

Equal Justice Under Love, Part 1 of 2

by Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline

[Note: as we prepare to remember the first-century lynching of Jesus on Good Friday, it seems appropriate to connect that to the lynching, and other racialized violence, perpetrated in the United States in the past and in present days.]

Dr. King said, “Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.” Love makes a way.

A vital aspect of love in ourselves, toward ourselves, as individuals and as a society, is acknowledging where and when we have strayed, where and when we have allowed hate to drive out love. Confession is an act of love towards ourselves, our world, our God. Confession makes it possible for God’s unceasing love to touch and change us. As individuals and as a society we are empowered to act to redress the wrongs we have committed and are committing.

I am titling this two-part series “Equal Justice Under Love,” believing that love is more foundational for justice than law. Law establishes rules that can be just, but they are too often unjust. So, the words across the entrance to the U.S. Supreme Court (“Equal Justice Under Law”) are admirable and apt, but they do not tell the whole story.

The Equal Justice Initiative (EJI.org) in Montgomery, Alabama, has become a beacon of love, of confession, repentance, restoration and reparation in our



national struggle to drive out hate. EJI is a non-profit that provides assistance to the poor, the incarcerated, the condemned, communities that have been marginalized by bias, discrimination, or poverty, and children prosecuted as adults in the criminal justice system. And EJI is perhaps best known for its two historical sites in

Montgomery—The Legacy Museum: from Enslavement to Mass Incarceration, and the National Memorial for Peace and Justice (more about them tomorrow).

I hang a calendar near my desk from EJI which day by day shares a short historical fact about the realities of White supremacy and efforts to resist it.

Reading the entry each days orients me to awareness and resistance to the lethal power of White supremacy.

Some days we read about a group of people standing up for justice for themselves or for others. On other days we read about a court decision or an immoral act by groups or individuals to perpetuate White supremacy through lynching and other ways, too. Our national history of racism and resistance are recorded daily over two centuries, from the late 1800's into the 21st.

On the day I write these words, February 11, we learn that in 1978 “members of the American Indian Movement begin ‘The Longest Walk,’ a five-month march from Alcatraz Island to Washington, D.C. to protest anti-Indian legislation pending in Congress.” On February 26 we are reminded of the murder of Trayvon Martin in Florida in 2012. One day's record inspires as it reminds us of ongoing resistance and another depresses and angers reminding us of all that remains to be done.

We know the long struggle for real, wide, deep, comprehensive justice, the never-ending work of love to transform and heal the soul of America, is far from over. Dr. King said, “Power without **love** is reckless and abusive, and **love** without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is **love** implementing the demands of **justice**, and **justice** at its best is power correcting everything that stands against **love**.” Dr. Cornel West, echoing Dr. King, said, “Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public.”



The struggle for what a friend of mine calls Justice/Love never ends. It is our struggle, all of us. It is too often a steep uphill climb, only glimpsing the promised land, but God keeps that vision alive in us, for us, to save ourselves.

Love makes a way for justice.