

ALIVE PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

I realize that most on my lists did not know Tom Norwood. And many never heard of All People's Community Center. I am at the age when I have to expect eyes to roll when I speak about olden days back when. But Tom is one of those people whose lives transcend "in those days" to "here and now" and "in the future." Past, present and future.

Of course Tom had a life before I first met him in 1964. He had earned a degree in Social Work. He had earned a seminary degree from my own seminary, Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. He and Nancy had married. He had been called to become the first Executive Director of inter-racial All People's Community Center.

I had just signed on as Pastor of Huntington Park Christian Church. We were only five miles apart, but virtually different worlds. We were two Anglo-Americans on opposite sides of the tracks. No African-Americans or people of any color lived or worked or attended school in Huntington Park, but were welcome to shop there. Some hard-won changes began that affected both sides of the tracks

Our beginnings followed the Assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963. It was a time of unrest, drugs, crime, and poverty. We shared the historic moments of the ill-famed "Watt's Riots" and assassination of Martin Luther King. We were in a painful and sad All People's Board meeting on that night, --- Tom as Director, me as chair of the Board.

Central Los Angeles was woefully unprepared for all the human needs. All People's was located in the midst of it. Our denomination had really abandoned support of All People's by that time. But there it was with Tom and some courageous local people to do what seemed impossible to do. That was where Tom's commitment and leadership became apparent.

We were able to enjoy friendship with Tom and Nancy through those years. Our friendship continued after he retired from All People's and moved to San Luis Obispo...where he also made important community contributions.

Looking back his work was monumental. There are so many stories of heroic people in their own life situations who became parts of Tom's story. Through Tom I was honored to know and work with people on the other side of the tracks who were on the same track His quiet friendship built All People's Community Center into what is a major part of ongoing life in south Los Angeles.

Looking at the present --- just one example is Sandra Bryant, one of the young people present when Tom began. She was encouraged and inspired in her life and has now been the Executive Director of All People's Community Center for over 30 years. She has been recognized for continuing to lead All People's far beyond what anyone even dreamed might be possible when Tom Norwood began. Or maybe he had a dream that many of us took a long time to embrace.

Looking ahead --- just look up All People's Christian Center <https://allpeoplescc.org/> to see what I mean. The very first thing I see on Facebook every morning is the daily report of what's going on. Today's post was a picture of Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti making a major gift from the Mayor's Fund to assure continuation of what is already unfolding because of All People's.

Tom Norwood died on Easter. He left us all with **a memorable past, an inspiring present and a promising future.**

...for the Moment...

Art Morgan