

## BOOK REVIEWS



**Danielle J. Buhuro, *Spiritual Care in an Age of #BlackLivesMatter* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2019), 244 pp.**

**T**his highly thoughtful book, *Spiritual Care in an Age of #Blacklives-matter* by Danielle Buhuro, provides both a dialectical and elucidatory account on the thriving of black lives. The account is a wakeup call to a just future—a future of authentic human development. This is because the book provides tools for religio-social consciousness and psycho-spiritual adjustments, enabling us to understand the unbreakable human spirit and the need to provide pastoral care for black people in an age when black lives matter.

Using African Americans as a microcosm of the suppressed human spirit and an epitome of oppression in a racially charged environment, the author establishes that our human spirit cannot be imprisoned, not even in situations where pastoral care is unavailable for racially abused victims. Arguably, African American people are psychologically trapped by artificially created social conditions. While Christian clergy struggle to discern the nature and scope of their role in the contemporary black life movement under these conditions, social media highlights police brutality on black people, leading to heightened psychological impact. The author admits that racialized police violence is complicating the potential of black people. Social media not only highlights police violence but also heightens the emotional pain and distress that results from graphic video images of these brutalities. These, in a way, are impeding the clergy's efforts to channel pastoral care to the affected black communities.

#BlackLivesMatter is a movement in voice and in action. The movement is situated in the American criminal justice system. This justice system in part is breeding racism and conflicted loyalties. Against this background, interrogating our religious beliefs, social and cultural values, and pastoral care practices in relation to the lives of black people is a necessity. The newness of this necessity stems from the unresolved emotional pain and spiritual distress of the many victims of violence and police brutality. Most of the victims are African Americans. Prioritizing the emotional pain and spiritual distress of these victims is a service to humanity. However, this service to humanity remains elusive as perpetrators of police brutality escape accountability in the justice system while racialized police violence against black people is soaring.

Is this because black lives do not really matter? To answer this question, the author argues that black lives do really matter while admitting that many black people are caught in the web of mental illness, drug addiction, and HIV/AIDS. Related to this are the psycho-spiritual and emotional needs of these people. These needs have created the awareness of a neglected pastoral situation that demands spiritual screening and ongoing pastoral assessments. Against this background, *Spiritual Care in an Age of #BlackLivesMatter* addresses, in part, this neglected area. Buhuro's work deserves attention from professional spiritual, emotional, and pastoral care providers to reimagine this unique pastoral setting as an area that stands in need of urgent pastoral care. To achieve this, the book offers an integrated explanation of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. The movement is conceptually prior to the twisted relationships that define the lives of many black people. In this way, the book advances the conversation about how and why professionals and faith leaders are grappling with the reality that black lives matter. It categorically establishes the impact of the state's continued failure to hold accountable those who commit crimes against black people, thus raising spiritual care issues that need urgent attention.

Methodologically, the book proceeds from a high level of discernment. It employs theoretical and self-conscious insights from general theology and clinical psychological questions to investigate racialized violence against black people. It also examines public lament in an environment where grief and mourning are interpreted as threatening and as rebellion by some European Americans. These European Ameri-

cans hide behind law enforcement agencies that use commodified racist weapons against African Americans. By tracing African American ways of honoring mortal remains and grief to pre-colonial West Africa, the author strategically connects the book to African ways of grieving during the pre-burial, actual burial, and post-burial stages of mourning and West African cultural ways of enchanting trauma and grief toward holistic healing.

Contextually, *Spiritual Care in an Age of #BlackLivesMatter* provides a general survey of all the features of a society divided against itself, including violence seeking to silence nonviolence. Addressing the psychological impact of racial attitudes within American society related to African Americans, the survey aims at clarifying the philosophy of relational care that values quality over philosophical doctrines. A diverse array of millennials affirm the above philosophy while disregarding philosophies that uphold hierarchy and protocol, institutional power, and politics of respectability. As Buhuro observes, for millennials, the notion that leadership is the exclusive preserve of a select gender identity, sexual orientation, ability group, and social class is unacceptable (xiii). The difficulty that black people encounter in grasping the essence of being profiled by law enforcement informs this survey. The author sees clergy's silence as undermining the #BlackLivesMatter movement and as a stance that supports state-sanctioned violence against black lives.

In this way, *Spiritual Care in an Age of #BlackLivesMatter* offers a theoretical model of general features of critical pastoral theological scholarship and of cultural studies that address the quotidian experiences of pastoral caregivers. It highlights the relationship between the nudging of the human spirit and the need for pastoral care in the context of racially charged police violence against black people. It epitomizes an integral work in psychology by investigating psychological phenomena, reflecting an interest in pastoral care classifications, and sharing metaphysical affinity with approaches in pastoral theology of the mind. At the same time, the book connects the essence of pastoral care to contemporary notions of consciousness, enhancing our frame of understanding of the #BlackLivesMatter movement. For these reasons, I recommend this book to all who love social justice and aspire to see a more equitable world. This work is a professional manual and guide

for professional care providers who on a daily basis engage black communities. Even so, the book points to all humanity in the sense that all lives matter, irrespective of race, color, religion, or social status. However, the book does not include insights from African communitarian ethics and other inputs.

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