Opinion
Guest Voices



Lisa Sharon Harper (Courtesy of Lisa Sharon Harper)



by John Dear

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June 29, 2026

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On this week's episode of "The Nonviolent Jesus Podcast," I host theologian, speaker, author and activist Lisa Sharon Harper. She has trained peacemakers in Ferguson, Missouri, and Charlottesville, Virginia, as well as South Africa, Brazil, Australia, Ireland and across the U.S.

Her 2022 book, *Fortune: How Race Broke My Family and the World and How to Repair It All*, was named Book of the Year by Word and Way. Her 2016 book, *The Very Good Gospel: How Everything Wrong Can Be Made Right*, was named Book of the Year by the Englewood Review of Books. After her leadership at Sojourners Magazine, she founded Freedom Road, where she is the host of its podcast and column on Substack. The Huffington Post named her one of 50 Women Religious Leaders to Celebrate on International Women's Day.

Asked about these days of social injustice, white supremacy and permanent warmaking under President Donald Trump, she said she cries every day.

"I actually have hope but I'm grieving like the rest of the country," she said. "I cry because of the church's silence during the Obama era and back to the '70s, '80s during the rise of the religious right. People didn't know what was right, just and Jesus' way. ... Evil goes all the way back to the Constitution, in the three-fifths compromise. I grieve for our inaction in the past. It didn't have to be this way, but in every generation, there is a remnant. There has always been a witness of the actual Jesus way of being in the world. Right now, that witness is alive and well."

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Harper told three stories on the podcast: of her time in Ferguson in August 2014 after Michael Brown was killed by a white policeman; her time in Charlottesville, when she was present in the 2017 protest against the neo-Nazis who killed Heather Heyer; and her experience in the D.C. Central Cell block jail after protesting at the Supreme Court in 2017 on the 40th anniversary of the first U.S. execution after the court upheld the death penalty in 1976.

She also shared about her organization, Freedom Road, which trains people of faith to take public action for justice, as well as her recent bestselling books.

"Nonviolence is the only way for people who are not on the upside of the empire to fight back," she said. "Nonviolence is the only way to not be at war with God."

Listen to the full episode here.

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