

Note from the Director

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Dearly Beloved vs. The Beloved Community

Martin Luther King, Jr. often spoke of The Beloved Community and since his daughter's recent visit to Providence College this has become somewhat of the mantra for the institution. But what does the Beloved Community look like?

As articulated by The King Center, the memorial institution founded by Coretta Scott King,

Dr. King's Beloved Community is a global vision in which all people can share in the wealth of the earth. In the Beloved Community, poverty, hunger and homelessness will not be tolerated because international standards of human decency will not allow it. Racism and all forms of discrimination, bigotry and prejudice will be replaced by an all-inclusive spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood.

So can we ever get to a place of The Beloved Community without discussing, explicitly racism and particularly anti-Blackness and the violence that results? The Beloved Community stands on two pillars resistance to racism and justice. Yet here we are in a place where Black folk remain targeted by state and quasi-state structural violence. We are murdered and often without consequence. We are profiled and often without consequence. White ethnic colleagues target faculty of color and often without consequence. Students in some departments face systemic racism and often those who engage such violence face no consequence. Yet, there is this discourse of The Beloved Community.

The praxis of the Beloved Community is missing. This is where the project of Dearly Beloved is important. Dearly Beloved is but one tool that can be used to move from rhetoric to action. Dearly Beloved, started by Viviane Selah-Hanna and me, is a quilting project that seeks to memorialize those killed by state and quasi-state violence. We conceptualized this project after the murder of Trayvon Martin was found not guilty. We are two Black mothering academics who, like many others mourned the death of this child Trayvon Martin, and the countless others who were murdered because they were people of color.

This project gathers women of color, to not simply stitch the patches that make up the quilt, but to offer a communal space for healing. This is our attempt to resist the official narratives of death that are often used to control and define Blackness and the "Other." *Dearly Beloved* is part of my larger attempt to create a community for Black women, where we not only address our traumas, but find healing—soul healing. But it is also a project that speaks to racism and justice.

We have to confront “New England liberalism” of justice and equity that appears in theory but not necessarily practice. As such, we need to deeply deconstruct the ethos of the structures that result in Black death. This requires that we shake up power structures in a substantive way. This means that we have to talk about power—power that is rested in whiteness. We have to speak of social justice and not simply diversity. We have to speak of how we value humanity across differences—then we will get to a place of A Dearly Beloved Community.