

A Presentation Guide:

My Pilgrimage to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice:

Artistic Witness to Trauma and Its Healing Through Truth

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Introduction: I begin gently with the practical side of this pilgrimage. Like Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, it builds in intensity and asks each viewer to acknowledge their own trauma.

I am an artist and theologian, and this is a story of art and truth that brought me to my knees. One evening, I printed out the required, free admission ticket, and at dawn on June 22, 2021, drove to Montgomery, Alabama. I was determined to exercise my right as a military child to journey the highways of America. Now as a senior citizen with some wisdom and a will of iron, I was determined to see the National Memorial for Peace and Justice ("Memorial"). I go both to satisfy my soul's demand, and to confront the Memorial's artistry that gripped my imagination. Moreover, I can share it with others like myself: Caucasian, good hearted, privileged, hardworking, and shielded from the truth of slavery, and hence the Black experience in America.

Although Google Maps showed a 12-hour trip, it lengthened with construction zones, rainstorms, and accidents. At hour 14, I pulled over north of Atlanta to spend the night, damn tired. I hate spending the night. It's lonely and it costs too much,¹ but a good room gives rest and safety. The next morning, I hit the road at 6am.²

As I entered Montgomery on US Highway 85, there were no directing signs to the Memorial or any information about it. Zero. I drove around downtown Montgomery and saw its modern courthouse and large business buildings, but nothing that

¹ \$130 per night if you stay outside the large cities; \$140-150 if you stay in Atlanta or Montgomery.

² BTW, Atlanta's skyline is ultra-modern, and skillful drivers navigate the complex interchanges at 75 MPH. Hard driving.

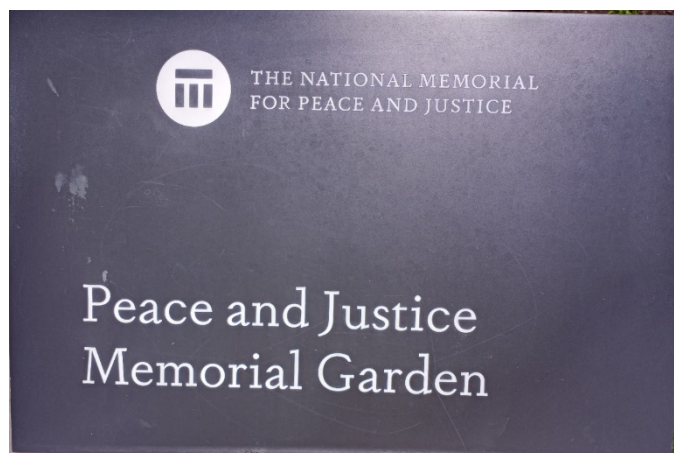
memorialized the civil rights movement.³ As I moved closer to the Memorial, the scene became older and lacked care. There were buildings made of unrestored brick and some gardening, but nothing about the civil rights movement. Finally, I reached the street that showed as the Memorial's address, and as I drove around a curve the Memorial simply materialized. It covers 6 acres in downtown Montgomery, apparently on the "wrong side of the tracks" to this day. As I drove toward it, first I saw the Peace Garden on the left, and then the Peace and Justice Memorial Center on the right. About 100 yards further ahead was the plaza that held the entrance to the Memorial with a line waiting to get in.⁴

³ In 2013 with the support of the Black Heritage Council, the Equal Justice Initiative erected three markers that document Montgomery's lead role in the American slave trade. See Equal Justice Initiative's book, *Slavery in America: The Montgomery Slave Trade*, published in 2018 by EJI. From photographs, they appear as quiet plaques, not as large public Monuments that represent their true consequence. Although I looked, I did not see them.

⁴ Most of the delay entering was caused by covid restrictions. Only a certain number of people are presently allowed on the grounds at one time.



As you drive up, your first view is the plaza with the entrance in the background. It is understated and evokes quiet strength. I was almost disappointed. I had expected to take a hard shot of justly deserved anger, but instead I encountered the quiet strength of the sacred. The Peace Garden is on the left. (See next page).



The Peace Garden holds gentle beauty, and presents the Memorial's first sense of the sacred. In the background to the right of center is a brick wall memorial. The bricks were made by slaves for the Montgomery Theater that opened in 1860. The

bricks have lasted in good repair for over 150 years. During slavery, many slaves refined skills in masonry, carpentry, blacksmithing, and other skills.⁵

Walking to the entrance for admission, I felt awkward. Silly, but it was the first inkling of my shame. I was treated the same as everyone else. People were friendly. Caucasians were welcomed and not dismissed or taunted. Ultimately, it felt more like being safely held while being taught of life itself. It reminded me of the feeling I had reading Morrison's *Beloved*.⁶

Security was tight. My purse was searched, and I stepped through a metal detector as I entered. Did the tight security and Montgomery's lack of welcome imply a potential threat? Was I minutely experiencing the fear that racism brings? Nonetheless, everyone to a person, was kind throughout the experience. As I began to feel a burden of White privilege and White sin, I wondered why the Blacks there were so kind. It must take strength to offer acceptance while the Memorial so clearly gives witness to the horror of White sin.

There were many high school students there, and most were Caucasian, for which I gave silent thanks. Maybe they were young enough to embrace the truth offered. There were a few White and some mixed-race couples touring, many cross-generational Black families and me, the only White woman alone. I entered at 10am and spent 2 hours there.

⁵ Equal Justice Initiative ("EJI"), *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eji.org, 2018. (Page numbers not shown by publisher.)

⁶ Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (London, UK: Chatto and Windus, 1987).

Immediately on my right was a memorial wall. Everyone passing—literally everyone-- stopped to look as we each began our pilgrimage in silent, collective connection.



“True peace is not merely the absence of tension, but the presence of justice.”

Martin Luther King



Then one's eyes turned to the left. The Memorial rests quietly at the top of a small hill, simply and without disguise or guile. It evokes the difficult, sad legacy of terror and enslavement through "sculpture, prose, poetry and architectural design to contextualize racial terror."⁷

And then it happened, directly in front of me.

⁷ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018.



There stands a larger-than-life sculpture of five African slaves, raging and crying out. All are chained, and one even pregnant. They loom like Rodin figures, big, strong, and powerful. This is sacred art, and the enshrinement of sin and trauma. Artistically, it is superb and world-class. It speaks truth to power through the symbolic language of art, and presents human life “in its most profound and comprehensive scope.”⁸ As Thomas Aquinas observed, if vision is to be used as perception, it is “not as a passing

⁸ Margaret Miles, *Image as Insight: Visual Understanding in Western Christianity and Secular Culture*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1961), 152.

stimulus, but as an enduring foundation.”⁹ This sculpture focuses the pilgrimage on the Memorial’s story of Black lynchings.



Proud dignity.

⁹ Miles, *Image as Insight*, 152.



A babe in her arms.



She is pregnant.



A young boy.

Lord, forgive us.



Gathering courage, I looked to my left and began the walk uphill to the Memorial of those lynched, approaching the weight of each steel marker with the trepidation of shame.



Each marker represents a COUNTY (not a person) found in the 12 Southern states of the Confederacy: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Missouri, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas, totaling 1,255 counties.¹⁰ Some counties have more than one hanging bar. Many bars have multiple names. The scene is both deafening and silent. It goes on and on and on.

¹⁰ The county tally was taken from current information on Wikipedia as of June 29, 2021.





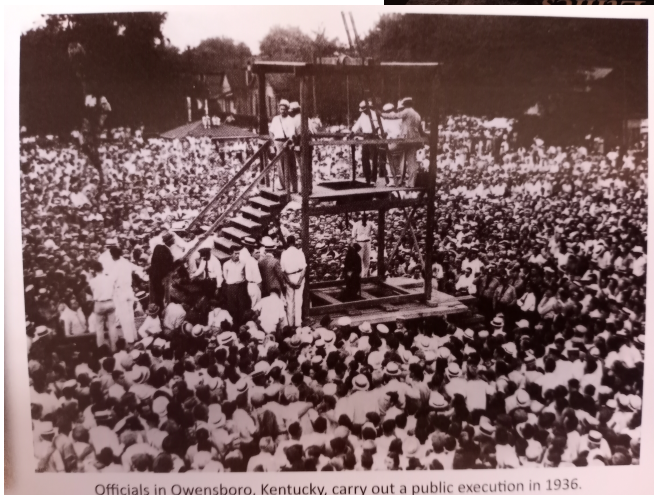
In 1877, Arthur St. Clair, a minister, was lynched in Hernando Cty, FL for performing the wedding of a Black man and a White woman.¹¹ My grandfather is named St. Clair.

In 1882, Jack Turner was lynched in Butler, AL for organizing Black voters.¹²

¹¹ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

¹² EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

In 1888, seven Black people were lynched near Screamer, AL for drinking from a White man's well.¹³



¹³ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eji.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

Discussion Question 1: What is trauma? What is collective trauma? What are its effects?

Academic Discussion:

Trauma is a suffering that endures long after its place in real time. It is what remains after the actual events occur that is not integrated within one's mental ability to assess reality. It is the emotional damage that remains unresolved and does not go away. Often those suffering from trauma have only fragmentary memories of the events because they disassociate and withdraw from the experience, and thus cannot develop a true and complete narrative of what actually happened.¹⁴ Trauma carries enduring conscious and unconscious psychological effects that prompt self-blame and "overwhelms a person's normal capacity to cope."¹⁵ Scholars have formed a new framework that when suffering leads to emotional and physical damage that cannot be integrated thus remains over time, one's ability to relate to others and connect in positive ways required of substantive living is also damaged.¹⁶ Trauma can threaten physical survival, and can threaten one's core beliefs about the world and one's self, by attacking personal assumptions of security, meaning, and self-worth.¹⁷

Collective trauma refers to a group effected by trauma that extends beyond those who actually experience the trauma, to include those who witnessed the trauma, and to others who seek to connect with those who suffer trauma's effects.¹⁸ Members

¹⁴ Christopher G. Frechette and Elizabeth Boase, "Defining 'Trauma' as a Useful Lens for Biblical Interpretation" in *Bible Through the Lens of Trauma*, eds. Christopher G. Frechette and Elizabeth Boase (Society of Biblical Literature, 2016), 5.

¹⁵ Frechette and Boase, "Defining 'Trauma'", 3,4,5.

¹⁶ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 4.

¹⁷ Martin O'Kane, "Trauma and the Bible: The Artist's Response," *Interpretation: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 69, no. 1 (2015): 50.

¹⁸ Frechette and Boase, "Defining 'Trauma'", 4.

of a group effected by collective trauma psychologically share in the experience.¹⁹ A group's collective trauma builds on "individual stress reactions, and their social fragmentation can increase the susceptibility of an individual to trauma...."²⁰ Collective trauma remains within a group, both within each individual member and within the group as a whole collectively and even systematically, and can be passed from generation to generation. As a collective group, those who suffer from trauma can fragment their society. Shelly Rambo suggests that "trauma has become an overarching term," and is now used to describe the experience of "particular persons and communities" and to the broad cultural issue of societal wounds. The damage of trauma cannot be erased, yet its acknowledgement within an ordered narrative can suggest a renewed path for life and healing that does not succumb to despair.²¹

¹⁹ Shelly Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds: Living in the Afterlife or Trauma* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2017), 4.

²⁰ Frechette and Boase, "Defining 'Trauma'", 4.

²¹ Rambo, *Resurrecting Wounds*, 5.



In 1898, Private James Neely was lynched in Hampton, GA for complaining when a White storeowner refused to serve him.²²

In 1898, David Hunter was lynched in Laurens Cty, SC for leaving the farm where he worked without permission.²³

In 1908, David Walker, his wife, and their four children were lynched in Hickman, KY after Mr. Walker was accused of using inappropriate language with a White woman.²⁴

In 1901, Fred Alexander, a military veteran, was lynched and burned alive before thousands of spectators in Leavenworth, Kansas.²⁵

²² EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

²³ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

²⁴ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

²⁵ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

In 1911, a lynch mob of more than 1,000 men, women, and children burned Zachariah Walker alive in Coatesville, PN.²⁶



In 1916, Anthony Crawford was lynched in Abbeville, SC for rejecting a White merchant's bid for cottonseed.²⁷

In 1912, Thomas Miles, SR. was lynched in Shreveport, LA for writing a note to a White woman.²⁸

²⁶ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

²⁷ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

²⁸ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

In 1925, Grant Cole was lynched in Montgomery, AL for refusing to run an errand for a White woman.²⁹



In 1922, Charles Atkins, age 15, was burned alive by a white mob of more than 1,000 in Washington Cty., GA.³⁰

On and on. Over 4000 lynchings are documented within the 12 confederate states. More if one includes events outside these states. In 1921, George Hawkins, Carrie

²⁹ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

³⁰ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

Diamond, Eliza Talbot, and Nelson Talbot were among dozens lynched during the Tulsa Massacre in Tulsa, OK.³¹

³¹ EJI, *The National Memorial for Peace and Justice*, www.eju.org, 2018. (No page numbers provided.)

Discussion Question 2: What does it mean to bear witness to the truth of trauma?

Academic Discussion:

To bear witness to trauma means to invoke the moral summons of justice by telling the truth.³² It is the function of a collective narrative to help a group suffering from collective trauma to organize and process their feelings, and thus heal. In her seminal text on trauma and theology, Rebecca Chopp explains that within our modern era of rational scientific thought, logic becomes the standard; however, she opines that people's stories are to be told and heard.³³ These stories act as a "jarring witness" to the truth.³⁴ They give voice beyond mere rational logic that integrates logic with heartfelt feelings.³⁵ The witness of truth calls for a moral response in which we listen and respond.³⁶ It calls for the listener to allow a new substance or essence and a more spiritual and multidimensional understanding of life.³⁷ As Fa. Spencer Reece showed us with his life's work, it is the fundamental, emotional connection with others that brings understanding.³⁸

The Memorial's witness to the truth of lynchings and their trauma is a sacred calling.

³² Rebecca S. Chopp, "Theoretical Reflections on Culture and Theology," *University Press Scholarship Online* (Subscription required; article provided by Dr. Abs.), 63.
<https://www.universitypressscholarship.com/view/10.5422/fordham/9780823280261.001.0001/upso-9780823280261-chapter-011>

³³ Chopp, "Theoretical Reflections...", 61.

³⁴ Chopp, "Theoretical Reflections...", 59.

³⁵ Chopp, "Theoretical Reflections...", 56.

³⁶ Chopp, "Theoretical Reflections...", 63.

³⁷ Chopp, "Theoretical Reflections...", 67, 68.

³⁸ Spencer Reece, ed., *Counting Time Like People Count Stars: Poems by the Girls of Our Little Roses* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2017).

Like Jesus himself, those lynched were led to the slaughter. Justice was denied them, as it was denied Jesus. Life was taken away from them: “Like a sheep he [Jesus] was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth. In his humiliation, justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” Acts 8:32-33 NSRV. The intense personal and communal suffering of believers at the crucifixion of Jesus is a fundamental building block of Christianity.³⁹ The collective experience of trauma is found Biblically as part of its human story of suffering: Job, Ruth, Ezekiel, Lamentations and in many Psalms. Trauma is an historic reality with humans enduring sin and violence.⁴⁰ Bearing witness to it is the process of seeking and bearing witness to the truth. Scripture tells us: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth...” John 16:12-13 NSRV. And further, “Sanctify them [those whom you gave me] in the truth; your word is truth.” John 17:17 NSRV. By doing so, we learn to use the Spirit of Truth to draw others into Christ’s communion, and to seek new intimacy between ourselves and Christ and those who have suffered trauma.⁴¹ It is a sacred calling.

Within a literary approach, Toni Morrison’s Pulitzer Prize winning novel *Beloved* creates a main character Sethe who suffers from severe trauma and disassociates from reality. She had killed her own baby—or thought she did—to avoid the slavers taking it. Like an infectious disease, her trauma had infected her family including her mother, Paul D, her sons, and ultimately beyond her family to her neighbors. The climax of

³⁹ O’Kane, “Trauma and the Bible,” 50.

⁴⁰ Frechette and Boase, “Defining ‘Trauma’”, 13, 18.

⁴¹ Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2010), 248.

Beloved related Sethe's trauma to her entire neighborhood, as those in her community came to her house to bear witness to the plight of Sethe and Baby Suggs.⁴² As the community reached out to her and they healed, so did Sethe: "I am not separate from her/there is no place where I stop."⁴³ To acknowledge trauma begins the healing process and integration of ordered thought and feeling.

Again in literature, Art Spiegelman's mouse-like, pop art character in *The Past Hangs Over the Future* (an apt summation of my pilgrimage) tells us that "No matter how much I ran, I can't seem to get out of that mouse's shadow!"⁴⁴ His feelings of trauma remained unresolved, but the mouse-character feels he has "no choice—gotta keep moving."⁴⁵ Spiegelman offers that "Hitler's notion of Jews as vermin...[as] a metaphor comes close to home," and he concludes that he does not "know *bupkis* about being Black in America."⁴⁶

Within secular thought, truth itself has its own strength and value. Within religious ethics, such value increases with the concept of "sacred." As Christians, we are bound to seek truth, meaning an accurate description of reality within our ability to understand using the tenants and teachings of Christ. This is not to suggest that we should claim ultimate religious truth, but that we should live with full awareness, and thus live fully. Jason Mahn reflects this point of view in his article on White privilege.⁴⁷

⁴² Toni Morrison, *Beloved*, 307-309.

⁴³ Morrison, *Beloved*, 248.

⁴⁴ Art Spiegelman, *The Past Hangs Over the Future* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 2019), 5.

⁴⁵ Spiegelman, *The Past Hangs Over the Future*, 5.

⁴⁶ Spiegelman, *The Past Hangs Over the Future*, 8.

⁴⁷ Jason A. Mahn, "The Cheap Grace of White Privilege and the Costly Grace of Repentance," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 47, no. 3 (July 2020): 10.

He argues from the Lutheran perspective of “grace,” and suggests such grace must include commitment to “costly grace” that requires intimacy with God and radical discipleship to hear and to respond to God’s calling.⁴⁸ For Mahn, such commitment is required to recognize and divest White privilege.⁴⁹ He writes that the work of repentance is a life-long commitment that recognizes one “as bound to sin.”⁵⁰ Within racism, the truth is bound to a concept of “justice,” for it is the honest and open acknowledgement of truth that invokes the moral summons of justice.

⁴⁸ Mahn, “The Cheap Grace of White Privilege...”, 10.

⁴⁹ Mahn, “The Cheap Grace of White Privilege...”, 11.

⁵⁰ Mahn, “The Cheap Grace of White Privilege...”, 12.



Somewhere in Mississippi.



Discussion question 3: How does the Memorial promote healing from trauma?

Academic Discussion:

The symbolic art of the Memorial binds us to acknowledge the truth of over 4,000 lynchings of Black African Americans since 1877, and places them within an organized structure for us to comprehend, feel, and then respond. There are three basic core tasks for response and trauma recovery: develop resilience in the face of on-going threats; establish safety to mourn the traumatic experience; and to reintegrate the experience within normal life.⁵¹ This can be done by constructing a trauma narrative in prose, poetry, music, or artistically⁵², as at the Memorial's hanging images of iron and its sculpture of the agonizing slaves. As a collective narrative forms that is accepted by the traumatized group, it has the "capacity to shape the identity of the collective."⁵³

The Memorial promotes healing by bearing witness to the truth. As such it is sacred. Within scripture, John 16 and 17 tells us that Christ will send the Spirit of Truth. As a Christian, this Memorial bears the sacred burden of the truth, stated simply and without anger or disguise. Nothing has ever gripped me with such shame, and yet the quiet strength of the Memorial allowed me to see and to understand that while I was not guilty of such horror, my privilege has makes me complicit, regardless of whether conscious or unconscious. The Memorial allowed me to witness and to feel the collective trauma of the Black community.

⁵¹ Frechette and Boase, "Defining 'Trauma'", 6.

⁵² Frechette and Boase, "Defining 'Trauma'", 6.

⁵³ Frechette and Boase, "Defining 'Trauma'", 9.

Between 1877-1950, there were 4,084 documented lynchings of Black African Americans in formerly Confederate states.⁵⁴ The highest rates of lynchings took place in Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Arkansas and Louisiana.⁵⁵ Paris, Texas had the most documented lynchings of any city in our country. In Paris in 1893, 17-year-old Henry Smith was accused of killing a three-year-old white girl. A mob beat him; took him to the gallows and there tortured him for an hour before the crowd of an estimated 10,000 people; and then – no, not hung him. The mob burned him alive while their children tended the fire. He pleaded that he was innocent. In 1920 there was another lynching in Paris. Brothers Irving and Herman Arthur were beaten, tortured and then burned. Then their corpse was chained to a car and dragged through the streets. Their sister was gang raped. In 2008 a 24-year-old Black man was dragged by a car as far as 70 feet. He died.⁵⁶ On June 30, 2021, I read the history of Paris, Texas on its Wikipedia site. No history of lynching was mentioned, nor was there any mention of their Black community. It is portrayed as a delightful town.

I ask if Montgomery is still complicit in minimizing the onus of slavery to this very day. Why is no civic pride shown for this world-class Memorial to truth? Why has Montgomery not taken part in it to the extent that there is no genuine civic acknowledgment of it? I am literally flabbergasted at this lack of respect. And, so I learned. Between 1820-1860, Montgomery, Alabama was the central point of slave trade within the United States.⁵⁷ In 1860, the census report of the US Census Bureau,

⁵⁴ Equal Justice Initiative (“EJI”), *Lynchings*, (Montgomery, AL: EIJ, 2017) 4. See www.eij.org.

⁵⁵ EIJ, *Lynchings*, 4.

⁵⁶ EIJ, *Lynchings*, 36-37.

⁵⁷ EIJ, *Slavery in America: The Montgomery Slave Trade*, 31. See also The National Memorial for Peace and Justice, www.eju.org, 2018, 31.

reports there were 435,000 slaves in Alabama, an increase of more than eight times over the previous 40 years.⁵⁸ There were numerous slave trading centers across the South: Natchez, New Orleans, Aberdeen, Jackson, Memphis, Vicksburg and others. However, Montgomery led the way in 1860 with 11 slave depots and 16 licensed slave auctioneers.⁵⁹ Between 1840-1860, Montgomery licensed 164 slave traders.⁶⁰ To date there remain over 100 Memorials to the Confederacy in Alabama. In 2014, a billboard in Alabama read, “Anti-racist is a code word for anti-white.”⁶¹ In July of 2001, Harvard University published its civil rights project and announced that schools in the South were rapidly resegregating.⁶² I saw nothing in Montgomery that acknowledged its civil rights history other than the Memorial itself. Is this much alone evidence of complicit and systematic denial of Montgomery’s role in the trauma and sin still present in institutional racism?

All who witness trauma are affected by it. Within racism, both Blacks and Whites and all of our society are affected by it.

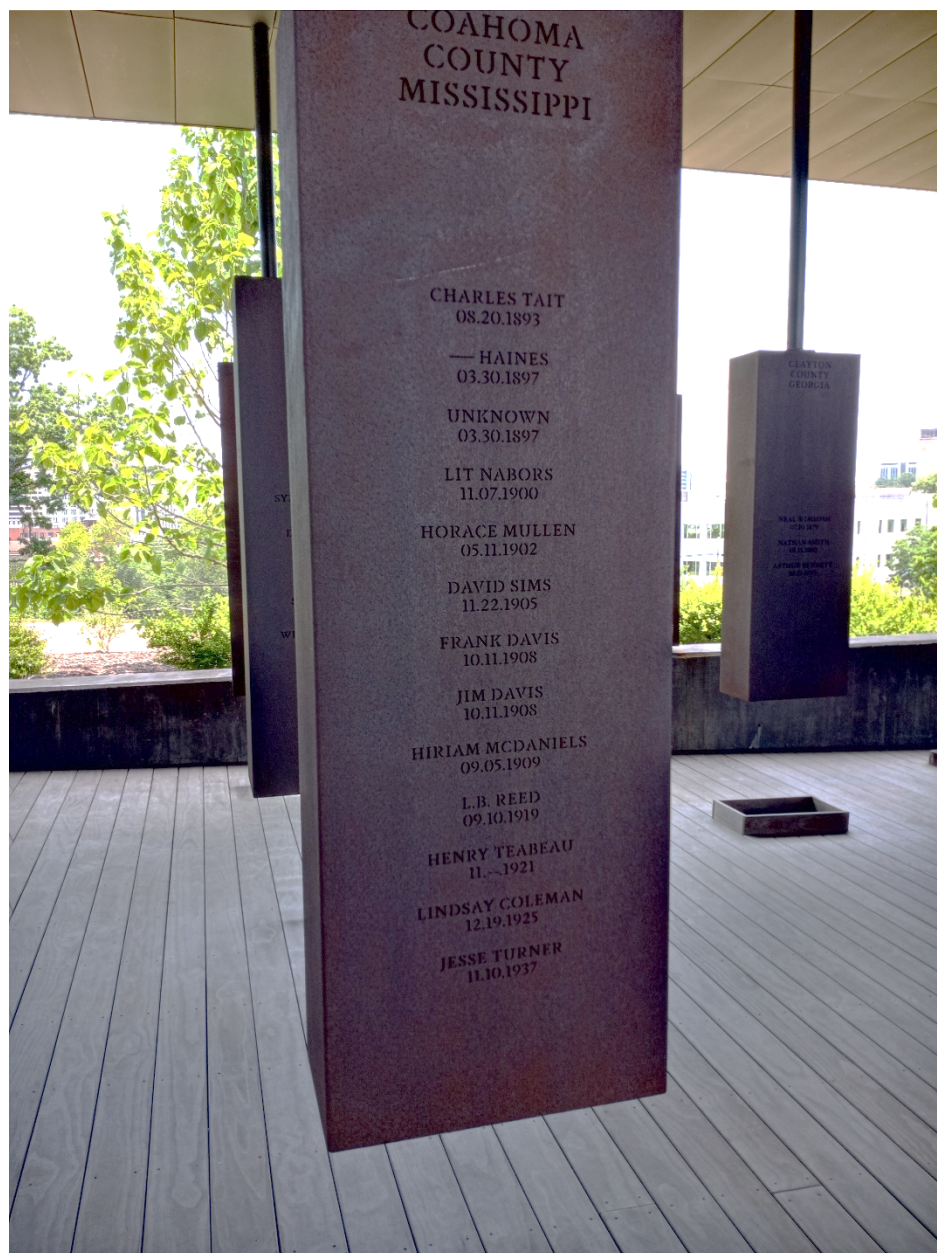
⁵⁸ EJI, *Slavery*, 82.

⁵⁹ EJI, *Slavery*, 47.

⁶⁰ EJI, *Slavery*, 34.

⁶¹ EJI, *Segregation in America*, 105.

⁶² EJI, *Segregation in America*, 102.





Lynchings from 1877-1950 in formerly Confederate States:

Alabama 361 lynchings	Mississippi 654
Arkansas 492	North Carolina 123
Florida 311	South Carolina 185
Georgia 589	Tennessee 233
Kentucky 168	Texas 335
Louisiana 549	Virginia 84
	TOTAL 4,084 lynchings









Discussion Question 4: If we agree that all who witness trauma are affected by it, can we take the next step, and find that the trauma of lynching continues to affect us all today: Blacks, Whites, all our people, and all our institutions?

Academic Discussion:

With both our intellectualized understanding of the facts and our deep feelings held tightly together, let us consider the Memorial's witness to truth. We seek to integrate the impact of the lynchings within our consciousness.⁶³ First, allow ourselves pain and shame, and then renew ourselves through repentance, forgiveness, and acceptance. All of us, of all colors, remain—like the trauma remains--part of a great nation, made greater by the contribution of its slaves. We can give thanks to those who are Black and who have shown their loyalty though such dark sin, and now seek a right relationship with us, their oppressors.

In part, Jennings' conclusion to his book *Christian Imagination* suggests that "right relationships...invite new patterns of life woven through and by means of the deep structures of Christian Faith [that] slowly open through ongoing interpretation and struggle. Those relationships involve deep joining, [and] the opening of lives to one another in love and desire...."⁶⁴ Jennings further suggests that today, relationships between Whites and Blacks are historically based on a racist paradigm, and thus continue to thwart the formation of Christian community beyond the strictures of nation, language, and peoples.⁶⁵ With this much, I can surely agree. However, I disagree with Jennings'

⁶³ See for example, Chopp, 67-8.

⁶⁴ Jennings, *Christian Imagination*, 248.

⁶⁵ Jennings, *Christian Imagination*, 233, and also Chapter 5 "White Space and Literacy" and Chapter 6, "Those Near Belonging."

suggestion that Christian doctrine is first a doctrine of place. I suggest it is first a doctrine of right relationships. Jennings argues, “Christianity is in need of place to be fully Christian. One of the first factors in rendering the Scriptures impotent and unleashing segregated mentality into the social imagination of Christians was the loss of a world where people were bound to land.”⁶⁶

I take issue with this. All who witness trauma are affected by it. Within racism, both Blacks and Whites and all of our society are affected by it. As a child of a military family, I have no “place” and yet seek relationships with others and with God and profess to be “fully Christian” or “fully struggling” to be so. I posit that right relationships are what is needed to be “fully Christian,” and constitutes what is needed between all peoples to be accepting of one another. If relationships are more important than place, it is easier to draw similarities between past Black experience and today’s Black urban experience in our own industrial society. Thus, focusing on what Jennings himself calls “right relationships,” rather than place, allows for a more cohesive argument as he helps us understand our imagined, diseased Christianity in today’s world. I also suggest that the Memorial seeks to support right relationships, and I think Jennings would agree with this.

Hasain and Paliewicz in their article “Taking the Reparatory Turn...at the ... Memorial”⁶⁷ suggests that the experience links a factual accounting of lynchings and their racial terror with the acknowledgement of present racism. The article suggests counties with lynching histories might accept one of the iron bars that lie on the ground

⁶⁶ Jennings, 248.

⁶⁷ Marouf Hasian, Jr. and Nicholas S. Paliewicz, “Taking the Reparatory Turn at the National Memorial for Peace and Justice,” *International Journal of Communication* 14 (2020): 2227-2245.

behind the Memorial as a symbol of acknowledgement and apology. Restorative justice begins with the truthful engagement of the past.⁶⁸ The article continues that lynchings cannot be redressed by only keeping account of their horror. All people need to fully appreciate the risks that their leaders took, such as Dr. King, and understand the systematic use of lynchings for social control.

In “White Privilege and the Erroneous Conscience...” Block opines that people experience error, and within racism it is often an error of conscience.⁶⁹ Block considers the advantages of being Caucasian within our culture. It is a position of privilege and supremacy, often acted out, although not always,⁷⁰ which allows those who are unaware and believe themselves to be good, to engage in a moral innocence of unconscious racism. The question is posed whether they “should” or “ought” to have known of their transgressions. Although they may be ignorant of their racism, such views remain, like trauma itself, still wrong and unjust.⁷¹ Racism exists within our culture and our institutions, and its collective and systematic nature makes it part of the culture we live in.⁷² Racism in this context is a communal and learned experience.⁷³ For Block, unconscious racial bias, culpability, and its “responsibility ...entails humility and the presumption of complicity over innocence.” One must strive to do right.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Hasain, “Taking a Turn...,” 2237.

⁶⁹ Elizabeth Sweeny Block, “White Privilege and the Erroneous Conscience: Rethinking Moral Culpability and Ignorance,” *Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics* 39, no. 2 (2019) 357-274.

⁷⁰ Block, “White Privilege...,” 357.

⁷¹ Block, “White Privilege...,” 360.

⁷² Block, “White Privilege...,” 365.

⁷³ Block, “White Privilege...,” 367.

⁷⁴ Block, “White Privilege...,” 374.



Discussion Question 5: How does the art of this Memorial bear witness and promote healing to the trauma of lynching and racism?

Academic Discussion:

The Memorial bears witness to trauma, and thus offers healing. Chopp observes that theology is fashioned though what she calls “poetics” that re-imagine “language, symbols, codes, [and] images.”⁷⁵ The calm artistry within the Memorial has created a safe, quiet space that allows viewers to discern without confrontation. The hanging iron bars evoke stark symbols of bodies of those tortured and killed. Through this thick, emotion-laden pilgrimage, it feels as if the Memorial itself trusts each visitor to see and to be closer to God’s revelation.⁷⁶ Sokolove opines that good art affords grace, comfort, truth and compassion mediated through God.⁷⁷ In this manner, aesthetic excellence embraces and holds a sense of the sacred,⁷⁸ and is both the path of the artist and the viewer. It is truth spoken through the power of the profound, symbolic language of art.

⁷⁵ Chopp, “Theoretical Reflections...,” 66.

⁷⁶ Miles, *Image as Insight*, 152.

⁷⁷ Deborah Sokolove, *Sanctifying Art: Inviting Conversation Between Artists, Theologians, and the Church* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013), 167, 171.

⁷⁸ Sokolove, *Sanctifying Art*, 144.



A photograph of slave pens in Alexandria, VA, less than 4 miles from Wesley Seminary.⁷⁹ They remain there to this day. May God have mercy on us.

⁷⁹EJI, *Slavery*, 39.

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