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Sr. Carolyn: Voice for the Voiceless

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Sr. Carolyn: Voice for the Voiceless

Abstract: This paper discusses parts of an interview I conducted with Sr. Carolyn on the roles of women religious and how they, including herself, are involved in activism.

Sister Carolyn's story of how she found her vocation started with her meeting a photographer, wearing jeans and a flannel shirt, in an airport. They got to talking and Sister Carolyn was surprised to find out that this woman was a woman religious. Sister Carolyn was thrown off by the casual attire, but that made her more interested in this woman. As they were talking, the sister mentioned that her congregation was looking for a teacher. Sister Carolyn went in to see about the position, and she said she felt at home during the interview. She was attracted to their mission of unity in love, for it was something that her family was passionate about and instilled in her. These women shared a common value with her. She decided then that she would become a sister. She was 28 when she entered, which was after Vatican II, and she described it as an exciting time to redefine and find their charisms. She was drawn to this group of women because she wanted to live out her gospel values and change the world, but she needed a community to help her do it. By being a part of a community, she felt stronger because they all shared one vision. This furthered her attraction to their mission for unity, because it gave her strength, which also allowed her to have a louder voice for justice.

Sister Carolyn emphasized the importance of sisters at the forefront of justice and activism throughout the interview. She herself has been very involved in speaking up about gun violence, climate change, women's rights, and justice in general. She writes music, and that has

been her platform for activism. “The world is my palette for my inspiration,” she told me. Her congregation’s mission of unity in love has allowed her to use her gifts to unify people and show support for those who cannot speak up. This was another reason her congregation made her feel at home—they were centered on any work where their gifts could be used. Her music reflects relationships with God, justice, gun violence, climate change, and many other things. She believes that the sacred can be found in everything, so she writes about it. She has shared her work through her numerous CDs. One notable way her music has been inspirational is from when the Vatican investigated American nuns. She talked about this being a difficult and terrible time, so she turned once again to her music by turning her fear and frustration into a song. In this song, she calls women religious to show that their love and passion for humanity and the world is at the forefront of their work. She helped women religious find a way to show that they will always stand up for what is right and what they believe in. I would compare her activism and using music as her platform for change to the way the Nuns on the Bus used the media to help spread their beliefs and passions. In both instances, they used their gifts to be at the forefront of activism.

Women religious have marched in the women’s march, have written songs and poems, and have used their vocation to be the voice for the voiceless. They have helped inspire change in their communities as well as around the U.S. and the world. Sister Carolyn’s devotion to environmentalism and gun control has helped bring attention to those topics.

Works Cited

“Sr. Carolyn Peterson.” Personal interview. 9 Jan, 2018.