

I like America
and America
likes Me

Living in the Balance

May and June 2021

I find myself rather bumfuzzled by the upsurge of the “let’s figure out our country’s racism.” I’m not saying that we shouldn’t do this. I’m asking this....have you been asleep your entire life? Just now noticing racism? Just now seeing the hatred toward people of color, Asians and Muslims and any other “other” that “ain’t me?” I witnessed this prejudice and racism before I was ten years old. A group of older teens in my neighborhood just outside Washington, DC, went into the city regularly on Friday nights to “nigger bob” and “roll queers.” When I was a teenager, I gasped as the police turned dogs and fire hoses on civil rights marchers. I watched police clash with demonstrators on the Edmund Pettus bridge on Bloody Sunday. I witnessed the assassination of Martin Luther King. I saw the national guard and other law enforcement called in to help integrate the schools. I experienced this firsthand in college as the police walked the halls of the high school where I was doing my school counseling internship as tensions were high. I observed the “white flight” as people of color tried to move into traditionally white neighborhoods like mine. As a school counselor, I encountered many very capable black students placed in lower-level classes and “tracked” into non-college curricula. We know...yes, we do....that this kind of discrimination....and worse....has been going on for generations. It is part of our country’s shadow DNA. Both actively and passively limiting access to opportunity for fair housing, education, medical care, and living wages for people of color and many others that “ain’t me” are the consequences of the systemic systems of our racist history and flies in the face of the “and liberty and justice for all” we espouse. We know this. We know this. We know this.

I have been sitting with several questions raised in various forums and I work to unpack each one. “What is my lived experience vs what I have been told?” “How big is your...my... ‘we?’” “We” this and “we” that. Who are we talking about exactly? How big is your...my....God...or the name you have chosen for that which is greater than self? What do our traditions ask of us? Is “What would Jesus do?” a true question or merely WWJD on a wrist band? Who is in that “we” that we are concerned with? Considerate of? Humane to? How big is that circle? What are my.....our....actions and decisions in service to?

In his song *Anthem*, Leonard Cohen, challenges us to “ring the bells that still can ring”.....“*The future is no excuse for an abdication of your own personal responsibilities Ring the bells that still can ring.... they’re few and far between but you can find them. This situation does not admit of solution of perfection. This is not the place where you make things perfect, neither in your marriage, nor in your work, nor anything, nor your love of God, nor your love of family or country. The thing is imperfect. And there is a crack in everything that you can put together: Physical objects, mental objects, constructions of any kind. But that’s where the light gets in, and that’s where the resurrection is and that’s where the return, that’s where the repentance is. It is with the confrontation, with the brokenness of things.*”

We will either ring the bells that we can still ring, or we will not. We will either work with the crack and let the light in, or we will not. We will either truly walk each other to the end of the walking, or we will not. And we will either make that path easier, more humane, and more compassionate for every human being journeying with us, or we will not.



About Spiritual Direction —

- Offers a space and time for you to explore, reflect upon, and deepen your relationship with God.
- Provides a haven from the daily busyness of the outer world and opens a time to be still and to reflect on your inner journey.
- Is a companioning relationship grounded in dialogue and discernment.
- Explores ways you may integrate spirituality into your daily life.
- Is not limited to any one spiritual practice or tradition.
- May involve one or two meetings or multiple meetings over time.

You may wish to consider spiritual companioning if you are —

- Longing for a deeper relationship with the Divine
- Looking for a place to dialogue about spiritual questions
- Seeking ways to connect with the Spirit in a more intentional way
- Discerning ways to live in a more integrated and whole way
- Standing at a crossroads in your life
- Exploring new or fresh ways to be in relationship with God

For more information about Spiritual Direction, please feel free to contact me by phone
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These photos are my work taken in Charleston and low country SC at the Penn Center.

