



We Need Each Other

Velda Love
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I've spent my life learning from people who challenged me to listen intently and perfect my critical thinking skills, read books, and study documentaries about my people—African Americans and the history of Africans prior to their enslavement. My mentors pushed me to read, interrogate, and then write about what I was learning. I studied events that were impacting Black communities in the 1960s such as uprisings in the North and South, protest marches in Montgomery and Birmingham, Alabama, worker strikes in Memphis, Tennessee and Mississippi, civil rights speeches from Fannie Lou Hamer, Ella Baker, Angela Davis, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

Sunday morning, afternoon, and evening sermons infused with passion began my interrogation of scriptures about liberation and the right of women to read, study, and use their voices, which connected to what I experienced when viewing and learning about courageous women and men during sit-ins, and the Freedom Riders putting their lives on the line to secure equal access to public spaces, public education, and voting rights.

These lessons, observations, and experiences of immersing myself in the struggle for human and civil rights as a child and later as a teenager proved to be movements towards higher education even before I was admitted into college and seminary. Education that was not discussed nor taught in elementary classes. Education worth discussing and talking about that was relevant and important in shaping my heart and mind inside and outside the classroom. Education that allowed me to challenge socially constructed narratives that excluded me, my family, and those who were committed to the struggle for liberation, freedom, equality, equity, and justice.

It was in the Black church that I deepened my connection to the Spirit

of the Living God. Sunday worship was a safe space to learn about Jesus, Black Jesus, liberator Jesus, and a God who created humanity equal and good. At fourteen I read *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church* by James H. Cone. In my twenties, I was introduced to Gayraud S. Wilmore, author of *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*. Cone and Wilmore co-authored *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*. And in my thirties, Womanist scholarship and theology resonated with my soul, which led me to Old and New Testament scholars like Renita Weems, Clarice Thomas, Delores Williams, Katie Geneva Canon, and Kelly Brown Douglass.

All of this and more has been my passionate pursuit and love for teaching, facilitating, and training clergy and lay leaders to dismantle racial injustice within themselves and then share their learnings with others. I believe the Christian Church can protect [the Right to Read advocacy and stop legislation from banning books](#). Banning books and removing them from libraries and bookshelves in schools is an attempt to silence voices, history, and experiences of people of African, Asian, Latin, and Native descents.

The Christian Church must advocate and stop politicians and individuals from seeking to limit education to European-Anglo-American only narratives.

According to the [American Library Association](#), book banning increased by 38 percent in 2022, and more than 1600 books were banned in 86 school districts and 26 states. However, this is not the first movement to ban books in our nation. Similar efforts have taken place in America's past to limit and manipulate access to education and maintain the status quo. Notably, laws prohibited enslaved persons from learning how to read to limit their progress as well as to prevent them from knowing their history and contributions to society.

“Banning books is reminiscent of a past we should do everything in our power to safeguard against repeating,” said Bishop Teresa Jefferson-Snorton, National Council of Churches Governing Board chair. “It is born out of fear, an abuse of power, and a repugnant lack of tolerance that, unchecked, can lead to violence against those not like us and with whom we may disagree.”

Stand with me and be an advocate for the Right to Read! Educating ourselves and our children and future generations must be a justice priority alongside ending racist policies working to control our minds, bodies, and spirits.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rev. Dr. Velda Love is the Minister for Racial Justice and Lead for Join the Movement Toward Racial Justice Campaign for the United Church of Christ.

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