

Empowered by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the mission of Lutheran Human Relations Association is to bring people together to do justice by:

- breaking down hostilities and fears between peoples;
- bridging racial, cultural, class, gender, age, ability and other separations; and
- building up human community.

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**Lutheran
Human
Relations
Association**

Vanguard LHRA

Welcome to the Comfort Zone

Marilyn Miller

This issue is dedicated to the idea of seeking truth, breaking it down, pulling it apart, and uncovering it. Throughout the Bible, we get to hear and reflect on conversations between Jesus and those who wanted to trap him and those who really wanted to know and understand God's truth. Today, we listen to radio and television hosts spew their versions of "truth telling" and wonder how people can simply accept what they say as the "gospel" – no questions asked. There are many untruths and partial truths being told which shape and influence us.

Language can be used to paint whatever picture the storyteller wants us to know/believe. One photographer described darker-skinned subjects as "looting" after Hurricane Katrina's destruction and in a different situation another said, lighter skinned subjects were "finding" necessities. Those two words – "looting" and "finding" paint very different pictures. The reality is judgement calls are always being made when we present and receive information, and the slant depends on a lot of complex pieces. We have to challenge ourselves to constantly examine how we interpret what we hear and see through the lens of our white privilege or internalized racial oppression among many other factors that influence how we arrive at the "truth." And how much truth are we willing to listen to and speak in the aftermath of the storm? I submit to you; it won't be much and it won't be long, because we love the "comfort zone." Many of us like to stay where it is comfortable because it's hard, demanding and painful work to step outside those consoling mindsets and lifestyles.

We don't want anyone to challenge us, make us feel uncomfortable or make us think. We just want someone to tell us what to think and do; and keep it simple, no struggle, please. The "comfort zone" is at its best in our churches. We are most comfortable with that one hour service where we get to go through the motions and rituals of worship. Please don't make me think – Ms./ Mr. Pastor. Just give me a dose of that nice sweet Jesus, some traditional and pleasant hymns, and let me go home.

I am challenged by the lies and myths that I see people holding onto in our churches. I'll share a few of them here:

"We invited the people of color, but they don't want to come back because they didn't see any others like them."

Perhaps, they don't want to stay because people know when someone really wants them there or not. And, why is it always the people of color's fault? Could the dominant culture have some things to learn about hospitality and inclusion? Why is it we are welcome until we want to share power or shape a new way of being or doing things? Stay in your place, and we'll get along just fine is the message- loud and clear.

"We don't want/need to talk about racism. You all are always bringing up racism!"

Just because you don't want to talk about it doesn't mean it's not a reality. You don't want to deal with a part of life for people of color if you are not willing to examine and confront racism – and work to be Anti-Racist. And tell me why I as a person of color should trust/believe you really want to be my brother/sister when you refuse to recognize a part of my reality?

"We don't need to talk about racism because we don't have any people of color here or in this community."

So, I guess you'll never have to ever deal with or live near or work with anyone outside your "comfort zone." I guess you don't think God is calling you to be in community with the people who are "different" in your community or a large majority of the Christians in the world. Your reality will be short lived. The face of Jesus is quite varied. As a matter of fact, it's all around us if people will take their heads out of the sand.

"We should just stop talking about these things, and they will go away!"

Show me a time when that worked, and I'll show you a miracle. We can't wish our societal/community challenges away. We have to confront them and come up with strategies to deal with them at every level- individual, cultural, and institutional- for the rest of our lives.

Seeking and telling truth means you don't get to stay in the "comfort zone." You'll have to leave the "temple", be with the "others" and welcome them in like Jesus did.

1821 N 16th St
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53205
Phone 414/536-0585
FAX 414/536-0690
E-mail lhra@lhra.org
Website: www.lhra.org

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LHRA Donations Get a Boost

Thrivent's Giving Plus® Program helps you make a bigger impact.

LHRA is grateful to once again be eligible for matching funds through Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. LHRA members who are also members of Thrivent are invited to participate in this program.

Contact LHRA for an application to be sent to you- 414- 536-0585 or lhra@lhra.org

OR

Contact your local Thrivent Financial representative OR

Download an application by visiting www.thrivent.com. Under "Quick Links" click on:

Fraternal Programs - Church and Community Programs- Giving Plus® Program.

After completing your portion of the application, send it to LHRA at 1821 N. 16th St., Milwaukee, WI 53205

We encourage you to make the most of your financial donation to LHRA through the Giving Plus® Program.



Visit LHRA on the web!
Our new site can be found at:

www.lhra.org

Check the site regularly for:

- ◆ program updates
- ◆ training schedules
- ◆ Jazz for Justice and other events
- ◆ back issues of the Vanguard newsletter

Watch www.lhra.org change and grow!!

Life Imitates Art

Miguel de Jesus

As we look at issues of critical thinking, two movies I've recently seen come to mind. They are the kind of movies which offer different things to different people. A person of privilege, (white skin, economics) could dismiss either one, or simply see them as entertainment. A person from a targeted or oppressed group would see them in an entirely different light. Within and around each of these perspectives there would be an entire spectrum of other perspectives.

Remember the Titans

Remember The Titans, came out several years ago. It explores the racial dynamics of 1971 Alexandria, Virginia. Based on a true story, this was the first time there ever was an integrated high school football team in Virginia. Three high schools were condensed into one in order to achieve integration. The movie seems to say that the team and its victories helped to make this transition a bit more effective and less dangerous than it might have been otherwise.

Virginia lacks any significant teams at the college level and has no professional football. Although the **Redskins** are a stones throw from Alexandria in Washington D.C., the people seem to look inward at their state. This gives high school football an importance it lacks in most other places. So, the first integrated team in 1971, was a really big thing. The original screen play was written by an African-American man who stumbled upon the story and found it to be very significant. After searching high and low for someone to make the movie, it was produced by a white man who is known for several movies and half the stuff on TV. And — hold on to your hat, it was put out by Disney.

I would recommend that you view this movie all the way through, with a racially mixed group of people including younger persons and older persons. Ask them not to just watch it passively, but allowing their minds to go into any thoughts and feelings the movie might bring up. Afterwards talk about any cultural or ethnic differences they might have seen. What signs of internalized racial oppression did you see? What signs of assumed white superiority did you see? Talk about the different characters and what risks they had to take. How were those risks alike? How were they different? How are those risks still around today? What old messages had to be given up? How were those messages similar? How were they different? How are these risks and these messages still around today? What still remains to be done?

The movie goes into interpersonal aspects of racial oppression. It even glances at some community aspects of racism. However it skirts institutional aspects and doesn't ever get the concept that racism is systemic and not about what one feels in one's heart.

Think critically and take the movie apart. If you get the DVD version look at the feature by Lynn Swan. What do you think of that presentation and what he has to say? As far as you can see, has the friendship developed and treasured between the two coaches over the decades served to bring about any significant systemic change?

Crash

Crash has been called the best movie of this year, 2005. It is set in Los Angeles where in real life, the new Latino mayor says he wants to bring all of the people of the city together. *Crash* will show you clearly, the monumental task he has before him. The dynamics of racism in Los Angeles are multifaceted, complex and have not clearly been analyzed or articulated by any of the people in

power who could actually make a difference. How can he possibly bring all the people together?

This movie starts to get you there. It takes an honest look at how the effects of racism are like a chain reaction crash. The metaphor of a crash is useful in looking at how one form of the oppression effects another and another and another. There are other metaphors in the movie, which you can find for yourself as you use your critical thinking skills.

The movie depicts violence and violation. It is honest in a stark way. Like *Titans* it depicts a white person who would save the dignity of African Americans. In each case the consequences show the futility of such messianic complexes.

Ask some of the same questions of this movie. Both movies show that indeed we are not the same, we are not equal as we live our lives in this nation. There are distinctly different worlds.

Looking at this in light of what has happened related to hurricane Katrina, I come to explore many things critically. As I see it, if anything has come across honestly in light of this storm it is that we are a nation built upon privilege and oppression. All the world has seen clearly the underclasses and the hidden ugliness of who we are.

Who are we in this country, really? I would say that we are all persons seeking shelter. We are seeking shelter from the oppression, the evil and the violence upon which we have built our house as a nation. If we are not all seeking God's refuge and God's strength, all is folly. Any person seeking refuge, is a refugee.

Miguel de Jesus, a lifelong community activist, currently serves as a trainer/consultant for LHRA's programs and is involved in the Central City Churches Empowerment for Employment Program in Milwaukee, WI.

Teacher, Please Hand Me the Remote

Deb Dassow

Much criticism has been leveled at public school systems in the United States. Since the publication of "A Nation at Risk", public schools have been at the center of the bull's-eye. Simultaneously, and somewhat incongruently federal and state funding has been cut to public schools. Wisconsin public schools have been under revenue controls since 1993. The media, television in particular, has seemingly limitless resources and boundless public appeal. So, if my students had the opportunity to use a remote and change the channel (namely me) what might be their motivation? The chart on the right, put together by Considine and Hailey (1994), explains why.



Deb Dassow is a teacher at Port Washington High School, Port Washington, WI. A media literacy course is among the social studies classes she teaches.

THE CURRICULUM OF THE CLASSROOM VERSUS THE CURRICULUM OF THE LIVING ROOM		
SCHOOL CULTURE	versus	TELEVISION CULTURE
Content/Skill Centered _____		Attention Centered
Required Courses _____		Elective "Courses"
Graded by Age _____		Non-Graded
Prerequisite Knowledge _____		No Prior Knowledge
Reflective Centered _____		Emotion Centered
(Cognitive Based) _____		(Affective Based)
Delayed Gratification _____		Instant Gratification
Limited Time Periods _____		Unlimited Resources
Past-Centered _____		Present Centered
Logic-Sequence Centered _____		Fragmentary/Mosaic

Source: Neil Postman V.I.E.W Considine/Haley 1994

Karl Lutze's Personal Conversations With God- An Invitation to Listen In

Gerhard & Lucy Fischer

In 1972 we were gifted with a book of prayers that we carried around with us to read at the opening of meetings...to share with weary friends.... and to use personally to rev up our own spirits. With Forgive Our Forgettings, Karl Lutze led us in prayer gently but firmly through the hard places – always him and us together — with reminders of what we need to look for and what we need to do along the way in God's world and, most importantly, reminding us of our everlasting source of courage and renewal as we go and do.

Now thirty three years later, having observed his 85th birthday, Karl still has

...a lot on my mind, Lord

This is the title of his sequel book of prayers. Listen in to Karl's soliloquies to God. And observe how, in and about the tender and loving insights is the reminder of God's longing for justice for all. The themes again intersect with our own wanderings and wonderings in turns of phrase that are pure Karl.

Karl Lutze was friend and mentor to so many of us who came to understand what "human relations baptized" meant through his leadership days at LHRA — life-changing times for us personally and for many others. He is still leading.

I wonder, Lord, just how those Twelve you chose
reacted to your startling invitation
when you enlisted them to follow you.
The record does not tell us
that the ones who fished
first straightened out their nets
and hung them up to dry
or put their boats in dry dock
or sold the fish they'd caught.

Nor do the Scriptures tell us
that the tax collector who joined your ranks
first filled out the proper forms
and made his final entries in the books
before he took to following his Lord.

...Forgive me, Lord, for times when I've forgotten you
or have regarded your concerns
as less important than my own;
and give me now new insights
so that what I regard as distractions from you
might become opportunities for service to you;

let the disrupting noises little children make
alert me to become your instrument
of care and love
to these, your precious ones,
and help me be aware that underneath
the harsh, demanding ways
of family
or friends

or even casual acquaintances
may lie a desperate need
for compassionate understanding
that may lead to useful change in them,
in me;

and help me recognize that troubled lives
of people everywhere
are opportunities for me to bring
your comfort
and your healing.

For you, Lord Christ, confronted all of this and more
when you were here upon this earth –
and I so wish to follow you!

Lord, more and more, help me to set priorities in order
that nothing clutter or obscure the path
I take in following you
in selfless, faithful service.

And when the path is rough or brings me pain,
help me remember YOU,
familiar with such paths,
are walking with me
all the way.

AMEN

Excerpts from *Let Me Walk With Those Twelve*

Internet Awareness

This fall the Empire High School in Vail, Arizona began without the customary handing-out of textbooks. Rather, Apple eBooks were distributed to each of the 340 students. In many ways this bold leap into cyber technology will offer tremendous benefits to the generation of students who have been identified as "speaking digital" for their first language. The ability of school districts to rapidly update information, adjust to ever-changing local, state and federal standards and offer a wider variety of resources is appealing. Yet the internet world offers as many challenges as benefits.

One of the most glaring challenges is the struggle to filter truth from fiction. Many of us have received emails altering us to take action on some impending, critical legislation, or be aware of a new crime pattern targeting women, only to find the message was a hoax. Websites such as snopes.com identify themselves as a "definitive Internet reference source for urban legends, folklore, myths, rumors, and misinformation."

Some internet misinformation is frighteningly believable. Take, for example, the site godsendinstitute.org. Visiting the highly professional site leads one to believe in the existence of a fertility clinic run by a Dr. Richard Wells, who specializes in human cloning. Yet further investigation reveals this is part of a trend called "internet based movie marketing" which draws people to a highly believable website to advertise an upcoming movie release, in this case a movie titled Godsend.

Jump to www.msnbc.msn.com/id/4839345, which seeks to debunk the hoax. Yet even that page contains inaccuracy by stating that the problem with the movie site is that it doesn't mention the movie. In fact, a left hand column on the godsend site advertises the movie, as well as a tongue-in-cheek quote that refers to the inability of the press and public to realize a "hoax when they see one."

Clearly, this is just one example of the challenges we face as we seek to get our information from the internet, and the challenges young people face as their options for gathering information become ever increasingly dependent on that medium.

Order the Book

"Enriching for personal devotions; useful as devotional material for small groups or large assemblies. Ideal for special occasion gifts, or 'thank you' gifts"

Karl Lutze

...a lot on my mind, Lord will be available in late September from:

**Orchard House, Box 469, Valparaiso IN 46383;
\$18 plus \$5 shipping costs.**



[Karl E. Lutze, pictured at left, speaking at the LHRA 50th Anniversary reception, is former parish pastor in Oklahoma (15 years), Assoc. Professor of Theology, Emeritus, Valparaiso University (30+ years), Executive Director Emeritus of LHRA (30+ years), Executive Director Emeritus of ALOA]

LHRA Introduces New Program

Relationships

Evolving into

Authentic

Partnership

R.E.A.P. Partnership/Accompaniment Program

The most important **relationship** we have is our **relationship** with God.

God tells us our **relationships** with one another are the next important order of business. Building up and strengthening these **relationships** creates climates where honesty, accountability and growth can thrive.

The **R.E.A.P. Partnership/Accompaniment Program** will help you build and maintain **relationships** with your partner congregation/organization. Programs will be tailored to provide knowledge, tools and skills to address challenges that keep your congregation's or organization's relationships from progressing into deeper, more authentic, life-giving representations of caring and just community.

Core learning/activities might include:

Awareness- Becoming conscious of conditions/ circumstances affecting people's lives within and outside your partner congregation/organization;

Anti-Racism/Anti-Oppression Work- Understanding the dynamics of racism, sexism, classism, and other oppressions and how they affect your relationships;

Analysis- Examination of your partner relationship(s) and how they are functioning, power elements, breadth and depth of growth;

Action/Strategy- Setting goals, a plan and timeline to work on specific elements of your relationships, and deepening conversations/interaction;

Accountability- Building into goals, plan and strategies who will be responsible for what.

Contact LHRA today, for a consultation on how we can help your relationships R.E.A.P. abundant gifts. Make an investment in yourselves and others today!

Dreams Come True in Twos

Lois R. Geiger Campagna, an artist from Big Bend, Wisconsin, made a deep connection with another artist, Doris Larteley Quertey during one of her stays in Ghana, West Africa. It was Lois' dream that she and Doris would one day have their art in a show together. While the dream wasn't realized in quite the way Lois envisioned, she has given LHRA the opportunity to help carry out the dream in a different way. In donating to LHRA a substantial number of traditional and contemporary art and pottery pieces of her own and a number of pieces from her collection of Doris' traditional African pottery, an art show, of sorts, will indeed take place. At the same time, the gifts enable LHRA to realize a dream of having even more wonderful items for our Jazz for Justice silent auction.

Lois' work is best described by her personal artist's statement:

"My work revolves around the concepts of life and death, good and evil, heaven and hell, and everything that happens to humanity in between. It is a story expressing this inner and outer struggle."

Lois received a degree in art at the University and Wisconsin, Oshkosh, and studied at the University of Ghana, West Africa. Her background includes researching indigenous art and learning traditional African pottery as a potter's apprentice in Ghana, West Africa, serving as an exhibition curator, teaching art and pottery, and acting as an art department head. Lois' artwork has been exhibited extensively in galleries and shows throughout Wisconsin. This summer Lois once again returned to Ghana, where she will establish herself in the village of her spiritual sister, Doris. There Lois will look for opportunities to work on women's development projects aimed at helping the women of the area achieve financial independence.

Doris, a single woman in her mid sixties, is a subsistence farmer and potter. She lives in Afuaman, Ghana, West Africa. Afuaman is a Ga and Ewe village, located about two hours northeast of Accra, the capital city.

In this village of 500 people, Doris is the only person still making pottery, even though all of the older women traditionally know how to make pots. The children show no interest in making pottery, and villagers are increasingly using metal and plastic utensils for eating and cooking.

Doris makes about six types of traditional pottery forms, all designed to be used primarily for food preparation.

The relationship between these women is a true manifestation of cross-cultural sharing as the two come together in spirit and creativity, crossing oceans and cultures, inspiring one another in an ever deepening relationship.

We ask that you keep Lois and Doris in your prayers.



Doris Larteley Quertey, Afuaman, Ghana, West Africa. Photo by Lois R. Geiger Campagna, 1994.



An online silent auction will feature the pottery pictured above. Watch www.lhra.org for details.

Yes!

I want to join with others in the work of breaking down hostilities and fears, bridging separations, and, building up human community.

I want to be a member of LHRA

- Here is my annual membership of \$30 (individuals), \$40 (families). Please send me the **Vanguard** to keep me posted on current issues of concern.

I want to help Lutheran Human Relations strengthen and expand its ministry.

- Here's my special gift of \$ _____

Please contact me/send me more information about:

- Books, publications and videos
- Youth Programs/Consultations
- District/Synod opportunities
- Congregation Programs/Consultations
- Planned Giving/Wills/Bequests
- Bridges Resources
- Regarding Bridges* (Bible study)
- Bridges of Human Community*
- Tending Bridges*

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Enclosed is my check or money order for \$ _____

send to:
Lutheran Human Relations Association Phone: 414/536-0585
 1821 N 16th St Fax: 414/536-0690
 Milwaukee, WI 53205-1626

Mark Your Calendars



LHRA Annual Fall Event

JAZZ FOR JUSTICE

Saturday, November 12

Cross of Life Lutheran Church
 20700 W. North Ave.
 Brookfield, WI 53045

4:00 LHRA Annual Meeting
 5:30 Reception with Silent Auction
 7:00 Jazz Concert featuring
 The Eric Jacobson Combo

Contact LHRA for ticket information
lhra@ecunet.org or 414.536.0585

Silent Auction on the Internet

LHRA friends and members who are unable to attend the Jazz for Justice fundraiser have an opportunity to participate in a silent auction. Photos and descriptions of a number of items, including the work of Lois and Doris, will be featured on our new website.

Between October 10th and October 31st, you can visit www.lhra.org, go to the "Events" page and follow the instructions. A form will be available for you to email LHRA with your contact information, your minimum opening bid, and your highest bid. An LHRA volunteer will be monitoring the site and keeping track of the bids. If others are bidding on the same item, your bid will be raised the minimum amount necessary until your maximum bid is reached. Bidding will end at noon on October 31st and high bidders will be notified on that date. Items will be shipped when payment is received.

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