

A Slave or Not a Slave, That's the Question!
(Holly W. Roddam)

During Black history month, there is a lot of focus on how Blacks were slaves and what that has done to them as people. I am only three generations out of slavery myself. I can't comprehend how people think they can own others and treat them with such brutality. And yet, I don't always treat people the way I should. Maybe it shouldn't be so hard to understand!

Martin Luther King Jr's letter from prison to the pastors of Birmingham is a powerful challenge, in love, to how they accepted the status quo and told Negroes to "be patient and wait for change to happen." It's a letter we all should read!

Recently, I read Pulitzer Prize winner, Alex Tizon's final story for the Atlantic magazine, "My Families Slave," a moving story about how Alex's family came to America in 1964 from the Philippines. They brought a Filipino slave, Lola, with them. She lived with them for 56 years until she died.

I was struck by the power of Lola's love and ability to put a family, who often mistreated her, before herself. Lola demonstrated what St. Paul said, "I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:12 – 13 niv).

I wonder if Lola walked with Jesus. She certainly lived like Jesus! I wonder too, if there aren't many who meet Jesus in a way that our Evangelical model would never even consider or believe. Scripture says that the whole earth gives witness of the Creator, and Jesus is a friend to the outcast and sinner. There is no excuse for not knowing Him.

Lola lived a non-violent protest of love. It got through to Alex. She was free on the inside while a slave on the outside. This was what Martin Luther King Junior was talking about. It is hard work, but pays off in the end.

I don't understand the suffering that goes on in the world. People enslave and abuse others. Hatred of perceived differences causes misunderstanding and pain. Missionaries willingly give up their lives for the sake of the gospel; thousands being tortured and murdered for their efforts to share God's love. But I do know that God's ways are higher, and I can trust that he is good. His ways are good, whether I understand them or not. I'm thankful for the lives of those who have lived the truth for the rest of us to see.

As we ponder again what has gone on in our own nation and with our neighbors to the south, may we be reminded that love conquers all but that is no excuse to

allow injustice to reign. We must speak the truth in love and grace to set the captives free.

(Published during Black history month.)