

"To stop whiteness from trembling"

By [Joanna Harader](#)

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[Pharaoh trembled](#) at the growing Hebrew population; at the thought that these slaves might realize their oppression *and* realize their power. He demanded that the Egyptians throw all of the Hebrew baby boys into the Nile River.

[Herod trembled](#) at the report from the eastern scholars of a child who had been born King of the Jews; at the prospect of Jewish rebellion and an end to his tenuous hold on power. He ordered the slaughter of all the children in and around Bethlehem who were under the age of two.

I'll grant that the slaughter in our country is geared toward males past their infancy and toddlerhood, but sometimes not by much. Never by enough. Tamir Rice was only 12. Laquan McDonald, 17. Freddy Gray, 25. Philando Castile, 32. Alton Sterling, 37.

[Traci Blackmon](#) connects the recent killings of Sterling and Castile to the fear that is illustrated in the Pharaoh narrative. She reminds us that "[the state is still armed, and murder represents a justifiable response to stop whiteness from trembling.](#)" The fear and slaughter to which we have borne witness are not new.

And neither is the resistance. Shiphrah and Puah, the Hebrew midwives, refused to carry out Pharaoh's orders to kill the male babies they helped birth. The wise men from the east went home by another way, disobeying Herod's orders to return to him and identify the Christ child.

[Diamond Reynolds](#) live-streamed the scene with police as her boyfriend sat shot and dying beside her. Members of [Stop the Killing, Inc.](#), monitored police scanners and showed up at the Triple S Food Mart in time to film the encounter between Alton Sterling and police.

People across the country are protesting and praying, analyzing and admonishing. We are pushing for reforms in gun laws and police departments and justice systems. We are fighting against the fear we see in others and the fear we sense in ourselves.

When we resist, we join the heartbreaking company of Shiphrah and Puah, of the mysterious men from the east.

We join the company of those, like the midwives, who must watch the trembling powers terrorize innocent people despite our best efforts to thwart the destruction.

We join the company of those, like the magi, who listen to our dreams from God and follow the path God gives us, but somehow still find ourselves part of the horror.

We join the company of the Hebrew mothers of Egypt, the Jewish mothers of Bethlehem, who wail and weep and wait for the slaughter to stop.

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