

# Sharing, Inc.

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Dear Sharing Friend,

## **"Watershed - a critical turning point"**

Forty years ago today marks perhaps the most significant watershed moment of my lifetime.

I can still recall the outrage I felt as I learned from the *Boston Globe* that malnutrition among children in Bolivar County, Mississippi was causing irreversible mental retardation. At the time Bolivar County was the second poorest county in the United States and Mississippi's poverty was exacerbated by racism. I also learned that a project to combat this reality, started by personnel from Tufts University School of Medicine and sustained for three years by the federal government's Office of Economic Opportunity, was to be cut from the budget.

I couldn't imagine the pain of not being able to provide sufficient food for my three daughters, then ten, eight and four. What I felt was, "Someone has to do something!" I was haunted by thoughts of those suffering families, their empty cupboards and refrigerators. But what could I do? Send the \$33.00 in my checking account? Then I had an idea. Why not have a Walk, similar to the one that my Sunday School class and I had taken part in the year before?

So for about six weeks I tried to interest some friends in helping me. No luck. Then two weeks before Easter I attended an Evening of Recollection at the Maryknoll Seminary in Hingham where I was a part of the lay community. In that sacred space I let go of my idea, in effect saying to God, "You won't let me forget, you must want me to do something. Well no one will help me, you'll just have to be clearer." In the morning it was clear as a bell. "Kay, walk yourself!" And walk I did. I chose Good Friday and walked from my home in Abington to church.

Whereas previously I had "observed" this Holy Day I found myself saying that I had "celebrated" it. Macrina Weiderkehr O.S.B. writes that to "celebrate" is to be radically present to the message received. Christians believe that Jesus' pain-filled journey to his death on Calvary's hill did something (redemption) for us. So too those who walk on Good Friday and raise money that helps real people who suffer the effects of economic poverty exacerbated by racism are doing something!

Many of you are doing things that alleviate suffering: volunteering at a food pantry or soup kitchen, cooking meals for others, assisting a new mother, providing transportation, helping to build or repair homes for people without the economic and/or physical means to do it for themselves, and/or making financial contributions.

Unfortunately racism, individual and institutional, is still alive and well and child poverty has increased.

For instance:

- A Cincinnati landlord named Jamie Hein, posted a sign on her apartment complex's swimming pool gate which read, 'Public Swimming Pool, White Only.'" She accused the biracial daughter of one of the tenant's of making the pool 'cloudy' because she used chemicals in her hair" CNN December 2011

- A lawsuit filed by the Illinois Attorney General against the mortgage giant, Countrywide, for unlawfully discriminating against African-American and Latino borrowers from 2004-2008 was settled last month for \$335 million dollars.

- Today our country honors the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Junior, a passionate, strong leader whose voice was tragically stilled when he was assassinated on April 4, 1968. When he died the United States had **eleven million** children living in poverty. Today that number is **sixteen point four million**.

Marion Wright Edelman, founder of the Children's Defense Fund and one of Dr. King's early lieutenants, recalled his words of encouragement, "Don't ever give up. You don't have to see the whole staircase, just take the first step."

## **Christmas Blessings**

Thanks to a generosity of time, talent, and treasure Sharing was able to send the following gifts to children in Alabama Louisiana, and Mississippi,

- 219 beautifully dressed Black dolls
- 147 gorgeous baby blankets, beautifully boxed
- 66 basketballs and 12 small balls
- numerous small stuffed animals and baby clothes

**438 wonderful books, by and about African Americans, were sent to Alabama Senator Hank Sanders to be distributed among 93 public schools in his district.**

Shalom,

