



# GRACE NOTES

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, 46 WOODLAND STREET, HARTFORD, CT 06105 860-527-7792

**JUNE 2023**

## TO LISTEN... THE FIRST STEP

### Listening Poem

When I ask you to listen to me,  
And you start giving me advice,  
You have not done what I asked.

When I ask you to listen to me,  
And you begin to tell me why I  
shouldn't feel that way,  
You are trampling on my feelings.

When I ask you to listen to me,  
And you feel you have to do something  
to solve my problems,  
You have failed me, strange as that  
may seem.

Listen.  
All that I ask is that you listen,  
Not talk or do, just hear me

When you do something for me that I can  
And need to do for myself,  
You contribute to my fear and inadequacy.

But, when you accept as a simple fact  
That I do feel what I feel, no matter how irrational,  
Then I can quit trying to convince you and  
Get about this business of understanding what's behind them.

So, please listen and just hear me.  
And, if you want to talk,  
Wait a minute for your turn,  
And I will listen to you.

Author Unknown

The wars being conducted or threatened throughout the world are growing and expanding. The violence is deafening. On Memorial Day I counted 23 "hot spots" world-wide, not mentioning our own country and its mass killings, rampant gun violence, where the greatest health risk for children is being killed in school. In all of these places we remember and hear the witness of the innocents saying, "no." In the face of death, imprisonment, and other unspeakable things, people still cry out. Israel, Palestine, Ukraine, Sudan, Iran, Nigeria, Taiwan, Iraq, Yemen, Myanmar, Nigeria, Mexico, Venezuela, Pakistan, India.... and the United States.

In our country this week we have remembered those who gave their lives for our country at

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war, yet how many of these endeavors have truly ended, and what have we achieved? In my lifetime, I can name one. The Second World War. How many others lasted for years and years and accomplished little purpose and cost lives, so many lives. Our service men and women, but so many more of the people we were at war with. Was it for oil? Was it to ensure our dominance? To make the world take notice?

Their toll listed on stone, remembered with statues, and fill cemeteries with flags and our hearts with thanks to those and their families who made the ultimate sacrifice. President Eisenhower, as president, gave warning to the American people about the growing military-industrial complex. Wherever we have gone in the world, we have learned of American weapons being used in conflicts. Our rifles, our bullets, our artillery, our equipment. We have not only grown the largest military apparatus in the world, but we have also armed the world.

In recent years, these commercial organizations came together, reducing competition and now holding our own country and military hostage to outrageous prices, along with inadequate parts, ensuring that the profitability of equipment and parts would make them enormous profits. Those profits are then often used to support the political parties that support militarization. Or the NRA

What is the meaning of all this, as our country is literally more divided than during the Civil War. Racism is rampant, and those who want wealth, power and guns have us confused, frightened and fearful.

It is about listening. In our ardor to make and win a point, we can fail to honor and respect the people we want to help, and/or the people who are working together to try and help them. I witness this at Grace, and I have seen it in so many other places.

We're so ardent about our own points of view and deep beliefs about what needs to be done, we can fail to truly hear... and we have lost the ability to listen. We do not keep people in the loop, including those who are trying to help just as we are. Read the "Listening Poem" once again and reflect on how you have done that.

The things that are most important to you in your effort to help in the change that is needed will not get you there with disrespect, whispers to certain people about others, and planning to get things done without conversations, without peaceful discussions, and open listening.

Our way of life is truly being threatened and our ideas about each other are as important as our concerns about those suffering, and those in power who are taking advantage. Unity is in the Holy Trinity, our service on Sunday on the Day of Pentecost was a day of joy and wonder.

May we find ways to interact with each other without worsening the circumstances we are all trying to change. Love is where it is. Not by lip service, but genuine love.



# TODAY I WILL LISTEN

by Marva Shand-McIntosh

Today I will listen  
Without interrupting  
Without prejudging  
Without second-guessing  
Without gazing  
Without rehearsing  
Without discounting  
Without filtering  
Without correcting  
Without contradicting  
Today I will just listen

Today I will listen  
With attention  
With humility  
With respect  
With patience  
With understanding  
With awe  
With gladness  
With empathy  
With warmth  
With gratitude  
With reverence  
Today I will just listen.

I love to Listen Day, May 16th  
Copyright 2007

## PASTOR'S MESSAGE – HOW HEALTHY CLEANING UP CAN BE!

The past is a great place to inform the present, even when you think all you're doing is cleaning out your office. Many of you have been engaged in cleaning up one part or other of our church, so I was feeling guilty because my "office", which has not been used heavily of late, was out of control... a real mess.

I was afraid that I was not offering a model for others to follow, as other spaces in the church are not exactly what you would call neat, clean and well organized. Seven hours on a Saturday, after spending several hours on a Friday, got me MOSTLY through it.

Besides filth, yes, filth, I also found some remarkable gems that the church and I now celebrate having! I found books, booklets, materials, and lots of Bibles. Bibles of all shapes, sizes, colors, and ages. Hymnals that pre-date my birth, never mind my time at Grace. In fact, I found a treasure trove of Parochial Reports dating back to 1894. By the way they were from the predecessor churches to Grace.

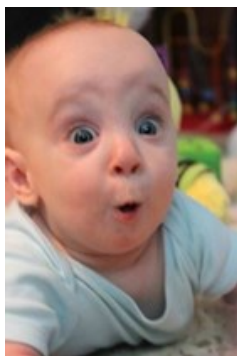
I found Guenther's little notebooks with the attendance at the church every Sunday going back decades. I found gifts never given, photographs dating back to black and white, and proof positive that this church has long been a community of diverse people. Someone told me, and it wasn't Dale, that his mother drove into Hartford inviting people to the predecessor churches, welcoming people of color into a church of caring and loving.

I found many things that I have simply asked Nilda to go through and see if she might be able to use them, or to check with others to see if they might find them helpful. A couple of copies of Grace Notes before my time, and so much that directed me to think about my time at Grace and truly how short 10 years have been or will be.

I also found a large number of pictures of the old days at Grace with many of you pictured but at a much younger age. What this affirmed to me was how much I love being with you all, and trying to be a part of this place of history and love, fun and sadness, hope and happiness.

As we enter the summer months may you enjoy some time with family and friends and remember that we ain't done yet! In fact, I have this idea about using the Gazebo as a place for Bible Study... and am talking with people who might like to lead it... I would love for us to offer some programs for children that might help them learn about our faith... wouldn't it be great if we could draw some younger people into our midst?

Synod Assembly is coming soon, and we will have a pretty good sized contingent there. Bless you as the seasons change once more.





# A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE DEBT CEILING DEBATE

by Lauren W. Reliford  
MAY 25, 2023

SOJOURNERS

SojoMail



As lawmakers on Capitol Hill argue about the national debt, the Bible verse that's been on my mind is Proverbs 3:27: "Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act."

When it comes to the debt ceiling, or the legal limit the U.S. is allowed to borrow to pay back our expenses, people aren't really getting the truth. According to House Republicans, it's only "fiscally responsible" to raise the debt ceiling alongside federal spending cuts to federal programs that benefit low-income Americans.

Of course, these legislators wouldn't say they're targeting poor folks; instead, they talk about the importance of adding increased "work requirements" to social safety net programs so that people get "back to work" (never mind that the U.S. already has the **lowest unemployment rate** in 53 years). In fact, both **Republicans** and some **Democrats** have long claimed that giving money to low-income Americans through programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which helps millions of low-income households buy food, without requiring them to work discourages them from getting jobs and creates a burden for U.S. taxpayers.

But here's the thing: That's not true.

First things first: When we are talking about raising the debt limit, we are not talking about future spending, but rather spending the U.S. has already committed to, including things like veterans' services; Meals on Wheels and other programs that older adults rely on; economic support like SNAP or Medicaid; and family support that includes child care, food pantries, and the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infant, and Children (WIC). We have already incurred these bills for services and programs that the government is legally bound to pay for. If members of Congress are concerned about future federal spending levels, they can use the regular process — known on Capitol Hill as budgeting and appropriations — which happens every year.

Next, if legislators are genuinely interested in increasing employment, adding more requirements to social safety net programs is not the way to do it. A **growing body of research** shows that adding more work rules to programs will likely have no impact on employment. One recent study, based on data in Virginia, **found** that adding work requirements for people who receive SNAP did not boost recipients' likelihood of employment or increased income. In fact, according to **Congressional Budget Office**, when factoring in the cost of implementing new requirements on programs like SNAP, Medicaid, or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), it wasn't clear whether new requirements would save the U.S. much money — and could wind up costing the U.S. more money than it saved. That same report also stated: "By removing families from TANF before they found work—and by deterring families from entering the program—work requirements have probably played a role in increasing the number of families in deep poverty."

But regardless of whether the added requirements would actually save money, there's one place where experts agree that the program would succeed: kicking out a large number of poor people from the program.

To be clear: Ensuring that all people in the U.S. have good jobs that provide a living wage is vital to our economic success. But while some may think that folks who benefit from these programs are lazy and don't want to work, the truth is that the majority of participants in

## A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE DEBT CEILING DEBATE (continued from page 5)

programs such as SNAP and Medicaid already do work. The problem is that they are often employed in low-paying jobs that don't provide a living wage. To me, this calls to mind James 5:4: "The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you."

As a person of faith, I'm angry and frustrated at the hypocrisy of this situation. Under former President Donald Trump, legislators agreed to raise the debt ceiling three times with bipartisan support. This included increases that followed Republican-supported tax credits and tax cuts benefiting wealthy people, which cost the U.S. an estimated \$1.9 trillion in revenue. In fact, raising the debt ceiling has often been bipartisan in our political history. Congress has acted 78 times to either raise, extend, or revise the debt limit; 29 times under Democratic presidents and 49 times under Republicans. But now, many of these same legislators who supported previous action have decided they will not raise the debt ceiling unless they can also secure spending cuts.

How can they justify, on moral grounds, their demands to hurt millions of people in the name of "savings" when that same standard did not apply previously? Further, why are we not asking for those who are accumulating wealth and power at a gluttonous pace (I mean, did *you* see your wealth grow by 62 percent during the pandemic like billionaires did?) to pay their fair share in taxes? What do you think Jesus would say to a group of individuals whose wealth grew as much during two years of the pandemic as they did in the previous 23? The Jesus that I know was livid that the wealthy allowed their consumption to displace God in their lives. The Jesus I know told a parable about rich man who was warned: "Son, remember that during your lifetime you had everything you wanted, and Lazarus had nothing. So now he is here being comforted, and you are in anguish" (Luke 16:25).

If Congress does not raise the debt ceiling by June 1, the U.S. will default on its loans and the consequences will be devastating, including higher interest rates for outstanding U.S. debt and global financial crisis. Democratic legislators say a default could also result in significant losses in retirement savings, veteran benefits, Social Security checks, and jobs.

In this perilous moment, now is not the time for political games that only serve people whose lives are unencumbered by daily worries of how to pay bills, where the next meal is coming from, or managing chronic health conditions without adequate access to health care. The solution is clear: We need to raise the debt ceiling and then work on a budget that looks for meaningful revenue raisers by addressing the extreme disparities in our tax code instead of asking the poor and working poor to subsidize our economy.

President Joe Biden must stay true to his previous promises — which I've heard some policy advocates refer to as the "Biden Principle" — to reject policies that would increase poverty, cut food assistance, and health care, principles that echo Matthew 25 and the injunction of the biblical prophets to protect widows, orphans, migrants, and people living in poverty.

Proverbs instructs us not to withhold good when it is in our power to act. And for people of faith and conscience, now is the moment to demand that Biden and Congress reject cuts to vital programs that will help working families afford their basic needs. Slashing the social safety net and disinvesting in programs that help children, families, and students thrive creates a hierarchy of humanity that is counter to our shared faith values.

We must be a nation that does not accept suffering as a normal part of the human condition because we know that suffering breaks the heart of God. If we are going to lead by faith, then we need to lead the war against poverty, not start a war on the poor disguised as an attempt to

reduce our growing deficit. We cannot withhold good.

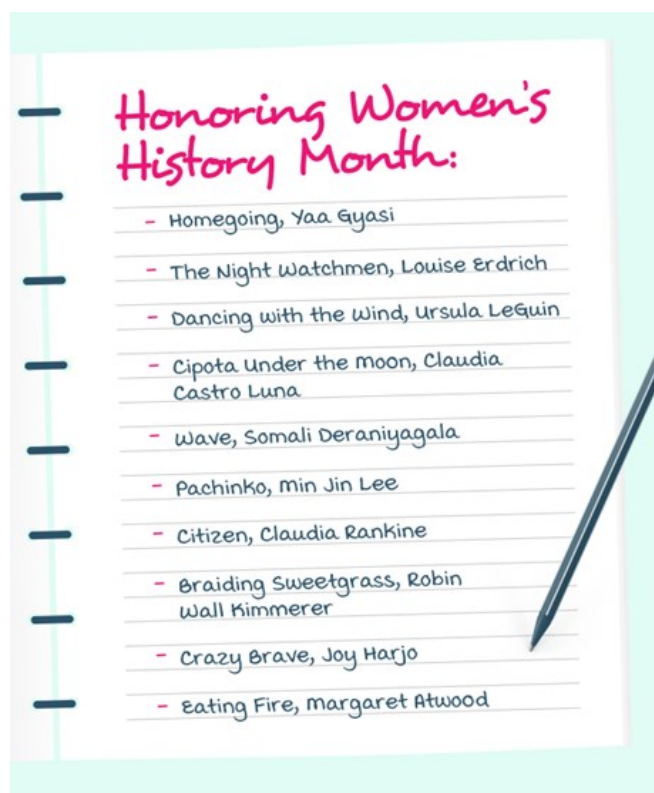
*To learn more about the debt ceiling and what it means for people of faith, SojoAction, The Maiden Group, and Friends Committee on National Legislation-Education Fund **held a webinar discussion** featuring remarks from Sen. Rev. Raphael Warnock.*



Lauren W. Reliford, MSW, is political director at Sojourners.

## WHO RUNS THE WORLD? GIRLS!

*Editor's Note: even though it isn't Women's History month, we thought this booklist was still relevant.*



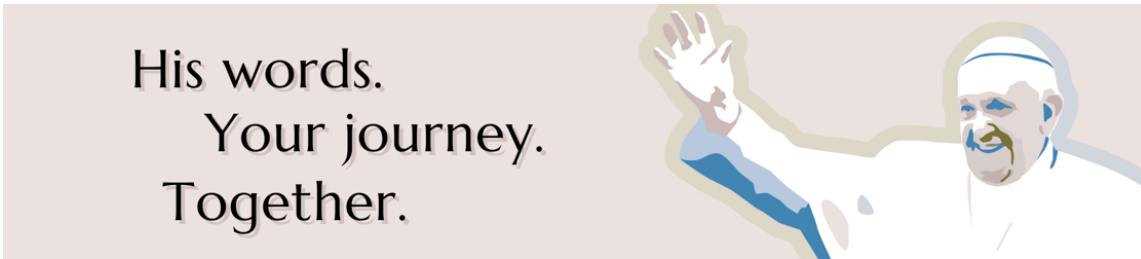
To every woman, girl, and ally reading this message, there is something we can never forget. **We are not alone in this work and we never have been.** That's why I decided to share a list of my favorite books written by an incredible group of women. I hope you can find truth and inspiration in their stories as I have:

The struggle for true equality has no time limit, and our movement isn't going anywhere. We have suffered attacks on our reproductive rights, on trans women and girls, and continue to face absurd pay inequity and discrimination. But we will not stop fighting. **History is on our side.**

I hope you enjoy my book recommendations and you'll stay in this fight with us, not just this month but every single day.

In solidarity, Pramila Jayapal

## POPE'S MESSAGE



**MONDAY MAY 22nd, 2023**

**“If we find ourselves in a moment of trial, the Holy Spirit consoles us, bringing us God’s pardon and strength. And when he places our errors before us and corrects us, he does so gently – there is always the timbre of tenderness and the warmth of love in his voice that speaks to the heart.”**

*Pope Francis*

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### **THE LEFT NEEDS A SPIRITUAL RENAISSANCE. SO DOES AMERICA.**

by Chris Murphy and Ian Marcus Corbin



...the op-ed Senator Murphy recently published in the Daily Beast with a philosopher at Harvard Medical School.

Throw a rock down a busy street and chances are you won’t hit a single American who feels good about the state of American political dialogue.

Those of us on the left can choose to take comfort in a sense of relative innocence, as the demagoguery and divisiveness on the right rise to a fever pitch. But scratch the surface and you will find that nearly everyone, of whatever party, feels an emptiness—a soullessness—to our shared political life.

As we brace ourselves for an election season that threatens to be even more fractious, bombastic, and incoherent than our last one, the left cannot, and should not, simply count on the continued meltdown of the right.

The deep truth is that American life needs a radical reframe, one that will require more than smart policy proposals, vague promises of growth, or even thundering denunciations of our opponents. If we’re going to pull out of this national nosedive, left politics needs a spiritual renaissance.

For approximately 40 years, Americans across the spectrum have been working within a picture of society that is broadly known as neoliberalism. In its simplest formulation, neoliberalism defines the good society as a level playing field where everyone is invited to compete for the scarce commodities of status and wealth, regardless of race, religion, sexual orientation, etc.

“The market”—fetishized by neoliberals as the just and ethical arbiter of all things—decides the outcomes, meaning the winners fully deserve their winnings, and the losers their losses. In the interest of basic decency and stability, society may be willing to subsidize the lives of the poor, but only grudgingly, and with plenty of strings attached. Near blind faith is vested in



## THE LEFT NEEDS A SPIRITUAL RENAISSANCE. SO DOES AMERICA.

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innovators and technocrats, who we desperately hope can engineer us into a better reality. But it is becoming undeniable, in 2023, that a great deal of this clever engineering is only serving to sow division, isolation, and anxiety.

The emptiness so many Americans feel is related to a public life stubbornly grounded in this failed neoliberal consensus, which tacitly instructs us that consumerism, wealth accumulation, and individual achievement are the main paths to happiness.

It is impossible to be happy and fulfilled without a certain degree of financial security. Economic inequality is a plague that undermines our social bonds and damages our national psyche. Prosperity can allow us to be more generous and creative, social goods that are difficult to contemplate when you're struggling for basic survival. But pursuit of material gain simply for the sake of material gain rarely brings fulfillment.



Americans do want a firm economic floor that guarantees everyone access to the basic necessities of life, but they also want our politics to be organized around the question of what actually makes a society good. This is why we need spirituality; at its core, it is an attempt to ask and answer deep, fundamental questions about the world, the self, and society.

Most versions of spirituality, of whatever tradition, tell us that what really matters is goodness, compassion, harmony with nature, self-discipline, mindfulness, holiness, the virtues, etc.—rather than just money and power. Importantly, these spiritual values are not zero-sum objects of competition. They are common goods—the compassion of my neighbor will tend to make me more compassionate, too.

A spiritual vision can show us that we are not enemies, but indispensable coworkers in this life. Not coincidentally, some of the most revered progressive leaders of the last century—the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Cesar Chavez, and Robert F. Kennedy— all embraced a mode of politics that was deeply rooted in explicit spirituality: the pursuit of something more than individual material reward.

King rooted all of his advocacy from his perspective as a Baptist preacher; Kennedy and Chavez grounded their passionate campaigns for justice in their Catholicism, and, of course, there is no way to separate Gandhi's liberation politics from his Hinduism. Theirs was a politics imbued with an innate and insatiable hunger for universal justice and solidarity, grounded in a deep spiritual vision—the kind of thing that one might be willing to live for, or even die for.

New visions of this kind will be key to our success, as we live through the painful denouement of neoliberalism. A transition of this magnitude requires the ability to step outside of conventional assumptions, to risk catastrophic failure, to weather wide disapproval and hostility, and to assemble new coalitions of solidarity that transcend our ossified factions.



These abilities are uniquely facilitated by the possession of a spiritual vision.

This is what allowed MLK and Chavez to call not for inter-tribal warfare, but the creation of a universal, trans-racial “beloved community.” It allowed Gandhi to forsake the trappings of wealth and power, and set an example of

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non-violent “soul-power” that compelled the British to withdraw from their vast, lucrative holdings in India. It motivated Chavez to fast for 25 days, in order to resist the hatred he sensed on both sides of the dispute between migrant laborers and moneyed agriculturalists. It allowed RFK to see and communicate the common humanity, suffering and aspiration that united poor blacks and whites with destitute Native Americans. Kennedy’s presidential campaign lasted only a few short months, but in that time he was able to cobble together a geographically broad, cross-ideological, multi-ethnic coalition that is virtually unimaginable for Democratic politicians today.

Today, alas, talk of spirituality is risky on the American left.

The Republican Party has long branded itself as the party of family values, community, faith, and tradition—and the political coalition that helped Ronald Reagan inaugurate a four-decade neoliberal consensus married pro-business, anti-regulation, supply-side ideology with openly political evangelical Protestantism.

Democrats have differentiated themselves by doubling down on tolerance, separating religion from public life, and reinforcing ostensibly secular, humanist notions of fairness, and justice. Those are important values and worth fighting for, but the left is missing an opportunity to ground this work in a generous, inclusive, galvanizing spiritual vision.

This kind of grounding could help attract many unlikely new partners to the left.

Donald Trump stumbled upon the broad dissatisfaction with neoliberalism, and his attacks on global trade and political conventions lit a fire under disaffected voters who had given up hope that any presidential candidate would ever contest the neoliberal consensus. But Trump’s critique was paper thin, and in the end, he offered no actual vision for a path out of the dog-eat-dog values and imperatives of neoliberalism.

But with few exceptions, the Americans who connected with Trump’s message, even temporarily, are right about a lot of what is wrong. They are hungry for a way out of the frantic competition for a piece of the ever-shrinking pie, and for a world in which our politics promise something more than, as Obama often put it, a “fair shake” at a slice of that pie. Those voters are ripe for recruitment to a new coalition, if the left can be generous and far-sighted enough to invite them in.

This invitation is within our power, if only we will engage in the kind of brave, humble, heart-deep spiritual questioning that has animated so many of our tradition’s greatest achievements.

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## **JUNETEENTH—6/19/2023**

Juneteenth is the oldest-known celebration marking the end of slavery in the United States, first recognized by the state of Texas. It is also known as “Freedom Day,” “Juneteenth Independence Day,” or “Emancipation Day.”

In 2023, Juneteenth will be celebrated on **Monday, June 19**. It is a federal holiday and a state holiday observed in 23 states and D.C.



## CT FOODSHARE WALK AGAINST HUNGER



**Grace Team:** David Kremer, Nina Kretschmer, David Prebit, Toby Scott, Geraldine Shannon, Stacy Williams, Pastor Rick, Louisa Barton-Duguay (Spirit Leader and Walker)

Goal: \$2,925

Raised to Date: \$2,395



by Zachary Lee

*Editor's note: we were unable to fit this article in previous issues. Will include the information about a couple of these extraordinary women in this and future issues.*

For the past seven years, Sojourners has celebrated Women's History Month by highlighting women whose work has inspired us with their visions for a more just world — and church. The women in this year's list include authors and reporters; activists and advocates; professors and pastors, but they're all united by their commitment to tell radical, inclusive stories and their belief that shaping the church and world starts in one's own community. These women teach, speak, podcast, and organize on behalf of many causes and communities, including reproductive health rights; multi-faith, multiracial democracy; garment workers; and Black liberation. We offer gratitude for their public leadership and passionate witness.

We asked each leader to share why their work is so important, describe their vision of justice, and offer a prayer or blessings for 2023. We hope you'll be blessed by their prayers and encouraged by their work.

### Beth Allison Barr

Beth Allison Barr is the James Vardaman professor of history at Baylor University. She is a medieval historian, specializing in women's history and church history, and the author of the best-selling ***The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth***.

#### ***Why is the work you do so important right now?***

Current events have made the fruit of Christian patriarchy so clear — from the Southern Baptist Convention sex abuse scandal and subsequent disfellowshipping of churches with female pastors to the continued sexual objectification of women by megachurch pastors to even The Gospel Coalition endorsing a sexual ethic of male power over female bodies. As I argued in my book *The Making of Biblical Womanhood*, historical ignorance helped pave the way for evangelicals to embrace these dangerous ideas about women. I further contend that a lack of understanding about the broader cultural impact of these evangelical beliefs contributes to the continuation of oppressive structures even outside of the church. My work thus shows how historical amnesia comes at great cost for not only evangelical women but also for human dignity.

#### ***A blessing for 2023:***

May we see women the way God has always seen women.  
May we listen to women's voices instead of silencing their speech.  
May we recognize that women, too, are image bearers of God.  
May we remember the great cloud of witnesses that surrounds us.  
May we know the strength of God who empowers us to do more than we have ever imagined.  
May we be known for sharing the love of God, even toward those who resist us.



## Olga Segura



Olga Marina Segura is a freelance writer, reporter, and author of ***Birth of A Movement: Black Lives Matter and the Catholic Church***. She is the founder of **Bronx Frontlines**, a weekly newsletter exploring Dominican identity and displacement.

**Why is the work you do so important right now?**

My work, and the work of many Black women, is so important right now because Black women are the ones who continue to tell the most authentic histories and stories about faith life in the United States and the rest of the Americas. Black women, especially queer and trans, continue to be at the frontlines of all anti-racist efforts in and outside church spaces. I am grounded in the history of the Black women who came before and after me, and I will continue to use my voice and writing

for anti-racist liberation work.

**A blessing for 2023:** I hope that in 2023, as fascism rises, we can see more people fighting for the rights of our most marginalized, especially trans women and men.

BRENNAN CENTER FOR JUSTICE

**The Briefing****Interference in the Trump Criminal Case**

Congressional Republicans' response to former President Trump's indictment in New York is out of line. GOP committee chairs have attacked Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, attempted to subpoena a former prosecutor from his office, and demanded access to nonpublic documents about the local case — a misuse of congressional oversight that threatens the rule of law. Though the prosecution of a former president is undoubtedly a sensitive undertaking, any allegations of abuse should be addressed through ordinary legal processes in court, **not partisan interventions by Congress.**

**How to Counter Big Money in Politics**

Since *Citizens United* opened the floodgates to massive political spending by the rich, many cities and states have found ways to ensure fair representation. Public financing of campaigns has emerged as the most powerful reform available to check megadonors' outsize influence and **give everyday citizens a bigger say in politics.**

**Election Denial Lives On**

The election denial movement faced a setback when midterm voters in battleground states roundly rejected candidates who echoed Trump's lie of a stolen presidency. American



democracy may have weathered the storm in 2022, but the crisis hasn't been averted yet, and dangerous lies still pervade our elections. We need robust reforms to [ensure free and fair elections in 2024 and beyond](#)

### Footing the Bill for Mass Incarceration

As the number of Americans in jails and prisons has skyrocketed, government agencies have forced the people behind bars and their relatives to cover the increasing costs of imprisonment. Incarcerated people are charged hefty fees for room and board, medical services, emails and phone calls, and commissary items. It all adds up to a significant financial burden. To help people successfully rejoin their communities after serving their time, we need to [eliminate as many of these fees as possible](#).

### Legislative Threats to Judicial Independence

Wisconsin's April 4 election created a liberal majority on the state's supreme court for the first time in 15 years, and it also gave Republicans a legislative supermajority. State lawmakers are already raising the possibility of using their power to impeach the court's new progressive justice over political disagreements — an extreme departure from historic norms of judicial independence. The Brennan Center's latest *State Court Report* newsletter explores the ways that Wisconsin's conservative legislature might [retaliate against the court](#).

### Another SCOTUS Scandal

The revelations about the lavish gifts and trips that Justice Clarence Thomas routinely received from a right-wing billionaire benefactor make clear that no public official should hold such power for so long. Not only do the Supreme Court's members enjoy lifetime tenure, but it is also the only court in the country without a mandatory ethics code. Leaving the justices to police themselves has proved time and again to be a fallible approach that imperils the Court's legitimacy. It's past time to establish binding ethics rules and term limits to [ensure impartiality at the Supreme Court](#).

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## CLAW BACK \$100 BILLION FROM WEAPONS AND WASTE

Pentagon spending is wildly out of control.

- U.S. military spending exceeds that of the next nine countries combined.
- We spend roughly 10 times more than Russia does on weapons and war.
- Avoidable spending waste — as identified by the Pentagon itself! — vastly exceeds the combined budgets of the Environmental Protection Agency and the Food and Drug Administration.
- Congress threw \$45 billion more at the Pentagon than it even asked for this year. That alone would have paid for adding hearing, dental, and vision coverage to Medicare for a year — a proposal abandoned with the excuse that it would have cost too much.
- By the way, this isn't even about Ukraine — American aid to Ukraine has come from supplemental funding packages, not the Pentagon's already bloated base budget.



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## CLAW BACK \$100 BILLION FROM WEAPONS AND WASTE

(continued from page 14)

Our nation's choice to spend so much on the military is equally a choice not to provide health care, invest in early education, address climate chaos, and more.

Thankfully, Reps. Barbara Lee and Mark Pocan have introduced the People Over Pentagon Act of 2023.

The People Over Pentagon Act would claw back \$100 billion from weapons and waste and instead redirect that spending to give priority to human needs.

Ask Congress now to pass the People Over Pentagon Act of 2023.

Thanks for taking action.

For progress,

- Robert Weissman, President of Public Citizen

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## WHAT I SAW INSIDE A TRUMP RESORT

by Amanda Tyler

I was surprised by how much I learned from attending the ReAwaken America tour at the Trump Doral resort in Miami last weekend. The content itself was not that surprising – I'd seen clips from prior events and extensive reporting about Michael Flynn and his "army of God," as the Frontline/AP documentary framed the roadshow. But my insights came not from watching the stage but from watching the people around me.

I was there to represent you as the lead organizer of our Christians Against Christian Nationalism movement, so I want to share some of my insights with you directly.

**There are a lot of people.** The Pastors for Trump event (the first in-person of its kind) was standing room only with people crowded into the doorway. The main event was held in a much larger room and, while not entirely full, definitely had a lot of people listening at any given time, with others in the marketplace or milling about outside. The crowd was also more diverse than I was expecting. It was mostly white, but significant numbers of people from other racial and ethnic groups as well. Many people have been to more than one. We should not take these tour events lightly. There were people of all ages, including small children. Younger, college-aged students were working registration. They are organizing and creating communities at these events.

**For many there, it seemed like a genuinely religious experience.** I'm often asked how religious I believe this movement is, and I often answer that it is a political movement using religion for its authority, motivation and permission structure. I think that is very much true for the leaders – people like Mike Flynn, Clay Clark, Roger Stone, etc. But for the people attending, I think for many of them, this is a type of religious experience. I noticed that in the excitement to be baptized, for instance, or the response to the music and prayers. And that realization made me feel sad for them. Because of how empty this form of religion is, how it is based on accruing political power and all in service to Trump.

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**The leaders are charlatans.** Again, not a surprise exactly, there were more offensive tactics than I had noticed in the brief clips. Watching a speech from Clay Clark for 30 minutes, for example, I saw how he uses almost this auctioneer voice to rile people up and also to get people to believe him. There was this extended presentation that was essentially a sales pitch for some financial counseling that would get people to invest in an alternative currency. He threw out lots of numbers, countries and “facts” at a rapid pace, and I watched the audience (myself included) try to make sense of the nonsense. But for many people there, I thought, the takeaway would be, “oh, I have to trust this smart person who obviously has more information and knowledge than I have about this scheme.”

**Baptisms – one thing I really wanted to see for myself.** Full-immersion baptism, which for some may seem odd, is not strange to me and other Baptists! But these were odd baptisms to me, because it was not at all clear to me what they were being baptized into. Each one took less than a minute, the person would step into a plastic kiddie pool, sit down and tell three people his or her name, and then be dunked. The officiants didn’t even say anything like a liturgy when doing it. People wore whatever they had on for the conference, like a ReAwaken America t-shirt or one person I saw, a QAnon t-shirt. Again, for the person doing it, it did seem like a genuinely spiritual experience, but of what, I don’t know. It wasn’t a recognizable Christian baptism to me.

**Two main themes – misinformation around COVID vaccines and election security.** The COVID lies were a larger part of the speeches than I had expected. The government shutdowns were a real galvanizing force for this crowd. We were all impacted by COVID, still dealing with the trauma and disruption to our lives, but this group is dealing with this open defiance and mistrust of government. When we registered for the conference, the organizers told my colleague who attended with me that no masks would be allowed. If we put on a mask, we would be kicked out.

**The “us vs them” motif is very strong.** This forces people into this self-contained sphere of misinformation and disinformation. “Mainstream media” was invoked many times (not surprising) but what was surprising is that mainstream media included Fox News, especially after the firing of Tucker Carlson. The message was direct: mainstream media is full of lies, and so to get the truth, you have to listen to us, whether the “us” be the speakers’ websites, podcasts or fringe social media sites. The argument sounded like this:

“We are the only ones who will tell you the truth. They are all lying to you.” These statements were repeated over and over again. Leaders billed it as a “two-day conference” and “master class” – that those in the room then had the responsibility to share what they learned with those back at home and in their social media circles.

**Calls for political violence were bolder than I expected.** Speakers talked about “spiritual warfare,” that we weren’t meant to be sheep but lions for Jesus. Greg Locke in an incredibly fiery “sermon” talked about the need to use our 2nd Amendment rights if the government won’t respect our 1st Amendment rights (huge applause line; people jumped to their feet and pumped their fist). A pastor at the Pastors for Trump event told a story from Marine lore about a unit that was surrounded and went to their commanding officer in despair. The officer said, no this is exactly where we want them so now we can shoot in all directions. Then that pastor told Mike Flynn (who repeated to the whole crowd) that he was “packing” right then.

**I know you’re just as horrified about the Christian nationalism I witnessed firsthand as I am.** But I don’t want to leave you with just these observations. After all, going inside the Trump Doral resort wasn’t the main reason I went to Miami. I wanted to be there to work with

Florida and national Christian leaders to ensure an alternative Christian message rooted in love was offered at the same time as ReAwaken America. I met courageous Christian leaders in the area who voiced their opposition to this toxic distortion of our Christian faith. And our mobile billboards in partnership with Faithful America and many other groups made media headlines and went viral on social media.

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### GUN MAKERS ARE THE NEW LOCKHEED MARTIN

### WIN WITHOUT WAR

Today, weapons like semi-automatic rifles and pistols can now be exported overseas with few checks to ensure they don't go to regimes that abuse human rights or fall into the hands of drug cartels and terrorist groups. As many as 620,000 U.S.-made firearms were shipped abroad last year alone.

**As Republicans in Congress and in states like Florida and Texas tighten borders and limit the movement of migrants, this explosive increase in firearm exports has exacerbated instability and violence across Latin America.** Right now, the United States is a key supplier of firearms that end up in the hands of criminals, drug cartels, and oppressive security forces across countries including Mexico, El Salvador, Haiti, and the Philippines.

The United States continues to be the sole source of over half of the world's guns — including many that end up in countries with few controls over where, how, and by whom they are used. But that can change. President Biden promised in 2020 that he would reverse a Trump policy and return authority over gun exports to the State Department.

**With enough people-power, we have a chance to pressure Biden to keep his promise and curb the free flow of guns. Can you help us get louder than the gun lobby to make it happen? Tell President Biden to issue an Executive Order to reverse Trump's decision and strengthen oversight on gun exports!**

In 2020 the United States' loose firearms export policies were wrenched wide open when — at the request of the gun lobby — the Trump administration shifted oversight of firearms exports from the State Department to the Department of Commerce. **This simple regulatory change opened the floodgates, and by the end of the year nearly 530,000 U.S.-made guns would be sent around the globe.**

By moving regulatory authority of these weapons back to the State Department, Congress can ensure that there is proper oversight, for the long-term. This won't end the epidemic of gun violence altogether — but it will help save lives by ensuring less weapons are available to spread it.

Despite the clear need for action, powerful lobbying groups like the National Rifle Association (NRA) continue to oppose any efforts to regulate firearms exports. Instead, they prioritize the profits of gun manufacturers over the lives of people suffering from the consequences of the cross-border arms trade.

President Biden recently announced policy steps to implement stricter rules on arms sales, and has issued a series of action steps to curb domestic gun violence. That tells us that he's focusing on the issue right now. **So while he's at it — we have a window of opportunity to**

## GUN MAKERS ARE THE NEW LOCKHEED MARTIN

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get as loud as we can so that he finally keeps his campaign promise to restore the rules that make it much stricter to export rifles and pistols.

**Don't let Smith & Wesson become the next Lockheed Martin. Ask President Biden to stop the cross-border arms trade.**

Together, we can make a difference and put an end to the dangerous and irresponsible export of small arms that wreak havoc on vulnerable communities around the world.

Thank you for working for peace,  
Faith, Abbey, Yint and the Win Without War team

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## We were there!



## THE RECOVERING AMERICA'S WILDLIFE ACT IS A BI-PARTISAN SOLUTION TO THE DECLINE OF U.S. WILDLIFE



**ACTION ALERT: Call on your senator to act now to support.**

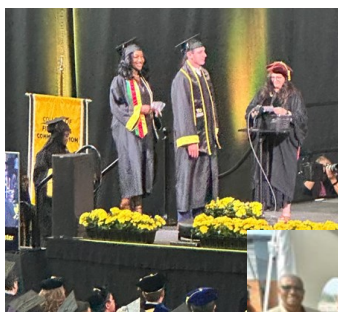
National Endangered Species Day on May 19 is only one way to alert us to a distressing fact: As many as one-third of all U.S. wildlife species are deemed vulnerable, meaning they face an elevated risk of extinction. While one-in-five species found in the country are imperiled and face a high risk of extinction. Unless we act soon, we risk losing some of our nation's most cherished wildlife. Growing research suggests that through concerted effort and funding into conservation, we may be able to reverse this trend.

Current policies and programs, like the Endangered Species Act and the State Wildlife Grants Program, address species decline too late and are underfunded. A focused, preventative approach to wildlife conservation gives species a better chance at rebounding and would save money overall. Introduced by a bipartisan group of senators, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act (RAWA) aims to do just that. RAWA will redirect \$1.3 billion of existing revenue annually to state-led wildlife conservation efforts. The National Wildlife Foundation describes this bill as the most significant investment in wildlife conservation in a generation.

Additionally, RAWA would take a necessary step toward addressing historical inequities and exclusion of Tribal wildlife management agencies, as Indigenous people have been successful managers of species and habitats for thousands of years. RAWA would designate \$97.5 million specifically to Tribal-led wildlife conservation efforts.

"God's gift of responsibility for the earth dignifies humanity without debasing the rest of creation. We depend upon God, who places us in a web of life with one another and with all creation," says the ELCA social statement *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice* (p. 3). Wildlife has no voice in halls of power. Stewardship of your voice can move us to better care for God's good creation.

**Share your customized message using the ELCA Action Center today.** [https://support.elca.org/site/R?i=0nLYvrX\\_GLmBHj\\_Y55PiIzDVP0K-\\_QutNKdPr4lxR1fpQB9sA3zqFA](https://support.elca.org/site/R?i=0nLYvrX_GLmBHj_Y55PiIzDVP0K-_QutNKdPr4lxR1fpQB9sA3zqFA)



Fely-Adrienne Yigle-Kaljob & Family

Dogara Simon Danbaba with Carters

## INVITATION TO TOUR THE NEW FREDERICK DOUGLASS EXHIBITION AT THE WADSWORTH ATHENEUM

by Sue Carey

*I Am Seen...Therefore, I Am:  
Isaac Julien and Frederick Douglass*

A new exhibition at the Wadsworth Atheneum in Hartford, opened on May 18. The exhibition is co-curated by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (the acclaimed host of the PBS series *Finding Your Roots*) and his Harvard University colleague, Dr. Sarah Elizabeth Lewis. They were at the Wadsworth for a public lecture on May 19 and stopped to have their photos taken with Gladys Jackson and Barb and Rich Carman. The Wadsworth theater was filled to capacity and the audience was captivated to be in the presence of giants past and present.



***You're invited to join Sue Carey for a tour of the exhibition on Sunday, June 25 following worship. If it can be arranged, we'll gather after worship for a quick lunch and then carpool to the museum for a tour at 1 pm. The tour is limited to 15 people and reservations are required.***

***Please reply to Nilda at [office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com](mailto:office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com), if you are interested. If needed, a second date will be set in July.***

### About the exhibition:

Frederick Douglass is most widely known for his escape from slavery and his national and international leadership in the abolitionist movement. Less known is his embrace of the emerging field of photography, beginning with the daguerreotype in the late 1830s. Historians believe that Douglass was the most photographed American of the nineteenth century. He used the medium to speak directly to the public.

Douglass appreciated photography for its democratic principles. As the technology progressed, it became affordable to the masses. Douglass wrote, "The humbled servant girl whose income is but a few shillings per week may now possess a more perfect likeness of herself than noble ladies and court royalty." The ability to choose clothing, adornments, posture, and props allowed the sitter to exert control over their image and provided alternatives to racist portrayals of African Americans. And, Douglass recognized that there is a fixed, unchangeable aspect to a photograph. In his 1861 "Lecture on Pictures," he said: "Pictures do not change, but we look at them through the favorable or unfavorable prevailing public opinion."

The exhibition is presented in two parts. First is Isaac Julien's *Lessons of the Hour*, a multi-screen film that runs approximately 25 minutes. The film juxtaposes episodes from the life of Frederick Douglass with the persisting issues of social justice that resonated then and now. The exhibition continues with a collection of rare daguerreotype and other nineteenth-century photographs that celebrate the collaborative output of African American photographers and sitters.

The opening of the exhibition in Hartford in May also commemorates the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Douglass's first speech made in Hartford, in 1843, at the age of 25 and less than five years after his escape from slavery. Although Connecticut was known for producing abolitionists like the Beecher family and John Brown, in 1848, it was the last New England state to abolish slavery. When Douglass came to Hartford in 1843, he spoke outdoors in the courtyard adjacent to Center Church across the street from the Wadsworth Atheneum.

For more information about the exhibition, please go to this site:  
<https://www.thewadsworth.org/explore/on-view/iamseen/>



## SOLAR PANEL REPORT—April, 2023



Produced

**2.3 MWh**

4% higher\*

9 Apr :122.0 kWh

Maximum production day

Consumed

**1.4 MWh**

18% lower\*

21 Apr :92.1 kWh

Maximum consumption day

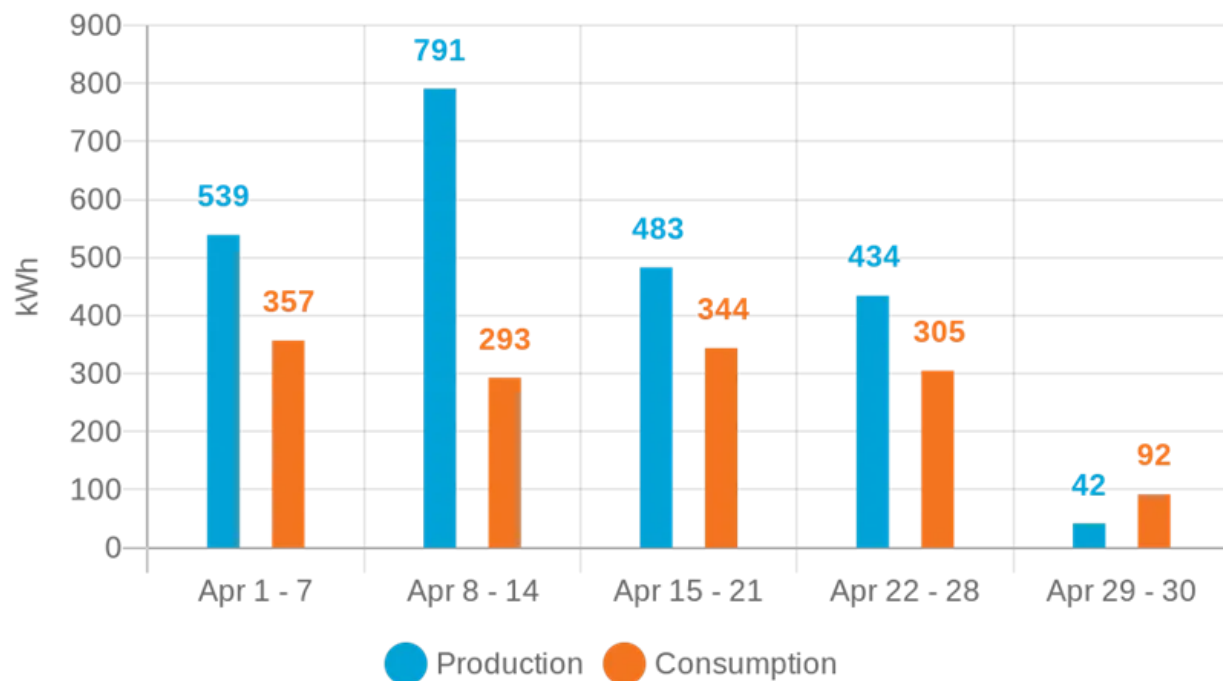
Grid energy

**601.9 kWh**

Imported

**1.5 MWh**

Exported



Carbon offset

**1.62 ton**

Offset equivalent to 28

Trees

Grid Dependence

**43%**

For this month, 43% of your energy consumption is supplied by the utility grid.

Get grid independence with Enphase

[Add Storage](#)

Year-to-date production

**7 MWh**

\* As compared to last month's records

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## **JUNE 2023 BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES!**

**Happy Birthday!  
To All those who Birthday  
in June.**



**Happy Anniversary!**



***May you all be blessed as you celebrate your special days!***

Did we miss your birthday or anniversary?  
Contact the office at 860-527-7792 or  
email [office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com](mailto:office.gracelutheranhartford@gmail.com)  
to update our records.

### ***IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER:***

**Friday and Saturday, June 9 & 10th—  
New England Synod Assembly, Worcester, MA**



**SYNOD ASSEMBLY**  
death & resurrection in the 21<sup>st</sup> century church

**Sunday, June 18th—Father's Day!**



**Monday, June 19th—Juneteenth!**







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Lloyd Smith, Lay Minister

Louisa Barton-Duguay, Religious Worker,  
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Betsy DeRoma, President

Lou Oliver, Vice President

Gladys Jackson, Secretary

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Janice Potter, Financial Assistant

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