

# Corps Connector

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Kneeling clockwise, Jose Rufino, Pamela Jafari, Deborah Zavos, Gregory Ford

**PLAYBACK THEATER**  
**January Day of Reflection**



# Notes from the Editor

Northern Virginia Regional Council:

Mike Mothes,  
Regional Director

Kai De Altin Popiolek

Pia Dinon-Clark

Emilie Gillanders

James Kelley

Christine McLaughlin

John McLaughlin

Steve Mournighan

Anne Murphy

Rebecca Ruiz

Richard Urban

Beginning with this issue, we are acknowledging our own aging eyesight and that of many of the rest of you by increasing the font in the Newsletter from 11 to 14.

*(The following is excerpted from my Journal for February 11-19, 2020)*

Good morning, dear Jesus. On this morning, Lord Jesus, after your persistent goading and my eternal foot dragging, I am undertaking a journey that I hope will serve, in a humble way, as repentance for the pain and horror my ancestors may have inflicted on the ancestors of the many black people they kept in captivity, using the labor of their bodies to enhance their own comfort and wealth.

It was scarcely 157 years after Columbus discovered America and 127 years before the American Revolution and 15 years after the first Jesuits arrived; in 1648 my g7 grandfather, Thomas Bowling was living in the Province of Maryland ('g7' stands for my 7<sup>th</sup> great grandfather, my great, great, great, great, great, great, great grandfather). My g5 grandfather, also named Thomas was captain of a small boat during the Revolutionary War that was part of a flotilla that successfully created a blockade preventing British warships from entering the Chesapeake Bay.

Not long after the war was over, Thomas led a group of 25 Catholic settlers, part of a mass emigration of Catholics from Maryland to Kentucky. He led them overland to Pittsburgh, where they constructed rafts, floated their families and household goods down the Ohio River to Maysville, Kentucky; then he conducted them overland to Nelson County, Kentucky. (I was born in Nelson County in 1934 at Gethsemane, Kentucky.)

Yet, there is a dark side to my family's history. About 10 years ago I completed my family genealogy and became aware that my family owned slaves. Until I read this year's book *America's Original Sin*, I was blind and deaf to the horror this meant to these enslaved people. Then several weeks ago, I saw Francis Collins, who is celebrated for mapping the human genome, on Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s "Finding Your Roots" program on PBS. Each week, Dr. Gates selects 2 or 3 celebrities who wish to have their family histories traced. When Doctor Collins discovered on the show that his early ancestors owned slaves, he said, "I find it deeply troubling to know my own family is part of that really dreadful chapter in American history."

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## Corps Connector

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Dick Bowling, Editor

Mary Anne Cummins, Proof Reader

Send submissions or comments to  
dbowling@ivcusa.org.

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My family, who came to Maryland so early, also took part in that “really dreadful chapter.” They eventually owned nearly a thousand acres of virgin land that first needed to be cleared, then planted. This required the labor of many more men and women than they themselves could provide. Black slaves, captured by their own people in Africa, transported under the most appalling conditions across the Atlantic, were available, for the price of their lives, to supply that labor.



Tobacco was the major cash crop grown in early Maryland. internet photo

I do not know how many human beings my ancestors bought, sold, traded and held captive during those over 200 awful years between my family’s arrival in the New World and the end of the Civil War, but it must’ve been many. My family’s genealogy book, *Thomas Bowling, His Forefathers in Maryland and His Descendants in Nelson County, Kentucky*, has helped me catch a glimpse of my family’s role as slave owners. “On the 1790 census of Prince George County, Maryland, John Bowling [my g6 grandfather]...[held] seven slaves.” In the same census, Thomas Bowling [my g5 grandfather] “is shown as head of household... and owning five slaves.” (p. 39) In 1798 “in the *Maryland Slave Owners or Superintendents* published by Genealogical Publishing Company... William Langeworth Bowling is listed as the owner of 10 slaves in Prince George County.” (p. 37)

On the same “Finding Your Roots” program mentioned above, Dr. Gates told another guest, Shirley Ann Jackson, an African-American, the president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, a nuclear physics expert on sub-atomic particles, that her ancestors were born into slavery; when he then showed her the market value of two of her ancestors, she remarked with tears in her eyes, “The idea that you can put a price on a human being is....” The “Finding Your Roots” program has helped me understand that the human agony of slavery still goes on to this day.

Another thing Dr. Gates does that has touched me deeply, is to show his audience the distress caused when he has to tell his African-American guests that he cannot trace their family roots back any farther than the Civil War. He goes on to explain that the tradition of recording slaves only by their first names is a reason for this. So many African-Americans can go no farther than the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in their search of where they came from; for nearly all, this search could have been very healing.

I started to think of the number of slaves that my family’s ancestors kept captive and of the many hundreds—even thousands—of men and women walking around today who, like

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the ones Dr. Gates interviews, will never be able to trace their ancestry back because my family kept them captive, destroyed all connection with their families, their homeland.



Internet image

A later reference in my family's genealogy on page 49 states, "In 1837, William Bowling [agrees] he will maintain and support the slaves of Thomas Bowling, namely Lucy, Charles, Helen, Harry and Martha during their natural lives." (These are undoubtedly the same five listed above for him in the 1790 census). William was Thomas' son and brother of my g4 grandfather, Robert Bowling. This tells us that Thomas had taken his slaves with him when he emigrated from Maryland to Kentucky in 1797.

The language of this last quotation indicates that Thomas wants William to **maintain and support** these slaves during the rest of their natural lives; but he is not passing them on to William as slaves; but only into his care. This sheds a positive light on Thomas' attitude toward his slaves and how he must have treated them. There is no record of any of Thomas' children owning slaves.

As I was completing this article, I wanted to see how many African-American families would be listed with the last name "Bowling" in the 1870 Federal census for Nelson County. (Most freed slaves adopted the last names of their former owners; 1870 would have been the first year newly emancipated slaves would be listed by family name.) I found only one 'black' family: a Richard(!) Bowling with his wife and five children. He was a distiller. Because his family was intact and he has a reputable career (reputable for Nelson County anyway, "The Bourbon Capital of the World!"), I conclude that Richard had been a free African-American before and during the Civil War.

This gives me a pale glimmer of light and hope for my family in that Thomas did not pass his slaves on to his son and assured they were cared for; and in that there were no other 'black' Bowling families in the 1870 census.

Revealing to you the part my forebears, John and Thomas and many other ancestors, played in the cruel story of slavery is one of the most difficult things I have ever written. I love these people, they are my family and it has cost me much heartache, as I knew it would. But the story must be told if we are ever able to find peace, love, reconciliation and reparation with our African-American brothers and sisters. I felt it had to start somewhere and why not with me?

*Dick Bowling*

# “I want to be Jackie Robinson!”

By Margot Eyring

The words, “I want to be Jackie Robinson,” from a story told during our Day of Reflection on January 30, have stayed with me this month. These words and the stories they evoke have prompted me to go deeper into my own story, as I have continued to reflect on our communal exploration of race.

About 50 members from the Northern Virginia IVC community gathered at Our Lady Queen of Peace on January 30th to hear one another’s stories of race. We heard stories directly from each other and through the lens of the local Playback Theater group. Playback Theater is an improvisational theatre form that began in 1975 and has groups around the world. The founders had been involved in international volunteer service and also exposed to oral storytelling traditions, the psychological technique of psychodrama, Paulo Freire’s educational philosophy (see *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*) and improvisational theater.

Playback Theater incorporates improvisational movement within a series of set forms, music, storytelling and an adult education approach to invite transformational learning and change. The change is intended to be both individual and systemic. The audience provides stories on a particular topic and the theater troupe brings the story to life so an individual’s experience can be seen and felt and heard and known by the larger group. (To see the local DC Playback Theater in action, google ‘Millennium Stage 9/11 Playback Theater’ for the YouTube video of their September 11, 2016 performance about the experiences of those in the audience on 9/11/01). This powerful interactive, improvisational approach engages both the head and the heart, with hopes for involving the hands and feet in the world.



Larry Dendtler tells his story to the Playback Theater Director John Johnson

The Playback Director invited stories from our community and early memories of race and the theater group seemingly magically recreated those stories in front of our eyes. We watched transfixed. These stories were powerful. Moving. Emotional. Funny. And challenging.

The stories in our community surrounding race were varied in both content, tone, and perspective. Experiencing the stories being told by an IVC member and then immediately enacted through the vehicle of Playback Theater provided a rich palette for reflection

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Asali McIntyre

during the performance of each story and then again in the afternoon during our time for small group reflection. In our afternoon small groups, we utilized Parker Palmer's Circle of Trust Touchstones (found on his website [www.couragerenewal.org](http://www.couragerenewal.org)) to create a safe space for each participant to share freely and respectfully. We ended our time sharing our corporate insights. Perhaps the best way to taste those insights from the group is to continue to share stories with fellow IVC members as we process what emerged in us during that day.

As someone who regularly facilitates small groups and serves as a “story holder” for others through spiritual reflection, processing my experience with this retreat day reminded me again how early stories and life experiences continue to impact us throughout our lives. As I have told some of my stories in the recent weeks, I have found additional meanings beneath the ones I have always understood to be the apparent meaning. These insights have been transformational in the way I see myself and I believe will impact the way I am able to care for others. For example, I recently remembered a time when I was no older than first grade and was being bullied by a little boy. I told my dad about it and he instructed me to punch the little boy in the stomach, which I did and he never bothered me again. I have always told this story with a little laughter and a sense of bravado about being courageous. And, I think my willingness to take the strong action instructed by my dad is an important part of the story. But, as I have retold the story and had the opportunity to explore it more, I have realized I also was very afraid. I wanted my dad to come and help me stand up to that bully in a peaceful, strong way. I am learning to be more compassionate with myself about my fears and wondering who I might be called to stand beside as they face bullying or discrimination. As I continue to hold my stories with others who I know and respect and who know me, it is possible for these stories to be re-remembered in ways that bring healing and wholeness. I am experiencing that healing.

As you remember important stories from your life— during this season of life, whether they be difficult, empowering, or something else, I invite you to find ways to share those stories with others you trust to listen and hold those stories with you.

May you continue to find ways to grow and learn from the life you have lived.

May you continue to hear how your unique story has made opportunities for you to bring healing and transformation in the world.

May you have courage to act with compassion and courage.



Margot Eyring

Hearing the story “I want to be Jackie Robinson,” challenged me to revisit my stories and see where they lead me. May it be so with you too. Amen.

# Joseph's house

by Kevin Dailey



I volunteer at Joseph's House, a residence in the Adams-Morgan neighborhood of Washington, DC. For nearly 30 years Joseph's House has been a haven for DC's homeless population with advanced HIV disease. Originally, Joseph's House was a hospice for the dying because effective treatment for seriously ill people living with HIV was unavailable and nearly all who came to stay at the house died. The focus at Joseph's House was on providing compassionate end-of-life care to this vulnerable population.

As HIV medications have improved life expectancies, Joseph's House has broadened its mission to include formerly homeless men and women whose HIV or related health, mental health and/or addiction struggles have resulted in the need for temporary residential care following a serious hospitalization. The goal of residential respite at Joseph's House is to stabilize the resident's health, identify their ongoing health, mental health, addiction treatment and housing needs and to link them with community based agencies who specialize in these areas.

The newly arrived respite resident at Joseph's House often has no identifying documentation. Life on the street makes it difficult to keep things. Much of my work involves assisting in obtaining birth certificates, social security cards and photo identification cards because these documents are needed to apply for ongoing health, mental health and housing services. Joseph's House has been quite successful in building working relationships with community based organizations that provide housing and out-patient health and mental health services allowing respite individuals to transition into the community.

A major key to the success of the respite component of Joseph's House is the ongoing care provided to the respite residents who move on. Most continue to receive their HIV meds through the nurses at Joseph's House. This helps stabilize their health status and greatly reduces the need for future hospitalizations.

IVC has been a presence in Joseph's House for many years with volunteers from the DC/ Metro Maryland region. This is both my second experience with IVC as well as with Joseph's House. In 2008 I retired from a career in social work, joined IVC and was placed at Joseph's House where I stayed until 2013. From 2013 until 2018, I returned to the "working world". When I re-retired, I re-connected with IVC, this time with the Northern Virginia region, and

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was again placed at Joseph's House. While Joseph's House is not affiliated with any church or religion, for me there is a real spirituality that threads throughout the community. The respect and dignity shown to each resident by the staff and volunteers is very authentic and moving. It is a spirituality that is shown through action and deed.

Joseph's House is just a house in a neighborhood. It can accept up to eight residents so it's not large and it blends in well within the community. The concept of a hospice can conjure up visions of a sorrowful place or a hospital-like setting but Joseph's House is anything but sad. Holidays and birthdays are celebrated with much gusto. Meals are served around a large table where everyone who is able – residents, staff and volunteers alike share. Outings, even if they are only to the local Safeway, are frequent.

As a hospice for the formerly homeless, Joseph's House often serves as a place for reconciliation between residents and family. Homeless individuals are often long estranged from family and being in a safe, supportive environment like Joseph's House has facilitated many reunions. The respite component has added a new dynamic to the house and the Joseph House "alumni" who come back regularly for their medications bring energy into the home. Joseph's House truly becomes a family for all who walk through the door.



Kevin Dailey

Save

Spring Retreat

The

June 10-12

Date

Loyola Retreat House



# Christmas 2019



## Ode to Maureen

(IVC Volunteer 2010-2013)

by Marty Walsh

I was blessed to be Maureen Bader's "spiritual reflector/companion", as in "two disciples on the Road to Emmaus." She was a wonderful, kind, caring, accomplished woman. We shared a lot, laughed a lot and always bumped into the Lord as she reflected on her IVC experience and everyday life.

Maureen and I were complete opposites, yet perfectly matched. I grew up on the west bank of New York City, (Jersey City, NJ) where "nothing was on the level but your word was your bond." I can spot a "fink, phony or fraud" within minutes.

Maureen grew up in white-lace Boston, graduated Boston College, worked for the State Department overseas and in Washington DC headquarters. Yet she never became cynical, suspicious or unkind. Some might say she was naive. She saw the good in everyone she met including "finks, phonies, frauds" and actual "crooks!"

She loved her IVC assignment, teaching English to seniors from diverse backgrounds at St. Martin de Porres Center in Alexandria. She wrote in her IVC evaluation: "I believe that the presence of God in my life has been revealed to me through the volunteer program. Many of the

seniors are not Christian. Yet the program reveals the basic tenet that we must see God in all people."

It is easier seeing God in good people than finding God in bad people, particularly those across the hall from



her in her older four-story building in Alexandria. Such was the challenge Maureen faced, after reaching out as a "good neighbor" to the strange new couple with a gigantic dog that could have swallowed her little dog in a single gulp!

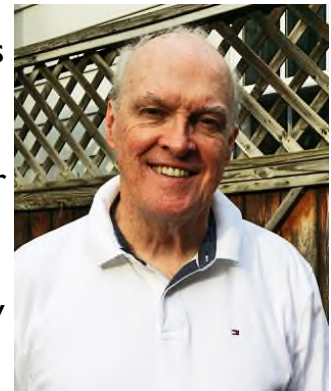
The woman knocked on Maureen's door one day to borrow milk, sugar, juice and anything else in her refrigerator. Maureen gladly gave her everything she requested and more. Soon, Maureen was driving them to pick up some packages "just down I-95 South a bit." It turned out to be a "four-hour round trip" to Richmond. One day, the "Godzilla-size" canine accompanied its owner on a tour of Maureen's impeccable apartment. Maureen locked her little poodle in the bathroom during the apartment tour. When they left, she noticed the dog left a gift behind—large poop in the middle of her immaculate

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white, wall-to-wall living room carpet. She shared these tales with me one day after we had completed our monthly reflection session; wondering “*how they could be so inconsiderate!*”

Fortunately, the “neighbors from Hell” soon vanished. By then, Maureen decided to move back to Boston to be with family and friends. Her condo sold quickly. Long-time friends of hers, a married couple, recommended she buy a condo in a new high rise south of the city overlooking the water on the neck to Cape Cod,. She and her friends were among the first occupants in late fall. Much to my surprise, she called me in late January. She sounded miserable. She said, “*My good friends are in Florida for the winter. Only a few condos here have sold and we are snowed in.*” (It was one of the worst winters in Boston history.)

As I listened to this tale of woe from one of the kindest persons I've ever met, I began to laugh out loud. This, of course, surprised her (and me too)! I said: “*Maureen, that's nothing compared to your crazy neighbors across the hall from you here in Virginia and their monster mutt, and to the condo you got out of before the apartment building it was in, collapsed; and your perfect luck of being one of the few owners in the new condo up there to experience the winter storm of the century*”. By the time I finished my “Discernment of Spirits,” Maureen was also laughing out loud. That is how I will always remember Maureen Bader! Filled with Joy! Maureen passed away early this year.



Marty Walsh

