



SCOPE50 News

The Struggle Continues!
SCOPE50.org

June 2025

"No Kings" Protests

More than 2,000 protests were scheduled across all 50 states on Saturday, June 14, as part of the No Kings movement, which was organized in response to the current administration's policies. Organizers estimated that more than five million people participated in the No Kings protests. The following photos appeared on the CNN website.



Atlanta: Protesters fill Liberty Plaza in front of the Georgia State Capitol. *Elijah Nouvelage/AFP/Getty Images*



Ocean Beach, San Francisco: A crowd of protesters spells out "No King!" when viewed from above. *Tayfun Coskun/Anadolu/Getty Images*



Louisville: A person waves an American flag as demonstrators gather. *Jon Cherry/AP*



Los Angeles: Protesters carry a banner representing the Preamble to the US Constitution. *Mario Tama/Getty Images*



Cincinnati: Demonstrators march down a street.
Jason Whitman/NurPhoto/Associated Press



Chicago: People convene downtown for the start of a demonstration. *Octavio Jones/Reuters*

Jo Freeman, a member of the SCOPE50 Board of Directors, attended the march in Manhattan and took a photo of a sign with a drawing of Dr. King on it, with the caption, “**What a Real King looks like**” She wondered how many SCOPers went to their own No Kings march and saw an affirmation of the Real King!



Honoring the Nine Victims of the Emanuel AME Church Shooting

June 17, 2025, marked the 10th anniversary of a painful and tragic chapter in our nation's history – the mass shooting by a self-professed white supremacist at Emanuel AME Church in Charleston that took the lives of nine people at a Bible study.

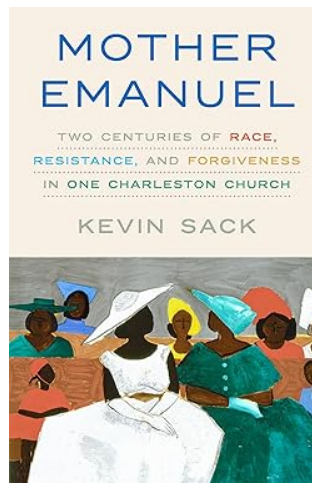


*The worshippers who died in the Emanuel AME Church shooting are
Cynthia Graham Hurd, Susie Jackson, Ethel Lance,
DePayne Middleton-Doctor, Rev. Clementa Pinckney, Tywanza Sanders,
Daniel Simmons Sr., Sharonda Coleman-Singleton and Myra Thompson.*

While there were changes that took place following this horrific act, such as removing the Confederate flag from the State House grounds, much still needs to be done. In the words of former SC State Senator Gerald Malloy, who was a friend of Pastor Pinckney: “We will never bring back those nine lives. But we can honor them — not with more symbols, but with substance. With a commitment to keep the doors open, even when it's difficult, even when it's costly. I still believe that South Carolina can live up to its highest ideals. That we can be a state where justice is more than a speech and progress is more than a gesture. But belief alone is not enough. We have to act. We have the heart. We have the history. What we need is the will.”

Mother Emanuel: Two Centuries of Race, Resistance, and Forgiveness in One Charleston Church

Early this month a book written by Kevin Sack, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who has written about race in his native South for more than four decades, was released.



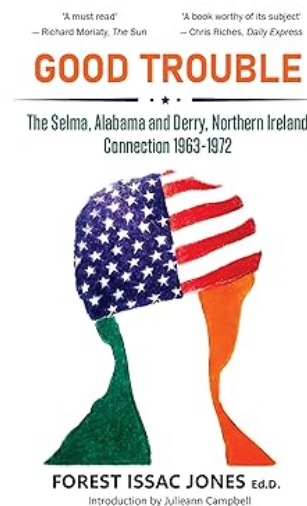
“Few people beyond South Carolina’s Lowcountry knew of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston—Mother Emanuel—before the night of June 17, 2015, when a 21 year-old white supremacist walked into Bible study and slaughtered the church’s charismatic pastor and eight other worshippers. Although the shooter had targeted Mother Emanuel—the first A.M.E. church in the South—to agitate racial strife, he did not anticipate the aftermath: an outpouring of forgiveness from the victims’ families and a reckoning with the divisions of caste that have afflicted Charleston and the South since the earliest days of European settlement.

“Mother Emanuel explores the fascinating history that brought the church to that moment and the depth of the desecration committed in its fellowship hall. It reveals how African Methodism was cultivated from the harshest American soil, and how Black suffering shaped forgiveness into both a religious practice and a survival tool. Kevin Sack uses the church to trace the long arc of Black life in the city where nearly half of enslaved Africans disembarked in North America and where the Civil War began. Through the microcosm of one congregation, he explores the development of a unique practice of Christianity, from its daring breakaway from white churches in 1817, through the traumas of Civil War and Reconstruction, to its critical role in the Civil Rights Movement and beyond.

“At its core, Mother Emanuel is an epic tale of perseverance, not just of a congregation but of a people who withstood enslavement, Jim Crow, and all manner of violence with an unbending faith.”

Good Trouble: The Selma, Alabama and Derry, Northern Ireland Connection, 1963-1972

by Forest Issac Jones. Another recent book shows “the strong connection between the Black Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the Catholic Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland, specifically the influence of the Selma to Montgomery march on the 1969 Belfast to Derry march.” Jones did fifteen interviews with people who were involved in the movement in Northern Ireland and in the movement in the United States. One of those interviewed was Richard Smiley (a member of the SCOPE50 Board of Directors) who was at Bloody Sunday and on the Selma to Montgomery march.



Remembering the “Charleston Nine”

This June was also the 18th anniversary of the Sofa Super Store fire in Charleston that killed nine firefighters on June 18, 2007. It was the deadliest firefighter disaster in the United States since the September 11 attacks. The fire, which started in the loading dock of the furniture store, spread to the main showroom and warehouse. Eventually, it led to a catastrophic structural collapse that trapped the firefighters inside. Now the site of the furniture store is a memorial park honoring the Charleston Nine. The fire department's Station 11 now stands next door. Nine windows, stretching from the ground up towards the sky, stand watch over the park from the station's east side.

In Memoriam – Walter Brueggemann

Walter Brueggemann, an influential theologian who used biblical exegesis to argue against nationalism, racial injustice and ignoring the poor, died on June 5, in Traverse City, Michigan. He was 92. Dr. Brueggemann was a rare scholar of the Bible who combined close textual analysis of the Hebrew prophets with a sociological consciousness. Just as these prophets denounced Pharaoh and the oppression of their time, he argued, latter-day prophets should oppose the oppressive traits, like consumerism, militarism and nationalism that dominate American life. His best-known book was “*The Prophetic Imagination*” which sold more than a million copies.

New SCLC President

SCLC has announced the appointment of a new President of the organization: “DeMark Liggins is the newly elected National President/CEO of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the venerable civil rights organization noted for its founding President, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. along with leading the charge to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.”



“Liggins’ vision for SCLC rests on the three tiers of Legacy, Leadership and Love. Combining the robust history of the organization, increasing the presence of local chapters, and initiatives and programs of the company to meet its mantra of ‘Saving the Soul of America’.

“He is a proud graduate of Alabama State University where he holds a degree in Finance from the College of Business Administration. Prior to his work at SCLC, he was in finance as a banker and working in Private Client Advisory as a stock broker and registered investment advisor. His over 10 years at SCLC led him to being the National Vice President/Chief of Staff before assuming his new position. He is a lifetime member of Kappa Alpha, Psi, Inc. and serves on several boards, including Georgia First and The Children’s School in Atlanta. He is the proud father of three children, Reagan (16), Darden (9) and Deuce (9) along with his wife Atoya.”

Brenda Davenport Honored

Deric Gilliard shared that his friend and colleague Brenda Davenport, who served as the SCLC's Student Affairs Director in the 1990's, is being honored by the city of Atlanta for her tireless work as a civil rights warrior for justice. He stated that "Brenda continues to inspire, while ensuring that we celebrate the giants, like Rosa Parks, Dorothy Cotton and all of the SCLC veterans who relentlessly pushed to Redeem the Soul of America. There is no more worthy servant leader in ATL.



Margaret Rozga wins the Mark Twain Award

Margaret Rozga, a SCOPE volunteer in Bullock County, Alabama, in 1965, is the forty-eighth winner of the Mark Twain Award for distinguished contributions to Midwestern literature, given annually by The Society for the Study of Midwestern Literature since 1980.



Throughout her career as a poet, essayist, editor, teacher, and social activist, Margaret (Peggy) Rozga has challenged the national conscience on civil rights and civic duty. Her five full-length books of poetry have been praised for their ability to inspire and provide hope while honestly portraying the realities of racial discrimination, the lives of soldiers and their families, and environmental change and loss. Her first poetry book, *200 Nights and One Day* (Benu Press 2009), relates the story of the fair housing marches in Milwaukee in 1967-1968 that led to the passage of a fair housing law. It received a bronze medal in poetry from the Independent Publishers Book Awards and was named an outstanding achievement by the Wisconsin Library Association. In 2019-2020 Margaret served as Wisconsin poet laureate. She has been an ambassador for poetry and social justice as a frequent reader of her own work and as a leader of numerous poetry workshops.

A Wisconsin native and resident of Milwaukee, Margaret Rozga was educated at Alverno College (BA) and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (MA and PhD). She taught writing and literature at the University of Wisconsin-Waukesha as Professor of English and earned emeritus status upon retirement. Her most recent book of poetry is *Restoring Prairie* (Cornerstone Press 2024).

Rhode Island Lawmakers Pass Bill to Ban Sales of Assault Weapons

Rhode Island's Democratic-controlled State House approved legislation that would ban the sale and manufacturing of many semiautomatic rifles commonly referred to as assault weapons. The proposal now heads to the desk of Democratic Governor Dan McKee who said that he plans to sign the bill into law. If that happens, Rhode Island will join ten states that have some sort of prohibition on high-powered firearms that were once banned nationwide and are now largely the weapon of choice among those responsible for most of the country's devastating mass shootings. The bill only applies to the sale and manufacturing of assault weapons and not possession. But residents looking to purchase an assault weapon from nearly New Hampshire or elsewhere will also be blocked. Federal law prohibits people from travelling to a different state to purchase a gun and returning it to a state where that particular weapon is banned.

Messages to a Father on Father's Day

This Father's Day was a moment of profound reflection and emotion for longtime news anchor Lester Holt, one of America's most respected journalists, who had just left his anchor position at NBC. His sons Stefen and Cameron sent him heartfelt letters, honoring him, not just as their father, but also the relentless mentor and quiet hero who fought through criticism, adversity, and doubt to become the man they are proud to call "Dad."



While Lester Holt's career might seem polished and seamless from the outside, his sons revealed that their father's journey was anything but easy. In their letters Stefen and Cameron reflected on how their dad had to fight for every opportunity. Early in his career, Lester was often overlooked, doubted, and even criticized for not fitting the traditional mold of a network anchor. As a Black journalist in an industry long dominated by others, he was frequently told that he "didn't look the part" or that he was "too different" to sit at the national desk. "But you never gave up," one letter read, "You never let the world's doubt silence your voice."

Stefen and Cameron both followed creative and professional paths influenced by their father's strength and character. In their letters, they expressed immense gratitude—not only for the guidance he provided, but for the example he set through action rather than words. "We watched you turn rejection into motivation," one of the letters read. "You taught us that it's not about how many people say you can't—but how many times you choose to say *I will*."

They thanked him not for material things, but for the values he lived every single day: integrity, patience, humility, and hard work. They recalled childhood moments when he would read over their essays, rehearse their presentations with them, and encourage them to pursue excellence in whatever path they chose. “You were never just our dad,” the letter continued. “You were our coach, our sounding board, our steady hand in every storm.”

In the end, Lester Holt’s greatest accomplishment may not be the decades he spent in front of a camera, or the countless major events he covered, but the two men he raised. Through their letters, Stefen and Cameron gave the world a rare glimpse into the private world of a public figure—a man who refused to let adversity define him, and who passed that same strength onto his children.

As Stefen wrote in his final lines: “You showed us what it means to lead with grace. You proved that the road less traveled is often the one worth taking. And above all, you taught us that true success is about leaving something better than you found it—including your own name.”