



The CommUUnicator

Newsletter of the Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship of Waynesboro

Remembering Bloody Tuesday (Part One)

In recognition of Black History Month, UUFW member George Thompson has shared excerpts from his interview with John M. Giggie, author of *Bloody Tuesday: The Untold Story of the Struggle for Civil Rights in Tuscaloosa*, forthcoming in June from Oxford University Press. George helped John in developing the book from its inception. Part two of his interview will be in next week's newsletter.

George: Why was Tuscaloosa so important to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s strategy for where to oppose segregation?

John: Six months after delivering his "I Have a Dream" speech, Rev. King prepared to end segregation once and for all in Alabama. In Birmingham in March 1964, he assembled Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) officers and ministers from across the state and announced plans to launch a massive attack on the color line starting in the summer, promising to stop only when "justice rolled like water." Rev. King identified Tuscaloosa as an early target in the 1964 campaign because it was the national headquarters of the Ku Klux Klan and home to its Imperial Wizard, Robert Shelton. Breaking segregation here would carry enormous significance for the civil rights movement.

George: What happened on Bloody Tuesday?

John: In March 1964, Rev. King installed one of his closest disciples, Rev. T. Y. Rogers, as Pastor of First African Baptist Church in Tuscaloosa and told the 27-year-old to "desegregate Tuscaloosa." On June 9, 1964, upwards of 70 law-enforcement officers, backed by hundreds of Klansmen and deputized White citizens, attacked

500 Black citizens gathered inside the church who planned to march downtown to protest White and Black water fountains in the new county courthouse. As they prayed, police smashed the stained-glass windows with water from a fire hose and filled the church with tear gas. When Blacks stumbled outside, police beat and arrested as many as they could. Nearly 100 went to jail, 30 to the hospital, and many more received care at a local barbershop. Locals dubbed the day "Bloody Tuesday."

George: Some say that learning about the civil rights movement without understanding Bloody Tuesday is akin to teaching the history of the Civil War without mentioning Gettysburg. Can you explain?

John: We often tell the story of the movement by focusing on moments featuring Rev. King as recorded by newspapers and TV. We are drawn to events of extreme violence but hope they are exceptions. What we lose in this narrative is the reality that the movement was a series of small, orchestrated, and interconnected battles in towns and cities like Tuscaloosa where the acts of police violence and White resistance were common.

The Black victory in Tuscaloosa was part of Rev. King's large vision for desegregating the state and nation. It emboldened protesters and unnerved White politicians, leading the latter to sanction extreme measures like the attack by State Troopers on marchers crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma on March 7, 1965. The story of Bloody Tuesday reminds us that TV cameras and reporters did not capture the struggles for justice existing beyond Rev. King's reach nor did they accurately communicate the widespread and violent nature of White resistance to racial change.

Bloody Tuesday was one of the most violent days of the civil rights movement. More people were injured and arrested on Bloody Tuesday than in Selma a year and a month later, Yet its story is unknown outside of the small circles of survivors. Why? The main reason is that Rev. King decided to join the struggle for integration in St. Augustine, Florida, instead of coming to Tuscaloosa. He sent James Bevel, a mastermind of the Birmingham campaign, to Tuscaloosa, but he was not a magnet for the media. White newspapers carried the story but only for a day or two, and they frequently blamed Blacks for instigating the violence. Two Black newspapers reported on it but only briefly. Other events had grabbed the nation's attention. A few days after Bloody Tuesday, three civil rights workers—Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney—in Philadelphia, Mississippi, went “missing” and Freedom Summer had just begun.

About the New Art on Our Walls

By Anne Armentrout, Artist

I generally travel under the rubric of *peripetetic polymath*. But for purposes here, call me a *collagist*. The exhibit now on the walls of the Fellowship is an offering of “digitally-mediated ephemera collages” entitled “What Dreams May Come?” Yes, the title words are from Hamlet’s “to be or not to be,” but note the question mark: punctuation changes everything. Likewise with collage: an image means one thing in one context, but bunged together with other images from other contexts and it’s “And now for something completely different.” Also, like a dream: I call these artworks *dreamscapes*.

Here’s how I make a dreamscape: Browse magazines. A certain image grabs the eye. Snip, snip. Another image comes along. Snip, snip. And perhaps another. Let’s see how they play together. What context do they need? What

companions? Snip, snip; glue, glue; fiddle, fiddle. Rinse and repeat.

After a certain point, no more trying to make meaning. The pieces of paper have taken over. It’s their show. Yours truly, with scissors and repositionable glue stick, and the ability to go questing, is the servant. I try to get their story right, to capture the critical moment of the dream.

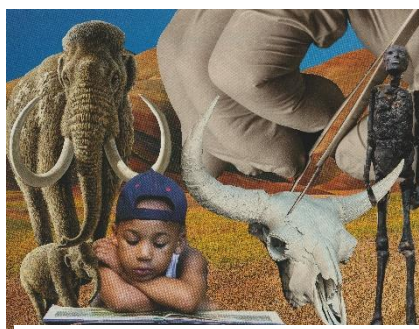
Next: submit to scanner/printer/computer. Tinker, tweak, adjust. Pull proof. Consider. Repeat. Repeat X more times. Print. Sometimes, wait years to consider again, to understand what the work wants, and then do the work. Encore tinker, tweak; proof, print. Dare to share the work. Just as writing is re-writing, collaging is re-collaging. *Is any work of art ever really finished?* **No:** sometimes you just get tired of each other. **Yes**—sometimes you agree to let go.

As to what has been let go to Art-On-Our-Walls, here’s the backstory: Early last year I realized I hadn’t made a dreamscape in five years. Had I hit burnout and failed to notice? I decided to see if, by encountering my complete body of work, I could find inspiration to produce new work.

I had serious conversations with my almost two hundred dreamscapes. And then there were eighty-one that either (1) were, just as they were, as good as I could make them, or (2) I thought I saw what was needed to make them as good as they could be.

I did the work. (Let’s hear for repositionable glue sticks.) I scanned the re-visioned, re-worked collages. Played with the scans. Pulled high-quality

prints. Then the tough part. Having bought thirty frames, I had to choose thirty prints. Now they are on the UUFW’s walls and their sale will add a few clinks in the Fellowship’s coffers.



Boning Up

