

Sharing, Inc.



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Dear Sharing Friend

On Holy Thursday evening in 2005, at our home, a familiar group of southerners were enjoying a good meal and one another's company while anticipating the next day's Good Friday Walk. It seemed incredible to me at the time, that four of us had become grandparents of twins within the past year! What are the odds of that happening? The Wendel and George Paris family had welcomed a George and a Wendy. Emily Harris's family had welcomed Matthew and Mark Harris. And my family had welcomed Rosalie and Jenson Benevides.

My initial trip to the rural south was to Mound Bayou, MS, in 1972, and there have been at least 42 additional trips. My life has been so blessed by the many friendships that have developed over these years. However, I can never really know what it's like to live in our world with richly colored skin. And it is **impossible** for me, as a "white" woman, to imagine for instance, all the safety rules that African American parents **must instill** in their children, especially the boys.

"For example; when a policeman stops you while you're driving, do not reach into your pocket for your license until specifically told to by the officer, and always respond 'yes sir' or 'no sir', and if the sun is going down and there is a police car behind you, don't pull over unless the area is well lit, don't talk, don't reach." *. Even these suggestions do not guarantee the driver's safety.

RACISM IN AMERICA

- Over the centuries, between 15 million and 20 million African men and women were violently kidnapped from their home villages and enslaved. They abruptly lost everything; family, language, culture, their entire world. They were chained together cheek by jowl in the bowels of a ship. More than 400,000 of them were brought to the Americas.
- Between 1882 and 1968 an estimated 4,742 Black Americans met their death at the hands of a lynch mob. Lynchings were public theater; they were advertised and, at times, people would come by the busload.

In November of 2002, just as it was about to close, I learned about an exhibit entitled "Without Sanctuary Lynching Photography in America" which was on display at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta Georgia. I flew down and back on the same day, I was stunned, and horrified by what I was seeing. I purchased the hardcover book about the exhibit containing 98 gruesome and heartbreaking photographs, about which the recently

deceased Congressman John Lewis wrote the following, "Without Sanctuary brings to life one of the darkest and sickest periods in American history. As a young child, growing up very poor in rural Alabama, I heard stories about lynchings and about the nightriders coming through, intimidating and harassing black people. At the time it all seemed nightmarish, unreal - even unbelievable. The photographs in this book make real the hideous crimes that were committed against humanity."

To this day, if I close my eyes, I can still see her. "Her" was a pre-teen white girl who looked enough like me to have been my sister. She was at the front of the crowd, a big smile on her face as she looked up at the hanging corpse of Rubin Stacy. (Photograph #57, taken on July 19, 1915 in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The full story can be located on Google).

I fully realize that "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

Let us pray together...

"O God,
Often we forget that we come from your one beam of creative light.
We build walls to keep the others out.
We construct unjust systems that favor fair skin.
We forget to love and to care for all.
We ask for healing and forgiveness... **

Shalom,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kay Doherty". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

* Bakari Sellers on "Firing Line", on PBS, season three, episode 50

**Maryknoll Prayer for Racial Justice