

THE CREEKSIDER

Plymouth Creek Christian Church Newsletter

A Better Word

The official blog of Chalice Press blog.chalicepress.com

10 Questions for Sandhya Rani Jha (Part 1- Questions 1-5)

Activist and author Sandhya Rani Jha's newest book, *Transforming Communities: How People Like You are Healing Their Neighborhoods*, collects real stories of ordinary people who took action and changed their corner of the world. Jha, director of the Oakland (Calif.) Peace Center, writes on race, community, and social activism.

Why did you write *Transforming Communities*?

--I do a lot of "front lines" work around things like the housing crisis in the Bay Area and racial justice, and it is easy to feel hopeless. I wrote *Transforming Communities* for myself as much as anyone, as a reminder that there really is forward momentum and that people power can't be underestimated. I also wrote it as a best practices resource so that folks who want to really transform their city have all the tools they need in one place, but even if someone just said "I could get some folks together to do this one thing," that would be more than enough. Sometimes we feel stuck, like we can't do anything. But starting with one small thing, and not doing it alone, can make a HUGE impact.

You maintain that "going local," or

healing your neighborhood, is more effective in transforming the world than joining a national issue. Say more about that.

I think the things happening at the national level are REALLY important, but two things make national organizing hard:

- 1) It is easy to get overwhelmed with how little change we can effect when chipping away and trying to win small victories in a hostile environment.
- 2) Part of the reason the environment is this way is that decades ago, people started organizing at the local level to shift American culture away from things like valuing our elders, caring for the poor, investing in a good education for all, honoring the immigrant and religious diversity and so on. Part of why national change is so hard is that over decades, there has been culture shift that started at the local level. So our best work starts local and then builds out from there. It's really the only way to ultimately effect national outcomes: community by community, then those communities connecting and those values taking root and becoming second nature.

What's your favorite story in the book?

--It really depends on the day: in the wake of the tragic Sutherland Springs Texas, I keep thinking about the amazing young Sikhs who went through the terror attack on their house of worship in Oak Creek several

years ago and turned that tragedy into a process of healing. They showed up to support the victims of Sandy Hook a few months later. They reached out to their neighbors so their neighbors would know about the Sikh religion and be more invested in their wellbeing. They recognized that while they had faced violence because of their race, they needed to deepen their relationship with the Black community whom they didn't know. They are my heroes for a moment like this, showing us that in the midst of suffering, people can build a community so there is less suffering in the future.

But my favorite story for years and years is the story of the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative in Boston. Most of us assume that the solution to problems in our community is well-run nonprofits. And most nonprofits feel the same way. (I know I do, as the director of a nonprofit!) So a major charitable foundation gets all of the nonprofit leaders together to propose a solution to the problems in a really underserved neighborhood in Boston, but a few people living in the neighborhood learn about it and show up to the meeting. They say "hey; how come you're always talking ABOUT us but never talking WITH us?" And the foundation is shocked, because they thought that by meeting with the nonprofits, they WERE meeting with the people from the community. So they started the process from scratch, this time with

community meetings that churches (and some nonprofits!) helped coordinate, to capture the voices and commitments of the people who lived there day in and day out. Thirty years later, that neighborhood has developed a pathway to home ownership and small businesses as well as amazing community building and culturally resonant educational opportunities. The city government wouldn't have created that structure, and neither would the nonprofits or the foundation. But by creating space for the people's voice, vision and hard work to be part of the plan, it is a community very different from most "urban renewal" programs you see today.

Your stories are all very different in their particular people, places, and events. Are there any common threads weaving throughout the stories that are instructive for would-be change-makers?

--I think the thing that ties most of these stories together is that (a) they are about listening to the wisdom of people actually facing the problems we want to fix, (b) involving them in the solution-making process, (c) investing time in building up a community, not just fixing specific things, and (d) practicing some consistent ethics. That last one maybe isn't always explicitly named throughout the book, but it really is at work in every chapter and is particularly clear in the last chapter about the small village in France during World War II that saved thousands of Jewish people and other people fleeing the Nazi regime. Before the French government was even taken over by Nazi sympathizers, the people in that village were practicing values that said they were the sons and daughters of Huguenots, Protestants who had to flee persecution in the 1500s. That meant their faith and their history required them to protect persecuted people, whatever the cost. They knew that's who they were, so in a time of trial, that is who they were able to be. (And it's who the Catholics in their community were as well, because it was baked into their community ethic.)

I think things are so bad that we're

often desperate for a quick fix. The stories in this book yielded often fairly quick results: deeply transformed communities within a matter of years. But the work that we really want to see takes community building and it takes discipline, because the counternarratives of fear and distrust and isolation are so thick around us that we will need to work together to override them. But the great hope of the stories in this book is that we can override those narratives. We can build communities of inclusion and justice and compassion. In fact, we already have, a million times over.

What trends are you seeing in community organizing? Where do you feel the current greatest need is for transformative community work?

--One of the things I am so excited about that's shifting in community organizing is how often I hear people from high level labor leaders to leaders in the Movement for Black Lives to organizers for worker justice talking about love. In the midst of the urgent work, we are slowing down enough to be in relationship with each other. History has shown us that the best way to break apart a movement is to sow seeds of distrust between members. This was a very intentional part of government efforts to disrupt the Black Panthers in my hometown of Oakland, for example, and it worked in a lot of ways. For us to invest in honoring each other's humanity as part of the work of movement building can slow down the pace of the work, but it creates such strong foundations.

I have a chapter on faith rooted organizing, the model of organizing I practice with several organizations where I live. It was named and developed by prominent civil rights leader James Lawson and workers' rights leader Alexia Salvatierra. It emerges out of the Indian freedom struggle of Mahatma Gandhi, the Black-led US Freedom Movement of the 1960s, Latin American Liberation theology and the multisectoral organizing model of the Philippines. What is really inspiring to me, though, is that I am seeing other community organizing movements (PICO, Gamaliel) taking on issues of racial

justice, honoring the leadership and wisdom of people of color, and somewhat organically implementing a lot of the values of faith rooted organizing that were not always there before. They focus on love as well as outrage, on higher vision and not just self-interest. It's been beautiful to watch.

I think the election results of 2016 show us that amidst the many urgent issues facing us (climate, religious liberty, immigrant rights, voter rights, health care, housing access, food safety, and so much more), there is some critical work to be done community by community for poor white people and poor people of color to recognize where their needs and causes and life experiences align. I do want to note that poor white people did not put Donald Trump into office by themselves: middle class and rich white people voted for him at high, possibly higher, margins. So some of the conversation right now distracts from a larger "us-them" issue in the country. But if we spent some energy on honoring the experiences of poor people of all races and also cultivating

How does your faith inform your work in community organizing and activism?

--The person who trained me in faith rooted organizing, Alexia Salvatierra, talks about faith rooted organizing as "organizing as if God is real." To me that means always having an eye on what Dr. King referred to as "Beloved Community," or what Christians sometimes call "the realm of God here on earth." It also means not limiting our vision. We hosted a panel on reforming the prison system at the Oakland Peace Center, and one of the panelists said, "you all won't get engaged in the work of prison abolition (replacing our current system with restorative justice and rehabilitation programs that would better serve victims, offenders and communities) because you want to aim instead for small, winnable campaigns. But you don't win those either, so why not go for what you actually believe to be right?" There is a need for strategy and for negotiating in coalition, but as people of faith, why don't we let the secular

folks take the lead on that and instead do what all of our faith traditions call us to: tikkun olam or “the healing of the world” in Hebrew. It is ironic to me when faith communities brag about their political acumen or their strategic skills; the people on the front lines of the movement need something different from us, I think. The justice movement could use some big dreaming, some hope, some vision. I think the other thing we do on a good day is humanize people. Sometimes activists forget that the work is about people; we can keep the movement grounded in the humanity of people who are suffering...and also people who are in power.

To read the full interview go to the Chalice Press Blog - blog.chalicepress.com

For more on Sandhya Jha, visit her website: www.sandhyajha.com.

Joys & Concerns

~ Dez's husband and children following her passing
 ~Those with health concerns: Julius' mother, Jeanne's sister Jackie, Carol J, Sharon's sister - recent cancer surgery, Deb's friend Alicia, Bonnie, EvaLyn, Susan W, Carsten's mom
 ~Prayers for victims of recent wildfires

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Jan 4 Happy Birthday Maya I
 Jan 9 Happy Birthday Carsten I IV
 Jan 13 Happy Birthday Steve W
 Jan 13 Happy Birthday Steve W
 Feb 4 Happy Birthday Richard S
 Feb 28 Happy Birthday Kimberly W
 Mar 8 Happy Anniversary Tom & Donna J
 Mar 17 Happy Anniversary Chana & Steve W

News & Events

HEALING DIVIDES: RACE & AMERICA

JANUARY 10&17, 2018

6:00 PM

PLYMOUTH CREEK CHRISTIAN CHURCH



We will be watching and discussing "13TH" - this Oscar nominated film explores the history of race and incarceration in the U.S.

Join us for dinner, a movie, & discussion



The Sleep Out – 83% to goal

We are so very close to meeting the \$2.3 million Sleep Out campaign goal! Thank you to all who have supported the effort and demonstrated deep care for our neighbors. One neighbor recently told us, "It's been a rough time, but not going through it alone has been a really big support. Even with all the challenges we've had, I've never felt alone." From this grateful mom and from all of us at Interfaith Outreach, a heartfelt thank you for all you do! In an effort to serve ALL of the families Interfaith Outreach expects to meet this year, we are extending the Dec. 31 Sleep Out campaign deadline and will accept donations through Friday, Jan. 12, 2018. Consider getting a jump on your 2018 charitable giving and help us meet our goal of assisting the more than 2,000 families who will work with us in 2018! You can

contribute by mailing a check, dropping it off at our offices, or giving online at www.iocp.org/donate.

\$300 – Puts tires on a car to keep a family moving toward their goals
 \$189 – Offers a utility payment assist that keeps the lights on
 A gift of any amount will create urgently needed hope for a struggling family
 Donate at iocp.org/donate

Interfaith Outreach Holiday Gift is a “hug of hope” thanks to you!

Thank you to all who so generously sponsored families, made donations and gave their time to the 2017 Holiday Gift Program at Interfaith Outreach. Because of you, the holiday season was brightened for more than 700 families in our community! Your gifts and thoughtfulness provided relief and joy – a hug of hope - for families and kids in our area. Thank you!

Winter coats needed at Interfaith Outreach

As the weather dips way below freezing we are especially in need of warm new and gently used outerwear – coats, parkas, snow pants, scarves, hats, gloves, mittens and boots. Please donate to Resale Select to help families through these cold months. Program participants have access to the coats you donate free of charge through Resale Select. Please go through your closets, spread the word to co-workers and friends, and bring your donations to Resale Select at 1605 County Road 101 N in Plymouth. Donations are accepted Monday-Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Thank you!

Join the Interfaith Outreach family – volunteer!

Interfaith Outreach is looking for volunteers – no experience required! Find fulfilling and fun opportunities to give back.

Drivers for Adult Learners – Provide scheduled rides in driver-owned vehicle for Adult Basic Education (ABE) classes. Students all live in our service area and will get dropped off at our building for classes. 1 ride/week, daytime.

Donation Receiver – Accept donations for the food shelf and resale store. Thank donors, provide in-kind donation receipts and begin sorting donations. Mondays, noon-3 p.m.

Homework Club Mentor – Volunteer

weekly to build trusting, positive relationship with youth (K-5) leading to success in school and community. Assist students with homework, social/emotional development and skill building. Volunteers can expect opportunities for their own personal growth, too! 1x/week, afternoon/early evening, October through mid-May. Interested in volunteering? Contact Liz at lerstad-hicks@iocp.org or 763-489-7506. For more information visit iocp.org/volunteer

Plymouth Creek Christian Church

16000 41st Avenue North
Plymouth, MN 55446-2500
www.plymouthcreek.org
763-559-1469

Worship: Sundays at 10 AM

Revised Common Lectionary Texts

Jan 7 | Genesis 1:1-5 • Psalm 29 • Acts 19:1-7 • Mark 1:4-11

Jan 13 | 1 Samuel 3:1-10, (11-20) • Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18 • 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 • John 1:43-51

Jan 21 | Jonah 3:1-5, 10 • Psalm 62:5-12 • 1 Corinthians 7:29-31 • Mark 1:14-20

Jan 28 | Deuteronomy 18:15-20 • Psalm 111 • 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 • Mark 1:21-28

Feb 4 | Isaiah 40:21-31 • Psalm 147:1-11, 20c • 1 Corinthians 9:16-23 • Mark 1:29-39

Feb 11 | 2 Kings 2:1-12 • Psalm 50:1-6 • 2 Corinthians 4:3-6 • Mark 9:2-9

Feb 14 (Ash Wednesday) | Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 or Isaiah 58:1-12 • Psalm 51:1-17 • 2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:10 • Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Feb 18 | Genesis 9:8-17 • Psalm 25:1-10 • 1 Peter 3:18-22 • Mark 1:9-15

Feb 25 | Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 • Psalm 22:23-31 • Romans 4:13-25 • Mark 8:31-38 or **Mark 9:2-9**

Mar 4 | Exodus 20:1-17 • Psalm 19 • 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 • John 2:13-22

Mar 11 | Numbers 21:4-9 • Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 • Ephesians 2:1-10 • John 3:14-21

Mar 18 | Jeremiah 31:31-34 • Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:9-16 • Hebrews 5:5-10 • John 12:20-33

Mar 25 | Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29 • Mark 11:1-11 or John 12:12-16

Volunteer Schedule

	Presiding Worship Leader	Assisting Worship Leader	Comm Prep & Clean-Up	Servers/ Ushers	Servers/ Ushers	Worship Facilitator	Servant Leader	Bus Driver
1/7/2018	Al J	Pete B	Mike B	Richard S & Bob M	Carsten I & Don B	Bob B	LeAnn V	Russ W
1/14/2018	LeAnn V	Russ W	Marian T	Richard S & Carlos O	Carsten I & Kim W	Carlos O	Donna Je	Carlos O
1/21/2018	Glenda G	Julia F	Debbie L	Tom J & Matt J	Carlos O & Don B	Tom J	Deb K	Richard S
1/28/2018	Donna Ja	Tom J	Wanda B	Bob M & Matt J	Carsten I & Kim W	Carsten I	Donna Je	Carlos O