> This context describes people who work together, live near each other, and perhaps even worship together but do not have real fellowship with one another. Without that sense of fellowship, it is easy to treat someone as other and foreign. Once this foundation is set, the dehumanization has begun, and there is no urge for compassion and justice.

In his work, Thurman ultimately calls the Christian to a life that is centered around a love ethic. He challenges both the oppressed and the oppressor to the same ethic. Both groups are filled with hate, and hate must be destroyed. But as long as we fail to see one another and to hear one another’s stories, we will forever come into contact with each other without any sense of understanding and compassion.

los pasos de los desheredados”. Aunque sus palabras fueron primero publicadas a principios de los años 1950s, resuenan inquietantemente hoy.

Thurman entendió que “el odio comúnmente empieza en una situación en la que hay contacto sin comunión”. Este contexto describe a personas que trabajan juntos, viven cerca unos de otros y quizá hasta adoran juntos, pero que no tienen una comunión real los unos con los otros. Sin ese sentido de comunión, es fácil tratar a alguien como si fuera diferente y foráneo. Una vez que este fundamento se establece, la deshumanización ha comenzado, y no hay urgencia por tener compasión ni justicia.

En su obra, Thurman finalmente llama al cristiano a una vida que está centrada en una ética de amor. Él reta tanto al oprimido como al opresor a tener la misma ética. Ambos grupos están

We know that we are called to do justice, and that justice calls us to be mindful and compassionate of our neighbors, but we are not always sure what that looks like. In this issue, you will find voices of practitioners and scholars who each unpack justice from their perspective. How might the psychologist or the pastor respond to the call to do justice? How do issues of power affect our understanding of, and engagement with, justice? How do we approach Scripture with a justice lens? May these contributions deepen your fellowship with others, guide you toward an ethic of love, and strengthen you in your call to do justice.

1. H. Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, reprint ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996), 64.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 65.

llenos de odio y el odio debe ser destruido. Pero mientras que fracasemos en vernos unos a otros y en escuchar las historias los unos de los otros, estaremos por siempre en contacto unos con otros sin un sentido de entendimiento y compasión.

Sabemos que somos llamado a hacer justicia, y que la justicia nos llama a ser conscientes y compasivos hacia nuestro prójimo, pero no siempre estamos seguros de cómo se ve eso. En este número encontrarás voces de profesionales y académicos que analizan la justicia desde su perspectiva. ¿Cómo puede el psicólogo o el pastor responder al llamado a hacer justicia? ¿Cómo afectan los problemas de poder a nuestro entendimiento y relación con la justicia? ¿Cómo nos acercamos a la Escritura con un lente de justicia? Que estas contribuciones profundicen tu comunión con otros, te guíen a una ética de amor y te fortalezcan en tu llamado a hacer justicia.

못한 자들을 쫓는 지옥의 사냥개들”라고 부르는 것은 당연합니다. 비록 그의 글은 1950년대에 출판되었지만, 오늘날에도 여전히 섬뜩하게 들립니다.

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텔만은 그리스도인들을 궁극적으로 사랑 윤리를 중심으로 둔 삶으로 초대합니다. 그는 억압하는 자와 억압받는 자 모두에게 사랑의 윤리로

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## JUSTICE LENSES

Dwight A. Radcliff Jr.

**Dwight A. Radcliff Jr.** is academic dean for the William E. Pannell Center for Black Church Studies and assistant professor of mission, theology, and culture. His teaching and preaching have taken him across the US and abroad, and he has lectured in seminaries, universities, and conferences on topics ranging from urban church planting, culture, theology, preaching, social justice, millennials, and evangelism. He has over 20 years of experience in pastoral ministry and is pastor of The Message Center, a multicultural, multigenerational, urban congregation in Gardena, California, where he leads with his wife, DeShun Jones-Radcliff. He and his wife have two daughters.

I vividly remember sitting in a class taught by my mentor, Ralph Basui Watkins. He kept talking about biblical interpretation and one’s social location. He kept using the term “lens” to describe a person’s lived experience and way of engaging with the world—their worldview. As a new student in theological education, so many terms and concepts seemed foreign to me. This concept of lenses, however, made perfect sense. I remember owning various pairs of sunglasses with different colored lenses—novelty sunglasses. While I thought the glasses made me look cool, I remember how they colored everything I saw. A pair of blue sunglasses changed everything to some abstract shade of blue. Green glasses gave everything a very distinct shade and haze. Even regular sunglasses—without the colored tint—added shading and discoloration. Sitting in this classroom in the midst of my own epiphany, I began to ask deep questions of myself. I needed to know what lenses I used and how biblical narratives were being shaded by my own worldview, and those of others.

Years later, I recognize that there are a multitude of lenses—hermeneutical approaches—that individuals and groups use to read and live out Scripture. I would like to be so bold as to attempt a very large generalization for the sake of brevity. In many groups where justice and shalom are not core tenants of reading and living out God’s Word, there seems to be a particular lens at play. This lens tends to push past the words on the page, with the hopes of attaining the hidden—and “more important”—meaning of the text. It is the assertion of this brief essay that, in reading Scripture this way, we are discoloring, shading, and shifting the text. The focusing done by this particular type of lens often denies the social location

and lived experiences of the human beings in the text, for the sake of reaching the perceived spiritual and universal truths of the text. This allegorical approach to Scripture often shifts the focus away from very obvious elements in a passage, and this shifting can deny the humanity and the divine interaction on the page. Bernard Ramm outlines several allegorical schools and the basics of their function; at the core of these schools and methods, however, is the idea that the letter of the text is obvious and mostly insignificant, because the real meaning is hidden underneath.<sup>1</sup> The brief argument of this essay is that a lens which rushes beyond the words of the text will often deny justice and shalom. Hence, my argument is for a justice lens that allows us to more fully read and live God’s Word.

### NOVELTY LENSES

In Luke’s narrative of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, he details a funeral procession that is interrupted by our Lord (Luke 7:11–15). The deceased young man is the only son of a widow. Jesus raises this young man, the gathered crowds praise God, and word of this spreads throughout the region.

So often, the miraculous raising of the dead young man takes center stage, and for good reason. This wondrous act of the supreme savior needs to be celebrated. However, the lens with which we view Scripture—at least in the church in the West—is often dominated by an allegorical approach. We are often so busy looking for the hidden meaning of a text that we miss the text itself. What I’d like to urge in this essay is that we do the hard work of removing (or at least naming) our preconstructed lenses that prevent us from seeing what is right in front of us because it has been shaded and altered. Is this passage about a miraculous raising

from the dead that could be symbolic of Christ’s authority over our own circumstances? Certainly. There is also, however, another narrative in the text that must be seen.

In the passage, several key individuals and groups are identified: Jesus, Jesus’ disciples, the large crowd following Jesus, a large crowd from the city, the deceased son, and the widowed mother. The woman is described in detail, especially compared to the others present. She is a grieving mother, a widow, in the midst of the funeral procession for her only son. The typical lens that we use to view this woman highlights her pain and her agony, stemming from a sense of deep loss. However, because that same lens has been constructed by allegorical preference and a Christian tradition that tends to ignore the social and lived realities of persons in the Bible and in our worlds, we miss the other things present in the text.

Notice, again, the way the lens works. If all the reader sees is her emotional agony, then Jesus’ compassion toward her is relegated to her emotional state; her trauma is truncated to her role as a grieving mother. Jesus’ miracle, then, is solely concentrated on the grief of a mother, and the raising of her son is an act of taking her pain away. In this interpretation Jesus becomes the God who comforts us emotionally and spiritually, but says nothing about our lived experiences and social realities. This particular hermeneutic—the novelty lens—shades, dims, and colors the view of the text in the same way those novelty sunglasses of mine did. This novelty lens focuses on a kind of Greco-Roman traditional hermeneutic steeped in allegorical method. This hermeneutic prioritizes a perceived deeper and truer meaning of the text, usually at the expense

of other things deemed to be “surface” and insignificant. Just as one who is wearing blue sunglasses will never be able to appreciate vibrant yellows and deep browns, this novelty lens robs the reader of the vibrant tapestry God is revealing to us.

### JUSTICE LENSES

We must be able to read God’s Word in totality. Yes, there are often wonderful and revelatory truths to be mined from deep study of Scripture. However, if all Scripture is inspired by God, then there are also wonderful and revelatory truths in the actual words and descriptions themselves.

Looking at this passage of Luke, Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder points out that this woman has lost her “primary means of support, she has lost all economic security.”<sup>2</sup> Without her son, this woman, in her social and historical context, is now in the most vulnerable position in her society. She will be primarily at the mercy of others for her daily provision, protection, legal needs, and communal engagement. As Jesus sees this woman in compounded agony and compounded disenfranchisement, he has compassion on her. A more justice-centered lens allows us, the readers, to engage the totality of compassion that Jesus has on this woman. Jesus’ compassion is not restricted to her emotional state of loss. Rather, Jesus’ compassion is inclusive of her entire condition. Jesus knows well what awaits this dear sister both in her days of mourning in a familial sense, and in her days of struggling in a socioeconomic sense. The compassion of the Messiah encompasses all this woman feels, knows, is experiencing, and will experience. This compassion does not skip over her lived reality, neither does it land solely on her current tears.

The good news in this passage is that Jesus

sees it all and sees us all. Christ is concerned with all of us, not just part of us. This view is not an isolated incident with this particular widow either. The fourth chapter of Luke gives us Jesus’ declaration and understanding of the gospel. As Justo González notes, this passage “sets the tone for the entire book.”<sup>3</sup> It is here that Jesus cites the prophet Isaiah and puts forth the familiar edict that he is to declare good news to the poor, release to captives, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and the year of the Lord. As Drew Hart reminds us, “Jesus’ message was revolutionary good news for the poor.”<sup>4</sup> Again, employing a justice lens, these are actual humans in actual conditions, not themes and abstract concepts. On the other hand, an allegorical reading of the text can deny actual justice and inspire pontification about a perceived eschatological justice. Too often we read “poor,” “captive,” and “blind” as simple adjectives—as metaphors. And our response is to pray for these conditions, which are interpreted as disembodied concepts to be cast out. This is not what Jesus said, nor is it what Jesus saw. “He saw them as bodies and souls.”<sup>5</sup>

Here, justice is not about seeking political upheaval for the sake of revolution. Justice, rather, is about reading and doing God’s Word. It is about an “ethic of compassion” and a sense of justice and liberation that is “the very foundation of biblical faith.”<sup>6</sup> In fact, Jesus’ very essence is freedom.<sup>7</sup> Jesus understands that his calling includes liberation and freedom and impacting the actual social conditions of human beings. He declares this in Luke 4 and demonstrates it so vividly in Luke 7. The compassion of Jesus toward this woman’s complete existence fueled him to intervene. Listen closely to the language of the text. Jesus sees her



entire grief, her entire trauma, everything she is facing. He says to her, “Do not weep” (Luke 7:13). After speaking to the young man and raising him from the dead, Jesus “gave him back to his mother” (Luke 7:18). By giving this woman back her son, in the context of her time, Jesus has essentially changed her entire social and economic future—in addition to healing her grief and loss. In the midst of the crowds following and expecting things from Jesus, he is able to focus in on the pain and suffering of this woman and center her narrative. He centers her experience in such a way that both crowds—the one following him to see miracles and signs of life and the one following her because there is no sign of life—are impacted by her current situation and the newness of life that Jesus’ interruption brings to her.

A justice-oriented lens allows the reader to see the varied colors and nuances in the passage. The woman’s grief is present, but so is her trauma, anxiety, uncertainty, social location, economic condition, familial future, vulnerability, fear, and even anger. She is allowed to be the full human God created her to be as she interacts with the divine. Any lens, then, that is not at least shaped, formed, or touched by God’s compassion and desire for shalom and justice refuses to acknowledge necessary details in Scripture and concludes with a summation of the text that is devoid of the depth and diversity of real-life application.

#### CONCLUSION

So often, conversations around justice within Christianity are dominated by social action, or political agendas, or division around denominationally bound definitions of the gospel. This essay seeks

to challenge the way we view Scripture rather than directly engage in the prevailing arguments. If we are to see the totality of human-divine interaction with the revelation of God’s Word, then we must divest ourselves of novelty lenses that look beyond what God has explicitly spoken. Christ has set an example for us. Christ is moved with compassion when he sees and considers this woman’s reality. That compassion moves him to intervene.

In her recent book, *In My Grandmother’s House*, Yolanda Pierce shares a story of a Black woman who is driving in the rain. She sees a White woman on the side of the road and has an internal struggle with herself regarding whether or not to help. The struggle, you see, is not about whether or not help is needed. Rather, the struggle is over whether or not the help would be received. Pierce ends this chapter by challenging a more eschatological understanding of salvation to include this work of intervening. “When I am spiritually and physically well, and when I am spiritually and physically safe, I have a responsibility to work so that other communities, peoples, and cultures can also be made safe and whole.”<sup>8</sup>

Can we open ourselves to see Scripture and to see our neighbors? Justice is more than the sermons we preach, the books we write, and the classes we teach. Not that these things are outside of the purview of justice, for many preachers and scholars find justice at the core of their work. Yet the goal of justice, rather than the sermon, the book, or the course, is the interruption of an actual lived reality that grieves the heart of God in our broken world. I strongly believe that if we were to see the beautiful spectrum of human experience engaging God in Scripture that we, too, would be

moved with compassion to speak, to heal, to give back. ■

#### ENDNOTES

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## LENTE DE JUSTICIA

Dwight A. Radcliff Jr.

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Recuerdo vívidamente estar sentado en una clase que estaba enseñando mi mentor, Ralph Basui Watkins. Él estaba hablando acerca de la interpretación bíblica y la ubicación social de una persona. Estaba usando el término ‘lente’ para describir la experiencia vivida de una persona y su manera de relacionarse con el mundo—su cosmovisión. Como un estudiante nuevo en educación teológica, había muchos términos y conceptos que parecían foráneos para mí. Este concepto de lente, sin embargo, tenía perfecto sentido para mí. Recuerdo tener varios pares de gafas sol con lentes de diferentes colores—lentes de sol novedosos. Si bien creía que los lentes me hacían ver bien, recuerdo como coloreaban todo lo que veía. Un par de gafas de sol azules cambiaban todo a un tono abstracto de azul. Gafas de sol verdes le daban a todo un tono y matiz muy distintivo. Todos estos colores son vitales a la analogía, pero no comienzan a cubrir el tema general de las tonalidades y descoloración que ocurre con las gafas de sol en general. Sentado en este salón de clases en medio de mi propia epifanía, empecé a hacer preguntas profundas de mí mismo. Necesitaba saber qué lentes usaba y cómo las narrativas bíblicas estaban siendo sombreadas por mi propia cosmovisión, y la de otros.

Años después, reconocí que hay una multitud de lentes—enfoques hermenéuticos—que individuos y grupos usan para leer y vivir las Escrituras. Me gustaría arriesgarme al intentar hacer una gran generalización por la necesidad de ser breve. En muchos grupos donde la justicia y shalom no son principios fundamentales al leer y vivir la Palabra de Dios, parece que tienen un lente particular en uso. Este lente tiende a empujar más allá de las palabras en la página, con las esperanzas de obtener lo escondido y el significado “más importante” del texto. Es la intensidad de este

ensayo corto que, al leer la Escritura de esta manera, estamos descolorando, sombreando y cambiando el texto. El enfoque hecho por este tipo de lente en particular de seguido niega la ubicación social y experiencia vivida de los seres humanos en el texto, con la excusa de alcanzar las verdades universales y espirituales percibidas del texto. Este acercamiento alegórico a la Escritura constantemente cambia el enfoque lejos de los muy obvios elementos en un pasaje, y este cambio puede negar la humanidad y la interacción divina en la página. Bernard Ramm describe varias escuelas alegóricas y los fundamentos de su función; en el núcleo de estas escuelas y métodos, sin embargo, está la idea que la letra del texto es obvia y en su mayoría insignificante, porque el verdadero significado está escondido debajo (1). El argumento breve de este ensayo es que un lente que se apresura más allá de las palabras del texto a menudo negará la justicia y shalom. Por eso, el argumento es a favor de un lente de justicia que nos permita leer y vivir la Palabra de Dios de manera más completa.

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En la narrativa de Lucas acerca de la vida y ministerio de Cristo Jesús, él detalla una procesión funeraria que es interrumpida por nuestro Señor (Lucas 7:11–15). El joven fallecido es el hijo único de una viuda. Jesús resucita a este joven, la multitud reunida alaba a Dios, y la noticia de esto se esparce por la región.

Frecuentemente, la milagrosa resurrección del joven fallecido se vuelve central, y por buena razón. Este acto maravilloso del supremo salvador necesita ser celebrado. Sin embargo, el lente a través del cual de seguido vemos la escritura—al menos en la iglesia del Este—frecuentemente es dominado por un acercamiento alegórico. Por lo general

estamos tan ocupados buscando el significado escondido de un texto, que nos perdemos del texto mismo. Lo que me gustaría instar en este ensayo es que hagamos el trabajo difícil de remover (o al menos nombrar) nuestros lentes pre-construidos que nos prevén de ver con frecuencia lo que está justo enfrente de nosotros porque ha sido sombreado y alterado. ¿Es este pasaje acerca de una resurrección milagrosa de entre los muertos que pudiera ser simbólico de la autoridad de Cristo sobre nuestras propias circunstancias? Por supuesto. También hay, sin embargo, otra narrativa en el texto que debemos ver.

En el pasaje, varios individuos y grupos claves son identificados: Jesús, los discípulos de Jesús, la gran multitud siguiendo a Jesús, una gran multitud de la ciudad, el hijo fallecido, y la madre viuda. La mujer es descrita a detalle, especialmente comparada con los otros presentes. Ella es una madre enlutada, una viuda, en medio de la procesión funeraria de su hijo único. El lente típico que usamos para ver a esta mujer destaca su dolor y su agonía, que proviene de un sentimiento de profunda pérdida. Sin embargo, a causa de que ese mismo lente ha sido construido por una preferencia alegórica y una tradición cristiana que tiende a ignorar las realidades sociales y vividas de las personas de la Biblia y en nuestros mundos, nos perdemos de las otras cosas presentes en el texto.

Pon atención, de nuevo, la manera en que el lente funciona. Si todo lo que el lector ve es su agonía emocional, entonces la compasión de Jesús hacia ella está relegada a su estado emocional; su trauma es truncada por su rol como una madre en luto. El milagro de Jesús, entonces, se concentra solamente en el duelo de una madre, y la resurrección de su hijo es un acto de quitar su dolor. En esta interpretación, Jesús se vuelve el Dios que

nos consuela emocional y espiritualmente, pero no nos dice nada acerca de nuestras experiencias vividas y realidades sociales. Esta hermenéutica particular—los lentes novedosos—sombrea, atenúa y colorea la visión del texto en la misma manera que mis gafas de sol novedosas lo hicieron. Estos lentes novedosos se enfocan en un tipo de hermenéutica tradicional greco-romana empapada de un método alegórico. Esta hermenéutica tiene como prioridad encontrar un significado del texto que sea más profundo y verdadero, usualmente a expensas de otras cosas consideradas como “superficiales” e insignificantes. Así como alguien que está usando gafas de sol azules nunca podrá apreciar los amarillos vibrantes y los cafés profundos, estos lentes novedosos le roban al lector del brillante tapiz que Dios nos está revelando.

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Debemos de poder leer la Palabra de Dios en su totalidad. Sí, muy seguido hay verdades maravillosas y reveladoras que deben ser extraídos de un estudio profundo de la Escritura. Sin embargo, si toda la Escritura es inspirada por Dios, entonces también hay verdades maravillosas y reveladoras en las palabras mismas y en las descripciones mismas.

Viendo este pasaje de Lucas, Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder nos señala que esta mujer ha perdido su “principal medio de sostén, ha perdido toda la seguridad económica”(2). Sin su hijo, esta mujer, en su contexto social e histórico, está ahora en la posición más vulnerable en su sociedad. Ella estará, primeramente, a merced de otros para su provisión diaria, protección, necesidades legales y compromiso comunal. Al Jesús ver a esta mujer en agonía y marginalización compuestas, Él tiene compasión por ella. Un lente más centrado en justicia

nos permite, como lectores, relacionar la totalidad de la compasión que Jesús tiene hacia esta mujer. La compasión de Jesús no está restringida a su estado emocional de pérdida. Más bien, la compasión de Jesús es inclusiva de su condición completa. Jesús sabe bien lo que le espera a esta querida hermana tanto en sus días de duelo en un sentido familiar, y en los días de batallar en un sentido socioeconómico. La compasión del Mesías abarca todo lo que esta mujer siente, conoce, está experimentando, y experimentará. Esta compasión no omite su experiencia vivida, ni aterriza solamente en sus lágrimas de ese momento.

La buena nueva en este pasaje es que Jesús lo ve todo y nos ve a todos. Cristo está preocupado de nosotros como un todo, no sólo una parte de nosotros. Esta perspectiva tampoco es un incidente aislado con esta viuda en particular. El cuarto capítulo de Lucas nos da la declaración de Jesús y su entendimiento del evangelio. Como Justo González señala, este pasaje “marca el tono para el libro entero” (3). Es aquí donde Jesús cita al profeta Isaías y presenta el edicto que Él va a declarar las buenas nuevas a los pobres, liberar a los cautivos, dar vista a los ciegos, libertad a los oprimidos y que ha llegado el año del Señor. Como Drew Hart nos recuerda, “el mensaje de Jesús eran revolucionarias buenas nuevas para los pobres”(4). De nuevo, usando un lente de justicia, estos son seres humanos reales en condiciones reales, no temas ni conceptos abstractos. Por otro lado, una lectura alegórica del texto puede negar justicia real e inspirar pontificación acerca de una percibida justicia escatológica. Demasiado seguido leemos “pobre”, “cautivo”, “ciego” como simples adjetivos gramaticales—como metáforas. Y nuestra respuesta es orar por estas condiciones que son interpreta-

das como conceptos desencarnados a ser desechados. Esto no es lo que Jesús dijo, ni es lo que Jesús vio. “Él los vio como cuerpos y almas” (5).

La justicia, aquí, no se trata de buscar una revuelta política con tal de tener revolución. La justicia, más bien, se trata de leer y hacer la Palabra de Dios. Se trata una “ética de compasión” y un sentido de justicia y liberación que es “el fundamento mismo de la fe bíblica” (6). De hecho, la esencia misma de Jesús es libertad (7). Jesús entiende que su llamado incluye liberación y libertad e impactar las condiciones sociales de los seres humanos. Él declara esto en Lucas 4 y lo demuestra tan vívidamente en Lucas 7. La compasión de Jesús hacia la existencia completa de esta mujer lo impulsó a intervenir. Escucha atentamente al lenguaje del texto. Jesús ve su duelo completo, su trauma completa, todo lo que ella está enfrentando. Él le dice a ella, “No llores” (Lucas 7:13). Después de hablar al joven y levantarlo de entre los muertos, las escrituras nos dicen que Jesús “se lo regresó a su madre” (Lucas 7:15). Al darle su hijo de vuelta a esta mujer, en el

contexto de su tiempo, Jesús ha cambiado esencialmente su futuro social y económico completo—además de sanar su duelo y pérdida. En medio de las multitudes siguiendo y esperando cosas de Jesús, él es capaz de enfocarse en el dolor y sufrimiento de esta mujer y centrar su narrativa. Él centra su experiencia de tal forma que ambas multitudes—la que lo sigue a él para ver milagros y señales de vida y la que la sigue a ella porque no hay señales de vida—son impactadas por su situación actual y lo renovación de vida que la interrupción de Jesús le trae.

Un lente orientado a la justicia le permite al lector ver la variedad de colores y matices en el pasaje. El duelo de la mujer está presente, pero también está su trauma, ansiedad, incertidumbre, ubicación social, condición económica, futuro familiar, vulnerabilidad, miedo e incluso enojo. Ella tiene permitido ser el ser humano completo que Dios la creó para ser mientras interactúa con lo divino. Cualquier lente, entonces, que no está al menos moldeado, formado, o tocado por la compasión de Dios y deseo por shalom y justicia se rehúsa a reconocer los detalles necesarios en la Escritura y concluye con una recapitulación del texto carente de profundidad y diversidad de una aplicación en la vida real.

#### CONCLUSIÓN

Seguido, las conversaciones acerca de la justicia dentro del cristianismo están dominadas por acción social o agendas políticas o división alrededor de definiciones del evangelio sujetas denominacionalmente. Este ensayo busca retar la manera en que vemos la Escritura, en vez de involucrarnos directamente en los argumentos predominantes. Si vamos a ver la totalidad de la interacción humana-divina con la

revelación de la Palabra de Dios, entonces debemos despojarnos de los lentes novedosos que miran más allá de lo que Dios ha dicho explícitamente. Cristo nos ha puesto el ejemplo. Cristo es movido por compasión cuando ve y considera la realidad de esta mujer. Esa compasión lo mueve a intervenir.

En su libro más reciente, *En La Casa de mi Abuela*, Yolanda Pierce comparte una historia de una mujer negra que está manejando en la lluvia. Ella ve a una mujer blanca al lado del camino y tiene una lucha interna consigo misma respecto a si debe o no ayudarla. La lucha, verás, no se trata de si se necesita o no la ayuda. Sino que, la lucha es sobre si la ayuda será o no recibida. Ella termina este capítulo retando a tener un entendimiento más escatológico de la salvación para que incluya este trabajo de intervención. “Cuando estoy bien espiritual y físicamente, y cuando estoy espiritual y físicamente segura, tengo una responsabilidad de trabajar para que otras comunidades, personas y culturas puedan también ser hechos seguros y completos”. (8)

¿Podemos abrírnos para ver las Escrituras y ver a nuestro prójimo? La justicia es más que los sermones que predicamos, libros que escribimos y clases que enseñamos. No que estas cosas estén fuera del alcance de la justicia, porque muchos predicadores y académicos tienen justicia en el núcleo de su trabajo. Sin embargo, la meta de la justicia, más bien, no es el sermón, el libro o el curso, es la interrupción de una realidad vivida que aflige el corazón de Dios en nuestro mucho quebrantado. Creo firmemente que si viéramos el bello espectro de la experiencia humana conectándose con Dios en la Escritura que nosotros, también, seríamos conmovidos con compasión para hablar, sanar y dar de lo recibido. ■

## 정의의 렌즈

드와이트 레드클리프

드와이트 레드클리프(Dwight A. Radcliff Jr.)는 윌리엄 E. 패넬 흑인교회연구센터(William E. Pannell Center for Black Church Studies)의 학장이자 선교, 신학, 문화학 조교수입니다. 그는 교육과 설교를 위해 미국 전역과 해외 여러 나라를 방문하였고, 도시 교회 개척, 문화, 신학, 설교, 사회 정의, 밀레니얼 세대, 복음주의 등과 같은 다양한 주제에 대해 신학교, 대학교, 학회에서 강의해 오고 있습니다. 그는 20년 이상의 목회 경험을 가지고 있으며, 캘리포니아 주 가디나(Gardena)에 위치한 다문화, 다세대, 도시 교회인 메시지 센터(The Message Center)의 목사로, 아내 디션 존스-레드클리프(DeShun Jones-Radcliff)와 함께 사역하고 있습니다. 그와 아내에게는 두 딸이 있습니다.

제멘토이신 Ralph Basui Watkins 박사님이 가르치시던 수업에 앉아있던 걸 생생히 기억합니다. 박사님은 성경해석과 사회적 지위에 대해서 말씀하고 계셨습니다. 박사님은 한 사람의 경험과 세상과 살아가는 방식, 즉 세계관을 설명하기 위해서 ‘렌즈’라는 용어를 계속 사용하셨습니다. 신학을 처음 접한 저에게는 처음 듣는 용어와 개념이 아주 많았습니다. 그런데 이 렌즈 개념은 너무 이해가 잘 되었습니다. 저는 다양한 색깔의 선글라스들을 가지고 있었습니다. 선글라스를 쓴 제 모습이 멋있었지만, 온 세상이 다른 색깔로 보이는 것도 기억합니다. 파란색 선글라스는 모든 것을 파란색으로 바꾸었습니다. 녹색 선글라스도 모든 것에 녹색으로 입혔습니다. 이 색깔들은 이 비유의 핵심이지만, 대부분의 선글라스들이 주는 그들과 왜곡을 설명하기엔 시작에 불과합니다. 이 교실에서 이 깨달음을 얻은 저에게 스스로 심오한 질문을 해 봅니다. 나는 어떠한 렌즈를 사용하고 있는지 또한 저 스스로의 세계관과 다른 사람들의 세계관으로 인해 성경 내러티브가 얼마나 그들로 가려져 있는지 알아야 할 것 같습니다.

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종종 죽은 자가 살아나는 기적이 본문의 주인공이 될 때는 합당한 이유가 있습니다. 우리의 구원자 예수님께서 하신 놀라운 일을 축하해야 합니다. 그러나 성경을 보는 우리의 렌즈는(적어도 서구 교회에서는) 대부분 알레고리적으로 접근합니다. 우리는 본문뒤의 숨겨진 의미를 찾기 위해서 본문 자체를 놓쳐버립니다. 이글에서 제가 강조하고 싶은것은 최소한 우리가 이미 쓰고있는 렌즈가 최소한 무엇인지 알거나 벗어나서 본문을 놓치거나 회생시키지 않도록 노력해야 한다는 것입니다. 죽은자가 살아나는 기적 본문이, 현재 우리 환경에 대한 예수 그리스도의 권위를 상징하고 있습니까? 그 본문에서 저희가 놓쳐서는 안되는 이야기가 또 있습니다.

이 본문에서 주요 인물과 그룹이 드러납니다: 예수님, 예수님의 제자들, 예수님을 따르는 큰 군중들, 장례 행렬을 따라온 도시의 많은 군중들, 죽은 아들, 그리고 과부 어머니가 있습니다. 특별히 여기서 다른 사람들에 비해 과부에 대해서 자세히 묘사가 되고 있습니다. 그녀는 자신의 외아들의 장례행렬을 따라가는 애통해 하는 어머니이자 과부입니다. 우리가 이 여성을 보는 보편적인 렌즈는 그녀의 아들을 잃은 깊은 상실감에서 오는 고통과 괴로움을 강조합니다. 그러나 그 렌즈는 본문과 우리 삶의 사회 문화적 현실을 간과하게끔 하는 알레고리적 경향과 기독교 전통으로 인해 생겼기 때문에, 우리는 본문의 다른 것들을 놓치게 됩니다.

다시 한번 더 렌즈가 무슨 일을하는지 보세요. 만약 모든 독자가 과부의 감정적 괴로움을 보았다면, 과부에 대한 예수님의 마음은 과부의 감정에 국한됩니다. 과부의 삶이 아들을 잃은 어머니로 한정되는 것입니다. 그렇게 되면 예수님의 기적은 어머니의 애통에만 집중되어, 아들을 살리신 일이 어머니의 고통을 없애 버린게 됩니다. 이 해석에서는 예수님께서서는 우리의 감정과 영을 위로하시는 분이시지만, 우리의 삶과 사회 현실에는 침묵하시는 하나님이 되십니다. 이러한 튀는 해석들은 제 튀는 선글라스처럼 본문을 변색시키고, 가리워 버립니다. 이런 튀는 렌즈들은 알레고리적

## RESTORING JUSTICE THROUGH RESTORED IDENTITY, AGENCY, AND TRUSTWORTHY CONNECTIONS

Miyoung Yoon Hammer



**Miyoung Yoon Hammer** is associate professor of marriage and family therapy and chair of the Department of Marriage and Family. Prior to joining the Fuller faculty, she worked as a medical family therapist (MedFT), providing therapy for patients and their families in hospital, outpatient, and private practice settings. In addition to her MedFT focus, her research interests involve the practitioner's experience and perspective. She addresses this self-of-the-therapist process in her classes, encouraging students to explore their contexts to better understand themselves and to develop an awareness of how their own family and faith narratives inform their clinical work. She is a licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT) in California and Illinois.

해석에 몰들어 있던 그리스-로마 전통 해석에서 비롯되었습니다. 이 해석학은 일반적으로 본문 뒤의 깊은 의미에 중점을 두다 보니, '표면적;이거나 덜 중요한 부분들을 희생시켜버립니다. 파란 선글라스를 쓴 사람이 아름다운 노란색과 짙은 갈색을 볼 수 없는 것처럼, 이런 튀는 렌즈들은 하나님이 보여주시기 원하는 여러가지 아름다움을 빼앗아 버립니다.

### 정의의 렌즈

우리는 하나님의 말씀을 온전하게 읽을 수 있어야 합니다. 네, 성경을 깊이 연구할때 종종 얻게 되는 놀랍고 계시적인 진리가 있습니다. 모든 말씀이 하나님의 영감으로 되었다면, 실제 단어와 본문에서도 놀랍고 계시적인 진리가 있다는 것입니다.

Stephanie Buckhanon Crowder는 누가복음의 이 본문에서 과부가 "기초적 생계 수단, 곧 모든 경제적 안전을 상실했음"을 강조합니다. 아들이 없는 과부는 그녀의 사회적 역사적 맥락에서 볼때 가장 사회 취약 계층이 되었습니다. 그녀는 이제 매일의 돌봄, 보호, 법적 필요들, 공동체적 참여 등을 위해 다른 사람의 자비에 의존해야만 하게 되었습니다. 예수님은 이 복합적 괴로움과 박탈 속에 있던 과부를 보시고, 그녀를 붙잡히 여기신 것입니다. 좀더 정의에 맞춰진 렌즈는 독자인 우리들에게 과부의 감정적 상실만 보게 하지 않습니다. 예수님의 마음은 과부의 절인적 상태를 보고 계신 것입니다. 예수님은 이 자매의 가족을 잃어 상심한 날들 뿐만 아니라, 사회-경제적으로 힘들어할 날들도 알고 계십니다. 이 여인의 느끼고, 알고, 경험하고, 그리고 앞으로 경험할 모든 것에 메시아의 긍휼이 있습니다. 이 긍휼은 과부가 살았던 현실을 빼먹지 않으며, 현재의 눈물에만 집중하지도 않습니다.

이 본문에서 좋은 소식은 예수님이 모든 것을 보고 계시고, 우리 모두를 보고 계신다는 것입니다. 그리스도는 우리의 한 부분만 아니라, 모든 것에 관심을 두십니다. 이같은 관점은 본문의 특정한 과부에게만 주어진 예외가 아니었습니다. 누가복음 4장은 예수님의 복음 이해와 선언을 보여줍니다. Justo González는 이 본문이 "누가복음 전체의 주제를 잡았다"고 말합니다. 여기서 예수님은 우리가 잘 아는 구절 즉 선지자 이사야를 인용하여 가난한 자에게 복음을, 포로된 자에게 자유를, 눈먼 자에게 다시 보게 함을, 눌린 자에게 자유를, 주의 은혜의 해를 전파하실 것을 선포하셨습니다. Drew Hart

가 우리에게 상기시켜 주듯이, "예수님의 말씀은 가난한 사람들을 위한 혁명적인 좋은 소식"이었습니다. 다시한번 말하자면, 정의의 렌즈를 사용하면 주재나 추상적 개념이 아닌 실제 현실의 실제 사람을 보게 됩니다. 다른 말로 하자면, 알레고리적 본문 읽기는 실제적 정의를 부정하고, 종말론적 정의에 대한 성화만 강조할 수 있습니다. 너무 자주 우리는 "가난한", "사로 잡힌", "눈먼"이란 문법적 형용사들을 단순한 은유로만 읽습니다. 그리고 우리는 이런 실체가 없는 은유적 모습들을 물리치도록 기도만 합니다. 이것은 예수님께서 말씀하신 것이 아닙니다. 또 예수님께서 그것만 보신 것이 아닙니다. "예수님은 그들을 육체와 영혼으로 보셨습니다"

정의란 여기서 혁명을 위해 정치적 변동을 찾는 것이 아닙니다. 정의란, 오히려, 하나님의 말씀을 읽고 행하는 것입니다. 이것은 "마음의 윤리"이며 "성경적 믿음의 가장 기초"인 정의와 해방에 관한 것입니다. 사실, 예수님의 가르침의 본질은 자유입니다. 예수님은 자신의 소명을 인간의 실제 사회적 조건에 영향을 주는 자유와 해방으로 보셨습니다. 예수님은 누가복음 4장에서 이를 선언하시고 누가복음 7장에서 잘 보여줍니다. 이 과부의 온전함에 대한 예수님의 마음이 예수님으로 하여금 과부의 삶에 개입하시도록 한것입니다. 본문의 언어를 잘 들으세요. 예수님은 과부의 애통, 과부의 삶, 그녀가 직면한 모든 것을 보고 계십니다. 예수님은 그녀에게 "울지 말라"(눅 7:13)고 하셨습니다. 성경은 예수님께서 청년에게 말씀하시고 그를 죽음에서 일으키시고 나서 "그를 어머니에게 주시니"(눅 7:15)라고 말합니다. 그녀에게 아들을 돌려 줌으로써 그녀의 아픔과 상실을 치유하셨을 뿐만 아니라, 그 시대적 상황에서, 과부의 사회적 경제적 미래도 근본적으로 바꾸셨습니다. 예수님을 따르고 무언가 기대하는 군중들 속에서, 예수님은 과부의 이야기 중에서 고통과 어려움에만 집중 하실 수 있었습니다. 예수님께서 과부의 경험을 중심으로 과부의 현재 상황과 예수님이 가지고 온 새 생명은 두 무리 모두에게 - 기적과 생명의 희망을 보기 위해 예수님을 따르는 무리와 생명의 희망을 잃어버린 과부를 따르던 무리- 충격이었을 것입니다.

정의 지향적인 렌즈는 독자들로 하여금 본문의 다양한 색깔과 뉘앙스를 볼 수 있도록 합니다. 여성의 아픔도 존재하지만, 그녀의 트라우마, 불안, 불확실, 사회적 경제적 상황, 가문의 미래, 취약성, 두려움 그리고 분노까지 존재합니다. 그 과부는 하나님과의 만남을

통해서 하나님이 창조하신 온전한 사람이 될 수 있었습니다. 살롱과 정의에 대한 하나님의 긍휼과 바램이 들어있지 않거나, 형성되지 않거나, 닿지 않은 렌즈는 성경 속의 필요한 세부사항들을 자제히 보지 않게 하며, 실제 적용의 깊이와 다양성이 부족한 본문 해석으로 이끌어 갑니다.

### 결론

종종 기독교 내 정의에 대한 대화는 사회적 행동, 정치적 의제, 또는 교단적으로 나뉘어진 복음 정의가 대부분입니다. 이 글은 그런 주장들에 관여하기 보다는, 어떻게 성경을 보는냐는 방식에 도전하고자 합니다. 하나님의 말씀 계시로 하나님-인간 상호작용 전체를 보고자 한다면, 하나님께서 말씀하신 것 너머의 뜻을 파헤치려고 하는 튀는 렌즈를 버려야 합니다. 예수님께서서는 우리의 본을 보이셨습니다. 예수님은 이 과부의 현실을 다방면으로 보시고 긍휼을 느끼셨습니다. 그리고 그 긍휼하심으로 예수님은 과부의 삶에 개입하신 것입니다.

Yolanda Pierce는 그녀의 최근 저서인 내 할머니의 집에서(*In My Grandmother's House*)를 통해 빛속을 운전하는 흑인 여성의 이야기를 나눴습니다. 그녀는 길가에 서있는 백인 여성을 보고 도와 줘야 할지 말아야 할지 내적 갈등을 겪었습니다. 이 갈등은 도움이 필요한지 아닌지의 문제가 아니었습니다. 사실 이 갈등은 그분이 도움을 받을 것인지 말것인지 였습니다. 그녀는 개입에 대한 그녀의 고찰을 통해 구원에 대한 종말론적 이해에 다시 질문하면서 이 챕터를 끝맺습니다. "내가 영적으로 신체적으로 건강하며, 영적으로 신체적으로 안전할때, 다른 공동체들, 민족들, 그리고 문화들도 안전해지고 온전해질 수 있도록 도울 책임이 있습니다"

우리가 우리 자신을 열어 성경과 이웃을 볼 수 있을까요? 정의는 우리의 설교보다, 우리가 쓰는 책 보다, 우리가 가르치는 수업 보다 더 큼니다. 이런 것들이 정의에 속하지 않았다가 아니라, 많은 설교가들과 학자들이 자신들의 사역 핵심에서 정의를 찾기 때문입니다. 그러나 정의의 목표가 설교나, 책이나, 수업은 아닙니다. 이 망가진 세상에서 하나님이 애통해 하시는 것은 실제 살아 있는 현실의 중단 입니다. 저는 성경에서 하나님을 만나는 사람들의 다양하고 아름다운 경험을 볼 수 있다면, 우리 또한 긍휼을 가지고 말하고, 치유하고, 되돌려 줄 수 있다고 굳게 믿습니다. ■

The work of restoring justice takes on many forms, and the one that I have been involved in for the past 25 years occurs in the relational microcosm of the therapy room. As a marriage and family therapist (MFT), I have worked in hospitals, outpatient community and non-profit agencies, university clinics, private practices, church counseling centers, and academic training sites. Although the clinical contexts have varied, the focus of the work has remained the same: restore clients' connection to themselves and their connection to others.

These interrelated goals of restoring intra-personal and interpersonal connections are essential in any kind of restorative work where the natural outcome of these connections is the experience of *seeing others* and *being seen by others*. Being seen is the starting point of being known and belonging, and if we are to take seriously the claim that every person bears the image of God, then we ought to see, perceive, and treat ourselves and others in alignment with this claim. And we also acknowledge that the contrary is true. When we are disconnected from our own humanity and to the humanity of others, we are at a greater risk of disregarding (at best) or violating (at worst) ourselves and one another. Thus, restoring connection to self and to others directly ties into the work of restoring justice, because when we see the worth and value of each person as God's creation, then we desire our relationships and our communities to congruently reflect that truth.

An outcome of a more congruent and consolidated sense of identity and relationships is the ability to see oneself rightly in the context of a relational system in which love, identity, accountability, and safety are

valued. It is in this relational space that justice can be restored.

Throughout Scripture, God's work of restoring justice begins with the pursuit of a person or a people whose life or lives betrayed the truth of the identity and purpose God intended for them. Eventually, God restores their identities and leads them to challenge the existing systems of injustice around them. However, God first meets them in moments of vulnerability and demonstrates an intimate connection to their hearts. Consider Moses in the desert, Zacchaeus in the tree, Mary Magdalene in the town square, and Jesus' disciples in the upper room. God pursues them by first declaring, in word and action, that he sees them and knows them. Without disregarding their fears, failures, and doubts, God acknowledges who they are, takes account of their limitations and vulnerabilities, restores their identities as his own, and calls them to live more fully into whom he created them to be.

A restored identity is one that has been made right with God, with oneself, and with the community. And it is from restored identities that individuals, families, and communities can begin to effect change toward restored systems of justice.

### A FAMILY SYSTEMS PERSPECTIVE: EXPANDING THE LENS FOR RESTORING JUSTICE

As an MFT, the locus of my work is in the therapy room with individuals, couples, and families who are courageously seeking restoration by changing, disrupting, and healing from intergenerational patterns of pain. However, although I primarily work in the microcosm of the therapy room, the family systems perspective orients me to see my clients as individuals, couples, and families



who are embedded in larger macro systems that either serve as a resource for resiliency and healing or contribute to the dysfunction within the micro relational system.

The family systems perspective is an ecosystemic lens and is one of the hallmarks of the MFT field. It is the primary framework through which MFTs conceptualize and approach our clinical work. The image of a mobile provides a helpful depiction of family systems, as every piece, connected by wire, moves when one piece is touched. Like the individual parts of a mobile, the whole family system is impacted by the actions of each member, whether this occurs in present time or over the course of generations. Clients and their presenting problems are situated within the context of their past and present social systems (particularly their family systems). Although each individual is ultimately responsible for the attitudes, assumptions, choices, and behaviors that they live out, it is important to understand the ways that their assumptions and behaviors are expressions of the social systems from where they came and in which they are currently embedded.

Over the course of my career, the family systems perspective has impacted me both professionally and personally, as it informs my understanding of myself, others, relationships, and institutions and is the lens through which I continuously make meaning of my experiences in the world. For example, I have been on a journey of discovery about how my assumptions, my imagination, and my sensibilities as an Asian American woman and therapist are embedded in macro social, political, and historical dynamics as well as micro relational systems within my community and the history of my family. These explora-

tions have had profound implications for me in my identity and my voice in the multiple social contexts in which I live. I possess the same multifaceted identity and the same potential to use my voice wherever I go, but depending on the context, I am either seen or invisible, audible or muted. I pay attention to the social context while I wrestle with the reality that my voice is not always welcome simply as a result of who I am. I have developed the skill of multivocality, knowing that the skill of contextualizing my voice is a byproduct of my bicultural agility, but at times I still wonder if I compromise the fidelity of my voice in order to be heard in spaces where I am otherwise muted. I am in constant interaction with my social and physical environment, but because of my experiences of marginalization, I am more aware of the tensions and dynamics of those interactions. The family systems perspective has provided both the language and the maps for me to make sense of my experiences.

As the family systems perspective conceptually and practically situates the individual, couple, and family within their social context, MFTs are trained to work with multiple members of those systems in the therapy room. Working with multiple people in the therapy room is a challenging but highly effective way to work directly with the relational system, where the pain exists and where healing can be sustained, because relationships are the crucibles for change. Meaningful and sustained change occurs in relational spaces and in the context of relationships—not in the isolation of an individual. If we are to seek meaningful change in ourselves and our relationships, then understanding the anatomy of relationships is a good place to begin.

#### ANATOMY OF RELATIONSHIPS: A LOCUS OF CHANGE FOR RESTORING JUSTICE

The late philosopher and theologian Paul Tillich posited that love, power, and justice are fundamental constructs of all human relationships and social systems. In his book *Love, Power, and Justice*, Tillich wrote about the three interrelated principles and how, together, they function to inform how we are to relate to one another and to God.<sup>1</sup> Like the persons of the Holy Trinity, love, power, and justice are distinct from one another while also interrelated, as the purpose and the effect of love, power, and justice are most fully realized when they exist in concert with one another. Drawing from Tillich's trifecta—which provides a comprehensive framework for relational and spiritual connection—I would suggest that there are three corresponding constructs in family therapy that are salient in the anatomy of relationships: identity (love), agency (power), and trustworthy connection to other (justice).

Identity is what we bring into relationships. Trustworthy connection is how we build and sustain relationships. And agency is the responsibility and accountability we hold within relationships.

As a Restoration Therapy therapist, my clinical work focuses first on helping clients gain insight about the pain they bear due to violations of identity and trustworthiness they have experienced, and then we focus on identifying a new narrative based on restored truths about identity and trustworthiness that promote healthy, relational connection to self and to others.<sup>2</sup> The process of change builds on the insights gained. Eventually, clients develop a consciousness about the choice they have to either live reactively out of their pain or live with agency

from their restored truths. These three constructs of identity, agency, and trustworthy connections are key components of all relationships and will be further explored below.

#### IDENTITY (LOVE)

Identity is the internalized sense and externalized expression of an individual's being. In individualistic cultures, this is conceptualized as the uniqueness of an individual apart from the larger group. In collectivistic cultures the identity is less about the uniqueness of the individual and more about an extension of the group. Regardless of cultural context, identity is integral to relationships as it is part of what we have to offer and receive when relating to one another.

As a Restoration Therapy therapist, I work with the assumption that identity is the primary emotion that is formed through the multidimensional expressions of agape, phileo, and eros love. Love is the conduit through which we receive messages that we have value and worth, that we belong and know to whom we belong, and that we are not alone. We know we have value. We perceive the ways each of us are unique, and in the uniqueness of our identities we belong to one another. We do not exist in isolation. Love forms the most fundamental aspect of our identities as being beloved and extends far deeper than the sentimentality of charity and affection.

Psychological and relational pain is a corollary of identity violations, where love was withheld, skewed, and manipulated during critical moments within formative relationships. When we receive the painful messages and internalize the lies that we are not good enough, that we are damaged goods, that we are alone, or that we are in-

herently unlovable, we are reactive in our coping and become further removed from a core identity that is rooted in truth and love. We need truth-speakers to send new and alternative messages of love and to help restore our identities to who God intended for us to be as his beloved creation, made in God's image.

#### AGENCY (POWER)

Power is present in all relationships, and two elements of power that are important to consider are agency and privilege. Agency is the belief that we possess the ability and resources (internal and/or external) to affect change and are able to employ those abilities and resources toward action or intentional restraint from action. Agency is related to identity, as our sense of agency is birthed out of the value we have in ourselves and the family or community in which we belong. When we know that we are not alone and that we have something to offer, we can stand rooted in that truth and be emboldened to be changemakers for the good of ourselves and others. Our agency as Christians is rooted in the narrative of faithfulness of those who have gone before us, reminding us from where we came and to whom we belong. In Hebrews 11 and 12, we read God's promise that we are surrounded by a faithful cloud of witnesses of those who went before us, of those upon whose shoulders we stand:

*These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised, since God had planned something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run*

*with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Heb 11:39–12:2)*

Agency and power are not one and the same however. It is possible to be in a position of power but not have agency. I would suggest that when power and authority is intentionally used to effect change or maintain a status quo that marginalizes, exploits, or in any way diminishes a person's or a community's identity as God's creation, the person with the power lacks agency and is instead acting out of reactivity and dysregulated emotions. I believe that the understanding of agency as described above is correct, but it is incomplete because agency is not simply the ability to act. I would add: "Agency is the belief that we possess the ability and resources (internal and/or external) to effect change that *promotes human thriving* and are able to employ those abilities and resources toward action or intentional restraint from action." Agency leads to affecting change that fosters healthy connection, relational resilience, and mutuality. Simply having the power or the resources to cause



change may be an act of control or authority, but it is not necessarily agency if the person is being reactive. Everyone has the potential for agency, regardless of their position of power or powerlessness, because agency is tied to identity and not to position.

We cannot discuss power without also considering privilege. Where agency is more closely tied to identity, privilege is about access to resources, both earned and unearned. The resources may be internal, such as knowledge, motivation, and temperament, or they may be external, such as social support, employment, and financial stability. Dominique DuBois Gilliard's book *Subversive Witness: Scripture's Call to Leverage Privilege* provides good examples of the use of privilege to meaningfully counter injustice.<sup>3</sup> He illuminates characters throughout Scripture who did not conform to the patterns of the world around them but instead, by the power of the Holy Spirit, leveraged the privilege they had to call out systems of injustice and take action to bring about change. The story of saints such as Moses, Esther, Paul, and Silas are retold in a new way, compelling the reader to consider this work of justice not as a secular social agenda but rather as an expression of the Christian's commitment to restore God's kingdom today, here and now.

#### TRUSTWORTHY CONNECTION TO OTHER (JUSTICE)

Trustworthy connection to others occurs when we recognize that we need one another to thrive. In our own identities, we recognize both the gifts we have to offer as well as our limitations, and we acknowledge the gifts and limitations of others. We approach relationships with a sense of hospitality, seeing each person as equal guest and host, and we each are invited to bring the fullness of

our own humanity to the relationship. When any person is made to believe they have nothing to offer and are not invited to bring the fullness of themselves to the relationship, a relational skew develops and creates a situation ripe for injustice. The work of restoring justice means to seek accountability, a sense of order, and equity between people because we recognize that each person has value and worth that is no greater or no less than our own. And from a family systems perspective, all are affected when one is affected—remember the example of the mobile.

The pursuit of justice is not simply about abiding by the law, procedures, and policies, which themselves can be askew. Rather, the pursuit of restoring justice is a relational endeavor based on the truth that all are created in God's image, intended to be seen and known rightly. Justice ought to cause us to account for what needs to be righted, recognize where there is relational and systemic imbalance, and create opportunities for that skew to be restored back to balance.

Our eyes will not be keen to see the skew if we are not connected to one another. And the physical, psychological, political, social, and spiritual distance that exists between people, particularly these days, makes it easy to be passively complicit with unjust systems. But it is in the context of relationships with others who do not share proximity of physical space and life experiences that our understanding about justice is expanded and our imagination for what ought to be is stimulated. Connection to others who are both like us and different from us makes it challenging to turn away when we witness violations of justice committed against them. The restoration of justice is tied to restored connection with others.

#### CONCLUSION: THE FIRST AND GREATEST COMMANDMENT FOR RESTORING JUSTICE

The parts of the triad of identity (love), agency (power), and trustworthy connection to others (justice) are interrelated and are meant to exist in concert with one another. Although there are occasions when more attention and emphasis is necessarily placed on one part, the absence of any one of the parts creates a relational skew that works against meaningful and healthy connection to self and others. The realities of social context, the level of emotional and social consciousness, personal disposition, and extraordinary life circumstances are important considerations in understanding both the potential as well as the limitations of one's identity, agency, and trustworthy connection to others. But it is otherwise impossible to pursue the work of restoring justice without all three parts. The work of restoring justice has the greatest potential to be accomplished in relational spaces where a person's or a group's identity is rooted in love and true belongingness, where they have a healthy sense of agency and use of voice, as well as an ability to seek trustworthy connection to others. ■

#### ENDNOTES

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2. T. D. Hargrave and F. Pfitzer, *Restoration Therapy: Understanding and Guiding Healing in Marriage and Family Therapy* (New York: Rutledge, 2011).
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## THE BIRD'S-EYE VIEW: THE PEOPLE HAVE SPOKEN, BUT ARE WE LISTENING?

Shep Crawford

There is an obvious shift happening in the Black church. No matter how well-attended church services were before the pandemic, my fellow colleagues and I have noted that at least one-third of our congregations have decided that they are not coming back to weekly services. Further, another third of parishioners are only attending services out of commitment, obligation, or because they hold certain positions in the church. To address this issue, I first need to tell my fellow pastors that the decrease in numbers is not a personal reflection of them per se, but a discernable transformation of God's church. This COVID-19 pandemic has interrupted the endeavors and doings of the world as we know it. Though the church is not of this world, she too has been an unsuspecting subject of the interruption.

An argument has been posed as to whether or not God brought this pandemic on us with intention, as with the plagues of Exodus. Or is this merely a condition of being in a world that is susceptible to sickness and disease? In either event, I believe we are missing a prime objective here. Whether God caused this pandemic is not the question we should be asking, but rather, "What is God calling the church to do in the midst of it?"

Considering the collective praying, fasting, and petitioning of the church worldwide for God to remove this virus, why hasn't he?

To that, we may never have an answer, but we know that God in his undoubted sovereignty is wise nevertheless. Still, where does that leave the church? A search of the Scriptures reveals that we will not find God shutting down an active system unless it wasn't working. Maybe God allowed the church building to be shut down to open the universal church and the spiritual eyes of church leaders and churchgoers?

Take a moment and use your imaginary lens from a bird's-eye view. It's Sunday morning. Gaze down on your beautiful local church. You can see the praise team singing, the pastor preaching, congregants shouting, and everyone having a good ole time in the Spirit. Now, go a little higher so you can further widen your view to include the community that surrounds that church. From this vantage point you will see:

- The community uniting in protest and marches for justice and equality while being oppressed by Pharaoh (Exod 5:1).
- Cain killing his brother for territory (Gen 4:8).
- Rahab and her girls on several corners being prostituted because they have been given no other choice or because no one has informed them that God has a plan for their lives (Joshua 2:9–13).
- Thieves out terrorizing the neighborhood because there are no Christians willing to be with them, uplift and edify them, or inform them that if they believe in the king, they too can become kingdom citizens in a day (Luke 23:42–43).

Now, be daring. Go even higher from the bird's-eye view to view as God views. See the world in

its true and chaotic form, while watching "church folks" having a good ole time in the church building. Observing the problem from a higher and wider view may give us some insight and understanding to our questions. Perhaps God is shutting down our systematic way of having church so that we may actually be a church.

Let's take, for example, Joseph's imprisonment (Gen 40–41). I'm sure there were times when Joseph looked up to God for relief. I'm sure he prayed for his release. It didn't happen right away, so at some point he looked around for work. Along with Joseph were two cellmates who needed his divine gift to interpret dreams, the baker and the cupbearer, the latter of whom was eventually the reason for Joseph's release. In his undesirable condition, Joseph's willingness to work in his giftedness not only got him out of prison but earned him a high position in Egypt and ultimately created more opportunities to shape and change the culture.

We, as a church body, have that same opportunity. Yes, we have and should continue praying to God to remove this pandemic. However, like Joseph, after we look up to God for help, we should also look around for ministry opportunities to affect our surrounding communities. God may even promote his church to leadership status in our communities to save our communities.

Finally, we look to Jesus for guidance on how to pastor in the modern world. Notice how Jesus made disciples. He didn't use shame, fear, or rejection, but transparency, love, and acceptance. He saw and heard the needs of the people from a bird's-eye view and brought them healing and kindness. He hung out with them and made them feel a sense of purpose. Notice that when Jesus and Peter had breakfast, he never checked or confronted

Peter for his momentary denial of faith. Instead, Jesus gave Peter a purpose-filled instruction from a bird's-eye view, to show him that where he was going would outshine the mistakes that haunted him.

As pastors, meeting the flock where they are may be the way to go. After all, their actions—or lack thereof—send a perceptible message. The people have spoken. They are not coming back to the physical building made by hands. Perhaps we should listen and go out to them.

If we see our communities from a bird's-eye view, and follow Jesus' methods of community conversion, we too will make disciples of our communities. Jesus tore down the temple that they knew in order to build the temple they needed. Now, he is seated next to the Father, watching us from a bird's-eye view. Since he is also inside of us, let's use his eyes for ours, while he uses our body for his.



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## RESETTING POWER FOR THE WORK OF JUSTICE

Wilmer G. Villacorta

Writing this article elicited mixed emotions in me concerning issues of social injustice. Near the time of this writing, the final verdict in the killing of a young Black man, Ahmaud Arbery, sentenced three White men to life in prison. Anxiety and tensions dissipated, giving a sense of relief. But continually watching young lives brutally taken based on their skin color is heart-breaking. And we, as a society, continue to listen to the cry for justice for thousands of Black citizens who continue to face violence and who depend on a justice system that controls fairness for their very existence. Although our society confesses equal access to justice, such equality is far from realized among those at the periphery of society. Over two months after this horrible killing, no arrests were made because a complicit and biased district attorney obstructed the investigation.<sup>1</sup> Such actions left thousands of people asking: Is there any justice in all of this? Why did the perpetrators walk free for that long without any accountability?

In a society that dims the human dignity of Black and brown bodies and wants to “denigrate” them, injustice, brutality, and abuse of power will always be common factors. The action verb “denigrate” expresses a dehumanizing adjective embedded in systemic racism.<sup>2</sup> Etymologically, “denigration” connotes a repudiation of darker skin or an attempt to “blacken” a person’s reputation.<sup>3</sup>

How can we speak of justice as followers of Jesus who critique this reality in our society today? In what ways do power dynamics seem to control and determine who receives justice or unjust treatment? Why do humans establish hierarchies based on material possessions, influence, race, gender, etc.?

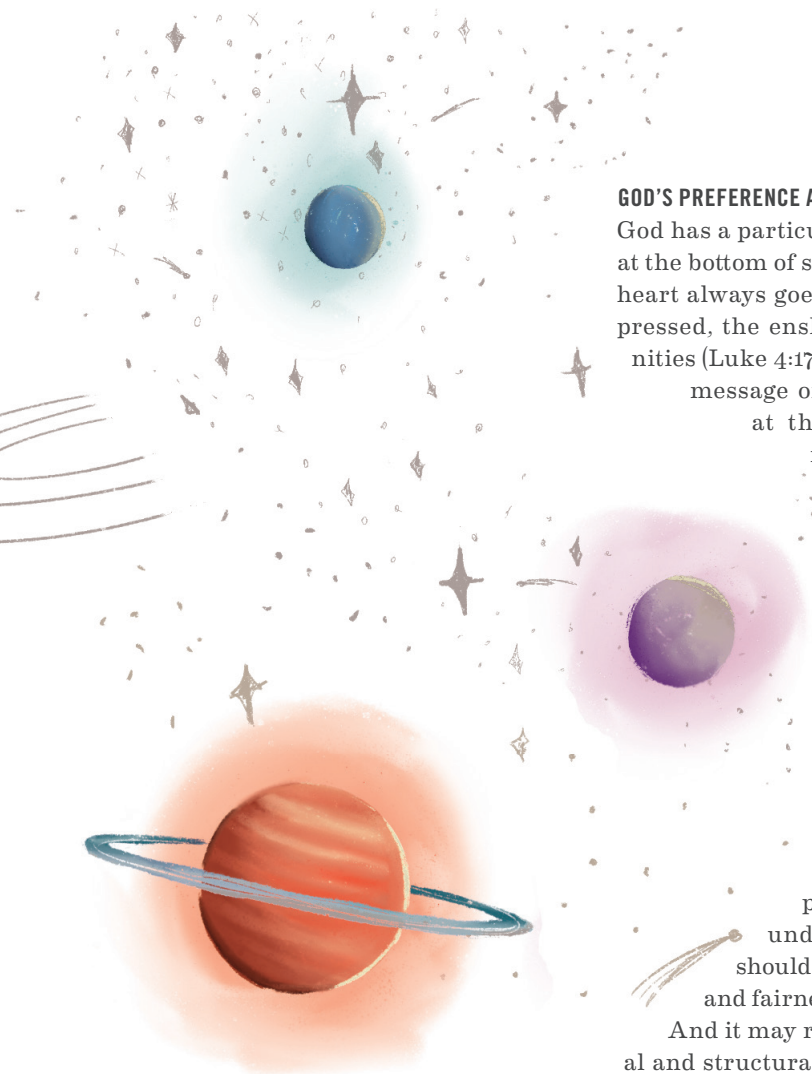
The problem of injustice is inherent to the human condition. Labeling other humans generates a segregating mindset. It represses and stereotypes. Because of this, an essential characteristic of a system of domination and oppression devalues human lives as objects deprived of their God-given rights. Throughout the ages, injustice and the abuse of power have operated hand in hand. At the core of this destructive and elusive problem, one finds other humans’ innate “denigration.”

As people of faith, what are the barriers that prevent us from a commitment to the work of justice? Recently, professing Christians have been struggling and succumbing to a system that incites violence, power abuse, and brutality toward people of color in particular. In contrast to the words of Jesus in the Beatitudes, contemporary religion has set aside the depth of Matthew 5:3-9:

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are those who mourn,  
for they will be comforted.  
Blessed are the meek,  
for they will inherit the earth.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst  
for righteousness,  
for they will be filled.  
Blessed are the merciful,  
for they will receive mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart,  
for they will see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they will be called children of God.”*

In this article, I propose that a robust understanding of Jesus’ view on power becomes the antecedent for substantive engagement and participation for justice. Because the power equation in the Gospels prefers





### GOD'S PREFERENCE AND JUSTICE

God has a particular preference for people at the bottom of society (Luke 6:20–21). His heart always goes out to the lesser, the oppressed, the enslaved, the exiled communities (Luke 4:17–20). Simply put, the core message of Scripture meets people at their most vulnerable by

revealing the power of hope even when it is not realized. God's passionate love moves him to reveal himself to the lowly and the poor (Luke 14:12–14).<sup>4</sup> Recognizing God's preference for the lowly, a response to the work of justice confronts us to engage ourselves in it. Because of God's intention and passionate love for the underprivileged, Christians should seek the ultimate freedom and fairness for every human being.

And it may require a reset of individual and structural power, which civil resistance movements aim to address.

Among the many stories of people living in the between stages of power and powerlessness, I think of Moses as a prototype of a person who lived in those two places of strength by having so much and by embracing the complete opposite in weakness and poverty. God's passionate love for freedom and justice took Moses through a resetting of his power.<sup>5</sup> Although Moses' own struggle for power led him to kill an Egyptian in his human attempt to bring justice, the divine plan had to take Moses through divestment of power into powerlessness so that he would become a fair legislator and humble servant.

### REFRAMING OLD IDEAS INTO NEW ONES

It might seem ludicrous, in a theological seminary, to have to emphasize that every human being bears the divine image. We all confess and hold such truth in high esteem; however, we, as a society, have regressed into a mindset of xenophobia, misogyny, sexism, and racism, which contradicts the lofty and revered Christian precept. It is the existential crisis of the church in the United States, which has lost its relevance and respect in the eyes of society and culture in general. Moreover, contemporary religiosity cheapens faith practice because of its endorsement of the degrading treatment of other humans, the treatment of persons as mere objects for productivity, exploitation, domination, and all types of consumption. Often, the narrative of exclusion adds to the actual politicized division among congregants who disagree on issues of injustice.

Human lives became objects of exploitation in the tragedy of slavery across the ages and cultures globally. The reduction of divinely indwelt humans as enslaved persons only benefited those with more wealth, privilege, and power. Unfortunately, in today's reality, the justice system continues to give preference to people in positions of power and/or privilege at the expense of those at the margins of society. The trial of Kyle Rittenhouse, a 19-year-old White man, was a vivid example of such inequity of justice in America. In fact, this trial marked the climax of a deteriorated system and the rule of law.<sup>6</sup> A question, however, remains unanswered: If Kyle Rittenhouse were a Black or brown man, would justice have favored him in his acquittal?

### RICH AND GUILTY VS. POOR AND INNOCENT

Bryan Stevenson, the founder of the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), refers to a truth rarely supported: "We have a system of

justice in [the US] that treats you much better if you're rich and guilty than if you're poor and innocent. Wealth, not culpability, shapes outcomes."<sup>7</sup> This statement shows what I want to invite you to reflect on today. According to Stevenson, wealth is a determining factor that measures a person's value. A justice system built on such value only serves those who can deliver gains (profits) back to the system or a private power broker. History attests how easy it was for Christians to fall short of seeking justice for enslaved persons or those seeking a fair trial.<sup>8</sup>

A correlation between an unequal justice system and the mass incarceration crisis shows a pattern of power imbalance. The cash bail system is one example of a system built on a power imbalance. Attorney Robin Steinberg describes it as an unjust system for those who "cannot afford to pay the price of their freedom, and that price is called bail."<sup>9</sup> This systemic issue of power imbalance in the justice apparatus of the United States is wrong. I cannot believe it happens in the world's so-called beacon of light and hope.

### POWER-SEEKING AND THE STRUGGLE FOR JUSTICE

At the core of our common struggle for justice, the root of the endemic power-seeking mindset crawls within the human heart at every level of existence. The inherent dignity of every person depends on one's value, whether by the color of one's skin, one's possessions, or what one can afford. Devaluing other human beings as mere objects is the beginning of most conquests and colonization leading to domination and exploitation.

### THE I AND THOU ENCOUNTER

Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher, wrote a treatise, "I and Thou,"<sup>10</sup> proposing that

human relationships with others mirror the relationship between a human being and their creator. The evangel-centric invitation "to love one's neighbor as ourselves" reflects the "I and Thou" relationship initiated and lived out in the coming of God in Jesus Christ. The "I and Thou" encounter becomes the stepping-stone for mutual, vulnerable, and thriving connections with others. Jesus taught it and embedded his life among the suffering people of his time. Such mirroring in the "I and Thou" encounter becomes an insight to value another human as God's image-bearer. It is a radical commitment as we seek to engage in the work for justice—to strive to contemplate God's image not only in the suffering people but also in those who cause the suffering. Indeed, the invitation to love our enemies speaks loudly of God's image even in those who do not deserve it. Certainly, it is a sacred and mysterious act of divine love.

Unfortunately, the human condition distorts the "I and Thou" encounter into an "I and It" encounter, thus fomenting the objectification factor. In other words, the objectification factor is the dehumanization of people created in the image of God. It reduces humans to 1) objects available for the benefit of profit and 2) objects whose given value makes them unworthy of receiving justice.

### THE I AND IT ENCOUNTER

The "I and It" encounter finds fertile ground in the abuse of power. Abusive power never seeks the flourishing of others; on the contrary, it instills hierarchies of domination, slavery, segregation,<sup>11</sup> and most social injustices in the world. Grappling with social injustice must lead us to a deeper self-reflection of how interpersonal relationships happen and become a means to an end rather than mutual, vulnerable,

and thriving interactions. Power dynamics demonstrate how these encounters occur in one's life and values system. In a subtle way, the "I and It" encounter can lead a person to set a transactional value even in their relationship with God. This action provides a basic definition of the mindset of an endemic consumerist faith. Likewise, human interactions have become transactional and conditioned by the selfish interest of the powerful.

If other humans are only objects, it influences one's perception of deeming them unworthy of attaining justice. So how is it possible that sincere Christians support unjust systems such as racism, sexism, and mass incarceration? Perhaps the "I and It" encounter has settled deeply in our consciousness as people of faith, unable to discern and critique its flaws. In what ways could we begin a path of liberation from this pervading and subtle distortion?

### A HUMBLE USE OF POWER FOR EQUAL JUSTICE

An Old Testament text commonly quoted in this type of reflection is Micah 6:8, which becomes a standard reference for a prescription toward a redeemed sense of justice. "He has told you, O mortal [Adam], what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Walter Brueggemann asserts that in Micah, "justice concerns precisely a right reading of social reality, of social power, and of social goods."<sup>12</sup> I mentioned Moses earlier in this article, and I want to integrate a few final thoughts with Brueggemann's point along the way. First, Moses had to be stripped of his distorted view of power, which led him to kill the oppressor—a clear example of the cruel way of the "I and It" encounter. His view of justice relied on violence and

people on the margins, it is in this pattern that we must assess our perspectives of power so that we can participate with God in a humble downward movement from power to powerlessness.

In doing this, our witness will open practical ways to love our neighbors as we confess to love God and as we love ourselves. The practice and defense of justice for the sake of the underprivileged and dispossessed will require men and women willing to love and act justly as God's image-bearers in mutual, interdependent, and vulnerable ways.

backfired. Fleeing persecution, he ended up in the desert, so the work of God began and humbled him and restored him anew. The social reality at the time of Moses displayed oppression and abuse of power. This account reminds us of the futility of our human efforts to attain justice in violent, vengeful, and reactive ways. A reading of Moses' social power proved that he had a reputation and positional power but was denounced by those he wanted to protect; in his desperation, he fled. Then, the "I and It" encounter paid him back and sent him to the hands of the Living God.

Micah's text warns us of the intoxicating pattern when one's positional power can destroy God's image in others by our biases, actions, attitudes, and words. The admonition of Micah blends justice and loving-kindness as a signpost and testimony of a humble way of power. Assessing our perspectives of power—in the way we treat other people as God's image-bearers or not—will help us embrace a new proposal for justice. The "I and Thou" encounter will empower us to love and renew us as agents of change. It will heighten the way of a prophetic imagination worth pursuing. It will give us a robust pathway to work and engage in the work for equal justice.

Let us reset our hope as we think of power in our work for justice—a humble use of power. As in the words of Howard Thurman: "to make justice where injustice abounds, to make peace where chaos is rampant, and to make the voice heard on behalf of the helpless and weak."<sup>13</sup> ■

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## THE BELOVED COMMUNITY: ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICE AS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE

Austin Childress, Olufemi Gonsalves, Darren Hagood, Barnabas Lin, and Dylan Parker

It is becoming increasingly evident that the planet and its inhabitants—human and otherwise—cannot sustain the destructive patterns of extraction, production, and consumption perpetuated by the modern era in which we find ourselves. Humanity has fabled an unlimited world and a blank check to cash against its resources, but reality is emerging through the cracks of the dream, and we are beginning to see the consequences. Climate change knocks at the door of every community, connected to and yet eclipsing all local and national conflicts. At the same time, the impacts of our inability to live within our limits and in harmony with the community of creation fall disproportionately on those whom the Bible calls "the least of these": the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized. What the scientific community is increasingly discovering has long been felt and known by indigenous and oceanic communities: Humanity cannot flourish unless it lives in right relationship with creation.

For these reasons and many others, it is impossible to think adequately about justice without considering environmental justice. More than this, when we think about justice from an anthropocentric starting point, we work out of a fractured, disembodied, displaced imagination and

do injustice to the full community of creation. This conviction goes far beyond partisan politics of climate change and the polluting of our skies, lands, and waters; it is at the heart of what it means to be human.

God created the world for life, flourishing, goodness, and blessing. Our creator called humanity to protect, nurture, steward, care for, guard, keep, serve, and love the full community of creation, collaborating with all creatures as co-inheritors of the divine breath of life. This is why the Bible several times names the mistreatment of the land as one of the reasons for God's judgment (Jer 2:1–7, Isa 5:8–10, Hos 4:1–3, Ezek 34:17–18). The earth with its skies, its lands, its waters, and its inhabitants all declare the glory of God (Ps 19, 29, 150) and we, in our pride, distort this eco-symphony of praise for our own profit and, ultimately, our collective harm.

Martin Luther King Jr. wrote in his 1963 "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" that "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." It is time for us to recognize that we are indeed "caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny" and to recognize that this network extends far beyond our species; it is the single garment of all creation. Justice for the poor,

the oppressed, the orphan, and the widow will only flow like a river when we make things right with more-than-human creation. So, when we talk about climate change, deforestation, carbon emissions, overfishing, agrobusiness, pollution, or any other issue, we as Christians move beyond politics to pursue something deeper—the reclamation of our own vocation as bearers of the image of God and caretakers of this sacred ecosystem we've been entrusted to tend by pursuing justice for the whole community of creation.

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## GOD'S RESTORATIVE JUSTICE IS FOR ALL

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In a video titled “Restorative Justice in Action: Teen Asks Forgiveness,”<sup>1</sup> 17-year-old Lil’ Mikey returns to the barbershop that he and two others robbed at gunpoint three years earlier and asks forgiveness of those he traumatized. He served time, fulfilling the punishment for the crime he committed, but he wanted to return to apologize and to make amends. Lil’ Mikey’s mentor says, “It takes a lot of guts to walk back on the surfaces you did dirt on.” One of the victims shares about the trauma she is still dealing with, years after the event. The emotions of fear and anxiety are real. Lil’ Mikey stands there taking it all in. He doesn’t respond defensively nor rationalize his behavior, but instead he remains present as emotions are shared. He listens and makes space for the pain, and in doing so, validates what they went through. Mid-conversation, one of those victims takes his hands, hugs him, and offers him care and blessing as she accepts his apology. Lil’ Mikey realized that his decisions, behavior, and choices on that day continue to impact people. By showing up and staying, he demonstrated a willingness to be vulnerable. What does justice look like for Lil’ Mikey, for those he victimized, and for the greater community? How does God’s justice connect their lives to each other?

### WE BELONG TO EACH OTHER

This video is an example of how restorative justice can bring healing both to the one who commits the offense and to those hurt by it. The story also demonstrates how our wellness, our peace, and our very lives are intertwined. Mother Teresa famously said, “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.” Fuller professor Jude Tiersma Watson says, “We belong to each other, and together, we belong to God.”<sup>2</sup> We do not live

as islands to ourselves. By God’s design, our decisions, our words, and our lives impact each other. For good or for bad, we are connected. Father Gregory Boyle of Homeboy Industries says, “We’ve become focused on peace, justice and equality, when the truth is, none of those things can happen unless there’s some undergirding sense that we belong to each other, that we’re connected, that we matter.”<sup>3</sup> When Lil’ Mikey asked for forgiveness, he began to see how intertwined his life was with those he robbed. God makes clear that our lives, peace, and futures cannot be separated.

### A JEREMIAH 29 FRAMEWORK

As I’ve written about elsewhere, I see Jeremiah 29 (in particular, v. 7)<sup>4</sup> as a framework that challenges the way we see ourselves and each other:

*God exiled the people of Israel from Jerusalem to live in the land of their enemies, Babylon, calling them to make a home there generationally and to seek the peace of a city not their own. Understandably, this is a place that the Israelites didn’t want to be. God promised that if they sought the peace of their neighbors and the land, God would bring peace on them, would shalom them. By God’s design, the peace of Israel and the peace of Babylon are intertwined and interdependent. . . Shalom is a comprehensive concept that expresses society as God intended it to be, including a sense of wholeness, harmony, and justice. The church is called to be reconcilers and peacemakers in the world, in our specific location and context.*<sup>5</sup>

The Israelites had no desire to share space with the Babylonians, with those they despised, yet this biblical text describes a way of being in the world together and a

model of navigating the complexities of life and justice in a shared community, even with people we don’t want to be with. When we contextualize this story, however, we must proceed with care, as we never want to imply that those who have been victimized need to share space with those who hurt them. This is complicated work. But God holds the many tensions and us. Jeremiah 29 illustrates how God’s peace is rooted in relationship and reminds us of our connectedness.

### PARTNERING IN GOD’S RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

God provides a way for us to share peace, healing, and reconciliation. Rather than a one-time act or experience, peace and reconciliation are predicated on daily decisions to be part of the conversations and relationships that God has placed us in. As we experience God’s reconciliation, we are invited to partner in this call to reconciliation (2 Cor 5:11–21). However, we often can approach restoration and justice like a transaction or exchange rather than a relationship. The example of Lil’ Mikey and the wisdom of great saints like Mother Teresa, Dr. Jude, and Father Greg help us to understand how peace is intertwined in our interdependent lives, by God’s design. It would make sense then that justice would need to be experienced in the same way. As we examine our systems, in particular the criminal justice and educational systems, we find (with a few exceptions) that punishment is often prioritized without restoration. If societies continue to incarcerate people without thought about them once they are locked up, they deny the truth that people’s lives and peace are wrapped up in each other. “But simply punishing the broken—walking away from them or hiding them from sight—only ensures that they remain broken and we do, too,” writes Bryan Stevenson. “There is no wholeness outside of our reciprocal humanity.”<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, the African concept of ubuntu reminds us that our humanity and what it means to be human are tied together. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who led South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission that reviewed crimes committed during apartheid, once said, “There are different kinds of justice. Retributive justice is largely Western. The African understanding is far more restorative—not so much to punish as to redress or restore a balance that has been knocked askew.”<sup>7</sup>

For the last 20-plus years, I have served as a law enforcement chaplain in three different agencies, and I have seen the criminal justice system up close—what works, what doesn’t, and what is missing. Punishment and accountability are necessary aspects of justice, but we don’t want systems and societies that only punish. We hope for communities that offer a process for addressing the cause of the offense and potential ways to heal personally and collectively from those crimes.

Restorative justice offers an opportunity to participate in God’s restorative work including addressing conflict, honoring dignity, and facilitating peacemaking. When crimes are committed against others, harm is the result:

*Wrongdoing is understood as harm—a violation of people and of relationships, rather than as crime—a violation of rules and laws. The RJ [restorative justice] approach emphasizes repairing harm and involving all affected parties in creating healing solutions. . . It addresses both needs—the needs of those who have been hurt, as well as those who hurt them. It provides accountability for wrongdoers so that they are empowered to take responsibility and make amends. It compels*

*communities to work together in resolving conflict and harm together. The development of RJ can be traced back to indigenous communities around the world, as well as Mennonite communities in North America. It was initially conceived as an alternative response to individual acts of wrongdoing. However, it is now increasingly embraced as an approach to facilitating wholeness within groups and whole communities.*<sup>8</sup>

Restorative justice helps us to see the crime and the sickness behind it. Why do people hurt one another? What is going on within to cause the crime in the first place? The sickness is not just in us but is also manifested in our systems and larger communities. As Johonna Turner and I have written:

*According to theologian Derek Flood, the primary metaphor of sin in the New Testament is one of sickness, not crime.<sup>9</sup> In essence, a crime is a symptom of a deeper sickness. This means that in addition to one taking responsibility for our own behaviors, we must also analyze the negative behavior and attempt to understand and address its root causes. Flood uses the example of a bully whose behavior is rooted in feelings of insecurity and worthlessness. Focusing on healing can lead to restoration.*<sup>10</sup>

While I served as a chaplain with a local law enforcement agency, young people who committed low-level offenses had the opportunity to have their records cleared if they participated in restorative justice. If we see crime beyond the intention and act on the sickness that caused it, our care and concern for ourselves and our neighbors can deepen. God calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves. The very core of the gospel of Jesus



Christ is love, healing, and restoration. Reconciliation is an embodiment of God's justice and shalom. The Hebrew word for peace is translated to wholeness, well-being, and prosperity. Restorative justice can lead to this kind of experience. These comprehensive concepts of God's peace and justice express society as God intends it.<sup>11</sup> Restorative justice is a model for partnering in God's justice and peace for all, helping us believe in this kind of justice for ourselves, our neighbors, our communities, and our world. Below are ways restorative justice can practically shape our theology, identity, spirituality, relationships, lenses, and systems.

*Restorative justice helps us to face our personal and collective beliefs about who God is and the justice God embodies.* Do we long for a God we conjure from Old Testament stories, who will vindicate us and get those people who harmed us? Do we expect God to love the "good people" and damn the others? Is God made in our image, or are we made in God's image? The justice we practice reveals the God we believe in. In serving as a law enforcement chaplain for over two decades, I have responded to scenes where unspeakable crimes have been committed against the most vulnerable—including young children. I have witnessed people wearing their trauma. God weeps with those who have been trauma-

tized and promises to remember every tear (Ps 56:8). In God's economy there is accountability, justice, and mercy. God's justice is neither conditional nor retributive. God's justice is just, restorative for those harmed and for those who cause the harm. The justice we believe, preach, and practice reveals the God we follow.

*Restorative justice acknowledges that all are God's beloved.* Our belovedness is not determined by behavior or human accomplishment. Belovedness is a birthright that every human being in history has. This is an identity, not a label. Every person is made by God. We are image-bearers. Belovedness is the lens from which we practice restorative justice. Loving those we like can be challenging, but loving our enemies is a different story. Like the people of Jeremiah 29, living among enemies is no easy task. In order for this to happen, one starts with seeing the other, the neighbor, as God's beloved. It is tempting to compare the best of ourselves to the worst in others. That is why it is imperative that belovedness shapes our practices of God's peace in our communities. Restorative justice begins with an understanding of how we identify, label, and value ourselves and one another. In a society that values categories of "good and bad," it will take work to resist limiting and relegating people to their worst offense. I remember one particular chaplain call, when I responded to a gruesome crime scene. I wanted to hate the one who murdered, to ignore him, and to believe that God couldn't possibly love him. But this man is God's beloved. This doesn't negate or erase what he did; he needed to face the appropriate consequences and punishment. But we can't earn or lose belovedness. Restorative justice doesn't wash over the pain and trauma but leads us to God's healing. Restorative justice is a model,

approach, and understanding of the nature of God and our relationships.

*Restorative justice and reconciliation are rooted in relationship.* Restorative justice is not a program but rather a way to practice God's peace in the context of relationships. Restorative justice calls us to proximity, not distance; vulnerability, not perception; and presence with, not absence from. All of this requires time, intentionality, and care.

*Restorative justice helps us to see and understand the world from a both/and perspective.* Someone can be both a victim and a perpetrator. One can hurt others while experiencing hurt themselves. I have served as a local church pastor, nonprofit organization leader, academic practitioner, community developer, and law enforcement chaplain. Although there are overlaps between these roles, there are distinct realities, values, and worldviews held in these spaces. From a law enforcement perspective, a law is clear cut. Through a community development lens, someone might have committed a crime after surviving incredible trauma and aging out of the foster care system. As we navigate the distinct aspects of our voices and roles, a both/and understanding acknowledges the tension, challenges, and pain of our intertwined lives and peace. Concrete truths and clarity may be preferred, but when we step into the complex, we are trusting a God who sees and holds it all.

*Restorative justice disrupts systems of injustice, inequity, and harm.* Many of the current justice systems are incomplete, broken, and unjust, often setting people up for failure. The term "school-to-prison pipeline" refers to policies and practices that lead to young people's entry into criminal justice systems, especially impacting people of color and those from under-resourced communities.



Restorative justice, advocacy, and policy changes can lead to equity and a disruption to recidivism (repeating of criminal offenses)—as a chaplain, I witnessed repeat offenders continue to impact themselves and their communities. Examples of restorative justice at work in the world help us imagine an alternative way that disrupts these broken systems:

*Restorative justice undergirds New Zealand's juvenile justice system and is used as an alternative to standard legal proceedings. Adults who participated in New Zealand's restorative justice conferences were 23 percent less likely to commit another offense than those who went through the criminal justice system.<sup>12</sup> In addition to reducing recidivism, restorative justice provides a sense of closure and satisfaction with the process. According to Howard Zehr, restorative justice addresses people's needs for safety, answers, voice, empowerment, vindication and validation.<sup>13 14</sup>*

#### RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AS A JOURNEY TOWARDS GOD'S SHALOM

How does our love and justice lead us to God's shalom, healing, wellness, and restoration? As we lean into restorative justice, our communities are positioned to receive, embrace, and participate in God's shalom in greater measure. Justice work is hard, complicated, and painful. When someone breaks a law, it is more than a violation of the law; it hurts others. As we lean into restorative justice, we turn to a God who heals and shaloms. Jeremiah 29 reminds us that we belong to each other by God's design. God calls us beloved, roots our healing in relationships, calls us to dismantle systems of injustice and inequity, and invites us to partner in this restorative justice work in our communities. God's restorative justice is for all. ■

#### ENDNOTES

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## FANNING THE FLAME: PASTORING IN THE MODERN MOVEMENT

Najuma Smith-Pollard

Reflecting on this year's 30th Commemoration of the 1992 Civil Unrest, which was provoked by years of injustice the Black community experienced at the hands of law enforcement and the tipping point of the unjust "not guilty" ruling of the four officers who beat Rodney King, we cannot dismiss the huge impact the historical Black church had in that moment. We see this vividly in the work of Rev. Dr. Cecil L. "Chip" Murray, who led FAME Church LA and the city through social justice and community development efforts to rebuild and restore LA. As I write this also in the weeks following this year's MLK season, we also remember the life and work of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the legacy of his leadership. Today, as our nation wrestles with social ills exposed by the global pandemic, the Black church remains a consistent central voice and resource for Black communities ravaged by COVID-19. Even in the midst of hybrid worship services, closed buildings, and full-scale electronic giving, the Black church is using digital and outdoor spaces to raise her voice and be a resource for those in need. Remembering the power of the Black church pastor throughout history, we must also continue to fan the flame of this kind of powerful leadership today, in hopes that those of us called to pastor in the modern movement will effectively do the same and more.

The iconic leadership of a Dr. King and a Dr. Murray—

while separated by time and geography—represents a model of Black church faith leadership that really was a more traditional, boots-on-the-ground kind of transformational work. How do we, as pastors of the modern movement, leverage these models and build on them, in order to build from them to strengthen our community base and improve our community power?

To be sure, the pastors of the modern movement have a different kind of urgency from King and Murray, who were the starters of movements. The pastor of the modern movement has a different kind of urgency: sustaining the movement. To keep the movement of liberation, justice, equity, and inclusion alive—not simply in America in general but alive within our churches and communities in particular—is, in many ways, more difficult now than during Dr. King's era and Dr. Murray's era here in Los Angeles. Progress has been made; every major city department has an equity office; between 2019 and 2021, corporate America vowed to dump billions of dollars into diversity training, diversity programming, and dialogue on diversity. With this level of perceived change, the challenge for the Black church and community is complacency—complacency inside the "church" and among the community. (In part, people are also exhausted by more than two years of pandemic life.) But in the words of Dr. King: "This is no time for apathy or complacency.

This is a time for vigorous and positive action."

The role of the pastor in the modern movement will be keeping our congregations and congregants invigorated and enthusiastic about the work ahead, exposing the urgency of now, regardless of how disruptive it appears, and having the willingness to sacrifice comfort for courageous action. I am hopeful that we will rise to the modern movement, not only because I am a Black pastor but because the same flame—the same spirit—that burns inside of a Dr. Murray or Dr. King burns inside of so many pastors in the movement today. Let us fan the flame.



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## THE POLITICAL IS PERSONAL: MARY AS PARENT AND PROPHET OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

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Until the 1970s in the United States, women could not bring charges of spousal rape. Like much so-called domestic violence, these actions were considered a private matter. As too often stated, “It’s none of my business.” Eventually, women and men agreed that such a bifurcation of public and private could not stand, and feminists popularized the term “the personal is political.”<sup>1</sup> Law addresses matters of our common space and, more crucially, of power—and the latter is the core of politics. The catchy insight translated into legislation and, at least in some cases, worked to protect women. At least in some ways, society and individuals reconsidered our obligation to one another, especially to our vulnerable neighbors. No abuser’s home is his castle. We remain responsible to others for what happens behind closed doors, with the tender attention and confidentiality intimate relationships of all kinds require. We remain responsible to one another in our common life, in spaces of economics and politics.

The phrase “the personal is political” reminds us of what Christians know: Christ’s kingdom is *here*, reorienting every aspect of our lives. We cannot wall off our close relationships from our public witness, any more than we can neatly sever our formation as persons from our formation as persons-in-public. And the God who comes to us in Christ remains the God of the Older Testament. YHWH’s Decalogue moves easily between “religion” (have no other gods and don’t use YHWH’s name in vain), intimate relationships (honor your mom and don’t commit adultery), politics (be truthful with your neighbor and don’t murder), and economics (take Sabbaths, don’t steal or plot to take what isn’t yours).

YHWH boasted of his jealousy as the rationale for these commandments. When John Legend sings, “Give your all to me/I’ll give my all to you” we swoon; we long for that sort of trusting connection.<sup>2</sup> Such is a sign of the sort of deep connections for which we all long. But only God can take all of us and not use us for some other end, as even the best intentioned of lovers remains a mere human, a person with conscious and unconscious needs of their own. Yet from the beginning, the people of God have balked at YHWH’s insistence on *all* of us. While in theory, perhaps, we trust God in everything, we too often resist this. As individuals and as congregations, we wrestle with God as we seek to contain him to domains of our choosing, that suit our particular spirituality or sensibilities. The patterns that emerge trend in two stereotypical directions. We can hear this in how two streams of Christian faith wield the word δίκη (*dike*) which is alternatively translated “righteousness” or “justice” in the New Testament. One stream focuses on righteousness as individual piety and the other on righteousness as social justice. While this is admittedly simplistic, they name temptations to which we are prone, ways we seek to reduce the size of Jesus’ realm and give our natural proclivities space to roam.

Below, we’ll look at two typical modes of being righteous or just that are currently on offer. Then we will consider a young woman who testifies to how a “yes” to receiving the king and his kingdom reorders our most intimate relations to others and to our own bodies. Her utter submission to God paradoxically liberates her. She perceives the politics of the kingdom coming, with a power incomprehensible by pretentious worldly politics. A parent and prophet, Mary illustrates what the saints enact over

the ages: The pious upend politics-as-usual, because they unmask the fragility of any authority that does not serve the good that is God’s reign.

### A SHRINK-TO-FIT GOD: TO BE RIGHT IS TO BE RIGHTEOUS

We don’t set out to reduce God to size. Ironically, such shrinkage often arises because we sense that others have limited God in offensive or (to us) obvious ways. Some of us have become disgusted by the rhetoric and hypocrisy of Christian leaders and moved into the “exvangelical” camp. I see this in media streams or hear it among friends who ask questions like, “With all the injustices and real problems in our society, why are these Christians fixated on [say] sexual morality? Why don’t these people get out of their megachurches and cry out about immigrant children in cages at our borders?”

We cite (portions of) the OT prophets who proclaim that economic and social arrangements be measured not by the consumer price index but rather by how the poorest and most vulnerable fare within it. Our position on social justice affirmed, we are left unbothered by what we might think of as oppressive and therapeutically dysfunctional emphases on individual sin. We are free to tune our lives to our heart’s desires, attending to the “true self” through interrogation of our desires. No one can deny us rights for, say, sex or other relationships that work for us individually. We don’t challenge others on private topics, especially in church.

Caught up in this stream, Christians increasingly identify as “progressive” and talk and post about causes that fall into this category. We are confident that what *really* matters to God is “social justice.” The nature

of politics and the content of the justice are often prescribed by secular movements or ideological commitments. Swept into these narrowed visions of “politics,” it can be difficult in these settings (for us) to ponder how the crucified Messiah alters conceptions of power, strategies for change, or the tone of public proclamation. We might become reticent to talk about patience, fidelity, forgiveness, or longsuffering as weapons of peace, or, worse, forget that these are integral to justice and to righteousness.<sup>3</sup>

Another “type” worries that these Christians conflate the gospel with social justice movements. What is needed, we insist, is individual salvation and submission to Christ. We might believe that social problems boil down to a need for individual conversion. We assert that “Lord” means my *personal* savior—and, in obedience, I submit to Jesus, gladly offering up the itty-bitty territory of my “heart” to rule as he wishes.<sup>4</sup> We suspect that immorality stems from lack of submission of our lives to Christ. We embrace our individual sinfulness and seek absolution. With Jesus thus confined, we are “free”—free to offer others our loyalty regarding economic or political arrangements, be it “America,” a political party, or some social organization.<sup>5</sup> These other associations likely feed our longing for significance, order, and security amidst the secularism of our age.

Both streams claim to pursue the righteousness of God. Evidenced in our social media and mirrored around too many of our dinner tables, that pursuit sets us up for *self*-righteousness. We are pretty sure we have it right or at least know we have it righter than those other Christians from whom we’d like to disassociate. Notice, too, how these streams tempt us with a sort of

liberation, leaving swaths of our lives untouched by an otherwise all-consuming king and that king’s reordering of our lives.

But like any leader worth their salt (or who hasn’t “lost their saltiness”), Jesus irritates me.<sup>6</sup> He consistently interrupts my *religion*-as-usual while also shaking up my *politics*-as-usual. It’s the pesky content of our proclamation of Christ as Lord—and savior—that should remind us that attaching ourselves to movements (be they enthusiastic about our national culture or critical of it) must always be done with our hearts and feet in the kingdom of God.

### MARY: GESTATING JUSTICE

The CEB translates the gospel invitation as, “Now is the time! Here comes God’s kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this good news!” (Mark 1:14–15). Trusting the good news of God in Christ turns out to entail bodies, to inhabit new ways of living internally as well as externally. We state this in our confessions when we invite the Spirit to create in us clean hearts; at our communion tables we ingest Christ, receiving sustenance for our week’s work in a world in need of good news. Perhaps more than anyone else, Mary displays for us how saying yes to the kingdom, and its unlikely king, necessarily involves the personal but also reorients our social and political allegiances. Intimacy with God necessarily entails a political orientation, bringing or solidifying a way of seeing power and position.

What a courageous young woman Mary is! She agrees to receive the Messiah, her Lord, into her womb (“Let it be as you have said”). Immediately, she gives up a treasured social and personal status as a virgin. She endangers her betrothal. Really, who would have



thought Joseph would ever buy her claim to fidelity? She risks—and perhaps experiences—humiliation, despite Joseph’s desire to spare her this. (People have always been prone to count backward from birth to conception, after all.)<sup>7</sup> Without any assurances for her own security or future, she assents to bear the Son of God, one who will take up the throne of David and whose reign will not end.

Welcoming the kingdom can’t get more personal than offering one’s womb as the royal residence, more intimate than birth through water and blood, or more embodied than offering her breasts to nourish Jesus for years to come. Like most mothers, Mary discovers that attachment to her son brings with it anxieties and sorrows that slice open her very soul (Luke 2:35).

But Mary welcomes not only a son but a *king*, and she recognizes that her intimate “yes” bears political significance in multiple ways. The language in Luke underscores this. Gabriel says she bears the “Son of God.” That title was not merely “religious” but rather appeared on the coins of Rome in this conquered region of Palestine: Caesar Augustus ruled as the “divine son of God.” Each economic exchange recalled that Caesar provided for the ruled and warned off anyone tempted to deny his claim to power.

Against such pretensions, the angel Gabriel speaks to Mary of a different throne and of an everlasting kingdom given to this yet-to-be-born peasant. Augustus was hailed as the savior who brought peace and prosperity to the world, but Luke’s heavenly army sings strange (and treasonous?) news to the shepherds: A swaddled bundle, resting in a trough, born to nobodies—this babe brings

peace to the earth and all her peoples.<sup>8</sup>

Within the politics of the Roman Empire, heralds often brought “good news,” broadcasting the birth of future emperors, military victories, or the like. In each movement of Luke’s long nativity narrative, he connects the εὐαγγέλιον, or gospel, to language dripping with political and social connotations. But in his telling, the good news rings in an anti-empire key. Its means of arrival and those it honors are unknowns and insignificants: a young girl, a cuckolded husband, an old infertile couple, a cooing boy, and uncouth shepherders.<sup>9</sup>

But in case we miss the contrasting politics of Luke’s Gospel to that of empire, Mary sings the wonder of a savior who reorders institutions and upends social values:

*Look! From now on, everyone will consider **me** highly favored because the mighty one has done great things for **me**. . . .*  
*He shows mercy to **everyone**, from one generation to the next, who honors him as God.*  
*He has shown strength with his arm*  
*He has scattered those with **arrogant thoughts and proud inclinations**.*  
*He has pulled the **powerful down from their thrones***  
*and **lifted up the lowly**.*  
*He has **filled the hungry with good things***  
*and **sent the rich away empty-handed**.*  
*(Lk 1:48–53, emphasis added)*

Personal salvation and intimacy? Absolutely! But notice that the king in her womb does not merely remain a matter of familial affection or, shall we say, of “heart.” Mary testifies that the coming of God in her baby shakes up political and economic arrange-

ments; the good news—for the disempowered and unimportant, anyway—is that business-as-usual bankrupts those who invest in it. The tense of Mary’s verbs in Greek reminds us that even if the externals seem unchanging, those who open themselves as she has done to receive the gospel know *in the present* a power stronger than the petty brutality of princes and enact a hope *in the present* more forceful than the cynicism of unseeing “realists.” Thus, Mary sings the good news: Shalom, true peace, marks the kingdom of God. Such peace comes to persons; such shalom reorders systems. To sever one from the other, the personal from the political, insults the God who wants all of us—and leaves us with a peace that is no peace.<sup>10</sup>

#### MOTHER MARY AND THE POLITICS AS PERSONAL

We don’t normally think of parenting as a political act, but it is for Christians. Following Aristotle and others, we recognize that as social, relational animals, even the most quotidian of activities entails a “politic.” We must organize, divide resources, and wield power for the sake of a shared end. (That’s part of why Aristotle believed that all virtues were, in some way, “political.”) The rub is that we are seduced by other sorts of politics than that of the kingdom, be they of Rome or of religiosity. “Give us your homeland, your loyal love,” they might cajole, “and Jesus can have your heart!” “God sides with those on this side of the issue,” they may pine, “so you are free to listen to whatever your authentic self commands of you!”

Mary’s story recalls that a most ordinary act, mothering, shapes—or misshapes—us for fidelity to the king and his kingdom. Parenting can serve a politic of self-preservation and protection, as when mothers’ anxieties

over their sons press us to exclude other mothers’ sons from our center of concern. We are tempted to perpetuate a politic of fear, voting for those who promise security from the other for “my” child, often through violence or exclusion. Or we may be tempted to a politic of despair that maintains that in a world of scarcity and injustice, it’s more compassionate not to welcome the vulnerable at all, not to open wombs or homes to the lowly or weak whom the world, we suspect, will merely consume.

Mary knows better. She bears this boy, knowing full-well that the religious, criminal, governmental systems are broken. She flees the bloodthirsty Herod, becoming a refugee with her new family in a foreign land. She will watch those systems converge in a determination to torture and execute her innocent son.

Mary has been “exceptionalized” in many contexts, however, and, thus set above us all, her witness cannot upend the status quo. But most of the time she plodded along like all of us, like when her teenager caused frantic anxiety as well as inconvenience. (Even Jesus needed to develop his prefrontal lobe, apparently; see Lk 2:41–50). Mary models what it means to enact the politics of the gospel in ordinary practices, in everyday choices.

We might wrestle with calls on our lives that seem too boring to be labeled “just.” Instead, we “just” take care of our neighbors and friends. Or maybe our bodies are worn down by illness or fractured by mental struggle. Maybe others of us find Mary’s manifesto out of touch with reality, because we know firsthand the coercion on which many powers and principalities (systems, institutions, organizations, or families)

rely. Mary resists the temptation to shrink God’s righteousness. Her “yes” to the kingdom means she participates in that king’s reign—God’s justice comes to earth, enacted in the material world of economics, politics, and power.

The political is personal: Mary cannot choose between being a parent or prophet. When we say yes to God as our ruler, when we agree to the Spirit’s desire to enter us, we submit as an individual with bodily appetites and soulful longings whose most intimate relationships (with others and with ourselves) become subject to Another’s direction. We also join God’s revolution in Christ, one that cannot be stopped or contained in a religiosity that refuses to seek the beautiful disruption of the Magnificat.

May we take up the politics of the kingdom with Mary as a guide. May her story inspire us, so that we, too, might gestate God’s justice in all that we are, all that we lack, and all that we seek to become. ■

#### ENDNOTES

1. Per Britannica, the origin of the phrase is unknown but was popularized by Carol Hanisch in an article of the same name in 1970.
2. J. Legend, “All of Me,” track 6 on *Love in the Future*, GOOD Music and Columbia Records, 2013.
3. See for example, Walter Knight’s poem, “Peace, Like War, Is Waged,” <https://prayerandpolitics.org/litanies-prayers/peace-like-war-is-waged/>. Such virtues can be twisted to excuse inaction or the urgency of shalom, as if these characteristics of God-likeness can be tweaked to suit our complacency. Rather, they are meant to train our dependence on Christ, not bolster habits of unclean living. As Martin Luther King puts it, “For years now, I have heard the word ‘Wait!’ It rings in the ear of every Negro with piercing familiarity. This ‘Wait’ has almost always meant ‘Never.’ We must come to see, with one of our distinguished jurists, that ‘justice too long delayed is justice denied.’” See *Why We Can’t Wait* (originally published by Harper & Row, 1964; reprinted Beacon Press, 2011).
4. Hebrew conceptions of “heart” understand it as the center of the person, directing not only emotion but also determined outward activities and action. Current English in the West usually imagines this concept as more limited and internal.
5. While commonly used in the US to denote our nation, in the Global South the term embraces the *Americas*—often Latin America as well as those countries on both continents, North and South.
6. E.g., Matthew 5:13.
7. Matthew’s Gospel refers to Jesus as Mary’s son (e.g., Matt 13:55). Usually, sons were referenced by their father (“Jesus bar-Joseph”), so some scholars wonder if this is an allusion to rumors of Jesus’ sketchy, scandalous conception.
8. An example is an altar inscription to the divine Augustus who brought “true peace and prosperity to the entire inhabited world.” Heavenly “hosts” is better translated “army.” This, too, clearly contrasts the politics and power of Jesus’ kingdom to the one of Rome as well as those before or since.
9. Some scholars argue that the nature of shepherds’ work kept them from participating in worship.
10. See, for example, Jeremiah 6:14, 8:11.



# Hope on the Other Side

WITH NIKOLE LIM



*Nikole Lim (MAGL '20) is the founder of Freely in Hope, a nonprofit organization dedicated to restoring dignity of survivors of sexual violence in Kenya and Zambia, which they do through holistic education and platforms for each survivor's dreams to be realized. Nikole is also the author of Liberation Is Here: Women Uncovering Hope in a Broken World (IVP, 2020), where she recounts her experience working as a documentary filmmaker capturing the stories of survivors of sexual violence before realizing her deeper calling to walk alongside them in partnership and advocacy. Learn more about Nikole's work at [freelyinhope.org](http://freelyinhope.org).*

**JOY NETANYA THOMPSON:** Your organization's mission statement is to "equip survivors and advocates to lead in ending the cycle of sexual violence in Kenya and Zambia." Let's start by defining our terms for those unfamiliar. How would you describe the cycle of sexual violence?

**NIKOLE LIM:** The cycle of sexual violence is perpetuated by many factors, including patriarchy, oppressive cultural beliefs, miseducation, and religiosity (that also embodies a lot of the patriarchal system). That system, which deems women or other marginalized groups as less than, leads the oppressor to overpower, violate, or coerce people at the margins. For us to end the cycle means not only ensuring that a survivor has loving support, access to education, resources to move forward in life, and safety away from the perpetrator. It also means changing the way this generation and the next generations after us perceive women and the "other." We want to change our cultures to embody more equitable ways of working and living together so that no person is dehumanized and sexually violated.

**JNT:** It sounds like stopping the cycle is really about addressing the root issues, rather than only responding once the violence has happened.

**NL:** Many factors inform this cycle. We also have to look at prevention. We work with girls who live in rural villages and are more vulnerable to sexual violence because there is a lack of access to education and there are many cultural practices that still oppress women and girls. We also work in urban informal settlements where people are living so close together that sexual violence is rampant because of close proximity to vulnerable people—especially children who are at home due to lack of school fees. Providing access to safe and quality education supports our prevention arm, which is one way of stopping the cycle. The second arm is aftercare: When we receive cases of survivors, we then ensure that they have a safe community in which to live and in which to be educated. Aftercare services also include everything they

need to go to school at full health, wellness, and safety. This doesn't just include school fees but also resources for mental health, physical health, safe housing, and a community of belonging. And finally, the systemic piece of stopping the cycle is where the survivors of sexual violence are the ones creating this new culture—bringing forth what they want to see in the world. They're the ones leading by teaching at schools, churches, and community organizations to talk about ways to shift oppressive mindsets and leverage the dignity in all people.

**JNT:** Your organization's goal is to end sexual violence. What would that look like, if there were a day when you could say, "We did it. We ended sexual violence"?

**NL:** Realistically we know that in this world where patriarchy is pervasive, it's very difficult. When we say that we work to end sexual violence, it might mean that for one person or two people, the debilitating trauma as a result of sexual violence and the acceptance of violent oppression ends in their lives. We provide survivors with holistic support that gives them the tools to lead in ending sexual violence—the impact they have in their communities is expansive. Survivors provided with holistic support in our community reach over 4,000 people per year! We start by holistically supporting each survivor, and from their leadership, their solutions will change the way that culture views the so-called "other." So with this larger goal in mind of eventually ending sexual violence within many years and many generations of educated and equipped people, I believe that the solution comes from people who have experienced sexual violence. They have the best solutions for moving us forward toward not just equitable leadership opportunities but also equitable resourcing where people from lower resourced communities have access to the same resources that I do—or the same resources that the White male might have—to then influence change in their spheres.



**JNT:** Freely in Hope is very clear that it is a survivor-led organization. What does that mean, and does it contrast with an older model of advocacy?

**NL:** The old model—which still exists, especially in faith-based communities—is the more colonizing approach where we as the Western minds, because we're educated and we have wealth and affluence, know what's best. In fact, we're spending \$5,000–20,000 per mission trip to come over and tell you how to live your life. But that mindset perpetuates violence in a way that it deems women—and those who live in places that we have no context about—as less valuable and less worthy to be solution-providers for their own contexts. To be survivor-led means to equip and allow survivors to influence change in our organization and then influence change in their families, in their cultural systems, in their schools and their churches, and in all the spaces they occupy.

**JNT:** You mentioned earlier how survivors have solutions or ideas that someone who wasn't in their situation or context couldn't even have thought of. Could you give an example?

**NL:** One of our survivors, Lydia, was sexually assaulted as a child. She is now an alumna of our program; she graduated from university with us and started doing work with us to end sexual violence within high schools. She is from Kibera, which is East Africa's largest slum. She knew the school system and the culture of Kibera like the back of her hand, so she designed a curriculum specifically for coed schools to foster shared learning on respect, consent, and sexual violence prevention. The schools don't talk about issues of consent and sexual violence, especially in coed schools. Lydia designed this curriculum with that approach in mind because she's been through the school system. She knew the best way to create messaging that fits the culture and resonates with that demographic. Our pre-assessment of these students showed that 50 percent believed that it was a man's right to have sex with women. After our 10 sessions of training, this went down to 35 percent. By equipping high school leaders in leadership, we want to see that percentage continually drop through peer education and focus groups. Through this program, we've impacted over 1,000 students, and our hope is that this generation of high school students will bring forward safety, consent, and mutual respect in their relationships.

**JNT:** Lydia seems like a great example of the Freely in Hope's three-pronged model of holistic education, leadership development, and storytelling platforms. I can see through her story how those feed into each other.

**NL:** Lydia's example is the ideal flow and trajectory of our programs. And we have many "Lydias" who have gone through the whole model and are now working with us or working with other organizations that end sexual violence. It starts with holistic education. We believe education is the first entry way into success in later life, in terms of survivors pursuing the career of their choice outside of the normal: forced prostitution, being a house girl, or being a day laborer. When I was working in the field as a documentary filmmaker, the survivors I met all said they wanted to go to school. For girls, access to education is a lot more limited. In high school, tuition fees are introduced, so many families can't afford to send their children to high school. Many parents have between five and ten children, so if they send some children to high school, they will prioritize the boys over the girls, and the girls are married off for dowry. Education was the first step toward their dreams. And then we realized other issues: How do they get to school? How are we ensuring they're eating proper meals, especially if they came from a background of starvation? How do we ensure that the places they're living are not in close proximity to the abuser? How do we ensure they are also healing holistically with access to mental health, physical health, emotional-spiritual health? How do we support their movement toward self-sustainability? Our holistic education program provides all of the components necessary to thrive in an academic environment.

But what we found also is that as these women are growing in their sense of leadership, they're also realizing that they have a greater purpose in the world, which is to be leaders and influencers in their spheres of interest. While our scholars are studying in university, we have a leadership development program where they commit to community service, and they also participate in leadership labs where we provide training on skills like program design, trauma healing, financial literacy, and public speaking. They practice their leadership skills through outreach programs—our storytelling platforms—that work with children, high school

students, women in prostitution, and survivors of sexual violence and trafficking. They can also pitch to design their own community-based program. We support our scholars as they develop their program model, ensuring there is a strong objective, as well as outcomes and assessments. And then we fund it. We reach around 4,000 people per year through our storytelling platforms throughout two countries.

**JNT:** Calling outreach programs "storytelling platforms" seems really intentional. I'm wondering what you think about the power of storytelling when it comes to survivors' healing and coming into their own power and helping others.

**NL:** Since all of our storytelling platforms are completely designed, initiated, and led by survivors, it leverages the wisdom and solutions of survivors that can change communities. Survivors have the most powerful solutions for their communities, which makes them experts in their field. Those who hear their stories might feel safer to come forward because it's coming from someone they could fully identify with. The power in the survivor's voice narrates their own healing journey from their perspective, which can also provide healing opportunities for others who have similarly experienced the trauma of sexual violence.

**JNT:** Liberation and freedom seem to be themes for you and your work. Your organization is called Freely in Hope and your book has the word "liberation" in the title. Why is that concept something you really grasped onto?

**NL:** I believe that survivors of sexual violence have the potential to become the most powerful liberators in our world, and oftentimes they're not given those opportunities or the resources to move toward that trajectory. But I found that in providing those opportunities for them to be in positions of leadership, their leadership is liberating. *Liberation Is Here*, the title of my book, means that liberation is found in the most unexpected places—that it's here. It's not just something in the future or something that is found by external resources. Liberation is here already in the hearts and minds and solutions of survivors. If we can all come closer to that experience, we can find liberation together.





**JNT:** Some people, especially if they don't have a history of sexual violence—if they're one of the lucky ones—might feel resistant to getting involved in this cause. It might feel like too much, too heavy. It's not a fun cause to be a part of. What do you wish those people would know about your work and the importance of it?

**NL:** I appreciate that question because I am one of the lucky ones, and my “come to Jesus moment” was when, in my work as a documentary filmmaker, I heard so many horrific stories and I asked myself the question, “Why am I lucky when easily any of these stories could have been mine?” I am a granddaughter of immigrants from communist China. Had my grandparents never immigrated, I may not have been born—being a girl in China. Had my parents been unable to find work due to their race, or stayed in Chinatown or lived on the other side of the freeway, it could have been a completely different story. But in being a “lucky one,” there is a responsibility to make the world more equitable, more beautiful, more whole, more liberated. From my experiences of living and working in community with survivors of sexual violence, I am constantly guided by Lilla Watson's quote, “If you have come here to help me you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.” Our liberation will only be found in tandem with the liberation of somebody else.

Otherwise, we are living in an egotistical fairyland, which can feel great, but it's limiting because it's been created to center one perspective. The reality is one in three women are survivors of sexual violence worldwide, one in four girls under the age of 18, one in six boys. Picture this: A third of your female friendships, a third of your congregation members, and a third of your family members have experienced sexual violence. In the egotistical fairyland, we can deny the truth of these statistics and live our life unaware of the violence oppressing our loved ones. But ignorance only limits our understanding of experiences outside of our own. To be a better leader, a better pastor, a better activist, a better sister, a better friend, a better auntie, a better husband, a better uncle, we must recognize that abuse is rampant and it requires all of our education and our participation to create safe spaces for survivors to heal and to use our influence to end sexual violence. Our responsibility is to connect to reality

and to bring forward new possibilities that nurture survivors and amplify solutions from unexpected places. But until we see it, we are only perpetuating violence. If we imagine the possibility of newness led by the wisdom of survivors of sexual violence and others who have experienced immense trauma, that's when we can work together to end oppressive systems and bring about liberation.

**JNT:** In the face of such a deeply rooted cycle, an issue so tragically rampant, what sustains you in this work? The other part of your organization's title is “hope.” I recently heard Bryan Stevenson say in an interview that hope is a superpower. What are your thoughts on that?

**NL:** Holding onto hope, when overwhelmed by the trauma of violence, feels impossible at times. Three years into this work, I was hospitalized in Zambia from secondary post-traumatic stress disorder. The crux of my book discusses my healing journey as I gained hope from the healing wisdom and support from survivors in my community. The only way to continue the work sustainably is to feel the grief of it. And when you're able to feel the grief of it, you find that there is hope on the other side. You'll only know what hope is after the experience of grief, just like you can experience the fullness of joy after an experience of pain. You'll be able to recognize what's beautiful after you've seen what's considered broken, and love is refined through experiences of suffering. These juxtapositions coexist together. Hope is found in recognizing and feeling the pain and the grief of the world, then using that grief as fuel to move forward. The hope is that our stories are not singular—there are multitudes of survivors and advocates joining in on this cause of ending sexual violence and ushering in a better world. And, for me, to see how survivors have been able to turn their suffering into love, or turn their grief into hope, or turn their pain into joy—they are my source of hope that keeps me going in this advocacy work. Their perspective helps me see how beautiful the world actually is.

*\*This interview has been edited and condensed for publication.*

JOY NETANYA THOMPSON (MAT '12) is Fuller's editorial director and senior writer.



# Revitalizing the Neighborhood

WITH CHRIS LAMBERT



Chris Lambert (MDiv '06) is the founder and CEO of Life Remodeled, a nonprofit organization in Detroit, Michigan, that renovates and repurposes former school buildings into opportunity hubs, repairs owner-occupied homes, and mobilizes volunteers to beautify areas in surrounding neighborhoods. Learn more about Life Remodeled at [LifeRemodeled.org](http://LifeRemodeled.org).

amazing for-profit entrepreneurs, that serve the community. No one organization has the solutions to all of society's challenges. True social impact happens when we work collaboratively, not only among our respective organizations but most importantly with the students and community members who live in the communities we partner with.

Additionally, we repair owner-occupied homes each year by providing hard-working families with the options to receive a new roof, furnace, or windows free of charge. And through our recurring Six Day Project, we mobilize thousands of volunteers to remove blight and beautify four square miles in only six days.

**JEROME BLANCO:** Life Remodeled describes its focus as “the intentional and equitable revitalization of Detroit neighborhoods distinguished by their significant need and radical hope.” I’d like to ask you, in your own words, how you would describe the work that Life Remodeled does.

**CHRIS LAMBERT:** When people ask us what we do, I usually like to start with the “why” first. We believe that largely as a result of our country’s deep and tragic history of systemic racism—including slavery, Jim Crow, redlining, the GI Bill, mass incarceration, and so much more—many Black families in America are still not experiencing equitable access to opportunities to thrive in the areas of education, economic prosperity, and health and wellness. While Life Remodeled does not have the power to end systemic racism, we partner with Detroit community members and students to repurpose vacant school buildings into one-stop hubs of opportunity for entire families to thrive.

Life Remodeled does more than renovate iconic buildings. We fill them with the best and brightest nonprofits, and several

**JB:** Can you say more about some of Life Remodeled’s ongoing projects?

**CL:** Back in the day, Detroit school buildings were built in the center of communities, and they were designed as hubs of opportunity for academics, athletics, and social advancement. But when a school building closes and becomes vacant, it can become a dagger to the heart of hope for a community.

In 2017, the Detroit Public Schools Community District invited us to repurpose the former Durfee Elementary-Middle School building. I can’t begin to tell you how many real estate developers and potential funders walked through Durfee with me, heard our vision, then sternly looked me in the eye and told me to run away from this project as fast as I could! Many said there was no possible way we’d ever get this building even 50 percent occupied, because we were surrounded by residential property without a business in sight, and the majority of residents live below the poverty line.

Immediately, Life Remodeled began engaging students and community members who lived within a four-mile radius surrounding the soon-to-be-vacated Durfee building in order to discover what the community desired most—what their hopes and dreams were for possible opportunities. Three categories rose to the top: youth programming, jobs, and community resources. Next, Life Remodeled raised all the capital needed to renovate this 143,000-square-foot building and recruited Detroit’s best and brightest organizations to become tenants—organizations that offer youth mentorships, literacy programs, job placement assistance, occupational therapy, and so much more. Each year our partners help 4,500 Detroiters gain access to job opportunities, 2,500 students experience educational programming, and more than 10,500 children and families receive a wide variety of community resources. Today, the Durfee Innovation Society (DIS) is 100 percent occupied with 39 fantastic organizations. Of these organizations, 77 percent are led by people of color, and 67 percent are led by women.

The keys to ensuring long-term community transformation in the areas of youth programming, jobs, and community



HOPES + DREAMS

resources are: (1) Always have the most effective tenants in place who are providing the most impactful programming; (2) keep the tenants happy, and help them become even better as a collective whole; and (3) continuously collaborate and innovate in partnership with community and student leadership.

At full occupancy, with thriving organizations who can prove significant outputs and outcomes, we have demonstrated that our model is appealing to high-impact organizations, both nonprofit and for-profit. In order to fully support them, we have created a staff culture and environment that meets and exceeds their requirements. The fact that our lease rates are below market value certainly helps. We also provide our tenants with free access to the following spaces: the auditorium, arcade, laundromat, multipurpose room, lounge, and gym. Lastly, we ensure the opportunity hub remains a secure and safe space for staff, volunteers, clients, and community members.

As it relates to financial sustainability, the DIS is debt-free and financially independent as a result of the income generated from tenant leases as well as from rentals of the building's auditorium, gym, and youth programming space. Because we raise the majority of our capital stack through philanthropic gifts, we are able to charge lease rates that are significantly less than market value.

Our plan for our next project is to repurpose the former Cooley High School, which has been sitting vacant since 2010. The windows and much of the copper have been ripped out, there was a fire that decimated the auditorium, and there are substantial active roof leaks that are on the verge of destroying the very foundation of this building if they aren't repaired soon. Even though all of this is true, the story of Cooley High School does not have to be over. We have an opportunity to put this facility to use—in ways the community wants—before it's too late. Although we have not yet purchased the property, we have already signed LOI agreements that equate to 75 percent of all leasable space being precommitted to lease by seven dynamic organizations who will deliver impactful opportunities directly requested by Cooley community members.

**JB:** Besides this incredibly impactful work, Life Remodeled also has a stated key focus of building relationships across divides—which happens through your projects as much as it happens as a result of them. Can you speak to that particular mission of Life Remodeled, of why and how it's core to the work you do?

**CL:** I've found that if you invite two people who are polar opposites on issues of race, religion, or politics to sit down at a table, look each other in the eye and work it out, nine times out of ten that won't be a very productive conversation. However, if you invite those same two people to work shoulder-to-shoulder on an action-oriented project they both agree on, something "magical"—something spiritual—happens.

That said, we mobilize thousands of diverse volunteers over six straight days every year to work together with a unified purpose of removing blight on vacant properties. In the process, people begin to develop increased respect for one another. More than 80 percent of our Six Day Project volunteers experience positive change in their thoughts or feelings about people of another race, religion, political perspective, or socioeconomic status.

Additionally, it is very difficult for a new organization to build trust in a community where many have experienced significant trauma. We build trust through sustained, meaningful relationships with students and community members, including five consecutive years of neighborhood blight removal and home repairs, as well as the high-quality, free community events and resource giveaways we provide throughout the year. The trust Life Remodeled builds also extends to the new organizations we bring into the community as tenants at our opportunity hubs.

**JB:** You received your MDiv at Fuller and served as a pastor for a while. Can you talk about the process of making the transition from church ministry to your work now? How do you see the work to be connected?

**CL:** While at Fuller, I learned that Jesus spent the majority of his approximately three years of ministry with some of the most marginalized people, and that he was inviting me to follow him and his way of life in a similar way. I also learned that Jesus usually demonstrated the gospel—the arrival of the





# What Makes the Movement Strong

WITH ANDRE HENRY



Andre Henry (MAT '16) is an award-winning singer-songwriter, the host of the *Hope and Hard Pills* podcast on racial justice and social change, and the author of *All The White Friends I Couldn't Keep: Hope—and Hard Pills to Swallow—About Fighting for Black Lives*. Learn more at [andrehenry.co](http://andrehenry.co).

**JEROME BLANCO:** I've seen people describe you as many things—activist, public theologian, historian, writer—and maybe some of these labels are more or less accurate than others. But you actually often respond by saying what you really are: an artist. How would you introduce yourself then and the kind of work you do?

**ANDRE HENRY:** Well, I'm a singer-songwriter. And I've been focusing a lot on social justice in my music lately, ever since the murder of Philando Castile. I thought I knew what my music was about. It was mostly about love, you know? But I found my voice after I saw Philando Castile dying on Facebook and while I was on this journey of studying systemic racism and studying nonviolence. So that's how I describe myself. An activist called me an "artist" when I started writing songs about justice. I don't like terms that combine words like that, but I kind of wish I would have gotten over myself and just said, "Okay, yeah, that's what I am," because it's confusing for people. They say, "Oh, Andre's an author, and he's a musician, and he's a historian." And, yeah, it's all connected. But the way I like to think about it is that an artist has something to say. So, I just think of myself as an artist with something to say.

**JB:** Can you talk more about the process of how this—the movement for Black lives—became your "something to say"? Obviously, the importance of the fight can't be overstated, but you've poured so much of yourself, in every capacity, into the movement in a very active way. How did you take the steps to go in with such deep commitment?

**AH:** Obviously Philando Castile was not the first instance of racism that I witnessed. I grew up in Stone Mountain, Georgia, where the Ku Klux Klan was reborn, and I saw and experienced a lot growing up in an anti-Black society. One of the ways it preserves itself is by gaslighting Black people into believing that maybe we're just being too sensitive—maybe we're the ones being racist because there is no systemic racism. So for a long time, those things that I experienced and saw, I didn't really feel free to say. But there was this long chipping away. It started

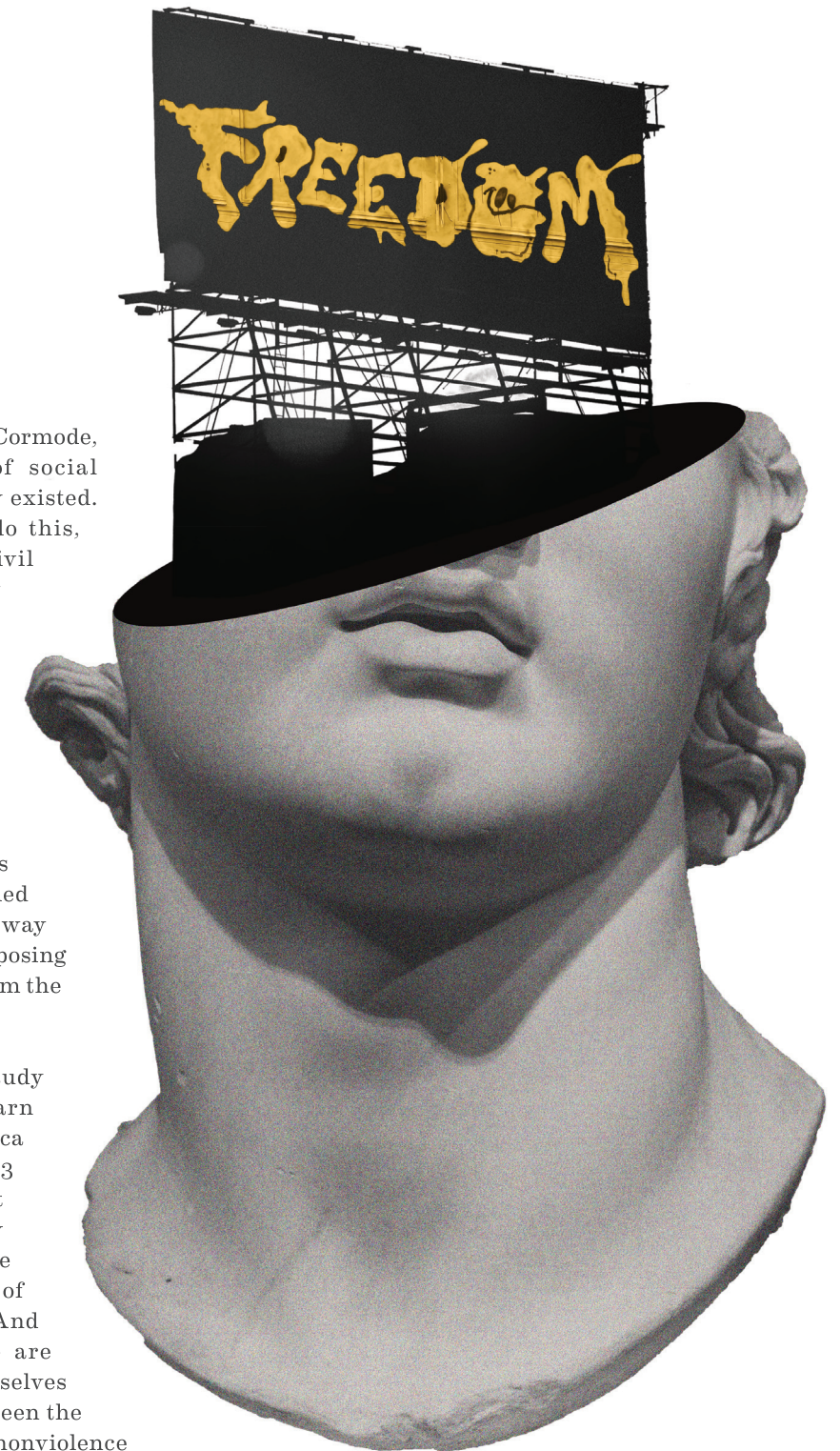
in Bible college, when I knew that I was experiencing microaggressions, but I didn't have that language for it. Then I moved to New York City, where it's more liberal and where people take for granted that racism is a thing. When I started naming those experiences in New York, not so many people said, "You're making too big a deal of it, you're playing the race card." It was people saying, "Yeah, totally." Anyway, the political scene was the last straw. Hearing about Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Sandra Bland, the list goes on. Within the same 48 hours, Alton Sterling and Philando Castile. It's still not the end. I was tired of feeling angry and helpless and powerless. And so, I decided that I needed to learn everything that I could about systemic racism, and I needed to learn everything I could about the civil rights activists who preceded us, to gain as much progress as they did. That was how that came about for me. With this line in the sand. From there, the more that I read, the more questions there were, the more there was to know. And I found myself feeling hopeful and enlightened by what I was finding. I felt like everyone in the world needed to have this information, especially the information about nonviolent struggle.

**JB:** What specifically pointed you to nonviolent struggle in that journey? What anchors your commitment to that way of doing things?

**AH:** It's the type of movement that, in recent memory, has brought us this far. When you think of how racial progress happened in America, I think the first name that comes to mind is Martin Luther King Jr., right? And this is not to say that the armed struggle over slavery, and riots that have happened, and the Civil War, and those things didn't play their part too—they have played a part. But the first name that comes to mind is Martin Luther King. And so, I was just an ordinary dude making music and wanting to do something to make a difference in the world, and I went to the first place that most people could think of.

It was actually a Fuller professor, Scott Cormode, who introduced me to the field of social movement theory, which I didn't know existed. He told me, "If you really want to do this, then you need to really understand civil rights history." That was my gateway into studying these things. And one book led to another. I didn't know about Dr. King, even though he was the first person who came to mind. I started reading about the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, which was more radical than the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in their views and their tactics of nonviolence. That led to me reading Gandhi, Tolstoy, all the way down the line—reading from Tolstoy opposing the Mexican-American War to stuff from the Black Lives Matter movement.

When you study the literature and study the data around nonviolence, you learn things. There's a massive study from Erica Chenoweth that found that in the 323 conflicts they studied, the nonviolent conflicts were almost twice as likely to win. That's by the numbers. We're not even talking about the principle of whether or not nonviolence is better. And I don't think that oppressed people are forbidden to use force to liberate themselves if that's what it takes. But for me, I've seen the data. And the data seems to show that nonviolence has been more successful.



# ON THE FLIP SIDE OF THAT ANGER IS YOUR VISION OF TOMORROW



**JB:** You've really dedicated yourself to studying history—in the US and even beyond. But our society, in general, seems to have such a short collective memory. I think, for example, of all the protests in 2020 following the murder of George Floyd and where we are now, and many of our attention spans seem so short. You've been in it for the long haul though. What has it looked like to sustain your work even when other people's memories falter? When many don't remember the history? How do you deal with that and what would you teach others about that?

**AH:** There's that saying: This is not a marathon, it's a relay race. I say that to say, first off, I think it is really admirable when you look at people like Dr. King and his children and others who are lifelong freedom fighters. But that also takes a huge toll on people's bodies and on their mental health. I'm learning now that it's actually common for people to be very active for several years and then to basically retire. One thing that a lot of people don't understand about social movements—but one of those things that makes them strong—is that it's not just this reactive mobilization to some horrendous piece of news. What really helps movements to sustain themselves is building leaders. So, people who have been involved for a while need to be investing in people who are coming in so that they can learn. I am very fortunate and humbled to have people who came into the movement in 2020 and are now doing activist work in different places. They look at me and say, "Well, you taught me these things," as I am feeling like it's time for me to take a step back and get off the streets and heal. And I've invested in other people in that way. So, a part of that memory is just making sure that we keep investing in other people. We keep telling other people the stories, so that none of us feels like we have to be the torchbearer alone.

**JB:** That recognition that you can't do it all or can't do it alone makes me think of this story in your book. You write about a single mother with two sons who showed up to a protest, and that story sort of touches on the reality that the struggle involves everybody, but at the same time, there are different roles to play. This woman, for example, can't commit to the deep study and intense work that you have done but has been a part of it in her own way. Can you say more about what that looks like?

**AH:** There can be like a really unhealthy culture of activism where it becomes very insular, and then it just becomes kind of a radical performance, right? Like, how are you presenting yourself as a revolutionary or a radical person? Are you making the sacrifices? Are you putting in the time? Then it just becomes about who's got the most bruises and who's got the least sleep and who hates the most things. A

toxic version of wokeness can present itself. I've learned a healthier way. Not that I have mastered it—I want to be very clear that I'm not a master of a healthier way—but I've been exposed to healthier ways of doing this through trial and error. I've learned that it is legitimate to ask ourselves, "What are we capable of? What are we passionate about? What resources do we have?"

Because you're one person. You have many commitments, and you have limited time, energy, and resources. Like you said, we can't do everything. So, what is our role? That has to be connected to what we are passionate about. In the book, I ask, "What makes you angry?" because I think that's a good indication of what you're passionate about. Usually, anger is a signal that you feel like something should not be a certain way. That is a hint that maybe you have an idea of how things should be in that area. And maybe you should lean into that because on the flip side of that anger is your vision of tomorrow—as one of my mentors phrases that. Then use your gifts and your talents and your resources to work in that area.

Also at that intersection, I'm learning that your passion can also be about what you enjoy doing. In the work of Black liberation in the 1950s and 60s, women played a huge part. Without Black women involved, the movement wouldn't have happened. But that's not how we tell the story when we talk about the movements of the 50s and 60s. Black men are overrepresented in the way that we tell these stories. And because of that—the patriarchy—the way that we view the movement through that picture crowds out the insights that Black women brought to the movement, which did include a more holistic vision of Black liberation. I'm thinking right now of someone like Audre Lorde and her essay "Uses of the Erotic," where she connected the dots between the fact that there is a sense of deep internal satisfaction that all of us seek in life, and that justice work needs to be connected to that deep sense of satisfaction. Our work needs to be in pursuit of that sense of satisfaction, but it can also flow out of that sense of satisfaction.

All that goes into our role. If you're a single mom raising two boys by yourself, maybe you can't play the same role as Dr. King, you know? But I've told this story many times. My friend told me about a friend of hers who offered to watch people's kids while they went out to protest. And that is just as valid as marching in the streets because you are creating the space for others to do that work. This happened in the

Montgomery Bus Boycott, too. They organized a carpool so that they could perform the boycott, right? Some people's role was driving other people to work or to school. Some people were helping organize who's driving. Some people were helping to organize some kind of way to replace people's shoes. And some people were cooking meals. There are all kinds of ways that this movement has to happen.

**JB:** I love how you also talk about how hope comes into play in the movement. In the book, you write about the practice of having hope, and even establishing your own hope regimen. Can you talk about that a bit? When did you decide you needed to do this?

**AH:** It was around 2017. It was just a year after I started being active, when every single day I would wake up and ask myself, "What can I do today to try to help move this thing forward?" For a whole year, I was writing blogs, making videos, writing articles, writing songs, performing here, speaking there. I was reading and studying. I was all in, and a year later, I was already feeling, "This is so much." Then someone sent me *Hope in the Dark* by Rebecca Solnit. I read a chapter every day like it was a devotional, because it was so enlightening. I said, "I need to make sure I always have a book about hope that I'm reading." I realized I needed to be hopeful, or else I was going to buckle under the weight. I was so depressed from doing the work that I knew I needed hope. And the only way that I'm really going to get it, I'm learning, is if I look for it intentionally. So that's what I did, what I'm learning to do. Over the years, I've built a kind of self-care regimen that includes nursing my memory on the stories of people who have fought against the powers and won, also just taking care of my physical body, drinking water, getting sleep, putting my cell phone away when I sleep at night so that, when I wake up in the morning, I am more clear-headed. It's kind of like mental hygiene. A huge part of this battle is psychological.

**JB:** Going hand in hand with that idea of hope is also the idea of joy. You write about that too—how you can't just wait for the end of the suffering and the struggle to then reach the joy someday in the future. You write about the necessity of joy now, in the present. What does that kind of joy look like?

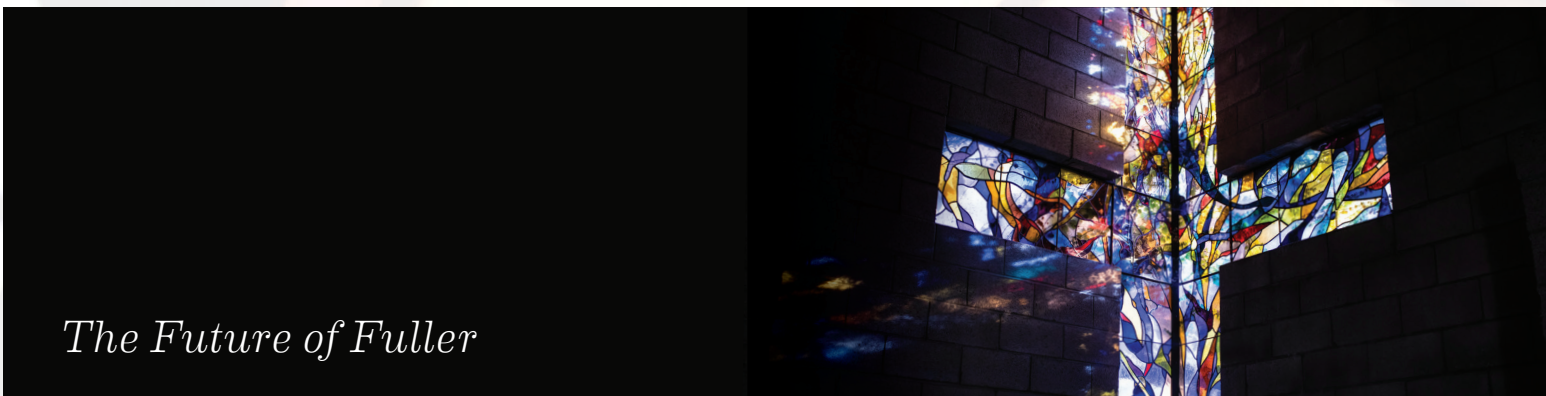
I was kind of poking fun at the dynamic earlier, when I said people have this idea that being a serious revolutionary means you have to be upset all the time and be this hard individual. And, okay, part of this journey of political awakening involves that seriousness. There's a balance here though, where I think some people just become so woke—I hate using woke in a pejorative sense—they're just no fun at all, and there's no joy at all. And that's not why we do the work ourselves. It makes a movement an end instead of a means of people beginning to live. People begin to behave as though the point is just for us to constantly be fighting. But the point is for us to create joy, right? We want to abolish punitive, inequitable systems so that people can experience the joy of living outside of those systems, living in the joy of being in a restorative community where communal care is our common sense and where people's needs are met. That's a joyful vision of the future. And people don't realize that it's not the disillusioned realism that makes the movement strong. Joy makes the movement strong.

*\*This interview has been edited and condensed for publication.*

**JEROME BLANCO** (MDiv '16) is editor in chief of FULLER magazine and Fuller's senior content editor.







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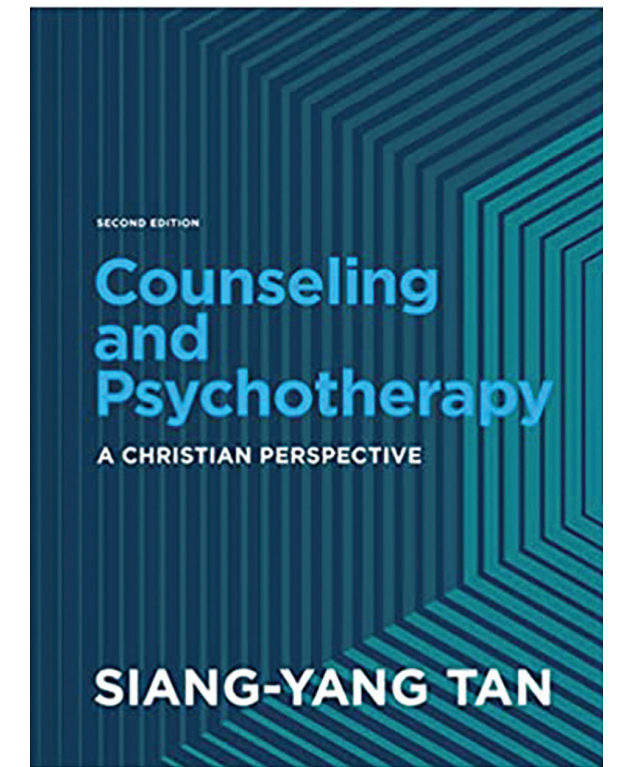
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## BENEDICTION:

### Acts that Speak the Good Word

"There's a need that has to be addressed," says Gabriel Jay Catanus, director of the Filipino American Ministry Initiative (FAMI), recently launched by Fuller's Asian American Center (AAC). "In the United States, there are more than 4 million Filipino Americans, and 90 percent of them identify as Christian. We need to serve these communities."

Daniel D. Lee, AAC's academic dean, explains that the new initiative—and hopefully others that may eventually follow—has been a long time coming. He says, "The Asian American context itself is very diverse, so from the very beginning, when we started the center, the question was, 'How do we do this without ending up with the problem of ethnic monopolizing?'" He explains that in most spaces, including seminary and church contexts, East Asian monopolizing can be a dominant factor, creating the need for intentional steps to highlight Southeast and South Asians.

The initiative is the first of its kind in the country, as far as Daniel and Jay understand. And in its inaugural year, FAMI already has plans for producing a special season of AAC's *Centering* podcast, hosting events during Filipino American History Month, rolling out formation groups, creating a course on FULLER Equip, and more. A taste of these offerings was made available last summer, when Jay and Daniel taught an online class, Filipino American Context and Ministry, which engaged "the social, political, and cultural aspects of the Filipino American context for the task of constructing local ministries." Eleanor Baylon, a PsyD candidate who participated in the class and is now serving as FAMI's director of formation, says there was power in simply being present with one another in that space—in knowing they were not alone.

"It was healing," says Eleanor, who hopes FAMI's work will contribute to combating a colonial mentality that has obscured the experience and story of Filipinos and Filipino Americans. Her goal for FAMI, and for its formation groups specifically, is not only to challenge such colonial thought but also to ask what it means to celebrate being Filipino, "not just in our individual selves but in our church communities."

Daniel says all of this is only the beginning, but "part of what we can do is try to actually become a place where Filipino American students can come and, if nothing else, be seen as Filipino Americans." Gillian Garcia, AAC's program assistant, believes we're on the right track, and she's hopeful about what's ahead for the initiative. "I've been chatting with other Filipino students," she says, "and we agree that it's such a good time to be Filipino and brown at Fuller."

✦ by Jerome Blanco (MDiv '16), editor in chief of FULLER magazine and Fuller's senior content editor.



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