

WE COMMIT OURSELVES:

A social justice newsletter of the Sisters of St. Joseph, Third Order St. Francis



Sr. Cecilia Marie Morton, Sr. Donna Wilhelm, Sr. Dorothy Pagosa, Jennifer Dillon,
Sr. Marjorie White, Maxine Smith, Sr. Rose Grabowski, Sr. Shannon Fox
—Social Justice Committee

Black History

Did you know...

The Black Man Invented the Following:

PENCIL SHARPENER • TROLLEY CAR POWER SYSTEM
1st TRAFFIC LIGHT • STREET SWEEPER TRUCK
CORN & COTTON SEED PLANTER • THE STRONG BOX
COMMON DUST PAN • AUTOMATIC ELEVATOR DOOR
1st CLOTHES DRYER • FIRE ESCAPE LADDER
JENNY COUPLER FOR TRAIN CARS • FIRE EXTINGUISHER
• CARBON FILAMENT FOR THE LIGHTBULB •

Special Interest Articles:

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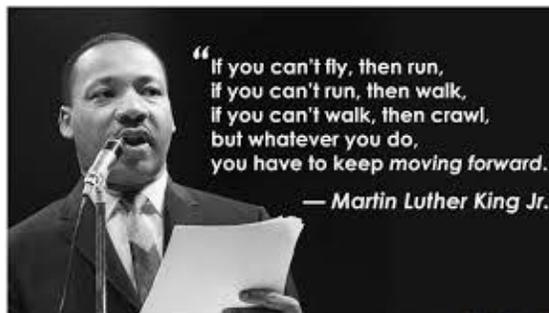
Racial Equality by Sister Shannon Fox

These are times when our country seems to be divided along so many lines—politically, religiously, and racially, for example. It becomes even more important to come together

er across racial and cultural lines. We hope to honor and celebrate diversity.

In this edition of *We Commit Ourselves* we highlight racial justice and equality in honor of

African American Heritage month. You'll read about the legacy of Dr. King and LCWR's reflection on Pope Francis' call to non-violence, among other important topics. ■



Who Is the Martin Luther King, Jr. We Celebrate?

by Sister Dorothy Pagosa

Many of us celebrate Martin Luther King, Jr. as the prophet of nonviolent resistance – and so he was. We celebrate him as the champion of civil rights for African-Americans – and so he was.

“First, I must confess that over the past few years I have been gravely disappointed with the white moderate. I have almost reached the regrettable conclusion that the Negro's great stumbling block in his stride toward freedom is not the White Citizen's Council or the Ku Klux Klanner, but the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order'

than to justice; who prefers a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive peace which is the presence of justice; who constantly says: "I agree with you in the goal you seek, but I cannot agree with your methods of direct action"; who paternalistically believes he can set the timetable for another [one's] freedom; who lives by a mythical concept of time and who constantly advises the Negro to wait for a "more convenient season." Shallow understanding from people of good will is more frustrating than absolute misunderstanding from people of ill will. Lukewarm

acceptance is much more bewildering than outright rejection.”

— Letter from a Birmingham jail [1963](#)

“A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.”

The speech distilled King's belief that racism, economic exploitation and war were all connected as "triple evils.”

“We are taking the black young men who had been crippled by our

Continued on p. 2



Martin Luther King, Jr. *continued from page 1*

society and sending them 8,000 miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in Southwest Georgia and East Harlem. So we have been repeatedly faced with the cruel irony of watching Negro and white boys on TV screens as they kill and die together for a nation that has been

unable to seat them together in the same schools.”

—April 4, 1967
Riverside Church

Martin Luther King, Jr. was the prophet of nonviolence and the champion of civil rights for African-Americans. He also was a great systems analyst. He made the

connections between racism, economic injustice and war.

As we go through February, which is designated as African-American heritage month, let us too begin to make the connections so that we can work towards a freer and just United States. ■

White Privilege Conference

The White Privilege Conference is being held in Kansas City, Missouri April 27–30, 2017.

What is the White Privilege Conference?

1. WPC is a conference that examines challenging concepts of privilege and oppression and offers solutions and team building strategies to work toward a more equitable world.
2. It is not a conference designed to attack, degrade or beat up on white folks.
3. It is not a conference designed to rally white supremacist groups.
4. WPC is a conference designed to examine issues of privilege beyond skin color. WPC is open to

everyone and invites diverse perspectives to provide a comprehensive look at issues of privilege including: race, gender, sexuality, class, disability, etc. — the ways we all experience some form of privilege, and how we're all affected by that privilege.

5. WPC attracts students, professionals, activists, parents, and community leaders/ members from diverse perspectives. WPC welcomes folks with varying levels of experience addressing issues of diversity, cultural competency, and multiculturalism.
6. WPC is committed to a philosophy of “understanding, respecting and connecting.”

Who attends the WPC?

The conference is unique in its ability to bring together high school and college students, teachers, university faculty and higher education professionals, nonprofit staff, activists, social workers and counselors, healthcare workers, and members of the spiritual community and corporate arena.

Annually, more than 1,500 attend from more than 35 states, Australia, Bermuda, Canada, and Germany.

To learn more about the White Privilege Conference, or to register to attend, you can go to their website by clicking on the link below:

<http://www.whiteprivilegeconference.com/index.html>



Where Do We Go From Here? A House Divided

By Sister Dorothy Pagosa

This was one of the most contentious election cycles in memory. One candidate won the Electoral College; one won the popular vote. We are a republic, not a democracy. Our election process has been set up since the time of the constitution to elect our president based on the Electoral College. We vote for the electors – not the candidate.

That being said, Donald J. Trump has been elected the President of the United States.

Yet, there are challenges to be faced and healing to be done. Some people have felt empowered to use hate speech, e.g. resurrecting the “n” word.

There were nearly 900 reports of hate incidents in the 10 days after the 2016 U.S. presidential election, and schools across the country reported an uptick in violence, derogatory comments and verbal harassment, according to a new study from the Southern Poverty Law Center.

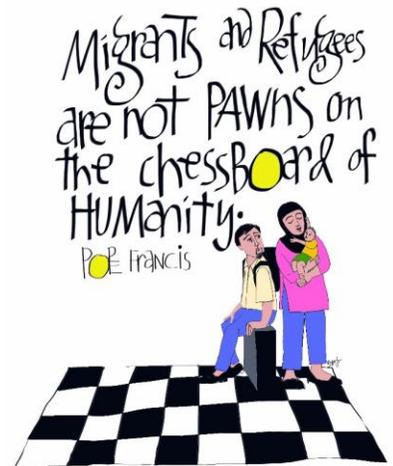
The Montgomery, Alabama-based organization, known for tracking hate incidents and groups across the country, said that [867 hate incidents](#) involving harassment and intimidation took place in the 10 days after the election, with many culprits reportedly invoking Trump’s name. California saw the largest number of crimes, 99,

followed by New York, with 69. On the other hand, no hate incidents were reported in Hawaii, Wyoming, North Dakota or South Dakota. (Newsweek 11-29-16)

What do we do?

- If you see someone being harassed...speak up. Challenge the harasser. If a woman is being harassed provide safety for her. If an immigrant child or woman wearing a hijab is harassed, stand with them.
- Listen to what people are feeling respectfully, but challenge any hate speech.
- Do your homework. Get information about migration and refugees, Islam, Black Lives Matter, the LGBTQ community. Allow yourself to make mistakes but then get back up and back to work.
- We cannot afford to be frozen in place out of fear. At the 20th Anniversary Celebration of Democracy Now, Harry Belafonte reminds us that we have fought long and hard for the rights we have. We are starting at a higher plain. We must continue the fight but we are not at square one.
- Stay in community with other people. Support one another. Together we have strength.

And of course – pray for peace and nonviolence in our country, for love of each other despite our differences. ■



Artwork by Brother Mickey McGrath, OSFS, as printed in *Benetvision*, and used with permission in that publication.

Fr. August Tolton Booklet Available — Associate Maxine Smith

Fr. Augustus Tolton was the first man of African descent to be ordained a priest in the United States, in the late 18th century.

While Fr. Tolton had two brothers who were ordained, their classification

was “passed” which meant they could be considered “white” because of their light complexions.

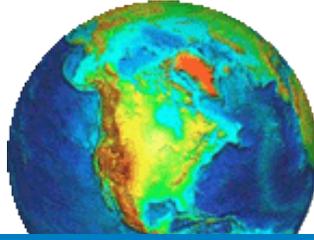
You can read the life story of Fr. Tolton in a small booklet offered to you, cost-free, by the Social Justice Committee.

If you are interested in receiving this booklet...

Contact **Maxine Smith** after Feb. 16th, by calling her at 734-697-1015 or by e-mailing her at garysmith1901@comcast.net.

You are asked to please order before March 1, 2017.





Resolutions To Action

LCWR Global Concerns Committee

Volume 26, Number 1

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Called to Nonviolence

Marie Dennis -- Co-President, Pax Christi International

EXPERIENCE

Invited by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Pax Christi International with LCWR, CMSM, Pace e Bene, the JPIC Commission of the Unions of Superior Generals (USG/UISG), the Columbans and Maryknoll, 85 people from around the world gathered in Rome last April for a conference on nonviolence and just peace. Many participants came from countries that have been at war or dealing with serious violence for decades: South Sudan, the Philippines, the DR Congo, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Palestine, Lebanon, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Uganda, Burundi, South Africa, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Colombia.

While acknowledging the difficulties, even danger, of persistent, active nonviolence, participants in the conference shared stunning examples of effective peace-building in South Sudan, Northern Uganda, the Philippines, Colombia and elsewhere under extremely difficult circumstances. They recognized that communities of faith are contributing to the develop-

ment of other routes than violent ones to solve crises.

The Rome meeting has generated a lively conversation on active nonviolence as a way of life, a positive and powerful force for social change, and a process for ending violence without violence, transforming conflict, and protecting the vulnerable. Given the effectiveness of strategic nonviolent practices in different situations of violent conflict and the fact that nonviolence is often misrepresented or misunderstood, participants in the Rome conference agreed to try to move the conversation about war and peace in the Catholic Church from just war to just peace by developing a deeper understanding of and commitment to nonviolence.

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Many people around the world are living and making peace; caring about one another; and striving for social justice and right relationships with the rest of creation. Yet, war, gang violence, gun violence, terrorist attacks, fear, and enemy-making, and the structural and systemic violences of poverty,

racism, environmental destruction, and gender violence are present in every person's life -- virtually if not personally.

For decades many of us have been asking: *Is there another path for the human community to take that will lead us beyond perpetual violence and war?*

While ethical criteria are necessary for addressing serious threats in a violent world, participants in the Rome conference called for the church to give less attention to the "just war theory,"

Resolutions to Action is an occasional publication of the Global Concerns Committee of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR). Members of the committee are: Danielle Bonetti, CSJ; Anne Curtis, RSM; Gemma Doll, OP; Susan Francois, CSJP; Alice Gerdeman, CDP; Patricia McCluskey, IHM; and Ann Scholz, SSND, staff. Please address correspondence to:

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which is well ensconced in international law. In many ways the language and concept of a “just war” has become a major obstacle to developing nonviolent tools and capacity for preventing violence, protecting vulnerable communities, transforming structures of violence, and promoting sustainable peace.

At the same time, “just peace,” as it is being developed by scholars and practitioners of peace, is an excellent example of a nonviolent moral framework that can help us navigate challenging ethical questions in a violent world and discern whether or not intended actions will move us toward the peace we all seek – or once again toward perpetual war.

A school of thought and set of practices for building peace at all stages of conflict, just peace draws on three key approaches—principles and moral criteria, practical norms, and virtue ethics—for building a positive peace. Just peace is not only the absence of violence but the presence of social, economic, and political conditions that sustain peace and human flourishing and prevent conflicts from turning violent or returning to violence. Just peace can help Christians move beyond war.

REFLECTION

Nonviolence was central to Jesus’ life and teaching. The Rome conference outcome document, *An Appeal to the Catholic Church to Recommit to the Centrality of Active Nonviolence* (www.nonviolencejustpeace.net), notes that

In his own times, rife with structural violence, Jesus proclaimed a new, nonviolent order rooted in the unconditional love of God. Jesus called his disciples to love their enemies

(Matthew 5: 44); ... Jesus embodied nonviolence by actively resisting systemic dehumanization ...

What if the institutional Catholic Church encouraged Catholics worldwide to study nonviolence and to engage in the development of increasingly effective nonviolent practices for protecting vulnerable communities, avoiding violent conflict, transforming structures of violence, and promoting cultures of peace?

What if ... the whole Catholic Church followed the example of the Church in the Philippines or Colombia, Uganda or South Sudan? What if Catholics were formed from the beginning of life to understand the power of active nonviolence and the connection of nonviolence to the heart of the Gospel – trained to understand the implications of love your enemy? What if every Catholic in the world were alert to signs of impending violence and trained to transform conflict? What if Catholics advocated actively for less spending on military and more on diplomacy, unarmed civilian protection teams, early warning systems, trauma healing programs, training in conflict transformation, as well as on just and sustainable development, education, environmental healing – efforts that we know can make a difference. What if the Catholic Church committed its vast spiritual, intellectual, and financial resources to developing a new moral framework and language for discerning ways to prevent violence and protect people and the planet in a dangerous world?

ACTION

To more deeply explore what could be a major shift in Catholic theology on war and peace, conference participants asked Pope Francis to write an encyclical on nonviolence and just peace. They asked the institutional church to integrate gospel nonviolence explicitly into the life, including the sacramental life, and work of the church and to focus not on the “just war theory” but on the development of nonviolent tools that can help the world move into the future on a different path.

In a very positive development, Pope Francis approved a proposal from conference participants to write his World Peace Day 2017 message on nonviolence. The theme is Nonviolence: A Style of Politics for Peace.

- In your congregation study the Appeal from the Rome conference at nonviolencejustpeace.net/final-statement-an-appeal-to-the-catholic-church-to-re-commit-to-the-centrality-of-gospel-nonviolence.
- Prayerfully consider whether as an individual or a congregation you can endorse the Appeal.
- During 2017 highlight the World Peace Day message on nonviolence using resources on The Catholic Nonviolence Initiative website: www.nonviolencejustpeace.net.
- Study and practice the virtues of active nonviolence and just peace in your congregation and congregational ministries.

What if the institutional Catholic Church encouraged Catholics worldwide to study nonviolence ...?



Still I Rise by Maya Angelou

You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops.
Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.
Leaving behind nights of terror and fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors
gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the
slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.



“Stemming from our Franciscan values and the fact that all life is interconnected, members, vowed and non-vowed, are encouraged to be engaged in ministry with those living on the margins of society and struggling to live with dignity.”

SSJ-TOSF Congregational Commitments
26th General Chapter

Maya Angelou



Maya Angelou was an American poet, memoirist, and civil rights activist. She published seven autobiographies, three books of essays, several books of poetry, and was credited with a list of plays, movies, and television shows spanning over 50 years. She received dozens of awards and more than 50 honorary degrees. Angelou is best known for her series of seven autobiographies, which focus on her childhood and early adult experiences. The first, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, tells of her life up to the age of 17 and brought her international recognition and acclaim. ■

—Wikipedia

REMEMBER...

We welcome your submissions in the form of

- “Sightings”
- Brief write-ups of your activities, “prototypes,” suggestions for workshops, books, articles, films, resources.

Note: The **next issue** of *We Commit Ourselves* will be published in **April**.

Please send any items for inclusion in this next issue to **Sister Marge White** by **March 20th**, the first day of spring.

~ Your Social Justice Committee