



Opening Our Hearts to Those Seeking Asylum

“Let us pray for the people who are met along the way. May they remember how they were strangers too. May they embrace the pathways of compassion. May they recall the teachings of the prophets. May they make room in their hearts and their homes.”

This was a prayer that was read aloud at a service I was invited to speak at yesterday. The Universalist Unitarian Church in Waterville dedicated an entire service to the inherent worth and dignity of every person.... including immigrants, migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees; those

seeking a new home. I was honored to be in the presence of such open and all encompassing love. The music of the service was beautiful and moving. The readings were as well.

It had been less than 48 hours since I returned from Matamoros, Mexico and Brownsville, Texas and there I was, in the presence of such wonderful people. "We want to know," they told me.

It's not easy sharing crimes against humanity. I'm sure I'm not alone in wondering, "How much do I share? What do I include? Should I leave the horror out? What is too much?" Yet in the few churches that have opened their doors and hearts to me they say the same thing, "Tell us all of it. We need to know all of it." And so, for the most part, I do. And yet the looks of grief and shock are universal. I stand before these good people and witness yet again. The shock of learning of the evil our country is committing.

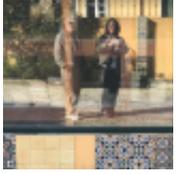
People often wonder what they would have done during the rise of Nazi Germany or the time of slavery in our country. We like to imagine we are braver than we are and more active than we are. We want to believe we would be on the front lines, doing what is right and good. Unfortunately we have that very opportunity to find out right now. Many argue over the language used to describe the crimes against humanity that our country is committing towards groups of people living in our country and those fleeing violence and trying to live in our country. Are they concentration camps or detention camps? Is it ethnic cleansing or genocide or just horrible behavior? The fact that we are even having this discussion and pondering these words tell us that we are in an era we should not be in, a time that we will someday be very ashamed of. The conversation is a false narrative. Never again is now and we need to see that and act accordingly.

Leaving the church to have breakfast with a dear friend I found myself feeling extremely sad and exhausted. What privilege to then go renew myself when so many others continue to live in fear, sadness, and utter exhaustion while trying to maintain a life along our southern border. We must keep our focus razor sharp. This is about them. How do we help them? What do they need from us? And then we need to work like we think we would if we were living in Nazi Germany, because we are, just a few decades later and in a different land. The parallels are impossible to ignore.

Thank you UU of Waterville. You made me feel welcome and safe. Exactly how we hope our country should make those who *we meet along the way and who may be strangers too*. You opened your hearts to me and the stories I had to share. In that you gave me your strength. Your strength to listen, to not look away, to keep going.

In solidarity with those who suffer from the policies that have been in place in our country for a very long time. May we continue to work together to break the chains that hold so many. May we continue to not look away.

Mary



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A wife, mother, activist, gardener, knitter, retired educator using writing to makes sense of my heart and our world. [View all posts by messagesfromtheheart](#)

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