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RENEWED HEART MINISTRIES

*Working for a World
of Love and Justice*



2020 has been a challenging year for many non-profits. RHM is no exception. We need your support to impact lives and bring the faith-based, societal-justice focused resources and analysis RHM provides.

Intersections between faith, love, compassion, and justice are needed right now more than ever.

If you have been blessed by the work of RHM, please consider making a tax-deductible donation, today.

#GIVING TUESDAY

#GivingTuesday 2020

December 1 is #GivingTuesday this year! #GivingTuesday is a global day of giving that harnesses the collective power of individuals, communities and organizations to encourage philanthropy and to celebrate generosity worldwide.

#GivingTuesday is held annually on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving (in the US) and the widely recognized shopping events Black Friday and Cyber Monday

to kick off the holiday giving season and inspire people to collaborate in improving our communities and to give back in impactful ways to the charities and causes they support.

#GivingTuesday is a global giving movement that began in 2012 that has been built by individuals, families, organizations, businesses and communities in all 50 states, and in countries around the world.

#GivingTuesday is endeavoring to transform how people think about, talk about, and participate in the

giving season. It inspires people to take collective action to improve their communities, give back in better, smarter ways to the charities and causes they believe in, and help create a better world.

#GivingTuesday demonstrates how every act of generosity counts, and that they mean even more when we give together.

Every year millions of people come together on this special day to give back and to support the causes they believe in.

This year we are asking you to support the work of Renewed Heart Ministries on this special day!

Also, all contributions this #GivingTuesday will be matched, dollar for dollar, thanks to a very generous and kind pledge to RHM by another of our supporters.

This December 1st, make a donation to Renewed Heart Ministries as one of your chosen non-profits and help make this #Giving Tuesday the best one yet. We can't thank you enough for your support!

On December 1, go to renewedheartministries.com and click "Donate."





"Beware when you see those in power using law and order rhetoric used to maintain power, position, control, and political office. Jesus 'followers should be the first to recognize when 'law and order' is being used to serve and protect the elite and privileged rather than the marginalized and excluded."

Jesus and Law and Order

by Herb Montgomery

At the beginning of Luke's version of the Jesus story, we read this summation of the character of what Jesus' ministry will be in the gospel of Luke:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4.18-19)

Here Jesus is portrayed as taking a firm stand with those his society was pushing to the margins. This solidarity comes into even sharper focus just two chapters later in Luke's sermon on the plain:

"Looking at his disciples, he said:

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man.

Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets...

But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort.

Woe to you who are well fed now, for you

will go hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you, for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets. (Luke 6.20-31)

Jesus here is announcing that God's just future is decidedly for those the present system makes last. Jesus' announcement is that the last will be first. What about those the present system is already making first? Jesus' words are blunt. They've "already received" their comfort.

In his book *The Scandalous Gospel of Jesus: What's So Good About the Good News?* Peter Gomes explains how problematic Jesus' solidarity with those who are presently marginalized is,

"When the gospel says, 'The last will be first, and the first will be last, 'despite the fact it is counterintuitive to our cultural presuppositions, it is invariably good news to those who are last, and at least problematic news to those who see themselves as first... Good news to some will almost inevitably be bad news to others. In order that the gospel in the New Testament might be made as palatable as possible to as many people as possible, its rough edges have been shorn off and the radical edge of Jesus' preaching has been replaced by a respectable middle, of which "niceness" is now God. When Jesus came preaching, it was to proclaim the ends of things as they are and the breaking in of things that are to be: the status quo is not to be criticized; it is to be destroyed." (p. 42, 31)

Jesus' solidarity with those on the

margins of his society is not just a characteristic of Luke's Jesus. Each of the Gospels begin on the margins. John the Baptist rejected his more central role of being a priest in the temple. He was a voice crying out in the wilderness. Jesus was from the marginalized region of Galilee and the majority of his story takes place here as well. This had deep, encouraging, political significance for the marginalized audiences of each of these gospels. "While the margin has a primarily negative political connotation as a place of disenfranchisement, Mark ascribes to it a primarily positive theological value. It is the place where the sovereignty of God is made manifest, where the story of liberation is renewed, where God's intervention in history occurs." (Ched Myers, *Say to This Mountain: Mark's Story of Discipleship*, p. 12)

What does this mean for those Jesus followers whose present social location is not marginalized but more centered? The temptation is often to call for those at the center to make room at their table for those more marginalized. Miguel A. De La Torre offers a different option. This option does not invite those on the margins to a table at the center of an oppressive society where God is not. But to recognize that God is already present at the tables of those presently on the margins; God is already at work there. God is with them and we are only with God when we, too, are with them.

The question for those endeavoring to follow Jesus whose social location is more central and privileged is whether they will reject a status quo that privileges some over others on the basis simply

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JESUS FOR EVERYONE

Podcast

WWW.RENEWEDHEARTMINISTRIES.COM

The “Jesus For Everyone” podcast

New episodes every Friday!

A weekly podcast where we talk about the intersection of faith and societal justice and what a first-century, Jewish prophet of the poor from Galilee offers us today in our work of compassion, love and justice.

[renewedheartministries.com/
Podcasts](http://renewedheartministries.com/Podcasts)

October's Recommended Reading from RHM

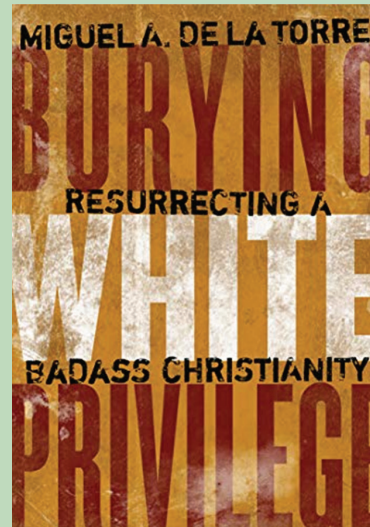
Burying White Privilege: Resurrecting a Badass Christianity by Miguel A. De La Torre

Short. Timely. Poignant. Pointed. Burying White Privilege is all of these and more. This is the book that everybody who cares about contemporary American Christianity will want to read.

Many people wonder how white Christians could not only support Donald Trump for president, but also rush to defend an accused child molester running for the US Senate. In a 2017 essay that went viral, Miguel A. De La Torre boldly proclaimed the death of Christianity at the hands of white evangelical nationalists. He continues sounding the death knell in this book.

De La Torre argues that centuries of oppression and greed have effectively ruined evangelical Christianity in the United States. Believers and clerical leaders have killed it, choosing profits over prophets. The silence concerning—if not the doctrinal justification of—racism, classism, sexism, and homophobia has made white Christianity satanic. Prophetically calling Christian nationalists to repentance, De La Torre rescues the biblical Christ from the distorted Christ of white Christian imagination.

Remember, you don't have to order this book through amazon.com, but if you do, please consider using Amazon Smile (smile.amazon.com) and selecting Renewed Heart Ministries as your designated charity for a portion of your purchase to be donated to RHM at no additional cost to you.



Weekly Zoom HeartGroup on Wednesday Nights

Each Wednesday evening, Glendale City Church will be hosting a Zoom-HeartGroup led by Herb Montgomery. Our discussion each week will focus on the content in Renewed Heart Ministries weekly eSight articles and the Jesus For Everyone podcast published each Friday. The time of each Zoom session will be on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. Pacific/10:00 p.m. Eastern.

For more information and for the link to participate each week, follow Pastor Todd Leonard's Facebook page at facebook.com/toddjleonard
#heartgroup #dojustice #citychurchonline



Recent Posts from RHM's "Social Jesus" Blog on Patheos

patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/



Enough for Us All (Parts 1–3)

Though oppressors often claim "God is on our side," the God of this Genesis story shows regard for the victim of systemic injustice.

Begin reading this series at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2020/08/enough-for-us-all-part1/



Not Everyone Is In Need (Parts 1–3)

This is the ethic of preference or priority we see in the passage above from Mark's gospel. This ethic in Mark can apply just as equally to those being harmed today by systemic, societal sicknesses.

Begin reading this series at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2020/09/not-everyone-is-in-need-part1



What a Just Future Requires (Parts 1–3)

I used to interpret this parable differently than I do today. When we read this par-able from the perspective of those oppressed, subjugated, or pushed to the mar-gins of society, certain things begin to stand out.

Begin reading this series at patheos.com/blogs/socialjesus/2020/09/what-just-future-requires-part1/

Jesus and Law and Order cont'd from page 3

of difference and begin supporting and working alongside those our society relegates to the margins. God is already there. The question is: are we?

"In reality, the gospel is thriving in the margins of society. The real question facing the center, accustomed to confusing its interpretations with the biblical text itself, is whether those at the center will also participate in the body of Christ that already exists in the margins of society." (Miguel A. De La Torre, *Reading the Bible from the Margins*, Kindle location 1075)

Jesus' solidarity with those on the margins reached a critical breaking point with Jesus' protest in the courtyard of the temple. The temple was the political, economic, and religious symbol of the temple state of his own society. Don't think of the temple as a modern Christian church. The temple was much more like a state's capital building. This was the center of power. Jesus' protest in his flipping over the tables of the money changers was the decisive move in the synoptic gospels which marks the threat of Jesus' teaching as having gone too far. His temple protest damaged temple property and threatened the income of those power-brokers who were at the

center of a system that economically exploited the poor. The growing number of followers of Jesus each day meant to those in power that something must be done. This is where we see the machinery of Roman "law and order enter" the story. Before the week is over, Jesus is hanging on a Roman cross.

Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas gives us insight into how the rule of Roman law and order including Roman crucifixion functioned in Jesus' society, "In Jesus' first-century world, crucifixion was the brutal tool of social-political power.... It indicated how much of a threat that a person was believed to pose. Crucifixion was reserved for those who threatened the 'peace of the day. It was a torturous death that was also meant to send a message: disrupt the Roman order in any way, this too will happen to you.... The crucified class... consisted of those who were castigated and demonized as well as those who defied the status quo. Crucifixion was a stand-your-ground type of punishment for the treasonous offense of violating the rule of Roman 'law and order.'" (*Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, p. 170)

Law and order should be to protect the vulnerable, those whom the more powerful in society will take advantage

of if given the opportunity. Too often law and order and the rhetoric that surrounds a law and order approach is nothing more than the powerful of society using law enforcement to silence the unrest and protest of the marginalized crying out for a more just and more equitable society. The question we must always ask about law and order is which sector of society is our law and order serving and protecting.

Jesus stood in solidarity with the marginalized over and against those who would exploit them. When 'law and order' is instead standing with the powerful and centered over and against the cries of those calling for justice we must recognize this not as life-giving to society but death-dealing, literally. We can have peace through establishing distributive justice or we can have peace through a heavyhanded use of law and order that silences protest. These are two paths toward peace. Rome used the latter. In America presently, we are seeing the use of the latter. Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan comment on the error of using this method, "The terrible truth is that our world has never established peace through victory. Victory establishes not peace, but lull. Thereafter, violence returns once again, and always worse than before. And it is that escalator

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violence that then endangers our world." (*The First Christmas, What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus's Birth*, p. 166).

Beware when you see those in power using law and order rhetoric used to maintain power, position, control, and political office. Jesus' followers should be the first to recognize when law and order is being used to serve and protect the elite and privileged rather than the marginalized and excluded. America has a long history of law and order being used to systemically serve and protect only the elite or privileged. And Christians should be the first to recognize when this American tradition is being repeated. It's what our story is all about.

The resurrection itself is God's definitive, nonviolent victory over law and order being used to protect privileged positions of a society's elite. The resurrection is God's definitive, nonviolent victory over systemic death-dealing. This victory was not one where death is overcome by a more severe death-dealing. But one where the death dealt by an unjust system is overcome by life. Life and life-giving overcomes systemic death and death-dealing in the Jesus story.

Again, Rev Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas calls us to reorient our interpretations of what the Jesus story is actually saying to us in moments like this one we are presently witnessing in the U.S. "The resurrection is God's definitive victory over crucifying powers of evil. Ironically, the power that attempts to destroy Jesus on the cross is actually itself destroyed by the cross. The cross represents the power that denigrates human bodies, destroys life, and preys on the most vulnerable in society. As the cross is defeated, so too is that power. The impressive factor is how it is defeated. It is defeated by life-giving rather than a life-negating force.

God's power, unlike human power, is not a 'master race' kind of power. That is, it is not a power that diminishes the life of another so that others might live. God's 'power respects the integrity of all human bodies and the sanctity of all life. This is a resurrecting power. Therefore God's power never expresses itself through the humiliation or denigration of another. It

does not triumph over life. It conquers death by resurrecting life. The force of God is a death-negating, life-affirming force." (*Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies and the Justice of God*, p. 188) Luke's gospel climaxes, not with a Roman cross, but a reversal, undoing, and overcoming of the rule of Roman law and order used by the elite over and against the marginalized:

"On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright, the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!'" (Luke 24.1-6)

What resurrecting power against our societal injustice—both private and systemic—are you needing in your life today?

HeartGroup Application

We at RHM are continuing to ask all HeartGroups not to meet together physically at this time. Please stay virtually connected and practice physical distancing. When you do go out, please keep a six-foot distance between you and others, wear a mask, and continue to wash your hands to stop the spread of the virus. This is also a time where we can practice the resource-sharing and mutual aid found in the gospels. Make sure the others in your group have what they need. This is a time to work together and prioritize protecting those most vulnerable among us.

1. Share something that spoke to you from this week's eSight/Podcast episode with your HeartGroup.
2. How do you see law and order rhetoric being used today? What is the social location of those calling for law and order? What kind of violence is being critiqued? What kind of violence is being affirmed? Discuss with your group.

3. What can you do this week, big or small, to continue setting in motion the work of shaping our world into a safe, compassionate, just home for everyone?

Thanks for checking in with us this month.

Right where you are, keep living in love, choosing compassion, taking action, and working toward justice.

I love each of you dearly. ■



A Special Message to Our HeartGroups

We at RHM are continuing to ask all HeartGroups not to meet together physically at this time. Please stay virtually connected and to practice physical distancing. You can still be there for each other to help ease anxiety and fears. When you do go out, please keep a six-foot distance between you and others to stop the spread of the virus.

This is also a time where we can practice the resource-sharing and mutual aid found in the gospels. Make sure the others in your group have what they need. We are more interconnected than we realize, as this has proven. And we need each other during this time.

This is a time to work together and prioritize protecting those most vulnerable among us. We'll get through this.

**2020 Projected Budget
Goal: \$185,000.00**

**2020 Projected Monthly
Budget Goal: \$15,417.00**

**2020's Projected Budget
January-August:
\$123,336.00**

**2020's Contributions
Received Through August:
\$46,707.93**

**August's Contributions
Received:
\$5,424.36**

Renewed Heart Ministries is a nonprofit organization working for a world of love and justice. We need your support to impact lives and provide the kind of resources and analysis RHM offers.

Intersections between faith, love, compassion, and justice are needed now more than ever.

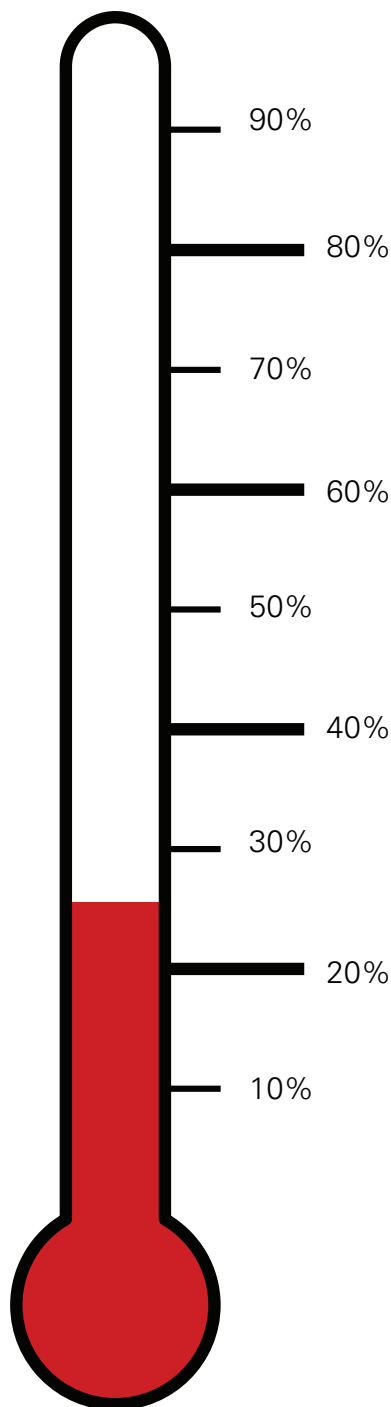
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better humans.***

**Please consider making a
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Renewed Heart Ministries today.**

To do so online go to renewedheartministries.com and click "Donate." Or if you prefer to make a donation by mail, our address is:

Renewed Heart Ministries
PO Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

**And to those of you out there
who are already supporting
this ministry, I want to say
thank you.** We could not continue being a voice for change without your support.



**Whether you give
\$5 or \$5,000,
every amount helps us
continue our work.**

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Renewed Heart Ministries is a not-for-profit group that is passionate about rediscovering, following and helping others rediscover the teachings and sayings of the historical Jesus of Nazareth. We believe these teachings have an intrinsic value in informing the work of nonviolently confronting, liberating and transforming our world into a safe, more just, more compassionate home for us all.

Everything we do here at Renewed Heart Ministries is for free. Even the many educational events that we hold in various venues. You can support our work either with a one-time gift or by becoming one of our monthly contributors by going to RenewedHeartMinistries.com and clicking the **donate** tab at the top right.

Or you can mail contributions to:
Renewed Heart Ministries
P.O. Box 1211
Lewisburg, WV 24901

Also, please sign up for our free resources and remember, every little bit helps.

Anything we receive over and above our annual budget we happily give away to other not-for-profits who are making both personal, systemic and structural differences in the lives of people who are less privileged.

And to those already supporting the work of Renewed Heart Ministries, your generous support makes it possible for us to exist and to continue being a presence for positive change in our world. So with all of our hearts, "Thank You."

Together we are making a difference, till the only world that remains is a world where only Love reigns.

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Front cover artwork by Ali Montgomery.

“

“Jesus's birth, ministry, death, and resurrection revealed his unambiguous identification with the socially downtrodden in their struggle against injustice.”

Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas
The Black Christ, p. 117

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