

12-20-2020

Miguel De La Torre (Ed.), Faith and Resistance in the Age of Trump - Review

John F. Burke
Trinity University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/jhlt>

Recommended Citation

Burke, John F. "Miguel De La Torre (Ed.), Faith and Resistance in the Age of Trump - Review," *Journal of Hispanic / Latino Theology*. Vol. 22 : No. 2 , Article 7. (2020) :185-189
Available at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/jhlt/vol22/iss2/7>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Hispanic / Latino Theology by an authorized editor of USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. For more information, please contact repository@usfca.edu.

Miguel A. De La Torre, Ed. *Faith and Resistance in the Age of Trump*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017. 240 pp. \$22.00. Paper. ISBN: 9781626982475.

Miguel A. De La Torre's edited volume *Faith and Resistance in the Age of Trump* is a compendium of over two dozen critiques of the politics and civil religion of President Donald Trump and his administration in the early stages of his presidency. Thus, the task of reviewing it three years later is a curious undertaking since events have unfolded that have either confirmed or in a few instances challenged the concerns of the essays' authors.

The overall ethos of the volume is captured by Kelly Brown Douglas when she suggests that the United States needs to choose whether its political culture identity is to be driven by the "Anglo-Saxon myth of exceptionalism" or by a "democratic rhetoric of being a nation of liberty and justice for all" (218). Douglas effectively draws upon W.E.B. DuBois and James Baldwin to challenge our "racial amnesia" (219). Indeed, in regard to the myth of exceptionalism, several contributors accent the pervasive dynamic of hegemonic whiteness. Santiago Slabodsky discusses the whitening of U.S. Jews. Marvin Ellison draws attention to white supremacist ideology. Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite reviews how immigrants became white. Amos Yong makes a fascinating connection between evangelical conservatism and Confucianism and other traditional moral and cultural perspectives. The volume is at its best when the authors move beyond pointing out surface rhetorical anti-whiteness to an in-depth theological analysis of this dynamic. Jacqueline Hidalgo's critique of the notion of hospitality toward immigrants is an example of this deeper analysis.

As the book's title states, these essays focus on resisting the normative outlook and public policies wrought by Donald Trump's hostile takeover of the Republican Party, enabled in part by support from the white Evangelical community. David Gushee's essay is particularly

prescient in his assessment of the ten reasons why white Evangelicals chose to support Trump enthusiastically, ranging from Trump's commitment to protecting the country's borders to his racist disposition. What Gushee misses is that Trump made it clear that he would tangibly put into action planks in the Evangelical political platform that were endorsed by previous Republican presidents but not acted upon, such as moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem or encouraging state legislators to pass laws to challenge the right to abortion established in *Roe v. Wade*.

In the forward to the volume, Jim Wallis states that faith-based activists must state “what we are *for* and not just what we are *against*” (xviii). Still, most of the specific actions enunciated by the contributors focus largely on fostering consciousness change regarding white supremacy, homophobia, male domination, and marginalization of “others”—the usual suspicions. Thus, the volume is weak regarding specific political proposals. For example, the Electoral College is taken to task, and rightfully so, by De La Torre, but he makes no suggestion as to a better alternative. Even if the Electoral College had not been in play in 2016, none of the candidates cleared fifty percent of the popular vote. To achieve a consensus when an electoral population is divided, alternatives can be used such as run-offs between the top two candidates, as in many state elections; the single transferable vote system used in Ireland; or the Nigerian system, where a candidate has to win a certain percentage of the vote in diverse regions of the country in order to be the country's president.

There are exceptions to the dearth of institutional reforms and policy alternatives proposed in this volume. Joerg Rieger suggests an economy that is oriented by profit-sharing workplaces. Simone Campbell argues for equitable tax reform, living wages, and family-friendly workplaces. Roger Gottlieb stresses moving beyond coal as an energy source. Amir Hussain

accents voting, contacting public officials, and running for office. Sharon Betcher accents the need for a universal basic income and affordable health care. Asante Todd emphasizes fair wages and working conditions, especially for people of color. Irene Oh suggests prioritizing rural areas and mobilizing Asian-Americans to go out and vote. The reader will also find, in parts of the volume, deliberations that are valuable for class discussion--on the challenges of growing economic inequality, poverty, water resources, the natural gas and oil pipelines, health care, the Black Lives Matter movement, immigration, and foreign policy.

The French personalist philosopher Emmanuel Mounier stressed the importance of balancing the prophetic and political poles of action. This text is strong on the former, not the latter, though admittedly the contributors are not political policy specialists. At the volume's end, De La Torre capture the ethos of this volume when he projects an "ethics *para joder* ... that screws with the prevailing institutional violence" (230). At the same time, as valuable and as urgent as such spiritual resistance is to the semi-authoritarian regime of Donald Trump, if this resistance does not lead to concrete institutional change--the political pole of action--it plays unwittingly into the agonal "I win - you lose" power politics in which *caudillos* like Trump revel. One of the lessons from the Arab Spring, especially in Egypt, has been that it is easier to overthrow regimes than to put liberal democratic politics and policies in their place. That said, the very fact that the President Trump regime is imploding suggests that the resistances practiced by these contributors, as well as critical actions by other--civil servants, progressive media outlets, federal judges, and some members of Congress--have had an impact on preserving and working toward a liberal democratic polity with liberty and justice for all.

In sum, the religious diversity of the contributors as well as well as the range of political issues covered from a spiritual perspective in this volume are impressive and many of the essays

in this volume are valuable resources for courses in ethics, social justice, and political activism. I recommend the inclusion of this text in any university or seminary library collection.

John Francis Burke

Trinity University

San Antonio, TX