

Not the Last Word

by Cathy Batson

The title of the book by Barbara Brown Taylor releases so many emotions within me. Learning to move in the dark wasn't even a choice initially, more like an inheritance would be more accurate. I think the only difference is that instead of adjusting to the darkness like my parents I've learned that the darkness has been and continues to be a blessing and an opportunity to move closer to God.

I was the first baby born in the new year in our little Midwestern town. However, in 1956 little black babies were not eligible for the gifts that first babies of the year receive—free diapers, bottles etc. Instead the white baby that was born two hours after me received the gifts, gifts that my parents so badly needed. I was one of six children and my parents were struggling to keep a roof over our heads and food on the table. When I was old enough to understand my mother explained to me why we were not the recipients of the gifts offered to first of the year babies.



My parents' struggles of being black living in this town meant they navigated their world in darkness. They rarely saw or believed there would be light at the end of the tunnel. My parents believed that being responsible parents meant to teach their black children how to navigate this big world of injustice and white privilege by living and adjusting to darkness. They did not mean for us to learn from it so much as to plant ourselves right in the middle of the darkness, stuck in racist quick sand,

knowing that any movement or squirming would render you paralyzed, or even dead.

I've since learned that darkness does not have to paralyze us, it need not be the last word. Darkness can free us. My parents' view of living in darkness does not have to be mine. They lived in a world that wasn't safe... much like our world now.

The difference for me is learning to walk towards the light, helping me find my truths. I am certain that God is guiding my foot steps. I am truly grateful that my parents taught me how to recognize darkness and it is in their honor that I continue to walk towards the light.

Don't get me wrong, there are times when I'm stuck right in the middle of a dark mess, but I know that as painful as that is, God is sitting in the middle of that mess with me.

And so it is.