

Towards a Theology of Organizing

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Mark Gornik: After that sermon? Reflections? It's my privilege to close us in prayer for the evening (laughter). That's what you normally do in these situations. But actually, a better way to follow that up, I think, is to turn to the subject of community organizing and some very concrete examples of lived theology. Let me begin with a description of community organizing taken from a statement by a group called Christians Supporting Community Organizing. Here's a definition of organizing: "Congregation based organizing is a process that enlists churches and faith and value-based action to address the economic, social, and cultural conditions which individuals and families alone lack the power to change. Congregation-based community organizing can be an instrument for the Shalom of our communities." Now in that definition of organizing, we learn a few things about organizing. One is that it takes more than individuals or families in order to bring about substantial change in our communities. It takes people working across many different lines in a body to bring about conditions of dignity, justice, and joy. In fact, the process is central to what organizing is about. It is courageous faith that is connected to some of the most important organizing efforts in our country. I think we are urged by the writers of this statement, of the Civil Rights Movement, but also by contemporary struggles for social justice in our cities. At its best, community organizing is the anti-trickle down of the powers. It's the anti-trickle down of the board rooms and the settings that control communities and lives. It's about a grass-roots revival of what is right and good. And it is theological drama. Now there are many models of community organizing that have as its center the church and the convictions of faith. And there are diverse ways that people theologize around organizing, diverse concepts and frameworks which animate these efforts. Salvation, liberation, justice, and power are all part of a vocabulary of underlying social and theological efforts to bring about social change. Now, our three speakers have extensive experience and knowledge of community organizing and ministry. Our main speaker is Dr. Lee Stewart, director of South Bronx Churches Nehemiah Corporation, which is now in its second phase of affordable housing construction. Now, you all may have an image of the South Bronx, where the South Bronx is vacant lots and burned out buildings. South Bronx no longer looks like that. The South Bronx has now been substantially rebuilt, a lot more to do in many different ways, and I'm sure Dr. Stewart will speak to us about that. But, at the heart of that effort and of renewal has been Dr. Stewart and the South Bronx churches. She's been a primary force there, with the organization since 1987, excuse me, from 1987 when the organization began. From 1992 to 2000, she was a lead organizer with the South Bronx Churches sponsoring committee. Among other degrees,

she has received a PhD in ecology from San Diego State University and the University of California at Davis. Currently, she has done a new work called Galileo Works, Incorporated, which combines organizing expertise and community development. And Lee is a founder and chief bottle washer of that right now. Our second speaker is Rydell Payne. Rydell has been here in Charlottesville for sixteen years. From 1988 to 1999, Rydell worked at as senior youth counselor for Community at Tension where he supervised, mentored, and directed programs for more than 60 at-risk youth. In 1999, Rydell became the executive director of Charlottesville Abundant Life Ministries, a faith-based, non-profit organization located in the Prospect Avenue area. Rydell brings hands-on experience and a steady faith to this work and he has been a significant, indeed huge asset to his work, to the work in the community. Through his leadership, Abundant Life Ministries is now flourishing as it seeks to empower children, families for a better life in the city. Our third person who will be a respondent to Dr. Stewart is Dr. Russell Jeung, who teaches Asian-American studies at San Francisco State University. He has, I think, one of the most significant stories of church-based organizing that we have to look at. While in graduate school, he became involved with a multi-ethnic church in Oakland. Along with a few Christian professionals who relocated to the inner city, they reorganized almost 200 Cambodian and Latino tenants, mostly immigrant, low-income, and limited English-speaking to address slum conditions. They won a settlement in which tenants received new, permanent affordable housing. Together, we have a superb panel of these three speakers. The format will be Dr. Stewart will speak for thirty minutes, and then Russell and Rydell will each respond for about five to ten minutes, and then we will have a chance for comments, discussion, and questions to the panel. So, I now turn it over to one of New York City's best, someone who cares about the city and about the South Bronx and will share with you about that passion and that commitment. Dr. Lee Stewart.

Dr. Stewart: I don't normally use the Dr, either, unless someone is being really disrespectful, and then I pull it out of my pocket, but thank you for the introduction. Those of you who have visited me in the Bronx, could you please raise your hands? I hosted groups. I was on the spiritual sawdust trail for a while. You can call it academic tourism or whatever it was, it was a pleasure to have you there, and I'm please to be with you here today. Now, I was really happy to hear that this session was 'Toward a Theology of Organizing' because it certainly is a process of towards. We don't have a theology of organizing yet. And I'm going to talk about some of the constructs, the theological constructs which seem to be really kind of run of the mill but were enlightening and revelational to people who came to see us in the Bronx and also talk about the failings of those structures right now and what I think, in many ways, kind of parallels with Reverend Rivers, where folks in the academy should be looking to help and provide that cover for those of us who are trying to do this in the streets. So I'm going to talk about some of the kind of steady sorts of theological, I call it building blocks, really. My own story is that I am an ecologist by training, I'm not a theologian, I'm not a historian, and I'm not even a community organizer. I was glad that that was word was out of the title, because I don't like that word, I don't know what that word beats people up, that word isolates people, and until we have a pretty good definition of what we're talking about, I think the community is like 'the tyranny'. I don't know what that—I have dropped that. I'll be an organizer but I don't know if it's towards community because I don't know what that means very much anymore. So, about 18 years ago

in between an appointment at your rival down the road, Virginia Tech, in the biology department, at some next professional step in which I hoped to be in Alaska, I was invited to go to the South Bronx to set up a shared food program which some friends and I had invented in San Diego. And I thought I would stay there for six months because I thought that was how long it would take to set it up. And that was how long it did take to set it up. But I stayed there because I was, I think, offended, would be the right word. I was scandalized. I was not an idiot. I had read things about what was going on in the inner cities in the United States. I was born the other end of the state in Big Stone Gap, Virginia, so I knew something about what Appalachian poverty looked like. I knew about the prejudices that poor people encountered as I left Appalachia and went out into the wider world and when I hit the south Bronx, I realized that places like the Bronx were the spectacle of the nation's poverty. And this time it had a really ugly added twist of race to it. And based on early childhood experiences, where I'd felt badly battered by the popular cultural understanding of where I grew up, I said I couldn't do anything about when I was thirteen, I'm going to take a stand here with people who are here, and I'm going to not let that happen if I can, and I'm going to challenge every step of the way that I can. And so what I encountered was that I was quickly adopted by an African American Roman Catholic Church. And I am a worshipping member of that church. I was raised a Presbyterian but I became a black catholic, if you will. So there is, you have a right to know what my theological underpinnings are as I come here.

The real premise of, these are the building blocks, this is how I start thinking about—what do you do the analysis about what are we going to organize. Very simple premise, that we use over and over, that the world as it is, is not as it should be, right? And yet, we say, that the reign of God is at hand. Which could mean that it's right here, right now, and we don't get it or it could mean that it's out there someplace. But whatever it is, the world as it is not as it should be, and in order to get it, to move it, from the world as it should be to the world as it is, there's only one way to do it, unfortunately, and that is by a display of power. And mean power. I mean the ability to move people, to move groups of institutions, it is a claim, in fact, this is not exactly a theological construct, this is a physics construct, also. In order to move anything, you have to apply some kind of force to it. It isn't going to happen by accident. And so what I think organizing is all about is how, in whatever context you are, can you help build power, can you support—and it's not even creating power because the power exists, it's claiming power that says we in this situation have the power, or can claim the power and will change and will push the world as it is to the world as it should be. Now, fortunately, 20 years ago in the South Bronx it was really simple, it was not ambiguous. You could go into a public school and you could find children eating on the floor because the custodians' union thought it was too difficult to sweep the floors with the tables up, so the principal's solution to that was to make the children eat on the floor. So, it was easy. Those are easy fights. But it took power to get that to change. So, what the basis, the theological basis that we had to start with is very simple, and these all may be too simple for you all because I don't know what you all do as theological academicians, but I think that thinking about some of these in a basic way and helping apply them in the ground is really important. And one of them is the image of God. You know, that people are made in the image and likeness of God and we mean by that all-powerful and all-loving, and if you don't fundamentally and radically believe that, and what that means, then I don't think there's a base

for organizing at all. And unfortunately, there are whole structures in our society which keep people from ever imagining themselves as the image of God, and in some ways, the only place where people can ever begin to get a hint of it is Sunday morning, and maybe that's why we stay separate, because if we're not separate, then that sense of "are we really the presence of God, are we the image of God, we don't know" but where people can finally be free to be themselves and to be seen as God. As children of God. So, I think that this was pretty simple. In terms of power, how many people here, does anybody here still have problems with power? You're all still convinced with—you have a problem with power? (Muffled exchange). I just want to make sure that everybody's not scared. I'll go through it. Is anybody worried about it at all? Well, maybe there's been a great revolution in theology and power is a virtue.

Power is the best theological virtue again. Power scares people because we were born in a dominant, our society is based on dominant society and we church people are taught not to be that way. And so we live in a whole system and pretend that power is a bad thing, but we say, "Almighty God" but we don't mean, we never equate that part of Almighty God with power. And, so I want to redeem power. I don't have a whole lot of time to redeem power, but just understand that power is one of the great attributes of God. It's probably the theological virtue that is least preached about and it should be preached about the most. Because it gets things done. When I'm talking about power, it means how do you get things done? And I put the relational in front of it because there's one way to get things done, which is to pull out the force of a gun or to take an airplane and do something or to take an entire army and overrun a country, that's one way to get things done. That's not the type of power that I'm trying to build, but it is a type of power that this is a pretty weak engine against. So what I'm talking about and organizing is how do you build relationships among people and among institutions so that they can get something done. For the Biblical reference to it, Jesus couldn't do anything if the people didn't have faith. If he were not in relationship to the people that he was working with, no miracles could occur. Nothing could. It took that touch of the cloak, it took the moment of faith, and so to build—there is no power without relationships, and so how do you build relationships where there are none, and society is forcing them apart? I think that's a real question for theologians, and I think it's not a trivial question. I don't think you can say, "Oh, just bring everybody together and let's just have an agape meal or sing kumbaya" I think you were talking about. You know, that those things are fairly lame—you have to figure out what is the real meaning. And people have organized for power in lots of different ways. Just to run through them, there's the movements, one cause, they're really focused on individuals, they have a fleeting type of power, they used to have a longer lasting type of power, the movement of my youth was the civil rights movement, the movement of my current time is this MoveOn.Org. It has exhausted me being part of that, at first I could get behind it, it has exhausted me. Movements don't, the modern movements don't last very long. It takes a tremendous amount of mobilizing. It takes an escalation of action, but the problem with movements right now is that dominant power, they don't matter. Movement, as expressed now, doesn't matter anymore, and there's an awful lot of romantic attachment to movements of the past, people haven't noticed that it doesn't work. You can have a million men someplace; you can have however millions of people in February, they don't work. I'm not sure, I don't want to say that it's dead, or that it's a dead practice but it sure hasn't worked very well. It has been beaten,

basically.

The other form of power that people try to express is in social services. How are you going to make a change, you're going to set up some kind of social service. These things are mandated by needs, the minute you do it, you step into a power problem because there's a division inside it which is power over of the client and the provider. You exacerbate all of the class attitudes that are rampant in our society. So that rather than, you may be meeting a physical need, but every time you're doing it, even if you're very clever at it, you are reinforcing a very bad theological construct that there's someone who is better and someone who is less and there is a power exchange and I've seen them done as best as I can see them, and I've tried to run them as best as I can run them, and I'm very guilty of it. I don't know how to make that model really work for power and for real respect for people. A challenge for you as academic theologians is can you do charity with dignity? I don't know. To be honest, I haven't seen it really in my lifetime. I've seen emergency response done with dignity, but I have not seen charity done with dignity. If movements go on too long, they die, if social service goes on too long, it creates another theological problem which is learned dependence, so again, you've taken the autonomy of the person, the image of God, and created them into something much less than that, and it's the provider that does it, it's not the person, that's a problem. Also, in my lifetime, what I've seen is that the social service providers become an establishment that act to keep situations and structures in place. We talk about it in the South Bronx. We used to say that there's no industry in the South Bronx and there's no manufacturing, and we now say, "Well, actually, there is, the industry is the maintenance and service of poverty, and what we create are jailbait. Because if you end up with schools that don't educate and lousy housing and the situation where the usually African American/Latino male is worth male in jail to the society because it costs more to keep him there than he's going to make on the street, then you end up with a system which is geared towards making that man the most expensive commodity you can. Through histories of failure of system after system after system of job training programs, we though a hundred million dollars came into New York City for job training every year and about 2% of that actually turned up with people having jobs, so there was a hundred million dollars invested against the African American/Latino families in the Bronx. I used to say, when I was a child, I'm a beneficiary of Sputnik, you know, my education, my science education was funded by the government because of trying to get better science education. My government was betting on me. The government now is betting against minority children in this country. Huge counter investment. And I think that's just a whole other issue—how do we have enough power to overcome that? I don't know. The type of work that I've been doing with the South Bronx churches is a structure called the broad based power organization which is different than those other two things because instead of organizing individuals, it organizes institutions, and those of you who came to the Bronx saw that we had 36 churches of different denominations and a mosque, that we had been slowly and increasingly building power to work from low levels, like getting the kids able to have tables to eat at, like complicated things like, we're at almost 1000 houses and we built a new public high school that was the first high school outside of the Bronx high school of science that had as its mission and goal preparing children to go to college. And the first meeting that we had with the New York City Board of Education in 1992, not like this is 1952, this is 1992, the head of curriculum of the New York City Board of

Education, looked at our team and said, I quote, “Do you really think these black and Latino children can go to college?” That’s what he said. Head of curriculum. Head of high school curriculum for the New York City School System, this is 1992. And one of our ministers had the presence of mind to say, “It’s that attitude which prevents them.” And when they got us off the ceiling after that, then we were able to do this thing. But if broad based organization is not the end of the model for organizing because it has very poor theology of succession. Changes of pastors are fatal to us as organizers. If a pastor comes into a church and is not interested, we very rarely have enough strength in the local congregation to do it. There is a problem of the succession of the organizer and of mission, there’s a problem of new people coming in, you always have to keep re-inventing the organization, some people get tired of fixing stop signs but some people need to fix stop signs. We’re always understaffed, we don’t plan for sustainability, and even though we’ve been able to do tremendous amounts of work, it’s really flawed because we don’t have a sustainable model and we—I mean, our biggest flaw is that we haven’t addressed the increasing import of the economy over the state, that all of these forms of organizing, particularly broad based organizing and movement, are focused at the state-side of the equation, but with the market becoming more and more _____, gaining much much much more power, we don’t have any, and most organizers refuse to look at the organizing of money as anything to do with organizing. They might organize for money and get their grant, I’m considered a very, kind of, threatening, influence in the organizing world because I think we ought to organize economy like capital organizes money, and only make that capital work on our behalf. So basically, those three models.

How did we get anywhere towards these? The access to the image of God? Is simple individual meanings is simple intentional thirty or forty minute conversations where you ask people what is there heart. It’s not about the chit-chat, it’s not about the gossip, but it’s taking time to authentically be with another human being to find out who that person is, what their story is, how do they see the world, what are their interests, what might we do together, it’s very prone to manipulation if you go in with an agenda about it. One of the hardest things I teach young organizers is just talk, don’t preach. Just listen. And find out. And when you’ve had thousands of these, or when you’ve had a good one, you know it because there is a sense of the presence of God. You actually feel as if there has been an encounter with the other, which is very holy and very sacred, and if you organize without that spirit, I think it’s completely dead, but if we only organize, but my tension is if we only do that, we don’t amass enough power to change the world as it is. We may change our relationships, we may change the way it feels to be in our churches, but we don’t have enough to change the world as it is to the world as it should be. But if you try to make those bigger changes without the relationship, the minute dominant power throws in anything like ethnic division, class division, geographic division, threat, intimidations, firings, evictions, any of that stuff, you don’t have the solidarity, you don’t have the glue between people. So, some kind of theology that would help keep people together in the face of an attempt to divide. I never read anything about that. It is intentional, and you can count on it coming, and if you don’t train people for it, when it comes, it can be very, very frightening. And I’ve only had one death threat about it, and it was fairly scary, but I knew they were too chicken to do it, but for the first twenty minutes I was scared. A theological metaphor that we use for the relation of power is the tent of the presence. This is Moses before he went

into the Promised Land, his movement is his liberation. His social service is his wandering in the desert for forty years, and his tent in the presence is his gathering of the tribes together so that all may prophesy. And in broad based organizing, the image works because what you try to do is get the prophets, get the heads of all of the different tribes, whoever they may be, so you get the ethnic tribes, the religious tribes, you try to get the class tribes together, and have the relationships among them so that all may prophesy. The trouble with most organizing is that most organizers can't hear the evangelical and the Pentecostal side, so they don't know how to interact with that. Most of us haven't had any experience dealing with Islam, so we don't know how to do that. Our organizations are not really broad based. They're kind of mainline Protestant with a residual left-wing Vatican two Catholics. And, frankly, those groups are in decline. These groups have been routed. They have been completely routed, and there doesn't seem to be a way out yet, so here we are trying to build power organizations with the least powerful institutions serving the least powerful people in the city. It doesn't make a whole lot of sense, but I told you I would make a critique of my own work here. I want to tell you a success story of how the best it worked was using a model of society which is recognizing that there is a private sector to society, a public sector, and the people who invented this, called us, the third sector, you know, the voluntary sector, the church and congregation sector, the third sector, think this is a terrible thing. For us, we should be the first sector, we're not. But I read Theodore Roosevelt's autobiography, and he called this thing the Hearth and Home sector. And that says it a little bit more for me, that it's the values of the hearth and home that are protected here, it's the values of the dollar that are protected here, and the values of the state that are protected here. Now, the organizing model that I use all the time for any issue, whether it's a stop sign or a school, or I'd love to figure out how to get this into the global arena, I'm not there yet, is that in the beginning, when this sector invented these two sectors, for some moment of time, there was some kind of balance, but right now, these relationships, this one works pretty well between the state and the market, but there's less and less here, and in fact, if you have to make a real power diagram, in my lifetime, the power has shifted from being in the state to being in to the economy and now into the one person state, which is heavily dealing with the aspects of the finances. So the object of organizing is to build the power here, so at first, you can get the theology of recognition. "Here I am, Lord." So, the first step we did is to organize enough power in the hearth and home sector to tackle what was—in the 1970's New York City had a policy called Planned Shrinkage. And you can read about it. And Planned Shrinkage was this really great idea that if a neighborhood, like Bronx and Harlem and Brooklyn, if they shut down the fire stations and shut down the hospitals and shut down the police stations and stopped prosecuting most forms of crime, then people would leave. And they did, in droves. 450,000 people left the South Bronx, and equal numbers of people left in other areas because the idea was that the cities had to protect its vital financial core. Now those of you who are from New York know that the current mayor is shutting down fire stations, shutting down schools, shutting down hospitals, closing public health clinics, closing mother and child health clinics, it sounds a little to us like it's happening again. But this had been the policy of the 70's, the Bronx had been laid to waste, the image you have in your head of the Bronx, I'll admit, was correct. But what we realized was that we had, if we could build enough power, and where did we have our power, we had it in our churches, we had it in ourselves, two things, housing and schools. So, for the housing, what we did is we borrowed 3.5

million dollars from the Catholic, Lutheran, and Episcopal bishops and that gave us a bank, so we formed our own bank. It's always best if poor people have their own bank. You should think about making your own bank. By getting enough money and 5,000 people in mayoral candidates' faces over a period of several years, we were able to convince the city that they should give us 20 acres of land and 15,000 dollars a house. And we found some private developers who were not crooks, who were very honest, and who would help us build the banks, and so we organized in all three sectors. A lot of times, community organizing or community organizers make a mistake and just think you're organizing here. I've spent as much time organizing the government of New York City and banks and private sector as I have in the social sector. The net result of this thing in nine years was 950 houses; I've had the pleasure of having some of the families who organized for this thing in the beginning purchase homes when their children were 16. The children are now buying the second set of homes, and this power analysis and hooking back the sectors is what allowed that to happen. And it came through organizing in all the sectors. Same thing happened with the Bronx Leadership Academy High School. We found enough parents who were fed up; only 3% of kids in the Bronx were going to school. The policy at the time in the schools there was that you should only have half as many chairs and half as many books per class as you had enrolled students. Why? Because half wouldn't come anyhow. You know, it seemed to make sense. You guys think that's a good idea? That was the educational policy. So we had enough people fed up with that that we went into the public sector and through nothing but hard, hard pushing, got the Board of Ed to agree, that there might be a slim chance that maybe a new type of approach to school was required. We found some partners in the private sector required, and managed to create the Bronx Leadership Academy High School, which has about 600 students, it's ten years old. Finally, the city is beginning to consciously replicate the darn thing. We are establishing connections through the traditional black colleges and a lot of the colleges in New England for our graduates, and about 90% of the kids go on to college, and we stay in touch. They have basically, we crack the monopoly of New York City education on that, through organizing. Now these things are all very well and good, and I used to feel very great about these, I still feel really great about it. I feel really great that South Bronx Churches has been able to rebuild its neighborhood and set a new standard of scholarship for, and expectations from, schools, but it doesn't mean anything in the face of what's happening globally right now. We have a situation where the market is taking over. What that feels like in the South Bronx is we're the labor end of globalization, so we have more and more people coming into the Bronx. And this is fine, because this is what's powered New York all of the time. But those people who have lived here for a long time have always felt that this is kind of an exile theology, you know, that we're in the wilderness, that we have to kind of hang together and liberate ourselves. New people think this is the Promised Land. And so they're easily abused by their employers. They don't know. They're easily abused by the educational establishment, and so what happens is there's a tremendous loss of ground because we don't have a way to organize people who don't have a sense of (A) democratic action, or (B), that this is not the Promised Land. It may look like the Promised Land because the Mexican Army is not at your door trying to run over your corn fields, but it isn't. And you don't get to be shoved around, so the huge challenge about how to deal with the human end of globalization. I mean, the theology of the financial end is one thing, but the human end of it is another. How can you help me, those of us in the field, think about

that, and teach the theology towards power that's going to get us out of that one? Also, the dominant power increasingly on the rise, it is the way things get done now, whether it was crashing the airplanes into the towers on 9/11 or whether it was the invasion in Iraq, the preemptive war in Iraq, there isn't anything in our type of relational power that I have seen yet that can approach it. Reverend Rivers talked about the paucity of any kind of reaction that can come from the intellectual community about what we might do about this, so we're kind of, I think, all living in a dream world, but we think these simple little models of what we've used before, but we are really fiddling while Rome is burning. We are not only routed, we are on the route, and we are running scared, and we are losing ground every day, and we are really kind of going willingly along with it. And the only Christian theology that is out there right now is the Bush Christian theology. And it is theological in nature. It talks about God. It talks about God's right. It talks about the domain of, this is a holy war. And I don't hear a peep. I don't. I don't hear it. So, somehow or another, we have got to figure out how to get the theology that can deal with those questions. And the first one, there was a thing that I object to, that was when people say, "Oh, 9/11 changed everything." 9/11 didn't change everything, 9/11 changed it for those people who were in the dominant power seat. It was the most brilliant political act that I've seen in my life. I hate to give it the credence like that. It was perfect in what we teach, which is you do something inside your experience and outside the experience of power in order to unsettle it and make a change. That was a perfect action. We don't have anything that can compare. I think maybe 100 guys actually put that thing together. And is there anybody—is there any 100 of us—who could come up with a parallel action? From the other side. Is anybody even asking what that action would be? So that would be my question, my challenge to, and it's fundamentally organizing, but it is not at the level that I've been doing it. People like me can work in the Bronx and can make our small headways, but we are not equipped to deal with the rampant power that's unloosed upon the world right now at all. And I'd like some cover from you for it. Thanks.

Rydell: I'm going to speak a little bit about what Abundant Life Ministries is and does in the context of what Lee hopefully has shared; hopefully I'll put it in the context of Abundant Life Ministries. Abundant Life Ministries started about 7 years ago, a church here locally in the city of Charlottesville decided that it wanted to basically address issues of poverty, issues of crime, issues of deterioration in a particular community here in Charlottesville, and it did so by going to the community and asking it how can we be helpful. And from the beginning, the community said that you can be helpful by starting a neighborhood center that provides programs. And the church also had in mind to plant a local church in that community and decided "we'll go with the neighborhood center first and perhaps the neighborhood center will come along later." Well, seven years later, the ministry has, I think, been very effective at developing social programs and Lee was kind of saying, you know, that's sort of an easy thing to do. Programs that have been helping families educationally, academically, vocationally, and also certainly spiritually as well. And there's a list of them, and I think in terms of the success of the ministry, it's impressive, it's encouraging. There are a lot of new things that are happening in terms of bringing more resources and more opportunities to the residents in the Prospect Avenue neighborhood. But as I begin to reflect on the issue of power, asking myself the question "Those whom we serve, what power do they really have to bring about change in their

community, or in our community?” and it’s a little daunting because we are able to summon lots of resources to provide programs, but we aren’t able to organize in such a way in that we’re really able to make a difference in that community in terms of seeing radical change, and a lot of my words have been taken away by listening to Eugene a little bit because the radical—the sincerity of looking at the intellectual community and looking at how it can be helpful kind of floored me, but I also want to go about organizing in that community in a very similar fashion. The communities that we see, or the community that I’m a part of where there is criminal activity, where there are issues of housing, where there are issues concerning whether it’s pregnancy, whether it’s education, we want to see it change dramatically as opposed to, you know, we’re a ministry down there doing a few good things, and we’ll kind of give you a little bit of help here and there. And we’re grateful for that. But to actually make assertions that, you know, give us some of the power to bring about change is a little bit risky and it does require having relationships with others but it also takes a sense of guts to look a little different and to perhaps be misinterpreted.

I’m thankful for what Lee has shared and some of the things that she has shared are a little bit risky because as I listen to her, I think the greatest virtue being power, well, wasn’t Christ’s message, if you will, would support the greatest message being love? Would not the message of Paul being that virtue being one of love? So I’m interested to hear more from her as to how do you take that message of, that’s very, very clear in scripture as to love being one of the greatest virtues, how that’s related to power? So, thank you so much for sharing and I look forward to hearing from you.

Lee: I think power and love is an unfortunate dichotomy that we fall into, and it should never be set up as either-or, I lift it up as an either-or because it’s almost like the value of saying, you know, blow your mind a little bit? But obviously power without love is tyranny and love without power is mush, so take your pick. So you have to have power with love.

Rydell: I’ll end by saying power is also, and love is also expressed, I think, in Christ’s declaration that the kingdom of God will be expressed by freedom being given to the captives, sight being given to the blind, and so forth and so on, and that’s how power is demonstrated. In organizing, as a Christendom goes about organizing is that it has an impact in people’s lives at a very practical level and as Abundant Life Ministries, we continue to struggle as to how do we have people realize where the power actually is and support them in reclaiming that power, and again, looking forward to this weekend to better understand how to go about doing that and how to embellish that. There are a lot of successes, but to under gird a community, whether it’s South Bronx, whether it’s Baltimore, whether it’s New Orleans, to actually get underneath, if you will, and serve in a community so that transformation takes place from the bottom in serving is also our challenge and I look forward to learning more and more about that.

Russell Jeung: I’d like to sort of elaborate and sort of extend Lee’s model here and share another story from our organizing experiences in Oakland, and I’d like to thank Charles and Lived Theology for inviting me to do this. Let me first tell me the story of where we’re at. We’re in Oakland and I work with a lot of the Southeast Asian and Latino kids and there’s one kid

named Sapaul who, when he was a teenager got arrested as an accomplice to murder and he spent eight years in prison, and he's in our church now. He got out and he joined our church. And while in prison he actually finished his high school degree and now he works as a community organizer, working with youth, teaching them break dancing, tutoring, and doing those types of things. Also while in prison, he loves horticulture, so he raises all these seedlings for us, and so now we take his seedlings and we plant seedlings in the neighborhood and it's really cute.

Okay, but now, here's the global, theological-needed theory of the state coming in. In 1996, congress passed an illegal immigration reform act. It's also known as the immigrant responsibility act. We call it IL-IM. In this law, it says "All non-citizens are subject to deportation for aggravated felonies." Even if they've already served their time, they have no rights because they're non-citizens. And you can see here the effects of globalization affecting individuals, the contraction over who belongs within a certain state, who's in, who's out, who's worth maintaining, so as a result of this law, so far, 1,541 Cambodians have received their deportation notices. And that may not sound like a lot, but within the Cambodian community, that's a big number. Already 63 Cambodians who have lived in the United States over 20 years, who have already served their time, have been deported and have gone back to Cambodia, where they don't know how to speak Khmer, they don't know how to interact. So, Sapaul, our community organizer, our church-goer, our supplier of daisies, can be next, right? Even though he's paid his time, he can be deported under this new law and that's a situation that a lot of our church kids find themselves in and that's where we found ourselves about a week ago protesting and organizing a lot of other Asian youth around this particular issue. What we did was we sort of took the power analysis that Lee had and we did it with kids. We said, okay, who's got the power in the situation, we cut the issue, we recognized it's Congress who passed the law, it's INS who implements the law, we need to target the government, so we went out to the federal building, the INS office, and we did a protest. And in usual protesting form, we did songs, we did our little protest, we did agitation is what it's called. So let me read a little poem that the kids did, it's actually a chant, but I'm not going to make you sing and say "yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah", but this is a poem.

"You wage war on my country, now I'm called a refugee. We are here with our demands, join us now and take a stand. Deportation is a crime when we already did our time. Immigrants are not to be blamed. George Bush, you should be ashamed. We need one love, one nation, we gotta stop deportation." And it goes on, ad infinitum. So, we're out there, we organized, and what we're trying to do is organize against the state, that's our target, and what we do is rally a lot of kids to sort of protect hearth and home, kids who want to stay with their families in the United States, they don't have any more family members in Cambodia, so what we want to do is protect hearth and home. We organize them; we try to get numbers, the power of numbers. We also organize, you know, the power of the media to try to redress this political situation. And so, we were there, and there isn't a happy ending to this story. So, what happens, then, is the kids act like squirrels, it's really hard to organize teenagers. So, they're like, sort of slightly chanting, they're sort of interested in the issue because they could be arrested and deported but, you know, they're acting like teenagers, and you know, looking at girls and things like that.

And it didn't seem very successful because it didn't get very much media attention. And so, for our church, this was like a group of non-profits trying to organize youth, so what was our church doing there in this kind of losing situation, we tried to organize, we tried to target the state, we did all of the right things, we agitated, we had a cute song, but our question is, what's our church doing in this type of organizing effort, and the way our church stays involved is we have a real different take than the way the secular organizers operate. And even maybe the way Lee operates. If you look at Lee's picture about power, and the definition of power, power is either organizing people or organizing money, and in our church, we sort of take it a little differently.

We think power belongs to God. And, it's sort of like the theological basis for all that we do is Psalm 62:11, that God's already done the great thing, God's already moved and changed our history, God's already affected what's going on, and what we need to do is come alongside God and not necessarily try to do things on our own but we first of all recognize and what we want to teach our kids is that power belongs to God. And that's a sort of different approach. Secondly, when we talk about the other source of power that the youth have that's not money, that's not numbers, it's actually the moral vision and the narrative that the Bible offers. And even as Cambodians, they can relate to the narrative of Jesus and the image of God because when we teach them, we talk about "well, Jesus was a refugee, too" right? Jesus was scapegoated, too. Jesus was unfairly punished, too. And so, they can see in their lives, God's life, and Jesus has already died to set us free from those sins, both the structural sins that oppress us, our personal sins that cause us to commit crimes, and even our own personal demons. So, for our church, our notion of power is a little bit different. So what we need to do, and what I'd like to ask theologians here to do, is to sort of develop that theology of power and help people of the likes of Sapaul and me in our work. For the community building group, one question that we have, and when you do organizing, what you try to do is you try to have winnable actions, right? Because supposedly, winning would breed success, success draws communities together, maybe shared common interest, draws black and brown and white together because we're all winning, everybody likes to be on a winner. So, the problem is that we're not winning, like Reverend Rivers says, we're getting routed. And the whole problem of, like, trying to operate on a model of success is that we've already bought into the capitalist game of trying to be successful. Of trying to be utilitarian and of trying to be effective. And I don't think the church is called to be effective or called to be successful. Christ died. And so what we try to do, instead of pushing for success and trying to do winnable issues all the time, we organize not because we're going to really, really win, but we'd like to, but we organize because it's the faithful thing to do, because it's the right thing to do, because God calls us to obedience. That's what we try to teach our kids. It's not about winning, it's about being faithful to the God who saves us. And so, that's our motivation.

But how do we, as community builders, how do we draw people around that vision of faith, the power of obedience, not the power of being successful? We don't want people to get caught up around that sort of, you know, thirst for success because that's not going to last and that's not going to happen in the real world, so we need a theology to sustain us in being faithful. We need a theology to sustain us in being obedient to God who calls us to justice, okay? And that

leads us to a question for the race group, where usually organizers organize around self-interest, right? And self-interest isn't defined as selfishness, your individual needs, self-interest isn't defined as altruism, but organizers define self-interest as, what De Tocqueville would say as your articulated defined self-interest would be that which is the common good, or the community's interest. And so, when Lee goes in and does the one-on-ones, what they're doing is not trying to discern the individual's self-interest, but the community's self-interest. And now, how that relates to race is now, for the theology of race group, is now, who is the self now? Which community of interest are you trying to organize around? Are you trying to organize around the church's community, geographic community, do you organize around the individual needs of the self? Do we organize around the ethnic needs? Which notion of self are we trying to organize around? And so, there, we need a theology of self-hood, and that's hard to do because when we're looking at self-interest, we also look at the social construction of what's our interest, right? And with the market clearly defining what we think are our interests, it's hard for people to really articulate what their self-interest are now because now everybody says "I want a play station 2, I want a DVD, I want a Lexus, I want an Escalade" and so, how do you actually help people discern their "authentic, legitimate self-interest" versus what the media tells them their self-interest is, versus what capitalism tells them their self-interest is, what the neighborhood, you know, local gangs are telling them their self-interest is. So not only do we need to understand ourselves, a lot of times we need to understand what self-denial is. And that's not talked about in community organizing very well either because you're sort mobilizing people along self-interest but Christ, like Rydell talked about, calls us to love and self-denial, and how do we become self-emptying, the way Jesus did, how do we give up our privilege and our rights, because we're all complicit in this system, we've all in the United States benefited from this system, so how do we become a community of repentance knowing that no one is perfectly right, how do we then establish a common good, and what I see a lot of community organizing groups is that we become like secular interest groups. We're just sort of fighting for our piece of the pie, for our particular neighborhood, and saying, "well, it's a zero sum game, there's a limited amount of money out there, so we're going to organize to get as much money for our neighborhood as we can." And that's, obviously, I don't think, very sound theology. For the theology of power people, then, what we try to do, then, is what we were talking is usually, what mobilizes people and organizes is what we call cold anger. It's not a hot anger that burns, a hot anger that seeks vengeance, but it's a cold anger that righteousness and justice. But Lee's talked about how she's motivated by the anger that things aren't as they should be, right, that things aren't as they ought to be, right, but I think Rydell's right that how do we combine that cold anger and transform that into love and nonviolence? I was talking to Victoria, right, about the culture of nonviolence that permeated the Civil Rights movement, how we've lost that legacy and I don't know how to organize out of nonviolence. Instead all we have in our organizing model now is conflictual politics, right, we go up and challenge power structures with our power, it's all about confrontational politics, so I don't know how to, like, do politics now in a nonviolent manner, and I think that would be sort of interesting for us. We want to be a witness of the good news, we want to do what's right, so we want to organize and use power in the right way. We want to know how to do things the right way and how to play the political games, how to organize to change things in a good way, so those are our three questions, and I just wanted to end with this sort of Biblical passage. I've always wanted to read

to a bunch of academicians. It's in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring nothing to the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the lived theologian, where is the disputer of this world, hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save him from what they believe. We preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men. So, for what we want to do is we want to see the weakness of God in our midst and let that not trickle down on us but let that sort of rain on us.

Mark: Okay, time for questions and comments.

Eugene Rivers: Just on the, one of the questions I have on the organizing side, that has to do with organizing among the poor, and I'd like to get some reactions from you folk on this. When we moved into our neighborhood and community to work with the poor fifteen years ago, we had a fairly traditional, progressive, living material, solidarity with the poor, kind of Dorothy Day, you know Bob Moses, overalls, you know the whole shtick. Then the poor said we're not feeling that. That's what the poor told us. They said, "Look. I've been poor all my life. I'd like to have something. You've had something and so you're now doing your simplicity, live-with-the-poor routine. Your class experience is such that what you want to do I've never had, now once I've had what you've had, I'll do the thing that you do now." And what we learned is that it was a much more complicated game because—and one guy told us, he said, "Look, Rivers, as far as I can tell, you look pretty rich to me which is why you can dress bummy because you got. Now, when I've had, maybe I can do the crunchy whole simplicity thing because I will have had something to reject." Do you find in your organizing, because we found this with a lot of the poor black people we work with, that they wanted to learn how to have, never having had, and I come from three generations of actually middle class people, so I didn't have the same needs psychologically and emotionally, is the idea of living simply, as simple as it sounds in your work with the poor, because it's turned out to be a more complicated game, as we've lived and worked among the poor.

Lee: In Appalachia doing that when I was a little kid and I said, well this doesn't work, and what I've found is when I came to the Bronx and first started working and was really taken in by South Bronx churches, and by St. Augustine's Church, that it was actually really incredibly really disrespectful to look like a bum or to pretend that you were something that you weren't and that it was just a fake and a BS argument and that it was just a...and so I just live like who I am. I'm a middle class white person and I'm not—I've got no issue about that. And what occurred to me once in one of these – they kind of train organizers too to kind of shut up and let the people speak. And I realized one time in one of these negotiation sessions with the New York City Board of Education that if I kept my mouth shut then that was the stupidest thing I had ever done and for whatever reason, God had put me in there so that kind of trash could not go over on people who did not know any better than that and it was a great moment of liberation for me to say you know what? I'm here so when that racket starts running and I'm the one who can

hear it because I've got a different way of looking at it, then I can stop it. And I realize, and I did this in the housing still for the last fifteen years in both the housing establishment and the school establishment in New York City, if I'm in the room, the BS stops, so that's...and then, also, other people have the courage to do it next time.

Russell: Well, I'm actually one of those guys who tried to be like the poor, live simply, and be down in the community and yeah... but I'm still there and I'm still trying to lose myself and finding my true self and we don't not acknowledge the true privilege we have as college educated, we don't not acknowledge our racial privilege if we have any, our little privilege, I think it's important for our own discipleship to try to live simply and to try to find solidarity with the poor, knowing that we do have more options, we do have more resources. The thing is, we don't call the poor to be like us and I think that's been the tension. Because now, developing a multi-class church is a lot harder than developing a multi-ethnic church but we have been told the poor or the other people in the neighborhood that you gotta be like us, and you know, give up your dreams of education because it's not worth it, you know, we've tasted it. What we try to do is thus create that community of love, forgiveness, and grace, and self-sufficiency that's rich enough to counter, you know, the other lust that they have for upward mobility. The ironic thing is the people we do attract in our community from the neighborhood are those that are upwardly mobile, right, and it's, you know, what are you going to do? I don't know. We're just going to keep on trying.

Eugene: That raises a question about our theology. Even on the race question. You see, right now we have this multi-culturalism ideology that is part of our understanding of how we do race, which avoids the central political and historical fact of the United States, which is slavery. In other words, slavery is the... this country and the reality and all the politics that proceeds from one issue that white folk and people of color avoid, which is slavery, so I just wanted to reference that because the history and to do politics in this country is to know the history of the United States. Most people avoid the history, even on the left, especially on the left, because they don't want to deal with where we stand in relationship with the political and the cultural and the historical reality of slavery to this day so that there's competition among people of color over the victim game and who's going to win and which minority group's larger and there's a whole hustle and on that side, and when you ask the question about the upwardly mobile, see, we don't have a clear class analysis of where the poor are, because in these poor neighborhoods, you have the upwardly mobile and stratification. We somehow feel guilty because there's somebody at the bottom. There are certain poor people who are lazy and they ain't going to do nothing. That's a hard thing to say but it's true. And when Victoria was doing her organizing, there are some that said, I'm going to juke joint, and getting some Johnnie Walker Red, and God bless y'all, and I'll give you a dollar, but I'm not going to come, but we didn't know what to do with that. On the race piece, we've got to come to terms with slavery. The left has ignored that because they don't know what to do with the Africans who were enslaved, and the legacy that has persisted to this day as well as other people of color who don't know what to do with that. So, it's a tough issue that we need more intellectual courage in terms of engaging it because it still exists and it's still unresolved, and until the left confronts that, not in a mushy, stupid, goofy your whips and leather, I feel guilty because I'm white, way

but in a serious intellectual way, the left is not going to get out of its current impasse.

Lee: Do you have a way on that politics of victimization where there's a power, the power racket over there, seems to be, I have more power if I'm more of a victim than you? That's just a very deadly cycle, and to even name it like that I'm going to get in terrible trouble for that. But I'm asking you how.

Eugene: I agree, but my big gig on that, my bugaboo, is the lack of intellectual seriousness, so that what happens is that we slip into kind of pseudo-therapeutic psycho-babble around victim stuff, where I get up, I tell my victim stuff, all the white folk feel guilty, and so they feel paralyzed to raise the hard question of the black dude when he says something stupid, and so that's the game, that's a racket. What I'm saying is that there needs to be an intellectually rigorous conversation around the history of the country that deals with the fundamental contradiction that revolves around the slave question that is still not intellectually resolved, so which doesn't mean every time a black dude gets up, he knows what he's talking about. Sometimes the stupid cat at the party is the black dude talking trash trying to manipulate the white folk with the race card. We ain't talking about that. There needs to be – if we up the quality of the intellectual discourse, when the idiot shows up to do the race number, he or she is disqualified because you up the bar. But we dumb the conversation down to anecdotes and you know, my victimology's tougher than yours, disrespecting the issue intellectually and politically and getting thrown off, so how do we elevate the quality of the issue so it's not simply a collection of anecdotes that masquerade as data or information? So we can do that, but somebody's got to be tough and say, "Look man, what you say is a nice anecdote, but it's stupid. It don't make no sense, it's not evidence, and let's stop talking about as though it is, and let's get down to the real conversation of how we deal with the unresolved issue." Because the black-Latino thing is being played out in a funny way because the slavery thing hasn't been dealt with and we're now playing another kind of goofy game that's got people jacked up.

Rydell: Just a word on, in terms of being in a community and serving a community, I just wanted to say there's a certain generation that's very open to having someone incarnate in their community, that's very open to you helping and serving them, but someone who's 18, 22, and above, they don't want what you're offering, they say "we don't want what you're offering. So I don't have the answer for 18, 26, and above, but if you choose to go generationally and say 12 and below or 12 to 16, they're impressionable and they're open to it, so that was addressing the first question that you had and giving some comment to it. The race issue, myself personally, I think is a big issue in our country, and I don't know how we continue to skirt around it, and maybe it's because I'm kind of in that generation that I wasn't enslaved, I wasn't discriminated against that much but yet I see the effects of discrimination and perhaps I'm a little bit afraid to say this is a real, real issue, and politically I think Bill Clinton started out saying, "I am going to have the war on race" if you will. But that just kind of fell to the side, not taken very seriously. And I haven't seen politically where we were willing to address that anywhere. I talk to students on college campuses and they're like "what race? What issue between blacks and whites?"

Lee: And whites getting off the hook by saying it's blacks versus everybody and never coming face to face with there still is, and will be until we address it, the issue between black and white, the reconfiguration is an easy out for whites who are not saying hold on just a minute, your claim of ...does not hold water in the history of this country in the same way that it does for an African American and get over it. And it's very rude, but what can I say?

Question: If I may, I'm not going to continue the discussion as is, I'm going to step back, particularly in your response early on to the fact that when you're with people who are making an effort to bring the public, you know, to deal with the public part of the deal, and if you don't speak up, then they will get done over or done in, whichever the case might be. My experience with this is, and I like this approach because I use it, is sharing the information with the community, teaching them the skills, identifying what's really going on, until they are very clear on who they are, who they are and whose purpose is what, and where is the power really, and my experience has been when we do that and we go to, you know, or invite, or present opportunities to these people to do the right thing, that they do a really good job, but it's about being very, very clear on who is who, etc, etc, etc, and so I like the idea, or so, Russell? Rydell. You begin by finding out what do you want, what do you really want, and then by taking it from there, and while there may come moments when your presence can make the difference, and I think we find that the happening is much, the time for these things for these things to happen is decreased considerably.

Lee: Oh, hugely. And I think the way I related to that is we always do an evaluation after actions and what it taught me was an error in teaching and reflection going into this because I felt that if I heard it and others didn't, then there was an insufficient analysis yet and we needed to talk more about who and what that was, so after that sort of thing happened and then much better, learning education for me to say hold on, let's keep working on this power analysis. And I didn't have to do that very often, I'm not in the habit of doing this, this was an example of really of a correction of me that said, you know, when you have to do that, that's a failure, and to keep yourself in it in that position is a failure, and sometimes you don't know that shot's coming but then you get better at that, so I would completely say that's right.

Luis Pedraja: I'm Luis Pedraja, I'm part of the Religion and Race workgroup, and I'm going to take this discussion back a step a minute, because as a Latino, it's very difficult for me to hear somebody say, well, your claim is not as important as the claim. It might be different but I think the important thing to remember is there we're starting to fall back into my victimization is worse than your victimization and let's see who's worse off here, and that's not going to solve the problem with race and religion. That's not going to resolve the problem with community building. That's just going to destroy any hope that we have of working together. Sometimes we forget that while slavery is one of the more critical marking points of this nation that also

(Muffled dialogue)

Okay, Brother Rivers. Slavery has been the defining discourse of the history of humanity. All intellectual endeavors have been built on the blood of slaves and you're right, in Latin America,

there have been slaves, and racism still exists, however, I want to put another point in there, it's the thing that's sometimes forgotten in black-Hispanic dialogue, is this, that there are many Hispanics who were black slaves also. And when we talk about Latinos, there were many Latinos who were blacks who were brought in as slaves just like...

(Muffled dialogue)

Okay, well Hispanic is a created category, we all already know that. It lumps a whole lot of people together. But the other thing is I always thought of myself as white until I came to the United States, and then all the sudden, when I was in seminary in Kentucky, I had a friend of mine tell me, well, your problem is that you are not white. That's the first time I realized I wasn't. Because the reality is that most of us are constructed by the white standard of who's in power in the United States. But the other thing that I think is important to realize in this issue of the black-white-Hispanic and all that dialogue is two things that I want to put forth. The first thing is that Latinos and Latinas in the United States, a lot of times, nowadays, our living conditions, and I might get in trouble for saying this, are very similar to slavery. You haven't been to the migrant fields. You haven't been to some of those sweatshops where people do have their rights taken away, where their language has been taken away, where some of them are basically imprisoned in those fields, where they don't have healthcare, where they're beaten by the owners of the fields, and where the women are raped. I've worked as pastor in those migrant fields and I know the reality of those fields and people living six and seven families in one trailer home and people look the other way because it gets us nice, fresh fruits on our table and it's low-cost produce. Now, that's a reality and blacks and whites and we Latino who are upper echelon benefit from that slavery. It might not be the same type of slavery, it's another type of slavery, but it's still a type of slavery and we need to contend with that one as well. But another thing that we need to realize as well is in the dialogue of the black and the white paradigm in the United States is that Latinos, Chinese and Japanese Americans, Philipinos, and all others who have been colonized, and the part of colonization is that they have been completely eradicated from that dialogue. We have kind of been completely left out for that last decade. How many of you have heard of the brown berets? Good. At least one has. How many of you have heard of some of those early movements that were going on at the same time as the Civil Rights movement and who were part of the Civil Rights movement? What was the situation of many of the Hispanics living in the Southwest who were forced to speak English and beaten and punished in school because they spoke Spanish and they weren't allowed and they were denied their culture? What was the situation during segregation when the Hispanics weren't allowed to go into the white restrooms because they weren't white but they weren't allowed to go into the black restrooms because they weren't black, so they had to hold it. That's part of the reality as well. And I think what happens sometimes is that those in power in the white establishment, they push us into a situation where we stand around and say, well, these people are taking our place or these people are taking our place, and it's just playing us against each other and saying there's only so much pieces of the pie and you only get one piece of the pie and you get to fight over it. As one of the Latino comedians has said, I don't want a piece of the pie, I want the recipe. And I think, in there, we're both on the same page. And the other thing I want to say is that part of the problem that we face in community building

and so forth, I think there's two problems, one is truth. The issue is that those of us who have the truth aren't speaking and those who don't have it are crying out loud. And they're going around selling us something as true which is not. And the other issue which you brought up the image of God, the Imago Dei, I think that's an important issue. I think what is happening now days is that we have forgotten the image of God. We have an image, we bought into an image of a deity but it's not the image of the God of the Bible and the God of the Scriptures. It's the God of commerce and the God of mammon, the God of white supremacy, the God of the media that is sold to us and that we're told this is what success is and this is where you're called to be and that's the image that you're supposed to follow, and that's where we get into it. We get into that image and we buy into what we're told, which is not the truth, and we forget the image of God, which is a God of love and a God of compassion and a God who's power is enough to share. And I think that's where we're having the problems. Thank you.

Mark: Well, thank you to everyone for very much engaging this. It's sad to end it, but I know the conversation will continue in this room and out in the hallway and over dinner, probably very quickly. I'd like to thank our panelists for excellent presentations and Charles again for hosting this.