



SHOWING UP: Noted for his civil rights activism, Campbell is writing a book on country music.

word. Grandpa called us over. He called everybody “Hon”—didn’t matter who they were—and we didn’t have those Freudian hang-ups in those days. He said, “Hon, that man is a colored man. Not a nigger. There aren’t any niggers, and I don’t want to hear you calling anybody that.” That made

an impression on me that has lasted until this day. Why it didn’t make an impression on the others, I can’t say.

Another experience like that was when I was in the war overseas. Once a sergeant came in the middle of the night and woke me up. I was in a medical unit and assisted in surgeries and the like. This sergeant was a friend, and that night we were helping with an operation on an island boy. The colonel who was performing the operation was a crusty man from Atlanta. The operation failed and the boy died. After it was over and the colonel told us to wrap the boy up so that he could be carried back to his family, he asked, “What happened to this boy?” The sergeant told him that he had been a houseboy for a wealthy French planter. The boy had dropped an ashtray and the planter had kicked the boy. “He didn’t just kick him,” the colonel said. And then he said, “That’s a hell of a price to pay for a goddamn ashtray.”

Afterward, the sergeant, who was a devout Christian, asked me if I would

go to the chapel to pray with him. He prayed and prayed, but he never mentioned the child or his family. Instead he was praying for the colonel who had taken the Lord’s name in vain. Now, granted, in my household that word was never used. If you had uttered it, you would have had the wrath of mama and daddy to deal with. But to give your attention to that and not to the child—that changed me.

There’s a rumor that you don’t go to church.

Well, I’m in church right now: We’re talking about the faith. We’re remembering what God in Christ has done. We’re having church. Now if you are asking me whether or not I am active in the steeples at 11 on a Sunday morning, I can’t say that I am.

What do Christians most need to be doing?

One thing is just to say no. We can just shake our heads and say, “No, we are not going to go there. We are not going along with that.”

Now if you take that to an extreme, then you are not voting and are not paying taxes. And I tried that for about 12 years—not voting, that is. But I’ve decided that’s not really the answer either. If the man who is currently in the White House had not been elected, I think it is pretty clear that we would have a different world and a better one. Not that I have ever been a big fan of Mr. Gore. And I’ve known all along that politics is inherently evil. At the end of the day, there may not be a huge difference between voting and not voting, between who gets elected and who doesn’t, but there is *some* difference.

You’ve lived through a lot of social change. Has any social progress been made? Is our society any better?

With what’s going on in Iraq, I don’t see how you could say progress has been made. What is being done at our behest is indefensible. In some ways, it seems like we’ve moved forward, and in other ways it seems like we are more in denial than ever. This war is inexcusable. I say this as a person who served in the military three years myself.

—Amy Frykholm

What we heard on Christmas Day

(with a line from Longfellow)

Silence like early morning, like indigo
Deepening at the bottom of the sea.
For hundreds of years.

No voice to say *this is the way*.
Or *tomorrow, he comes*. They raised
Their questions, rose each morning, found

No answers. Unless you count
Wait. But after the hush
Of prophecy, the long line of law,

Exile centuries ago just a bitter aftertaste
In their empty mouths, sting
Of dust on their ribs dulled, almost imperceptible,

A baby wailed. And if you listened close,
You knew your ears did not deceive you.
He had entered the ebony tomb

Of Earth, loosening at last his long-held tongue,
The star a halo of song blaring overhead,
God is not dead, nor does he sleep.

Julie L. Moore



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