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Editors' Notes

Stuart Love
Pepperdine University

D'Esta Love
Pepperdine University

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Editors' Notes

D'ESTA LOVE AND STUART LOVE

The last time *Leaven* published an entire issue on the topic of race and reconciliation was in 1998. Richard Hughes served as the guest editor. The theme explored by Hughes and the various authors he selected, as one might expect, sparked a number of contrasting and polarizing responses. All of us at *Leaven* were reminded that “11:00 a.m. on Sunday morning is the most segregated hour in America.” Today, twelve years later, we believe it is time to revisit this ongoing social issue, especially from the perspective of devoted young preachers now being trained and/or serving as evangelists of black Churches of Christ.

Since 1998, some positive changes in race relations have taken place in American society, evidenced dramatically by the election of our first African American president. However, it is fair to ask, has there been systemic progress in racial reconciliation among our churches, Christian colleges and universities? Who could best measure this contemporary pulse rate? We turned to Jerry Taylor, a member of *Leaven's* editorial board, teacher in the School of Theology at Abilene Christian University and an influential preacher of the gospel among black Churches of Christ. Dr. Taylor has worked on this issue of *Leaven* for two years. We are honored to have him serve as our guest editor.

GUEST EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION JERRY TAYLOR

The writers for this edition of *Leaven* are young men who are part of an interracial group known as the School of the Prophets. This group formed in response to the noticeable absence of a true community of countercultural prophetic voices within the Churches of Christ. The group had its first meeting at the Catholic Retreat Center in Dallas, Texas, during a weekend in December 2007.

Initially, the group consisted of about twenty-five young men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-six. The retreat focused on the nature and function of prophetic ministry. Walter Brueggemann's book, *The Prophetic Imagination*, served as our main text for discussion and dialogue. J. McDonald Williams, founder of the Foundation for Community Empowerment, and Dr. William McElvaney, Homiletics Professor Emeritus of Southern Methodist University, were the main presenters.

As the country approached the beginning of the historic year of 2008 it was becoming more evident that an African American could possibly be nominated for president of the United States by a major political party for the first time in American history. It seemed obvious that the issue of race was once again being brought to the forefront of America's national consciousness. It seemed logical to the School of the Prophets that the racial divide in the church was the most pressing issue that needed prophetic attention.

Out of the first meeting several members of the group put together a powerful presentation on race and racism. They gave their excellent presentations at the New Wineskins Retreat held on the campus of Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, in July 2008. On the fortieth anniversary of the “Atlanta Meeting” on race, the closing of Marshall Keeble's Nashville Christian Institute, and the loss of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., voices from the past met together with voices of the future to talk with honesty and truthfulness about the past with the goal to mediate a new future.

These young men made their presentations in the company of some of the strongest prophetic voices that were in the Churches of Christ during the 1960s; Andrew Hairston, Dwaine Evans, Walter Burch, Robert Randolph, David Jones and Landon Saunders. The young men were surprised to realize that there were those who sought to address the racial divide in the Churches of Christ forty years earlier. They found themselves wondering about the efforts of the previous generation of prophetic voices. Had anything significant happened between 1968 and 2008 to dismantle the high wall of racial division in the body of Christ? Were the efforts of the previous generation futile? It became apparent that each generation needs the emergence of its own prophetic voices. They must speak truth in love faithfully, regardless of the outcome.

On the heels of the New Wineskins Retreat 2008, the School of the Prophets was offered the opportunity to speak prophetically to an even wider audience from the platform of *Leaven*. The articles contained in this special edition have come from the hearts of young men who possess the fire of the prophet Jeremiah. The reader will sense in these young prophetic voices the expression of a deep faith generated by a compelling prophetic vision for the church of Jesus Christ to demonstrate to the world what true racial harmony looks like in the context of Christian community.

