

## THE ROCKY ROAD TO RACIAL RECONCILIATION

And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. (Colossians 1:20) Recently, some 142 years after slavery was unofficially ended when Robert E. Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House in Virginia and almost 400 years after the first African slaves arrived in Jamestown, the Virginia legislature officially apologized for Virginia's role in those abominable actions. The apology is the latest in a series of long overdue steps Virginia has taken to reconcile its segregationist past. In 2004 the Legislature created a scholarship fund for blacks whose schools were shut down between 1954 and 1964 because of the massive resistance to school desegregation. Sponsors of the symbolic resolution believe Virginia is the first state to pass such a measure. The resolution is mild, innocuous, and totally toothless, but it acknowledges the monstrous wrong of slavery.

It states that slavery "ranks as the most horrendous of all depredations of human rights and violations of our founding ideals in our nation's history, and the abolition of slavery was followed by systematic discrimination, enforced segregation, and other insidious institutions and practices toward Americans of African descent that were rooted in racism, racial bias, and racial misunderstanding."

The Virginia House approved the resolution 96-0 and it was unanimously passed in the 40-member Senate. Among those voting for the measure was Delegate Frank D. Hargrove, an 80-year-old Republican who antagonized black leaders earlier this year by saying "black citizens should get over" slavery instead of seeking a formal apology from the state. Hargrove voted for the revised measure because it expresses regret without actually apologizing.

In a broader sense, now that Virginia has opened the door, Congress should also step up and atone for its role in slavery. Michigan Congressman John Conyers has had such a bill bouncing around Congress since 1989.

The greatest impediment to black empowerment, economic justice, and reconciliation has been the Constitution, which institutionalized the disparate social and economic status of blacks and whites. It wasn't just Virginia and a handful of other southern states that nurtured slavery. The U.S. government had encoded slavery in the Constitution and encouraged it for over a hundred years. This onerous system of entrenched bias, bigotry and segregation fostered the wealth and power imbalance between blacks and whites. The American economy boomed as landowners, traders, insurance companies, bankers, shippers, and other businesses made billions off the backs of black slaves.

The several small steps that Virginia has taken toward reconciliation are a welcome start after many decades of dialogue on race issues. Still the residual effects of the multi-generational alienation between blacks and whites lingers on. Blacks have made little relative progress from slavery to today because the American majority still harbors notions of race that perpetuates the slavery pathology. Even while America searched for its own moral high ground and championed personal freedom and economic independence blacks

were still socially, economically and politically marginalized. There is nothing new about state and federal governments issuing apologies for past wrongs committed against Blacks. The U.S. government admitted it was legally liable in 1997 to pay the black survivors and family members of the four-decade long Tuskegee syphilis experiment begun in the 1930's that made human guinea pigs of black patients. They were the victims of a blatant medical atrocity conducted with the full knowledge and approval of the U.S. government. Indicative of the wide dispersion of thought and dialogue over racial reconciliation is an observation by Dr. Raleigh Washington in the book *Breaking Down the Walls*. He addresses the issue of how whites talk to whites about blacks and how blacks talk to blacks about whites. The underlying problem with this lies in the fact that whites and blacks do not intrinsically communicate with one another about their experiences, resulting in walls of friction and misunderstanding.

The even deeper problem is the inability of man to reconcile with God. That being the case it is not difficult to understand the continuing racial reconciliation gap. In spiritual reconciliation God is the offended party whose law has been and is being violated. Therefore, it is man who must become reconciled to God not God to man. The cause of the spiritual disharmony and enmity with God is that man first strives to be in harmony with the world instead of God's law. Reconciliation with God should be man's first priority because an alienation and separation exists. God is love and even though God loved the world so much.

that he gave his only begotten son on behalf of man, the fact remains that mankind as a whole has been in a state of enmity towards God. God's ultimate gift of love to the world was a gift made by Him to His enemies because of love guided by principles rather than friendship. Once man is reconciled to God these same principles could be used to smooth out the rocky road leading to racial reconciliation by those who are now alienated and enemies in their own minds because of their wicked work

By *James W. Breedlove*

*Comments or opinions may be sent to the writer at: [www.truthclinic.com](http://www.truthclinic.com)*

### The Tyler Museum of Art Announces Rebecca Lawton Lecture

**June 30, 2007**-The Tyler Museum of Art is pleased to announce an upcoming lecture by Rebecca Lawton, Ph.D., in conjunction with the exhibition "Earth & Sky: The Pastels of Josephine Oliver-Travis" scheduled for June 30th, from 2 - 4 p.m. in the gallery.

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