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Forgiveness & Reconciliation II



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Anna Howard Shaw Center

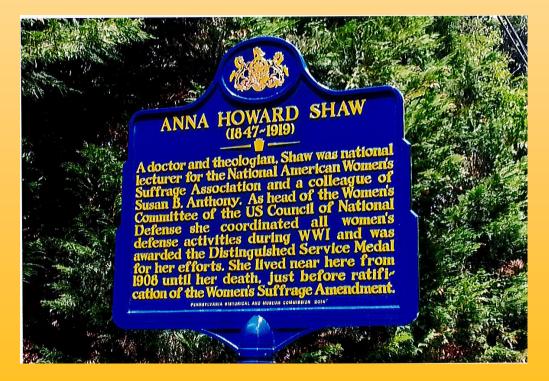


MARKING A TRAIL OF WOMEN'S HISTORY

In May of 2014, a Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission roadside historical marker was installed and dedicated to honor and memorialize Anna Howard Shaw near her former home in Moylan, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. The marker is located at the intersection of South Orange Street and Ridley Creek Road, a short walk from the home Shaw shared with Lucy Anthony, Susan B. Anthony's niece. I raised the \$1,875 for the manufacture of Shaw's marker from a donor and held a ceremony with speakers from the League of Women Voters and the Delaware County Women's Commission on the date of the dedication. Marking women's history with historical markers has been my goal since I learned that out of the 1,626 markers in Pennsylvania in 2001, only 60 were for women's history. Now known as "the Marker Lady" for obtaining markers for women's history throughout the state, I am happy to report that as of March 23, 2017, I now have 18 markers approved by the Commission. A photo showing the text of the Shaw marker appears below.

Submitted by Robyn Young

Media, Pennsylvania



Pardon My Unforgiveness

taken in what became known as the modern day The Charleston giveness is oppressive and hurtful. It offers no resolution or solu-Massacre. I remember scrolling through my Instagram feed and tion to the problem. It is used to create a false sense of unisaw a former classmate posted a picture of Mother Emmanuel ty. Forgiveness alone does not create unity, it is reconciliation that Church with the praying hands emoji as the caption. The post was does. vague, but having grown up in the Charleston area I immediately anything else that had happened for me. This happened where I grew up, to people I knew. One of the victims and her husband my father. This hit a little too close to home.

enslaved Africans to this country through the Charleston harbor, bows or a kumbaya moment. to South Carolina seceding from the Union, to the birthplace of The Civil War. My parents lived through Iim Crow and tell stories extended to this country. Dylann Roof is just a mere drop of water of having bricks thrown at them while walking down the road. I in the ocean of the history and effects of racism; forgiving him went to school with classmates proudly displaying confederate without addressing racism helps no one. By all means reconciliaflags in their yards, on t-shirts and their pickup trucks, claiming it as tion is not an easy commitment. It is long, ugly and messy. It heritage not hate. There was once an instance of local Klansmen requires addressing personal views and beliefs as well as systems dressed in white robes going into the local high school causing and privileges that benefit the majority at the expense of the mipandemonium, crosses were burned in Black neighbor's yards to nority, but it changes things for the better. Reconciliation and get them to move out of "their' neighborhoods, to more recent forgiveness must work together to bring about a complete healing happenings as the shooting of Walter Scott and The Charleston process, once we decide to do the work of reconciliation, it is then Church Massacre.

This cowardice act of Dylann Roof was the eye-opener to place. many of the truth that Black people have always known, racism is not dead. It's easy to view many of the events mentioned above as isolated and events of old and that the United States is living in a post racial utopia, but they prove that we are not one big happy blended family. This idea of a post racial America is not only problematic but also very dangerous. I believe the way we have viewed forgiveness has played a huge role in this misconception.

Forgiveness has always been held as the Christian ideal. We ought to forgive as Christ has forgiven us. It is to be offered freely and often without regard. You see how quickly the family members "forgave" Roof and how they were praised for their strength and courage to pretty much ignore the evil, hurt and pain inflicted upon them all while Dylann Roof stood there stoically and seemed to could not care less. Their forgiveness meant nothing to him, but it meant a lot to those who have bought into the idea of a post racial society; the willingness and speed at which forgiveness was offered to Roof help to endorse this misunderstanding of forgiveness.

The problem with this understanding of forgiveness is that it is one sided and places all the responsibility on the victim. It does nothing to hold accountable the perpetrator or change the evils that caused this monstrosity to happen. It essentially lets the offender off the hook and places guilt on the victim to do the "Christian" thing. Forgiveness is used to discredit the trauma of

June 17, 2015 is a day I will always remember, 9 lives were the victim and ease the guilt of the offender. This concept of for-

Reconciliation works together with forgiveness. It is recrecognized the name. I typed the church's name into Google and onciliation that brings about restoration, justice, accountability and read what had happened. My heart sank. I was shocked, devastated change. Unlike forgiveness it is holistic in that it requires both and angry to hear that this happened. This was different than parties to work together. There is responsibility that lies with both the offended and offender. It holds the offender accountable for their actions and allows the victim to process the trauma inflicted were friends and pastors in the same denomination and district as upon them and gives them the choice to forgive. It is important to understand that reconciliation does not totally erase character flaws, I know Charleston's history, America's history, all too well, but is a process in which maturity takes place, making it a continfrom the transatlantic slave trade that brought over 40 percent of uous rather than finite process that does not always end with rain-

> The invitation to racial reconciliation is what must be and only then that the process of forgiveness can authentically take



Don't ask Black People to Forgive you, ask God.

ever the hashtag #neverforget is used to lift up acts of terror on see the image of God in them. Black people from slavery to police brutality, social media commentators become hostile, claiming that Black people need to stop reconciliation must take place through dialogue and the first diaracializing the hashtag and move on from talking about slavery and logue perpetrators must have is with themselves asking "Who do I racism because it only causes division.

Americas were built on the backs of Black people after they were perpetrator needs it the most from God. Victims can and will stolen from Africa, packed onto ships like cargo and made to work rightfully relapse in anger and pain because of the reality of their as slaves. Not only did this crime strip an entire people from their trauma, but God won't. God is God because God can validate one land, loved ones and culture, it set precedence for the perpetuation person's pain, comfort them and stand on the side of the oppressed of physical and psychological abuse on the Black body and psyche. as well as denounce systematic sin that has broken right relation-Easily put, encounter with something outside of whiteness caused ships, execute justice accordingly, and still carve out a future for so much fear that it led to the social construction of race and the those that are truly repentant and seek to turn from their evil ways. correlation of Blackness to evil, thus making it easy to dehumanize This is biblical. and kill them. Marred with such an extensive criminal record in relation to color, whiteness should never have the audacity to ini- ence of the human spirit, the reality is that we are vulnerable, we tiate or facilitate conversations about forgiveness.

Forgiveness is not a one time act, but a process, a series of mans do. We are only steps taken to reach an end goal, but when the history of trauma on strong because our Crea-Black bodies is examined, there is literally no room to begin such a tor is and when we can't process because as Black people attempt to re-member their bodies be, it's imperative that we from the dismemberment of the past, new forms of injury are give it to God and not inflicted on them. Today, Black people, though 13 percent of the pretend American population, they make up 37 percent of the prison pop- noble. Forgiveness is too ulation. Black children are 4 times more likely to be suspended than complex of a gift to ask their white counterparts and are 2.5 times more likely to be shot hurt people to grant, so and killed by the police. Black children develop low self esteem to white People, when it their white counterparts who are often lifted as the standard of comes excellence and beauty in academia and culture. So, if well meaning through your racism, white Christians want to talk about forgiveness, they should do that please don't ask Black not by dictating when and how forgiveness will be granted to them people to forgive you, by their victims, but by acknowledging their criminality and harm ask God and then do on communities of color, by repenting for their participation in the what it takes on your systems that continue to allow it to exist, by seeking new ways to do end to make your wrongs life together where the voices and stories of the vulnerable are right. centered and by using their privilege to change said systems. Anything that sways from this framework adds insult to injury, especially when the victims are still living through the trauma as evident in the case of racism.

After the shooting of the Charleston 9, the family of the

As a millennial who spends way too much time on social victims were held in high esteem because many of them publicly media, I've become quite fond of the use of hashtags. This label forgave American terrorist Dylan Roof for what he'd done. Right used on social networks to consolidate messages with a specific winged evangelicals-whom are often proudly colorblindtheme has created a streamlined way for people with similar inter- commended the pardon for it displayed the high moral compass of ests to share ideas as sentiments around common interests. One Black Christians. Such empty praise has historically been the white hashtag I have always followed is #neverforget. Used to reflect on response to the respectability theatre that Black people have had to some of the biggest atrocities that have taken place over the course put on in the public sphere so as to not fall into the trope of being of history around the world, I recall first coming across angry and aggressive, as bestowed upon them by the white gaze. #neverforget when people began sharing memories of where they Pressuring Black People to forgive racism and the inherent viowere on September 11th 2001 during the 10 year anniversary of the lence that comes with it, is giving white people an excuse to easily tragedy. Since then, #neverforget has been used to have us give remove themselves from having to see or let alone fight the system pause to events like that of the Oklahoma City bombing, that feeds it. To pressure a victim of violence into forgiveness is a the Holocaust and other acts of terror like the one that took place refusal to see the humanity of that person as one who has been in Paris in November of 2015. However, I've noticed that when- deeply injured, it is asking the person to be God while refusing to

In conflict transformation, the work of forgiveness and need forgiveness from?" While Victims of violence can and should The entire infrastructure of the British Empire and the have the agency to refuse dialogue for the sake of their healing, the

As much as we want to believe in the power and resili-

ache, we bleed as hu-



Forgiveness & Reconciliation

reconciliation begins with becoming deeply acquainted with Without them I would have no reason to believe that God's hurt and betraval.

As a deeply introspective person, I value spending time acknowledging my emotions – the penetrating sadness lante. Yet, I care about my people and as someone who is that overwhelms me when I think of how vulnerable my struggling to love myself I am deliberately choosing to exmother is as un undocumented immigrant, the exhausting claim that my existence, even at its shattering pieces, is a anger I feel when I think of my dad's deportation a few years testament to my resistance. I shall resist by not hiding my back, the tiredness that I experience when I realize that anger when we begin to normalize hatred and bigotry. I barely making it through isn't just a condition of being a will not pretend to be happy when I am completely anxstudent but rather a systemic problem of poverty. These are ious about the number of executive orders being signed. the chains I identify in my life, holding me back from living During this time, the process of hurting and healing is sima life as my truest self. And while I won't stop fighting until ultaneous. No one can presume that forgiveness and rec-I see justice at all levels of society, I often have to stop and onciliation is applicable to past transgressions that are no care for myself. I am hurting and I am tired and without longer affecting us. To use Malcolm X's illustration, the realizing it, I am slowly losing the foundation of my strength hurt and pain that we are experiencing now is like the knife because the struggle is truly real.

starting point for a journey towards forgiveness and recon- low me to fully heal. So until then, I will not stop crying or ciliation. And I really do mean a journey. One that is filled groaning. This is the pain of injustice. with plenty of tears and much isolation, impatiently waiting to experience justice because my bit of strength is being exhausted.

For a person like me, who not only has a troubled past but continues to experience a troubling present, surrendering myself over stillness, tears, and the embrace of the few people that I can trust is the only thing I seem to have left before losing absolute hope. This is my message for those most hurting, for those who feel betrayal and are finding it difficult to trust people. The kindom is yours. I suspect that there are only a few who understand the daily fear of becoming separated from a parent by Immigration & Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, the experience of being told that you can no longer see your parent, and the worry that comes in having to choose between buying a coat or buying food because you do not have enough money for both.

The second part of processing through my deep hurting self is also learning how to do so in community. It is a privilege to have the education to articulate the systems of racism, sexism, and classism that have largely defined my story. However, it has been earth shattering, especially in relationship to my Christian faith, to break down what oppression feels and looks like. The only way that I have gotten through so much is because I have had people who have held me in their arms or laughed with me in a way that acknowledged my humanity even when I can no longer see myself outside of these oppressions. It continues to be a

I think a good starting point for forgiveness and privilege to have people I can talk to at any time of the day. love is true or possible.

The fight is not over. En la lucha seguiremos adethat has been jabbed in our back. I feel it; the knife is being For me, this is where my healing begins. This is the pulled back and forth, and neither of those actions will al-



Forgiveness & Reconciliation: a Case of the Former Jerusalem of Lithuania

cannot be atonement for the individual or reconciliation for any Jews were murdered by Nazis and Lithuanian collaborators. It is group without apology. It would be considered not only wrong but the highest percentage of Jews killed in Europe during the war. In absurd for a victim to be expected to forgive without the accused the postwar years, the Jewish community continued to decrease making efforts to recognize the lapse in good judgment, as well as due to other waves of Stalin's repression and due to the emigration performing an act of regret and contrition for the wrongdoing (i.e., of Jews to Israel and the United States of America. Today, the offering an oral apology), in addition to rectifying or reversing, if Lithuanian Jewish community numbers only around 5,000 people possible, the wrongdoing. Under those circumstances, the agvenge, under all circumstances is condemned.

the 12th century by Jewish rabbi, philosopher and physician, Mai- Jewish community. monides, in his insistence that atonement could be at least psychologically, if not theologically, real only if the perpetrator is be described in the post-WWII period? Professor Tomas Venconfronted a second time by the circumstances in which the origi- clova's lecture Lithuanians and Jews: What's Changed and What Hasn't nal sin or moral wrong was perpetrated. Then the accused would over the last Forty Years? may hold an answer. Venclova said: voluntarily choose to do right rather than wrong. In brief, for- "Lithuanians then, including me, knew practically nothing about giveness can never be an unearned entitlement and privilege.

relationship, which has lasted for almost three decades, is an at-page to Jews... Soviet textbooks didn't mention Jews at all, the tempt initiated by Lithuanians to build a bridge between the past word itself seemed profane somehow and it was avoided... Jews and present and between a living community and a community of were considered 'strangers' par excellence." memory.

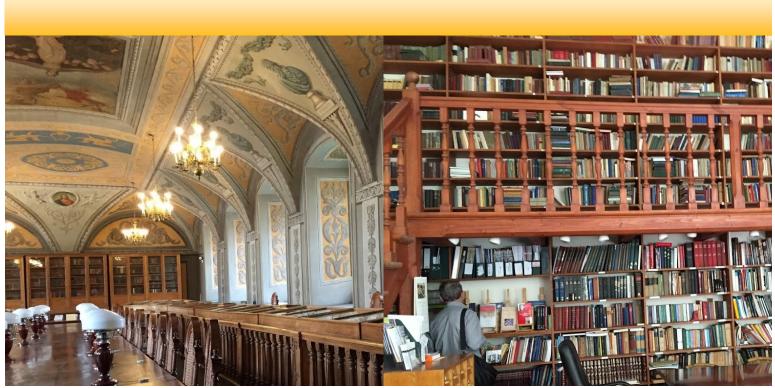
World War II, there were 250,000 Jews living in Lithuania. Only cross paths."

In the history of Judaism, the legal norm is that there 20,000 survived the Holocaust. Ninety-five percent of Lithuanian

Physical extermination of the Jews during the Holocaust grieved would be expected to forgive; the alternative, to take re- was not the only action that ruined the rich Jewish communal life in Lithuania. Fifty years of the Soviet regime also destroyed the The standard for reconciliation was raised even higher in memory of Jewish tradition, its living language, and any sense of

How could the relationship between Lithuanians and Jews Jewish history in Lithuania. The history textbooks of independent The process of reconciliation of the Lithuanian and Jewish Lithuania between the two world wars dedicated at most a half

What changed in the decades since the fall of communism The modern Republic of Lithuania is a country where the and collapse of the Soviet Union? In his lecture, Venclova outlines, Jewish population is the smallest minority of the society. Before "Lithuanians and Jews are no longer separate worlds who never



Forgiveness & Reconciliation: a Case of the Former Jerusalem of Lithuania Continued...

would have to be in place to sustain it consistently: the estab- elist, Ruta Vanagaite. "Musiskiai" ("Our People") was published lishment and revival of the Jewish community in Lithuania and in Lithuania. This is probably the most significant act taken by the creation of environments for cultural integration of Jewish any Lithuanian to rectify the original wrong deed for the past culture into Lithuanian society. These necessary conditions three decades. would lead to the understanding and acceptance of Jewish history and culture by the Lithuanians. Both conditions cannot be sus- like Lithuania, I am influenced by the hope for "Never Again," tained without rediscovering the Jewish heritage of Lithua- not only for Jews but for all people. By this standard, architecnia. This is the core of the process of reconciliation, which after tural restoration cannot be a remedy to the new horrors of the three decades, is still ongoing. Some milestones in rediscovering 21st century. Though I fully recognize the good intentions of of Jewish heritage, steps made to revive the Lithuanian Jewish some Lithuanian citizens in building memorials, or attempting community and actions taken to reconcile relationships between restorations of Jewish quarters, I still feel that such actions do not Jews and Lithuanians are listed below:

- The rediscovery of Jewish heritage started with the opening of the Jewish State Museum in Vilnius in 1989.
- The first Jewish Middle School was opened in the same year. for a world of "Never Again."
- Many Jewish organizations were founded at that time.
- In March 1995, President Algirdas Brazaukas acknowledged the crimes committed by Lithuanians during the Second World War and asked the parliament of Israel for forgiveness.
- By 2000, the State educational program began to promote learning about the Holocaust within its public schools.

Walking through Vilnius today, we can see many commemorative plaques and statues in honor and memory of the famous Jews as well as non-Jews who lived in or were associated with Jewish Vilnius and/or Jewish Lithuania. Referring again to Venclova's lecture, he states: "The great stratum of Litvak culture is no longer alien. If it hasn't been integrated into Lithuanian culture, I believe the foundation for doing so has already been laid."

In my opinion, however, the forgiveness asked for by the Lithuanian President Algirdas Brazaukas from the Israel' parliament in 1995 was a symbolic act but not a decisive step in the process of reconciliation. Why? The best answer to this question is a citation of my teacher, Professor Ellie Wiesel who said: "I don't believe in collective guilt. The children of killers are not killers, but children" and "Only the guilty are guilty. Their children are not." And who can grant forgiveness on behalf of 230,000 murdered Lithuanian Jews? Referring again to Ellie Wiesel on his interview with Oprah Winfrey in the November of 2000:

Oprah: On your first night in the camp, you saw babies

being thrown into the flames. Can you ever forgive

those who killed the children?

Elie: Who am I to forgive? Only the children themselves

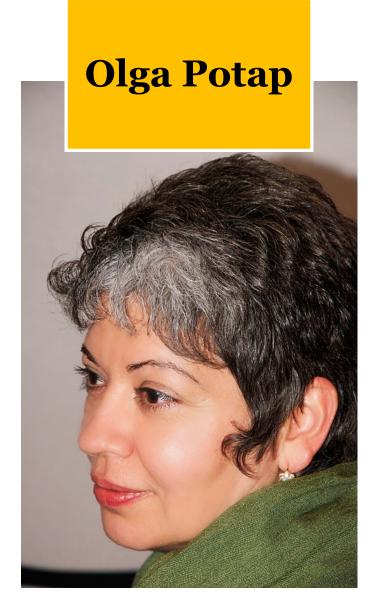
could forgive. If I forgive, I should do it in their

name. Otherwise, it is arrogant.

In 1995, when Lithuanian President Brazaukas asked the Knesset for forgiveness, Lithuania built commemorative plaques and a statue in honor of the famous Jews who lived in Lithuania. Yet, it seemed Lithuanians were not ready to learn the deepest lessons of the Holocaust. Only twenty years later, in 2016, the first book that honestly narrated the participation of Lithuani-

In order to make reconciliation happen, two conditions ans in the mass murder of Jews was written by Lithuanian nov-

In my assessment of what has been happening in places imply that they have learned the deepest lessons of the Holocaust. Restoring a corner or part of the Jewish world is a superficial activity unless hearts and minds can turn to desiring and working



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Reverend Dr. Hee An Choi, Clinical Associate Professor of Practical Theology, Director of the Anna Howard Shaw Center



Rev. Dr. Choi's research and teaching focuses on practical theology and gender and cultural studies in the multicultural and post-colonial context of the globalized, modern post-Diaspora era. Her most recent book, A Postcolonial Self: Korean Immigrant Theology and Church (2015, SUNY), analyzes how Korean immigrants form their immigrant identity through the Korean immigrant church, constructing Korean immigrant theology in the complex dynamics of racism, sexism, classism and postcolonialism of the United States of America. She is also the author of Korean Women and God: Experiencing God in a Multi-religious Colonial Context (2005, Orbis) that explores the transforming relationship between images of God and self-images of women in Korean ministerial context. With Katheryn Pfisterer Darr, she is also the co-editor of Engaging the Bible-Critical Reading from Contemporary Women (2006, Fortress). Dr. Choi has conducted research projects concerning Women and Leadership, to develop spiritual programs to support clergy, lay leaders, and seminarians for multicultural/immigrant church ministry.

Ylisse Bess Washington, Graduate Assistant



Ylisse is from Lakewood, WA and a graduate of Gonzaga University with a B.A. in Sociology and Religious Studies. She served an AmeriCorps year with City Year Chicago where she worked as a tutor and mentor to high school students in Chicago. She is currently in her third and final year as a Master of Divinity student at Boston University School of Theology. Her interests include women's health and spiritual healthcare policy. She currently does theology as a Full Spectrum Doula, supporting people through the full spectrum of their reproductive experience.

Uchenna Joan Awa, Graduate Assistant



Uchenna is from Abia State, Nigeria. She is a graduate from University of Abuja, with a BL in Law; she obtained her LL.B from Nigerian Law School, Abuja, and is currently pursuing a dual Degree in Divinity and Social Work at Boston University School of Theology and Social Work respectively. She practiced as a Barrister and Solicitor for several years, representing clients around Nigeria. Then she felt a pull to work with Non-Governmental Organizations whose major focus was to assist Nigeria in its improvement of good governance, creation of policies that will assist in the reduction of poverty levels and policies promoting Gender and Social Inclusion (G&SI). Her interests include; Intl' Development, gender equality, and conflict resolution.

Anna Howard Shaw Center Lunches Spring 2017















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