

Vernice's Final View

6/20/16

What a wonderful Celebration! The entire weekend was just over the top with love and community. I want to say a public thank you to all who celebrated with me in person, in spirit, in prayer. Thank you to friends who traveled from other cities and states to be with me. Thank you for the words of witness and celebration from Presiding Elder Hughes, AME Church, from Rev Zaki Zaki, UMC and Cathy Knight, CWACM. Thank you for the hugs, the gifts, the emails, the texts...whew! Your love and well wishes took my breath away.

I want to say a special thank you to my retirement team: Satia Orange, event planner extraordinaire, words cannot express to you how much I appreciate the amount of work and energy that went into the planning. To Dee and Carolyn thanks for organizing the Friday night party and for the music on Saturday. To Vincent and the Saturday open house crew: Ines, Anna, Kaya, Jon Fallon, MJ, Chris, Jose, Herbert, Charolette and all who furnished food - THANK YOU. A special thank you to our friend Jimmy and The Metropolitan for the use of their community room. Thank you to Victor and the Sunday Morning Team, responsible for worship and the tasteful and abundant brunch that followed. To Jackie and the choir - you all were extraordinary and the robes!!! The accompanists, organist, and drummer - Jenn, Mark, Tim and George. Unique Spirit, the praise team - Jayla, Chantal and Ines - Jon Zilliox and Kevin, Charolette, Demetrius and all who brought a dish, thank you. To all who helped with setup and cleanup. To my daughter who designed the invitation and created the slide show and sang so beautifully...thank you! To Ruthann who helped create the message for the invitation. To Alexia, office manager and bulletin guru. To Reed who centered me for the worship service, "breathe, Vernice". To my Partner Brian who is my biggest cheerleader and my best friend. Thank you. Thank you all!

I want to say a special thank you to Alka for your support this year and I wish you well as you continue in ministry with Broadway. And finally thank you to all my Broadway Family. The tears, the laughter, the challenge, the growth – thank you for sharing ministry with me for 15 years.

I leave this last list of resources with you as you continue to do justice ministry at the intersections:

Redefining Realness: My Path to Womanhood by Janet Mock. With total honesty Janet Mock talks about her experience growing up young, multiracial, poor and trans in America. It's a fascinating story told with accessible language, insight and heart. She talks in depth about the challenges and vulnerabilities of being a part of a marginalized and misunderstood community.

Where the Edge Gathers: Building a community of radical inclusion by Bishop Yvett Flunder. This is a must read for serious justice seekers. Bishop Flunder speaks critically about the essential components of building and sustaining inclusive communities. In this book Bishop Flunder uses examples of persons most marginalized -- same gender couples, transgendered persons, gay persons living with HIV/AIDS -- to emphasize the need for radical welcome and inclusivity in our faith communities.

Gender Queer: Voices from beyond the Sexual Binary edited by Joan Nestle, Clare Howell and Riki Wilchins. In this groundbreaking anthology, three experts in gender studies and politics navigate the rigidly imposed binary of two genders to discover and illuminate through thirty first person accounts the limitless possibilities of identity. Powerful stories.

Sister Outsider by Audre Lorde. Audre Lorde was a prophet, writer, lesbian, poet and mother. In this book of essays and speeches, Audre Lorde examines racism, ageism, heterosexism, and classism. Her stories are incisive and real, reflecting struggle but ultimately offering messages of hope.

Dismantling Racism: The Continuing Challenge to White America by Joseph Barndt. This book does not intend to attack or produce guilt, but its message is tough and demanding. It begins by analyzing racism as it is today and the ways it has changed or not changed over the past few decades. This book focuses on the task of dismantling racism, and how we can work together to build a racially just, multiracial and multicultural society. I would call this book anti-racism 101.

Body Remember: A Memoir by Kenny Fries. In this poetic, introspective memoir, Kenny Fries illustrates his intersecting identities as gay, Jewish and disabled. While learning about the history of his body through medical records and his physical scars, Kenny Fries discovers just how deeply the memories and psychic scars run. The author also examines family dynamics during this journey.

Welcoming the Stranger: Justice, Compassion & Truth in the Immigration Debate by Jenny Hwang Yang and Matthew Soerens. In this book World Relief staffers Matthew Soerens and Jenny Hwang move beyond the rhetoric to offer a Christian response to immigration. They put a human face on the issue and tell stories of immigrants' experiences in and out of the system. With careful historical understanding and thoughtful policy analysis, they debunk myths and misconceptions about immigration and show the limitations of the current immigration system. Ultimately they point toward immigration reform that is compassionate, sensible and just, as they offer concrete ways for church communities to welcome and minister to our immigrant neighbors.

So... Broadway, it's been a beautiful 15 years. Thank you. Here is how I ended my last sermon, this past Sunday. It is my challenge and my prayer for you and to you as you continue justice ministry at Broadway.

"So, as I take my leave I challenge you to keep the radical welcome alive – keep naming who is in the room (and be aware of who is not) – keep leading the justice conversation – asking the hard questions – demanding change so that violence is not the answer – keep demanding change so that all will have a home and health care, and education and clean water – and a fair wage. Keep demanding change so that the hate speech that has become so prevalent in our politics and in our world is not the only word people hear. Keep demanding truth and equity and freedom for all. Broadway don't stop...don't ever stop speaking truth to power. This community needs you, Chicago needs you. The world needs you. I need you... your voice, your presence, your gifts. I love you. Thank you for being you."



Trusting the Way,

Vernice