Charleston Syllabus

READINGS ON RACE, RACISM, AND RACIAL VIOLENCE

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More Than a Seat on the Bus

(December 1, 2015)

Today marks the sixtieth anniversary of the arrest of Mrs. Rosa Parks in Montgomery, Alabama. We all know the popular story of what happened on that cold December day in 1955. Indeed, it has become an American myth. A soft-spoken seamstress with tired feet refused to move to the back of the bus to make room for a white man. Her spontaneous action and subsequent arrest sparked a year-long boycott of the city's buses that brought down Jim Crow in the cradle of the Confederacy. And the path to black equality was cleared.

But that story, of Rosa Parks tiptoeing into history, both oversimplifies the deep roots of the boycott and disregards the bold actions of the many black women who made the Montgomery movement about more than a seat on a bus. In truth, the Montgomery Bus Boycott was a protest against racial *and* sexual violence, and Rosa Parks's arrest on December 1, 1955, was but one act in a life devoted to the protection and defense of black people generally, and black women specifically. Indeed, the bus boycott was, in many ways, the precursor to the #SayHerName Twitter campaigns designed to remind us that the lives of black women matter.

In 1997, an interviewer asked Joe Azbell, former city editor of the *Montgomery Advertiser*, who was the most important person in the bus boycott. Surprisingly, he did not say Rosa Parks. "Gertrude Perkins," he said, "is not even mentioned in the history books, but she had as much to do with the bus boycott as anyone on earth." On March 27, 1949, Perkins was on her way home from a party when two white Montgomery police officers arrested her for "public drunkenness." They pushed her into the backseat of their patrol car, drove to a railroad embankment, dragged her behind a building, and raped her at gunpoint.

Left alone on the roadside, Perkins somehow mustered the courage to report the crime. She went directly to the Holt Street Baptist Church parsonage and woke the Reverend Solomon A. Seay Sr., an outspoken minister in Montgomery. "We didn't go to bed that morning," he recalled. "I kept her at my house, carefully wrote down what she said and later had it notarized." The next day, Seay escorted Perkins to the police station. City authorities called Perkins's claim "completely false" and refused to hold a lineup or issue any warrants since, according to the mayor, it would "violate the Constitutional rights" of the police. Besides, he said, "my policemen would not do a thing like that."

But African Americans knew better. What happened to Gertrude Perkins was no isolated incident. Montgomery's police force had a reputation for racist and sexist brutality that went back years, and black leaders in the city were tired of it. When the authorities made clear that they would not respond to Perkins's claims, local NAACP activists, labor leaders, and ministers formed an umbrella organization called the "Citizens Committee for Gertrude Perkins." Rosa Parks was one of the local activists who demanded an investigation and trial, and helped maintain public protests that lasted for two months.

By 1949 Rosa Parks was an experienced antirape activist. The campaign on behalf of Perkins, for example, was modeled on a protest Parks helped launch several years earlier for Recy Taylor, a young black mother kidnapped and brutally raped in 1944 in the town of Abbeville, Alabama, by a group of white men who threatened to kill her if she told anyone. Taylor reported the crime anyway and the Montgomery NAACP sent Parks to Abbeville to investigate. After gathering Taylor's testimony, Parks carried it back to Montgomery, where she and other activists launched "The Committee for Equal Justice for Mrs. Recy Taylor," a nationwide campaign that demanded protection for black womanhood and accountability for Taylor's assailants.

Two years after the protest on behalf of Gertrude Perkins, meanwhile, black activists rallied to defend yet another victim of white sexual violence in Montgomery. In February 1951, a white grocer named Sam Green raped a black teenager named Flossie Hardman whom he employed as a babysitter. After Hardman told her parents about the attack, they decided to press charges, and when an all-white jury returned a not-guilty verdict after five minutes of deliberation, the family reached out to community activists for help. Together, individuals such as Rufus Lewis, who organized voter registration campaigns, Rosa Parks, who was still serving as secretary of the Montgomery NAACP chapter, and members of the newly formed Women's Political Council, launched a boycott of Green's grocery store. After only a few weeks, African Americans delivered their own guilty verdict by driving Green's business into the red.

By the early 1950s, then, a history of sexual assaults on black women and of the use of the boycott as a powerful weapon for justice had laid the groundwork for what was to come. Given that history, it made sense that city buses served as the flashpoint for mass protest. Other than police officers, few were as guilty of committing acts of racist violence and sexual harassment of black women as Montgomery's bus operators, who bullied and brutalized black passengers daily. Worse, bus drivers had police power. They carried blackjacks and guns, and they assaulted and sometimes even killed African Americans who refused to abide by the racial order of Jim Crow.

In 1953 alone, African Americans filed over thirty formal complaints of abuse and mistreatment on the buses. Most came from working-class black

women, mainly domestics, who made up nearly 70 percent of the bus ridership. They said drivers hurled nasty, sexualized insults at them, touched them inappropriately, and physically abused them. In May 1954, JoAnn Robinson, leader of the Women's Political Council, threatened a boycott of Montgomery's city buses, and only after months of futile efforts to get city officials to address the problem did the boycott finally come into being. Women walked rather than ride the buses, Rosa Parks said in 1956, not in support of her, but because she "was not the only person who had been mistreated and humiliated." Other women, she said, "had gone through similarly shameful experiences, most worse than mine."

These experiences propelled African American women into every conceivable aspect of the boycott. Women were the chief strategists and negotiators of the boycott and ran its day-to-day operation. Women helped staff the elaborate carpool system, raised most of the local money for the movement, and filled the majority of the pews at the mass meetings, where they testified publicly about physical and sexual abuse on the buses. And of course, by walking hundreds of miles to protest their humiliation, African American women reclaimed their bodies and demanded the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Rooted in the struggle to protect and defend black womanhood from racial and sexual violence, the Montgomery Bus Boycott is impossible to understand and situate in its proper historical context without understanding the stories and *saying the names* of Gertrude Perkins, Flossie Hardman, Recy Taylor, and all the black women who were mistreated in Montgomery.

Today, as we celebrate the anniversary of Rosa Parks's arrest, witness the growth of the #BlackLivesMatter movement on city streets and campus quads across the country, and #SayHerName to demand an end to police violence against women of color, we should look to the past—and remember it correctly. Parks and the women who started the Montgomery bus boycott fought for more than a seat on the bus. They demanded the right to move through the world without being molested, fought against police brutality and racial and sexual violence, and insisted on the right to ownership and control of their own bodies.

PART 6

Contemporary Perspectives on Race and Racial Violence

CHAD WILLIAMS

Kendrick Lamar, in the opening bridge of his song "Blacker the Berry," invokes an image of late 1960s urban unrest and black rage. As the civil rights movement reached its apogee with the 1965 Voting Rights Act, the neglect of inner-city black America and the myriad issues facing its residents, such as unemployment and police brutality, exploded to the surface. From Watts to Newark and Baltimore, African Americans rebelled against their conditions and the devaluation of their lives, whether by the police officer administering "law and order" or the sniper who murdered Martin Luther King Jr. on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee.

In "Blacker the Berry," Kendrick Lamar does not offer a retrospective of the late 1960s but instead speaks of the meaning of blackness in 2015, the year of the Charleston, South Carolina, Emmanuel AME shooting. Irrespective of time and place, the massacre of nine men and women inside a church during bible study would have registered as significant. The tragedy of Charleston, however, was compounded by the historical moment and national racial climate in which it took place.

Beginning with the 1968 presidential election of Richard M. Nixon, national politicians pivoted to a "post–civil rights" approach to race relations and inequality. As Thomas Sugrue outlines, shifting government priorities combined with other social and economic forces to devastate urban African American communities. Well-paying jobs with benefits vanished as a result of deindustrialization. Urban renewal projects decimated working-class neighborhoods, replacing single-family homes with housing projects that quickly became overcrowded and poorly maintained. Crucial social and political resources departed with the flight of whites and middle-class African Americans to the suburbs, contributing to eroding tax bases and underfunded schools. These socioeconomic developments were accompanied by a pernicious discourse that blamed the problems African Americans confronted on their own familial behavior and cultural deficiencies.

Arguably no other phenomenon did more to ravage African American

communities and families than mass incarceration. President Ronald Reagan's launch of a so-called War on Drugs marked a new stage in a long history of criminalizing blackness and, as Kali Gross illuminates, destroying the right of black women in particular to protect themselves. Police, empowered by harsh sentencing laws and military-style weapons and tactics, specifically targeted predominately African American and Latino neighborhoods. Throughout the 1980s the percentage of black people imprisoned for nonviolent drug offenses skyrocketed. Policies that disproportionately impacted poor African Americans continued under President George H. W. Bush and were strengthened by his successor, President Bill Clinton, who went to great lengths to prove that he and the Democratic Party were tough on crime.

The very meaning of racial progress in the 1980s and early 1990s proved confounding. African Americans could point to important political achievements, such as the presidential campaigns of Jesse Jackson and elections of black mayors in major cities across the country, the steady growth of the black middle class, or the ubiquitous presence of black faces in every realm of American popular culture—Michael Jackson on the music stage, Oprah Winfrey on the television set, or Magic Johnson on the basketball court. However, the intractability of racial inequality and racist violence could not be ignored, and it cut across class lines. African Americans moving into white neighborhoods, as Jeannine Bell demonstrates, faced the threat of hate crimes, while African Americans trapped in the inner city remained subjected to police abuse. The 1992 Los Angeles rebellion, sparked by the acquittal of four white police officers caught on video beating black motorist Rodney King, reflected the pent-up rage felt by many African Americans. When Compton native Kendrick Lamar raps in "Blacker the Berry," "You sabotage my community, makin' a killin' / you made me a killer, emancipation of a real nigga," he is speaking to this frustration and desire to be both heard and seen on his own terms.

As the twenty-first century dawned, the problem of the color line still remained. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks triggered a wave of hyperpatriotism and demand for 100 percent Americanism. Many African Americans, however, approached this moment and the nation's subsequent "War on Terror" with a different historical sensibility, one informed by a legacy of slavery, lynching, mass slaughters, state-sanctioned violence, and other forms of racial terror. Hurricane Katrina, the August 2005 storm that, together with a failed government response, killed upwards of eighteen hundred people, resulted in over $100 billion in property damage, and destroyed the black neighborhoods of New Orleans, permanently displacing its residents, again challenged African Americans' faith in their country.

The 2008 election of Barack Obama was seen by many Americans not only as the turning of the page on this recent history but also as a move beyond the nation's long and troubled racial past. As the first African American president of the United States, Obama symbolized hope and the ability to transcend even the most unimaginable racial barriers. The dream of the Obama presidency and a "postracial" America quickly collided with the continued existence of racial inequality and the legacies of white supremacy. In many ways the Obama years heightened the expectations of African Americans, especially among a younger generation, who increasingly refused to accept the disconnect between the promise of America as symbolized by President Obama and its cruel reality when it came to the value of black life.

The February 26, 2012, shooting death of African American teenager Trayvon Martin at the hands of George Zimmerman and subsequent trial was a watershed moment in contemporary race relations and struggles for African American civil rights. Dylann Roof credited the incident for awakening his white racial consciousness. In contrast, after Zimmerman's acquittal on grounds of self-defense, a broad youth-based movement for racial justice emerged, sparked by the Twitter declaration #BlackLivesMatter. The #BlackLivesMatter movement draws inspiration from earlier civil rights groups, such as the Student Nonviolence Coordinating Committee (SNCC), while creatively employing social media as a means of communication, mobilization, and consciousness raising. As this new movement continues to evolve, historian Barbara Ransby offers crucial perspective and advice for its long-term viability and success.

The Charleston massacre took place during a year-long span in which the #BlackLivesMatter movement focused the nation's attention on the long-standing problem of police violence against African Americans. The suburban St. Louis city of Ferguson, Missouri, became ground zero following the August 9, 2014, death of eighteen-year-old Michael Brown by white police officer Darren Wilson. The protests that followed, marked by alarming displays of militarized force by area law enforcement, compelled the Justice Department to investigate the practices of the Ferguson police department. Their report, an excerpt of which is included in this section, revealed a systemic pattern of violent abuse and economic exploitation directed toward Ferguson's black residents.

In the aftermath of Ferguson, new stories of black men and women being killed by police became almost daily occurrences. The videotaped murder of Walter Scott, shot in the back multiple times by a North Charleston police officer after a seemingly routine traffic stop, was especially shocking and exposed the inadequacy of simple police reform in lieu of fundamental transformation of the nation's criminal-justice system and the moral logic behind it. State senator Rev. Clementa Pinckney, in a May 9 speech before the South Carolina legislature on the Walter Scott shooting, intoned, "Today, the nation looks at South

Carolina and is looking at us to see if we will rise to be the body, and to be the state that we really say that we are."

The following month, on June 17, Pinckney would be killed in his church along with eight other men and women. As details of the massacre unfolded and Dylann Roof's motives became more clear, much of the nation and, indeed, the world looked to see if South Carolina would honestly confront its troublesome racial past and present, symbolized by the Confederate battle flag flying on the grounds of the state capital building, a history Steve Estes recounts. President Barack Obama's eulogy of Rev. Pinckney touched on this issue and many other themes, among them the historic role of the black church and the power of grace and forgiveness. The article by Esther Armah offers a different perspective on black forgiveness of white supremacist terror, placing it within a global context, as does the essay by Brittney Cooper on the faith and feminism of Bree Newsome. Newsome, as she reached the top of the thirty-foot pole that held the Confederate flag and looked down on the capital police officers prepared to arrest her, boldly pronounced, "You come against me with hatred and oppression and violence. I come against you in the name of God. This flag comes down today!"

In "Blacker the Berry," Kendrick Lamar repeatedly declares, "I'm the biggest hypocrite in 2015." Lamar's honest self-reflection speaks to the internal challenges many African Americans and socially conscious individuals face during moments racial crisis. While it may be easy to celebrate a Bree Newsome, not everyone will possess her courage. Lamar pushes us to seriously consider the ways in which our actions, as well as our passivity in the midst of injustice, allow the conditions that contributed to the Charleston shooting to persist. As Lamar's song concludes with him shouting, "Hypocrite!" one final time, we are left to grapple with how learning about, embracing, and protecting blackness and black lives is a matter of both personal accountability and collective responsibility.

BARACK OBAMA

Remarks by the President in Eulogy for the Honorable Reverend Clementa Pinckney, College of Charleston, Charleston, South Carolina

(June 29, 2015)

THE PRESIDENT: Giving all praise and honor to God.

The Bible calls us to hope. To persevere, and have faith in things not seen.

"They were still living by faith when they died," Scripture tells us. "They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on Earth."

We are here today to remember a man of God who lived by faith. A man who believed in things not seen. A man who believed there were better days ahead, off in the distance. A man of service who persevered, knowing full well he would not receive all those things he was promised, because he believed his efforts would deliver a better life for those who followed.

To Jennifer, his beloved wife; to Eliana and Malana, his beautiful, wonderful daughters; to the Mother Emanuel family and the people of Charleston, the people of South Carolina.

I cannot claim to have the good fortune to know Reverend Pinckney well. But I did have the pleasure of knowing him and meeting him here in South Carolina, back when we were both a little bit younger. Back when I didn't have visible grey hair. The first thing I noticed was his graciousness, his smile, his reassuring baritone, his deceptive sense of humor—all qualities that helped him wear so effortlessly a heavy burden of expectation.

Friends of his remarked this week that when Clementa Pinckney entered a room, it was like the future arrived; that even from a young age, folks knew he was special. Anointed. He was the progeny of a long line of the faithful—a family of preachers who spread God's word, a family of protesters who sowed change to expand voting rights and desegregate the South. Clem heard their instruction, and he did not forsake their teaching.

He was in the pulpit by 13, pastor by 18, public servant by 23. He did not

exhibit any of the cockiness of youth, nor youth's insecurities; instead, he set an example worthy of his position, wise beyond his years, in his speech, in his conduct, in his love, faith, and purity.

As a senator, he represented a sprawling swath of the Lowcountry, a place that has long been one of the most neglected in America. A place still wracked by poverty and inadequate schools; a place where children can still go hungry and the sick can go without treatment. A place that needed somebody like Clem.

His position in the minority party meant the odds of winning more resources for his constituents were often long. His calls for greater equity were too often unheeded, the votes he cast were sometimes lonely. But he never gave up. He stayed true to his convictions. He would not grow discouraged. After a full day at the capitol, he'd climb into his car and head to the church to draw sustenance from his family, from his ministry, from the community that loved and needed him. There he would fortify his faith, and imagine what might be.

Reverend Pinckney embodied a politics that was neither mean, nor small. He conducted himself quietly, and kindly, and diligently. He encouraged progress not by pushing his ideas alone, but by seeking out your ideas, partnering with you to make things happen. He was full of empathy and fellow feeling, able to walk in somebody else's shoes and see through their eyes. No wonder one of his senate colleagues remembered Senator Pinckney as "the most gentle of the 46 of us—the best of the 46 of us."

Clem was often asked why he chose to be a pastor and a public servant. But the person who asked probably didn't know the history of the AME church. As our brothers and sisters in the AME church know, we don't make those distinctions. "Our calling," Clem once said, "is not just within the walls of the congregation, but . . . the life and community in which our congregation resides."

He embodied the idea that our Christian faith demands deeds and not just words; that the "sweet hour of prayer" actually lasts the whole week long; that to put our faith in action is more than individual salvation, it's about our collective salvation; that to feed the hungry and clothe the naked and house the homeless is not just a call for isolated charity but the imperative of a just society.

What a good man. Sometimes I think that's the best thing to hope for when you're eulogized—after all the words and recitations and resumes are read, to just say someone was a good man.

You don't have to be of high station to be a good man. Preacher by 13. Pastor by 18. Public servant by 23. What a life Clementa Pinckney lived. What an example he set. What a model for his faith. And then to lose him at 41—slain in his sanctuary with eight wonderful members of his flock, each at different stages in life but bound together by a common commitment to God.

Cynthia Hurd. Susie Jackson. Ethel Lance. DePayne Middleton-Doctor. Tywanza Sanders. Daniel L. Simmons. Sharonda Coleman-Singleton. Myra Thompson. Good people. Decent people. God-fearing people. People so full of life and so full of kindness. People who ran the race, who persevered. People of great faith.

To the families of the fallen, the nation shares in your grief. Our pain cuts that much deeper because it happened in a church. The church is and always has been the center of African-American life—a place to call our own in a too often hostile world, a sanctuary from so many hardships.

Over the course of centuries, black churches served as "hush harbors" where slaves could worship in safety; praise houses where their free descendants could gather and shout hallelujah; rest stops for the weary along the Underground Railroad; bunkers for the foot soldiers of the Civil Rights Movement. They have been, and continue to be, community centers where we organize for jobs and justice; places of scholarship and network; places where children are loved and fed and kept out of harm's way, and told that they are beautiful and smart—and taught that they matter. That's what happens in church.

That's what the black church means. Our beating heart. The place where our dignity as a people is inviolate. When there's no better example of this tradition than Mother Emanuel—a church built by blacks seeking liberty, burned to the ground because its founder sought to end slavery, only to rise up again, a Phoenix from these ashes.

When there were laws banning all-black church gatherings, services happened here anyway, in defiance of unjust laws. When there was a righteous movement to dismantle Jim Crow, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached from its pulpit, and marches began from its steps. A sacred place, this church. Not just for blacks, not just for Christians, but for every American who cares about the steady expansion—of human rights and human dignity in this country; a foundation stone for liberty and justice for all. That's what the church meant.

We do not know whether the killer of Reverend Pinckney and eight others knew all of this history. But he surely sensed the meaning of his violent act. It was an act that drew on a long history of bombs and arson and shots fired at churches, not random, but as a means of control, a way to terrorize and oppress. An act that he imagined would incite fear and recrimination; violence and suspicion. An act that he presumed would deepen divisions that trace back to our nation's original sin.

Oh, but God works in mysterious ways. God has different ideas.

He didn't know he was being used by God. Blinded by hatred, the alleged killer could not see the grace surrounding Reverend Pinckney and that Bible study group—the light of love that shone as they opened the church doors and

invited a stranger to join in their prayer circle. The alleged killer could have never anticipated the way the families of the fallen would respond when they saw him in court—in the midst of unspeakable grief, with words of forgiveness. He couldn't imagine that.

The alleged killer could not imagine how the city of Charleston, under the good and wise leadership of Mayor Riley—how the state of South Carolina, how the United States of America would respond—not merely with revulsion at his evil act, but with big-hearted generosity and, more importantly, with a thoughtful introspection and self-examination that we so rarely see in public life.

Blinded by hatred, he failed to comprehend what Reverend Pinckney so well understood—the power of God's grace.

This whole week, I've been reflecting on this idea of grace. The grace of the families who lost loved ones. The grace that Reverend Pinckney would preach about in his sermons. The grace described in one of my favorite hymnals—the one we all know: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I'm found; was blind but now I see.

According to the Christian tradition, grace is not earned. Grace is not merited. It's not something we deserve. Rather, grace is the free and benevolent favor of God—as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings. Grace.

As a nation, out of this terrible tragedy, God has visited grace upon us, for he has allowed us to see where we've been blind. He has given us the chance, where we've been lost, to find our best selves. We may not have earned it, this grace, with our rancor and complacency, and short-sightedness and fear of each other—but we got it all the same. He gave it to us anyway. He's once more given us grace. But it is up to us now to make the most of it, to receive it with gratitude, and to prove ourselves worthy of this gift.

For too long, we were blind to the pain that the Confederate flag stirred in too many of our citizens. It's true, a flag did not cause these murders. But as people from all walks of life, Republicans and Democrats, now acknowledge—including Governor Haley, whose recent eloquence on the subject is worthy of praise—as we all have to acknowledge, the flag has always represented more than just ancestral pride. For many, black and white, that flag was a reminder of systemic oppression and racial subjugation. We see that now.

Removing the flag from this state's capitol would not be an act of political correctness; it would not be an insult to the valor of Confederate soldiers. It would simply be an acknowledgment that the cause for which they fought—the cause of slavery—was wrong—the imposition of Jim Crow after the Civil War, the resistance to civil rights for all people was wrong. It would be one step in an honest accounting of America's history; a modest but meaningful balm for so

many unhealed wounds. It would be an expression of the amazing changes that have transformed this state and this country for the better, because of the work of so many people of goodwill, people of all races striving to form a more perfect union. By taking down that flag, we express God's grace.

But I don't think God wants us to stop there. For too long, we've been blind to the way past injustices continue to shape the present. Perhaps we see that now. Perhaps this tragedy causes us to ask some tough questions about how we can permit so many of our children to languish in poverty, or attend dilapidated schools, or grow up without prospects for a job or for a career.

Perhaps it causes us to examine what we're doing to cause some of our children to hate. Perhaps it softens hearts towards those lost young men, tens and tens of thousands caught up in the criminal justice system—and leads us to make sure that that system is not infected with bias; that we embrace changes in how we train and equip our police so that the bonds of trust between law enforcement and the communities they serve make us all safer and more secure.

Maybe we now realize the way racial bias can infect us even when we don't realize it, so that we're guarding against not just racial slurs, but we're also guarding against the subtle impulse to call Johnny back for a job interview but not Jamal. So that we search our hearts when we consider laws to make it harder for some of our fellow citizens to vote. By recognizing our common humanity by treating every child as important, regardless of the color of their skin or the station into which they were born, and to do what's necessary to make opportunity real for every American—by doing that, we express God's grace.

For too long—

AUDIENCE: For too long!

THE PRESIDENT: For too long, we've been blind to the unique mayhem that gun violence inflicts upon this nation. Sporadically, our eyes are open: When eight of our brothers and sisters are cut down in a church basement, 12 in a movie theater, 26 in an elementary school. But I hope we also see the 30 precious lives cut short by gun violence in this country every single day; the countless more whose lives are forever changed—the survivors crippled, the children traumatized and fearful every day as they walk to school, the husband who will never feel his wife's warm touch, the entire communities whose grief overflows every time they have to watch what happened to them happen to some other place.

The vast majority of Americans—the majority of gun owners—want to do something about this. We see that now. And I'm convinced that by acknowledging the pain and loss of others, even as we respect the traditions and ways of life that make up this beloved country—by making the moral choice to change, we express God's grace.

We don't earn grace. We're all sinners. We don't deserve it. But God gives it to us anyway. And we choose how to receive it. It's our decision how to honor it.

None of us can or should expect a transformation in race relations overnight. Every time something like this happens, somebody says we have to have a conversation about race. We talk a lot about race. There's no shortcut. And we don't need more talk. None of us should believe that a handful of gun safety measures will prevent every tragedy. It will not. People of goodwill will continue to debate the merits of various policies, as our democracy requires—this is a big, raucous place, America is. And there are good people on both sides of these debates. Whatever solutions we find will necessarily be incomplete.

But it would be a betrayal of everything Reverend Pinckney stood for, I believe, if we allowed ourselves to slip into a comfortable silence again. Once the eulogies have been delivered, once the TV cameras move on, to go back to business as usual—that's what we so often do to avoid uncomfortable truths about the prejudice that still infects our society. To settle for symbolic gestures without following up with the hard work of more lasting change—that's how we lose our way again.

It would be a refutation of the forgiveness expressed by those families if we merely slipped into old habits, whereby those who disagree with us are not merely wrong but bad; where we shout instead of listen; where we barricade ourselves behind preconceived notions or well-practiced cynicism.

Reverend Pinckney once said, "Across the South, we have a deep appreciation of history—we haven't always had a deep appreciation of each other's history." What is true in the South is true for America. Clem understood that justice grows out of recognition of ourselves in each other. That my liberty depends on you being free, too. That history can't be a sword to justify injustice, or a shield against progress, but must be a manual for how to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past—how to break the cycle. A roadway toward a better world. He knew that the path of grace involves an open mind—but, more importantly, an open heart.

That's what I've felt this week—an open heart. That, more than any particular policy or analysis, is what's called upon right now, I think—what a friend of mine, the writer Marilyn Robinson, calls "that reservoir of goodness, beyond, and of another kind, that we are able to do each other in the ordinary cause of things."

That reservoir of goodness. If we can find that grace, anything is possible. If we can tap that grace, everything can change.

Amazing grace. Amazing grace.

(Begins to sing)—Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me; I once was lost, but now I'm found; was blind but now I see.

Clementa Pinckney found that grace.

Cynthia Hurd found that grace.

Susie Jackson found that grace.

Ethel Lance found that grace.

DePayne Middleton-Doctor found that grace.

Tywanza Sanders found that grace.

Daniel L. Simmons, Sr. found that grace.

Sharonda Coleman-Singleton found that grace.

Myra Thompson found that grace.

Through the example of their lives, they've now passed it on to us. May we find ourselves worthy of that precious and extraordinary gift, as long as our lives endure. May grace now lead them home. May God continue to shed His grace on the United States of America.

CLEMENTA PINCKNEY

Speech on Walter Scott Shooting

(April 14, 2015)

. . . [A]s I stand here today I am reminded of one of our former colleagues. Though he is small in stature, he stood tall in moments in which the soul of the State, and in particular the soul of the Senate, were called into question. He always challenged us to rise to a higher level. I am referring to the great Senator Patterson, who from time to time would rise and remind us of the greatness of this august body. Today the nation looks at South Carolina to see if we will rise to be the body and the State that we say that we really are. Over the past week many of us have seen on the television and read in newspapers reports about Walter Scott, who in my words was murdered in North Charleston. It has really created a heartache and a yearning for justice. Not just in the African American community, but for all people. Not just in the Charleston area or in South Carolina, but across our country. . . .

As we are in the Christian season of Easter we are reminded of the story of Jesus gathering his disciplines in Galilee in the upper room. In that week following Easter, every disciple was there except Thomas. . . . Jesus walks through a locked door and the disciples see something that amazed them. They saw the living Jesus. They were able to see the nails in his hands and they were able to put their hand in his sides. Jesus allowed them to see this as proof, so that they would have no doubt. But one person was missing, and that was Thomas. When Thomas heard the news, he said he did not believe it. He said there was no way, it had to be impossible. He said that Jesus was dead and there was no way that he came and visited. But the next week Thomas was there. Jesus walked in, he said, "I will not believe until I see the nails. I will not believe until I can put my hand in your side." And it was only when he was able to do that; he said, "I believe, my Lord and my God."

Ladies and gentlemen of the Senate, when we first heard on the television that a police officer had gunned down an unarmed African American in North Charleston by the name of Walter Scott, there were some who said "Wow! The national story has come home to South Carolina." But there are many who said that there was no way that a police officer would ever shoot somebody in the back six, seven, or eight times. Like Thomas, when we were able to see the video and we were able to see the gun shots, and we then saw him fall to the ground

. . . And when we saw the police officer come over and hand cuff him on the ground; without even trying to resuscitate him—without even seeing if he was really alive, without calling an ambulance, without calling for help . . . We saw him die face down on the ground as if he were gunned down like game. I believe we all were like Thomas and said, "I believe." What if Mr. Santiago was not there to record what happened? I'm sure that many of us would still say like Thomas, we do not believe. I believe that as a legislature—that as a State—we have a great opportunity to allow sunshine into this process, to at least give us new eyes for seeing so that we [are] able to make sure that our proud and great law enforcement officers and every citizen that we represent [are] able to at least know that they would be seen and heard and that their rights will be protected. . . . It is my hope as South Carolina Senators that we will stand up for what is best and good about our State and really adopt this legislation in an effort to find a way to have body cameras utilized in South Carolina. Our hearts go out to the Scott family. Our hearts go out to the [Slager] family because the Lord teaches us to love all. We pray that over time that justice will be done. Thank you.

STEVE ESTES

From *Charleston in Black and White: Race and Power in the South after the Civil Rights Movement*

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When Democrats initially voted to fly the Confederate battle flag above the South Carolina statehouse in the early 1960s, the measure was so uncontroversial that Peter McGee, who joined the legislature just after it went up, nearly forgot that it was there. In hindsight, he wished that he had pushed to bring it down, but McGee and other white Democrats never mustered the votes to do so, even when they held supermajorities in the legislature during the 1960s and 70s. Although black Democrats lobbied to bring down the flag throughout the 1970s and 80s, they got no traction on the issue with their white colleagues. After Republican Governor Carroll Campbell recognized the symbolic power of the issue for white voters in the 1980s, the Republican Party joined black South Carolinians in keeping the issue alive. Pro-flag advocates, including Glenn McConnell and other Republican leaders, raised funds for television and print ads, arguing that outsiders and radical civil rights groups led opposition to the flag. In their 1994 primary, Republicans asked voters a series of questions about taxes, the Confederate flag, and other issues. Seventy-two percent of Republicans wanted to eliminate property taxes, while seventy-four percent wanted to keep the flag flying above the statehouse.

Despite the strong support for the Confederate flag among the Republican rank and file, the flag issue proved to be a double-edged sword for the GOP, just as it cut both ways for the Democrats. South Carolina Democrats officially opposed flying the flag, although white conservatives rejected the party line and moderates recognized that the issue could divide the party's interracial coalition. In the GOP, Governor Carroll Campbell toned down his support for the flag, fearing that it would hurt his chances of joining a Republican administration in Washington during the early 1990s. His successor, David Beasley, stumbled dramatically on the flag issue. A former Democrat who switched parties in 1991, Beasley defeated Arthur Ravenel Jr. for the Republican gubernatorial nomination in 1994. Beasley won the general election that year, vowing to defend the

Confederate flag. Then in 1996, the Republican governor had a change of heart. Worried about worsening race relations, Beasley said that he prayed about what to do. The governor called for removing the flag from the capitol dome and raising it over a Confederate monument on the statehouse grounds. A tsunami of negative responses swept into Columbia. The governor was a "traitor" and a "scalawag," according to one fax from the "Dixie Defenders." Rank-and-file Republicans wrote angry letters to GOP leaders, withdrawing their financial support for fear that some of their money "might fall into Gov. Beasley's pocket to support his liberal sway." Yet for all of the populist anger that Beasley's proposal stirred, there was also quiet support for a compromise from some GOP backers. The Palmetto Business Forum and the South Carolina Chamber of Commerce—traditional GOP allies—worked behind the scenes to take down the flag, fearing that it was limiting outside investment in the state. With fiscal conservatives pushing for a compromise and cultural conservatives willing to defend the flag to the last, the Republicans seemed just as flummoxed on the flag issues as the Democrats. The split within the GOP helped a Democrat win the governor's mansion in 1998, but it did not bring down the flag. If anything, the battle lines were even more starkly drawn.

At the suggestion of local civil rights activists, the NAACP called for a national boycott of South Carolina, discouraging all business and personal travel to the state until the legislature removed the Confederate banner from the statehouse. With tourism a huge part of the state's economy, particularly in the Lowcountry, the boycott could ultimately cost the state millions of dollars in revenue. Reverend Joe Darby, who drafted the original NAACP sanctions, described the flag as a symbol of a dead country and racism. Growing up in Columbia, the AME minister recalled watching Klansman display the rebel flag in demonstrations at the capitol on Confederate Memorial Day. By the 1990s, when Darby took a position at Morris Brown AME in Charleston, his opposition to the flag was resolute. "Until South Carolina lays that flag aside," he said, "we're gonna have a problem."

The NAACP boycott brought additional resources and national attention to the fight against the flag, but it also hardened resistance to bringing the banner down. Though he had originally considered a compromise, State Senator Glenn McConnell was offended by the implication of the boycott. The flag was a source of pride to McConnell, not embarrassment. "I'm not going to surrender it now to a reputation of shame," the Republican legislator said in response to the NAACP sanctions. "If there's one thing we learned at Gettysburg," he concluded, "it's to occupy the high ground and don't leave it." Not everyone occupied the high ground in the pro-flag camp, however. Members of the Klan were quite visible at pro-flag rallies at the capitol in 1999 and 2000. McConnell distanced him-

self from such extremists, but it was harder to disavow enthusiastic GOP leaders and friends like Arthur Ravenel. Returning to the state senate after an unsuccessful run for governor in the mid-1990s, Ravenel spoke to a rally of 6,000 flag supporters in early 2000. "Can you believe that there are those who think the General Assembly of South Carolina is going to . . . roll over and do the bidding of the National Association of Retarded People?" Ravenel said, mixing up the black civil rights organization and an advocacy group for the mentally disabled. Ravenel, the father of a son with Down syndrome, fueled further controversy by apologizing "to the retarded folks of the world for equating them to the national NAACP."

Mayor Joe Riley and other liberal Charlestonians were appalled by Ravenel's comments. After speaking out against flying the Confederate flag over the statehouse throughout the 1990s, Mayor Riley led a final push to lower the banner in 2000, organizing a protest march from Charleston to Columbia. "The important thing," Riley said, "was to show that South Carolina wasn't a racially polarized state." Still, there were South Carolinians who opposed the famously liberal mayor. "You bring those niggers marching through Calhoun County," one man wrote, "and you will be in the sights of my gun." Charleston Police Chief Reuben Greenberg loaned Riley a bulletproof vest. His wife made him wear it. The fifty-seven-year old mayor marched twelve hours a day for nearly a week to traverse the 120 miles to Columbia. "Every religious denomination, every business organization, every civil rights organization, college boards of trustees and athletic directors, and average citizens, rank and file, have said: remove the Confederate battle flag," Riley told a few thousand people at the state capitol. "And our legislature . . . hasn't even begun to debate the bill. They are out of step with the people of South Carolina." Meanwhile, 300 flag supporters demonstrated on the north side of the capitol, waving hundreds of battle flags. One flag supporter wore a replica of a Confederate uniform, and another held a sign that read "God Save the South." A third blamed Yankees who had moved down from the North for trying to destroy the southern heritage. As impassioned as both sides were, legislators inside the statehouse held out hope for a compromise. If Republican Senator Glenn McConnell agreed to take the flag down, one Democratic senator noted, "It'll be over."

Once again, the compromise would hinge on an alliance of white Republicans and black Democrats. Senator Glenn McConnell did not relish the idea of taking down the battle flag in the face of the NAACP boycott, but he left a small opening for compromise. "I was rigid that that flag should be preserved, and it should not be removed except with honor," McConnell later recalled. "It could not be settled on the basis of power, because we had the power on our side to keep the flag on the dome." But the Republican senator also came to see the Confederate struggle in a longer history of South Carolinians fighting for rights

that stretched back to the American Revolution and forward to the civil rights movement. Working with Robert Ford and other African American legislators as well as white Democrats, McConnell crafted a compromise to take the battle flag off the statehouse and place it on a monument to Confederate soldiers in front of the capitol. The state would also commission an African American history monument on the capitol grounds, something that black legislators had long sought. Ironically, the Confederate battle flag would actually be *more* visible to capitol visitors in its new location. NAACP activists were not pleased. It was a "sellout," according to Reverend Joe Darby, that only "got the flag halfway down." Despite the continuing opposition of the NAACP, the legislature passed the flag compromise. On a warm Saturday in the summer of 2000, two Citadel cadets in dress uniforms lowered the Confederate battle flag from the capitol dome. A color guard of Civil War reenactors raised a new flag above the monument to Confederate soldiers.

When the dust settled from the flag fight, Glenn McConnell and Robert Ford continued their unlikely political alliance, one that reflected the complicated relationship between white Republicans and black Democrats in the South of the post-civil rights era. The two men worked together on resolutions to establish state holidays for Confederate Memorial Day and for Martin Luther King Day. McConnell supported Ford's efforts to nominate more African American judges, and Ford brought a Confederate flag back into the statehouse to make a point about the importance of celebrating the Civil War's sesquicentennial. Not everyone believed that the partnership between these two Charleston politicians was an equal one. Former state representative Lucille Whipper thought Ford supported McConnell because the Republican was both personable and a political power broker. "He became friendly with Glenn," she recalled of Ford's change of heart about McConnell. "Now, whether that is a mutual friendship or not, I question that." For his part, McConnell was proud to call Ford a friend. Friendship was one thing, however, political power another. In one legislative session after the flag controversy was settled, only two of the sixty- six bills Ford authored passed into law. By contrast, McConnell saw forty-six of the 106 bills he authored become law. Five years after the Confederate flag fight, McConnell led a Republican majority in the Senate. The GOP controlled the governor's mansion, house of representatives, both U.S. Senate seats, and most of the congressional delegation. Black Democrats like Robert Ford continued to win elections in majority- minority districts, but the Republicans won nearly everywhere else. A fierce critic of the alliance between black Democrats and white Republicans, NAACP activist Joe Darby observed, "In the process of getting a couple more members of the Black Caucus, they actually set the stage for the Republican Party to become pretty much invincible in South Carolina."

All of this had been made possible by the passage and evolution of the Vot-

ing Rights Act. A signature accomplishment of the civil rights movement, the act reenfranchised and empowered African Americans throughout the South. Conservative critics continued to challenge the law as unnecessary, unfair, and unconstitutional. This was particularly true, critics argued, of the section of the law that let the Justice Department review changes to state and local voting regulations, including redistricting. One such challenge to the Voting Rights Act reached the Supreme Court in 2009. In oral arguments, Chief Justice John Roberts asked how the Justice Department could support its claim that the preclearance process was still necessary when they rejected only 0.05 percent of changes to state and local voting laws. The government's attorney replied that the threat of rejection kept states from passing discriminatory voting laws. Chief Justice Roberts called this line of reasoning silly, comparing DOJ review to the fabled "elephant whistle." "Well, there are no elephants," he joked, "so it must work." Four years later, the chief justice authored a majority opinion that struck down the section of the Voting Rights Act requiring southern states and other localities with a history of voter discrimination to preclear their electoral changes with the Justice Department.

Chief Justice Roberts may not have seen any elephants, but they were clearly there. The received wisdom on the Republican revolution in the American South holds that the white backlash against civil rights legislation, particularly to Democratic support for laws like the Voting Rights Act, led to the rise of southern Republicans. Certainly, southern whites began to vote for Republican presidential candidates in the late 1960s and continued to do so in increasing numbers through the 2000s. . . .

This set the stage for a battle over Confederate memory in South Carolina and other Deep South states. Confederate memory had welded southern whites together with a shared culture, even when they might have been divided on a host of other issues, including geography, religion, and economics. With black politicians pushing to furl the Confederate flag in the wake of the civil rights movement, white Republican candidates could weld together diverse white constituencies by defending the flag and southern heritage. By the 1990s, however, it became clear that the Confederate flag could divide whites as much as it had once united them. Some Republicans, especially business leaders, feared that public celebration of Confederate memory hurt outside investment; other Republicans warned that such investment was not worth selling out southern heritage. Ultimately, a second coalition between white Republicans and black Democrats ended the standoff on the Confederate flag issue in South Carolina, Georgia, and other southern states. Once again, interests converged to maintain the status quo of political empowerment for a black Democratic minority and a white Republican majority.