

**Charles H. Smith**

# *Bent Towards Justice*

*This essay, "Bent Towards Justice", is dedicated to my five daughters, six granddaughters, and two great grandsons, and it is meant to be a primer revealing the high cost of justice. My early childhood experience with racial discrimination led to my involvement in education, social service, civil rights advocacy, and writing, which were driven by my divine call to bring about justice.*

## **I In Pursuit of Justice**

### **Segregation-The Early Years**

Racial discrimination was pervasive during the early years of my life growing up in Lexington, Kentucky. From my front porch, I would gaze daily at the beautiful, towering statue of Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky, who was buried in the Lexington Cemetery that forbade the burial of African Americans. I lived in a neighborhood in which five black homes were surrounded by white neighbors. I was forced to attend segregated public schools that used outdated and discarded textbooks, which had been transferred from the white schools. All across town, public accommodations posted signs for Colored and White entrances and even public water fountains posted similar ignoble signs. Ben Ali, the main movie theatre in the neighborhood, forced blacks to enter in the rear and then climb three flights of stairs to the top balcony with no access to the toilet, which was reserved for blacks. In addition, blacks could only use one public park, ironically named after freedom fighter Frederick Douglass, in the west end of town. If that were not enough, upon graduation from high school, although qualified, I was barred from attending the "white only" University of Kentucky across town.

These experiences of inequities and segregation fueled my determination to expose and fight the insidious evil of applied racial hatred and discrimination regardless of its manifestation. They also helped to develop my 'faith construct,' empowering me to overcome legal restraints and dedicate my life's work to fighting for equality.

My personal protest against segregation began en route to Richmond, Virginia. I was travelling by train, which, when it stopped at the Virginia border (Mason-Dixie Line), the conductor hurriedly rounded up all the black commuters and herded them into a segregated coach for the remainder of the trip. I refused to move. This incident was a blow to my dignity, but it would prove to be yet another element of the catalyst that empowered me to become boldly engaged in

some of the following actions:

#### **Personal Protest Journey Towards Justive**

- **1958** *Engaged* in organizing the first chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in Lexington, Kentucky.
- **1959** *Protested* with Dr. Abba Marlatt, Head of the University of Kentucky's Department of Economics, in a sat-in at segregated lunch counters adjacent to the University campus.
- **1961** *Hosted* students from Marshall University who led sit-ins at Bailey's Cafeteria, a White establishment and organized a boycott of Anderson Newcomb Department Store for refusing to allow women and men of color to try on clothing or shoes before purchase.
- **1961** *Attended* a speech given by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania where I share with him our local struggles and invited him to be guest speak at The First Baptist Church of Huntington, West Virginia, where I served as Senior Minister.
- **1962** *Elected* Chairman of the Mayor's Human Rights Commission in Huntington, West Virginia.
- **1962** *Dr. King* called to apologize for not being able to come speak at my church and share in the local civil rights struggle because he was in transition .I later received a personal letter explaining his inability to keep his speaking commitment.

January 30, 1962

The Rev. Charles H. Smith  
First Baptist Church  
1731 Coulton Avenue  
Huntington, West Virginia

Dear Rev. Smith:

When I talked with you the other day, I thought it might be possible for me to accept your invitation to speak for you in Huntington, West Virginia at First Baptist Church in April or May of this year. After returning to the office, I have gone over my calendar very scrutinizingly and find that I do not have any Sundays open for the next several months. Very recently I had to adopt a policy of preaching at my own church at least two Sundays in each month. All of the other Sundays for the Spring and Summer are taken up with long standing engagements. But for this I would be more than happy to serve you. Please know that I deeply regret my inability to come.

Please let me take this opportunity to apologize to you for not returning your calls. My secretary checked her telephone receipt book and it does not reveal a call from you. This means that your call came in at a time that she and I were both out and we did not get your message. I am sorry about this. I certainly would have returned your call if I had known about it.

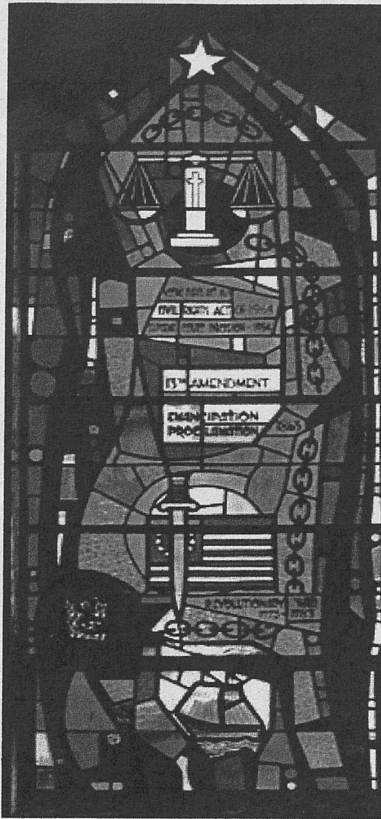
Sincerely yours,

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Km

Full letter: <http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/letter-mlk-rev-charles-h-smith>

- **1963** *Attended the March on Washington*, where we stood ten feet from where Dr. King delivered his famous address.
- **1964** *Tragedy & Opportunity* came when I received a telephone call at 4 a.m. on a Sunday morning informing me that our church building was on fire. The beautiful edifice had to be razed but provided me the opportunity to design an edifice with stain glass windows telling the story how faith led African Americans to freedom.
- **1965** *The Voting Rights Act* passed by Congress and signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson inspired me to design two stained glass windows depicting the struggle and resiliency of African Americans. It represented the opportunity for African Americans to have uninhibited access to polls. Its passage was a historic moment for justice to “roll down like a mighty stream” on all American citizens. The Freedom Window shows progress in the struggle, while the Freedom Fighters Window depicts who was in the struggle and shows some escape routes to freedom.



Reading From the Bottom of the Window

**SLAVE SHIP**  
*The Middle Passage*

**CHAINS**  
*Slavery and Discrimination*

**REVOLUTIONARY WAR**  
*Freed the Colonies 1775-1783*

**13<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT**  
*Abolished slavery and involuntary servitude*

**1865 EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION**

**1954 SUPREME COURT DECISION**  
*Outlawing Segregated Education*

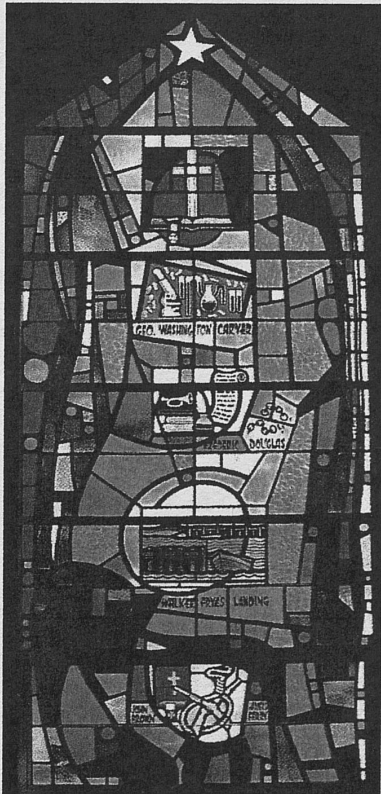
**1964 CIVIL RIGHTS ACT**

**1965 VOTING RIGHTS ACT**

**SCALES OF JUSTICE**

**STAR OF HOPE**

**CHAIN OF DISCRIMINATION**  
*Wraps Around Time*



Reading From the Bottom of the Window

**JOHN BROWN'S WAR**  
*The West Virginia town of **Harpers Ferry** was the site of an 1859 raid that was a major precursor to the Civil War.*

**THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD**  
*Walker's Fryer's Landing was an escape route to freedom on the Ohio River six blocks from the First Baptist Church*

**FREDERICK DOUGLASS**  
*A prominent abolitionist, author and orator. One of the most prominent African Americans of the 19th century.*

**GEORGE WASHINGTON CARVER**  
*1864 – January 5, 1943), was an American scientist, botanist, educator, and inventor.*

**THE HOLY BIBLE**  
*Spiritual Guide to Freedom*



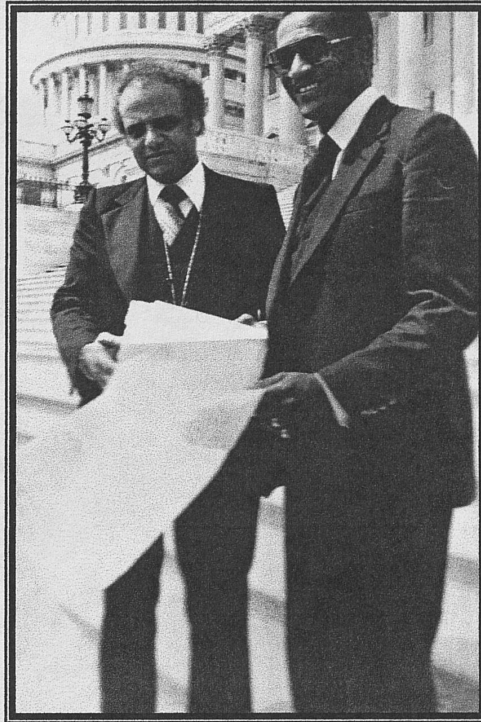
### 15th Amendment to the Constitution

The 15th Amendment to the Constitution granted African American men the right to vote by declaring that the "right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." Although ratified on February 3, 1870, the promise of the 15th Amendment would not be fully realized for almost a century. Through the use of poll taxes, literacy tests and other means, Southern states were able to effectively disenfranchise African Americans. It would take the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 before the majority of African Americans in the South were registered to vote.

### 1965 Voting Rights Act

**The 1965 Voting Rights Act** was the last legislative law placed in the stained glass window before the arc began bending towards the **SCALES OF JUSTICE**.

This law was the *lynchpin*, which serves to hold together parts or elements that exist or function as a unit, in our democratic form of government. It ensures every citizen can share, without intimidation, in decisions, which govern our country. The act was the screening mechanism to inhibit jurisdictions from creating roadblocks to the voting booth.



### **NAACP's Dr. Benjamin Hooks and Rev. Charles H. Smith**

Petitioning Congress Urging Them To Renew and Amend the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

**In 1980**, as Deputy Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in New York City serving under the leadership of the late Dr. Benjamin Lawson Hooks, one of my first assignments was to work with the agency's voter registration director, the brilliant Joe Madison, in launching a national signature campaign urging congress to renew the Act. Joe Madison also gathered evidence of voter fraud, which was compiled and used in Congressional hearings and part of the 15,000 pages of testimony justifying its renewal as well as expanding its coverage.

## II. The U.S. Supreme Court Declares a Key Provision of the 1965 Voting Rights Act Unconstitutional

### Chief Justice Roberts - Majority Opinion

In JUNE 2013, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled Section 4b of the Voting Registration Act unconstitutional. The vote was five to four. Judge Roberts, who provided the majority decision, recognized the existence of “entrenched racial discrimination,” yet he disregarded the overwhelming evidence of states and jurisdictions latent with voter violations and gerrymandering manipulations. The majority opinion based its rationale on increased voter registration among African Americans. Judge Roberts’ rationale for striking down the Act was predicated, at best, on a ‘number shell game.’ The culture context follows. Since the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, it has been under every conceivable assault. Under the law, twelve cases have been processed in the federal judicial system.

- Between 1982 and 2006, the Justice Department blocked over 700 voting changes based on a determination that the changes were discriminatory.
- Two hundred and seventy-two requests were currently pending for ‘pre-clearance’ with by the Justice Department when the Supreme Court rendered its narrow decision in *Shelby v Holder, SC*, Section 4 (b) of the Act declaring its formula for requiring pre-clearance unconstitutional.
- The decision freed nine states and portions of six others to enact discriminatory laws, to craft new voting requirements such as stringent identifications, gerrymander districts, change at-large voting in places with a sizable minority population, and to add restrictive polling hours.

The timing of this decision provides lead-time for voting rights opponents to introduce new nefarious measures. Texas has begun changing the voting rules. However, the Justice Department served them notice that it will act immediately by using other provisions of the law to curtail their defiant acts. The Supreme Court directed Congress to revisit the pre-clearance formula to make sure it was fair to all states and local jurisdictions. The current conservative, do-nothing, obstructionist Congress, with a 10% approval rating, must be forced to take action now before the 2014 election period. Although Congress is frightened by right-wing extremists forcing them to exist in a state of inertia fed by election fears, cultural phobias and biases, we must apply relentless pressure by a proactive broad demographic coalition of American citizens.

## Justice Ruth Ginsburg - Minority Opinion

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg summarized her dissent reading from the bench by citing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "*The Arc of the moral universe is long; but it bends toward justice, if there is a steadfast commitment to see the task through to completion.*" Dr. King had extrapolated this metaphor from Theodore Parker, a Unitarian minister and prominent American Transcendentalist born in 1810, who called for the abolition of slavery. Parker's words foreshadowed the Civil War fought in the 1860s.

Judge Ginsburg notes that the focus of the Voting Rights Act has properly changed from "first-generation barriers to ballot access" to "second-generation barriers" like racial gerrymandering and laws requiring at-large voting in places with a sizable black minority. She said the law had been effective in thwarting such efforts and that the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the nation's commitment to "justice" had been "disserved by today's decision."

The following history lesson reveals the sacrifice, struggle and price paid over two centuries ago by those who were willing to move this great nation towards justice.

## 189 Years to the Voting Booth in 1965

The struggle for equal voting rights has been going on for over two hundred years. The following brief timetable provides an American odyssey of oppression, persecution, and discrimination in the struggle for women, Asian, Mexicans and African Americans to vote. It documents legislative and legal milestones in pursuit of the sacred ballot. Progress from persistent citizens willing to struggle and apply political pressure paid off. This battle began long before the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. In essence, the struggle for voting rights in America must be divided into two parts. The first part was to win citizenship rights for people of color and the second was to win the right to vote regardless of color, gender, race or national origin. The following chronological list of actions provides a snapshot of the struggle forcing the arc to bend towards justice.

**1776: Abigail Adams** asks the Continental Congress to support women's rights.

**1776-1828: Struggle** to remove religious restrictions. Some of the colonies barred Jews, Quakers, Catholics and other "heretics" from voting or holding office.

**1787: Three-Fifths Compromise Adopted** - Bitter Debate - Only white males were allowed to vote, but a limited number of slaves were included in the census to determine how many representatives in Congress each state was entitled to.

**1788-1856: Struggle to remove property restrictions.**

**1820-1865: Abolitionist Movement** to end slavery.



**1836: Texas denies vote to Mexicans.** Mexican-Americans who tried to vote faced widespread beatings, burnings, and lynching.

**1848: Mexican-Americans** are denied voting rights in the southwest.

**1848-1920: Women's Suffrage Movement** demanded women be granted all rights as full citizens including the right to vote. They braved beatings, mob attacks, rape, jail, seizure and destruction of property, forced divorce, and murder.

**1850: Asian immigration** - Under the "whites-only" clause of the 1790 Naturalization Law, Asian immigrants could not be citizens.

**1856: Property restrictions removed.**

**1861-1865: Civil War and Emancipation.** At the close of the war, the slaves were freed by the influence of the Emancipation Proclamation and the passing of the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment.

**1867: 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment** extends citizenship to Blacks. Women are still excluded in the Constitution from full citizenship in regards to voting.

**1868: Women petition** that women's suffrage be included in the draft of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment. It was denied.

**1870: 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment** extends the vote to Blacks.

**1867-1877: Reconstruction** - In the late 1860s, more African Americans are registered to vote than whites in the states of the former Confederacy. Several blacks are elected to office.

**1877: End of Reconstruction** Equal voting rights enforcement ends: Reign of terror - Ku Klux, Klan; Legal disenfranchisement - state laws passed to create loopholes in the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment. Literacy test introduced, Grandfather Clause enacted, etc., Poll taxes must be paid to vote, new segregation laws are passed, introduction of "Black Codes" system. All elected Blacks are driven from office.

**1870-1923: Asians** denied citizenship.

**1878: Women Suffrage Amendment** introduced in Congress after 42 years of courageous struggle to finally ratify it in 1920.

**1920: 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment** extends right to vote to women.

**1924: Native-American citizenship**

**1942-1952: Asian Citizenship rights**

**1944: "White-only" Primaries Ruled Unconstitutional.** In 1944, NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall won the *Smith v. Allwright* case. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled "all-white" primary elections unconstitutional.

**1945-1960: GIs fight for civil rights.**

**1948: State laws** denying the vote to Native-Americans are overturned.

**1954-1960: Early Civil Rights Movement** activity. Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* desegregated public education. Hundreds of voting-rights lawsuits are filed in state and federal courts.

**1960-1965: Civil Rights Movement** demands the right to vote. Sit-ins, freedom rides, marches, boycott -- voting rights and segregation emerge as the two central issues, intertwined and inseparable.

**1964: 24<sup>th</sup> Amendment** ends poll taxes

**1964-1965: Freedom Summer** and the Selma to Montgomery March.

**1965: Passage of Voting Rights Act.** Congress has amended this Act four times.

**1966: Voting Rights Act** takes effect.

**1966: Poll taxes** outlawed in state elections.

**1970: 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment** lowers voting age to 18.

**1975: Extension of Voting Rights** to "language minorities."

**2000: Republican-directed** disenfranchisement of Blacks in Florida.

**2013: Supreme Court** declares Section 4b of the Voting Rights Act unconstitutional

**Sources:** William H. Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970*; Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*; Thomas Dublin, *Women at Work: The Transformation of Work and Community in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1826-1860*; Sara M. Evans, *Born for Liberty: A History of Women in America*; Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States*, rev. ed.; Debra Franklin, *The Heritage We Claim: College of Notre Dame of Maryland, 1896-1996*; National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) Collection, Rare Books Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Anne Firor Scott and Andrew Scott, *One Half the People: The Fight for Woman Suffrage*; "From Parlor to Politics," permanent exhibit at the Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.; and Dorothy Sterling, ed. *We Are Your Sisters: Black Women in the Nineteenth Century*. Zophy, Angela Howard and Frances M. Kavenik, eds. *Handbook of American Women's History*.

Source - <http://www.crmvet.org/info/votehist.htm> Voting Rights Histor

## The Struggle to the Voting Booth Continues

### For the Sake of justice, Your Voice and Vote Counts

Today, 1.4 million black men are denied the right to vote because they have served time in prison. Voter suppression with voter ID laws, targeted voter purges, and dirty tricks such as false notification of polling places, are used to deprive blacks of their vote.

We must become the eyes and ears in our communities and report any changes that are planned which we believe may have a negative impact on our community. These might include:

- Moving polling places to locations that are difficult for your community to access;
- Switching to at-large voting or appointing officials who were formerly elected;
- Redrawing district lines in a manner that reduces the number of majority-Black or Latino districts;
- Reducing the early voting period, curtailing opportunities to register to vote;
- Implementing New Voter ID requirements. Example: new law signed in North Carolina

Report any of the above in your area by contacting the following email [vote@naacpldf.org](mailto:vote@naacpldf.org) or call 1-866-OUR-VOTE or NAACP main office @ 410-580-5777 or visit [www.naacp.org](http://www.naacp.org).

We must harness our collective energy and urge Congress to respond to the Supreme Court's ruling and revisit the pre-clearance clause as a top priority. Lastly, join the Rev. Al Sharpton and Martin Luther King III on August 24<sup>th</sup> in Washington, D.C. to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the March on Washington. I was there at the March on Washington in 1963. I am coming out of retirement to continue the fight.

## **BROADEN THE DEBATE ON RACE AND JUSTICE**

### **“Striving for a Higher Moral Law of Justice”**

Within the struggle for justice, the concept of civil rights cannot be truly separated from the universal moral concept of human rights and dignity. The United States hammers this ideal into nations around the world. Yet the U.S. must begin to practice what it preaches on human rights by providing those same rights to all its citizens, no matter their race.

America would be shortsighted in allowing the Supreme Court's recent decision to be the only corrective measure taken, although it needs immediate action. The Voting Rights Law is a legislative vehicle ensuring full voter participation for all, regardless of national origin, race or ethnicity. However, it cannot be separated from the big picture of providing jobs and a safety net for the poor and elderly, eradicating urban poverty and crime, maximizing quality educational opportunities, and instituting fair rules in the work place even in the 'right to work' states. Presidential leadership, congressional action, and citizen involvement must work in unison to rewrite the pre-clearance formula.

We must not become so obsessed with the dynamics of correcting the Voter Registration Law that we ignore the needs of our nation, such as fixing the immigration laws and addressing the plight of the jobless, which adversely affect people of color.

We must not allow politicians to use more financial resources to keep Mexicans out of our country than to take care of the poor and needy citizens within our borders.

### **Root Cause of our Nation's Divide is RACISM**

We must move beyond a narrow tactical slice of voter rights legislation and uncover the tap roots of racism, which reveals itself in blue and red states, congressional inertia, state and local governing bodies, faith community complexes, and in metaphors for traditional values.

There appears to be an unholy alliance between southern organized religious institutions, fundamental and evangelical, and the Republican Party, which is quite open as reported by the Heritage Foundation. They have created a civil religious alliance, which purports to be God's only true custodian of social values. This propaganda is heard on the radio and in the southern white pulpit.

There is a 'Bible Belt value system' that needs to be examined and brought under serious scrutiny by adherents to the Christian faith. In the face of contradictory evidence, far too much prejudice and inconsistent moral standards prevail and remain suppressed in a logic-tight compartment.

Such compartmentalized religiosity allows the brain to receive only facts that support

preconceived biases or beliefs thus avoiding emotional conflict. The examples below support this theory. This was evident during slavery when southern Methodists proclaimed the practice of slavery to be God's will by interpreting Pauline theological apologetics that admonished slaves for disobeying their masters. Black Methodists extrapolated a different message from the teachings of Jesus in which they acknowledged that the 'truth', which set them free, was by a divine act of grace. Because white Methodists refused to allow the teachings of Jesus to mitigate their compartmentalized hold on slavery, they continued to practice segregated seating, baptism, and communion in their worship services. Richard Allen, a black preacher, left the church and established The African Methodist Episcopal Church, which welcomes all races into its church family.

The Compartment.' White Entitlement' codified in legislative history is still alive today in the religiosity of the south and body politics. The bloody civil war is over but another kind rages. But constructs of the old ideology of white superiority and racial hatred still fan embers of the Confederate fire, and are now the driving force behind the strategy for the conservative Republican Party in Washington and state houses.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

Ephesians 6:12 (KJV)

In his book "Rituals of Blood," Harvard scholar Orlando Patterson maintains that those zealous to preserve the politics of White supremacy and the southern way of life breached barriers between the secular and the sacred, politics and piety, church and doctrine and civil duty, and introduced lynching.

According to Patterson, between the years 1882 and 1968, 2,873 out of 3,446 blacks in the eleven Confederate states were lynched. Lynching killing became a sacrificial ritual, a communal act under the leadership of southern ministers who deemed Blacks as satanic and offered them up, most often on Sundays!

#### **Political/Civic Lynching**

Today, these acts of violence are a crime. However, political lynching is not over - the political lynching the first black president of the United States by using ugly politics to deny him the opportunity to effectively govern a second term. Mitch McConnell, the new "Confederate" leader from Kentucky had vowed to keep President Obama out of the White House for a second term. Unfortunately for Mr. McConnell, the political arena is no longer limited to white males, but open to a wide spectrum of individuals. Add Evangelical religious leaders as well.

- *President Obama* - With an avalanche of facts supporting the legitimacy of President Obama's birthplace, Rev. Franklin Graham fired up his evangelical base by ignoring well-established facts about the President. Graham racially profiled Obama, blinded by the myth that a black man could not be President of the United States. Compartmentalized biases allowed Rev. Graham to ignore and remain unaffected by the facts.
- *Boy Scouts* - Selected scriptures are often used to justify prejudices and such scriptures are never integrated into the whole context of biblical teachings. The Southern Baptist Convention recently passed a resolution condemning Boy Scouts of America for allowing gay youth to

become members of a scout troop. The Roswell Street Baptist Church of Marietta, GA has withdrawn its sponsorship of Boy Scout troops, according to its pastor, because the Bible teaches homosexuality is a sin. After 50 years of ministry, I am confused. I thought the Church was the hospital for sin-sick souls and that the power of Christ's love and resurrection could make them whole in His sight. Many noted white evangelicals and black mega church preachers have been accused of deviant sexual misconduct, yet they been forgiven and restored by God's redemptive love. They were not completely removed from the influence of God's loving community.

- *Women* - Selected scriptures are often used to justify prejudices and such scriptures are never integrated into the whole context of biblical teachings. The Southern Baptist Convention recently passed a resolution condemning Boy Scouts of America for allowing gay youth to become members of a scout troop. The Roswell Street Baptist Church of Marietta, GA has withdrawn its sponsorship of Boy Scout troops, according to its pastor, because the Bible teaches homosexuality is a sin. After 50 years of ministry, I am confused. I thought the Church was the hospital for sin-sick souls and that the power of Christ's love and resurrection could make them whole in His sight. Many noted white evangelicals and black mega church preachers have been accused of deviant sexual misconduct, yet they been forgiven and restored by God's redemptive love. They were not completely removed from the influence of God's loving community.
- *Executions* - Mississippi and Texas navigate between the facts that history records them as having the largest amounts of lynching, executions, and voter suppression on the one hand, and passing the most restrictive abortion law on the other hand.
- *Fidel Castro* - The Rev Rafael Cruz father of Senator Ted Cruz immortalizing Glenn Beck as the modern day John the Baptist and President Obama as Fidel Castro.

### Declaration: The Civil Was Is Over

Sixty-five years ago, I accepted the call to Christian ministry, and prepared myself academically for service. Upon retirement from active leadership in a local church in 2012, I moved to Marietta, Georgia in 2012, joining three older daughters in the area.

However, my daughter, Dr. Stephanie Poole, M and her husband, had selected a home for me unseen near her medical practice in Cobb County Georgia in my absence while I completed my duties as Senior Minister of the First Baptist Church of Madison

Upon my arrival in September 2012, I discovered my new residence was located 20 yards from the Kennesaw Mountain Civil War battleground where the Confederate army, led by General Joseph E. Johnson, had repeatedly retreated from Union General William T. Sherman's superior force. I lived on a street named after the Major General of the Confederate Army. Although Union forces had temporary setbacks, Union forces finally succeeded in the overall campaign and the fall of Atlanta, which was a turning point in ending the Bloody War between the States.

### **THE CIVIL WAR IS OVER**

God will judge states like Mississippi and Texas as they navigate between the facts that history records them as having the largest amounts of lynchings, executions, and voter suppression on the one hand, and passing the most restrictive abortion law on the other hand.

## **Where Do We Go From Here**

Too long has the leadership of the Faith Community been reticent in advocating for justice. It sits in silence giving a sacred nod to politicians who unleash mean, disrespectful language and craft policies contrary to fairness. The muddy waters of racism convolute their definition of 'justice.' Racial prejudice is revealed through devious voting strategies, suppression, policy platforms, and distortion of data.

As a country that was founded on the precepts of the Bible, we need to return to its teachings. Faith played a major role in America's success both socially and economically, and today faith communities across the nation have a moral responsibility to balance the scales of justice and move the moral arc toward a more equitable system. There is much work to be done, and the time is NOW!

- Faith Communities must partner with those who have been affected by racism by promoting open and honest dialogue. This will assist in understanding the crisis in our urban centers.
- We must identify and add discriminatory practices to the 'database' that monitors local jurisdictions that craft laws and procedures to prevent law-abiding citizens from voting.
- Let us follow the lead of The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) National Body by passing emergency resolutions calling on Congress to act immediately in protecting voting rights for all, and putting an end to the racial profiling that led to the death of Trayvon Martin.
- Let us speak out against elected officials like Steve King of Iowa, for his shameless stereotyping of Mexican Americans.
- Let us ask our congregations to support those who earn minimum wage and still go hungry by advocating a raise to keep them out of poverty and not dependent on the government for survival.

## **A CALL TO ACTION**

Each of us has the responsibility to make our communities and our society more peaceful and more just. The moral arc toward justice is not going to bend without our intervention. It is said that evil triumphs when good people stand still and do nothing. Maintaining the *status quo* signs the death warrant for the disenfranchised and those whose voices are muted by the strident sounds of those in power. Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. said it most eloquently as he wrote from behind bars in a Birmingham jail, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

For our part we can:

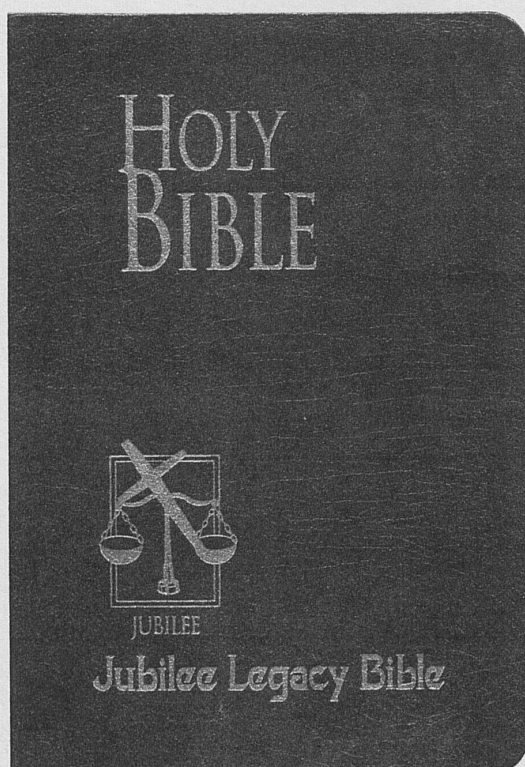
- Launch a campaign to strongly urge Congress to make a renewed Section 4b a national priority and defend voting rights across the nation.
- Establish a Marshall Plan to reclaim the inner cities by transferring a percent of funds, which are currently allocated for foreign aid. Raise no taxes. Tap returning vets to execute this program. It can be tied to workforce investments boards and local community bases such as the Urban League.
- Create a Student Loan Barter Program where skills can be traded for debt relief.
- Create a mechanism to utilize millions of professional retired persons to assist inner city families with parenting skills and provide positive male role models.
- Release non-violent offenders from prison and place them in a rehabilitative, on-the-job public work program with required parenting classes for fathers.

In light of these realities, we must take the fight to every corner of our society, or wherever the dark shadows of racial prejudice has lodged.

Ephesians 6:12 (KJV)



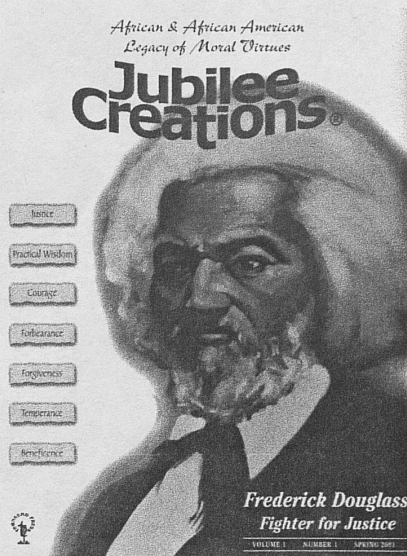
## *Bent Towards Justice* *- Publications -*



**HOLY BIBLE**  
*Jubilee Legacy Bible*

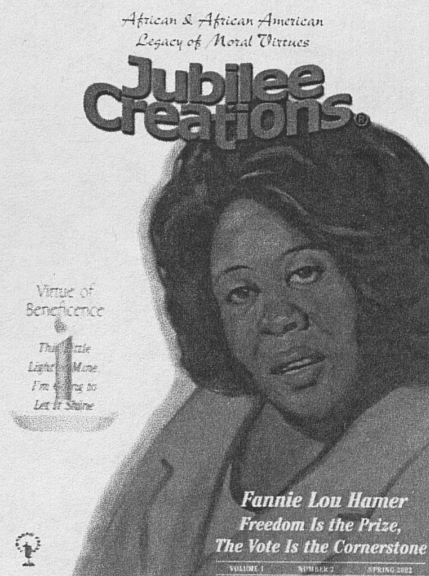
1995- The American Bible Society in New York City published the *HOLY BIBLE - The African American Jubilee Edition* with the following notation in its acknowledgment:

*“The Jubilee Bible Project was championed by the Rev. Charles H. Smith, who saw the need to bridge the teachings of the Bible with the realities of African American day-to-day living. In his capacity as Assistant Director for Heritage Markets at the American Bible Society, Reverend Smith traveled extensively throughout the United States for several years gathering research data, interviewing church and denominational leaders, speaking to clergy, laypersons, and youth, attending conferences and seminars, reading the latest books, and listening intently to people to determine the type of supplementary material that would make the Jubilee Bible relevant to the African American community and beyond. The American Bible Society gratefully acknowledges Reverend Smith’s determination, indefatigable spirit, and deep commitment to the Bible Cause.”*



2000- The Townsend Press of Nashville, Tennessee published *Frederick Douglass - Fighter for Justice*, edited by Charles H. Smith.

2001- The Townsend Press of Nashville, Tennessee published *Fannie Lou Hamer - Freedom Is the Prize, The Vote Is the Cornerstone*, edited by Charles H. Smith.



2001- The Townsend Press of Nashville, Tennessee published *African American Jubilee Legacy - Spiritual Odyssey*, Edited by Cain Hope Felder, and Charles H. Smith.

