



RACE RELATIONS AND THE CALL TO SYNODALITY

Part 1

By Sister Anita Baird, DHM

“If my people, called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and, turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land”. (2 chronicles 7-14)

As we embrace this sacred moment in the life of our church; a call to be a synodal church...a Pilgrim people called to listen to the holy spirit in the silence of our hearts and in our communal sharing as the body of Christ. We must enter this sacred moment and find the courage to speak to one of the greatest issues of our time and that is the history of systemic and institutional racism that to this day continues to wound and divide the body of Christ. There has never been a social problem more enduring in the life of our nation and church than the struggle with the concept of race. It is the lens through which most of our social ills pass— such as chronic health problems, drug abuse, family breakdown, violence, poverty, and racial discrimination. Racism is that ever present, silent menace cloaked in housing patterns, school test scores and the unequal distribution of dwindling resources and wealth. While most of us want to believe that we live relatively faultless lives; we are entangled in a form of evil that is every bit as pernicious as the blatant race crimes of long ago.

According to Dr. James Cone, the preeminent African American theologian and father of Black Liberation Theology, “racism encompasses the underlying and largely covert system of racial advantage and privilege enjoyed by white Americans irrespective of their conscious awareness or choice, even if individual white Americans wished it otherwise. They cannot escape the advantages conferred upon them solely for being born with white skin.” Cone views American racism being synonymous with white supremacy. “We live in a nation committed to maintaining relationships of white cultural, political, and social dominance. White supremacy has shaped the social, political, economic, cultural and religious ethos in our Churches, institutions of learning and the broader society.” Forty-three years ago, the U.S. Catholic bishops wrote in their pastoral letter on racism, *Brothers And Sisters To Us*, that “the absence of personal fault for an evil does not absolve one of all responsibility.” We must seek to resist and undo injustices we have not caused, lest we become bystanders, who tacitly endorse evil and so share in the guilt for it.”

In 2018 Pope Francis wrote, “we live in times in which feelings that to many had seemed to be outdated appear to be reemerging and spreading. Feelings of suspicion, fear, contempt and even hatred toward other individuals or groups judged to be different based on their ethnicity, nationality or religion, and as such, believed not to be sufficiently worthy to participate fully in the life of society. These feelings, then, too often inspire real acts of intolerance, discrimination or exclusion that seriously harm the dignity of those involved as well as their fundamental rights, including the very right to life and to physical and moral integrity,” (*speech at world Conference on Xenophobia, Racism and Populist Nationalism, September 20, 2018*)

In his speech given September 23, 2015, at the white house Pope Francis said, “Mr. President, together with their fellow citizens, American Catholics are committed to building a society which is truly tolerant and inclusive, to safeguarding the rights of individuals and communities, and to rejecting every form of unjust discrimination.”

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Continued from page 1

The question then is this: Are American Catholics really committed to building a society that is truly tolerant and inclusive?

Father Richard Rohr offers a critique of how Christianity aligned with empire building and colonialism manifested specifically in the United States. “The form of Christianity that has grown in the United States and spread throughout much of the world is what we have to fairly call “slaveholder Christianity.”

The founders of our nation drew on a Christian tradition that had been aligned with empire building for more than a millennium. It must be said that this form of Christianity is far, far removed from the gospel and the example of Jesus as it has failed to respect the divine image in all beings”. Many believe that slavery in this part of the world began in 1619 but that is far from the truth. Jesuit Father Joseph Brown, professor at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, writes that “the involvement of the Catholic church in the enslavement of Africans who were forcibly brought to what is now the United States began long before the events that lent their name to “the 1619 project”.

In 1452 and 1455 Pope Nicholas V issued papal edict sanctioning slavery and the seizing of non-Christian lands. The first entitled *Dum Diversus* (while different) authorizing King Alfonso V of Portugal to reduce any Saracens, Muslims, pagans, and all unbelievers to perpetual slavery, facilitating the beginning of the Portuguese slave trade from west Africa; and the second one entitled *Romanus Pontifex* (roman pontiff) as a follow-up sanctioning the Catholic nations of Europe’s dominion over discovered lands. Along with sanctifying the seizure of non-Christian lands, these papal edicts gave Christian explorers the right to claim lands they “discovered” and lay claim to those lands for their Christian monarchs, sanctioning the enslavement of native, non-Christian peoples in Africa and the new world. They paved the way for the global slave-trade of the 15th and 16th centuries, hence beginning the 400-plus years of enslavement of Africans in the Americas sanctioned by the holy Roman Catholic Church. The Catholic Church began the slave trade and has benefited financially from it. The Spanish and French colonizers who arrived here brought enslaved Africans to this land as early as 1526. Surviving records at St. Augustine, Florida, confirm this.

Why is it important for us to know our history?

Because history has been rewritten and erased when it comes to the Catholic Church’s involvement in the slave trade in what is now the United States of America. This is the whole point of critical race theory...not to make white people feel “guilty” but rather to teach the historical truth and to set the record straight. Until we do there cannot be authentic atonement and reconciliation for the sin of racism in our church and nation.

As followers of Christ the church is found wanting and bears the greatest responsibility of failure to stamp out the sins of racism and injustice in our nation and world. Too often, she fails to be the light that shatters the darkness of sin. Too often, we are comfortable co-existing with evil, rather than fighting to expose and eradicate it. Our salt has grown tasteless. Throughout the history of the United States, the Catholic Church has often faltered and missed crucial opportunities to stand with African Americans and other peoples of color in our long, difficult and painful struggle against racial injustice. From the church’s earliest days in the new world, it often remained silent in the face of the greatest issue confronting this country—the building of the wealth of a nation upon the enslavement of black people. Much of the southern slave-holding Catholic hierarchy considered slavery to be a political rather than a moral issue. Most southern bishops along with many religious orders, including the Jesuits, the Religious of the Sacred Heart, the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, the Trappists at Gethsemane, and several Dominican orders, just to name a few, owned and sold slaves for purely economic reasons.

It was not until 1958, almost 100 years after the emancipation of the enslaved that the American bishops addressed racism as a moral issue and stood firm as a body in denouncing racial discrimination as immoral and unjust.

To be continued in the July issue of the Pulse



Sister Anita Baird is a member of the Society of the Daughters of the Heart of Mary and founding director of the Archdiocese of Chicago’s Office for Racial Justice. She is a member and serves on the board of the National Black Sister’s Conference. Sister was awarded an honorary Doctor of Ministry degree from Catholic Theological Union and is a recipient of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious’ Outstanding Leadership Award.

Juneteenth, the Second Juneteenth and Where We Go from Here

By Gardis Watts



Over the last two years, Juneteenth has gained major popularity across the country. Originally celebrated in Texas and various parts of the south, Juneteenth has currently become the Independence Day for Black Americans. Starting in the late 19th century with small church-based festivals in Texas, this celebration of black emancipation spread across the south. The people of the Great Migration in the early 20th century took this custom up north where it started to get more popularized. While it had its ebb and flows in popularity over time, this celebration started to get its recognition as a holiday in several states starting in Texas in 1980 where it originated from. The year 2021 saw Juneteenth become a federal holiday. Many felt that the recognition of this celebration as a federal holiday was a result of the mass protest that happened in 2020 over the death of George Floyd. It was a symbolic gesture by the federal government to appease the masses of Black Americans who were angry and frustrated. Nevertheless, this holiday not only reminds us of our emancipation from slavery but also shows us the contradictions of how far we need to go for true liberation and what more we can learn from this celebration.

What is traditionally known about Juneteenth is that on June 19, 1865, two months after the official end of the Civil War, Union General Gordon Granger rode into Galveston, Texas with a regiment of majority black troops to read and execute General Order No. 3 to proclaim to all residents of Texas that slavery was abolished. These emancipated Africans in Galveston organized a celebration that next year and originally called it, “Jubilee Day.” Since that time, it has been a cornerstone for celebrating the end of slavery in the United States.

What is rarely known regarding the abolition of slavery associated to this day is the concept of a “Second Juneteenth”, a term coined by historian Dr. Gerald Horne. In his recently published book called, *The Counter-Revolution of 1836: Texas Slavery & Jim Crow and the Roots of U.S. Fascism*, Dr. Horne talks about the importance of June 19, 1867, two years after General Granger’s announcement. According to Dr. Horne, the announcement of General Order No. 3 did not automatically free all the enslaved. Slavery still ensued in certain parts of Texas where Union troops have not gone to yet. Many of the former Confederates migrated to Mexico by way of Texas after the official end of the Civil War. During that time, France was occupying Mexico and building a monarchy that aligned with the French Empire. After French forces ousted Mexican President Benito Juarez, France’s Emperor, Napoleon III, the nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte, installed Maximilian I as Mexico’s emperor. The intentions of this French invasion of Mexico, which started in 1861, was not only to establish a Franco-friendly state in the western hemisphere but to re-establish slavery in Mexico, which was abolished in 1829 under Mexico’s first black president Vincente Guerrero. Dr. Horne argues that the Confederates who fled to Mexico in 1865 had intended to align themselves with the French and rebuild the Confederacy. When the Union got word of this, they immediately sent troops to assist with the Mexican Republic to take back the nation from the French. With the assistance of the United States, a regiment of Black Mexican soldiers, and the failure of the French to send more troops, the Mexican Republic successfully ousted the French from the country in 1867. This triumphant climax resulted in the execution of Maximilian I on June 19, 1867. Dr. Horne establishes the importance of this day because without Mexico’s victory over France, we would have been looking at a continuation of the Civil War with a French backed Confederacy.

Critically analyzing the historical significance of this holiday gives us a sense of where we need to go from here. The idea of Juneteenth also gives us a glimpse of achieving true liberation but at the same time letting us know how much work needs to be done. From the complete historical background to its inception as a celebration and a national holiday, Juneteenth shows us the struggles we must face if we are to be emancipated people.

We as people of African descent have not yet achieved the full liberties and protections under the constitution as our white counterparts, even though we are under the narrative that this is the most democratic country in the world. We are like those Africans who still toiled under slavery in Texas for two years after the Emancipation Proclamation and two months after the official end of the Civil War. Liberation did not come to the enslaved in Galveston until black soldiers with guns had to come and enforce the abolition of slavery.

This history shows us that more work needs to be done. As stated with the “Second Juneteenth”, even though Confederate General Robert Lee surrendered at Appomattox County, Virginia in April of 1865 to signal the end of the Civil War, more work had to be done in re-establishing the Mexican Republic to quell the reemergence of a slave holding Confederacy.

The hope of this celebration also connects us in this country. For an event like this to start in the small town of Galveston, Texas, and has now become a celebration amongst all black communities across the country, attest to the fact that we are linked. This bond was strengthened during the country-wide mobilization against racial police violence. As a result of that moment, Juneteenth was declared a federal holiday. However, let’s not be satisfied with that. Let us continue to work towards a stronger legislation that provides Black Americans the ability to achieve social, political and economic liberation.



Mr. James Porter and his wife Mrs. Angenetta Porter are members of St. Moses the Black parish. They have been together for 35 years and married 18 years. They are originally from the legacy St. Columbanus Church where Mrs. Porter was for 16 years and Mr. Porter 11 years. They have two sons, Lamar and Tyson and 3 grandchildren. Mr. Porter came to Chicago in 1967 after serving active duty in the Army. He is originally from Paris, Tennessee.

After leaving active duty, 1965-1967, Mr. Porter served in the National Guard from 1981-1985 and the Army Reserve from 1985-2004. While in the National Guard he was an instructor in Springfield, Illinois. He was activated

and mobilized during every conflict of war and when not on active duty he was employed by the U.S. government as a Unit Administrator. He had dual status and served 19 years as government civil servant and 24 years in the military. In April 2004, 3 days before his retirement, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal. He retired from the Army in 2004 Sergeant First Class. Mr. Porter has served his country well and is very proud of his time in the military. For a brief time after retirement, 2004-2006, he worked as a doorman at Water Tower Place and had conversations with many celebrities. He enjoyed this position because he enjoys meeting and greeting people.

In his time at St. Moses, Mr. Porter has had various roles and responsibilities. He has been the Sacristan for the past 11 years, served in the food pantry, head usher and greeter, counter, Secretary of the Holy Name Society, and Vice-President of the Holy Name Society. He works closely with Fr. Matt. His roles with the church were somewhat challenging in the beginning but he enjoys the people, the church family, what the church does for the community and what the church stands for. Most of all he enjoys the parish and being of service and giving back by giving his time.

His hobbies include fishing, and he has been taking yearly fishing trips with longtime friends. They have fished in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Waukegan and caught catfish, trout and salmon. Many times, he has brought fish back to some of the parishioners. He enjoys fishing, but more so the camaraderie and laughing and talking with old friends. They also sometimes play cards.

On fatherhood, Mr. Porter likes to counsel his sons and especially likes when they listen and learn from his experiences. He likes the positive things they are doing with their lives as well as the fact that they do what's needed to be responsible and productive. Like any grandfather, he spoils his grandchildren and looks forward to spending time with them.

I have known Mr. Porter for several years and he is like a father figure to me. He is very encouraging and supportive and always a pleasure to have a conversation with. He is very wise and knowledgeable, and I enjoy seeing him every Sunday. He is always busy, and it is very rare to see him seated. When you think of elders in the church, he is the image that comes to mind, someone that is kind, courteous and friendly to all he meets.

-Tanya Bolen



Christian Plummer, 34 years old, is the father of 2 boys, Caleb, 4 years old and 1 year old Zechariah. He is a devoted husband, father, and son who is raising his boys with his wife, Crystal. Christian has been an active member of the Faith Community of St. Sabina all his life. He attended St. Sabina Academy, St. Ignatius College Prep, Howard University and Northwestern University where he received his Juris Doctor degree. Christian is a Sr. Associate at Jenner & Block Law Firm. Education is very important to him, and he wants to instill that into his boys. But even more important to Christian and Crystal is raising their sons with a strong faith formation, like he grew up with.

The greatest joys of fatherhood for Christian are having the opportunity to shape a life and see that life flourish. It is a big responsibility in being a provider and protector for his family. However, he feels it is well worth it and gives him hope for the future.

Christian says that having children has deepened his own relationship with God. When he looks back over his life, he sees how God has protected him and how dependent he is on God especially as he is raising his sons. He knows that he does not know everything about parenting and must lean on his faith and God to be a good parent.

Christian has had wonderful parenting role models in his parents, Yvonne and Mark and also both sets of grandparents. All have been instrumental in his upbringing in the faith. He has experienced the importance of the village, through his faith community, in his own development. He continues to rely on the village in the upbringing of his sons.

Even though Christian has many achievements, it was not without some challenges. There were peer pressures that he had to overcome to be successful. He has been blessed in having been exposed to different experiences, culturally, socially and in academia. He believes that the village kept him grounded, mentored him, and has shaped him into the man he has become.

The pandemic has revealed to him that an important aspect of raising children is the need to be more present and engaged in their lives as well as equipping them in understanding the importance of having God in their lives. Christian brings Caleb (his mini-me) to the St. Sabina justice marches to start educating him on how God is a God of justice and wants us to bring justice here on earth. When Zachariah is old enough, he will join them. Christian is a wonderful role-model for his two sons.

In a time when black men are being demonized, we applaud your witness as a son, husband, father and Man of God.

-Dr. Kimberly Lymore



Why Black Lives Matter

"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
Galatians 3:28

Aaron Salter, 55; Celestine Chaney, 65; Roberta A. Drury, 32; Andre Mackniel, 53; Katherine Massey, 72; Margus D. Morrison, 52; Heyward Patterson, 67; Geraldine Talley, 62; Ruth Whitfield, 86; and Pearl Young, 77.

May 14, 2022, 10 people were going about their day in Buffalo, New York at a grocery store shopping or in the case of Aaron Salter, working, only to be gunned down because a white young man thought his whiteness was being threatened.

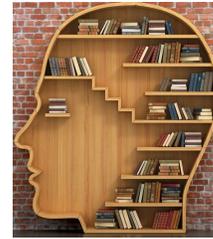
Clementa C. Pinckney, 41; Cynthia Graham Hurd, 54; Susie Jackson, 87; Ethel Lee Lance, 70; Depayne Middleton-Doctor, 49; Tywanza Sanders, 26; Daniel L. Simmons, 74; Sharonda Coleman-Singleton, 45; Myra Thompson, 59.

June 17, 2015, at Mother Emmanuel Church in Charleston North Carolina, 9 people in the middle of bible study lost their lives because a young white man thought his whiteness was being threatened.

Sadly, stories like these is not new in the history of our country. These imagined threats to whiteness and white power has consistently lead to Black and Brown lives being lost. From 1776 until 1863, Black folks were not even considered whole persons in this country and yet because of the 3/5's compromise, Black bodies gave southern states political power. After the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments gave African Americans full personhood, laws and practices were put into place to strip those basic God-given rights away. From 1919 until 1921, race riots flared up throughout the United States with the worst happening in the Greenwood community of Tulsa, Oklahoma from May 31-June 1, 1921. In each of those cases, imagined threats to whiteness cost lives, property and identity. When African Americans asked for and later demanded justice which was a right guaranteed under the constitution, at best victims were ignored, at worst, killed. From strange fruit hanging from poplar trees to Medgar Evers, Emmett Till and countless others, many paid that ultimate price to remind this country that Black Lives Matter! Yet, for those who say "All Lives Matter" don't seem to understand that for most of the history of this country, that statement is not true. Unless we learn, understand and come to terms with our history, we will continue to repeat the atrocities of it.

-Tina L Carter

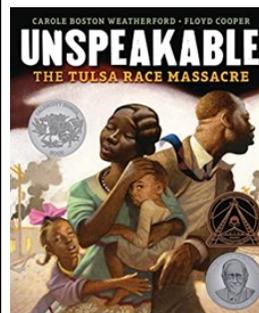
Literary Corner



Begin Again: James Baldwin's America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own by Dr. Eddie Glaude Jr.

Dr. Eddie Glaude in this book attempts to make the works of James Baldwin relevant in our times. Dr. Glaude undertakes the task of using Baldwin's literary achievements, along with his experiences, to help it make sense in today's times. He presents us with biographical information, literary criticism and historical context of Baldwin and links them to the issues of America today. There seems to be a successful synthesis of all these elements related to James Baldwin. Dr. Glaude not only makes Baldwin's work important but necessary to understand that the way Baldwin looked American society is the way we should look at it.

-Gardis Watts



Unspeakable: The Tulsa Race Massacre

by Carole Boston Weatherford & illustrated by Floyd Cooper. It tells the true story of the devastation which occurred from May 31 to June 1, 1921, in the community of Greenwood, a predominantly Black prosperous neighborhood in city of Tulsa, Oklahoma. For over 18 hours, a white mob attacked residents, robbed, and burned homes and businesses. The entire incident was largely suppressed, and no official investigation occurred for 75 years. Being a children's book, Weatherford presents the story of this tragedy in a sensitive way to her young readers. She uses a literary structure of a fairytale form with her repetition of "Once upon a time..." at the opening of each section. This method creates a "magic" around the story showing the height of Black progress, into the tragedy of what takes place eventually. As described in the book, Greenwood Avenue was a one-mile stretch which was known as, "The Black Wall Street" or as Booker T. Washington called it, the "Negro Wall Street of America." It was home to two Black-owned newspapers; the largest Black-owned hotel in the country; a Black-owned movie theater; multiple other businesses, and successful schools which some proposed had a higher level of education than the white schools in the area. In the conclusion of the story, Weatherford notes that the Greenwood of today is on an upswing of hope and improvement. Weatherford and the illustrator Floyd Cooper both share personal childhood memories of racial events that affected their families in the afterward. The book has been praised by critics and has received a Caldecott Honor and the Coretta Scott King Award in both the categories of author and illustrator.

-Stephanie Garrison

Habari gani

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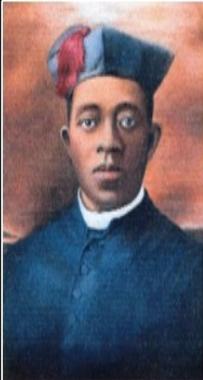
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Habari gani What's the News?



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Prayer for Fathers

Gracious and Eternal God,

As the Father of all creation, we implore you to bestow on the earthly fathers the love, strength, wisdom, courage and intellect to be the men of our community.

We ask you to bless those men who take on the role as fathers and fatherly figures to those who need them.

We thank you for giving us those men who serve as protectors and providers of our families and communities.

Continue to keep them strong as they impart their wisdom to the next generation.

We continue to pray for those men who have been ignored by society, the ones who are incarcerated, unemployed, or have strayed from the path.

Watch over them and give them the love they need to fulfill their purpose in life.

We pray for the souls of the dearly departed fathers, that their impact on the lives of everyone they touched continues to grow in love.

We ask all these things in the Mighty Name of Jesus.

Amen



Who are we?

The Pulse is a monthly newsletter to provide information about the concerns and happenings in Black Catholic Chicago. It will be made up of articles, profiles and information about events and programs happening throughout the archdiocese of Chicago. If you are interested in contributing or have any questions or concerns please email us at chicagoblackcatholics@gmail.com

This month's contributors are:

- **Dr. Kimberly Lymore** DMin, is the director of the Augustus Tolton Pastoral Ministry Program at Catholic Theological Union and Associate Minister of the Faith Community of Saint Sabina.
- **Shannon Ambrose** MAPS, is a Tolton Alum, facilitator of St. Mary Evanston Black Catholics and member of St. Mary Parish, Evanston, IL.
- **Tanya Bolen** is a Tolton Scholar and part-time student at Catholic Theological Union pursuing a Masters of Arts in Pastoral Studies. She serves and worships at St. Moses the Black Parish as a Eucharistic Minister, Hospitality, and the Women's Guild.
- **Tina L Carter**, M.Div.; MLIS, is a public librarian, graduate of Catholic Theological Union and Tolton Alum. She is a parishioner, catechist and serves on the technology ministry at Our Lady of Africa Parish in Bronzeville.
- **Stephanie Garrison** is a retired teacher, Tolton Scholar currently seeking a Masters in Pastoral Studies at CTU Seminary, attends St. Moses the Black Parish, serve in the ministries of Lector, Catechism and RCIA.
- **Gardis Watts** is a Tolton Scholar and part time seminary student at Catholic Theological Union pursuing a Master in Divinity. Current member of Holy Name of Mary Parish.
- **Latrece Winfield** is a part-time student (Augustus Tolton Scholar, M.A P.S. program) and a part-time library assistant at Catholic Theological Union; church affiliation- St. Benedict the African Church, ministers as a commentator and proclaimer.

This is a publication of the Chicago Black Catholic Alliance!

