

Racial Healing During Lent: A Prayer Invitation.

Week 1

Each of the 5 Sundays of lent, read and pray the following excerpts from 40 Days of Prayer, compiled by Cheri L. Mills. Reprinted with permission.

“In 1857, this candidate for Canada had the good fortune to escape the clutches of his mistress, Mrs. Elvina Duncans, widow of the late Rev. James Duncans, who lived near Cumberland, Md. He had very serious complaints to allege against his mistress, ‘who was a member of the Presbyterian Church.’ To use his own language, ‘The servants in the house were treated worse than dogs.’ John was 32 years of age.”

*The Underground Rail Road: A Record
(The True Story of Samuel Williams,
Alias John Williams, page 82)*

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Black Codes, from 40 days of Prayer, Day 7

The black codes were laws passed by Southern states in 1865 and 1866 after the American Civil War with the intent and the effect of restricting African Americans’ freedom, and of compelling them to work in a labor economy based on low wages or debt. Black Codes were part of a larger pattern of Southern whites, who were trying to suppress the new freedom of formerly enslaved African Americans, the freedmen. Black codes were essentially replacements for slave codes in those states. Before the war, Black Codes were enacted in states that prohibited slavery. Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and New York enacted Black Codes to discourage free blacks from residing in those states and to deny them equal rights, including the right to vote, the right to public education, and the right to equal treatment under the law. Some of these northern Black Codes were revealed around the same time that the Civil War ended and slavery was abolished.

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**“We Are the Voice of One” Prayer Declaration
(Declare Aloud)**

We are the Voice of One that crieth in [city and state]” “Prepare ye the way of the Lord!

Make straight in [city] a highway for our God; Every valley in [city] shall be exalted; And every mountain and hill in [city] shall be brought low. The crooked places in [city] shall be made straight; And the rough places shall be made smooth; And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed in [city and state]; And all of [city] and all nations shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it!”

Heavenly Father, we both claim and proclaim your prophesy that is written in Genesis 15: “Your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land; they will be slaves there and will be treated cruelly for four hundred years. But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and when they leave that foreign land, they will take great wealth with them.” Heavenly Father, make us one, just as You and the Lord Jesus are One! Heavenly Father, increase our numbers and gather Your people to pray! Let the Holy Spirit move freely, and the zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall accomplish it! In Jesus’ name! Amen!

**Offer a Closing Prayer to God
And as you Pray....**

- Consider the prayers of the enslaved as they lay on the slave ship stored chained together and stored like cargo for months on an unknown journey that was thousands of miles long. The bodies of the enslaved who died in the Middle Passage were thrown in the Atlantic Ocean.
- Imagine the prayers of the enslaved as they fled for freedom, following the North Star despite threats of lynching, beating, mutation, and death.
- Call out the names of the enslaved who were highlighted in today’s reading from the Underground Rail Road and remember their descendants who still experience systemic racial oppression caused by social engineering.

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“He was about forty-six years of age, according to his reckoning, full six feet high, and in muscular appearance was very rugged, and in his countenance were evident marks of firmness. He said that he was born a slave in North Carolina and had been sold three times. He was first sold when he was a children three years of age, the second time when he was thirteen years old, and the third and last time from Jesse Moore, from whom he fled... ‘In the woods I lived on nothing, you may say, and something too. I had bread, and roasting ears, and ‘taters. I stayed in the hollow of a big poplar tree for seven months; the other part of the time I stayed in a cave. I suffered mighty bad with the cold and for something to eat... while in the woods all my thoughts was how to get away to a free country.’”

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(The True Story of Harry Grimes, page 269)

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Redlining, from 40 days of Prayer, Day 26

In the 1960s, sociologist John McKnight coined the term “redlining” to describe the discriminatory practice of identifying areas where banks would avoid investments based on community demographics. During the heyday of redlining, the areas most frequently discriminated against were black inner city neighborhoods. Fore example, in Atlanta in the 1980s, a Pulitzer Prize-winning series of articles by investigative reporter Bill Dedman showed that banks would often lend to lower-income whites but not to middle-income or upper-income blacks.

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“About the 1st of March, 1855, Mary was presented to the Vigilance Committee. She was of agreeable manners, about forty-five years of age, dark complexion, round built, and intelligent. She had been the mother of fifteen children, four of whom had been sold away from her; one was still held in slavery in Petersburg; the others were all dead. At the sale of one of her children she was so affected with grief that she was thrown into violent convulsions, which caused the loss of her speech for one entire month. But this little episode was not a matter to excite the sympathy in the breasts of the highly refined and tender-hearted Christian mothers of Petersburg.”

The Underground Rail Road: A Record
(The True Story of Mary Epps, Alias Emma Brown, pages 52-53)

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Institutional Racism, from 40 days of Prayer, Day 29

The racial segregation and disparities in wealth between Caucasians and African-American people include legacies of historical policies. In the Social Security Act of 1935, agricultural workers and servants, most of whom were black, were excluded because key white southerners did not want governmental assistance to change the agrarian system. In the Wagner Act of 1935, “blacks were blocked by law from challenging the barriers to entry into the newly protected labor unions and securing the right to collective bargaining.” In the National Housing Act of 1939, the property appraisal system tied property value and eligibility for government loans to race. The 1936 Underwriting Manual used by the Federal Housing Administration to guide residential mortgages gave 20 percent of weight to a neighborhood’s protection, for example, zoning ordinances, deed restrictions, high speed traffic arteries, from adverse influences, such as infiltration of inharmonious racial groups. Thus, white-majority neighborhoods received the government’s highest property value ratings, and white people were eligible for government loans and aid. Between 1934 and 1962, less than 2 percent of government-subsidized housing went to non-white people.

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“Of all the passengers who had hitherto arrived with bruised and mangled bodies received at the hands of slave-holders, none brought a back so shamefully lacerated by the lash as Thomas Madden. Not a single spot had been exempted from the excoriating cow-hide. A most bloody picture did the broad back and shoulders of Thomas present to the eye as he bared his wounds for inspection. While it was sad to think, that millions of men, women, and children throughout the South were liable to just such brutal outrages as Thomas had received, it was a satisfaction to think, that this outrage had made a freeman of him. He was only twenty-two years of age, but that punishment convinced him that he was fully old enough to leave such a master as E. Ray, who had almost murdered him.”

The Underground Rail Road: A Record
(The True Story of Thomas Madden, page 189)

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The New Jim Crow, from 40 days of Prayer, Day 28

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness is a book by Michelle Alexander, a civil rights litigator and legal scholar. The book discusses race-related issues specific to African-American males and mass incarceration in the United States. Though the conventional point of view holds that racial discrimination mostly ended with the civil rights movement reforms of the 1960s, Alexander posits that the U.S. criminal justice system uses the War on Drugs as a primary tool for enforcing traditional, as well as new, modes of discrimination and oppression. These new modes of racism have led to not only the highest rate of incarceration in the world, but also a disproportionately large rate of imprisonment for African-American men. Were present trends to continue, Alexander writes, the United States will imprison one-third of its African-American population. When combined with the fact that whites are more likely to commit drug crimes..., the issue becomes clear for Alexander: “The primary targets of [the penal system’s] control can be defined largely by race.”

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“Nancy was also from Richmond... She was neat, modest and well-behaved – with a good figure and the picture of health, with a countenance beaming with joy and gladness, notwithstanding the late struggles and sufferings through which she had passed. Young as she was, she had seen much of slavery, and had doubtless, profited by the lessons thereof. At all events, it was through cruel treatment, having been frequently beaten after she passed her eighteenth year, that she was prompted to seek freedom. It was so common for her mistress to give way to unbridled passions that Nancy never felt safe. Under the severest infliction of punishment, she was not allowed to complain. Neither from mistress nor master, Mr. William Bears, was a Yankee from Connecticut, and his wife a member of the Episcopal Church, but Nancy’s yoke seemed none the lighter for all that.”

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(The True Story of Nancy Brister, page 237)*

A Consequence of Lack of Wealth Transfers

and Multi-Generational Oppression, from 40 days of Prayer, Day 40

Duke University economist Dr. William “Sandy” Darity, and co-founder of the ADOS (American Descendants of Slavery) movement, Antonio Moore, along with other researches, observed in their study “What we Get Wrong About Closing the Racial Wealth Gap” that the concentration of ADOS at the bottom economically is a consequence of lack of wealth transfers and multi-generational oppression, not individual agency or cultural patterns. – Antonio Moore

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Heavenly Father, we both claim and proclaim your prophesy that is written in Genesis 15: “Your descendants will be strangers in a foreign land; they will be slaves there and will be treated cruelly for four hundred years. But I will punish the nation that enslaves them, and when they leave that foreign land, they will take great wealth with them.” Heavenly Father, make us one, just as You and the Lord Jesus are One! Heavenly Father, increase our numbers and gather Your people to pray! Let the Holy Spirit move freely, and the zeal of the Lord of Hosts shall accomplish it! In Jesus’ name! Amen!

**Offer a Closing Prayer to God
And as you Pray....**

- Consider the prayers of the enslaved as they lay on the slave ship stored chained together and stored like cargo for months on an unknown journey that was thousands of miles long. The bodies of the enslaved who died in the Middle Passage were thrown in the Atlantic Ocean.
- Imagine the prayers of the enslaved as they fled for freedom, following the North Star despite threats of lynching, beating, mutation, and death.
- Call out the names of the enslaved who were highlighted in today’s reading from the Underground Rail Road and remember their descendants who still experience systemic racial oppression caused by social engineering.

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**“We Are the Voice of One” Prayer Declaration
(Declare Aloud)**

We are the Voice of One that crieth in [city and state]” “Prepare ye the way of the Lord!

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