

## **PRAYER**

5/31/20

Will you join me in a spirit of prayer?

Spirit of life, holy one, known to us most intimately as breath, the very breath of life,

Spirit,  
moving on the wind, rustling the trees, rippling the water,  
filling every thirsty lung with sweet spring air,

except the lungs of George Floyd,

may he rest in power,  
rest in peace.

For us, the time for resting is not now,  
not for us who still draw breath,  
tired as we are, this anxious, awful spring.  
The time for resting is not now.

Spirit, wake us,  
shake us, from our sleeping.  
Strengthen our resolve.

Yesterday I learned that when you charge somebody with murder in the third degree, part of the charge against them may be described as “evincing a depraved mind.” That’s a legal term. I read in the warrant issued Friday.

*Evincing a depraved mind.*

If that’s a crime,  
then every aspect of our common life,  
our economy,  
our history,  
the systems of so-called government  
and so-called justice,  
and so-called education,  
every social construct that defines us as a people, American people,  
is guilty as charged.  
Depravity.

Every aspect of the white supremacy within us and among us  
and everywhere around us,  
as if in the very air we breathe,  
is depraved, “evinced a depraved mind,”  
and heart and soul and body politic.

This is not about one officer, or four officers  
- may they all be charged accordingly-  
this is not about them only,  
or the entire racist, sordid Minneapolis Police Department,  
or policing generally,  
which feels so often to communities of color here and everywhere like a military occupation –  
this is not about that only.

When the people march, you sometimes hear, we sometimes cry,  
“the whole damn system is guilty as hell.”

And so it is- guilty as charged.  
This is larger than last Monday.  
Our grief is for George Floyd,  
and it is larger, deeper, older, wider –  
so many thousands gone.

Spirit we are weary, and our work has just begin.

We are living in pandemic time.  
We have lived all our lives in pandemic time,  
no matter our age.  
Our parents, our grandparents,  
ancestors all the way back,  
have lived and breathed this viral, lethal white supremacy,  
each one of us, unwittingly, a vector,  
a super-spreader,  
a walking epicenter of contagion.  
It is passed to us in utero,  
in stories,  
in practices of privilege  
which look to us like “just the way things are,”  
if we are white.

For most of us it is invisible,  
we're asymptomatic, to ourselves,  
we don't even know that we're sick.  
So often we're so in denial we just don't believe that our own negligence or ignorance could do any harm at all.  
Our own distance from the death out there, from the dying, protects us,  
or so we want to believe.

Spirit, abolish bad belief.

Faulty doctrine.

Call us back to what we know:

till all of us are free,

none of us is really free

or whole or well or safe or sound.

Call us back to what we know:

either black lives matter

or they don't,

to us.

Call us back to what we know

and back to what we sing,

"Somebody's hurting our family, and it's gone on far too long, and we won't be silent anymore--"

even if we don't know what to say,

and it may come out all wrong.

May we stay strong and bright in days ahead,

eyes open, not closed,

hearts open, wide open,

to the urgent needs

and urgent, brilliant leadership

of our black siblings,

our siblings of color, ingenious siblings.

May we listen for the call when it comes from them,

listen more than talk for once,

to what the people need.

Help us, if we're white,

to know that it is not for us to define what "peaceful protest" looks like.

The rage and grief of centuries,

the everlasting harm,

is borne in other bodies,

and until justice flows like a river,  
till justice comes shouting and singing into the streets and the neighborhoods,  
till justice comes there can no peace.  
But we can name the difference  
between righteous revolution rising up  
and white power wreaking havoc.

May we stay alert, awake, and well aware,  
ever more keenly attuned to the presence of evil among us  
in the form of white denial, yes,  
but also, and for real,  
white thugs, white gangs, white infiltrators,  
some from out of state  
and (frankly) some right here beside us all along, hidden in plain sight,  
well-organized, well-funded,  
in every meme and tweet and text,  
and every fire that they set,  
evincing a depraved mind.  
They are trying to break us  
but this movement won't be broken  
because it's beautiful  
and the soul of it is strong.  
We have seen this is abundance this past week  
and we must not forget:  
there isn't only wreckage.

Spirit of life,  
holy breath and holy name,  
hold us now in the crucible of our moment.  
Crack us open, shake us awake.

Turn our broken hearts, our fear, our grief, confusion,  
into love and yet more love.

May we who are still breathing  
be worthy of our breath.

AMEN.