

Faith after Ferguson: Resilient Leadership in Pursuit of Racial Justice

Leah Gunning Francis

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Leah Gunning Francis explores how religious leaders can affect change in their communities in her memoir *Faith after Ferguson*.

Michael Brown, a Black teenager, was murdered by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, in the summer of 2014. Since then, activists—both secular and faith-based—in Ferguson and throughout St. Louis have made progress in getting liberal candidates elected and passing progressive reforms. By interviewing activists on the ground, Gunning Francis highlights what has been accomplished and what still needs to be done, both in Ferguson and around the United States.

Gunning Francis's interviews explore many subjects related to the fight for social justice, especially the role that religious leaders can and must play. These include both short-term work, like providing a safe space for protesters during demonstrations, and long-term work, like fostering discussions within their congregations about race and racism. Gunning Francis shows that such work is necessary in all religious communities: Christian and Jewish, white and Black, rich and poor.

Thus, these interviewees fight for police reform or abolition, gun reform, and prison reform in their communities. They discuss their thoughts and experiences in numerous areas, such as how verbal violence—including false accusations and racist rhetoric—can be just as damaging as physical violence. Each chapter ends with incisive questions aimed at spurring honest self-reflection.

Gunning Francis also shares her personal experiences, beginning and ending the book with heartbreaking interactions with her son. Though its subject matter is difficult, *Faith after Ferguson*, with its numerous examples of faith leaders and communities stepping up to fight for racial justice, should also be a source of comfort and inspiration on the long road ahead.

The memoir *Faith after Ferguson* focuses on the importance of putting religious teachings into action for the greater good.

EILEEN GONZALEZ (July / August 2021)

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