

***To Live Peaceably Together: The American Friends Service Committee's Campaign for Open Housing.* By Tracy E. K'Meyer. Historical Studies of Urban America. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022. 240 pp. \$45.00 cloth.**

In John McPartland's 1957 novel *No Down Payment*, suburban bliss is disturbed by the "collective guilt" of racial exclusion. For the resident liberal Herman Kreitzer, the solution was practical: "If there was a wall with Negroes on one side and whites on the other the wall was important, but if you could get enough Negroes on this side of the wall the wall wouldn't be so damned important anymore" (John McPartland, *No Down Payment* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957], 98–99). Kreitzer's pragmatic optimism exemplified the outlook of those pushing to end racially restrictions in the nation's housing market.

Tracy E. K'Meyer's *To Live Peaceably Together: The American Friends Service Committee's Campaign for Open Housing* examines a group of influential integrationists, the small but determined staff of the church commonly known as the Quakers. Beginning in the 1950s, they sought to assist black pioneer families in moving over "the wall" into white communities. Drawing on their core principles of pacifism, reconciliation, and hopefulness, the "open housers" persevered despite fearsome resistance from white residents, the real estate industry, and government officials at all levels. For K'Meyer, this persistence is the main historical lesson. Even as American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) workers faced setbacks, they moved forward, motivated by the belief that residential segregation was undermining the gains of the civil rights struggle. The book deftly relates how the AFSC and other faith-based organizations turned their attentions to race relations after World War II and exposed Americans to the spiritual perspective that, while all forms of prejudice were interconnected, education and personal contact could change people's minds if they realized that their convictions must match their deeds.

Implementing integration, however, turned out to be complicated in unexpected ways. Drawing on Quaker ideals of moral enlightenment, AFSC staffers imagined that once whites had a respectable black family in their midst, they would accept and even embrace interracial living. But pioneering, with or without the assistance of integrationists, took a tremendous toll on black families, as violence, vandalism, isolation, and open hostility from law enforcement made every move-in an ordeal. Activists often struggled to find African Americans willing to be test subjects, and skeptical black recruits worried that they were being used by "starry-eyed integrationists" insensitive to their feelings (86). The AFSC started their housing efforts in 1951, but it was not until ten years later that they started truly incorporating black input on strategy.

K'Meyer argues she is relating a story of failure as the AFSC encountered stonewalling and violence, mounting frustration and despair, and minimal progress. The vicious responses to their labors made it difficult to see God's Inner Light in their opponents. As one AFSC leader noted, he struggled to avoid a most "un-Quakerly and un-realistic separation" of people into "bad guys and good guys" (29). For integration to happen, the nation needed legislation, enforcement, white acceptance, and business support all clicking at the same time—a near-impossible task given the unpopularity of the cause. Residential segregation proved more resistant to change than other forms of discrimination—leaving the country racially balkanized.

But the AFSC's efforts may not be as unsuccessful as K'Meyer depicts, as nearly every community came to accept the token presence of minority neighbors. AFSC staffers

sought African Americans of “superior quality” who could fit in, adjust, and integrate—and over time vanishingly few suburbs were solely white. The problem that careful observers identified early in the open housing movement, though, was a “tipping point” at which whites deemed an area “too black.” Integration, especially when the local schools enrolled more than a handful of African American students, was a temporary accommodation followed by white exodus. Many schools shifted from almost exclusively white to racially segregated in a matter of years, with black middle-class families also exiting. In the 1960s, prominent voices, including the Church Federation of Greater Chicago, explicitly advocated quotas on black move-ins to allow neighborhoods and schools to stabilize. Liberals such as Herman Kreitzer and dogged black pioneer families succeeded in getting to the other side of “the wall,” but then the wall shifted further out into the ever-expanding suburbs, a process of resegregation that continues to this day.

Yet as K'Meyer details, instead of addressing this process of resegregation, in the late 1960s, the AFSC shifted to housing concerns within inner-city communities. Tenant organizing emerged as a nonviolent way to increase power and self-determination in black neighborhoods. Integration fatigue had set in, and frustrated advocates decided that if poor African Americans could not get out of the ghetto, they should own and control their surroundings. The rising Black Power zeitgeist clashed with AFSC principles, however, as Quakers in the movement were dismayed by militant ultimatums and charges that white allies were neo-colonizers. Race nationalism proved a poor fit with AFSC beliefs.

*To Live Peaceably Together* is not a trendy work in this era of Afro-pessimism, “equity in place,” and voluntarily segregated charter schools. K'Meyer's examination of a predominantly white faith-based group seems purposely old fashioned, and she concludes that what mattered most was the steely persistence demonstrated by the Friends and other open housers. Proponents of integration have been on the defensive for decades; meanwhile, the research on the detrimental effects of racially segregated concentrated poverty and the resulting inequalities continues to pile up. If living together peaceably is not the answer, what is?

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***The Life of Cardinal Humberto Medeiros of Boston: Whatever God Wants.* By Richard Gribble, CSC. Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2021. ix + 353 pp. \$120 hardback; \$45 ebook.**

Richard Gribble's books include biographies of Nelson Baker and James Martin Gillis. With this biography he moves into the post-Vatican II era.

In 1931 Humberto Medeiros's family emigrated to Massachusetts from the Azores, where Humberto's father Antonio had gone to seek employment. After a secondary education delayed to provide for family needs, Humberto went to the Catholic University of America (CUA). Ordained in Fall River in 1946, Medeiros was sent back to CUA to earn a doctorate in theology. Gribble's foray into Boston's archdiocesan archives illustrates a prominent theme in the young priest's sermons: a Christ-founded church existing to help