



We Need a Caravan of Compassion

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I am deeply troubled by the continued escalation and racist rhetoric against Central American migrants and others heading towards our border. The unbridled dehumanizing, demonizing, and racist assertions by our current president are now institutionally supported with expanded Border Patrol and Immigration Customs Enforcement law enforcement branches. These groups, along with the administration, have yet to be held accountable for the human rights abuses they enacted by separating children from parents, detaining asylum seekers in what amounts to prisons and concentration camps, and sending children to be adopted while parents are deported (amounting to human trafficking). Now, in a grand show of escalation and with no regard for the violence and abuses that continue, the US military deployed to the border because of the coming migrant caravan. My soul is deeply troubled within me.

The violence being sown by this escalation of racism and fear cannot be understated. Stand Your Ground laws hold the perception of danger, not actual danger, as an acceptable reason for a civilian to use lethal force. Similarly, in the aftermath of a police shooting, law enforcement officers need only to convey they were afraid, whether the perceived threat was a reality or not. The confluence of racism and civilian gun violence, as well as racism and state violence, lead to too many murders and too many bodies, particularly of black and brown people. As Rev. Traci Blackmon said, "How can I be disarmed when what you fear is my blackness?"

How do these migrants have any chance of receiving compassion and care when the air is thick with racism and fear? The caravan contains many families with young children. They are never named as such. They are never named by the state as humans fleeing violence and poverty. They are "invaders" and predictably, militia groups are traveling to the border, self-proclaimed protectors. The fear is already here; it is preemptively justified. Will the bodies of brown children and parents start piling up? My soul is deeply troubled within me.

How can we, fully awake to all of these things, create a caravan of compassion? *Passion*: to suffer for. *Com*: meaning “with.” Compassion is a solidarity willing to suffer with. It is a deeply Christian kind of love. It is a deeply Christian calling. How many of us will come together? How far will we walk to extend compassion? Our siblings are walking thousands of miles, looking for a place and a people to affirm their humanity. We must be ready to meet them, at the border, in our communities, and in our churches. We must call out the racist and fear-escalating rhetoric for what it is: dehumanizing violence. We must continue to demand justice for children detained and separated from their parents. We must overcome this together.

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