

# GraceFUL



I saw a people tired of profanity, disrespect and abuse from those in authority over their communities. I saw a people tired of the escalating institutional oppression, where they are no longer innocent until proven guilty but dead before proven guilty. I saw a people tired of the spaces of impunity within the law that allows the murder of innocent Black lives to go unpunished as “justifiable homicide.” Legal does not equate to right or just. Civil disobedience is not a criminal enterprise.

If we fight, do we deserve to die?  
If we don’t fight, do we deserve to live?  
We fight because we deserve to live in respect of our lives.

## fight

*The Fire Shut Up In Our Bones*  
(2014)

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Abu Shok Refugee Camp	
Darfur, Sudan (2004)	



"My son shut down. My daughters are too young to understand. I am sad and scared for my children."  
~ Genetria, 33, Canfield Green resident



"The children are out here because they have to take a stand. This is the fight **for** their generation and **of** their generation."  
~ Sacretta, 38, native of St. Louis

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## CANFIELD STREET Protest Converged

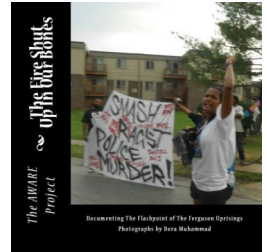


The Ferguson Uprisings were sparked by the August 9, 2014 shooting death of unarmed 18-year-old Michael Brown at the end of a police officer's gun, the four hours his slain body remained uncovered in the middle of Canfield Street, an extended vacuum of unanswered questions, and the relentless aggression of a militarized police force equipped to slaughter protesting

masses surrounded by the weaponry of the National Guard.

The fire shut up in the bones of Ferguson residents of all ages released onto the streets in sustained protests and quickly heightened in global calls for justice, rallies in protest, and demonstrations of solidarity. Local, national and international agencies and institutions converged on the ground to address the harrowing agony, galvanize under a shared banner of peace, seek fundamental redress, and strategize a way forward for the community.

Dignity of life stretches across every human being, whether believed or conceived to be divine or natural. It speaks our conscience and illuminates the intrinsic justification of our beings. True justice cannot exist where human dignity is abrogated.



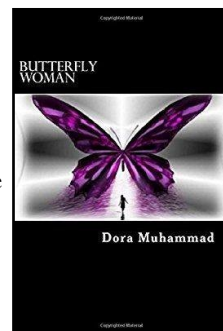
*The pain in the eyes of Michael Brown's mother gripped my consciousness as I saw in my living room, watching televised reports from Ferguson on how her son's body lay uncovered in the street under the summer sun. As protesting youth with palpable outrage surged in the streets of St. Louis, the ensuing tear gassing, shooting, chasing and beating by law enforcement and the National Guard stirred flashbacks of the violence exerted to try to silence civil rights protests in the sixties. Within weeks, I traveled to St. Louis to document the voices of mothers and the organizing work on the ground to harness a generation's outrage fueled by injustices of generations past. It was a watershed moment because we wanted it to be, we needed it to be, we expected it to be.*

Introduction

*The Fire Shut Up in Our Bones—Documenting the Flashpoint of The Ferguson Uprisings (2014)*

In an amazing natural feat of silk thread around itself to form aerodynamics when the time is right, the caterpillar will begin to emit a silk thread from within itself to form a tiny hook-like extension on a tree branch.

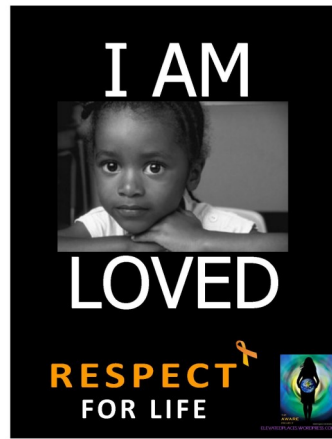
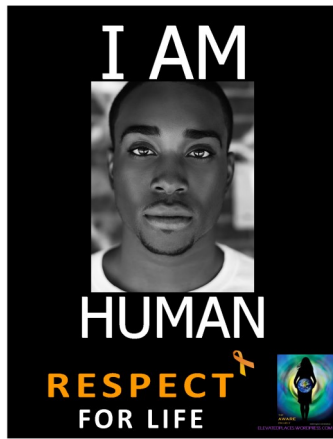
From this perch, it will turn itself toward the branch and hang upside down. Then, with swift deliberation, it will continue to spin the



the caterpillar's metamorphosis.

*Butterfly Women (2016)*

## RESPECT FOR LIFE Defining Torture, Cruelty and Inhuman Treatment



The full series of posters are available as free downloads: [elevatedplaces.wordpress.com/the-aware-project/respect-for-life-poster-campaign/](http://elevatedplaces.wordpress.com/the-aware-project/respect-for-life-poster-campaign/)

"[T]orture" means any act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person

information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity.

NO exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture.



Each State Party shall keep under systematic review interrogation rules, instructions, methods and practices as well as arrangements for the custody and treatment of persons subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment in any territory under its jurisdiction with a view to preventing any cases of torture.



**RESPECT FOR LIFE**

torture as defined in article 1, when such acts are committed by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity. The provisions of this Convention are without prejudice to the provisions of any other international instrument or national law which prohibits cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment or which relates to extradition or expulsion.

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### Getting Into The Margins

Hard to Count populations are those for whom a real or perceived barrier exists to full and representative inclusion in the census data collection process. Communities of color, immigrants, homeless, children aged 5 and under, rural residents are typically hard to count. The reasons fall in four categories: hard to locate, hard to contact, hard to persuade, and hard to interview. Barriers exist due to home addresses that are not included in census address roster, highly mobile individuals, complex household relationships, mistrust of government, fear of privacy violations and misuse of information, language barriers, and confusion about counting children.

*"People who are hard to reach should be given priority."* – UN Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson, 2016 address regarding UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

*The AWARE Project is an official U.S. Census Bureau partner for the 2020 Census.*

**CENSUS DAY**  
**APRIL 1, 2020**

When completing the census survey, you'll note the address of where you are living on April 1.

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# *seeking refuge*



Abu Shok Refugee camp  
Darfur, Sudan  
2004





## MASS INCARCERATION

### Redesigned Dehumanizing Social Control

#### The Optics of Oppression

When They See Us

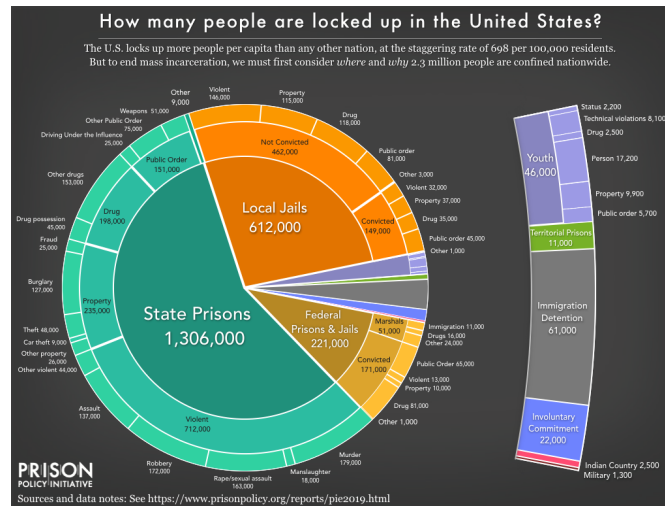


Do you find me guilty?  
Are you afraid?  
When you see me

Have you heard my voice?  
Care for my story?  
When you see me

What is my life worth?  
Where is my dignity?  
This black and brown body  
Walking the street  
or floating in a river  
Am I equal? Is there justice?  
Recognize humanity?  
How do you define  
your responsibility?  
Will you be accountable?  
When you see me

*For Oscar Martinez and his two-year-old daughter Valeria who carried dreams from El Salvador that were lost crossing the Rio Grande River, and the Exonerated 5 as the power of their innocence convicts the criminal justice system after their lives were snatched one night in Central Park.*



Mass incarceration in the U.S. is not accidental. Carefully crafted policies and laws have continued institutionalized dehumanization of people of color—much like forced mass breeding transfigured normative indentured servitude and elite household slave ownership into an American colonial brand of brutal chattel slavery rooted in trans-Atlantic trading.

Today, the U.S. constitutes five percent of the world's population but 25 percent of the world's prisoners. Nearly 2.3 million people are confined

behind bars in prison and jail, immigration detention centers, psychiatric hospitals and civil commitment centers. People of color make up 67 percent of the inmate population though they are only 37 percent of the U.S. population.

Ninety-seven percent of people in jail have never had a trial or been convicted. Most are too poor to afford bail. Sentencing inequalities – longer penalties, mandatory minimums, three strikes rule—have led the prison population from a little over one million in the 1990s to double

within the next decade. Minor technical violations, like missing curfew or failure to pay supervision fees, are common reasons for the incarceration of people on parole or probation, and not charges of new offenses.

While corporate profits of vendors contracted with the prison industrial complex drive some prison policy, the U.S. cannot escape the entrenched beliefs that white supremacy must be sustained by the subjugation of all others.

**Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States.**

- 13th Amendment

## INSANE ASYLUM: The Loss of Civility at the Border



Sanctuary DMV protest outside the Frederick County Detention Center in Maryland (2018)

If parents can plead guilty in immigration court to a *misdeemeanor offense of illegal entry* to try to be reunited with their children, why were they held in criminal detention used for felons rather than administrative detention in the first place?

Crackdowns on unlawful border crossings have held several limitations found in the 1997 Flores Agreement, which settled a class action lawsuit

against the federal government's treatment, detention and release of immigrant children. Children cannot to be detained with parents in facilities made for adults and cannot be detained more than 20 days in detention facilities designed for families.

However, on May 6, 2018, Attorney General Jeff Sessions announced that a **zero tolerance policy** would criminally prose-

cute **all** individuals crossing the U.S. border without authorization, stating that if parents do not want to be separated from their children, they should not "bring them across the border illegally."

Over 250,000 doctors and nearly 7,700 mental health professionals and 142 organizations urged the administration to stop the policy, for its long-lasting impact on the children's physical and mental health, development and wellbeing.

## LIFE HOUSE Empowering Female Ex-Offenders To Re-Enter Society



Bishop Gale LeGrand Williams,  
Entrusted Connections Ministries

**The thief's  
purpose is to steal  
and kill and  
destroy. My  
purpose is to give  
them a rich and  
satisfying life.**

*- John 10:10*



When one door closes, another opens. This adage is no truer in Prince William County when Entrusted Connections Life House opened its doors in December 2018, the same month that the county's only transitional housing had permanently closed.

"Life House is established to give life to women, to help them to be all that God has called them to be, to give them that life that God has called them to have, and to have it abundantly," shared Bishop Gale LeGrand Williams, founder of Entrusted Connections Ministries (ECM).

Every 5th Sunday, ECM ministers at the Adult Detention Center in Manassas, Va. to the Women in New Direction, a group focused on Christ in segregation from the general population. Bishop Williams recounts that the women often comment that they have nowhere to go as they approach their release dates.

With a heavy heart for these women, she prayed and received a vision for the transitional home. In March 2018, she shared the vision at the ECM annual women's retreat, which inspired an overwhelming support that still amazes her. Women pledged to sow monthly to bring her vision to fruition and over \$3k in cash was donated at the retreat.

That fall, her search for a property was not as easy. Many owners did not want to rent to ex-felons because of their past and uncertain future. Support finally came from a pastor who owned a house in Manassas where he held a vision to open a transitional home for men but could not get it off the ground. He not only rents his property to ECM now, but also pays for the electricity, utilities and cable.

A maximum of five people unrelated can live in the three-level townhouse for up to one year, with a minimum

commitment of three months. Residents pay a nominal weekly "rent" that covers all living expenses except food, which is coordinated with area food banks. They are also required to get a job, which can be challenging even though several local retailers and restaurants have become reliable employment options for the residents.

"It is a great challenge. Even though they are qualified and have demonstrated abilities and trustworthiness, the stigma is hard to remove," shared Bishop Williams. "It is discouraging to the women."

She recalls one resident who had experience in the dental field and was able to get a job at a dentist. However, she was immediately let go after two weeks when they discovered she was formerly incarcerated.

After ministering to her about the freedom of being truthful and forthcoming about her past, the resident was strengthened to be honest when she applied for her next job. She was wonderfully shocked when the manager told her not to worry, she could start tomorrow, for she understood because her

boyfriend is going through the same thing.

Empowerment for the residents is also fostered during voluntary daily devotion, readings, affirmation and prayer, mandatory Bible study Wednesday nights and mandatory church service either Sunday morning or evening. Evening and weekend classes teaching life skills and professional development are also key elements of the transitional program offered to the residents.

Bishop Williams shared that they refer to the home as "Life House 1" – a clear indication of the vision for growth and expansion.

"We are humbled by the opportunity to help these women," she added. "To God be the glory for Life House and this ministry."

The AWARE Project is excited to support Entrusted Connections Life House.

To learn more, visit [ec-ministry.com/ecmh](http://ec-ministry.com/ecmh)









## *the fire*

Following his murder, Michael Brown's body was left uncovered in the middle of the street that runs through Canfield Green Apartments, a densely populated apartment complex, for over four hours. This treatment of his body, grotesquely mutilated by the six bullets and left bleeding in the street in plain view, traumatized countless neighbors who witnessed either the shooting, its aftermath, or both. This trauma was all the more intense for Michael Brown's family, who came to the scene only to find their young son's remains quickly decomposing on the hot summer street." - *excerpt from the statement submitted by the Family of Michael Brown to the UN Committee on Torture, November 2014*



From the ash and smoke of  
A people thought to be  
Crushed and dead arose  
Sparks of passion from the  
Fire shut up in their bones.  
Spreading across the globe,  
Catching fire within spirits  
While unifying hearts, the fire speaks of consciousness that  
Scatters the darkness of racism.  
Divinely released to transform reality.  
Illuminating humanity. It cannot be extinguished.

## spirit sparks

*The Fire Shut Up in Our Bones:  
Documenting The Flashpoint of  
The Ferguson Uprisings (2014)*



tears and fire (2014)

Links

WISDOM NOTE | WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 7, 2019



# integrity

n. the quality or state of being complete or undivided

origin. Latin *integritas* meaning *entire*

CREATIVE GRACE CONVERSATIONS

The AWARE Project is a non-profit organization that leverages a multi-media art platform to raise awareness, increase civic engagement, and further the advancement of policies impacting women's rights, child welfare and human rights.

By intersecting community and municipality, faith and advocacy, and the arts with policy awareness, it creates a dynamic synergy offered to inspire the humanity in others with an unmatched passion to improve the quality and dignity of life of the vulnerable and marginalized.

Advocacy for Women's  
Activism, Rights & Empowerment

THE AWARE PROJECT

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