Opinion
Guest Voices



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by John Dear

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On this week's episode of "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," I speak with Melanie Harris, professor of Black feminist and womanist theologies jointly appointed with Wake Forest School of Divinity and African American studies at Wake Forest University in North Carolina.



Melanie Harris (Zoe Gamwell Brown)

A graduate of the Harvard Leadership Program, she is the author of *Gifts of Virtue, Alice Walker, and Womanist Ethics* and *Ecowomanism: African American Women and*

*Earth-Honoring Faiths*. She is a former broadcast journalist who worked as a news producer for ABC, CBS and NBC affiliates. Harris earned her bachelor of arts degree from Spelman College in Atlanta, her doctorate and Master of Arts degrees from New York's Union Theological Seminary and her Master of Divinity from Iliff School of Theology.

"Womanist theology came from Black seminary women looking for a term to express the theology of Black women," she said.

She then connects the theology of Black women with a theology of the Earth. "Justice for all is connected to environmental justice. The question is: What does the divine intend for all of humanity and all of the Earth?"

When I asked her suggestions for us, she responded: "Tell the story of Jesus well and truthfully. In truth, Jesus was a nonviolent person and deeply committed to compassion. Jesus was corrected by the Syrophoenician woman. For a male religious leader to be speaking with a woman was radical; this was a model of peace-giving and peace-building. It is important to recognize that the Gospel of Jesus is a Gospel of peace. Jesus was not one who stood for violence, hierarchy or domination."

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"All of us are interwoven and interconnected," Harris said. "We have to come back to our own peace, and the truth that we have to have buckets and buckets of forgiveness and compassion. Find the spaces of hope for your spirit and nourish those spaces as much as possible. From now on, we need to seed peace from the time we wake up to the time we fall asleep."

Listen to the full episode here.

This story appears in the **The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast** feature series. View the full series.