

Call to Selma

A service by Rev. Jackie Clement and William Rau
Delivered at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Bloomington Normal, IL
March 8, 2015

Reading: On the Edmund Pettus Bridge: Sheyann Webb's Account of "Bloody Sunday"

Our reading is from Sheyann Webb's account¹ of "Bloody Sunday." Webb was 8 years old when she first encountered Dr. Martin Luther King in Selma. She soon bore the title of Dr. King's "Smallest Freedom Fighter".² Against her parents' wishes she decided to participate in the first march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. She was toward the back of the line with her teacher when police attacked the front. Soon, she heard, "Oh, God, they're killing us!"

She goes on:

"I think I just froze then. There were people everywhere, jamming against me, pushing against me. ... All of a sudden, it stopped and everyone got down on their knees, ... and somebody was saying for us to pray." ... A few seconds went by and I heard a shout. "Gas! Gas!!" and everybody started screaming again. I looked and I saw the troopers charging us again and some of them were . . . throwing canisters of tear gas.

I saw those horsemen coming toward me and they had those awful masks on; they rode right through the cloud of tear gas. Some of them had clubs, others had ... whips, which they swung about them like they were driving cattle.

I turned and ran. And just as I was turning the tear gas got me; it burned my nose and then my eyes. I was blinded by the tears. So, I began running and not seeing where I was going. I remember being scared that I might fall over the railing and into the water. . . .

... You could hear the horses' hooves on the pavement..., you'd hear people scream, hear the whips swishing,. . . hear them striking people. . . . One of the horses went right by me and I heard the swish sound as the whip went over my head and cracked some man across the back.

I [then] heard more horses and I turned back and saw two of them and the riders were leaning over to one side. . . . I just knew then that I was going to die, . . . those horses were going to trample me. So I . . . knelt down and held my hands and arms up over my head, and I must have been screaming. . . .

All of a sudden somebody was grabbing me under the arms and lifting me up and running. The horses went by and I kept waiting to get trampled on or hit, but they went on by. . . . I looked up and saw it was Hosea Williams who had me and he was running. . . .

..

[When] we were off the bridge and down on Broad Street . . . he let me go. I didn't stop running until I got home. All along the way . . . I saw people . . . being chased by the horsemen who kept hitting them. . . .

When I got to [my] house . . . I ran in and tried to tell [my momma and daddy] what had happened. . . . I kept repeating over and over, "I can't stop shaking, Momma, I can't stop shaking," She grabbed me and sat down with me on her lap. . . . [Later], I remember just laying on the couch, crying and feeling so disgusted. They had beaten us like we were slaves.

In the evening the people gathered in church. Everyone was quiet, stunned . . . like we were at our own funeral. But later. . . somebody started humming. I think they were moaning and it just went into the humming of a freedom song. . . . Some of us children began humming along, slow and soft. . . .It was like a funeral sound, a dirge.

Then I recognized it - "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round".³ . . . It just started to catch on, and people began singing the words. "Ain't gonna let George Wallace . . . turn me 'round." "Ain't gonna let Jim Clark turn me 'round." "Ain't gonna let no horses...ain't gonna let no tear gas - ain't gonna let no state troopers; ain't gonna let nobody turn me 'round. NOBODY!!

Everybody's singing now, and some of them are clapping their hands, and they're still crying, but it's a different kind of crying. It's the kind of crying that's got spirit, not the weeping they had been doing.

And me and Rachel are crying and singing and it just gets louder and louder. I know the state troopers outside the church heard it. Everybody heard it. Because more people were coming in then, leaving their apartments and coming to the church--because something was happening."

Notes

¹ Taken from "Songs and the Civil Rights Movement in Selma, Alabama." https://duckduckgo.com/l/?kh=-1&uddg=http%3A%2F%2Fpeople.hofstra.edu%2Falan_j_singer%2F294%2520Course%2520Pack%2Fx10.%2520Civil%2520Rights%2F125.pdf This text is probably an excerpt from *Selma, Lord, Selma: Girlhood Memories of the Civil-Rights Movement* by Sheyann Webb and Rachel West Carson, with Frank Sikora (U of Alabama Press, Feb 1980). Sheyann's name is pronounced *Shy-ann*.

² Wikipedia. 2015 (March 6). Sheyann Webb; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheyann_Webb

³ That is why Robert F. Darden wrote the essay, "How a Freedom Song Saved Selma." See: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/robert-f-darden/how-a-freedom-song-saved-_b_6349960.html

See also Robert F. Darden. 2015 (Jan 16). "The Missing Songs of Selma," for a number of the songs that played a central role in Selma. Faithstreet: <http://www.faithstreet.com/onfaith/2015/01/16/the-missing-songs-of-selma/35899>

Reflection: The "Spirit of Selma," a Remembrance, William Rau

All us of have lived through an event that leaves tracks in our memories and shapes the contours of our souls. Work on voter registration in the South was such an event for me. First I volunteered, then I became paid staff for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, or SCLC. That was Dr. Martin Luther King's organization. SCLC played a major role in the restoration of constitutional liberties to Southern blacks, rights stolen from them in the murderous terror campaign the Klu Klux Klan waged before and after the withdrawal of Union troops from the South in 1877.

I became active in civil rights during my senior year at Northwestern University.⁴ While schooled at NU on the slave trade, race relations, and a sanitized history of the south, nothing prepared me for the brutal police riot against civil rights demonstrators on Selma's Edmund Pettus Bridge 50 years ago. Vividly described by Sheyann Webb, that event is "Bloody Sunday."



A slave scarred from whippings, Baton Rouge, 1863. War Department/National Archives, via Time & Life Pictures, via Getty Images

And it was no accident that the whip looms large in Webb's vivid account. Missing from my sanitized history course was the centrality of whip to the South's slave-owning elite. First, it was a leading gift that one slave planter gave to another.⁵ Second, it was a gift put to frequent use. Planters used whips to beat slaves into submission, to coerce more effort in the fields, and to lash runaways into tattered remnants of human beings.⁶

In 1965, those whips were no longer working because something WAS happening.⁷ When Dr King called for "clergy of all faiths" to come to Selma after Bloody Sunday, the response was overwhelming. With a phalanx of 450 ministers, priests, rabbis, nuns, and UUs⁸ behind him, Dr King led a second march which HE turned around because Judge Frank Johnson had issued a restraining order until this federal judge held hearings on another march. Frank Johnson, an Eisenhower appointee, was a fair but no-nonsense federal judge--a judge SCLC did not want to alienate.⁹ Alas, racists did not turn around; that night James Reeb, a UU Minister from Massachusetts, was savagely beaten and died several days later

Then, the floodgates opened wide with thousands more streaming into Selma, including three students from Northwestern University. Upon entering Brown Chapel, the raw energy and spirit we three found almost bowled us over. A balcony swept along both sides and the back of the

sanctuary. And it was chock full of young people whose syncopated clapping played off the walls and rafters. It was a gift of grace that the Chapel didn't come tumbling down!

I also vividly remember the day we began the 3rd March on Montgomery. So many people had arrived in the days leading up to the 3rd march that most of us were only allowed to cross the bridge before returning to town.¹⁰ ***But what a remarkable sight!*** When I reached the top of the bridge people filled an entire highway lane stretching ahead as far as the eye could see. As I turned to look behind me, the line wove back into town and around the corner to the Brown Chapel. There we were, a rainbow coalition, every race, creed, and color on the planet, following OUR Black Moses out of the land of pharaohs.

After a brief march, my two compatriots and I returned to Brown Chapel. We found over a dozen old & infirm black folk, heads bowed in silence. Then it began: low, mournful, wordless humming. Slowly, steadily it picked up becoming crescendo, now a powerful supplication that filled the entire Chapel.

Was it a collective prayer to their Lord to protect sons, daughters, grandchildren and allies? I think so.

And protect them it did--until the departure of the more than 30,000 who had joined the last triumphant leg of the March to Montgomery. That evening, March 25, 1965, Viola Liuzzo, another Unitarian, was killed by the Klan.¹¹ In less than one month, Jimmy Lee Jackson, James Reeb, Viola Liuzzo were murdered trying to secure the right to vote---in America. These three died but a short time before the 100th anniversary of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln on April 14, 1865.

And why was Lincoln assassinated? Because in a speech to a White House crowd on April 11, 1865 he suggested black soldiers should be permitted to vote.

John Wilkes Booth was in the crowd. "That means nigger citizenship. That is the last speech he will ever make," he snapped.¹² And Booth made good on his word by dispatching Lincoln the same way Liuzzo¹³ would be dispatched--with a bullet to the brain.

However, no bullets were going to "turn 'round" this movement. When Dr. King put out the call for summertime voter registration volunteers, over 600 students, myself included, headed South to assist the thousands of African-Americans already mobilizing people to register.¹³ Let's be honest about one reason why white collegians were important. Then, as now, **white lives mattered; black lives did not and they still don't.** When I was billy clubbed and left with a fractured skull and a blood-drenched chin by J. W. Sewall, a former Georgian State Representative, it made the New York Times.¹⁴ When Reverend Reeb was savagely attacked the incident received extensive national coverage and sparked demonstrations across the nation.¹⁵

When Jimmy Lee Jackson attempted to shield his mother from a volley of billy clubs, he was shot twice by one of Al Lingo's state troopers. When he was finally taken to the hospital, after being left bleeding in the street for three hours --- does that sound familiar? --- Lingo went to

Jackson's hospital bed to charge him with assault and battery and intent to murder a state trooper.¹⁶ But it's hard to serve a warrant on a dying man.

Here's the point: where was the news coverage for Jimmy Lee Jackson? When journalist Richard Valeriani was bludgeoned by an ax handle and ended up in the hospital during the same outburst that killed Jackson, he was interviewed for the Huntley-Brinkley Report.¹⁷ Not interviewed were Jackson's mother and 82 year old grandfather both beaten in the same melee. When Reverend Reeb lay in a coma in a Birmingham hospital, President Johnson dispatched a White House jet to fly Reeb's wife and father to Birmingham. When Reeb died Lyndon Johnson and Lady Bird Johnson called Marie Reeb to offer their condolences.¹⁸

Jimmy Lee Jackson's mother and his 82-year old grandfather, Cager Lee, were not given White House transportation from Marion to Selma where Jackson lay dying. And when Jackson passed there was no condolence call from the President.

A people's history of Selma gives Jimmy Lee Jackson his role in the narrative. The UUA has done so by including his name on the UUA Eliot Chapel plaque commemorating the "honored dead" in the Selma battle for freedom.¹⁹

Can we not say that Selma has been grafted into the DNA of Unitarian Universalism?

Let's on to voter registration, but by way of a detour. All was not serious and angst-ridden in the movement; we had a lot of fun too. SCLC staff had a rich, earthy sense of humor, verbal wits to match, and--this is important--a fondness for good Scotch! Then there were events that could only be met with humor. One of my favorites is when John Lewis and I attempted to integrate the First Baptist Church of Americus Georgia.²⁰ Stopped by a wall of stern patriarchs, we and eight others knelt down on their steps to pray, whereupon we were arrested and jailed for "**prayin' on private property.**"

Fellini would have loved it and so did we! Oh, the spiritual uplift!!!

Back to registration: Our most important registration drive was in Birmingham Alabama, in late 1965, early 1966. Al Lingo, who ordered the Bloody Sunday assault, was running for sheriff of Jefferson County which included Birmingham. SCLC decided this particular sheriff's race would be **the test case** for the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

So Dr. King dispatched almost his entire field staff to register as many people as possible. Once more people were shot--five, as a matter of fact²¹--and once again scores of heads were cracked by billy-club wielding police.²²

A digression: These two events are not taken from stale historical footnotes; they're seared into my memory. When I was assigned to Birmingham, I was provided housing by Simon Armstrong, a retired 70-year old Pullman porter. One night when I returned to his home after a day of canvassing, he greeted me at the door with his arm in a sling. He was one of the five who were shot that day. On another day when we were demanding federal registrars, I was at the front of the line when helmeted police poured out of three or four

busses and ran into our line with billy clubs flying. Time almost stopped still for me as I witnessed a nun, shock and horror on her face, blood smattered across her cassock, as she tried to assist one of her college students who had been bludgeoned with a billy club.

But this violent incident led to the dispatch of federal registrars. We were being thwarted by a slowdown by local registrars which would have severely limited our ability to impact the spring primary.

With federal registrars, a key provision in the Voting Rights Act, SCLC's registration drive was off to the races.²³ Each day we rounded up hundreds upon hundreds of people to register. We worked the bus stops and barbershops, the bars and jive joints,²⁴ the parks and playgrounds--everyplace and anyplace that Blacks congregated and took them to register.

That included nursing homes. I remember to this day canvassing a nursing home where I found a man over 100 years old who wanted to vote. He said he had been a deputy sheriff during the Reconstruction but lost both that job and his right to vote after the collapse of Reconstruction. 75 years had come and gone, but he was determined to vote again. Even though a centenarian he walked to our car with the help of a cane. I think I remember a spring in his step and a twinkle in his eye, but perhaps my memory is playing tricks with me.

The numbers of the newly registered began to add up and eventually went over 30,000 in Birmingham alone. As a result Al Lingo lost his bid to become High Sheriff of Birmingham and Jim Clark went down to defeat in Selma during the 1966 Alabama spring primary.²⁵

The success of the Alabama voter registration drives is the biggest civil rights story that's never been told. 20 people were killed in race-related murders in 1965.²⁶ After the spring primary that number would drop almost to zero. The ballot box brought an uneasy peace to the killing fields of the American South. In sum, both Martin Luther King and Lyndon Banes Johnson were proven correct. Gaining the right to vote, they asserted, would be one of the most important outcomes of the civil rights movement to which history writes an affirmative YEA.²⁷

So, what are we to make of this brief shining moment called Selma? What of the black folk who endured bludgeoning by billy clubs, the biting sting of whips, lacerations from rubber truncheons wrapped in barbed wire, and choking clouds of tear gas only to rise again ever more resilient, ever more determined to break the chains of oppression? If Dr. King were alive to give words to the Spirit of Selma, I think he would render a more eloquent version of these words:

**When they were overwhelmed by fear, they called up courage;
When they were surrounded by hate, they turned to love;
When they faced bone-weary despair, they sang a spirited song of freedom.**

Like Camelot, this brief shining moment called Selma is a story for the ages. May we have the wisdom & courage to make it *an ever living story by carrying its spirit "in our hearts always."*

Notes (Continued from Sheyann Webb reading):

- ⁴ Northwestern had a quota system in 1961: 10% Catholic, 5 % Jewish, 0% minority. Since I went to a Catholic high school, I would have had to place in the top 180 Catholics applying to NU, rather than filling one of 1,800 openings in the freshman class as a whole. I couldn't make the Catholic cut, and rather than telling me why, the Assistant Dean of Admissions strongly urged me to apply elsewhere. However, I received an Evans Scholarship to NU, so I was exempted from the quota system. Due to the excellent college preparation I received at Loyola Academy, I was allowed to take more advanced courses than the typical NU freshmen. Within several years, these "affirmative action" quotas for white, male Protestants were eliminated at every major private university in the US. Needless to say, this experience sensitized me to the institutionalized mechanisms of exclusion that fueled the civil rights movement.
- ⁵ Levine, Bruce. 2013. *The Fall of the House of Dixie: The Civil War and the Social Revolution that Transformed the South*. New York: Random House. Pp. 10-22. As Levine notes, "Slave Management [101]" articulated the principle "that the Slave is driven to labor by stripes." All slave masters were united in a brotherhood of brutality. There was no such thing as "humane" slave owners. That includes Thomas Jefferson and Robert E. Lee.
- ⁶ Many urban slave owners would not stoop to whipping their own slaves; they farmed out the task to slave traders. According to Hughes (1897; pp. 8-9), whipping was one of the more profitable line items in trader balance sheets. Should we call this Slave Management 102?

Hughes, Louis. 1897 [1998]. *My Thirty Years as a Slave: From Bondage to Freedom. The Institution of Slavery as Seen on the Plantation and in the Home of the Planter*. U.S. Library of Congress; <http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/hughes/hughes.html>

Slave Whipping as a Business



Photo source: <http://usslave.blogspot.com/2012/02/slave-whipping-as-business.html>

- ⁷ A forgotten memory surfaced during my writing. When I was working in the SCLC field office in Atlanta, a tall, lanky Texan 'rode into town.' The field office had living accommodations for visiting field staff. One morning I ran into him in the men's washroom and could not miss the long, angry

striations running down both sides of his back. His response to my wide-eyed amazement came out in a matter of fact Tex-Afro twang: "Texas Rangers: they love their spurs."

- ⁸ Walton, Christopher L. 2001 (May/Jun). 'So nobly started': Unitarian Universalists responded to Martin Luther King Jr.'s call to Selma. Two gave their lives. *UU World*; <http://www.uuworld.org/life/articles/2356.shtml>. Walton counted 500 UUs at Selma, including about 100 or one-fifth of our ministers.
- ⁹ Kotz, Nick. 2005. *Judgment Days: Lyndon Baines Johnson, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Laws that Changed America*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Pp. 290-297.
- ¹⁰ Judge Johnson limited numbers on the four-land portions of Highway 80 to 3,200 marchers. The numbers crossing the bridge on the third march was much higher, possibly at least double the 3,200 number, but I can't find a good estimate.
- ¹¹ Gianniono, Jeanne. 2003 (Jun 16). Viola Liuzzo. *Unitarian & Universalist Biography*. <http://uudb.org/articles/violaliuzzo.html>. Gianninono presents the concerted and effective efforts to slime Liuzzo's reputation. With access to government records, Kotz (205; p. 326) identifies the slimer:

"...Hoover could not resist trying to smear the Liuzzo family with his racism, his lurid preoccupation with interracial sex, and intimations that Mrs. Liuzzo used drugs, had served jail time, and that her husband was associated with the mob. Hoover's reports to the president stressed how close Liuzzo and Mouton were seated in the car, and what appeared to be hypodermic needle marks on her arm. None of this information proved to be true; but Hoover seemed determined to show that anyone involved with the civil rights movement was either politically or morally suspect."
- ¹² Levine, op. sit. Pp. 292, 300-302. It took four hours to take Reeb to Birmingham, a distance of 92 miles. The ambulance broke down and police non-cooperation added to the delay.
- ¹³ Leventhal, Willy Siegel. 2005. *The SCOPE of Freedom: The Leadership of Hosea Williams with Dr. King's Summer '65 Student Volunteers*. Montgomery, AL: Challenge Publishing.
- ¹⁴ Roberts, Gene. 1965 (Aug 6). Ex-Official Held in Georgia Attack: Rights Worker Says Former Legislator Assaulted Him. *New York Times*, p. 6. As Roberts' article correctly notes, The sheriff called Mr. Sewall and asked him to post \$500, which he did, and then returned home.
- ¹⁵ Kotz, op sit. Pp. 296, 300-302
- ¹⁶ Kotz, op sit. P. 276.
- ¹⁷ Palmer, Nancy Dole. 2015 (Jan 6). Selma and Richard Valeriani: A Reporter's Story. HuffPost; http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nancy-doyle-palmer-/selma-and-richard-valeria_b_6414664.html
- ¹⁸ Kotz, op sit. Pp. 300-301.
- ¹⁹ Walton, op sit. For an image of the monument, go to: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/uuworld/8454404282/in/set-72157632708896121>
- ²⁰ Roberts, Gene. 1965 (Aug 2). Two Churches Bar Civil Rights Groups in Americus Drive. *New York Times*. P. 1.
- ²¹ UPI. 1966 (Feb 25). 5 Negroes Shot in Birmingham: White Man Held in Violence Outside Picketed Store. *New York Times*. P. 1.
- ²² Roberts, Gene. 1966 (Jan 14). Alabama Police Club Marchers: Civil Rights Demonstration Dispersed in Birmingham. *New York Times*. P. 1.
- ²³ Reed, Roy. 1966 (Jan 25). *U.S. Voter Drive on in Birmingham: 1,100 Registered by Federal Examiners in First Day*. P. 1. It took unbelievable courage under the Deep South's old regime for an

African American to try to register to vote. SCLC very significantly reduced the fear by taking hundreds of Blacks, *at the same time*, to courthouses to register. This safety in numbers tactic required federal registrars. Local registrars could not or would not accommodate this need.

- ²⁴ One of SCLC's most effective bar organizers was "Big Lester," a giant of a man with a nasty scar over one of his eyes. Big Lester could nonviolently organize bar patrons and take them down to the registrars better than anyone in the business.
- ²⁵ AP. 1966 (Apr 13). Col. Lingo Pleads for Negroes' Votes. *New York Times*. P. 53.
- ²⁶ Roberts, Gene. 1966 (Jan 31). Racial Violence Kills 20 in Year. *New York Times*. P. 18; Harris, W. Edward. 2004. *Miracle in Birmingham: A Civil Rights Memoir, 1954-1965*. Indianapolis, IN: Stonework Press.
- ²⁷ Reed, Roy. 1966 (Jan 23). Democrats Scrap Alabama Slogan in bid to Negroes: Committee Votes to Discard 'White Supremacy' Motto on Party Ballot Emblem. *New York Times*. P. 1; **UPI?** 1966 (Apr 11). Negro Registration for voting Up 50% in 5 Southern States. *New York Times*. P. 39; Roberts, Gene. 1966 (Apr 17). A Remarkable Thing in Happening in Wilcox, ala.; A year Ago it had No Negro Voter. Today a 30-Year-Old Negro is Running for Sheriff and Could Win. *New York Times Magazine*. P. 249; Roberts, Gene. 1966 (May 3). Alabama Negroes Key to Vote Today; 122,000 to Cast Ballots for First Time. 200 Federal Observers are Sent In. *New York Times*. P. 1.



Source: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/rare-photos-selma-march-thick-history-180953874/?no-ist>



Source: <http://www.firstcoastnews.com/picture-gallery/life/2015/01/19/photos-from-selma-to-montgomery/21984639/>

Reflection: From Selma to Sacrifice, Rev. Jackie Clement

The Sunday after Viola Liuzzo's murder, Martin Luther King said, "If physical death is the price some must pay to save us and our white brothers from eternal death of the spirit, then no sacrifice could be more redemptive."

I don't know if death is ever redemptive, and I'm not sure I understand the need for redemption the same way Martin Luther King understood it, but I do believe, deep in my heart, that the way Jimmie Lee Jackson, Jim Reeb and Vi Liuzzo *lived* was redemptive of whatever missteps they had to atone for. They lived, at least in their last days and in their actions in Selma, for other people.

They sacrificed their lives for other people. Indeed, they sacrificed more than their lives. Vi Liuzzo is a good example. Her reputation, as a person, as a wife and mother, was intentionally and brutally attacked by the FBI under the direction of J. Edgar Hoover. The smear campaign was so vicious and so successful that the destruction of her character, perhaps even more than the loss of her life, unraveled her family. Following her death, Viola Liuzzo was not praised for her sacrifice but vilified as a bad mother. She was characterized as a drug addict, an adulteress, a communist and neglectful parent who abandoned her family, none one of which was true.

Four months after Viola Liuzzo's death, the magazine Ladies Home Journal asked their readers this question, "No matter what your own opinions are on the question of voting rights do you think that Mrs. Viola Liuzzo,, had the right to leave her five children to risk her life for a social cause or not?" 55% of American women felt strongly that Viola Liuzzo was wrong for leaving her children to fight for justice. This widespread disapproval plus constant harassment and threats destroyed the life of the Liuzzo family, something Viola would have felt was a much greater sacrifice than her own life.

The sacrifices of Jimmie Lee Jackson, Jim Reeb and Vi Liuzzo are rightly held up because they paid the ultimate price, but sacrifices other than lives were made, as well. Many, many people sacrificed to be part of what happened in Selma. Many sacrificed with FBI files and smear campaigns, with lives ruined by loss, with physical injury and injury to the spirit.

In his eulogy for James Reeb, Martin Luther King spoke these words:

One day the history of this great period of social change will be written in all of its completeness. On that bright day our nation will recognize its real heroes. They will be thousands of dedicated men and women with a noble sense of purpose that enables them to face fury and hostile mobs with the agonizing loneliness that characterizes the life of pioneers. They will be faceless, anonymous, relentless young people, black and white, who have temporarily left behind the towers of learning to storm the barricades of violence. They will be old, oppressed battered Negro women... They will be ministers of the gospel, priests, rabbis, and nuns, who are willing to march for freedom, to go to jail for conscience' sake. One day the South will know from these dedicated children of God courageously protesting segregation, they were in reality standing up for the best in the American dream...

It leaves me with the question of what I am willing to sacrifice to stand up for the best in the American dream. And for what or for whom am I willing to make that sacrifice? Martin Luther King said that those in Selma were willing to march for freedom, to go to jail for conscience' sake. But I don't think that Jimmie Lee, that Jim and that Vi sacrificed their lives for an idea. They sacrificed for people, for real people who were being beaten and real people who were having their rights denied. For people whose existence was circumscribed by false boundaries and those who lived not in freedom but in fear, those who faced, in King's words, "an eternal death of the spirit."

Maybe the idea behind that was one of equality, but I think for Jimmie Lee, for Jim and for Vi, they saw Selma as fighting for the material welfare of their people, people were no different than they were, who were deeply connected to them in a web of inescapable mutuality, but I don't think they fought for the idea. They fought for the people.

So, for whom are we called to sacrifice? Is Ferguson our Selma? Is Sheriff Joe Arpaio our Jim Clark? Do the names of Michael Brown, Eric Garner and John Crawford III replace Jackson, Reeb and Liuzzo? Sometimes the world calls us to make sacrifices for things which are simply unavoidable. The tragedy of Selma is that it was all avoidable, that it was only human hatred and littleness of spirit, fear of losing power and the greed of grinding down others that made it necessary. We have the opportunity to make such tragedy unnecessary—in Ferguson, in Phoenix, in Dayton, Ohio, and Staten Island, New York—and that is the redemption that our world needs.

In his book *Selma Awakening*, Mark Morrison-Reed wrote of the UUs who marched in Selma, “They had been changed in ways their lives would reveal but which words could never quite capture.” Yes, justice asks of us sacrifice, but as Bill has testified it can change our lives in ways which words can never quite capture. For whom are we called to sacrifice, and by this know greater life?

Namaste.

Por lo tanto puede ser.

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