

Civil Rights Pilgrimage: Day 2 – Thursday, June 1 From the Rev. Mary Laymon

Pilgrimage journeys differ from other kinds of travel. While pilgrimages bring us to sacred spaces, "getting-there" often impacts us more than "arriving". What happens "along the way" matters most on pilgrimages. And often, it's the moments that "go wrong" - when the plan doesn't execute the way we expected - that we are most



likely to encounter Spirit. Who we eat breakfast with, who sits next to us on the van, the stranger we meet standing next to us at the museum become sacred surprises.

Today was Day 2 of our Civil Rights Pilgrimage. It began with the Breakfast Club! When I entered the dining room the couples had un-coupled and the women were gathered around one table, and the men had paired off for morning conversation. One person in our group struggled with that pilgrimage moment where nothing about her room went right, and she lost her breakfast voucher along the way. Thankfully this ushered her into the hospitality of the dining room host who made sure she got her orange juice and breakfast despite the snafu.

Our first stop brought us to the oasis of the King Center, a peaceful garden nestled under towering trees in the middle of Atlanta, next to Ebenezer Baptist Church, the place Dr. King's journey began, and ended. Here I encountered Dr. Martin Luther King's 6 Principles for non-violence. I realized that for all I've learned over the years about Dr. King, I had not learned about these. The spiritual wisdom in each one resonated deeply with me.

<p>PRINCIPLE ONE: Nonviolence is a way of life for courageous people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is active nonviolent resistance to evil. • It is aggressive spiritually, mentally and emotionally. 	<p>PRINCIPLE TWO: Nonviolence seeks to win friendship and understanding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The end result of nonviolence is redemption and reconciliation. • The purpose of nonviolence is the creation of the Beloved Community 	<p>PRINCIPLE THREE: Nonviolence seeks to defeat injustice not people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonviolence recognizes that evildoers are also victims and are not evil people. • The nonviolent resister seeks to defeat evil not people. <p>#CHOSENONVIOLENCE</p>
<p>THE BELOVED COMMUNITY</p> <p>The Beloved Community is a realistic vision of an achievable society one in which problems and conflict exist but are resolved peacefully and without bitterness. In the Beloved Community, caring and compassion drive political policies that support the worldwide elimination of poverty and hunger and all forms of bigotry and violence. The Beloved Community is a state of heart and mind a spirit of hope and goodwill that transcends all boundaries and barriers and embraces all creation. At its core, the Beloved Community is an engine of reconciliation. This way of living seems a long way from the kind of world we have now but I do believe it is a goal that can be accomplished through courage and determination and through education and training, if enough people are willing to make the necessary commitment.</p>		
<p>PRINCIPLE FOUR: Nonviolence holds that suffering can educate and transform people and societies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonviolence accepts suffering without retaliation. • Unearned suffering is redemptive and has tremendous educational and transforming possibilities. 	<p>PRINCIPLE FIVE: Nonviolence chooses love instead of hate.</p> <p>Nonviolence resists violence of the spirit as well as the body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonviolent love is spontaneous, unmotivated, unselfish and creative. 	<p>PRINCIPLE SIX: Nonviolence believes that the universe is on the side of justice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nonviolent resister has deep faith that justice will eventually win. • Nonviolence believes that God is a God of justice <p>#LIVENONVIOLENCE365</p>

I felt deep gratitude that Dr. and Mrs. King's mausoleum rests among such beauty, in the middle of a deep blue water stream.

After lunch we traveled to the National Center for Civil and Human Rights for a self-guided tour among exhibits highlighting significant moments on the Civil Rights journey, and as well as showcasing human rights issues around the world. The exhibit on the men committed to segregation, and the arguments they employed to defend their hate, reminded me of how horribly attached we can become to our blindness. I appreciated learning the stories of leaders who began their careers supporting segregation, but opened themselves to hearing the stories of segregation's violence, and changed their perspective. In particular I was struck by the owner of the Atlanta Constitution newspaper, who initially supported segregation, but ended up using his influence to report on the Civil Rights Movement in a way that influenced his audience to support the end of Jim Crow. He's a wonderful reminder that awareness and waking up is a process.

Probably the most impactful exhibit for all of us was the simulation of the sit-ins at segregated lunch counters. In this exhibit we took a seat at a lunch counter, put on earphones, placed our hands in front of us, and were invited to sit still as best we could as we listened to a recording of the brutality, verbal and physical, experienced by those who braved this kind of non-violent action.



I also found myself moved by the stories of the Freedom Riders. While I was familiar with this part of the Civil Rights movement, I did not fully appreciate the role they played in making sure Federal mandates for desegregation were implemented, or the way these young people, for a brief moment in time, embodied Dr. King's vision for Beloved Community.

I was disappointed though, by the stories the museum didn't tell. There was not even one reference to Pauli Murray, the forerunner of the Civil Rights Movement, even though it was her arguments male lawyers like Thurgood Marshall used before the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Even though she refused to give up her seat on the bus, long before Rosa Parks came along. Pauli Murray wrote the blue print for the Civil Rights Movement years before Dr. King implemented it. She deserves to have a place in a museum dedicated to Human and Civil Rights. I was also disappointed to see no reference to the New Jim Crow, and the use of the criminal justice system to justify mass incarceration

of black men. As one member of our group lamented, "we're going backwards" in our society right now. I am hopeful we will talk about this more in the days ahead.

We ended Day 2 in the best Mexican restaurant in Montgomery, Alabama. Over tacos, guacamole, fajitas and flautas we debriefed our day, hearing more about one another's stories.



Today we head to the National Memorial for Peace and Justice, the nation's first memorial dedicated to the legacy of enslaved black people, people terrorized by lynching, African Americans humiliated by racial segregation and Jim Crow, and people of color burdened with contemporary presumptions of guilt and police violence.

Shalom,
Mary