

Messengers of hope

This Advent, the people who have spoken most clearly to me are women and people of color: Aisha Hinds, D. L. Mayfield, Eddie Glaude, and Liz Theoharis.

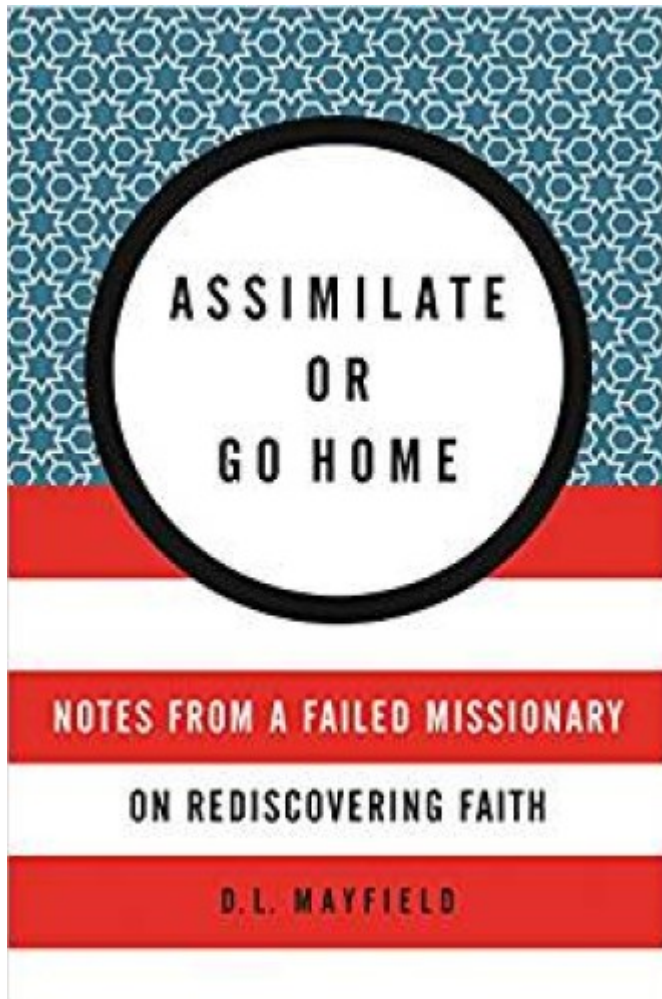
by [Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove](#) in the [December 6, 2017](#) issue

In Review



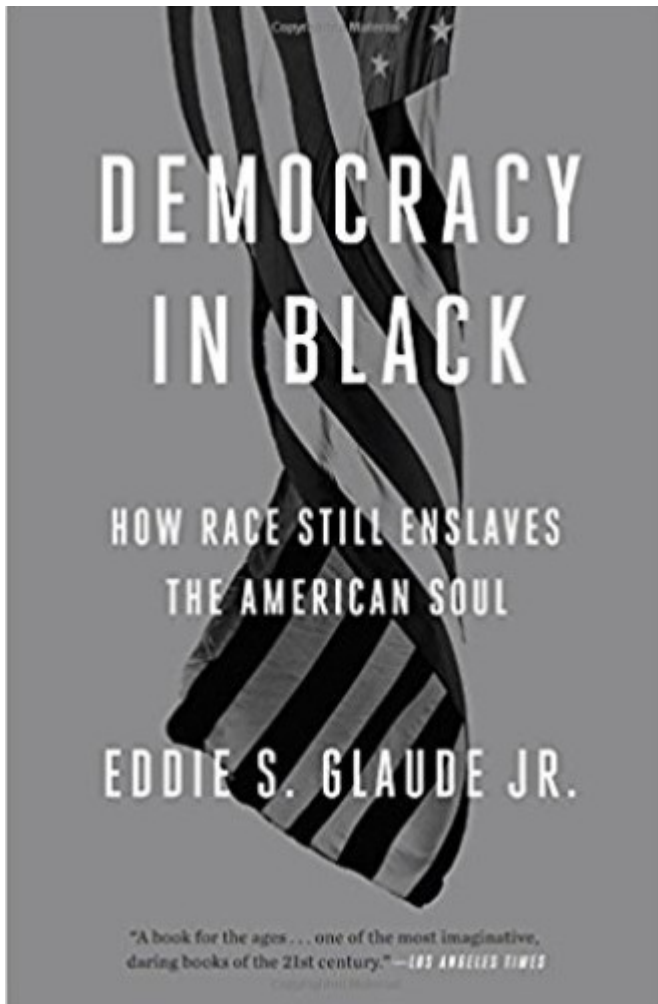
Shots Fired

Season 1



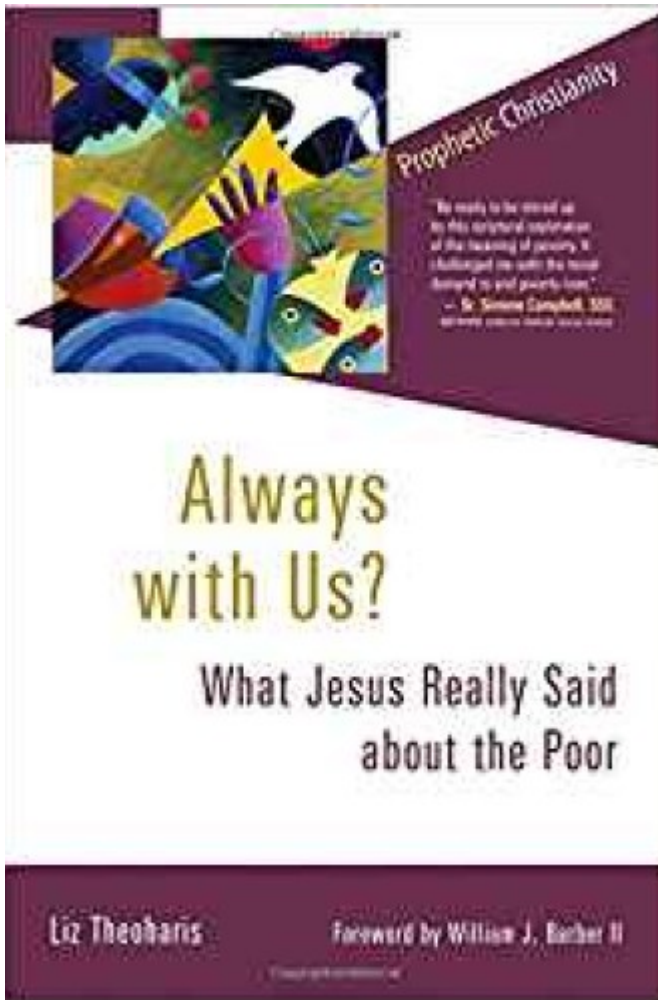
Assimilate or Go Home

D. L. Mayfield
HarperOne



Democracy in Black

by Eddie Glaude
Broadway Books



Always with Us?

What Jesus Really Said about the Poor

by Liz Theoharis
Eerdmans

If our Christmases are not merry, it is because we will not wait to receive them as gift. But sometimes we must wait: not because we are disciplined enough to choose delayed gratification, but because we do not have the power to bring about the change we want. This is the norm for most people throughout human history. And yet, in this season of longing, God has sent messengers of hope—and the ones who've spoken most clearly to me this year are women and people of color.

Aisha Hinds is an accomplished theater actress who I first met when she played Ann Atwater, the freedom movement mother, in the play *The Best of Enemies*. Aisha

wasn't simply playing a part; she was, I learned, committed to embodying on stage the fierce truth of another person who had lived in obscurity. America's TV audience met Aisha this year when she played a Black Lives Matter pastor on *Shots Fired* and, to great acclaim, Harriet Tubman in an hour-long monologue on John Legend's *Underground*. This monologue, which became known as Hinds's "Tub Talk," should be the subject of Sunday school lessons this Advent.

One of the best young spiritual writers in America today, D. L. Mayfield, published her first memoir, *Assimilate or Go Home*, at a moment when the Muslim refugees who've been her teachers were becoming scapegoats in American politics. As we prepare for the birth of the refugee baby who had to cross a border to survive before almost anyone recognized him as Savior, Mayfield's book is a must-read.

The wisdom of black people, who can no longer be surprised by the extremism of white Americans, is essential in our time. It is no accident that Ta-Nehisi Coates has become the most celebrated American writer in this moment. Eddie Glaude, who combines a critical racial analysis with an understanding of religion, is especially important for American Christians. Glaude's *Democracy in Black* both names the persistent realities of white supremacy in an accessible way and points to the real hope that has emerged from liberative black theology in contemporary revivals like Moral Mondays, led by William J. Barber II.

Barber has teamed up this year with Liz Theoharis to take up Dr. King's call for a "moral revolution of values" by reigniting the Poor People's Campaign, which Dr. King died trying to build. At the heart of this campaign, which I'm also deeply involved in, is a challenge to the public theology that blames poor people for their suffering. Theoharis's new book, *Always with Us? What Jesus Really Said about the Poor*, is a Bible study for our time. She reintroduces the revolutionary power of the gospel's message and invites us to walk in hope alongside the diverse and growing number of movements that are organizing poor and working people to become the "peace on earth, good will to all people" that we long to see.

Read the other 2017 Christmas picks [here](#).