Inside:
From Selma to Stonewall
Immigrant Abrahams and Sarahs in America
Mission to Break the Stained Glass Ceiling

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Inside:
What will it take?
overcoming racism

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Overcoming Racism

What will it take?

BU School of Theology gave me tools to think about faith and religion in a new way. Now, as a chaplain and parish minister, I am able to help people embrace their questions and doubts as companions that guide them to deeper faith. Thank you, BU!

Sandra Olsen ('82)
Olsen has included a gift to STH in her estate plans.

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Professor Harrell F. Beck (1922–1987) brought the Hebrew Bible to life for 33 years. For just as long, Professor Kathe Darr has done the same.

**PILGRIMAGE to SELMA**

An estimated 80,000 people visited Selma, Alabama, on March 7 and 8, 2015, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the “Bloody Sunday” march for black voting rights. But for Woodie W. White (’61), this pilgrimage is an annual event. The retired United Methodist bishop (center) has been taking students from his Methodist Church and Race class here for roughly the past six years. White is bishop-in-residence of Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and a member of STH’s Dean’s Advisory Board.

During the anniversary weekend, White joined others—including his wife Kim (right) and Ruby Shinhoster of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s Women’s Organizational Movement for Equality Now (left)—in crossing Edmund Pettus Bridge, where state troopers attacked marchers on March 7, 1965. Also during the weekend, fellow alums Donald E. Messer (’66, GRS’69) and Kent Millard (’66, GRS’70), who participated in related marches at Selma in 1965, gave a talk about the historic march.

White, who will return to Selma in 2016, says he wants to give his students “a greater appreciation of how far we have come in the area of race in the nation in the past 50 years, and a greater commitment to continue the work for equality and justice still sought in the nation today.”

Adapted with permission from United Methodist News Service reporting by Joey Butler. Additional reporting by Julie Butters.
DEAN'S MESSAGE 2

FEATURES

From Selma to Stonewall 12
Gil Caldwell demonstrated alongside Martin Luther King, Jr., and has been arrested for protesting antigay policies. At 82, he’s still agitating for change.

Rules of Engagement 16
In election campaign-weary Ohio, Kyle Bozentko helps millennials tune in to civic life.

Mission to Break the Stained Glass Ceiling 18
HiRho Park has helped double the percentage of female pastors leading large churches, but that’s only the start of her quest to promote equal opportunities.

Black Lives Matter 20
Today’s activists protest oppression with a new prophetic power
By Pamela Lightsey, associate dean for community life & lifelong learning, clinical assistant professor of contextual theology & practice

Abraham and Sarah in America 24
Immigrants have always been vulnerable. Mercy charges us to act on their behalf.
By Sally Dyck (CAS’76, STH’78), bishop of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church

Overcoming the Wounds of Racism 28
Yesterday’s problem was the color line. Today’s is admitting it still exists.
By Art J. Gordon (’16)

Missing in Action 32
Does what we believe line up with what we do?
By Barbod Salimi, instructor of philosophical psychology, theological ethics & peace studies

Voices in the Wilderness 36
The oppressed urge us to cry out for justice
By Walter Earl Fluker (GRS’88), Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of Ethical Leadership

Preaching in a Postcolonial Age 40
Telling the truth about our past allows us to be faithful in the present
By David Schnasa Jacobsen, preaching professor, director of the Homiletical Theology Project

The Kingdom and the Kitchen 44
Building God’s kingdom is like baking bread. We work—and then we wait.
By Lindsay Popper (’15)

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

STH News: A time machine for religious scholars, campaign update, and more 4

Reflection: A Perfectly Unjust Storm 48

Pilgrimage to Selma 49
DEAN'S MESSAGE

DEAN'S MESSAGE

JUSTICE DEMANDS OUR ALL

By MARY ELIZABETH MOORE

Without justice, peace will fail
Without peace, justice will flee
Without compassion, neither justice nor peace can abide.

We are witnessing horrific violence in the United States and around the world. This violence shines a light beneath the surface of human pettiness and tolerance to reveal violent forces of racism, Islamophobia, heterosexism, classism, ableism, sexism, and interreligious intolerance. How can this be? What can we do?

On August 9, 2014, Michael Brown, a young African American man, was shot and killed by police officer Darren Wilson in Ferguson, Missouri; the aftermath revealed deep patterns of racism in US society. In response, I wrote a message to the STH community: “Enough talk—Enough inaction! Enough turning aside from racism!”1 In June 2015, after the mass shooting in Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, I wrote: “The horror has ended”2 In November 2015, after the brutal attacks in Paris, I stated: “The horror is unthinkable—almost unbearable.”3 Since then, more horrors have taken place, including the fatal shooting of 14 people in San Bernardino, California. As I write to you now, I am pulled between horror and numbness, depression and blame, but the heart of Christian faith—and the heart of most faith traditions—is that the hurting world does not have the last word. In those traditions, we turn to God and the ever-moving presence of God to hold our pain, to move redemptively, to inspire our visions and guide our actions, and to create anew. These are real promises. Human as we are, we will not agree on the causes of social problems or on the solutions. However, we have the capacity to hold one another’s dignity and work together to build a just peace, brick by brick.

Sadly, the promises of God do not remove human anguish. We remember the senseless killings of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Freddie Gray, Terence Avery Green, Alex Yazzie, Mya Hall, and the people of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church. We remember people killed by violence—more than 1.3 million people worldwide each year—and the nearly 4.6 million Syrian refugees who have fled their country with no place to go and nowhere to return.5 We remember that in the United States, more than 33,000 people are killed by firearms each year6 and that the gun murder rate is more than 20 times the average rate of other developed countries.7 Further, we know that human violence extends to all parts of God’s creation: ten of the warmest years on record have occurred in the last 12 years, with carbon dioxide levels surpassing 400 parts per million.8 We cannot continue these patterns, either in the United States or in any other country. We are destroying one another; we are destroying God’s precious creation.

We have passed the tipping point for taking a few well-placed actions. We need to be transformed from the inside out—and the outside in—if we are to turn our culture of hate into a culture of hope. Such transformation is very demanding. It will not allow us to fall into easy patterns of scapegoating—blaming a particular political party, racial group, religious community, or set of leaders. We are all to blame, and we can all be part of moving forward.

In order to change these patterns, we need to rethink social symbols that degrade and dehumanize others. As a young girl, I graduated from an all-white Robert E. Lee High School, where we were known as the Rebels and carried the Confederate flag into football games. The school’s mascot was finally changed in 2005, but the culture of the rebel flag remains subtly present in the lives of people shaped by it. Just in this high school but throughout a large portion of the United States. Not until the mass murder of nine people in Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in 2015 could the country rise up against those who promoted the flag’s continued symbolic use. Originally created by William P. Miles, the flag was used by Confederate soldiers in battle; it was later adapted by William T. Thompson as a flag of the Confederacy.9 Both men were ardent defenders of slavery, and Thompson explicitly described his version of the Confederate flag as a symbol of white supremacy.10 Indeed, the flag was used in marches of the 1950s and ’60s to support segregation. While some say the flag stands for Southern pride, the record reveals its origins and continued use as a symbol of white supremacy.

This is where we are challenged as human beings. When a symbol evokes pride for some people and degradation for others, we need to rethink and reform that symbol. Surely, Southern pride can appeal to values that defy hatred and racism. We need to rethink and reform the rebel flag.

Surely, people of one race can be their best selves without denigrating those in other races. Surely, people who are heterosexual and cisgender can be their best selves without isolating and oppressing those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer. If we truly trust a God who created this world and called it “good,”11 we can open ourselves to learn from and walk with people we do not understand.

Justice demands our all. It demands that we be truly open and compassionate toward all human beings—not that we like everyone, but that we hope and act for the well-being of all. It demands that we protect the cosmos from human destruction, not just for the sake of human beings, but for the sake of creation itself. Justice demands that we foster a just, compassionate spirit within and that we live justly in all of our daily actions and major decisions. I hope this issue of STH will inspire our collective reflection and action so that together, we can give our best for a world of justice, peace, and compassion.

A Growing Vision

A full-time spiritual life coordinator, a financial stewardship program for students, and additional scholarships are among STH’s newest resources, thanks to the School’s first-ever campaign. STH surpassed its $15 million goal in 2015 and is working to raise an additional $10 million by September 2019. Here’s the latest progress:

**STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS AND SUPPORT GOAL**

- **$6.2M**
  - Raised: $4.5M
  - Remaining: $1.7M

**STUDENT HOUSING GOAL**

- **$2.5M**
  - Raised: $1.7M

**FACULTY SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT GOAL**

- **$6.0M**
  - Raised: $0.4M

**CENTER FOR GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY & MISSION**

- **$2.7M**
  - RAISED: $1.7M

**CENTER FOR PRACTICAL THEOLOGY**

- **$25M**
  - RAISED: $17.1M

**RELIGION & CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM**

- **$17.1M**
  - RAISED: $17.1M

**ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER**

- **$4.5M**
  - RAISED: $1.7M

**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. INSTITUTE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**

- **$6.0M**
  - RAISED: $5.0M

**CENTERS ENDOWMENT GOAL**

- **$2.7M**

**A TIME MACHINE FOR RELIGIOUS SCHolars**

It’s the next best thing to time travel, says Wesley J. Wildman: computer software that helps scholar test theories about the role religion played in shaping historical events and make better-informed predictions about the future. Wildman, professor of philosophy, theology & ethics, is the principal investigator for a three-year project to develop the software. The program is part of a broader scientific study of religion project that received $2.4 million from the John Templeton Foundation and other organizations in 2015.

The free, web-based software, Complex Learner Agent Simulation Platform (CLASP), will function a bit like a world-building strategy game. You select or adapt default settings, or input unique data on elements including geography, water sources, and the culture, society, and beliefs of your human inhabitants. Then you run the model. Does it produce the results you expected, or do you need a new theory?

For example, let’s say no one knows why an ancient civilization stopped worshipping one god and began worshipping another within 25 years. You theorize a severe drought was the cause. You would feed CLASP your information about this civilization, including the drought and people’s religious beliefs, and run the simulation. If your simulated citizens are still worshipping the same god, perhaps there’s a hole in your theory. There might be another factor—for example, the rising power of a nearby community that believes in the competing god—that you may not have taken into account and that could explain the change in belief.

Wildman believes simulation software like CLASP has a critical role to play in moving religious studies away from conjecture and toward testable hypotheses. “People are starting to see that you can handle complicated issues and clarify complicated theoretical situations using modeling and simulation that you just can’t any other way,” says Wildman. And this new technology isn’t just for the computer-savvy: CLASP requires no knowledge of coding, which Wildman says will “open up a world of research” opportunities for people working in the scientific study of religion.

The software is being developed at the Institute for the Bio-Cultural Study of Religion (IBCSR), a Massachusetts-based nonprofit cofounded by Wildman to explore the scientific study of religion. IBCSR resolved a 200-year-old dispute about how violence spread among some post-Reformation Anabaptists. Wildman says that, using computer analysis to compare data sets for two competing theories, the institute’s research team showed the evidence best supports the claim that the violence was passed down from generation to generation within congregations—as opposed to by traveling preachers. The institute has also been experimenting with predicting the future. Using data about human beliefs from the World Values Survey, it built a computer model to show how religion might evolve in the next 50 to 100 years under the hypothetical conditions of more widespread science education and sufficient global access to food and water. Wildman says a possible outcome is that superstition would decrease, leading to an age where reverence for nature overtakes belief in the supernatural.

Wildman predicts that eventually, a religious scholar will have to test any new theory with a computer simulation so others can compare the scholar’s predictions against a dataset to see whether the theory holds water or not.” He says that though the preliminary technology is imperfect, “it sure is a lot more precise than what we’ve got at the moment: people sitting in their bathtubs having ideas about things.”
Trailblazers and History-Makers

Between them, they marched for civil rights in Selma in 1965, made important strides for women in academia, created leadership opportunities for Navajo youth, and helped bring God’s Word to the United States, marrying an American and becoming an established filmmaker. Her work, she says, is influenced by an idea she encountered in her studies at STH: theology is worthless without social action. Her 2000 film Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women featured women who were sexual slaves of the Japanese Imperial Army during WWII—a dark moment in history some Japanese officials still deny. She hopes her latest film will enlighten audiences on struggles she says Koreans have faced as a result of America’s intervention after the war. The United States caused harm by maintaining its superpower status.

Her new film will enlighten audiences on struggles she says Koreans have faced as a result of America’s intervention after the war. The United States caused harm by maintaining its superpower status. Kim-Gibson says America “means more” to her, believes it merits “us versus them” mentality—to think about the likeminded people everywhere as home. Kim-Gibson had hoped her husband of 29 years, Don, would travel with her to North Korea to make this film. But his health was poor, and “he knew he was going to die.” After grieving his death in 2009, she gave herself a talking-to: “Get up, Dai Sil. Go to North Korea. Don will come with you in spirit and make that last film.”

It was the last film she had to make, she told her husband—the one about the country she’d left as a little girl but had felt a longing for ever since. Filmmaker Dai Sil Kim-Gibson (’69, GRS’69) was seven when her family left North Korea in 1945, crossing the 38th parallel looking for democracy. Never having fully felt comfortable anywhere else she’d lived, she wanted to revisit the country of her birth. After more than a 65-year absence, would the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea feel like home?

In November 2015, Kim-Gibson visited BU to screen People Are the Sky: A Journey to North Korea and featured the film for the School of Theology’s Lowell Lecture. Believed to be the first Korean-American filmmaker to receive permission by the North Korean government to film inside the country, Kim-Gibson aims to share a rare view of her birthplace—one focused not on its defectors, infamous leaders, or human rights violations, but on its ordinary citizens. The documentary explores Kim-Gibson’s personal journey and the relationships between North Korea, the Republic of Korea, and the United States.

After her childhood departure from North Korea, Kim-Gibson studied in South Korea and the United States. She settled in the United States, marrying an American and becoming an established filmmaker. Her work, she says, is influenced by an idea she encountered in her studies at STH: theology is worthless without social action. Her 2000 film Silence Broken: Korean Comfort Women featured women who were sexual slaves of the Japanese Imperial Army during WWII—a dark moment in history some Japanese officials still deny. She hopes her latest film will enlighten audiences on struggles she says Koreans have faced as a result of America’s intervention after the war. The United States caused harm by maintaining its superpower status.

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BOLD SEEKERS, BIG QUESTIONS

Should we adopt a global currency to address inequity? How did practices of medieval monks prefigure psychotherapy? How can we improve interfaith relations? Could our daily habits unknowingly dispose us toward war?

“Karl Barth once said to do theology we need the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other. But I say today, we need the Bible in one end, the Wall Street Journal in the other, and a smartphone in the pocket.”

One such text is De visione Dei (On the Vision of God), which was written for a group of Benedictine monks by 15th-century theologian Nicholas of Cusa and sent to them with a religious icon whose eyes seemed to follow the viewer. Hollingsworth says Cusa instructed the monks to use the icon for a communal ritual. Walking across the room while regarding the icon, each monk believed the icon’s gaze followed himself alone. But his fellow monks, walking in different directions, had the same experience. This helped the monks to appreciate God’s concern for each and every person.

Hollingsworth says this ritual “shares striking affinity” with “cumulative and imaginative” exercises used in psychotherapy to develop self-awareness and empathy. She believes De visione Dei and similar works could be “interpreted not just as an abstract theological discourse on God, but...as a practical tool or ‘technology’ for entraining empathy, reeducating the emotions, and aiding the reader’s self-transformation” that modern readers can still experience today.

Barbod Salimi, instructor of philosophy, psychology, religion, and ethics, says the common practice of walking by the homeless without acknowledgment is one example of problematic behavior. Though that’s a “vastly different action” from, say, killing by drone, “I think that the habitual formation of somebody who has literally been trained to...walk right by suffering human life [uses] the same sort of muscle that needs to be flexed when obliterating human life.” Salimi believes these kinds of actions “shape us in ways that really form our ethics and therefore give us a particular kind of potential to then make decisions about war.... It’s not about foreign policy, it’s about who we are, who we’ve become, what our ethics are.”

That page to page 32 to read an essay by Salimi on this theme.

David Decosimo, assistant professor of theology

Some say religions are simply “different paths up the same mountain.” It’s understandable that people may wish to downplay differences in the name of harmony, but David Decosimo argues this can amount to “dodging the hard theological questions.” How people of varying religions can uphold the truth of their traditions while being “maximally hospitable” to each other is a conundrum he tackles in his work in Christian ethics and comparative theology. Decosimo says we are called to “acknowledge the depth and the reality of the disagreement and nonetheless expect that God is speaking and working in these lives and communities in ways” we may not see.

Decosimo, the author of Ethics as a Work of Charity: Thomas Aquinas and Pagan Virtue (Stanford University Press, 2014), says Church tradition has much to offer in tackling challenges such as interfaith dialogue and social justice. Pointing out that Martin Luther King, Jr. (GRS’55, Hon.’59) quoted Aquinas’s views on unjust laws in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail, Decosimo says he wants to help students recognize the ongoing relevance of early Christian theologians.

Nimi Wariboko, Walter G. Muelder Professor of Social Ethics

A former consultant to top investment banks, Nimi Wariboko left Wall Street to serve any faith community, with all in her research on how mystical religious texts can “lead the mind of the reader or the practitioner along a kind of healing journey.” Hollingsworth says that these writings described or facilitated practices used to regulate thoughts, emotions, and behavior in ways similar to those often used in modern psychotherapy.

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Turn to page 32 to read an essay by Salimi on this theme.
The defunct magazine of the Methodist Student Movement that became famous for its radical views on justice is online for the first time. The magazine, motive, was published from 1941 to 1972 and inspired students, clergy, and activists—former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has cited motive as a major influence.

Harold Ehrenesperger, once a professor at STH, was its first editor. STH and the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry of the United Methodist Church collaborated on the digitization project. The website organizes the magazine by decade and allows users to bookmark and share pages. Read motive at go.bu.edu/focus/motive.

PHOTOGRAPHING the DIVINE

The winner of the 2015 RAI poetry contest was “Marshchurch” by Zachary Bos, an administrator at the College of Arts & Sciences:

Marshchurch
by Zachary Bos
Shaking the grassfringe the greenfrogs startled
drummed and spearsharp jump in and ruffle
the brownwater bog while boy who I was
sits on the shoreline halfway in dozing
dreaming the meaning of birdrasp and wail,
of rainpatter on petlmarsh, of barbospike
swamp snottree taustutting who stand there with
beaver-chewed belts to serve the blue herons
and redshoulder crows as nestperch and mast,
of the round riverstone turtles baking
to stoneshell hardness unyielding on logs
mossrough submerged. That’s how a boy dreams—like
he owns all the meaning—as around him
suckflies come clouding to sip their small sips.

At STH, we encourage our students to lead change beyond the classroom. The Global & Contextual Engagement Fund awards fellowships to STH students participating in educational enrichment experiences in the Boston area and beyond. The Religion & Conflict Transformation program pioneers courses that take the classroom into the world in the pursuit of just peace. Generous donors will double your donation to these efforts, up to $500,000 for the Global & Contextual Engagement Fund and up to $100,000 for the Religion & Conflict Transformation program.

Email sthdev@bu.edu, call 617-353-2349, or visit bu.edu/sth/giving
Gil Caldwell demonstrated alongside Martin Luther King, Jr., and has been arrested for protesting antigay policies. At 82, he’s still agitating for change.

One month after his historic marches in Selma, Alabama, Martin Luther King, Jr. arrived in Boston to demonstrate against the city’s fostering school segregation. On April 23, 1965, in a light rain, he led singing protesters more than two miles, from the predominantly African American neighborhood of Roxbury to the Boston Common. There, he told a crowd of 22,000 that it was “the time to make real the promise of democracy. The Boston Globe called it the city’s ‘first gigantic civil rights march.’”

One man was close to his side throughout: pastor and activist Gil Caldwell.

In the press photos of the day, Caldwell (’58) appears next to King as the civil rights leader addresses a growing throng in Roxbury, joins King in song at the head of a reported “mile of marchers,” and stands on a temporary common stage, fresh from introducing King to the crowd.

Caldwell was a self-described foot soldier in the civil rights movement: he marched on Washington, called for voting rights in the heat of the Mississippi summer, and walked from Selma to Montgomery. He later broadened his demand for equality, advocating for gay rights. In 2000, he was arrested twice for protesting the United Methodist Church’s policy that the “practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.”

Later that year, a brain tumor left Caldwell with nerve damage in his right leg, so arrestable acts of civil disobedience are consigned to history. Now 82 and retired, he’s producing a film about his tumultuous civil rights movements. To Caldwell’s disappointment, not everyone who stood alongside him during the heyday of the civil rights struggle supports his advocacy of gay rights. Some dissenters are caustic; the more reasonable argue that the push for black justice is incomplete. But after a lifetime of striving against discrimination, Caldwell counters that no one deserves to be excluded in the drive for social justice.

“DR. KING’S ROOM, PLEASE”

Caldwell was born in 1933 in a segregated hospital in Greensboro, North Carolina. He grew up in a segregated neighborhood and was educated in segregated schools. The son—and grandson—of a minister, he attended a black church (it would have welcomed whites, he says, but the welcome was never tested). In 1955, Caldwell tried to break the cycle of racial inequality and applied to study at Duke Divinity School in Durham, North Carolina. At the time, Duke didn’t accept African American students—and wouldn’t until 1961. Like so many other blacks in the South, Caldwell crumpled his rejection and headed north for a master’s degree.

At Boston University, Caldwell sat for the first time in classrooms with students who were not black. It was, he says, a “new interracial experience… just a marvelous barrier-breaker for me.” He also studied with two of King’s major influences—Dean Howard Thurman (Hon.’67) and Walter G. Muelder (’30, GRS’33, Hon.’73). The first time Caldwell met with King was in 1958. The civil rights leader—by then a Time magazine cover star—was in town to make a speech, and Caldwell, vice president of STH’s student association, decided to ask King to visit the University he’d left three years earlier. “I called the hotel where he was staying, asking for Dr. Martin King. Lo and behold, they put the call into his room and he picked up the phone.” King agreed to speak at the School. Caldwell can’t recall the topic, but he remembers relaxing with King and other students afterwards in the School’s basement refectory. Unlike other famous people Caldwell has met since who were “impressed by their own charisma,” King wanted to learn about those sitting with him. Caldwell found himself “bonding with him and knowing that he would be a person I would love to follow.”

(continued on page 14)
Caldwell, who served four white and five black churches during his career, believes that living his life “against the white background” made him “more conscious of race or color” and more receptive to black theology. In 1968, he became a founding member of Black Methodists for Church Renewal and of the National Conference of Black Churches. His activism didn’t end in the ‘60s. In 1971, he inaugurated his rap sheet while protesting a supermarket’s discriminatory hiring; in 1985, he was arrested again after condemning apartheid outside South Africa’s Washington, DC, embassy.

RETURN TO SELMA
When protesters disrupted the 2000 United Methodist Church’s annual conference in an attempt to overturn its policies on homosexuality, Caldwell joined them, ready, once again, to make a stand—even if it meant another spell in cuffs. He’d first confronted his views on gay rights in the late ‘70s when activist priest Malcolm Boyd came out; Caldwell liked Boyd’s writings and decided his sexuality would do nothing to change that. Caldwell later became publicly involved in advocating for gay rights because, he says, the movement needed a place alongside that for racial equality. “We can no longer engage in silo justice movements,” Caldwell, a prolific letter writer, wrote one of his colleagues in 2018. “Until all of us are free, none of us are free.”

Caldwell hopes his forthcoming documentary can bring the movements together. In the film, he joins author and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights activist Marilyn Bennett on a journey to Selma and other landmarks in the civil and gay rights movements. The two share their own stories, as well as those of other activists, religious leaders, and academics, exploring how the two movements intersect—and where they collide. In Selma, for instance, Caldwell talks about James Reeb—the white minister killed in the city in 1965—and his role as an ally of the black civil rights movement. Caldwell calls Reeb, with whom he flew from Boston to Selma, “the model for what I’m attempting to be as an ally-advocate of LGBT people and same-sex couples.”

When he returned to Selma for the documentary, Caldwell felt some in the city were reluctant to talk with him, wary of associating an emblem of the civil rights movement with a call for gay rights. Caldwell says he’s even received abrasive letters accusing him of betraying his legacy of civil rights engagement and of betraying King.

“I’ve been disappointed that many of my civil rights movement colleagues have not joined me in being ally-advocates of gay rights,” says Caldwell, who officiated his first gay wedding in 2014 and is a former national board member of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. “I am appalled and overwhelmed at how I think black persons in the Church hew to a literalistic interpretation of scripture on gays and lesbians, when a literalistic interpretation of scripture was what enslaved our forebears and racially segregated us.” Others have argued there’s still too much to do in the fight against racism. Caldwell doesn’t disagree: his euphoria about a first black president has been beaten down by the killings of Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Freddie Gray.

“We’re repeating the past,” he says, “because we’ve not really exercised it.” The United States, he says, needs to make reparations, including financial ones, and “revisit its antiblack history and be honest about today’s antiblack reality; the truth of that effort would shape new responses and ultimate healing for the nation.”

Caldwell, is living life on tiptoe, peering over to see what it’s like beyond.
RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN-WEARY OHIO, KYLE BOZENTKO HELPS MILLENNIALS TUNE IN TO CIVIC LIFE

BY JULIE BUTTERS

Young people have the power to shape US history, but they’re not using it. In November 2014, an NBC News poll revealed that in that month’s midterm elections, people under age 30 accounted for only 12 percent of the vote; those over age 60 made up 37 percent. That’s reported to be the largest age gap in at least a decade. Why aren’t more young people voting, and what can be done about it? Kyle Bozentko is working to find out.

Bozentko (’10) is the executive director of the Jefferson Center, a nonprofit civic engagement organization in St. Paul, Minnesota. He’s also the project lead for Up for Debate! Ohio, a Jefferson Center initiative that received $35,000 from the Knight Foundation to increase “political knowledge in Ohio through community deliberation, online engagement, and the media to provide citizens the opportunity to discuss issues and campaigns thoughtfully and civically.” The project aims to get millennials (people roughly ages 18 to 34) to the polls and “find ways for communities themselves to support young people in getting involved and staying involved [in local government] outside of elections,” says Bozentko. Some might question whether millennials actually care about their communities. If they did, wouldn’t they show up at the polls? Not necessarily, says Bozentko, who received STH’s 2014 Distinguished Alumni/ae Award in the category of Young Alumni/ae. “It’s not that they don’t care, it’s that they express their commitment in different ways—through community work, through neighborhood programs, or anything else that just doesn’t fit the standard political mold, because [they see politics] as an area where you go to waste time, or waste your energy, because nothing’s changing there.”

Overcoming young people’s apathy toward government is a major challenge of Bozentko’s work. “Having seen voting in politics play out so dysfunctionally on larger levels—whether that’s changes in voter restrictions or voter ID laws or the Bush-Gore election mishaps—has turned young people off from the premise that their vote makes a difference [and created] distrust,” he says. Getting people to care about elections and civic life can be even more difficult in swing states like Ohio, where residents are bombarded for a year or more by media coverage and mudslinging campaign ads. “People just check out,” he says.

Up for Debate! Ohio made its initial foray into increasing engagement in the months leading up to Akron’s first open mayoral election in 28 years, which took place in November 2015. It organized discussion gatherings of young people to learn about their priorities and ideas for connecting with local government. On one such occasion, they paid a group of millennials $75 each to spend a day brainstorming how to engage young people in politics. Participants subsequently met with then-Republican mayoral candidate Eddie Sipler.

Young Akronites are not, “in most cases, looking for drastic changes,” says Bozentko. Their suggestions included expanding mentoring opportunities for students within city government and creating an app to keep citizens up to speed on elections, community projects, and other events. They also proposed a policy roundtable, in which Akron officials would solicit solutions to the city’s challenges from local millennials.

Recognizing that media plays a key role in informing and engaging (or turning off) citizens, Up for Debate! Ohio is also working with outlets such as the Akron Beacon Journal and WKSU, Kent State University’s public radio station, to provide information provided by campaigns, offering “better information and resources for people who do want more substantive policy conversations.” But conversation alone isn’t Bozentko’s goal: it’s action and engagement. The Jefferson Center is still crunching numbers to learn whether its efforts around Akron’s mayoral election increased voter turnout, but past research shows such programs increase voting and civic participation. Participants in Jefferson Center electoral initiatives “have an increased sense of civic agency, feel that government or political officials are more likely to be open to solving their problems, and that they have more trust in government,” says Bozentko. “People feel they’re more equipped to be strong or autonomous civic actors.”

For Debate! Ohio’s next steps are to implement ideas from the millennials’ discussions, develop relationships with the mayor and area partners, and continue engagement efforts for the 2016 presidential election. Bozentko hopes any civic interest Up for Debate! Ohio inspires will outlast the initiative. The Jefferson Center is currently expanding partnerships with Ohio-based organizations such as Bliss Institute of Applied Politics at the University of Akron, The News Outlet (a journal-school of theology | bu.edu/sth 17

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“Having seen voting in politics play out so dysfunctionally on larger levels—whether that’s changes in voter restrictions or voter ID laws or the Bush-Gore election mishaps—has turned young people off from the premise that their vote makes a difference [and created] distrust.”

—Kyle Bozentko

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MISSION TO BREAK THE STAINED GLASS CEILING

HIRHO PARK HAS HELPED DOUBLE THE PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE PASTORS LEADING LARGE CHURCHES, BUT THAT’S ONLY THE START OF HER QUEST TO PROMOTE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

BY LARA EHRLIKCH

In the 1970s, young women in the Republic of Korea were generally encouraged to keep their ambitions small: marry well and stay at home after graduating from college. HiRho Park was determined to go against convention. “I wanted to be a pioneer,” says Park (‘07,’11), who immigrated to the United States in 1986 to “be myself as a woman, do the things I wanted to do, and be treated equally.”

When the aspiring pastor arrived in the United States, however, she was hit with a double whammy—sexism and racism. Caucasian males make up about 94 percent of the clergy in large United Methodist churches, and many district superintendents and church members questioned whether Park was qualified for ministry due to her gender and ethnicity.

Park resolved to smash the glass ceiling. In 1990, she became the first Asian woman ordained in the Oklahoma Annual Conference and the first racial-ethnic (racial and ethnic minority) pastor at the Glen Burnie UMC in Baltimore, Maryland. In 1995, she became the first racial-ethnic pastor in the Salem UMC in Baltimore, and, a decade later, the first Asian woman to serve the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry (GBHEM). Now, as director of Clergy Lifelong Learning for GBHEM, Park advocates for other racial-ethnic clergy.

UMC research shows how sorely Park’s advocacy work is needed. The Church reported in 2005 that of the 1,154 large United Methodist churches in the United States (those with a membership of more than 1,000), only 64 had lead female pastors. In 2008, the UMC revealed that although women in these roles generally garnered higher average membership and worship attendance, supervised more staff, and handled more responsibilities than their male counterparts, their average salaries were approximately 27 percent lower. Male clergy are more likely to request an appointment at a large church, for instance, while women are reluctant to self-identify as lead pastors. In a 2008 survey of lead women pastors Park conducted for GBHEM, she learned that women not only face institutional barriers to the ministry—navigating the appointment process and gaining acceptance as leaders among them—they also confront self-imposed hurdles. Male clergy are more likely to request an appointment at a large church, for instance, while women are reluctant to self-identify as lead pastors.

“There is a need to challenge clergywomen to recognize and affirm their gifts,” writes HiRho Park. As a direct result of her work, she says, the percentage of lead women United Methodist pastors serving large churches has more than doubled since 2008.

“While Park credits the UMC with supporting this work and including women in cross-racial and cross-cultural appointments in its Book of Discipline, “in reality and practice, we have a long way to go,” she says. It is still rare for a Caucasian pastor to pursue an appointment serving a racial-ethnic congregation, for instance, and when she addresses this issue with colleagues, Park finds Caucasian pastors often claim the difference in language as justification. Her response: “There are 10,000 racial-ethnic clergy who are willing to learn about different cultures, customs, and languages so we can serve Jesus Christ in this Church,” and the education should go both ways. As a first step, she proposes the Church make learning a language besides English an ordination requirement. “It takes the entire Church to nurture all people as they are.”
We came to affirm our commitment to types of scholarship and activism that prizes justice and works for transformation. We came prepared to lend our hands, heads, and hearts to catalyze a movement—to do the work of transforming the death of Michael Brown, Jr. and so many others into new life. We knew that it had been done before.

More than two years after the killing of Trayvon Martin, and only three weeks after the killing of Eric Garner, the body of Michael Brown lay for nearly four hours decomposing on a sun-scorched Ferguson, Missouri, street after Brown was shot by police officer Darren Wilson. While the US Department of Justice subsequently determined “there is no credible evidence that Wilson willfully shot Brown as he was attempting to surrender or was otherwise not posing a threat,”

the killing of these three African American men fomented a summer of national unrest and the most significant black protest movement since the 1960s civil rights era. From the steady cadence of “Hands Up, Don’t Shoot” to the #BlackLivesMatter campaign, activists have demanded the American political machine give an account for the legislative and socioeconomic systems that oppress black people and perpetuate privilege—and these activists have called with a new prophetic power.

Economic discrimination is one of the founding pillars of societal racism. The racist transatlantic slave trade helped many owners of enslaved Africans amass wealth that continues to be passed on to their progeny, some of whom balk at the very idea of white privilege.

Author Ta-Nehisi Coates and the cofounders of the nonprofit legal firm ArchCity Defenders have written in-

Pamela Lightsey is a scholar, social justice activist, and military veteran. An ordained elder in the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church, Lightsey has recently received awards for her justice work from the New England Conference and the North Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church, Reconciling Ministries Network, and Black Clergywomen of the United Methodist Church.
Discussions about policing in America cannot ignore the injustice of municipalities deriving funding from what are now called “poverty violations”—traffic tickets assessed to citizens who could not afford the costs associated with operating an automobile.

LIVING WHILE BLACK
Each time I travel to Ferguson—or for that matter, most segregated communities of people of color—I see the currency of racism continues to destroy both oppressed and oppressor. I participate in the Movement for Black Lives optimistic about what shall be accomplished but at the same time lamenting how little has been gained. The memories evoke anger and determination.

I cannot remember a time when I was not acutely aware that living while black is a struggle against racism and its concomitant poisons, the likes of which can only be resolved by prolonged work. I remember that my education at one of the finest black schools in my country was ended when I, along with other young children of my community, was forced to board a bus to desegregate a white school—not because my school was inadequate, but because the price for desegregation would not be paid by white children being bused away from their familiar neighborhoods.

Today, when I see housing that should be condemned, I remember the abandoned laundromat behind my family’s tiny apartment with its “White Only” and “Colored Only” signs still visible—a reminder of the Jim Crow laws under which I was born. The racial category “colored,” printed on my birth certificate, and the story of my siblings being born—some alive, some stillborn—at home or clinics for the poor continue to remind me how racism often intersects with poverty. My birth certificate also has inscribed upon it evidence of the economic impact of structural racism upon black people during the days of my upbringing: “Father: Laborer.” Race is not only a social construct, it is the mechanism by which many privileges are conveyed and assumed as deserved.

The longevity of the #BlackLivesMatter protest is due to an organic power that neither white supremacists nor the status quo can diminish or control. It is a palpable energy. It provokes soul-stirring cadence, fists clenched in the air, social media strategies, sophisticated marketing, and the brilliant articulation of national goals. As activists, we simply offer our skills, when appropriate, as much as is needed.

This was the mindset of about 200 scholars and activists as we gathered in Ferguson in August 2015: to come together to determine how we might be helpful in the movement. The conference, located a few blocks from the local police station, was intentionally planned to take place around one year after the killing of Michael Brown. We listened to one another—activists, local clergy, and politicians. We wept and were stirred by the prophetic, embodied in young activists. And we shook our heads in agreement when time after time we were asked, “When can we come together like this again? We need this!” We were thankful for and took note of the support of bold and courageous schools like STH.

We learned much during those two days. Among the outcomes of the gathering was an agreement to make this movement a centerpiece of our work and repent for ways we have left blacks to fend for themselves. We also committed to calling out any form of religion that dehumanizes blacks, and to urging the Church “to claim a new prophetic witness in the present rather than reviving a witness of ‘old wineskins.’”

The late civil rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer once said, “There is one thing you have got to learn about our movement. That we are not just people who are better than no people.”

It’s great that #BlackLivesMatter has been a well-supported movement full of leaders. It will be better when we no longer need movements to ensure justice. Until such time, the words #BlackLivesMatter also committed to ensuring the prophetic witness in the present rather than reviving a witness of ‘old wineskins.’


5. The remainder of our thoughts is contained in the document quoted at the beginning of this article. I do hope you will take the time to read it in full.
It was a peaceful demonstration, beginning at the back of the sanctuary of the Chicago Temple (First United Methodist Church) on March 27, 2014. About 50 United Methodists, both laity and clergy, had gathered from across the Northern Illinois Annual Conference. We began with a joyful recognition of each other’s support and prayer. Then we walked to Chicago’s Federal Plaza, where we heard from families who have been separated from loved ones due to deportations. There were prayers and statements by political and religious leaders. Several hundred people continued the march to the Homeland Security building, where a dozen of us from the Conference joined others in civil disobedience by blocking the doorway, resulting in arrest.

We believed it was incumbent upon those of us who have some degree of power and privilege to provide prophetic witness for those who are struggling as immigrants in our country. The challenges faced by immigrants—with or without documents—lead them to make difficult decisions. One of those decisions is coming to this country, to protect children from violence in their homeland and to find economic solutions to the poverty they experience. Tens of thousands of unaccompanied children—fleeing violence from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and other countries—entered the United States in the last two years.1 Honduras has become one of the murder capitals of the world and gang violence has increased tremendously in these countries. Many children have had “join or die” gang recruitment or gang threats against them or their families. Some families with support back in the United States are vulnerable as targets for kidnapping.

I don’t think those of us who’ve never been forced to flee our homes fully comprehend why people make some of the choices they make, that’s the definition of privilege.

SURVIVAL TACTICS

Difficult decisions have always been a part of immigrants’ lives. Every year, I

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About the Author

Sally Dyck (CAS’76, STH’78) is the bishop of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. She and her fellow protesters who were placed under temporary arrest as a result of the anti-deportation rally in Chicago were charged with a fine.
read through the Bible and I encounter the stories in Genesis where Abraham and Sarah are traveling through a foreign land and Abraham passes Sarah off to the foreign king as his sister. “Abraham traveled from there toward the land of the arid southern plain, and he settled as an immigrant in Gerar.”

This is an immigrant’s story. I am deeply indebted to the Common English Bible for opening my eyes to this story, because instead of using the word “sojourning,” the translation clearly refers to Abraham and Sarah as immigrants.

When immigrants find themselves in any kind of trouble, they have to make hard choices, just as Abraham did before Abimelech, the king of Gerar. Abraham was trying to keep himself alive; without him alive, Sarah had no hope as a foreign woman. Yet in order to do that, he had to say that Sarah was his sister, a half-truth because they had different mothers. Sarah is incredibly vulnerable in this story—Abraham knows it, but he is powerless himself as an immigrant to do anything to protect her except to try to stay alive himself.

Abraham had to make hard choices in the hope of survival and keeping his family alive and together. Just like immigrants today facing deportation, abuse, and vulnerability. For instance, some of today’s Abrahams suffer physically when they’re forced to work in substandard conditions. If they complain, they could lose their job, at best, be turned in to the authorities for deportation.

**LIVING IN FEAR**

What happens to the Abrahams of today if they are deported? In addition to being separated, often abruptly, from their families, many are used by the federal government to provide essential labor at the detention centers where they are being held. In 2013, at least 60,000 immigrants worked in federal detention centers—more than worked for any other single employer in the nation, according to data from US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The government pays these immigrants roughly 13 cents an hour, or one dollar a day, instead of the $7.25 federal minimum wage. These Abrahams are slaves in our country, specifically in federal detention centers.

But the face of an immigrant is predominantly a female face; there are slightly more female than male immigrants. Today’s Sarahs are often left to fend for themselves, not because their husbands, fathers, and brothers are the only family that the biblical commentators make Abraham out to be, but because their male family members had to make a hard choice to work wherever they could in the United States, even in risky and unsafe situations.

Imagine dropping your child off at school every day, afraid that you’ll be detained by ICE. Imagine arranging for a neighbor to take care of your children in case you disappear. Imagine staying with a violent partner because calling the cops could get you deported.

Forty-six percent of domestic workers are immigrants. In New York City, 33 percent of immigrant domestic workers have experienced abuse of some kind in their workplaces, often because of their race or immigration status. An abuser can use the woman’s immigration status to keep her from leaving an abusive marriage or workplace or from reporting abuse. In the Bible, it says that Abimelech “took her [Sarah] into his household” (Genesis 20:2). Do we think she suddenly became the queen of the land? I don’t think so. Who knows what Sarah’s future would have been held in Abimelech’s palace?

The next generation was seriously jeopardized in this story, too. If Abraham’s and Sarah’s immigration experience had gone badly, there would be no Isaac, no Jacob, no people of Israel.

**SPEAK UP, ACT OUT**

Our Hebrew scriptures are filled with admonitions to provide mercy and care to immigrants, including: “Don’t mistreat or oppress an immigrant, because you too were once immigrants in the land of Egypt.” Likewise, the prophets admonish people to live rightly, which includes seeking justice for the poor, orphans, widows, and immigrants.

The lives of immigrants in our country are at risk, especially in our present political climate. Every day, they make difficult choices. Many of them can’t raise their own voices because of their tenuous situation with the US government. And so the task comes to those of us who believe that justice and mercy require not just speaking up, but acting for those who are voiceless and vulnerable.

I could have written about the immigration issue forever with few people paying attention, but when clergy and laity were arrested for taking a stand, people took notice. Taking that step provided an opportunity for prophetic witness throughout the Church.

A portion of this essay was adapted from “A process and penalty for disobedience,” about Dyck’s anti-deportation protest, at bishopdyck.org.

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1. Exodus 22:21 (Common English Bible), my emphasis.
2. Genesis 20:1 (Common English Bible), my emphasis.
7. Exodus 22:21 (Common English Bible), my emphasis.

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**Imagine [being] afraid that you’ll be detained by ICE.**

**Imagine arranging for a neighbor to take care of your children in case you disappear.**

**Imagine staying with a violent partner because calling the cops could get you deported.**
It was November 24, 2014. As a nation, we went about our average day: Starbucks, work, school, pastoral visits. But this was the day we looked forward to hearing the results from the grand jury in Ferguson, Missouri, investigating the death of black teenager Michael Brown. Many were hopeful—after all, it is 50 years removed from Selma and the Voting Rights Act. We have a black president and black attorney general.

But at 9 p.m., after a 20-minute speech by Prosecutor Bob McCulloch, the grand jury decided not to indict Officer Darren Wilson. A prosecutor with the power to indict a “ham sandwich” could not indict Darren Wilson. Riot and protest ensued. Less than two weeks later, there was reason to hope the grand jury investigating the death of 43-year-old Eric Garner in police custody would secure an indictment—after all, there was video footage. But again, there was no indictment—except for Ramsey Orta, the 22-year-old Hispanic who recorded the event. The challenge for racial justice of the 21st century is not the blatant “Bull Connors” of old, but the quiet, aversive racism that sneaks up as a cancer, hard to prove or be conscious of until its culmination.

The night of the Garner decision, it felt like a part of me died. I couldn’t muster the strength to do anything. How could the justice system fail its own people again? It was a sad time in this nation, and many mourned.

Perhaps Jeremiah would understand the pain we are in. In the early seventh century BC, the Kingdom of Judah had initiated reforms to bring the nation to spiritual unity and social continuity. But along the way, the people who said they were a nation after God oppressed foreigners and ignored the poor. In a situation so broken and unjust, Jeremiah loses hope for any cure and utters the rhetorical question, “Is there no balm in Gilead?” (Jeremiah 8:22)

This present moment is painful for those hurt from the wound of racism and the challenges that hinder racial justice. We are hurt by legislation that says “stop and frisk” and “stand yesterday’s problem was the color line. Today’s is admitting it still exists.

BY ART J. GORDON (’16)

It was November 24, 2014. As a nation, we went about our average day: Starbucks, work, school, pastoral visits. But this was the day we looked forward to hearing the results from the grand jury in Ferguson, Missouri, investigating the death of black teenager Michael Brown. Many were hopeful—after all, it is 50 years removed from Selma and the Voting Rights Act. We have a black president and black attorney general.

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This present moment is painful for those hurt from the wound of racism and the challenges that hinder racial justice. We are hurt by legislation that says “stop and frisk” and “stand...
your ground,” and by Senate Bill 1070, Arizona’s draconian anti-illegal-immigration law. Our prophetic witness, like Jeremiah’s, gets discouraged sometimes. It’s the same discouragement Martin Luther King, Jr. felt after the 1963 bombing of Birmingham’s 16th Street Baptist Church, the same discouragement activists in Ferguson felt. Racial justice seems like an idealistic hope that can’t fully be realized.

W. E. B. Du Bois proposed that the problem of the 20th century was the color line, but the problem of the 21st is acknowledging the color line. In 1986, social psychologist John Dovidio proposed a theory called Aversive Racism, contending that this form of racism essentially denounces racism while upholding it. It is conscious in its efforts to be anti-racist and subconscious in racism. It’s dangerous. Can we prove it?

It’s dangerous because it says, “Our university is diverse, and has a 20 percent Asian population,” yet denies that the same 20 percent is voiceless on campus. It’s conscious because it says, “We have a multicultural congregation,” but fails to mention that the leadership is not diverse. It’s difficult to prove because it will march with you at night in the streets of New York City, Boston, and Washington, DC, chanting “black lives matter,” but the same very night will stand our ground against aversive racism, and stop and frisk unjust legislation.


It is a new day. Yet the wounds still hurt. But let us not “be weary in well doing,” for we shall reap justice. It’s a new day, so let us proclaim that “there is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole, there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.”

Condensed and adapted from the sermon that won Gordon the 2015 Donald A. Wells Preaching Prize from the Massachusetts Bible Society.

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JOURNAL

By Barbad Salimi, Instructor of Philosophical Psychology, Theological Ethics & Peace Studies

In the 2005 film *Batman Begins*, the main character—Bruce Wayne—receives a sobering message from his love interest during a charged interaction. “It’s not who you are underneath, it’s what you do that defines you,” 1 Rachel Dawes proclaims. For the audience, and for Bruce, this moment is marked with painful irony: Rachel does not realize his true identity and activity in Gotham City. She is later stunned to find out who Bruce is—or more importantly, what Bruce does as Batman.

The notion that what people do defines them contrasts with what we are used to hearing, both in pop culture and in academic circles—that identity is contained in some less concrete realm, independent of action in the world. This takes familiar forms such as, “It’s who you are on the inside that matters most,” or, in academics, what psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott called the “true self.”

These ways of thinking seem to locate the essence of personhood in a place thought to be “internal” and thus wholly independent of the external.

There are obvious ways that this works toward good. For example, one’s value and worth should not be assigned based on a phenotypical externality such as skin color. (Think of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s emphasis on the “content of character” in his “I Have a Dream” speech.) Similarly, there is good reason to think that a person’s beauty is indeed more than skin deep. But Rachel was implicitly highlighting the cold, hard truth that gets overlooked when these otherwise good messages lose nuance and are applied too heavy-handedly: what one does speaks volumes in a way that what one says cannot. Rachel points out that what people believe about themselves is hardly as telling as how people actually live. In essence, she pathologizes the disjunction between thought and action.

(continued on page 34)

MIND, BODY, AND WITNESS
This disjunction is common in our sociocultural contexts. We find ourselves comfortably accepting of the thought that our true selves are normally tacitly tucked away in their safe havens, untouched by the grim realities of our day-to-day happenings. It is comfortable to think that poor actions do not define us and that some inner self can persist and maintain an unblemished identity in spite of our missteps. This sort of disjunction is a luxury afforded by a type of dualism that pervades Western notions of personhood. When Descartes famously asserted “Cogito, ergo sum” (“I think, therefore I am”), he effectively made it philosophically permissible for subsequent generations to split mind from body, thought from action, mere beliefs from concrete ethics, and so on.

I submit that the luxury of viewing our lives through such dualistic lenses constitutes a maneuver of power and privilege that we do well to work against. By orienting ourselves toward a deeper unity of thought and action, we may find ourselves living more faithfully in the practical sense while also becoming more holistically positioned to occupy the space of prophetic witness.

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This occurs by virtue of the very nature of capital—when it becomes so central to a culture, it engenders an ethic of expendability. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels referred to this as commodification, noting that in capitalistic societies where human beings operate as means to ends (namely, instruments used to make money, or build more capital) rather than as ends in themselves, humanity becomes overshadowed as people are made “into machines.”

Reducing human worth in such ways engenders perceptions of human beings as monetized, disposable, or usable. Take, for example, the tendency of politicians and non-politicians alike to speak of war through dollars and cents. Often, sociocultural attitudes of aversion to war are articulated in strictly economical terms that tend to sound more like, “We can’t afford another war.” The very thought that we do not kill our fellow human beings. It is important to notice that in this view, the obliteration of human life becomes blurred—and even goes unnoticed—by virtue of commodifying capital with humanity. Such views do not arise from out of thin air. They are shaped by our everyday cultural embodiments, of which the pervasive monetization and commodification of life is a prime example.

Contrast this violent and dehumanizing reduction with the sort of ethic that French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas advanced that rested upon the philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas advanced that rested upon the importance to notice that in this view, the obliteration of human life becomes blurred—and even goes unnoticed—by virtue of commodifying capital with humanity. Such views do not arise from out of thin air. They are shaped by our everyday cultural embodiments, of which the pervasive monetization and commodification of life is a prime example.

Contrast this violent and dehumanizing reduction with the sort of ethic that French philosopher Emmanuel Lévinas advanced that rested upon the refusal to reduce the other or deny the infinitude of the other. When we encounter the world without a sense of mystery and radical openness, we commit the grave mistake of appropriating it and all it contains, including other human beings. Avoiding this mistake does not necessarily need to come in the form of full-scale, anarchistic revolution (though one could make the case that Jesus’s prophetic witness constituted a theologically informed mode of anarchism). Rather, we can take moderate steps toward “de-monetizing” our perceptions of the world by simply being more mindful about the ways that our culture collapses capital and humanity into one another.

One way to promote this mindfulness is through a more careful monitoring of our everyday use of language. When we catch ourselves speaking of others in financial terms, we do well to pause and reformulate our words. Rather than allowing ourselves to make utterances like, “That person is worth every penny,” we should strive for statements like, “That person is so intrinsically valuable, a blessing.” The way we speak goes a long way in shaping ethics and ultimately illuminating our true identities.

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MONEY TROUBLES
The pervasive monetization of our daily lives, for example, potentiates the violent capacity for dehumanization. This occurs by virtue of the very nature of capital—when it becomes so central to a culture, it engenders an ethic of expendability. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels referred to this as commodification, noting that in capitalistic societies where human beings operate as means to ends (namely, instruments used to make money, or build more capital) rather than as ends in themselves, humanity becomes overshadowed as people are made “into machines.”

Reducing human worth in such ways engenders perceptions of human beings as monetized, disposable, or usable. Take, for example, the tendency of politicians and non-politicians
There are many voices calling us from the wilderness. They talk, walk, and stalk us in our gardens of innocence—our learned ignorance and forgetfulness—demanding how we will identify and locate ourselves in the human struggle for justice. These voices—belonging to the muted, missed, and dismissed, the wretchedly fated of society—transgress borders, categories, and the order of things. They intrude, disrupt, and interrupt our quiet complacency—making us anxious and afraid. They often cry out in extremes, without respect to persons, places, or heritages because they are unheard, unacknowledged. Unlike many of us who benefit from the privileges of academic and ecclesiastical authority, they do not seek to make straight that which is crooked nor right that which is not in alignment with the order of things. These are subaltern voices that have no recourse but to cry out. As Father David Tracy writes, “The final indignity for anyone is to be forbidden one’s own voice or to be robbed of one’s own experience.”

Tragically, the comfortable and secure seldom, if ever, really hear these voices until they scream. The terrible reality is that we have missed or dismissed these voices in places like Sanford, Florida; Ferguson, Missouri; and Staten Island, New York—and we are shocked when they speak up and act out in tragic, tormented violence in places like Brooklyn, New York; Baltimore, Maryland; Boston, Massachusetts; or Paris, France.

In one sense, the wilderness is a dangerous, complicated space where people compete to be heard. The wilderness is not merely a geographical and political location—it is also embodied history. To quote Howard Thurman, we come into the world and even before God with “the smell of life upon us.” Much of the violence in our world is a result of long, complicated, embodied histories that collide at the intersections.
of our everyday worlds. These histories remind us of our vulnerability, detachment, and complicity because the wildness is a mirror of our own wildness, desertion, loneliness, and alienation. Should we be surprised, then, that there are so many voices crying in the wildernesses of 21st-century America and the world who appear as wild men and women, who haunt our sacred stories of religion and nation, and call us to accountability where injustice reigns and the pain of the poor, among black, brown, red, white, female, male, cripped, and queer broken bodies that are crucified daily by the relentless pursuit of capital and power?

COMPASSION THAT SEEKS JUSTICE

The wilderness is indeed dangerous, but it can also be a space of grace, freedom, liminality, transformation, and hope—it can be a site where a liberating word comes our way.6 The liberating word, writes the apostle, is near and calling us, intimately connected and configured into our very existences; it is in our faces, in our minds and hearts like a champion fighting for the silenced, daring us to hear, see, believe, speak, and act. We are all haunted by a word that comes our way in the wildernesses of our small, incomplete, and lonely lives and that

liberate[s] us, both from the frightening restrictions that bind us to what is present and from the anxiety of our hearts.7 In fact, “[w]e need language more for hearing than for speaking, for believing than for acting.”

How shall we hear this liberating word until we have given attention to our own voices? How shall we learn to listen for the liberating word in the voices of others with whom we strongly disagree? And how shall we insure that our voices are voices of the just, not self-aggrandizing babblings of which we hear so much? It begins with hearing, seeing, and believing in justice that seeks compassion. According to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in the Tibetan language, compassion is called chen dung ngyal wa la mi sê pa, which means literally, “the inability to bear the sight of another’s suffering.”8 Compassion calls us “alongside the other to share in her sorrow and tragedy, but also in her hopes and aspirations”9—the wildernesses of 21st-century America and the world who appear as wild men and women, who haunt our sacred stories of religion and nation, and call us to accountability where injustice reigns and the pain of the poor, among black, brown, red, white, female, male, cripped, and queer broken bodies that are crucified daily by the relentless pursuit of capital and power.

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Compassion calls us “alongside the other to share in her sorrow and tragedy, but also in her hopes and aspirations”10—the wildernesses of 21st-century America and the world who appear as wild men and women, who haunt our sacred stories of religion and nation, and call us to accountability where injustice reigns and the pain of the poor, among black, brown, red, white, female, male, cripped, and queer broken bodies that are crucified daily by the relentless pursuit of capital and power.9

The broadest definition of justice seeks compassion. According to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in the Tibetan language, compassion is called chen dung ngyal wa la mi sê pa, which means literally, “the inability to bear the sight of another’s suffering.”

Compassion calls us “alongside the other to share in her sorrow and tragedy, but also in her hopes and aspirations” (Romans 10:18).


7. “But what does it say? ‘The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart’ (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim)” (Romans 10:18).


9. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Ethics for the New Millennium (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999), 64.

10. Walter E. Fluker, Ethical Leadership: The Quest for Charisma, Civility, and Community (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009), 166.


12. “There is in every person something that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine within herself… There is something in everybody that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in other people.” Howard Thurman, “The Sound of the Common Sense” (Anniston Address, Spelman College, Atlanta, Georgia, May 4, 1980).


In 1999, the Dalai Lama offered the following advice in a letter to the World Council of Churches: “There is a particular service that you and only you can do, in a voice which only you can speak. When we cry out for justice in this world, we are the voice—and that voice is the voice of the divine.”1

Adapted from Fluker’s sermon delivered at Harvard Memorial Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on January 18, 2015.
BY DAVID SCHNASA JACOBSEN, preaching professor, director of the Homiletical Theology Project

A common sobriquet for the School of Theology is schola prophetarum, or school of the prophets. The name calls to mind the prophetic witness at the heart of what the institution does and how its students, alumni, faculty, and staff have sought to engage in the world. We gratefully recount the prophetic memory that makes us want to celebrate this place and its prophetic preachers: Anna Howard Shaw (1878, MED 1886), Martin Luther King, Jr., Howard Thurman, and so many others.

At the same time, it is exceedingly important for us to be honest about our identity and our witness for the sake of preaching gospel prophetically today. If we mistake our sense of memory and identity for uncritical hagiography, we are not truthful about our past, nor can we be prophetically faithful in the present. At the very least, some grounding in a critical reading of history and a truthful theological perspective should give us pause.

In the Heidelberg Disputation, Martin Luther argues that the chief virtue of a theology of the cross is to “[call a] thing what it actually is.” A theology of glory runs the risk of occluding the truth; a theology of the cross acknowledges the troublesome truth that the gospel and the call to prophetic witness meet us where we really are. Somehow we in STH need to learn to speak of ourselves historically and theologically in an even more truthful way: a way that acknowledges all the differences among us and the cruciform shadows in which our prophetic calling is issued.

Some of this naming of the cruciform truth of our identity and witness is already a topic of conversation in the Church. Thirty years ago, postliberal theologians like Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon invited mainline churches to embrace their loss of cultural power and any pretensions to a universal liberal “we” and hold instead to a Church with a countercultural identity, as “exiles” or a colony in a secular world.2

(continued on page 42)
The problematic “we” of homiletic discourse reveals the difficulty we have of understanding our identities and the nature of prophetic witness itself. Implied underneath is the idea that the largely white mainline Church needs not only to acknowledge its disestablishment, but its racial privilege and need for decolonization.

The goal of all this, however, is not an extra dollop of white, liberal guilt, but responsible and faithful prophetic witness, calling a thing “what it really is” in the shadow of the cross. This will not be easy, and may also require an honest, intercultural capacity that is both painful and life-giving.

It is painful because it means embracing the truth of memory and acknowledging the corruption that attends any institution’s desire to possess its identity as a reified essence. Prophetic witness may just mean that we take seriously postcolonial theology’s commitment to identity as being formed in intercultural relation with others. Postcolonial theology acknowledges that identities in a colonial (and now neocolonial) context are often reified so as to disavow the complexity of relationships across groups and their identities. It may not be easy for the white mainline Church and its institutions to acknowledge the painful truth of the ways in which its identity has been constructed to keep others at bay and away. Postcolonial theory invites us to see ourselves as entangled in our identities with others and therefore not heirs to some preserved purity.

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Instead, we are invited to see ourselves as entangled in our identities with others and therefore not heirs to some preserved purity. It is painful to confront the fact that our privilege and its need for decolonization are often not come fully clean with its identity and the nature of its prophetic witness in a world that doesn’t feature just one dominant culture, but many cultures and identities. My concern is that both mainline liberalism and a culturally wary postliberalism have inadvertently occluded the complexities of identity and privilege that even now are too often unspoken features of common life. STH and the mainline Church are neither chaplains to some universal order nor the vanguard of a pure, countercultural ecclesial body. We are, in truth, largely white institutions to acknowledge its racial privilege and need for decolonization.

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Building God’s kingdom is like baking bread. We work—and then we wait.

BY LINDSAY POPPER ('15)

I baked bread this morning. It’s a recipe I learned from a friend, for a sourdough that uses the yeast from a saved bit of last week’s dough. Up until Sharon’s lesson, I thought all yeast came in neat foil pouches, an even 2¼ teaspoons premeasured and hermetically sealed.

To help me begin my own lineage of dough—a starter—she told me to mix just water and flour. While I kneaded, the little particles of wild yeast—the ones that are always floating in the air, living on countertops, and colonizing our skin—worked their way into my dough.

I did not think it was going to work. I saw no change for the first or second day, no frothiness or lightness or rising. On the third day, still nothing. The recipe said more flour, more water, more kneading. By the fifth day, I was finally willing to say that there was yeast in my dough.

In Luke 13:20-21, Jesus says, “To what should I compare the kingdom of God? It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

Because Jesus was likely talking about a process fairly similar to what Sharon taught me, interpreting this scripture requires knowing something about baking. His metaphor gets us out of the library and into the kitchen, out of our overworked minds and into our ready bodies, out of the world of theory and into the world of lively, messy, embodied, delicious practice.

There is a tendency among interpreters of this parable to reduce the metaphor to this single meaning: something very small becomes very big. But I believe that Jesus, with his consistent use of story, parable, and metaphor, complicates such a straightforward approach.

In Luke 17:21, Jesus will go on to say that “the kingdom of God is in your midst—in within you, is in your hearts and all around you” (my paraphrase). Yeast—wild yeast—really is within us, and all around us. The yeast-like kingdom may be small—it may be hardly perceptible sometimes—but my goodness it is pervasive. So how does this kingdom come?

Lindsay Popper ('15) is a preacher, poet, and the minister of Christian education at Allin Congregational Church in Dedham, Massachusetts. She is interested in social justice and issues of grief and loss.
We are tempted to believe that we build the kingdom of God every time we go to marches, cook meals for the hungry, and start social justice programs. We are tempted to believe we build it when we teach Sunday school and campaign for the good candidates and stand for the rights of the dis inherits. But when we convince ourselves that we build the kingdom by buying into a dangerous and exhausting lie that has been plaguing liberal Christianity for the last hundred or so years. We have bought the lie that building the kingdom of God is on our shoulders, and that it will come when we are good enough, strong enough, persistent enough, smart enough, steady enough. That lie will always and only leave us feeling tired and insufficient.

The kingdom of God is like yeast: you couldn’t make yeast if you tried. Yeast is a living, growing being that can’t be manufactured by people, no matter how crafty we are. Baking bread is always an act of faith. As a baker, I can provide the right conditions for the yeast. I can make the bread warm enough but not too warm. I can make the yeast grow and be steady enough. That lie always feels like a miracle. Wondering if you can make any good yeast is somewhere between an incredible bit of good news and the kingdom of God. Just as the success of bread rests ultimately on the presence and action of yeast, the bringing and the building of the kingdom of God rests ultimately on God’s action. In Luke’s gospel, the leaven parable follows a teaching on the Sabbath; Jesus reminds his crowd that this sacred day has always been a time for remembering God’s liberation. When he goes on to talk about the kingdom of God being like yeast, I submit that he does so to underscore the good news of the Sabbath: human work is not the basis of the universe. God’s work, God’s sustaining presence, God’s healing and redemption is infinitely more powerful, enduring, and efficacious than the work of any one person, or even any one community.

God freed us from bondage in Egypt and from our bondage to the death-dealing systems of sin. God frees us from the lies that we must work endlessly. God frees us from the lie that the kingdom could rise or fall on our efforts. And God frees us from our belief that we are the world’s last best hope.

Because the kingdom is wild. The kingdom is all around us. Jesus is the one who inaugurated and announced the new and coming kingdom, and Jesus is the one whose power and love and grace will bring that kingdom into fullness.

Now, our job is not to sit back eating bonbons and drinking martinis unless Jesus brings the kingdom in. In light of the fact that the kingdom of God is like yeast, we have real work to do. Scholar N. T. Wright makes a helpful distinction between building the kingdom and building for the kingdom. An individual stonemason does not build a cathedral; no single person has the knowledge, skill, foresight, power, ability, or time to build a cathedral alone. But a stonemason can dedicate his or her life to building for the cathedral, knowing that what he or she makes will be used.

And so, in light of the good news that God is the builder and the bringer and the architect and the fulfiller of God’s kingdom, what are we to do? And so, in light of the good news that God is the builder and the bringer and the architect and the fulfiller of God’s kingdom, what are we to do? We are participating in something bigger, way more beautiful, than anything we could imagine.

Hear the good news: the kingdom of God is present in the world. It is wild and persistent, it is surprising, it is growing, it is coming. The kingdom of God is rising like leavened dough and we are invited to work and to wonder at the stunning beauty of it.
A PERFECTLY UNJUST STORM

RACISM, POVERTY, AND CLIMATE CHANGE ARE A DEADLY MIX

BY MARIAMA WHITE-HAMMOND (’17)

In 2005, I went to the Gulf Coast to provide support after Hurricane Katrina. I saw how the devastation of the wind and water was compounded by poverty and racism to create a perfectly unjust storm. As I witnessed the suffering, I began to see how climate change could devastate our planet and our most marginalized people. Since then, I have been trying to speak prophetically about the injustice of human-made climate change.

There are days when working for climate justice makes me feel like the prophet Jeremiah, whose heart was heavy as warnings to his people went unheeded. It is easy to get depressed when we see how wasteful our society is and when we hear political leaders dismiss scientific evidence of human-made climate change. It is frustrating when people in the environmental movement use the urgency of climate change to avoid necessary conversations about race, class, power, and privilege. Faced with challenges like police brutality, educational inequity, and health disparities, it can be hard to even get attention from fellow black people.

Part of my motivation for coming to STH was to figure out how to mobilize people of faith to engage in the climate justice movement. In classes, I am exploring the connections between ecology, economics, theology, and practice. My contextual education placement allows me to engage in interfaith organizing around Massachusetts’ energy policy.

God has helped me to see climate change as an opportunity for miraculous transformation. Averting this crisis requires us to work across national borders, build relationships between neighbors, reduce our consumption, and live more simply. It seems like a “mission impossible,” but with my faith in the transcendent power of the Holy Spirit, I accept the assignment.

Mariama White-Hammond (’17) is a second-year Master of Divinity student. She serves on the ministerial staff of Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Boston and on a number of local and national nonprofit boards.
PILGRIMAGE to SELMA

An estimated 80,000 people visited Selma, Alabama, on March 7 and 8, 2015, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the "Bloody Sunday" march for black voting rights. But for Woodie W. White ('61), this pilgrimage is an annual event. The retired United Methodist bishop (center) has been taking students from his Methodist Church and Race class here for roughly the past six years. White is bishop-in-residence of Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, and a member of STH’s Dean’s Advisory Board.

During the anniversary weekend, White joined others—including his wife Kim (right) and Ruby Shinhoster of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference’s Women’s Organizational Movement for Equality Now (left)—in crossing Edmund Pettus Bridge, where state troopers attacked marchers on March 7, 1965. Also during the weekend, fellow alums Donald E. Messer (’66, GRS’69) and Kent Millard (’66, GRS’70), who participated in related marches at Selma in 1965, gave a talk about the historic march.

White, who will return to Selma in 2016, says he wants to give his students “a greater appreciation of how far we have come in the area of race in the nation in the past 50 years, and a greater commitment to continue the work for equality and justice still sought in the nation today.”

Adapted with permission from United Methodist News Service reporting by Joey Butler. Additional reporting by Julie Butters.
Inside:
From Selma to Stonewall
Immigrant Abrahams and Sarahs in America
Mission to Break the Stained Glass Ceiling

OVERCOMING RACISM

WHAT WILL IT TAKE?

“BU School of Theology gave me tools to think about faith and religion in a new way. Now, as a chaplain and parish minister, I am able to help people embrace their questions and doubts as companions that guide them to deeper faith. Thank you, BU!”

Sandra Olsen (’82)
Olsen has included a gift to STH in her estate plans.

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