

What we've seen and heard

By Sister Gwynette Proctor, S.N.D.deN.

Special to the Review

For some, the incidents brought back horrible memories of a time long past; for others, the incidents renewed inherent fears of Baltimore City and black people in general. For some, the incidents could be described as a feeling of taking back the power and making a clear and definitive statement that, "Enough is enough, I will not tolerate the deplorable conditions that diminish my humanity any longer. I will not stand idly by while family members, friends and community members continue to be victimized, abused and killed by police officers whose actions appeared to be sanctioned by law enforcement. My life matters."

In times like these, there are no quick fixes or simplistic answers to the challenges we face. Now, the healing must begin. It must open our hearts so that you can look into the face of any woman or man and see there your sister or brother. It will require us to see all human life with new eyes. The faith community and all people will need to emerge from the complacency that has characterized our failure to act on behalf of those who have no voice; those who have been pushed to the edges of our communities, out of sight and forgotten; and those people who were born, are now living and expect to die believing "no one cares."

Where do we go from here?

Pope Francis, in "The Joy of the Gospel," tells us, "We need to look at our cities with a contemplative gaze, a gaze of faith which sees God dwelling in their homes, in their streets and squares. God's presence accompanies the sincere efforts of individuals and groups to find encouragement and meaning in their lives." Are we poised to embrace this "call to action?"

Thousands of youths and young adults either graduate from or drop out of a dysfunctional public education system each year. Lacking the necessary skills, knowledge and motivation to press for success, they wander aimlessly from menial jobs that do not pay a living wage. At some point, an all-consuming despair and hopelessness takes root.

Let's imagine an alternate educational system that offers a continuum of services to people who cannot access collegiate opportunities. The system could provide a holistic approach that brings together health care providers to address psychological, emotional and physical impediments. It would be accompanied by ongoing adult educational programs while providing a seamless transition to an employment system that has leveraged the support of charitable organizations and corporations to establish long term partnerships with employers. It's a thought.

We cannot ignore the challenge to dismantle unjust and corrupt government systems that continue to perpetuate policies that are meant to “keep people poor.” Are we committed to the creation of a more promising future? I imagine the responses to these questions will depend greatly upon what we have seen and heard.

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