

Life in the Aftermath: On Predictable Politics and an Unpredictable Nature

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Hurricane Sandy reminded us that nature is, indeed, a force that we can barely reckon with. Mother Nature is a judicious teacher, often jogging our communal memory, reminding us of the fact that we are mere mortals. Perhaps in this ever increasingly globalized and digitized world we thought, for a moment, that we could transcend all time and space continuums. This matriarch of winds affected people all up and down the U.S. eastern seaboard. Yet, just because one is not in the storm's direct path, doesn't mean one doesn't feel its effects. While 20 feet of water rushed into underground garages and basements in New York City, we got a 45-degree chill here in Atlanta.

While raging torrents of hate are pummeled at brown people in workplaces, classrooms, and churches alike, you feel the chill of racial tension. Moments of silence are complicit as white supremacist tendencies and the righteous rage of brown folks clash to create a tempest that even Shakespeare couldn't articulate. The media also plays home to the reification of damaging narratives because of a culture of silence. While we've seen many still photos of white folks at makeshift "charging stations" scurrying to suck some electrical juice for their gadgets, photos of brown, female faces trudging through chest-high waters are a lot less circulated. In Jamaica, Cuba, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic, humanity is praying for the coverage and exposure we disregard.

Over \$11 million has been raised for the United States' relief aid. With painful flashbacks of Hurricane Katrina, I can only wonder how much more this country must experience before we throttle the mob that is racism. In corporate offices, school

classrooms, and church pews, this embedded cultural evil continues to ransack our institutions. White privilege is perpetuated so much so that spaces that were once created for healing have deformed into modern-day Babylons. The prophets Isaiah and Bob Marley critique and interrogate those who have forsaken their duty to love God and others. Acknowledging looks have turned to dismissive glances; contemplative gazes have soured to hateful casts.

I am sure God does not give *these* visions.

From the conception of creation, liberation was our model. Somehow, we have allowed the binaries of the oppressor/oppressed, enslaver/enslaved, and captor/captive to remain our rudimentary contextual education. Captivity for the Jews meant feelings of despair because of their circumstance. Captivity for African-Americans emerges out of our narrative of the transatlantic slave trade. Black bodies stolen, bought, and sold—commodified from the auction block to the NBA draft.

Slavery gave birth to twins named racism and poverty. America is a modern-day Babylonian empire exploiting the poor, the oppressed, and the less fortunate. Racism, sexism, discrimination, and prejudice are running rampant through our society, and even in our churches. If hope is not mediated through religious leaders, where will it come from? If God is not a part of these conversations, how will we hear truth? With false prophets like Richard Mourdock and Todd Akin in the media, how will emancipation break forth?

Isaiah speaks of singing mountains and hills, and trees that clap their hands. How can a tree that has had strange fruit hanging from it rejoice? Because even in the midst of pain and intense suffering, God's grace abounds. But will it abound for naught? Right now, millions of northerners are wading their way through physical and emotional debris in the

hopes of regaining some sense of normalcy. Superstorm Sandy has left at least 56 Americans dead in her wake. Death is assured for all of us. But, for now, we are present in life in the aftermath. Where there is cultural debris and social destruction, but also, blueprints for reconstruction and a hopeful landscape on the horizon.