

TROUBADOUR

The Newsletter of St. Francis House, New London, Connecticut



Center Section: **Building the Beloved Community:** **Book Reviews and Resources**

Eastertide 2018

Vol. 20, No. 1

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50 Years After Dr. King's Assassination: Where Are We Now?

An Interview with the Rev. Florence Clarke

Anne Scheibner for the *Troubadour*: April 4 of this year marks the 50th anniversary of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination. Please share some of your reflections on your own experience of the Civil Rights Movement and how things have changed (or not) since 1968.

First, I need to say that I remember exactly where I was and what I was doing the day Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. I was teaching at Charles A. Brown High School in Charleston, S.C. and was standing in the hall getting ready for the exchange of classes when the announcement was made by the principal over the intercom. After the announcement, there was silence, disbelief, I could not move. Then sounds of, "oh no" and screams from the students. I lost it.

I grew up in the segregated South. I grew up in a neighborhood in Charleston, SC where there was diversity: Polish and Italian and African American families. Children played together. We went to each other's houses to eat – kielbasa, spaghetti and of course fried chicken. When we turned school age at six, my best friend who was white said to me, "I can't play with you anymore because you're a N---." I beat her up. I was so hurt.

I remember when I was about seven seeing water fountains marked, "White" and "Colored." I drank from the one marked "White" because I thought it meant clear water; who would want to drink colored water?! My grandmother took me aside and told me never to do that again. She explained to me what could have happened. How shall I put it? Life was about survival and we were taught early. The African proverb, "It takes a village" was true back then; the elders served as parents for all. If you heard, "Riders are coming," they got the children in. The children were protected no matter whose they were. Now you have to be careful of what you even say to a child who is not biologically yours.

We had separate and unequal educational facilities. I graduated from high school in 1958; we had to pass two white high schools to get to the all-Black one, J. E. Burke. Black schools often got old textbooks some with no covers. However, teachers told us, "Pay attention to what's inside on the pages-- never mind the covers even with all the exclusions." "The exclusions" meant little to no mention was made of the contributions Blacks had made in the building of the country. Our teachers made sure we were introduced to Black history. We knew the poetry of Langston Hughes and Gwendolyn Brooks and Countee Cullen. We learned about Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, George Washington Carver and many, many others. These courageous teachers jeopardized their jobs teaching us our history. They did it to give us a sense of worth. When I was teaching in South Carolina the schools were still segregated so I followed their example to make sure my students learned that history even though it wasn't in the curriculum. I made sure we had a weekly "Current Events" session. February is Black History Month; I wonder if it is still being observed.

I was able to go to college because I won one of 10 scholarships which the state of South Carolina provided-- ten for Black students to attend the Black college, South Carolina State in Orangeburg, S.C. and ten for white students to attend the University of South Carolina in Columbia, S.C. I was a Business major and worked four jobs on campus-- it took me 4 ½ years to graduate. This was so because both of my parents were dead; my guardian did the best she could and I needed extra money to do my student teaching.

I was active in the lunch counter sit-ins and marches which began with college students in Greensboro, NC. Our first march downtown Orangeburg was met with little reaction because no one knew we were coming! But the second march tested my commitment to nonviolence. I heard a white lady say, "Where are all the N--- coming from?" I stepped out of line to tell her in no uncertain terms she didn't know my name. Another marcher pulled me back and said, "If you can't stand the heat, get out the kitchen!" That was when I learned that for me the cause was more important than having to endure name calling; that the cause of equality was greater than personal feelings. On that second march we were arrested and put in livestock cages. The local NAACP chapter in Orangeburg came to our aid and bonded us out.

When I started teaching high school in South Carolina, I knew early I was not going to stay in that town because of the white superintendent's language in meeting with the Black teachers: he would talk "at" us (all Black teachers) instead of "to" us. The school was located in klan country, and I was too idealistic to keep quiet. After two years, an opening occurred back home in Charleston and I applied for that position and got it. It was a new high school but still segregated. Some of my students would be those I had babysat. I was the first in my neighborhood to attend college. I would be able to say to them, "If I did it, so can you."

I left Charleston in 1968, certified to teach in three states: SC, Michigan and Connecticut. I settled in New London and because there were no open teaching positions in my field, I went to work at Electric Boat.

I grew up in the South and have lived in the North nearly fifty years. I've experienced racism. One case that stands out was shortly after I retired after 25 years at EB. Three of my coworkers who were white invited me out to celebrate. Knowing how much I love Italian food we went to a nearby restaurant that was said to have the best lasagna—it was good. But when coffee was served after the meal I noticed that my white friends got china cups and saucers and I got a different cup and saucer. I called the waitress for an explanation and was told they had run out of the same kind of cup and saucer. I asked to speak to the manager; it was done by phone. After I explained what happened, he apologized and promised a free meal. My co-workers were embarrassed and upset and said they hadn't noticed. My response to them was, "You don't have to." I haven't gone back to that restaurant but tempted to. I had a similar experience in Westbrook, CT where we were given different water glasses. I was savvy by this time and asked the manager if they had white dishes and Black dishes. His response let me know that something was up. I honestly say that I am vigilant to this day. The

possibility of restaurants in Connecticut even in the 1990's having dishware for colored people, heaven forbid. You probably never imagined such a thing. [Note from Interviewer: she was right; I was dumbfounded.] It's still hard to comprehend when it's so clear that there is no such thing as Black money or white money: it's all green!

Have things changed? Sunday is still the most segregated day in America. And no, I haven't really heard anything about a new Poor People's Campaign except for a recent email.

It is hard not to be discouraged with all the evidence of the dismantling of progress we thought had been achieved. The new administration is dismantling legislation and programs that were so beneficial to the least and the last. The Voting Rights Act is under attack and watered down to discourage registration of new voters. The levels of mass incarceration which Michelle Alexander documents in her book *The New Jim Crow* [see center section] for Black people overall and Black men in particular is beyond belief. It's all about punishment now and not opportunities for rehabilitation. The new Secretary of Education is chipping away and recommending cuts in programs and funding that offered rights and opportunities to all students. Free school lunches which benefit all children regardless of color as Dr. King intended are being cut back. Higher educational opportunities to help equal the playing field for minorities are nil. The present environment and atmosphere is disorienting to people who thought progress had been made—it's still about a hand up and not a handout. You wonder if the many lives that have been lost meant anything.

I think we are going backwards. There is no one now whose voice is heard as Dr. King's was and I haven't yet heard anyone articulating a new vision. Social media can get certain messages out, but you have to know who is speaking for you.

Setbacks, yes! But I'm yet hopeful! And after witnessing the "March For Our Lives" movement, I am energized. It is about the march. Voices! Action! I still believe in the Dream. In my corner I will do all that I can no matter how unnoticeable. "Keep hope alive" and I think we need to do that.

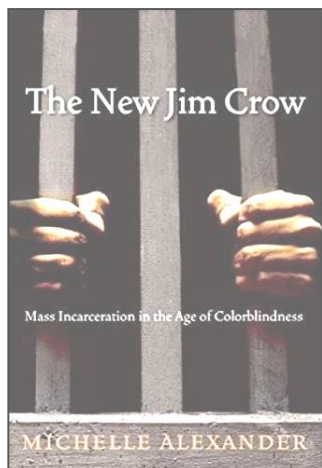
The Rev. Florence Clarke recently retired as pastor of Walls Clarke Temple A.M.E. Zion Church in New London and is a former Protestant Chaplain at Connecticut College. She continues her work in the community as a member of NAACP, NCNW (National Council of Negro Women), Southeastern Connecticut Ministerial Alliance, Greater New London Clergy Association and Rotary International.

Anne Scheibner lives and works at St. Francis House. In 1998 she transcribed for publication in the *Troubadour* the Rev. Canon Edward W. Rodman's "Building the Beloved Community" Address on the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of Dr. King's assassination. Reprinted last year: Vol. 19, No. 2. See St. Francis House website.

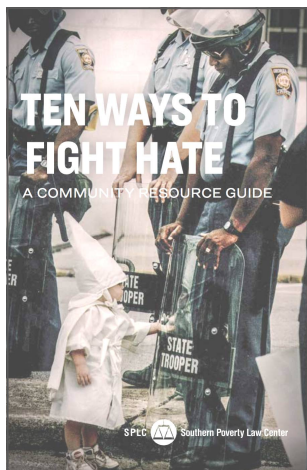
Building the Beloved Community: Book Reviews and Resources

It is urgent that all persons, especially those checking the “White” box on various forms, undertake their own re-education. This is a difficult task and we hope many *Troubadour* readers have reading groups (or can form one!) to support this endeavor. This is difficult but renewing and rewarding work. We hope you will share other resources you have found useful in anti-racist endeavors and write to us with any comments on any of the books and resources included here. Thank you!

Troubadour, Vol. 20, No. 1, the Newsletter of St. Francis House, New London - April, 2018



The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander. (2010) “A civil-rights lawyer’s disturbing view of why young black men make up the majority of the more than two million people now in America’s prisons. In this explosive debut, Alexander (Law/Moritz College of Law and the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity) argues that the imprisonment of unusually large numbers of young blacks and Latinos—most harshly sentenced for possession or sale of illegal drugs, mainly marijuana—constitutes ‘a stunningly comprehensive and well-designed system of racialized social control.’ The ‘warehousing’ of inner-city youths, she writes, is a new form of Jim Crow under which drug offenders—in jail or prison, on probation or parole—are denied employment, housing, education and public benefits; face a lifetime of shame; and rarely successfully integrate into mainstream society. The author blames the situation mainly on the War on Drugs, begun by Ronald Reagan in 1982, which grew out of demands for ‘law and order’ that were actually a racially coded backlash to the civil-rights movement. The situation continues because of racial indifference, not racial bias, she writes...” *Kirkus Reviews*

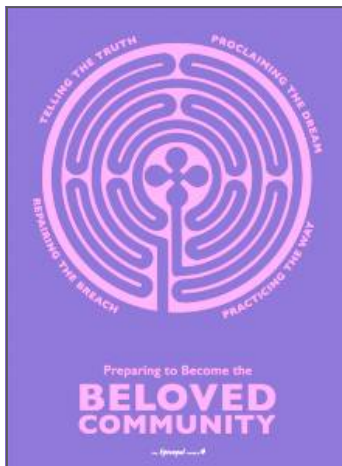


This 30-page resource guide from the Southern Poverty Law Center is available online:

<https://www.splcenter.org/20170814/ten-ways-fight-hate-community-response-guide>

The guide sets out 10 principles for action:

1. Act: i.e. Do something.
2. Join forces: Reach out to allies from churches, schools, clubs and other civic organizations to create a diverse coalition including children, police and the media.
3. Support the victims: Hate crime victims are especially vulnerable.
4. Speak up: Help news organizations create balance and depth. But do not debate hate group members in conflict-driven forums. Speak up in ways that promote unity.
5. Educate yourself: An informed campaign improves its effectiveness.
6. Create an alternative: Do not attend a hate rally. Find another outlet for people’s desire to do something. Hold a unity rally/parade to draw media attention away from hate.
7. Pressure leaders: Elected officials & other community leaders can be important allies.
8. Stay engaged: Be proactive and reach out to people outside your own groups.
9. Teach acceptance: Bias is learned early, often at home. Reach out to susceptible youth.
10. Dig deeper: Look inside yourself.



Preparing to Become the Beloved Community:

https://www.episcopalchurch.org/files/becoming_beloved_community_summary.pdf

From the website: “*Becoming Beloved Community* represents not so much a set of programs as a journey, a set of interrelated commitments around which Episcopalians may organize our many efforts to respond to racial injustice and grow a community of reconcilers, justice-makers, and healers.” The labyrinth image for this kind of engagement is borrowed from Bp. Desmond Tutu. The four quadrants name the goals: Telling the Truth; Repairing the Breach, Proclaiming the Dream, Practicing the Way. Resources for Advent, Lent, information from various parishes, dioceses.

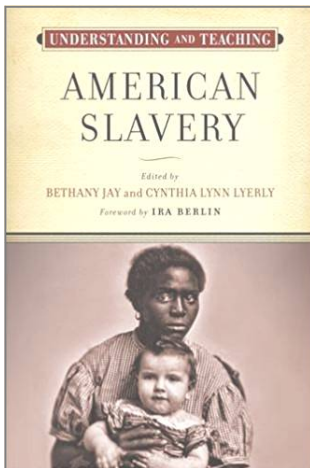
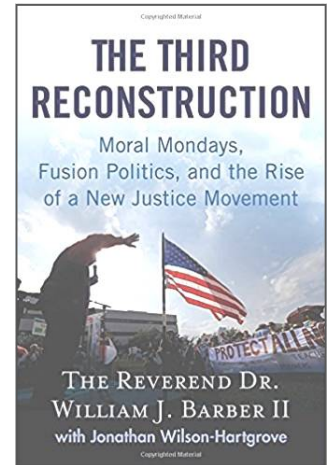
Byron Rushing told us about this initiative when he visited St. Francis House last fall as part of our Clarification of Thought series on *The Poor People’s Campaign: 50 Years Later*. As Vice President of the House of Deputies, he has been part of leadership group supporting and developing this initiative.



NPR had a recent focus on "Teaching Hard History."
Resources available on the Southern Poverty Law
Center website:

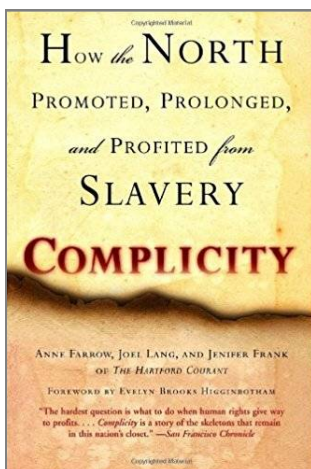
<https://www.splcenter.org/20180131/teaching-hard-history>

The Third Reconstruction is basic background reading for the New Poor People's Campaign. (Excerpts for organizing in Fall 2017 *Troubadour*)
Current updates: www.poorpeoplescampaign.org
Also the Rev. Dr. Barber's Repairers of the Breach website: <http://www.breachrepairers.org/> and co-convenor the Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis of the Kairos Center at www.kairoscenter.org.
In Connecticut look for Bp. John Selders: <http://moralmondayct.org/poor-peoples-campaign/>



Understanding and Teaching American Slavery Edited by Bethany Jay and Cynthia Lynn Lyerly (2016). Teaching slavery is tough to do, but to neglect it is to leave our students persistently muddled about perhaps THE most essential element of our national heritage. This book will open a long-neglected window for most teachers and make them wonder why no one ever taught them about the persistent and deeply-rooted nature of American slavery in U.S. history. These 19 essays explain how iconic historical events from the Louisiana Purchase to Reconstruction resulted from national struggles over the need for institutionalized slavery. The foundation of our most fundamental institutions from the wording and meaning of the Constitution to the evolution of our contemporary economic system and the most popular cultural phenomena of the times from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *Birth of a Nation*, *Gone with the Wind*, *Roots*, minstrel shows to most popular music developed in the cauldron of our collective struggles with the institution of slavery and its legacy. Even the most discussed science topics of their time, Evolution and Eugenics, derived much of their power from our struggles around slavery and its legacy, and they live on in serious cultural misunderstandings today. This book is an excellent resource for teachers, or anyone trying to understand the impact of slavery on our history and culture at their deepest levels.

Reviewed by Pam McDonald, retired high school librarian, certified Kingian Nonviolence trainer and a volunteer with the Center for Reconciliation in Providence. cfri.org

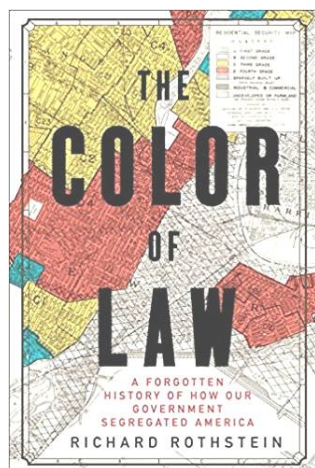


(2005) Beginning with the *Hartford Courant* coverage of the story "Aetna 'Regrets' Insuring Slaves", three *Courant* journalists set out to do more investigative reporting. They discovered and published another front page story: "*Courant* Complicity in an Old Wrong--- Newspaper's Founder [The *Courant* dates from 1794] Published Ads in Support of the Sale and Capture of Slaves." As they continued their exploration, their first response was confusion. As they say in their preface, "Hold on, weren't we the good guys in the Civil War? Wasn't the South to blame for slavery? After all, Southerners had plantations, we had the Underground Railroad. They had Simon Legree, we had his abolitionist creator --- Harriet Beecher Stowe's house is literally up the street from the *Courant*." What they discovered was incontrovertible proof of not only Connecticut's but also New York City's and indeed all of New England's complicity in slavery in the development of the wealth of colonial America. "How could we not know...[that] the year before the American Revolution more than 5,000 Africans were enslaved in Connecticut" or "that in 1790 most prosperous merchants in Connecticut owned at least one slave, as did 50 percent of the ministers?" Important reading on the history of New London, Ivoryton, Venture Smith, Prudence Crandall, John Brown.

Authors Anne Farrow, Joel Lang, and Jenifer Frank of *The Hartford Courant* end the preface of *Complicity* as follows: "We are journalists, not scholars, and want to share what surprised, and even shocked, the three of us. We have all grown up, attended schools, and worked in Northern states, from Maine to Maryland. We thought we knew our home. We thought we knew our country. We were wrong."



The History of White People by Nell Irvin Painter. This is essential reading. Starting with the Greeks and Romans, Dr. Painter traces the history of white slavery and the development of European ideals of beauty, the close links between European and American (including Emerson's) ideas about race and the enlargement of access to becoming "white" through successive waves of European immigration. In her introduction she writes, "Today, however, biologists and geneticists (not to mention literary critics) no longer believe in the physical existence of races -- though they recognize the continuing power of racism (the belief that races exist, and that some are better than others)... Although science today denies race any standing as objective truth, and the U.S. census faces taxonomic meltdown, many Americans cling to race as the unschooled cling to superstition. So long as racial discrimination remains a fact of life and statistics can be arranged to support racial difference, the American belief in races will endure." (2010)

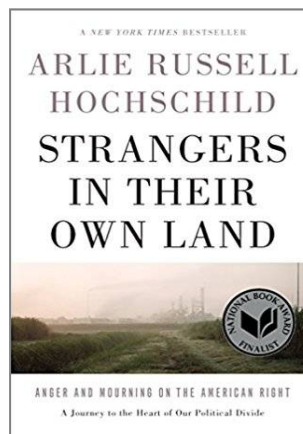


The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America (2017)
By Richard Rothstein

"Rothstein has presented what I consider to be the most forceful argument ever published on how federal, state, and local governments gave rise to and reinforced neighborhood segregation."

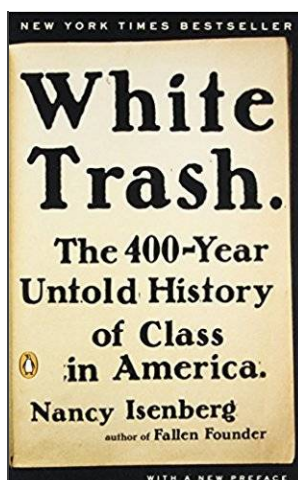
—William Julius Wilson

This book is of particular interest in light of the January, 2018 Connecticut Supreme Court decision rejecting the need for state intervention to make public education funding equitable. The court held that current patterns of racial economic disparities in suburban and urban school districts are not caused *de iure* (i.e. "by law" as in the era of legally mandated segregation) and therefore are not subject to constitutional remedy.



(2017) From the book jacket: "In *Strangers in Their Own Land*, the renowned sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild embarks on a thought-provoking journey, traveling from her liberal hometown of Berkeley, California, deep into arch-conservative Louisiana bayou country -- an area in environmental crisis, where many people suffer from poor health and wide-

spread poverty, enduring rates of education and life expectancy that are among the country's lowest. Her mission is to do what so few of us are able to do: truly *listen* to the other side in order to understand why they believe -- and feel -- the way they do." Over the course of five years, Hochschild befriends a variety of people who take her to fish fries, Pentecostal church services, Trump rallies and oil soaked wetlands.



(2016) "This eye-opening investigation into our country's entrenched social hierarchy is acutely relevant." -- *O, The Oprah Magazine*

"In *White Trash*, Nancy Isenberg reveals a dark and tangled American secret at the core of our history: the pervasive persistence of white poverty. She deftly explores the interplay of mockery and denial in treatments, historical and fictional, of hardships and limits in a supposed land of equal and abundant opportunity. Drawing upon popular media as well as historical sources, from past and present, she exposes harsh realities long kept hidden in plain sight."
-- Alan Taylor

"[*White Trash*] sheds bright light on a long history of demagogic national politicking, beginning with Jackson. It makes Donald Trump seem far less unprecedented than today's pundits proclaim." -- *Slate*

Stand Up, Sisters!

by Ellen Adams

The 2017 Women's March was held to make it clear to our new administration on their first day in office that women's rights are human rights. Although the primary call was to go to Washington D.C., many sister marches were held across the United States and around the world.



Jana Flaherty (left) and Laurie Gorham (right) at the 2018 Women's March in Hartford

Between 3.3 and 5.2 million people gathered on all 7 continents to support a variety of issues including healthcare reform, reproductive rights, sexual orientation rights and racial and pay equality. Many members of the St. Francis House extended community participated in these gatherings. Laurie Gorham spent 20 hours on a bus to go to Washington D.C. with a friend. Marlies Parent and Jodi and Eric Johnson went to Boston. Madeline Labriola went to the march in Palm Beach, Florida. They went because they believed it is important to stand up for what they believe and because they espoused the values being presented.

They all enjoyed the experience. It was great to be with so many like minded people and the shared experience deepened their relationships with the people they were with. It helped combat the despair and negativity they felt. It was also great to see people of all ages joining together to send a message of solidarity to our government officials. Jodi was happy to find out that her sisters from New Hampshire had also been in Boston that day.

All 5 of them also attended the 2018 Women's March but in different places. Jodi, Eric and Laurie went to Hartford the second year and Madeline and Marlies went to Providence. The MeToo movement

and Power of the Polls were conspicuous the second year.

Some of the marches were really rallies. Jodi and Eric enjoyed the Boston trip more than the one in Hartford because they marched through the neighborhoods and enjoyed the support of the people they passed. They felt that staying in a contained area was less effective. Marlies and Madeline sang at the Providence March because they are Raging Grannies. This group sings songs about social justice issues to familiar tunes. It was a great joy to have the mass of demonstrators join them in singing these words to the tune of the Battle Hymn of the Republic:

“We’ve broken our shackles; still we sing a battle song,
We work for liberation and we’re many millions strong,
The world needs women’s voices which were silent for too long,
That’s why we’re raging on.

STAND UP, SISTERS, JOIN THE CHORUS,
STAND UP, SISTERS, JOIN THE CHORUS,
STAND UP, SISTERS, JOIN THE CHORUS,
AT LAST OUR TIME HAS COME!

Let’s reach out to all women everywhere across the seas,
Whose lives are still in bondage to a host of miseries,
Till women’s rights and dignity extend to everyone,
We will keep raging on!”



Marlies Parent (far left) and Madeline Labriola (third from right) holding the Raging Grannies banner at the 2018 Women's March in Providence.

Going to the march was not the only activity these people participate in. Laurie writes letters and calls her elected representatives. Jodi and Eric attend meetings and other events that support the causes they believe in. Marlies and Madeline continue to write songs and sing with the Raging Grannies on a variety of issues. They said that two groups have formed as a result of the marches, HUDDLE in West-erly and RISE UP MYSTIC which they support when they can.



Jodi and Eric Johnson wearing their Pink Pussy hats at the 2018 Women's March in Hartford.

St. Francis House is a place of prayer, a house of hospitality and a center for peace and justice ministry. The residents and members of the extended community support and offer leadership in the local area and through their partnerships with organizations like the Voluntown Peace Trust and the Homeless Hospitality Center.

Ellen Adams, is a member of the extended community and a deacon in the Episcopal Church. She helps run a re-entry program for women coming out of prison in SECT.



Clarification of Thought Schedule

Spring



2018

Living Our Faith:

Personal Experience from Religious Traditions

We are inviting persons from different faith traditions to come for an evening to reflect on how their tradition has impacted their own lives with respect to such issues as prayer, food, money and engagement in civic life.

Friday Schedule 5:30 Evening Prayer;
6:00 Supper; 7-8:30 Conversation

Date	Presenter / Tradition
March 9:	Dr. Subba Rao CT Hindu Valley Temple Society
March 23:	Edward Sarabia <i>Native American, Tlingit</i>
April 6:	Fr. Bob Washabaugh <i>Roman Catholic</i>
April 19: (Thursday!)	Rabbi Marc Ekstrand <i>Reform Judaism</i>
May 4:	Sr. Clare <i>Buddhist, Peace Pagoda</i>
May 18:	David Madden <i>Society of Friends</i>
June 1 (Note different time/meal schedule)	
6:15	Evening Prayer;
7-8:30	Conversation
8:30	Iftar - traditional Muslim meal for breaking the daylong fast during Ramadan.

Amar Faraj
Islamic Center of New London

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Religious Traditions”

Center Section: Building the Beloved Community:
Book Reviews and Resources

St. Francis House

Annual Community Retreat

LIVING OUR FAITH

Anchoring Time / Day of Reflection

Saturday, June 9, 2018

9:00AM Coffee

9:30AM - 3:00PM Program

Lunch catered by Pacifeast

Location

AJ Muste Center
Voluntown Peace Trust
539 Beach Pond Road
Voluntown, CT 06384