

A Publication of the National Black Chaplains Association

The Capsule

JULY 2019 | Volume 2 Issue 3

Equal Justice
for All

Diversity Matters

29th Annual NBCA
Conference in Washington DC

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the NBCA

DVA
Navigators
Initiative

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The Benefits of Membership – To improve the quality and quantity of life for veterans and their families. To receive discount hotel rates for the VA National Black Chaplains Association conferences. To be eligible to become a writer, facilitator, moderator, or key note speaker/presenter at various conferences.

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- ▶ **General (Regular) Membership (\$50 annually)** is available to any African American or Minority Chaplain employed by the DVA.
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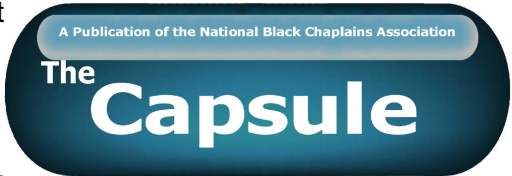
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The Capsule is a quarterly publication that was launched in December 2017 by the National Black Chaplains Association. This multicultural publication is centered around a mission to inform, inspire, educate and connect chaplains, families and communities of all FAITHS and RACES through information, stories, food, and poetry. The Capsule is written primarily by Black Chaplains, but is also open to articles submitted by writers of other ethnic groups and other disciplines. In each issue we highlight articles with an African American, Multicultural, Pluralistic, Clinical, and Legislative Perspective – and so much more.



The Capsule represents a pill filled with excellent ideas that will strengthen us, various experiences that will help us cope with struggles we all face, views that may challenge us or our beliefs, and educational tools designed to enhance our ministries and our togetherness as a people. If you **swallow the pill** (that is, take in the information so that it can be beneficial to you just as food is beneficial to our bodies), it is our earnest prayer that it will inspire you to always be your best, do your best, and make a contribution to this and future generations that will be a blessing to people of all ethnicities, especially veterans and their families.

The Capsule is designed to help individuals cope with daily struggles, strengthen their faith, draw closer to God and be a blessing to others. We believe that by consuming the pill or taking in our content, individuals will find a renewed sense of hope through inspiration and information that positively impact the world. We encourage your support through memberships, donations, subscriptions and advertisements at alfray.thomas2@va.gov, [donations](#), and [membership](#).

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You can now market and highlight your special events, announcements, goods, and services in **THE CAPSULE** quarterly publication.

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For more information and submission instructions, please contact the Editor-in-Chief Rev. Dr. Alfray Thomas, Jr. at 918-671-0046 or by email alfray.thomas2@va.gov.



From the Desk of the President

A Discussion - Chaplaincy Leadership Training: In the Time of Crisis

By definition, the word crisis implies a coming darkness, as well as an uncertain outcome. Inherent in the crisis may exist a huge opportunity to improve the order of things. It is not unusual for people to turn to the Chaplain in the time of a crisis. Desert Storm served as a catalyst as individuals flocked to houses of worship to hear the Word of God pending what was believed to be the coming of an apocalypse.

When we reflect on the unwillingness of others to speak out in the time of crisis, we may immediately remember the powerful and provocative words uttered by a German Lutheran Pastor. His name was Martin Niemöller who addressed the cowardice of the Germans for not intervening in the affairs of the Jews. He stated in prose like language the following message that is worthy of remembering:

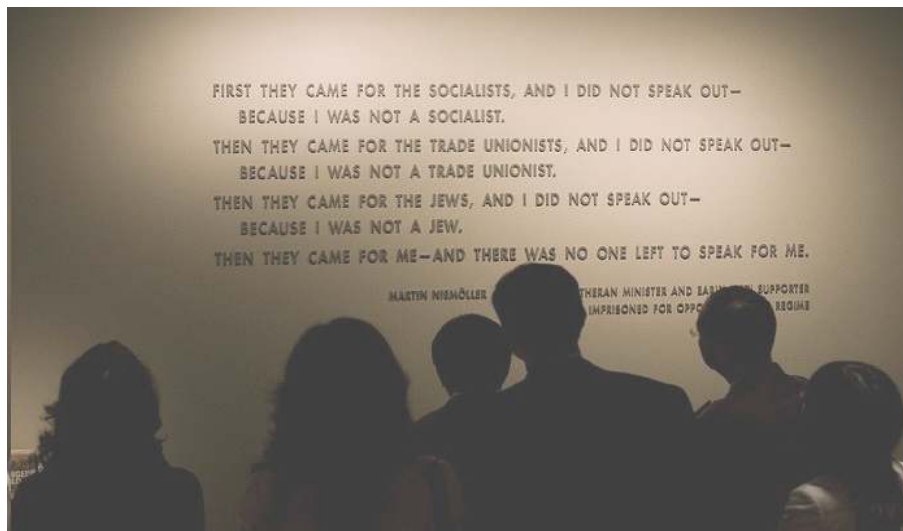
***First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a socialist.
Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a trade unionist.
Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out—
Because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for me—and there was no one left to speak for me.***

When a crisis comes upon the land, as we are presently experiencing, there exists a real urgency to hear the voice of the Chaplain. He or she must passionately speak in unequivocal terms about the will and righteousness of God. The Chaplain is not intimidated by the size of the opposition, nor daunted by fear or persuaded by unethical influences. The biblical and leadership training remind Chaplains that there are four elements to remember when facing a crisis. First, be fervent and persistent in prayer. Secondly, be willing to stand up for what you know is right. Thirdly, be guided by your leadership training. Fourthly and lastly, be sure you adhere to the will of God.

The late Dr. Samuel Dewitt Proctor, former President of Virginia Union University and Pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, stated that “whatever the problem may be, whether social, political or economical, it must be treated spiritually at the roots.” That is to say, God remains the solution to every problem.



**Chaplain Marvin L. Mills, Sr.
President, NBCA**



Visitors stand in front of the quotation from Martin Niemöller that is on display in the Permanent Exhibition of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Niemöller was a Lutheran minister and early Nazi supporter who was later imprisoned for opposing Hitler's regime.

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FROM MY HEART TO YOUR HEART

Chaplaincy is a career that requires continuing education; therefore, Leadership Training is essential to our growth and development, especially in the time of crisis. We must be able to address the needs of veterans as new and innovative treatment options become available. Lives can be stagnant, destroyed, or transformed. I believe that the impact of this training will help us to improve the effectiveness of our ministry, and transform the lives of our veterans.

The President and I want to invite you and fellow Chaplains (*and your families*) to attend this life change Conference in the nation's Capital. As you read through this **Special Edition of The Capsule**, expect to be encouraged. As you prepare to attend the Conference, expect great fellowship with your fellow co-workers and new acquaintances around the world. During the Conference, we will have the opportunity to tour the Smithsonian Museum of African American History. Furthermore, we will be enriched by great national speakers in their various fields of study. You will be educated and inspired by topics such as: *Why is Diversity of Development so important in Chaplaincy, 90 Minutes in Heaven, Judges and Equal Justice for All, Education and Labor Issues Affecting Minorities, Police Reform and Mandatory Minorities, Domestic Abuse, Women Mortality and Gun Violence, What is the significance of the Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Arlington Cemetery, and Understanding the Navigators Program.* See you at the Conference!



Chaplain Rev. Dr.
Alfray Thomas, Jr.
Editor-in-Chief

"We all learn from each other – it's called the gift of sharing"

Introducing the National VA Chaplaincy Director

"Working in VA Chaplaincy is a wonderful opportunity to serve our Veterans and be part of a most meaningful mission."

Juliana M. Leshler, M.Div., Ph.D., BCC
National Director of VA Chaplaincy

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At This Year's 29th Training Conference

THE NAVIGATOR'S INITIATIVE



by **Chief Chaplain Rev. Dr. Clifton Montgomery, Jr., Vice President, Houston, TX**

DVA NBCA's Mission is to promote the highest level of pastoral care for patients, families, and communities; to strengthen the effectiveness of African American chaplains; to assist in the

recruitment, retention, education, growth/development of all federally employed chaplains.

The nature of a waterway changes regularly, and a mariner navigating on an old or uncorrected chart is courting disaster. Every producer of navigational charts also provides a system to inform mariners and aviators of changes that affect the chart!

Such is the case, A Navigator on board a ship or aircraft is responsible for its navigation. The Navigator's responsibility is always to be aware of ship or aircraft position; advising the ship's captain or aircraft commander of estimated timing to destinations and ensuring hazards are avoided.

Nautical charts are essential tools for marine navigation. These principles offer an effective strategy for helping chaplains navigate the ever-evolving changes occurring in VA Chaplaincy.

- ▶ **Career Exploration and Skill Development:** Finding a job can be a challenge for African-American and other ethnic minorities. In addition to determining what careers are available, what their interests are, and what skills they have or need to develop; systemic challenges limited the access these chaplains have to this vital information. ***The Navigator's Initiative*** can help chaplains compete for advanced employment opportunities.
- ▶ **Mentoring: *The Navigator's Initiative*** can be likened to career-focused mentoring. Some examples include assisting with the following:
 - writing resumes and cover letters;
 - conducting mock interviews and support for answering interview questions;
 - developing on-the-job skills (soft skills or technical skills);

- career planning, goal setting and understanding recent changes in VA Chaplaincy.

We're seeking the names of chaplains willing to participate in the Navigator's Initiative. If you are interested, please join us at our 29th Annual Conference- Washington, D. C. July 10-13!

EXPERIENCE THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

by **Chaplain Sherri Headen, Indianapolis, IN**

What should we expect from the tour at the National Museum of African American History and Culture? The National Museum of African American History and Culture is the only national museum devoted exclusively to the documentation of African American life, history, and culture. Congress established it in 2003, following decades of efforts to promote and highlight the contributions of African Americans. The Museum has collected more than 36,000 artifacts. It opened to the public on September 24, 2016, as the 19th and newest museum of the Smithsonian Institution.



There are four pillars upon which the NMAAHC stands:

1. It provides an opportunity for those interested in African American culture to explore and revel in this history through interactive exhibitions.
2. It helps all Americans see how their stories, their histories, and their cultures are shaped and informed by global influences.
3. It explores what it means to be an American and share how American values like resiliency, optimism, and spirituality are reflected in African American history and culture.

- It serves as a place of collaboration that reaches beyond Washington, D.C. to engage new audiences and to work with the myriad of museums and educational institutions that have explored and preserved this important history well before this museum was created.

In thinking about the question that began this article, my innermost being is filled with a myriad of deep feelings and emotions! "I am experiencing pride, heightened self-confidence, heightened cultural and ethnic confidence, gratitude to ancestors, adoration of our Creator, strength, anger, sadness and a wellspring of emotions (in the pit of my chest and throat) that is difficult to explain."

Why am I experiencing these feelings and emotions in anticipation of visiting the NMAAHC? As a clinical chaplain, my training and experience thrust me into keen self-awareness and assisting others in digging below their superficial mental, emotional, and spiritual state of mind. My clinical practice not only informs my personal awareness and pastoral care practice, it encourages me to assess my family system, other family systems, social systems, community, ethnic groups, North American society and the world stage in its various deep layers. When I tour the NMAAHC with other colleagues, I expect to gain deeper understanding regarding my personal identity and worldview as an African American woman and to a much larger degree, the identity and worldview of the African American community in North America. How does our past inform our present circumstance? I always intend to refrain from labeling and classifying a people group into one lump classification. Diversity is a constant, even within an ethnic grouping. However, my social study during this tour will focus on how, or if, various social constructs and events which occurred in the African American community throughout history still have a profound effect today.

Given the reality of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, I plan to ask a curator, historian or well-informed tour guide to expound on its influence. The African American slave trade began in 1619 and lasted well into the 19th century over 250 years. What remnants still exist?

What are the remnants from the reality of the "Slave Bible," a Bible where 90% of the Hebrew Scriptures and 50% of the New Testament was left out? These Bibles were given to the slaves who were tasked to preach to other slaves. Missing are chapters and verses thought to encourage slave uprisings. The

remaining portions of the Bible were thought to instill obedience. For many slaves, this was their first exposure to the Bible.

What are the remnants that exist from the reality that birthed the "The Negro Motorist Green Book"? Before the popular 2018 movie "The Green Book", many African Americans in my generation and younger were unaware of this Book's existence. I knew the Southern part of our nation during this time was especially challenging for African Americans. However, it never crossed my mind that a book to inform African Americans where they were welcomed, because there were so many places where they were not, was necessary.

What are the remnants that exist from the reality of the Civil War, the Emancipation Proclamation, Reconstruction, sharecropping, Jim Crow, discrimination in the Armed Forces, the need for the Civil Rights Movement and the various civil rights acts implemented as a result?



I expect to gain from our time at the NMAAHC a more in-depth understanding of how African American history informs the state of African American life and culture today. Our triumphs, our challenges, our collective community conscience with ourselves and others, our faith, our worldview and the utilization of this knowledge to inform our clinical pastoral practice are what I expect to gain.

For more information, visit

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/about/museum>
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uH-tAj4WA2Y>

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WREATH LAYING CEREMONY AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY?

by *Chaplain Fred Tittle, Martinez, CA*

Arlington National Cemetery is a military cemetery located in Arlington County Virginia, across from the Potomac River from Washington DC; Arlington became a National Cemetery on 15 June 1864. Veterans from every war that the United States has been involved in are buried there. The cemetery covers over 624 acres of land and is indeed a very special and sacred place and space for men and women buried there, as well as for family members and friends of the deceased who stop by and visit this historic place.

The Wreath Laying Ceremony is significant, for it allows us to honor and thank all who served in the United States Armed Forces. Although the identity of those at the TOMB of the UNKNOWN is uncertain, we continue to promote and participate in this wreath laying ceremony. Further, throughout the entire cemetery, efforts are made to ensure we never forget the sacrifices that brave women and men made on our behalf, to protect and preserve our freedom.



29th NBCA Annual Training Conference

July 10 -13, 2019

Hyatt Regency - Washington on Capitol Hill

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This Year's Theme:

“Chaplaincy Leadership Training: In the Time of Crisis”

Area Attractions: Arlington National Cemetery - U.S. Capitol Building - Washington Monument
Lincoln Memorial - National Air and Space Museum - National Gallery of Art

You can register @ <https://www.vablackchaplainsconference.com>



African American Perspective



WHEN POLICE HURT INSTEAD OF SERVE

by Chaplain Rev. Elizabeth Putnam, New York, NY



We all see the words, “To Protect and Serve”, but the police do not always serve, and they do not always protect. I had heard of many infamous cases of police violence, including the killing of unarmed people who were simply returning home after a day’s work. It usually happened to people who were Black men, although it did sometimes happen to others. But it is one thing to be horrified and watching it from the distance of a TV screen or a newspaper article and another to be with those directly affected.

I was serving as a chaplain resident at a non-VA hospital in Philadelphia in 2006, when Philadelphia had a spate of shooting incidents. I had seen a few people brought into the trauma bay with bullet wounds, one young man paralyzed in one shooting, another young man killed in the next one. I had sat with a young woman with a minor gunshot wound, if there can truly be such a thing. But then I saw the reality of what happens when police do not have the skills or wherewithal to fulfill their official duties, and they instead create harm.

The first moment I saw the young man they wheeled in that night, something already seemed different with the buzz of the emergency department and the speed at which the medical staff assembled. I remember seeing the branch of a bush stuck in the leg of his jeans, even as they began cutting away all his clothing. His heart had stopped while he was being brought to the hospital. The medical team moved so fast to try to restart his heart and get him ready for surgery; anything to try to save him. I saw them cut him open, so they could send shocks to his heart directly and hoped to get a heartbeat.

I had moved out of the trauma bay, as there were so many team members in there that night, and I became aware of who else was in the emergency departments. I saw so many police officers, all standing and watching. And one of them told the story of how he came to shoot that young man. I did not want to be part of his story, so I went to find the young man’s family. I found his mother and his aunt, and they were so scared for him and so upset because they were the ones who had called the police to try to get their son and nephew help. He had been having some sort of event, where he was threatening and scary to his family. They knew he needed help. The police often respond to domestic incidents or mental health crises, so they called for help.

I only know how they told the story, and how the police officer told the story, but somehow in the end that young man stood with a hammer in a circle of police officers, and when they could not calm him down, one of them opened fire. I saw with his mother and his aunt as the medical team worked to start his heart back to beating and stabilized him so he could be moved to the Operating Room. I sat with them while they told their story of events leading up to the shots from the police sent to investigate the story. I held his mother’s hand while she described how she called for help for her son, and how he was shot by those who came to help.

I later sat with his mother and his aunt in the operating waiting room, in the wee small hours of the night, when the surgeon said their son and nephew had died on the operating table. I sat with them in their crying and their grief, their confusion and their quiet anger. And I know that this has happened to so many other families in the years since, and somehow, someday, we must find a way to ensure this stops happening.

EDUCATION AND LABOR AND THE IMPACT ON MINORITIES

by *Chaplain Rev. Jeffery A. Stallworth, Jackson, MS*

Education and labor are intertwined and these two major issues significantly impact minorities. While education is a valuable tool in the toolbox of labor, the unemployment rate for minorities is higher than the national rate of 4.4 percent. Lack of access to quality education impedes minorities who struggle to achieve the American dream. A labor force with doors closed (shut) to opportunities for minorities is also an impediment.

Minorities must overcome many hurdles to obtain a quality education. One hurdle is a dearth of qualified teachers in public schools. While teachers must pass a state test to enter the teaching profession and become licensed educators, states should also require them to pass tests to remain in the profession. It is not enough that teachers only must take a certain number of courses or hours to maintain their licenses or credentials. Instead, teachers should also continuously pass tests and assessments that measure their skills and abilities to teach well after initial entrance into the teaching profession. It is essential that students, particularly minority students, are taught by top-notch, highly qualified educators.

Combating chronic absenteeism is a hurdle that plays a major role in whether students pass or fail. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, students with fewer absences scored higher in reading and math assessments than students with more absences.

Lack of equity in education is another hurdle. Science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs should not be available only at public schools with a majority white population. Schools should also continue career and technical courses. Vigilance at the local, state and federal levels is needed so that schools in impoverished areas offer the same rigorous, challenging courses as schools in affluent areas.



*Chaplain Rev.
Jeffery A. Stallworth*

Sources: <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/>;
<https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/race-and-ethnicity/2017/>





WHY DIVERSITY MATTERS

by *Chaplain Rev. Jennifer Dukes, Tuskegee, AL*

"It almost seems shameful that we are still grappling with the same old issues of equity and equality, fair wages, social justice, legal fairness and other issue and "ism"; issues that make our stomachs turn, grit our teeth, and even shake our heads or fists at our seemingly blatant disgruntlement with the way human beings are being dishonored for being different." So how does diversity join us at the table and represent the plurality of society, of not just race and gender, but diversity and inclusion of background and mindset?

How wonderful it is to meet someone who has similar values, but a different perspective about how something should be done, or how life should be, that does not necessarily reflect the hegemony. Yes, I said it. We all see it, and think within ourselves, wouldn't it be nice, if "they" could live in my shoes for at least one day and experience how it feels to be me? Hmmm... I can almost feel the cringes while you read and consider the rhetorical question.

Diversity and inclusion matter because it puts in our own faces the prejudices we may have for others. Diversity and inclusion matter because it causes us to grow. Compassion and empathy are the very thing we "preach" to others, but is it what we really live? If we did, then why doesn't our workforce reflect it? Why is change so slow? What are we really afraid of?

So, I challenge you to watch "The Color of Fear" by documentary film director, Lee Muh Wah. There is more than one part, and each address different concerns. Take courage and watch!

Movie trailer link,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvlfRx77ko>.



The Color of Fear (Part One) is an insightful, groundbreaking film about the state of race relations in America as seen through the eyes of eight North American men of Asian, European, Latino and African descent. In a series of intelligent, emotional and dramatic confrontations the men reveal the pain and scars that racism has caused them. What emerges is a deeper sense of understanding and trust. This is the dialogue most of us fear, but hope will happen sometime in our lifetime. (1994, 90 minutes, closed captioned)

COMPLIMENTARY HANDOUTS & DIVERSITY TRAINING RESOURCES FROM STIRFRY SEMINARS & CONSULTING

StirFry Seminars would like to encourage communities to come together and host much-needed diversity dialogues. To facilitate this undertaking, our company is offering a wide selection of complimentary handouts created by Lee Mun Wah, as well as other resources that we hope will support teachers/facilitators/group leaders in carrying out these important discussions. Many of these handouts are reflective of Lee Mun Wah's unique and revolutionary "mindful facilitation" approach. Please feel free to print the handouts out, pass them on, and share the Resources Page widely with others.

https://stirfryseminars.com/resources/request_form.php



JUDGES AND EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL

by Chaplain Rabbi Deborah Schloss, Houston, TX

In Hebrew, one of the 70 names for G-d is *Elohim*, which also means judge. There are other Hebrew names for judge such as *shofet*, *dayyan*, and *palil*. When there are multiple names for someone or something, like Hebrew has for G-d and judge, it illustrates the significance of these concepts.

Equality and justice for ALL was the principle guiding Jewish judges. (See Leviticus 24: 22; Deuteronomy 1:17.) A case involving a *peru ah*, which is the smallest Palestinian coin, should be regarded just as important as a case involving thousands. *Sanhedrin* 8a. Judges could not listen to the arguments of one of the litigants without the other one present, nor must he help either of them in their arguments. Rather, he listened quietly to the presentation of the case by both parties and then made his decision.

In the book of Judges, we learn about a system of judges who will pursue justice for those in need. Also, Deuteronomy 16:19 teaches that the judges and officers should be beyond reproach or personal compromise. Deuteronomy 16:20 issues the familiar instructions "Justice, justice shall you pursue..."

Justice should be pure and impartial. Ideals are clearly hard to realize, but without them we are adrift. As my colleague Rabbi Laurence Kotok explains, "Although the reality is hard to attain, a concept of justice as fair and impartial is a goal that we still embrace, even as we struggle to make it real."

Justice is just as applicable to our private lives as to the judicial sphere. As one pious person once noted, "We were given two eyes: one very powerful for introspection, so we should find within ourselves even our smallest faults; the other very weak, for viewing the faults in others. Only too often we switch their functions." (Love Your Neighbor, Zelig Pliskin, Aish HaTorah Publications, 1977) May we always remember to put this helpful insight into practice, enhancing our own lives as well as those around us!



JUSTICE IN ISLAM

by Chaplain Hossain Mokarram, Washington, DC

According to the Holy Qur'an, social justice is a key component of the Islamic faith. It especially states: *"O' you who have believed, be persistently standing firm in justice, witnesses for Allah...even if it be against yourselves or parents and relatives... Whether one is rich or poor."* [4:135]

The three Abrahamic faiths advocate moral behaviors such as feeding the poor and providing aid for those who are less fortunate, but justice in other mediums is also very heavily encouraged. Islam has a set of morals which are universally accepted in terms of ethics. Feeding the poor, taking care of orphans, providing for those who are unable to support themselves (Handicapped individuals, widows, etc.) and other acts of justice.

Regardless of societal status, justice is to be pursued and delivered for all. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly shuns those who oppress others and states that it is one of the worst sins one can commit. This proclamation against oppressors is one which spurs every Muslim to advocate for justice in whatever form they can. In fact, one of the pillars of Islam is to donate to the poor and needy (It is called "zakat" in Arabic), and even donating to legal funds to help those who are wrongly incarcerated or prosecuted is a valid recipient of zakat.

There are many misconceptions about justice in Islam, mainly due to skewed media representation as well as ignorance. The most common incorrect claim is that sharia law, or Islamic law, is a tyrannical and archaic set of rules. This could not be further from the truth. Sharia law does not have a single book and is not one solidified codex. It is important to note that **only** Muslims should abide by sharia law, it can't be forced upon others. However, one key factor is that the Prophet (Peace be upon him) said that one aspect of Sharia law, is to obey the laws of the land which you reside in, as long as those laws do not compromise your faith. Unfortunately, in every religion there are individuals who misinterpret the religion or wrongly reflect it through their actions. In today's media, there is exclusive coverage of Muslims who commit injustice daily. Nonetheless, steadfast Muslims who follow the true faith are quick to condemn extremists of every faith.



One aspect of social justice which is very important to note is the staunch opposition to racism which Islam has pioneered. In the last sermon from the Prophet Muhammed, He dedicates an entire section to how racism is loathed in the eyes of God. He then goes on to say the only thing which makes an individual superior to another is their morality, piety and God consciousness. In our current living conditions, it is easy to say that racism has disappeared in the U.S. but that could not be further from the truth. There are still remnants of prejudice which run rampant across the country, especially towards our African American brothers and sisters, and it is a mandate from Allah (God), to fight this oppression on all fronts.

The golden rule of treating others as you want to be treated is a good general moral compass in everyday life situations. Justice as perceived through the lens of Islam takes it a step further and instructs us to seek out and quell injustice wherever it is found. I pray that we come closer to freeing those who are oppressed in any and all forms of injustice around the world. Amen.



Clinical Perspective

Stop the Violence

DOMESTIC ABUSE, WOMEN MORTALITY AND GUN VIOLENCE

by Chief Chaplain Rev. Dr. Don D. Fuller, Memphis, TN

I have always been holistically enamored by and spiritually attracted to the wonderful world of social psychology. I've known that within the folds of social psychology, one can find crucial conversational questions that are asked to examine the many ills of Humanity. I've always wanted to be used of God, in an awakening, that would propel human behavior higher.

When I look back at my upbringing in the mid-south, and where I am today, as I stand under the teachings of many 'voices of change' like a Rev. J.L. Davenport, Rev. Dr. Gina M. Stewart, Rev. Dr. Keith Norman, Rev. Alan Bell and many others, my desire to be used of God as a 'voice of change' in human affairs is with me still. That's why I've always held an open heart and a very attentive ear to the questions that social psychology ask. The truth is that at the foundation of that school of thought; Social Psychologists ask questions associated with 'why do we do what we do?'

They ask questions, in researchable ways, to ascertain answers to 'why do we think the way that we think...why do we behave the way that we behave...why do we perceive the way that we perceive?'. It is the hope of social psychologists, that in finding answers, that they would find the ingredients that can lead to behavioral changes. Most often, social psychology, begins their trek with the intriguing question of "Why?"

And, when my mind ponders awhile and my heart sits awhile, with the issues and concerns of Domestic Abuse, Women Mortality and Gun Violence, my own questions also begin with that intriguing word of "Why?" Why do hands that are pledged towards love-forever, so easily turns into fists of love-fatality? Why does one race of women die more than other races of women, associated with the child birthing experience? Why does the cry of gun lobbyists (those who desires no gun control) speak louder and register more than the cry of families of gun victims (those who desires more gun control)?

When we think about how the statistics speak to us, one can agree that at the crux of it all is an ever increasing dysfunction in human behavior. Some spiritualists, naturalists, economists and theologians have raised thoughts from their disciplines, that it's some widespread and undiagnosed sickness that's attributed to those increasing numbers. Some Native American "Story Tellers" say that the cause of these increasing numbers, is because Mother-Earth or (Mother-Nature) herself, is in a period of deep sadness at the loss of Human Connection.

I wonder would the social psychologists consider asking questions directed to ascertain enlightening answers for "why this sickness or these negatives with Humanity and Mother-Earth"? Furthermore, I wonder would the social psychologist consider asking suitable questions to ascertain suitable answers to "How does God Almighty feel about this dysfunction in human behavior?"



What’s left for humanity to do when humanity destroys humanity towards revolving extinction? What can we do today to prevent extinction for tomorrow? Considering the unanswered questions associated with the title of this writ, I’m reminded of some age-old wisdom. I believe the old mantras and proverbs of our “Elders” would do us well to remember.

As an answer to violence, I remember the wisdom told to us “Just walk away.” As an answer to domestic situations, I remember the wisdom told to us “A REAL MAN, should NEVER hit a woman!” As an answer to gun control, I remember the wisdom told in our ears and hearts, “Don’t settle things with a gun, that can be settled with a kind word.” Do you remember those wisdom filled words told to you by your elders? Here’s one last question: “Why don’t you pass them along?”

MEANINGLESSNESS AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

by Chief Chaplain (Fr) Toney Mensah, Bronx, NY

Dr. Keita Franklin, Director, Defense Suicide Prevention Office, wrote in 2017; “There’s no simple reason why suicide occurs, nor a single approach for preventing it. Suicide is a complex issue with biological, cultural, economic, psychological, and social factors”.

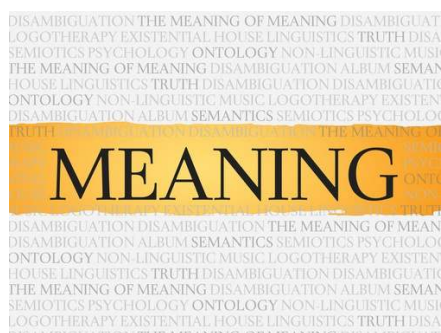


Indeed, suicide is a mystery. A person spends their life protecting his/her life and then goes and takes his/her own life. When we see someone with suicidal ideations we may not see them again. How are we to treat them?

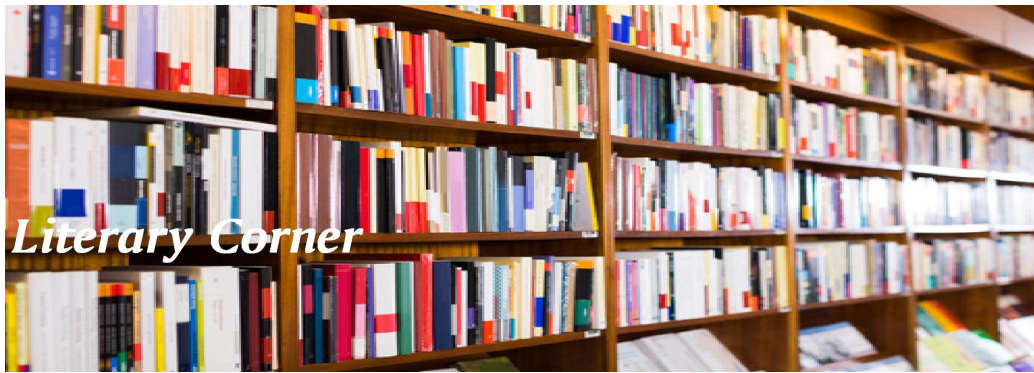
Viktor Emil Frankl (1905 -1997) received his MD and PhD degrees from the University of Vienna where he studied psychiatry and neurology, focusing on the areas of suicide and depression. As a medical student in the late 20s, he successfully counseled high school students to virtually eliminate suicide. Because of these accomplishments, he was asked to head the suicide prevention department of the General Hospital in Vienna. He developed the theory of Logotherapy and Existential analysis which is based on the premise that the human person is motivated by a “will to meaning,” an inner pull to find a meaning in life. The main idea behind logotherapy is “that lack of meaning is the chief source of stress as well as anxiety. Logotherapy aids the patients to reach the meaning of life. In other words, logotherapy is a type of psychotherapy that believes that the lack of meaning causes mental health issues, so it attempts to help people find meaning in order to help solve their problems.

When looking at the effectiveness of logotherapy (used as a supplement not as a substitute) in treating suicidal risk, we can start by looking at Frankl himself. When the manuscript of Frankl’s first book (Man’s Search for Meaning) was taken from him, he decided he would live his book. He would become a living example of one who, having a why to live for can bear any how. Viktor Frankl survived four (4) concentrations camps in Auschwitz.

As a human being, you can get a face-lift. You can change your habits. You can choose any number of things you want to do with your life. But you cannot *not* be who you are. Responsibility is built in to the human condition. Responsibility means that what you do matters. What you do has a consequence. What you do impacts others. As a person of the Christian faith, I believe that my responsibility as a Christian is the same as my responsibility as a human being; and I believe that if I were to live in accordance with human responsibility, I would be a more perfect Christian.



Logotherapy, as a meaning-centered therapy also posits that, human beings are the only meaning-seeking and meaning-making species on planet Earth. Everything about us is related to meaning- how we think, how we see ourselves, how we attribute meaning to different life situations, the language we speak and the cultural values we hold are all aspects of our meaning-making systems. Therefore, meaning is all we have, and relationships is all we need. If we can help people better understand themselves, their world and their predicaments, they will be able to cope better.



Review

WHO IS REVEREND DON PIPER? (90 MINUTES IN HEAVEN)

by Chief Chaplain Rev. Dr. Don D. Fuller
Memphis, TN

[I died on January 18, 1989. Paramedics reached the scene of the accident within minutes. They found no pulse and declared me dead. They covered me with a tarp so that onlookers wouldn't stare at me while they attended to the injuries of the others. I was completely unaware of the paramedics or anyone else around me.

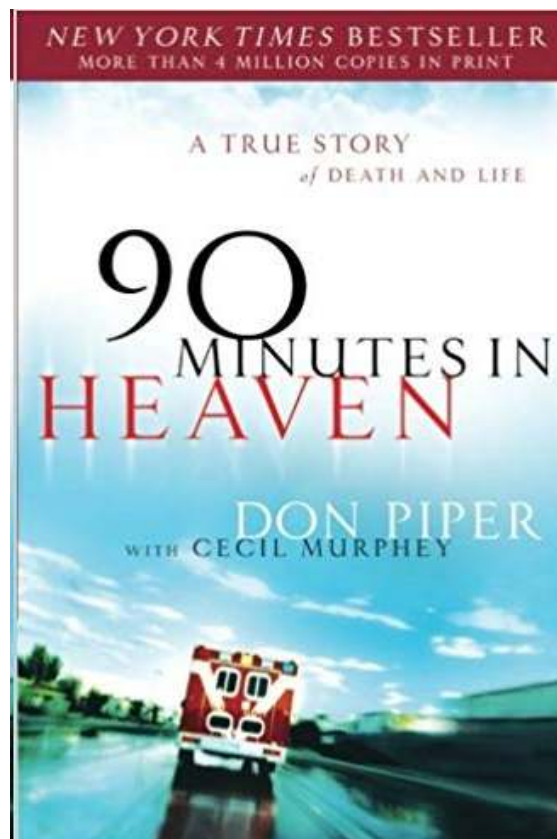
Immediately after I died, I went straight to heaven. While I was in heaven, a Baptist preacher came on the accident scene. Even though he knew I was dead, he rushed to my lifeless body and prayed for me. Despite the scoffing of the Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), he refused to stop praying. At least ninety minutes after the EMTs pronounced me dead, God answered that man's prayers. I returned to earth. This is my story.]

This short excerpt from the "Prologue" of the book "90 Minutes in Heaven," cannot adequately give due justice to the story of Reverend Don Piper. For I find the encounters surrounding the evening of his "fatal" (yes fatal) car crash, to be so awe-spoken as pertaining to the issues of 'death and dying' that one must read the entire book. To some, the awe-spoken encounters found in the book, will provide further Theological conversations, confirming their positions on Miracles, Death, Dying and Heaven. And to others those same encounters combined with their reading of Rev. Piper's book, can be found as bold and controversial. And I really don't want to go in that direction.

I want to bring some attention, not just to Rev. Piper, but also to Rev. Dick Onarecker; the one who felt the need to pray for Rev. Piper. In the book, Rev.

Piper recalls the words of Rev. Onarecker; "God just impressed on me, that I need to pray for this man." Again, Rev. Piper was already pronounced dead, and was covered up in a plastic tarp; awaiting for the Medical Examiners. When Rev. Onarecker and his wife, who had witnessed the accident, came up to the EMTs and forced his urgency upon them to pray for Rev. Piper, Rev. Onarecker is recorded saying, "I felt compelled to pray that you not only live, but have no internal injuries."

The boldness of 'compelling prayer' is the focal point that speaks to me even more. On one side stands the ability of a miraculous and Awesome God. And on the other side stands a person who was bold enough to exhibit a 'compelling prayer' in that Awesome God. In times like today, that's a good stance for us all. Don't you think?



WHO IS DR. KENYATTA R. GILBERT?

by *Chaplain Elder Sherri Headen*
Indianapolis, IN

Dr. K.A. Slayton Ministries JUST TALK ...The Reverend Dr. Kenyatta R. Gilbert is Associate Professor of Homiletics at the Howard University School of Divinity (HUSD). He earned his B.A. in Political Science from Baylor University and both his M.Div. and Ph.D. in Practical Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary. Dr. Gilbert specializes in the history, theory, and practice of African American preaching. His research focuses on the theology and rhetoric of prophetic preaching, African American religion, hermeneutical theory, and constructive practical theology. He is author of *The Journey and Promise of African American Preaching* (Fortress 2011); *A Pursued Justice: Black Preaching from the Great Migration to Civil Rights* (Baylor 2016); and, *Exodus Preaching: Craft Sermon about Justice and Hope* (Abingdon 2018).

Dr. Gilbert is the recipient of Louisville Institute's First Book Grant for Minority Scholars, Howard University's Emerging Scholar Award, and Moorland-Spangarn Research Center's Andrew Mellon Summer Fellowship. He served as faculty collaborator for HUSD's *Equipping the Saints: Promising Practices in Black Congregational Life* research project, a three-year national study funded by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Dr. Gilbert is an ordained Baptist minister and founder of *The Preaching Project: Restoring Communities through Spoken Word* (www.thepreachingproject.org), a website ministry promoting the nurture of the preaching life of ministers serving African American churches and communities. He has served congregations in Maryland, Texas, New York, New Jersey, and Kenya. Dr. Gilbert is married to Dr. Allison Blow Gilbert, a pediatrician. The Gilberts have three daughters: Olivia Copeland, Ella Jane, and Ava Sage.



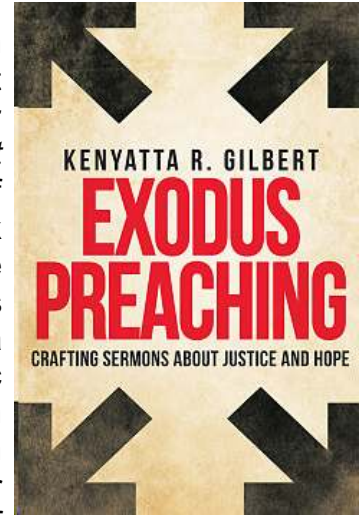
Dr. K.A. Slayton Ministries JUSTTALK Episode 1: Interview with Rev. Dr. Kenyatta R. Gilbert

Part 1: *Exodus Preaching: Crafting Sermons about Justice and Hope*

After listening to this interview with Dr. Gilbert, I feel more empowered in preaching and writing about

the Gospel within my cultural context! Throughout my time in ministry, the Holy Spirit guides me in writing or preaching truth to power from the African American experience. However, as Dr. Gilbert expounded in this interview, anyone who reads or hears the message, no matter their demographic, can grasp the call to justice if their hearts are open to it.

In this interview Dr. Gilbert expounded in response to questions about his book *Exodus Preaching: Crafting Sermons about Justice and Hope*. "A lot of the preaching in Black churches today is ...more talk about prosperity and less about justice... There is a need for the prophetic Dimension of Christian preaching... If what I am writing serves a greater purpose to the body of



Christ, it must be bathed in prayer... It is intentionally context specific in its orientation, because I believe each of us are historically embedded in the culture that has shaped us and our future... I write on experiences internal to black life, but I believe my own contextualized experiences can be pedagogical for other traditions and other folks... To honor and own one's culture as a preacher is critical to preaching an authentic message to the people for a particular time and a particular place."

From the book *Exodus Preaching: Crafting Sermons about Justice and Hope* is the expectation, "Discerning other specific assignments as proclaimers of the Gospel is something preachers should be able to do." Dr. Gilbert stated the following:

"Preachers ought to seek to discern their assignment based on the moral authority that they can bring to that assignment... There are particular issues, that I feel like, based on the suffering life I've had, I ought to be able to speak about adversity, I ought to be able to speak about being dehumanized in a culture that could care less about me based on the color of my skin. So, what I have a moral authority to preach is largely based on my lived experience."

Follow this link

<https://www.drkaslayton.com/2018/05/18/eps1-kenyatta-gilbert>



Sermonette -

THE ROLE OF THE CHAPLAIN IN THE 21ST CENTURY

by Rev. Karen Markland, Tulsa, OK

The 21st century is the era in which we currently live. It is characterized as a time of “freedom” and technological advancement. Many live without moral restraint and ethical boundaries. Just about anything and everything is acceptable. Our food is genetically engineered, and without hesitation we devour it all. If we are not happy with the way we look or with our gender, with scientific and technological advancements we change it at the drop of a hat. Legal systems consent to the rich becoming richer via means of extortion from the “poor”, under the guise of sales and marketing, via financial institutions et. al. While we claim to have made strides in scientific and technological advancement, chronic disease is at an all-time high. Depression and anxiety are the order of the day and suicide and euthanasia have become the new way of making our exit from this life.

A chaplain is one who has received a special call to ministry. He or she is either a teacher, caregiver, a witness of his or her faith and certainly an advocate for people. Chaplains generally minister to a group of people of many different religions or no religion at all. They may also represent many different cultural identities. Chaplains are given authority by the institution that employs them in addition to the ecclesiastical body that endorses them. They minister in the “marketplace” i.e. places not usually considered “religious.” I write from a Biblical Christian worldview hence from this perspective the role of a chaplain ought to be pastoral, prophetic and priestly – even among those who profess no religion.

The chief of all chaplains was Jesus Christ. Most of His ministry was done outside of the walls of the synagogue. He ministered on the seashore, on mountains, at dinner tables and along roads that He walked. He ministered across socio-cultural and economic groups. He mingled with those who were ostracized – “sinners”, tax collectors’, women, prostitutes, lepers, half breed Samaritans, Gentiles and Roman soldiers. Twenty First Century chaplains ought to follow Jesus example of cross-cultural ministry without casting judgment. Jesus had an agenda without having an agenda. While Jesus came to earth on an ultimate mission to redeem humanity from a lost eternity, his day to day dealings was that of a servant without an agenda. He met people where they were and responded accordingly to their request. When he was summoned by blind Bartimaeus, He asked, “What would you like me to do for you?” He met a woman at the well – and not just any woman. She was a half breed Samaritan prostitute. He engaged her in conversation. He asked her for a drink of water – knowing full well where He was taking the conversation. Here He seamlessly entered her space without casting judgment. Using the gift of discernment of spirits or word of knowledge, He dug a little deeper into her situation by asking her to call her husband – knowing full well that she had no husband. He did not accuse her. He did not call her out. He did not point the finger. Instead, Jesus impacted this woman’s life in such a profound way by imparting the kingdom of heaven without proselytizing. And so, it ought to be with the 21st century chaplain.



WHY JOIN THE VA NATIONAL BLACK CHAPLAINS ASSOCIATION?

by Chaplain Rev. Joao Teixeira, New Haven, CT



Chaplain Rev. Joao Teixeira

My name is Joao Teixeira. I am currently a Mental Health Chaplain Fellow at VA Connecticut Healthcare System in West Haven, CT. I recently joined the VA National Black Chaplains Association after having read some articles in its newsletter titled, *The Capsule*. I was intrigued by the diverse perspectives of the articles. When considering the unique issues of a diverse Black community, a fuller picture of the VA is drawn. Reading *The Capsule* made me realize how diverse the VA really is.

I joined the National Black Chaplains Association because I needed support as a Black man, regardless of my national origin (*which for me are the Cape Verde Islands – a country positioned off the north west coast of the continent of Africa*). I have not interacted with many people of African descent in professional positions during my fellowship. The people who I have met with are all white and have a view of things from a perspective that I cannot relate to – a privileged perspective.

Another reason why I joined the VA National Black Chaplains Association is because it is an inclusive organization. The fact that this organization is welcoming to people of all races and ethnic backgrounds speaks volumes about what type of organization it is. I can think of the many groups that I have been excluded from on the basis of my race or national origin. I believe that people who open their doors to everyone, are people who would truly walk with people from all walks of life on their life's journey.

As a person who is interested in becoming a full-time and permanent VA Chaplain, I needed to seek out an organization that actively engages its members in different endeavors, reaching out to the community at large to educate people about the VA, in recruiting more chaplains, and also seeks to ensure that the "playing field" for Black chaplains is leveled. The Black Chaplains Association encompasses all the above-mentioned attributes.

I joined the organization because I believed that I would receive the support that I needed as a man of African descent based on what I outlined above. It is imperative for me to be part of a support network during these last few months of my CPE Fellowship. I have many questions about the VA as I discern my call to join the VA as a full-time chaplain. Therefore, I will need to contact the brothers and sisters of the VA National Black Chaplains Association for help in answering my questions, or to seek prayer, suggestions, or a listening ear during this critical time. I am grateful that since they are chaplains, I can also anticipate that active-listening and a non-judgmental ministry of presence will be present during our meetings.





If you have been blessed by the content of this publication and would like to see it reach more people, please consider making a donation to the National Black Chaplains Association.

We are grateful for your support and look forward to helping more people.

I would like to support the vision of the VA National Black Chaplains Association with a donation of:

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Your tax-deductible donation will benefit the mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs National Black Chaplains Association; to strengthen the effectiveness of not only African American chaplains, but to all other chaplains of ethnic groups, to assist in the recruitment and retention not only of African American chaplains but to all other chaplains of ethnic groups, and to foster the education, growth and development of all federally employed chaplains and professional allies.

Why Donate to the NBCA?

- ▶ To help bridge the gap and celebrate all race relationships.
- ▶ To heal one's view of self, others, and how we are uniquely tied to each other no matter our family of origins.
- ▶ To appreciate and celebrate cultural diversity.
- ▶ To recruit writers and new members from every sector of the globe.
- ▶ To inspire patients, veterans, families, chaplains, and all others with hope, love, and joy and a determination to make a difference and a contribution in the earth.

The Purpose of Donations

- ▶ To broaden the multicultural perspective because everyone is important and has something beneficial to offer.
- ▶ To support the upward mobility efforts of all Chaplains.
- ▶ To strengthen the Executive Board and their committees to plan, organize, train, teach, and host Annual Conferences.

How Will Donations Be Used?

- ▶ To develop training for Chaplains and non-Chaplains to effectively tackle issues together such as the Opioid crisis, MST, women's issues, and medical and health issues that impact everyone.
- ▶ To educate and network with churches and other organizations or professionals that desire to work with the NBCA to make their communities better, especially those with veterans.
- ▶ To sponsor those individuals who have a financial hardship to conferences hosted by the NBCA.

What is the Impact of Donation?

- ▶ The ability to change lives through knowledge and by example.
- ▶ The ability to learn from others and even better oneself in the process.